Conversational Cooperation Revisited

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Abstract

It is commonly accepted that conversation is, in some sense, cooperative. This is due in part to Paul Grice's articulation of the Cooperative Principle, which states that participants should "make [their] conversational contributions such as is required…" (Grice 1989, 26). Yet the significance of this principle, as well as the notion of cooperation that is entailed, is up for interpretation. For example, there are several ways of understanding what kind of force the Cooperative Principle is supposed to have: it could be meant as a requirement on the behavior of speakers, a description of the way speakers behave, or an articulation of what speakers assume of one another's contributions. I consider each of these options, and I argue that the first, which is often seen as a naïve interpretation, is worth considering. Although I ultimately reject the prescriptive interpretation of the Cooperative Principle, it offers a jumping off point for exploring other prescriptions on

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conversational behavior, such as the Requirement of Interlocutor Responsiveness, which I offer as an explicitly prescriptive conversational principle.

1. Introduction

In "Logic and Conversation," Paul Grice introduced the notion of conversational implicature, in which participants in a communicative exchange can convey content that is not part of the literal meaning of their utterances. Central to his argument is the Cooperative Principle, a principle of conversation that allows participants to derive the implicated meaning of their interlocutors' utterances. In the time since Grice introduced the Cooperative Principle (or CP), it has become a widespread practice for linguistic theorists operate under the assumption that conversation in general is a cooperative activity.

As I will show shortly, there is significant disagreement regarding what it takes for an activity to be cooperative, in the relevant sense, and in this paper I will not commit to any particular notion of cooperation. Yet there appears, prima facie, to be a problem with this assumption that conversation is a cooperate activity: some conversations seem to be, to some extent, uncooperative. Conversations *can* be cooperative activities, and people can engage in cooperative interactions in part by engaging in conversation[2], but very many conversations involve significant divergence in the communicative aims of parties, up to and including outright hostility resulting from incompatible

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[2] Clark (1996), for instance, argues both that language is something that is used to engage in cooperative social activities (and indeed that these activities are crucial in the need for and development of language) and that language use itself is a form of joint action.

sets of interests.[3] We have arguments with friends and strangers (the latter with increasing frequency due to twitter and other social media platforms), run-ins with law enforcement officers, negotiations with insurance agents, and so on. As these examples show, the paradigmatic cases of conversations that are not fully cooperative are to some degree conflictual. Yet a conversation need not be overtly antagonistic or conflictual in order to fail to have the features we might expect from a cooperative exchange. If it were true that conversations are cooperative – particularly according to familiar notions of cooperation on which cooperative activities involve joint action, or shared activity, in some sense[4] – then we would expect that people would not, or not commonly, dismiss the ways their interlocutors attempt to contribute to the exchange. For example, the following two cases should strike us as odd if conversation is cooperative in any familiar sense:

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[3] Pinker (2007), Asher and Lascarides (2013), and Camp (2018) have all made similar points in discussions of various speech contexts that are at least partially noncooperative. Beaver and Stanley (2019) list the assumption of cooperativity as one of a number of artificial idealizations that theorists make about language and communication. Jankovic (2014, 490) has also argued that some conversational exchanges are not cooperative, but does not take this to be a challenge to the "collectivist model of communication," according to which cooperation is "standard" for communication, but not a universal feature; she argues that deviations from cooperation are still "causally or conceptually dependent" on the cooperative nature of conversation.

[4] Camp (2018), Jankovic (2014), and Tomasello (2008), for instance, all tie cooperitivity in conversation to the sharing or jointness of the activity of communicative exchange. I do not assume that this is the right way to understand Gricean cooperation; as I'll discuss shortly, others understand Gricean cooperation much differently. However, this understanding is a good place to start.

Case 1:

Jane: Hi Tom, could you be sure to get me the agenda for our meeting this afternoon before lunch?

Tom: Why don't you just join me for lunch? I'll tell you all about my agenda for the two of us over a bottle of wine.

Jane: No thanks, I have work to do. I just want to see the agenda.

Tom (coldly): I'll see if I can get it to you, but I really think lunch would be the best time.

Case 2:

Jane and Tom are now in their meeting. During the meeting, Jane asserts *p,* believing that she is making a significant contribution to the discussion. She is disappointed that the comment doesn't precipitate greater conversation, but she has no reason to believe she has been ignored until Tom asserts *p*. After Tom makes his contribution, the trajectory of the meeting changes significantly as several participants respond to and build upon *p*.

In both cases, Jane makes contributions ("could you be sure to get me the agenda," and *p*) which Tom should, if he were engaging in a joint project with Jane (or for that matter if he is participating cooperatively in any ordinary sense of the word), take seriously. In both cases, however, he does not appear to treat Jane's contributions as contributions to the exchange, and thus, does not appear to be treating their exchange as a joint project at all.[5]

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[5] According to some ways of understanding what it takes to be cooperative, these cases may not count as uncooperative. My aim in highlighting these examples is to show that there are natural conversations that *strike us* as uncooperative, and that plausibly violate certain ways of understanding

These sorts of everyday examples, which often involve microaggressions, implicit or explicit bias, and in some cases harassing behavior, strike me as particularly important cases that require accounting. In part, this is because they are absolutely ordinary, often mundane cases that fail to neatly fit the paradigm of conversational cooperation, and in part (as will be made clear in section 5 of the paper) because they involve a challenge to the assumption of cooperativity that is different in kind from the kinds of cases that are widely cited, such as strategic conversation (Asher and Lascarides 2013), indirect speech (Pinker 2007), and insinuation (Camp 2018), among others.[6]

Given the range of not-fully-cooperative speech mentioned and illustrated above, it may not be surprising to note that there is no consensus regarding how we should understand the term 'cooperative' as it applies to conversational exchanges. Some, such as Sperber and Wilson (1996, 161) assume that because Grice associates cooperativity with the requirement that conversational participants have a "common purpose or set of purposes" (Grice 1989, 26), this suggests that cooperative conversation requires significant overlap of conversational goals. Others have

what it takes to be cooperative. Even if there are ways of understanding 'cooperation' according to which Case 1 and Case 2 count as cooperative, there is a clear sense that something is going wrong in these cases. This will help motivate the claim in sections 4 and 5 that there is some kind of prescriptive requirement of cooperativity.

[6] Some might worry that because the examples I offer involve one party not treating the other as contributing to the exchange, we should not think of these cases as conversations, or as part of the category of linguistic exchanges we care about. However, I am inclined to assume that any variety of linguistic exchange that is readily observable should be analyzed as a conversation unless we have a principled reason not to do so. So far, I have not seen any principled reasons to exclude exchanges like Case 1 and Case 2 from the set of conversations we should analyze.

interpreted the notion of cooperation in question as a robust attitude of cooperative engagement or collaboration toward conversation (Keenan 1976, Campbell 2001), or as a variety of shared intentional action (Tomasello 2008, Jankovic 2014).[7] Meanwhile, many have taken these interpretations of Grice to be simplistic and naïve,[8] arguing that the notion of cooperativity with which Grice is concerned has more to do with shared rationality between conversational participants (Davies 2007), or else mutually accessible (rather than actually shared) goals (Green 1990, 415). These latter approaches reject the view that the CP might have something to do with an intuitive, colloquial notion of cooperation, and instead treat 'cooperation' as a technical term. Ordinarily, these approaches incorporate an argument that the CP is intended not as a claim about the actual cooperativity of participants, but instead, about what participants must assume of one another; in order to have any hope of interpreting one another accurately, the idea goes, conversational participants must assume that their interlocutor is cooperative in a technical sense which I will outline in greater detail shortly. This assumption allows participants to accurately interpret one another.

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[7] Tomasello and Jakovic are not engaged simply in Grice interpretation, but are making independent arguments for this conclusion which draw on Grice and appear to assume that Grice's notion of cooperation intersects with the idea of shared intentional action. Moore (2016) argues against this view, claiming that communication is often, but not necessarily, a variety of joint action.

[8] Keenan (1976), Sperber and Wilson (1996), and Campbell (2001) also take their characterization of cooperative conversation they draw from Grice to offer a naïve picture of conversation. Unlike Green (1990) and Davies (2007), however, they take this to be a reason to reject Grice's account, rather than a reason to consider a different interpretation of Grice.

In this paper, I will say a great deal about cooperation, but I will not attempt to identify the proper interpretation of 'cooperative' in Grice's CP. Instead, I have two primary aims in this paper. First, I will lay out three options regarding what *kind* of claim the CP makes about cooperation in conversational exchanges; that is, what kind of role the CP is supposed to play in a theory of communication. The notion of 'cooperation' that makes most sense may vary among these different options. Second, I'll pick out one of these options—the option that the CP articulates a prescriptive norm—and argue that even if this is not the best way to interpret how Grice intended the CP, it plays an important role in conversational exchanges.

I'll begin by discussing the Cooperative Principle itself and clarifying a few pertinent details of the Principle. I will then distinguish three ways of understanding the force of the CP. The understanding most widely accepted by interpreters of Grice holds that the CP is what I'll call a *presumptive* principle – it specifies the presumptions that we make in communicative contexts which allow us to interpret speakers' utterances. On the second, the CP is a *descriptive* principle of behavior – that is, it simply describes how people do *in fact* behave in conversational settings. According to the third, the CP is akin to a *prescriptive* norm – it specifies the kind of behavior we ought to engage in when producing utterances. The second and third options are the ones that are best associated with the naïve interpretations of Grice articulated above, and thus, these ways of understanding the CP are often quickly dismissed. I will not come to a final determination about which of these is the correct interpretation of Grice; there is some textual evidence to support each interpretation. Instead, I'll argue that even if the prescriptive interpretation is an inaccurate interpretation of Grice, it captures something important about communication. Because the critiques of the prescriptive interpretation of the CP are strong, however, I will introduce and defend an alternative, though related, prescriptive communicative principle: the Requirement of Interlocutor Responsiveness. Although this principle takes inspiration from the prescriptive interpretation of the CP, I do not

mean for this principle to count as an interpretation of Grice, but as a distinct communicative principle that is explicitly stated as a prescriptive principle.

2. The Cooperative Principle

In "Logic and Conversation," Grice introduces the notion of conversational cooperation by claiming that conversations are, "characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in [a given conversation], to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction" (Grice 1989, 26). He then builds on this claim with his articulation of the Cooperative Principle:

> Cooperative Principle: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1989, 26)

Although Grice goes on to use the word "cooperative" in a few other places, these two quotes are more or less representative in how he uses the term in the paper. We can see from these excerpts that Grice takes conversation to be cooperative in that conversational participants share, and recognize as shared, some of purpose or direction of the conversation and, moreover, that they make their contribution "such as is required" given that shared purpose or direction.

It is clear why some might interpret Grice here as suggesting a relatively robust understanding of 'cooperative': if cooperativity requires sharing a common conversational purpose, this suggests that the notion Grice is putting forward is quite strong. One might even identify in this a way of conceiving of conversation as a shared action à la Margaret Gilbert (1989, 215), who understands conversation to be a shared action or activity between members of a plural subject in

pursuit of a shared goal, echoing the notion that participants share an accepted purpose or direction in a talk exchange. For Gilbert, a shared action or shared activity involves an offering of the will on the part of each participant to form a "pool of wills," which acts as a unit in pursuing goals (Gilbert 1990, 7). Of course, nothing that Grice says here commits him to anything as strong as the fusion of wills between conversational participants, but it does appear that his account requires a sharing of a goal or aim that constrains what kinds of contributions can be offered.

Yet this turns out to be contested. Some have argued that we can only accurately interpret the CP and Grice's notion of 'cooperative' by considering the use to which he puts the CP, and not merely the words he uses to articulate it. As Davies (2007) claims, and as is widely accepted, the primary purposes of "Logic and Conversation" are, first, to defend the view that at the level of literal meaning, the meaning of our English language terms like 'and' and 'or' track those of the logical operators, and second, to introduce the notion of conversational implicature, which can explain how conversational participants can communicate information not included in the literal content of the contributions (Davies 2007, 2321). Only by looking at the system he presents as a whole can we hope to understand what he really takes the force of the CP to be. Let us consider, then, how the CP functions in Grice's system as a whole.

Grice follows up his articulation of the CP by specifying four conversational "maxims":

Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required…. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Say things in a straightforward and understandable way. I.e. Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief…. Be orderly. (Grice 1989, 26-27)

According to Grice, to make your contributions "such as is required" one should observe the maxims. It is often suggested that the maxims indicate *ways* of being cooperative (Green 1990).[9] That is, the maxims offer ways of making one's contributions "such as is required" (Grice 1989, 26).[10] In putting these maxims to work in explaining conversational implicature, Grice does not suggest that one must always make a point to follow the maxims in how they produce utterances; he claims, instead, that it is a "well recognized empirical fact that people do behave in these ways" (Grice 1989, 29). This in turn is the "basis for the assumption which we seem to make…that talkers will in general" observe the CP and the maxims (Grice 1989, 28).

To motivate this assumption that people in general observe the CP, consider that if a conversational participant were to act as though we do not have a general expectation that speakers

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[9] This is in contrast to, e.g., Lycan's (2008, 159) view that the CP "summarizes" the maxims. In other words, the maxims are themselves what it takes to be cooperative and the CP sums up those general principles.

[10] There is, however, room for interpretation in how we should understand the relationship between the CP and the maxims: it is not clear whether the maxims are a way of spelling out the CP, or if they are necessary but not sufficient for following the CP, or sufficient but not necessary, and so on. Subsequent work by Horn (2004), Levinson (2000), and Sperber and Wilson (1996), among others, have attempted to limit which maxims are actually necessary for deriving implicature, and which we should think of as playing a central role in understanding the CP. Moreover, Grice himself acknowledges that we may need maxims beyond the four he offers, suggesting that he does not necessarily think that these maxims may not be appropriately understood as a way of spelling out what the CP itself articulates.

will say things that they take to be true, relevant, etc., then it would be hard to understand them as being engaged in a conversation with their interlocutor at all; it would be hard to see what such a person would expect to contribute to or derive from the exchange. If they have no expectations about the cooperativity of their interlocutor, then they would have no particular reason to think that what their interlocutor is saying is relevant to them or the conversation. Thus, we can generally *presume* that interlocutors are attempting to be cooperative, and thus that they are attempting to observe the maxims. This presumption allows a hearer to interpret a speaker's utterance even when it appears to be uncooperative. If an utterance appears to be a violation of the CP, but the hearer presumes that the speaker is following the CP, then it is appropriate for the hearer to re-interpret the utterance to mean something that does count as cooperative. This is the reasoning process that allows us to derive implicatures.

In such a derivation, a hearer will normally attempt to determine what the speaker is most likely to have meant to communicate with their utterance, given that their utterance was a cooperative contribution to the exchange, i.e. given that they were observing the CP and the maxims. If an utterance appears to violate Relation, then the hearer should attempt to determine what *relevant* contribution the speaker must have been attempting to communicate with an apparently irrelevant utterance. Grice gives the following example (Grice 1989, 32):

A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.
B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.

B's utterance, if interpreted as though it has no significance over and above its literal meaning, would be irrelevant to the question of whether Smith has a girlfriend. A report on Smith's travel habits does not constitute a contribution about Smith's relationship status. Smith might pay visits to

New York for any number of reasons—because he has family there, because he has work there, because he is considering buying a condo, and so on. It is only because A already *assumes* or *presumes* that B intends their contribution to be cooperative (i.e. to contribute appropriately to the exchange at hand) that it makes sense to think that B is saying something more; we must assume that B is offering their observation of Smith's travel habits *as an apparently relevant contribution*. With that in mind, it is easy to see that B is not just communicating Smith's travel habits; they are trying to communicate that Smith's travel habits likely reveal something about Smith's relationship status, namely, that Smith may have a girlfriend in New York after all.

As we can see, despite the fact that the CP is phrased as a prescription for how speakers ought to behave, it is generally put to use as a presumption enabling a hearers to interpret speakers' utterances. It should be clear that this is a highly productive tool: if hearers are standardly justified in presuming that their interlocutors are observing the CP, this can play a role in allowing speakers to engage in creative uses of language without sacrificing the ability to effectively communicate. However, the presumption that conversational participants are following the CP must be a relatively strong presumption. It must be strong enough at least that hearers will ordinarily prefer cooperative interpretations over uncooperative interpretations even when the speaker produces utterances that appear to violate the conversational maxims, and even in some cases in which the contribution is consistent with the uncooperativity of the speaker.[11] After all, it is this presumption that allows

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[11] This does not, of course, mean that it is impossible to judge that a speaker is uncooperative. However, in order to do so, the evidence of the uncooperativity must be strong enough to outweigh a basic assumption about what we are doing as conversational participants. According to some theorists, what it is to judge that someone is not engaging cooperatively in an exchange just is to judge that they are not rational conversational participants (Davies 2007, Green 1990).

hearers to derive implicatures in the first place; if the presumption were not strong enough to prefer cooperative interpretations in the face of apparently uncooperative contributions, then the force of the CP and maxims to explain implicature would be undermined.

As I have noted, it is uncontroversial that the primary purpose of Grice's paper is to give an account of conversational implicature. Some theorists have thus understood this as a justification for dismissing any stronger interpretation of 'cooperative' than that which is minimally necessary for explaining the phenomenon (Green 1990, Davies 2007). However, this may be problematic in two respects. First, it is questionable whether it is fair to dismiss outright Grice's statements about the cooperation and shared goals, which seem to leave open room for a stronger interpretation. Second, it strikes me as intuitively plausible that there are principles of conversation that involve a stronger notion of cooperativity or something like it. As I will argue shortly, we should consider stronger ways of understanding the cooperativity of conversation independently of whether this was Grice's primary intention. Before I do so, however, I will introduce three models for understanding the force of the CP.

3. Three ways of interpreting the CP

In order to determine what notion of cooperativity Grice endorses, we must first consider different *kinds* of things one might mean by saying that conversation is cooperative. In outlining these three kinds of things one might mean, I am not offering full interpretations of the CP or the notion of cooperativity it requires. The views I will be presenting in this section model for what *role* the CP plays in theory of conversational cooperativity, not what it actually takes to *be* cooperative.

For this reason, the three interpretations I'll be considering are distinguished not in terms of the conception of 'cooperation'. Rather, they are distinguished in terms of what the purported force

of the CP is. For instance, on the interpretation we discussed at the end of the previous section, the CP is an articulation of what we do or should presume of others. I'll call this the *presumptive view.* Alternatively, the CP may be stating, or purporting to state, a matter of fact about how people behave in conversation: people just are, in fact, cooperative in their conversational exchanges. I'll call this the *descriptive view.* Finally, the CP could be a prescription for how we should behave in conversation: speakers ought to behave cooperatively in producing utterances. I'll call this the *prescriptive view.* These interpretive models are not mutually exclusive; one might think that hearers by default presume that speakers are cooperative and also think that there is a normative prescription that speakers should speak cooperatively. However, as I understand the discourse around the interpretation of "cooperation," much of it involves rejecting a prescriptive interpretation of the force of the principle in favor of presumptive interpretation. I'll thus spell out these distinctions between these interpretive views in order to argue that, even if Grice's primary goal was tied to the presumptive interpretation, there may still be good reason to adopt a prescriptive norm reminiscent of the CP.

The Presumptive Interpretation

In the previous section we saw several reasons to adopt a presumptive interpretation of the CP. For one, the Grice's primary aim in "Logic and Conversation" is to specify how conversational participants derive implicatures indicates, and this requires presumptions on the part of hearers about the cooperativity of speakers. Although my explicit discussion of how implicatures are derived has been relatively brief, this use of the CP is quite productive and explanatory. Presuming *something* of a speaker – whether cooperativity in an ordinary sense, or an understanding of 'cooperativity' in a technical sense that is more closely tied to rationality, as Davies suggests (2007, 2324) – does seem necessary if speaker and hearer are to expect that they are to communicate successfully with one

another in the first place. As Grice's (1989) discussion of implicature shows nicely, the content that individuals communicate to one another does not always track the logical/literal meaning of the utterances they perform. The assumption that one's interlocutor(s) are speaking cooperatively enables hearers to narrow and/or adjust the interpretations that an utterance might have according to the existing state of the conversation and its direction. Without such an assumption, the best a hearer could do is to assume that their interlocutor is speaking literally at all times. Not only does this limit our communicative tools, it also notably still involves an assumption – only instead of the assumption that the participant is cooperative, the hearer must assume that the speaker is speaking literally. We know that participants do not always speak literally, and to assume that they do would often get one into trouble when attempting to determine the communicative intentions of one's interlocutors. Thus, the presumption of cooperativity does make sense as a tool of communication that improves our communicative capacities.

Those who take the presumptive model tend not to be worried that conversational exchanges that are uncooperative or only partially cooperative present challenges to the CP. This is because the kinds of cases that are sometimes taken to be uncooperative (or incompletely cooperative) are cases in which the presumption will still hold. Conversations in which participants engage strategically – i.e. by offering contributions that appear contribute appropriately to the exchange even if they end up being misleading (Asher and Lascarides 2013), or intentionally producing utterances to direct the hearers' attention in a particular way (Camp 2018) – still involve a presumption that interlocutors are cooperative at least insofar as they are engaging rationally in the conversation, using language in a way that is intended to allow their interlocutors to derive their meaning, and so on. Similarly, in the two cases I offered above, although Tom is rudely ignoring Jane's conversational goals or intentions, he is still behaving as a rational participant (to some degree at least) and he still has identifiable conversational intentions.

Although I am distinguishing the presumptive interpretive model from the descriptive and prescriptive interpretive models, a presumptive model could, in theory, be either descriptive or prescriptive, though, as I will show, it is best understood as a descriptive-presumptive interpretive model. On a prescriptive-presumptive interpretation, the CP would be putting forth the claim that a hearer *ought* to presume cooperativity of the speaker, while on a descriptive-presumptive interpretation, the CP would be putting forth the claim that, as a matter of fact, hearers *will* or *do* presume cooperativity. If we were to take a prescriptive interpretation, we may expect hearers to interpret speakers more accurately or more charitably if they presume cooperativity, but this would not necessarily imply that participants *would* standardly presume cooperativity of one another. However, as I have shown above, the CP is supposed to be a relatively strong, default presumption. This kind of presumption simply makes more sense as a descriptive presumption: that hearers by default *do* presume that their interlocutors are cooperative. Along these lines, Horn (2004, 8) treats the CP and the maxims as "default settings," or presumptions of which the speaker and hearer must have a "mutual awareness." This enables the speaker and hearer to be operating with comparable default settings, thus allowing them to communicate more accurately. As a default presumption, then, this should not be thought of as a prescriptive principle; implicature derivation is not something that participants (ordinarily) need to aim at by consciously taking their interlocutors to be cooperative. Rather, it is something that, as a matter of fact, participants do by default.

The Descriptive Interpretation

According to the descriptive interpretive model, the CP describes participants' actual behavior: participants actually are, ordinarily, or by default, cooperative. Given the relationship between the CP and the maxims, this means, among other things, that as a matter of descriptive fact, speakers do not ordinarily lie or mislead, and they generally share goals sufficiently to have a

cooperative discourse, and so on. One reason to endorse a descriptive notion of conversational cooperativity has to do with the presumptive model: I noted in passing in the discussion of the example involving Smith's travel habits that a presumption that one's interlocutor is observing the CP would be productive *if the hearer is justified in that presumption*. If the presumptive model has so much explanatory power, then then it is reasonable to expect that the presumption is justified. In other words, we should expect that our presumptions track reality in some way—or at least that they track reality better than an alternative set of assumptions (i.e. that one's interlocutor is always speaking literally). If it is almost universally productive to presume that interlocutors are producing cooperative contributions, then we should expect that this is because they *are* (normally, in general) producing cooperative contributions. Further, Grice (1989) seems to think that as a matter of fact, speakers *do* tend to observe the CP. For instance, as we've seen above, Grice claims that it is a "well recognized empirical fact that people do" observe the CP (Grice 1989, 29). This is, at least in part, why it makes sense for participants to assume that their interlocutors are cooperative in the first place.

There is a problem with this view, however: many conversations are, simply, not cooperative, or not fully cooperative. One move that has often been made by those theorizing about strategic or antagonistic communicative exchanges is to claim that the range of phenomena at issue fails to satisfy the Gricean standard of cooperativity.[12] This challenge generally takes the following form:

1) The standard Gricean models assume that conversations are cooperative activities.

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[12] See for instance Pinker 2007, Lee and Pinker 2010, Asher and Lascarides 2013, and Camp 2018, all of whom discuss forms of strategic conversation, indirect speech, and/or insinuation, and present these cases as offering, at the least, a kind of tension with Grice's picture that warrents exploration.

2) Some conversations are not cooperative, i.e. some conversational participants do not participate cooperatively.

3) Thus we need to reject/expand/clarify the Gricean model when it comes to analyses of conversations that are not fully cooperative.[13]

This mode of reasoning can only make sense on a descriptive interpretation of the CP, since this is the only interpretation according to which instances of uncooperative exchanges could count as counterexamples to the CP. On the presumptive interpretation, the question is not whether conversations are themselves cooperative activities; the question is whether or not, in order to adequately interpret one another, we must treat other participants as cooperative. Thus it might be the case that even in the apparently uncooperative exchanges these theorists discuss, participants still must presume one another to be cooperative. As a result, those who defend the presumptive view as the proper interpretation of Grice will reject that this critique constitutes any kind of challenge at all for their interpretation; after all, in order for participants to engage *strategically* in conversation they

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[13] It is not obvious that all theorists who engage in the sort of reasoning represented here take this to be a genuine critique of Grice's system. Camp (2018), for instance, does not attribute the assumption that conversations are cooperative activities exclusively to the Gricean program, but rather takes the assumption to be a reasonable, though somewhat constraining, one that results from a variety of theoretically fruitful and intuitively compelling considerations. For Camp, the aim of considering conversations that are not fully cooperative is not to put a challenge to Grice, but to explore a mode of linguistic communication that is under-discussed in the literature. See also footnote 2 for a discussion of cooperativity in Jankovic's (2014) picture. This appears to be a descriptive understanding of cooperation that allows for some instances of uncooperative conversation which is derived from a standard of cooperation.

must assume a basic form of cooperativity of their interlocutor(s) in the first place. The challenge from uncooperativity, then, is not a challenge that can hope to apply effectively to the presumptive interpretation.[14] Nor can this challenge be understood as a challenge to the prescriptive interpretation. This is because the mere fact that a prescription is violated does not mean that the prescription is flawed; it only means that someone violated the prescription. To see this clearer, we must consider the prescriptive interpretation in greater detail.

The Prescriptive Interpretation

As I have noted, according to the prescriptive conception of the CP, there is some sort of prescription that conversational participants be cooperative in their conversation—that is, that they produce true, appropriately informative, relevant, etc. contributions. As a prescription, there is some sense in which participants *ought* to behave this way, either morally, rationally, or, perhaps, linguistically or communicatively. Thus there is not necessarily any assumption that people will, in all or most cases, be cooperative. However, if they are not cooperative, they have done something wrong in some sense: they have violated the prescription and thus done something they ought not to

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[14] It has been suggested to me that, although the presumptive model may not face any challenge from the fact of uncooperativity, there might be analogous challenges that it does face, namely, a challenge related to *intelligible* uncooperative exchanges. However, I do not think that this is a challenge that the presumptive interpretation actually faces. This is because on the presumptive interpretation, the listener presumes cooperativity, and this is what *enables* intelligibility. Thus a conversation that is intelligible *must* count as cooperative (in the presumptive sense). If an intelligible conversation is uncooperative, it must be uncooperative in a different sense (i.e. not in a presumptive sense).

have done. Unlike the descriptive model or the presumptive model, the prescriptive model presents constraints on the speech acts that speakers are permitted to perform. They must *aim* (though not necessarily consciously) to participate cooperatively, rather than doing so naturally or by default.

There are two primary ways in which Grice's writings suggest that he is operating with a prescriptive notion of cooperation. The first is the simple fact that Grice articulates the CP and the maxims as imperatives: *"Make* your conversational contributions such as is required…" (Grice 1989, 26, italics mine). If the CP is stated as an imperative for what a speaker ought to do, there is some reason to think that it *is* an instruction for what a speaker ought to do, and thus, a prescriptive interpretation is apt. Second, even where Grice appears to suggest that the CP is a descriptive principle, stating that it is a "well recognized empirical fact" that people observe the CP (29), he follows up his statements by suggesting that the descriptive principle might be grounded in or justified by facts about what is "*reasonable* for us to follow," or what "we *should not* abandon" (Grice 1989, 29, italics in original). That is, even if it were not the case that participants in linguistic exchanges did observe the CP, they *should*.

Despite these statements from Grice, some have presented worries about interpreting the CP as a prescriptive principle. After all, the prescriptive model does little to explain how we derive implicature, and Grice says nothing about what happens when you fail to participate as you ought in conversation. Moreover, it is plausible that Grice might have stated the principle as a prescriptive one due to its rhetorical simplicity rather than because of any commitment to an actual prescriptive principle. Indeed, Green (1990, 414) argues that it is, "really unfortunate that he articulated the maxims as imperatives," because little if any of his reasoning actually requires that the CP or maxims have any kind of prescriptive force. Similarly, Davies (2007) centrally argues that the CP has often been *misinterpreted* to articulate a principle that is about cooperation in our ordinary sense rather Grice's technical understanding of 'cooperative'. In other words, those who favor a presumptive

interpretation of the CP tend to think that Grice's choice of how to articulate the CP was an unfortunate rhetorical move, not intended to communicate that the CP should function as an imperative for speakers in any sense.

When it comes down to it, however, I am not terribly interested in whether Grice intended for the CP to be a prescriptive principle. We have seen that there is some reason to take each of the interpretive models seriously in attempting to understand Grice. But each of these has something going for it not only based on textual support about what Grice likely *meant,* but also because each of these interpretations seems to describe something about communicative exchanges. The presumptive interpretation helps to explain the phenomenon of implicature, and the descriptive interpretation helps to justify the presumptive interpretation. In what follows, I argue that the prescriptive model is useful for understanding features of conversation as well. Too often, the prescriptive model has been dismissed on the basis that it does not appear to align ideally with Grice's project of articulating and developing the an account of conversational implicature. However, as I will be arguing, it is quite plausible that we have prescriptive conversational principles along the lines of the (prescriptive interpretation of) the CP. It will be worthwhile to take these principles seriously.

4. Linguistic Prescriptions

Above I gave a couple of places in which Grice could be interpreted as though he intended for the CP to be a prescriptive principle. At this point, I could offer a further defense of why I think that Grice's CP can, and perhaps should, be interpreted as a prescriptive account, but I do not think it is the most productive way advocating for the claim that we need to consider and adopt a

principle, along the lines of the CP, specifically as a *prescriptive* linguistic principle. Despite that I do a fair amount of Grice interpretation in this paper, my primary concern going forward is not whether or not Grice in fact did defend a prescriptive account—readers may come to their own conclusions on this based on the textual support I offered above—but instead why the prescriptive interpretation is tempting to some readers of Grice. The answer, I think, is that there is a great deal that strikes us as right about the prescriptive interpretation of the CP because we intuitively recognize that there *is* a kind of prescriptive linguistic principle along the lines of the CP. For this reason, the prescriptive interpretation is, on first consideration, plausible as an interpretation of the CP. Further, this suggests that we should get clear on what the prescriptive principle actually is.

The reason I take it to be plausible that the CP appeals to some as a prescriptive norms is that we can see intuitively that communication is, at its best, a constructive and coordinated sharing of content between individuals in order to realize some aim in an efficient manner – it is a "joint project of figuring out how the world is," (Camp 2018, 40). This is not to say that this is the only way for conversation to happen; adversarial conversations are still conversations in which communication can take place, though it is plausible that such exchanges may be less effective or more prone to miscommunication than ideally constructive exchanges. In order for this kind of constructive and efficient sharing to take place, participants cannot be engaged in completely independent projects. They must, in some sense and to some degree, be doing something *together*. I take this to be part of what influences Gilbert to say that conversations are joint actions of plural subject. She goes so far at one point as to say that in order for a participant in a conversation even to tell something to another, they must be "in a position to think of themselves as us*," that is, a plural subject together with the other participants (Gilbert 1989, 215). Now, I will neither argue for nor against this particular, and unusually strong, articulation of the requirement that participants share projects. However, the motivation behind this kind of a view is compelling: if participants in a

conversational exchange do not feel mutually invested in a goal of the conversation to at least a minimal degree, there may not be any particular reason to think that any communication will be successful. This makes sense of why conversations with strangers over social media are so often unproductive[15]: there is little context to the exchange, and little understanding of one another's intentions and goals in the exchange. If one person says something that the other party (intentionally or otherwise) misinterprets, then this does not negatively impact the realization of a shared goal because there *is no* shared goal. This means that it is more likely that there will be miscommunication between participants on an ongoing basis for the rest of the exchange, and neither party is likely to care, since neither party has a stake in the exchange. If, on the other hand, two friends are planning a trip and one says something that is even minimally ambiguous, the other is very likely to ask for clarification; if they miscommunicate, this could have serious consequences for the success of the upcoming trip.

Thus, we can see that, although it is certainly *possible* to engage in conversation with only minimal shared goals,[16] communication just works *better* when participants are mutually invested to a

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[15] Goldberg (2020a) makes a similar point when he claims that the "inferiority" of online conversations when compared with face-to-face conversation is due to a lack of "mutuality" in online conversations. For more on mutuality, see Goldberg (2020b).

[16] There is some reason to think that in any conversation, there is at least the minimal shared goal that one will "identify [oneself] with the transitory conversational interests of the other" (Grice 1989, 29). I am, however, skeptical that even this minimal shared goal is required for communication, for reasons that the online exchange makes clear—we do, I think, sometimes engage in communicative exchanges in which an interest in aligning oneself with the conversational aims of others is, for all intents and purposes, absent.

greater degree. The fact that there are better and worse ways of engaging in conversation suggests that there is some sense in which conversational participants *should*[17] (i.e. it would be better to) engage in conversation in particular ways. In other words, there communicative prescriptions for participants.

In order to motivate more strongly my view that we have prescriptive norms of conversation, we may want to consider cases that seem to be a kind of violation of a cooperative norm. First, we may want to consider adversarial or strategic conversations such as those discussed by Asher and Lascarides (2013). In such cases, conversational participants often have at least partially conflicting sets of conversational goals, or goals that operate at different levels of explicitness. Asher and Lascarides use courtroom proceedings as paradigmatic examples of strategic conversation: the prosecuting attorneys and witnesses for the defense are aiming for opposite outcomes, and want to foil one another's goals. Yet they still must participate in the conversation under at least a guise of cooperativity: a witness may not simply ignore an attorney's questions, for instance. They are, thus, strategic conversations; participants might aim to appear as cooperative as possible, and at the same time aim to undermine the goals of their interlocutors. In adversarial

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[17] I have not specified, nor will I in this paper, what the nature of this *should* is; there is some reason to think that there is a rational requirement on participants in conversation—after all, I've just noted that communicatively good conversations involve shared goals. Thus, in order for a participant to be rational, they must engage in conversation in a way that is likely to realize those goals. However, as the cases I appeal to suggest, some violations of communicative requirements appear to be not just violations of rationality, but also norms that appear in some sense moral in nature. It is possible that this is an accidental feature of the cases, but I am not in the present paper in a position to argue one way or the other on this matter.

conversations such as arguments and debates, there may not be even a façade that the participants are cooperating with the other party's goals. Instead, participants often have a particular goal that conflicts with that of their interlocutor and advocate for their goal against their interlocutor.

None of these sorts of cases are ones that I have in mind as violations of a prescriptive conversational norms, however. This is because conversational participants in such cases haven't necessarily done anything wrong conversationally (even if they have done something morally wrong by lying or misleading). It would surely be strange if our prescriptive conversational norms ruled out all argument as a legitimate form of conversation, since arguments, even highly adversarial ones, can be communicatively effective—participants can convey their thoughts effectively, interpret one another's utterances effectively, and even build upon one another's contributions in a productive way. Adversarial exchanges often are not the most constructive communicative exchanges, but surely that should not be enough to rule them out as communicatively permissible conversations. Similarly, any misleading that may occur in the course of strategic conversation or insinuation might be a violation of a moral norm, but it is hard to make the case that these involve violations of any linguistic principle.

Instead, the kinds of conversational exchanges that strike me as violating prescriptive conversational goals are those in which participants are uncooperative in the sense that they fail to engage properly with interlocutors *as* interlocutors. If cooperation requires participants to be jointly contributing to a shared project of conversation, then it would be a clear violation if someone failed or refused to treat their interlocutor as engaged in that shared project in the first place. For example, one might fail to treat their interlocutor as an interlocutor if they fail entirely to allow some of their interlocutors' contributions to influence the conversation, or else if they are unwilling or unable to engage the conversational goals of their interlocutor, despite there being adequate contextual

information for the hearer to identify these goals. In short, the cases I have in mind are the two cases I presented at the beginning, repeated here for convenience:

Case 1:

Jane: Hi Tom, could you be sure to get me the agenda for our meeting this afternoon before lunch?

Tom: Why don't you just join me for lunch? I'll tell you all about my agenda for the two of us over a bottle of wine.

Jane: No thank you, I just want to see the agenda.

Tom (coldly): I'll see if I can get it to you, but I really think lunch would be the best time.

Case 2:

Jane and Tom are now in their meeting. During the meeting, Jane asserts *p,* believing that she is making a significant contribution to the discussion. She is disappointed that the comment doesn't precipitate greater conversation, but she has no reason to believe she has been ignored until Tom asserts *p.* After Tom makes his contribution, the trajectory of the meeting changes significantly as several participants respond to and build upon *p.*

In these two cases, there does not appear to be any robust cooperation between participants, and further, Tom appears to doing something communicatively wrong; he is violating a prescriptive conversational principle. In Case 1, Jane's communicative goals are relatively clear: she intends that Tom recognize that she wants him to give her the agenda for the meeting, and ultimately hopes that he will do so. Despite that this is clearly the intention with which Jane entered into the conversation,

and despite that Jane's goals are contextually appropriate and that, given that Tom works with Jane, he should share this work-related goal with Jane, Tom refuses to cooperatively engage in the exchange, choosing instead to derail the conversation in pursuit of a distinct goal.[18] Similarly, in Case 2, Tom seems to refuse to treat Jane as a conversational participant at all; on ordinary ways of understanding conversational dynamics, when a participant makes an utterance, this should impact the conversational score or context in some way (Lewis 1979, Stalnaker 1978, 2002, Roberts 2012). The fact that Tom reasserted what Jane had previously said, without comment and without acknowledging that it was a reassertion of Jane's contribution shows that neither Tom nor others in the meeting treated Jane's contributions as contributions.

5.   The Requirement of Interlocutor Responsiveness

The cases above, I argue, involve violations of a prescriptive norm that governs conversational exchange. They are, of course, only two examples of a widespread phenomenon. But how should we think of the violations that occur in these sorts of cases? Do they count as violations of (a prescriptive interpretation of) the CP? Perhaps. It does seem right that to hijack an exchange to serve one's own purposes, as is illustrated in *Case 1*, is a failure to "make your conversational contributions such as is required." Likewise, it may be that when a contribution is ignored and the content of that contribution is later reintroduced by another participant as though it is their own

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[18] Note that this does not, by any means, suggest that Tom violates the presumptive CP: one might argue that he is exploiting the conversational maxims and Jane's intentions in just the way we would expect, given that he takes her to be a cooperative participant, and that he is cooperative in his interpretation of Jane's utterances.

contribution, they have failed to make an appropriate contribution due to the fact that participants have failed to properly update the context or common ground of the exchange. However, I do not think that the most effective way to understand the violation going on in these cases is as a violation of the CP. In part, this is because the CP requires not just that one make their contribution "such as is required," but that they make it "such as is required…given the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange." Part of the problem, especially in *Case 1*, is that it is not clear that there is an identifiable "accepted purpose or direction" in the first place; Jane's goals have to do with work and the meeting agenda, whereas Tom's have to do with flirting and going to lunch. Thus, despite that Tom is taking advantage of the exchange, he is not obviously failing to make his contribution such as is required given the purpose of the exchange; there *is no* unified purpose of the exchange.

If this is right, then these cases do not obviously violate the CP. In what sense, then, do they show violations of prescriptive requirements on conversation? I contend that Tom's violation is not that he does not share Jane's goals, but that he does not sufficiently acknowledge Jane's goals and communicative intentions, nor is he influenced by Jane's goals and intentions: Tom is not sufficiently *interlocutor responsive*.

> Requirement of Interlocutor Responsiveness (RIR): Speakers should make their conversational contributions appropriately responsive to the perceived goals and communicative intentions of their interlocutors.

RIR does not require that a speaker should accept the perceived goals of their interlocutor(s) at any given point in the exchange, and thus it does not require that participants share a goal between them; it should be possible that a speaker can satisfy RIR while rejecting their interlocutor's goals. For example, we might think that, in *Case 1*, Jane satisfies RIR, while rejecting Tom's goal of getting

a date (or whatever his goal may be); she recognizes his communicative intentions (i.e. what he is attempting to communicate to her) and is adequately responsive to those intentions even while rejecting Tom's larger goals.

What does it mean to say that speakers' contributions should be "appropriately responsive" to the goals and intentions of their interlocutors? To see this, we need an understanding of appropriateness and responsiveness. I'll start with the latter. All that is required in order to be *responsive* to the goals and communicative intentions of one's interlocutor is that the speaker's utterance should be counterfactually variable depending on identifiable goals and intentions of their interlocutor: in other words, had the speaker's interlocutor's goals been identifiably different, the speaker would have produced a substantially different utterance. Note that Tom's utterance in *Case 1* involves a bit of wordplay referencing Jane's contribution ("I'll tell you all about my *agenda* for the two of us…"), which could have been different if Jane's goals or communicative intentions were perceptibly different. Whatever variation on wordplay Tom might produce under different counterfactual scenarios, however, I do not take these to constitute a *substantial* difference in Tom's utterance – that is, a difference in truth conditional content and/or force. His goals and intentions, as well as the force of his utterances, seem to be largely unresponsive to Jane's. As soon as Jane engaged him in conversation, he was set on flirting with her and inviting her to lunch, and almost entirely unconcerned with Jane's actual goals or aims in the conversation. Variations in her goals, communicative intentions, and utterances, will not be enough for Tom to change the primary communicated content or force of his utterances. Thus Tom is insufficiently responsive to Jane's goals and intentions because his communicative intentions and the utterances he produces are not sufficiently variable in a way that takes Jane's goals into account.

In order for a participant to be *appropriately* responsive to their interlocutor, their responsiveness must exceed some contextually determined threshold. In almost all cases, there is

some counterfactual scenario in which the speaker will produce a substantially different response. If Jane had approached Tom to make a threat on Tom's life, he would likely have responded substantially differently. This is not enough for Tom to count as an appropriately responsive interlocutor, however, since the contextually determined threshold will require him to produce substantially different responses in a larger set of circumstances. Likewise, in many cases, there is some counterfactual scenario in which the speaker's utterance need not vary according to variation in the goals or intentions of their interlocutor. For instance, extremely subtle differences in the communicative intentions of one's interlocutor may not make a difference: if A and B are discussing where they want to eat for dinner, and A communicates that they do not want to go to restaurant X, B may not need to adjust their subsequent contributions depending on whether A's utterance specified that they *despise* the restaurant, as opposed merely *disliking* the restaurant. Provided that B is responsive to A's goal to communicate that they do not want to go to restaurant X, B has not been inappropriately responsive to A's utterance. A participant is *appropriately* responsive, then, if they would produce substantially different responses in a sufficient number of (contextually determined) counterfactual scenarios, and in sufficiently different scenarios.

The requirement specifies that one's contributions should be appropriately responsive *to the perceived goals and communicative intentions of their interlocutor*. That is, a participant's contributions are not only held to standards of arbitrary variation in counterfactual scenarios, they are held to standards of variation specifically with respect to their interlocutor's conversational goals. We can spell this out by appealing to the notion of conversational context. According to standard views, the context of a conversation involves information about the rules of the exchange (Lewis 1979) as well the content that has been communicated and/or is assumed within the conversation (Lewis 1979, Stalnaker

2002, 2014). Thus, the context of conversations should indicate the threshold for responsiveness:

the context of exchanges that require relatively little responsiveness should indicate this fact, while

the context of exchanges that require a high degree of responsiveness should indicate this fact.[19] For

instance, conversations in which one or more participants are venting have a very low threshold for

appropriate responsiveness; in many cases, a person who wishes to vent has very little expectation

that their interlocutor will respond at all, let alone in a way that is responsive to specific features of

what they are saying. Occasional responses of "That's so frustrating!" and "I'm so sorry!" are often

more than sufficiently responsive for such conversations, regardless of the specific content of the

venter's utterances. On the other hand, conversations in which participants are making joint plans

tend to have much higher thresholds; since making joint plans requires that participants are in some

sense on the same page, working toward some shared goal, a lack of appropriate responsiveness can

indicate a lack of attention to or uptake of information that is crucial to the pursuit of the shared

goal.

In addition to including information about the threshold for responsiveness, the context of a

conversation is also standardly understood to track what information has been communicated

and/or assumed within the conversation itself, including information about what each participant's

goals and intentions are. This means that in order to be appropriately responsive, a participant must

attend to what is being communicated by the other party, update appropriately, and produce

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[19] The context should also track adjustments to this threshold as the conversation changes.

utterances that take any relevant new content into account. When a conversational participant is

insufficiently responsive, this means that they either are not updating their representation of the

context appropriately to include information about their interlocutor's goals (including the goals

related to what specifically they intend to communicate), or else they are not attending to the details

of that information when producing or interpreting an utterance. As a result, they will tend to

produce utterances that are not relevant (as in Case 1) because they have not updated their context

appropriately given the recognizable communicative intentions of their interlocutor or because they

have not adjusted their own communicative intentions to take into account the intentions of their

interlocutor, or else their utterances may be redundant (as in Case 2) because they haven't updated

their context to reflect new contributions from their interlocutor in the first place.

The fact that some conversations are not cooperative, or at least are "less than fully

cooperative" (Camp 2018, 41), has sometimes been presented as a limitation on Grice's picture that

needs to be addressed. Yet this discussion is intended to show that there need not be such a tension.

Adversarial and strategic conversations, often taken to be the not-fully-cooperative exchanges that

cause Grice problems, can still be shown to be subject to at least the presumptive understanding of

the CP. And to the degree that we want an account of why these cases still strike as uncooperative,

we can consider other ways of understanding the force of the CP, such as the descriptive

interpretation.

Yet participants in strategic and adversarial exchanges still often observe the RIR, since

failing to be responsive to one's interlocutor is not, in fact, strategic. Imagine, for instance, a

prosecutor in a criminal trial questioning the defendant. It may well be true that one or both are not

participating cooperatively in some senses – each has different goals,[20] and each is happy to intentionally misinterpret or twist the words of the other in order to serve their own goals. Nevertheless, they ought to be interlocutor-responsive; even the twisting of words and misdirection require that each pay attention to and adjust their contributions in accordance with the contributions of the other. If the prosecutor is not responsive to the contributions of the defendant, then they will not be effective in their questioning or in using the defendant's testimony to their advantage because in order to effectively twist the words of another (particularly a courtroom setting, in which third parties are present and attempting to determine what is true from the communicative exchange), one must take into account the actual contributions of one's interlocutor, understand their communicative intentions, and manipulate the conversation in a way that is sensitive to these.

To illustrate, consider an example that Asher and Lascarides (2013, 2) use to illustrate the phenomenon of strategic conversation (from Solan and Tiersma 2005):

a. P(rosecutor): Do you have any bank accounts in Swiss banks, Mr. Bronston?

b. B(ronston): No, sir.

c. P: Have you ever?

d. B: The company had an account there for about six months, in Zurich.

In the case, B's utterance in (d) implicates that B himself never had an account in a Swiss bank, which is false, though it is true that the company had an account for six months. B is aiming to

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[20] I am setting aside the claim that is sometimes made that in court settings, participants do share a goal: the goal of reaching the truth. This strikes me as naïve, but a discussion of this issue is well outside my purposes for the present paper.

misdirect his audience's attention and get them to believe something false without actually stating something false. This is a setting in which P and B have contrary goals in the exchange, and each is willing to engage in strategic conversational tactics. Asher and Lascarides (2013) use this example to illustrate that such conversations are not fully cooperative.[21] But even if this is not a cooperative exchange in a descriptive understanding of the CP, this kind of strategic conversation crucially involves interlocutor responsiveness. In order for B's misdirection to be effective, he must be responsive to P's conversational moves and goals. Note that if B uttered (d) in response to a different question, it would be much less likely that B could succeed in getting his audience to believe that he did not personally have a Swiss account. If P had asked, for instance, "Have you ever held a *personal* account in a Swiss bank," an utterance of (d) would be much less effective as a diversion, since it is less likely that it can be interpreted as a relevant answer to the question, and thus less likely to be interpreted with its implication that B has not ever held a personal account in a Swiss bank. Instead, it would likely be transparent as an attempt to deflect the question. In order to engage effectively in courtroom questioning, B and P must both be in a position to make their contributions appropriately responsive to their interlocutor's goals and communicative intentions. That is, effective courtroom exchanges must involve adherence to the RIR.

    To fail to be interlocutor-responsive is impractical and ineffective, but it also seems to be wrong in a deeper sense: not only does a person who fails to make their contributions interlocutor-

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[21] They distinguish what they call "Gricean cooperativity," which they take to be a relatively robust notion of cooperativity, from "rhetorical cooperativity," which is weaker, and involves primarily making rhetorical moves that appear cooperative, and "basic cooperativity," the weakest notion of cooperativity. This particular case is supposed to illustrate rhetorical cooperativity, but not Gricean cooperativity. See also Asher and Quinley 2011.

responsive fail to do that which is likely to help them achieve their goals, they also seem to be failing at the very project of conversation, in a way. One need not accept the idea that a conversation is a joint activity – at least not in the sense that parties think of themselves as participating in a joint project, toward a joint goal – in order to think that it is an activity that must be pursued alongside others. To fail to treat it is as such is a failure of one's ability to participate as a conversational agent in an exchange, and likewise, it is a failure to treat one's interlocutor as a conversational agent.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have revisited the way we understand the notion of cooperation in conversational exchanges. I offered several ways in which Grice's CP can be understood, and I suggested that among these ways of understanding the principle, the idea that the CP is a prescriptive principle has been too quickly dismissed. I do not ultimately argue that the prescriptive reading is the appropriate reading of the CP itself, but instead, I suggest that the easy dismissal of the prescriptive understanding has resulted in the widespread neglect of theorizing about what kinds of conversational prescriptions there might be. I thus offer and defend the Requirement of Interlocutor Responsiveness as one such prescription, and one which aligns well with what we might want out of a requirement of cooperation. I do not mean to suggest that RIR is the only prescriptive principle of conversation. There are likely others. Yet this is one principle that allows us to see why it can be useful to take more seriously the notion of prescriptive principles that govern communicative exchanges.[22]

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