



Philosophical Review

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Studies in the Way of Words*. by Paul Grice

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Source: *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (Jul., 1992), pp. 619-621

Published by: Duke University Press on behalf of Philosophical Review

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2186059>

Accessed: 16-05-2018 22:51 UTC

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The Philosophical Review, Vol. 101, No. 3 (July 1992)

STUDIES IN THE WAY OF WORDS. By PAUL GRICE. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989. Pp. viii, 394.

This book contains Paul Grice's William James lectures, given at Harvard in 1967, but published in full for the first time here. It also contains many of his articles on language and metaphysics, including one previously unpublished paper, and a long epilogue that comments retrospectively on the other pieces. Grice is said to have completed the book to his satisfaction before he died. It is well made. The book does not contain all his published articles. These omissions may have contributed to the book's unity. But the lack of a complete bibliography is unfortunate.

Grice's theorizing about meaning in the James lectures certainly benefits from being published whole. Grice's tendency toward extreme subtlety and convolution (not to mention muttering!), which sometimes crippled his talks, is more easily assimilated in his writing. The large scope of his vision is more apparent here than in separately published lectures. Grice's starting point for understanding meaning, in individuals' intentions, and the theory of implicature have always been striking and powerful. But connections between these components—and those between individual intentions and communal meaning, one of the weak spots in his theorizing, in my opinion—stand out better in this context.

The theoretical ideas about meaning are so widely discussed that there is little point in reviewing them in such short space. Two aspects of them are perhaps worth remarking. One is the problem of whether Grice can make good his view that the notion of meaning can be noncircularly analyzed in terms of a mentalistic notion. At the very end of the James lectures, he suggests, somewhat obscurely, that first-person authority about the interpretation of inner "word flows" provides the key to understanding how propositional attitudes are prior to the meaning of one's "inner" language. In the fourth section of the epilogue, Grice discusses various other ways of dealing with the problem. But he never confronts one of the main threats to his reductive analysis: the apparent fact that the content of propositional attitudes sometimes depends (and is seen by the individual to depend) on the public meaning of words that the individual uses to express his attitude. I do not see how to plausibly accommodate this apparent fact in Grice's program. Even so, the program remains interesting. One can see the analysis not as a reduction but as an attempt to state deep

necessary connections between propositional attitudes and meaning. The connections need not be unidirectional.

The other aspect of Grice's account I want to mention is that unlike several of the other accounts of the period, it does not treat meaning as a theoretical notion. Although there is, I think, a place for the alternatives, Grice's approach aims at grounding a plausible account of the elements of directness in our knowledge of meaning. Unfortunately, Grice does not pursue the matter; and no epistemological account can simply be read off his approach. But remarks in the epilogue and in some of the articles show that he was partly motivated by deep awareness of the issue.

Grice is widely known for his criticisms of standard moves associated with the Oxford group called "ordinary language philosophers." These criticisms begin in the 1950s and flower in his theory of meaning and implicature. But Grice regarded himself as a member of the group, a group that included Moore, Ryle, Austin, and Strawson. He respected common sense, and ordinary language as a repository of common sense; and he believed in "philosophical analysis." This latter belief led him to defend "analyticity" against Quine's criticisms. Grice discusses this issue in the epilogue, and in fact ends the book with it. In my view, he never clarifies what notion of analyticity he is defending; and his defense does little to take account of fundamental strands of Quine's attack. It appears to me that Grice was not defending the notion of vacuous truth, employed by empiricists. Nor does he seem focused on any of the other traditional conceptions of analyticity. I think that he was primarily defending a way of doing philosophy—a practice—that does not stand or fall with any formulation or conception. The book is an exemplification and commentary on this practice. Grice believed in the power of distinctively philosophical methods for dealing with problems that had their starting points in the notion of linguistic meaning. His willingness to confront meaning and mentalistic notions intuitively as cognitively interesting phenomena was, to my mind, liberating.

Grice was more sophisticated, subtle, and theoretically powerful than Moore (of whom Grice expresses a low opinion). He was unencumbered by the behaviorist tendencies of Ryle, and again more theoretically powerful. He was more inclined to use the history of philosophy and more willing to turn his linguistic investigations in philosophically fruitful directions than was Austin. Among the most distinguished members of the group, only Strawson seems as attentive to traditional philosophy, as able to make fresh, enduring, well-developed contributions to fundamental philosophical issues, and as sophisticated in interpreting the relation between structural and pragmatic aspects of language. This latter sophistication derived partly from the fact that both Grice and Strawson made greater use of the rival logical constructivist tradition than did other members of the group.

BOOK REVIEWS

Strawson was more deeply a metaphysician; Grice, more deeply a methodologist and philosopher of language. Significantly, Grice was Strawson's teacher. Although Moore, Ryle, and Austin are each of great historical importance (almost certainly Moore will be seen as having greater historical importance), and although each made unique and valuable intellectual contributions, it seems to me that along with Strawson, Grice deserves the most current philosophical interest of any in the group. One need only read "Meaning" or "Some Remarks about the Senses" to see what a wonderfully powerful, subtle, and philosophically profound mind Grice had. Grice's writing will continue to repay many readings.

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The Philosophical Review, Vol. 101, No. 3 (July 1992)

SOURCES OF THE SELF. By CHARLES TAYLOR. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989. Pp. 601.

Charles Taylor's chief work of the 1980s is a wide-ranging study of modern intellectual history, set in the context of some ambitious philosophical theses about the foundations of morality. Taylor's inquiry begins with a puzzle. Although the moral consciousness of modern society is distinctive for the emphasis it gives to certain values, such as individual autonomy and the relief of human suffering, there is little agreement in modern culture about the basis of these values. One response to the puzzle, Taylor notes, is to scorn the search for ontological foundations in morality and focus on what we agree about. Some who do this treat moral theory procedurally, systematizing shared moral opinions. Others adopt a position Taylor calls "naturalism," reducing moral beliefs to subjective projections. Taylor finds both reactions unsatisfactory, because they leave inarticulate the "ontological framework" (or frameworks) underlying our moral convictions. These theories stultify our cultural self-understanding, and may even undermine themselves because they reject even the possibility of articulating their own basis.

Taylor understands frameworks themselves as the legacy of a history; his principal aim is its retrieval, focusing on the modern, post-Cartesian conception of the human self. Taylor traces its prehistory back to Plato (chapter 5), where there emerged the notion of human reason as awareness of a meaningful cosmic order, and to St. Augustine (chapter 6), who gains access to this order through the self's "inwardness" in its intimate relation to God. Descartes (chapter 7) takes the decisively modern turn by