TWO CONCEPTIONS OF RATIONALITY IN GRICE’S THEORY OF IMPLICATURE

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ABSTRACT
Conversational implicature has been considered by Grice as well as by post-Gricean and neo-Gricean approaches to linguistic communication as a “rational” matter. This paper explores why. The exploration will show that two distinct conceptions of rationality, “instrumental” and “argumentative” rationality, are at play in Grice’s thought, generating two different senses in which conversational implicature may be deemed to be rational, one based on its efficacy in maximizing understanding, the other on its so-called “calculability”. Instrumental rationality alone is cared for by both post- and neo-Gricean theories, but argumentative rationality plays a major role in Grice’s thought and may shed further light on his conception of conversational implicature.

Key words: Rationality, linguistic communication, pragmatics, Grice, implicature, Cooperative Principle.

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1. Implicature

Paul Grice launched the word “implicature” for use within his theory of speaker meaning, in order to account for aspects of speaker meaning not contributing to the truth conditions of the sentence uttered by the speaker. Surprisingly enough, he never explicitly defines “implicature”; he provides examples, but gives a definition only to one kind of implicature, the one in which he is most interested: conversational implicature. This is his definition:

A man who, by saying (or making as if to say) that p has implicated that q, may be said to have conversationally implicated that q, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, q is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say p consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required. (Grice, 1989: 30)

This definition presupposes the following formulation of the 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)

While such a principle has the form of a precept or a rule (imperative mood, second person), its use in the theory of conversational implicature is never directly normative. It is the assumption, or presumption, that the speaker is observing the Cooperative Principle and not the real observance of it, nor the (possible) obligation, or commitment, of the speaker to observe it, that comes into play in the definition of conversational implicature quoted above. I have argued elsewhere that the Cooperative Principle is no actual rule but a presumption that receivers make (and that it is rational for them to make) for the sake of giving as full an interpretation as possible of what they are told (Sbisà, 2001), quite apart or even beyond any independent evidence regarding the conformity of the communicative behavior of the speaker to the principle. Also the conversational maxims that articulate the Cooperative Principle (as applying to assertions or other information-oriented speech acts) with respect to the four classic categories of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner are cast in imperative form, but their use in utterance interpretation goes mostly through the assumptions of the receiver as regards their observance or open violation.

In Grice’s definition of conversational implicature, clause (1) apparently requires to be satisfied by the speaker, but at a second glance we realize that if the speaker is merely “to be presumed” to observe the conversational maxims, the requirement is actually posed on the receiver, who should have good reasons for presuming of the
speaker that he or she is observing the conversational maxims. Since, on a default view of what is “normal” in conversational interaction, a good reason for presuming that the speaker is conforming to the conversational maxims is already provided by the absence of perceivable alarm signals, situations in which the receiver does not notice any indication that “normality” is suspended are in general situations in which the speaker is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims. Clause (2) spells out a condition that the speaker should satisfy (his thinking that q), if his utterance (his saying or making as if to say p) is to be consistent with his observance of the conversational maxims. Clause (3) is again to be satisfied by the speaker and is concerned with his beliefs or more generally attitudes towards the hearer. Saul (Saul, 2002a) has pointed out that the three clauses make the applicability of the definition depend on both hearer and speaker, so that unmeant implicatures and cases in which the speaker attempts to conversationally implicate something but fails to do so are no conversational implicatures.

The distinction between saying that p and making as if to say that p, which features in the definition, is meant to make the definition applicable to both the main brands of Gricean conversational implicature: those implicatures that supplement the content of the utterance in order to make the utterance count as a cooperative move in the current conversation, and those that are triggered by the “flouting” (or explicit violation) of a conversational maxim and consist of a complete re-reading of the utterance (again, as a cooperative move in the current conversation). This distinction is a weak point in Grice’s theory of conversational implicature and criticism of it has opened the way to alternative, competitive readings of the alleged flouting of the conversational maxims and therefore new pragmatic analyses of rhetorical figures (Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Carston 2002). I will not be concerned with this distinction here; not much of what I try to say hinges on it.

The definition of conversational implicature sets conditions for an implicature’s being conversational, provided that the speaker is implicating something. From it, we indirectly gather that an implicature consists for Grice in an assumption q, of which a speaker is (at least) aware and that the speaker communicates (or makes available: see Saul, 2002a: 245) to the hearer not by saying that q, but by saying or making as if to say that p. We may then say (with a bit of imprecision, but it has become common usage in pragmatics) that q is an implicature of p. In consideration of the function that implicatures (both “conventional” and “conversational”) are designed to play in the Gricean analysis of language and communication (Grice, 1989: 3-21), we may say that implicatures are for Grice non-truth-functional inferences: sentences that may be

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2 In Grice's usage, “implicature” is the fact that the speaker implicates something, while what is implicated is called “implicatum.” Usage has shifted and “implicature” is more and more often used to indicate also or only what is implicated. The latter is the standard usage in Relevance Theory, where both implicatures and explicatures are contents as opposed to acts.
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derived from the fact that a certain sentence has been uttered, without their truth value affecting the truth value of that sentence or depending on it. Clearly, if the inferential relation is not guaranteed by truth value preservation as in deductive reasoning, it must rely on other grounds. For Gricean conventional implicature, such grounds are given by convention (specifically, conventions regarding the performance of “non central” speech acts such as objecting, concluding, and the like), while for conversational implicature, they are given through reference to the Cooperative Principle and its maxims, as specified in clause (2) in the definition cited above.

The most frequent criticism to Grice’s conception of conversational implicature has been that the Cooperative Principle does not always hold. It does not hold in all cultures (for an early criticism along these lines, see Ochs, 1976), it does not hold in all contexts (for an early criticism along these lines, see Lakoff, 1973) or for all aims (how far can cooperation go in the context of a conflict?). I believe that, if understood as a presumption that receivers make (and that it is rational for them to make) for the sake of giving as full an interpretation as possible of what they are told, the Cooperative Principle may enjoy universal applicability. But I will not be concerned here with the issue of the universality or cultural relativity of the Cooperative Principle. I will be concerned with a distinct, albeit related, issue: the alleged rationality of implicature and particularly of Gricean conversational implicature.

2. Is Implicature Rational?

Both post-Gricean and neo-Gricean approaches to linguistic communication, while accepting some version of the Cooperative Principle, have supplemented, criticized and modified the Gricean conception of implicature in various ways. Relevance theory, the post-Gricean approach par excellence, has claimed that our understanding of linguistic utterances is governed by the Relevance Principle, originarily inspired by Grice’s maxim of Relation “Be relevant”, which has then reached the following two-fold formulation:

(1) Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance.

(2) Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance. (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 260)

According to Relevance theory, utterance processing always comprises an inferential component, governed by the cognitively built-in presumption of optimal relevance. Neo-Griceans (see in particular Levinson, 2000) have claimed that the Relevance Principle does not suffice to explain all kinds of implicit communication and has to be replaced by two or more principles inspired by other conversational maxims of Grice’s, each with its distinct function and sphere of influence. In Relevance Theory utterance processing always involves contextual assumptions (shared or mutually accessible knowledge), while neo-Griceans emphasize Grice’s conception of Generalized Conversational
Implicature, according to which some implicatures at least are communicated thanks to reference to the Cooperative Principle and its maxims, but without direct involvement of further cognitive material from the current context. Whatever the differences, on all versions implicature is supposed to be a “rational” matter.

For Grice, it is conversational implicature in particular which is rational. According to him, it is rational to follow the Cooperative Principle and assume it is followed by others, therefore communicating and understanding conversational implicatures. Moreover, conversational implicature is “calculable”, and calculations are quite obviously a rational matter. It is harder to tell whether or to what extent Grice would also count conventional implicature as something rational. Grice’s “rational” approach to conversational implicature has influenced his followers and critics. So, it is rational speakers and hearers (or speakers and hearers qua rational) that, according to Relevance Theory, conform to the Relevance Principle to yield inferential interpretations of explicit and implicit utterance meaning (including implicatures). Also in Levinson’s analysis of generalized conversational implicatures, these depend on the application of rational principles and rules to utterance processing.

I will take it for granted that Gricean conversational implicature is to be considered a rational matter and explore why. The exploration will show that two distinct conceptions of rationality are at play in Grice’s thought and that only one of these has been picked up by post- and neo-Gricean approaches.

3. GRICE ON THE RATIONALITY OF CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

Two distinct hypotheses about why conversational implicature is rational can be extracted from Grice’s work.

(1) Conversational implicature is rational insofar as it is part of rational communicative behavior to maximize understanding (gather as much information as possible, etc.)

(2) Conversational implicature is rational because it is calculable.

Hypothesis (1) traces the rationality of conversational implicature back to the rationality of the Cooperative Principle. Grice (Grice, 1989: 29-30) says that he would like to think of the Cooperative Principle not merely as something that we do in fact follow but as something that it is reasonable for us to follow (hence, we may say, something “rational”) and outlines two possible arguments in support of this idea. According to one line of reasoning, conversational cooperation can be described as quasi-contractual: each interlocutor’s response to a move of the other interlocutor enhances mutual expectations of cooperativity, makes them more specific, and gives to each interlocutor reasons to believe that his or her interlocutor is cooperative. It is hard
to see, though, why this should prove the observance of the Cooperative Principle to be rational. Moreover, this description of conversational cooperation seems to fit only some types of exchanges. The second line of reasoning seems to work better: according to it, the rationality of conversational implicature depends on its capacity of maximizing understanding (and we may say, it is in fact rational to maximize understanding or to squeeze as much information as possible from one’s interlocutor’s words). Surprisingly enough, Grice drops this line of reasoning too, declaring himself uncertain about its soundness as well as about some of the concepts involved in it.

Hypothesis (2) traces the rationality of conversational implicature back to its calculability. After all, calculation is a rational activity. Calculability involves, according to Grice, the availability of an inferential path - a series of inferential steps - leading from the utterance of a sentence to its implicature. This inferential path is outlined by Grice as follows:

He has said that \( p \); there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; he could not be doing this unless he thought that \( q \); he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that \( q \) is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that \( q \); he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that \( q \); and so he has implicated that \( q \). (Grice, 1989: 31)

Hypothesis (2) is, in my opinion, quite plausible both as a claim about the rationality of conversational implicature and as an interpretive claim about Grice’s theory of it. But before accepting it and drawing further consequences from it, we should stop to clarify the nature of the calculability requirement, which we have so far left largely indeterminate.

4. THE NATURE OF THE CALCULABILITY REQUIREMENT

While the form of the inferential path proposed by Grice for conversational implicature is clear enough for our current aims, its nature is problematic and this might interfere with the project of interpreting the rationality of conversational implicature as based on its calculability. We may want to know whether the Gricean inferential path for the calculation of a conversational implicature is meant to have the nature of an actual psychological process (a psychological necessary condition for an utterance to carry a conversational implicature) or that of some kind of abstract, logical model giving the grounds for the recognition of the implicature as conversational. Are conversational implicatures characterized by the fact that the hearer, in order to understand the implicature, actually goes through a certain (Gricean or otherwise defined) inferential path? Must the speaker actually go through the same inferential path while planning the implicature-carrying utterance? Are only those implicatures
“rational” that are actually calculated by the hearer and planned by the speaker through a certain kind of inferential path?

We may consider these questions as applying to actual or ideal hearers. In the case of actual hearers, it is clear enough that a hearer might fail to calculate the implicature and, conversely, not everything a hearer infers from an utterance is an implicature. Actual hearers make every kind of mistakes. But of course, it must be possible to determine what implicature a certain utterance (in a certain context) should be recognized to carry, independently of whether actual hearers manage to derive the implicature. Were it not so, it would be impossible to distinguish correct from incorrect implicature comprehension. If, instead, we take into consideration only those hearers who succeed in grasping the implicature, we implicitly introduce a normative criterion. Hearers who understand well approximate ideal, “rational” hearers. So claims about how conversational implicature is derived are in fact claims about how hearers approximating ideal rational hearers derive it, and therefore, are deprived of any empirical character. They are claims about how the implicature should be derived.

But after all, as Saul has correctly noticed (Saul, 2002a), the actual working out of the implicature by the hearer is not included in the conditions for conversational implicature laid down by Grice (Grice, 1989: 30-31). A hearer might grasp the implicature without going through exactly that inferential path or even without any inferential path at all. According to Grice himself (Grice, 1989: 31), conversational implicature may well be grasped intuitively: calculability is not actual calculation. For an implicature to be calculable and therefore conversational, Grice only requires that the intuition be “replaceable by an argument”.

As to the speaker, observation of everyday life tells us that actual speakers do not in general plan their implicature-carrying utterances by consciously anticipating the inferential path of the hearer. It is often quite legitimate to attribute to a speaker the intention to implicate something whose relation to the utterance is characteristic of conversational implicature, even in absence of evidence to the effect that the speaker has gone through the corresponding inferential path. Actual calculations by the speaker cannot therefore be a realistic requirement for an implicature to be conversational (and calculable) and if we make the rationality of implicature depend on its calculability, they cannot be a requirement for its rationality either.

It could be objected that Grice, while clearly not concerned with the psychological processes on behalf of the hearer, requires of the speaker (in clause (3) of the definition of conversational implicature, quoted above) that he or she thinks that the hearer is able to work out the implicature. It seems therefore that the speaker must at least be aware of the inferential path leading from the implicature-carrying utterance to its implicature. If
in order for an implicature to be conversational, the speaker must think that the hearer is able to understand that the supposition that the speaker thinks that q is required, shouldn't the speaker be also aware that the supposition that he or she thinks that q is required? If an individual, in order to evaluate another individual's ability to grasp an assumption, must represent this assumption to him or herself, the answer must be positive. But it is not so clear that this must be so. It might be enough that the speaker be willing to grant to the hearer the ability to grasp whatever assumption is needed for a thorough understanding of the utterance. Moreover, we might take it that the requirement posed by Grice onto the speaker need not be satisfied by his or her having an *occurrent* thought about the hearer's abilities, but by a general attitude towards him or her. The speaker might, so to say, merit to be attributed the relevant thought because his or her general attitude towards the hearer is of the kind one has towards a fellow thinking being, typically able to grasp assumptions of the kind of the one which is required on that specific occasion. So we may escape commitment to counterintuitive claims about the psychological implementation of calculations in the speaker's mind.

Of course it may also be said (as is done e.g. by Relevance Theory) that utterance processing, both in production and in reception, consists of subpersonal calculations, of which speaker and hearer need not be aware and that they do not control at all. But subpersonal calculations aren't such clear a hallmark of rationality as personal-level, conscious ones. So, if in order to save the psychological implementation of implicature calculability, we make it subpersonal, the support to the rationality of conversational implicature that may come from reference to calculability is weakened considerably.

Rather, I believe that in conversational implicature, the unavoidability of going through reference to the speaker's subjectivity (expressed by Grice in condition (3) of his definition) depends on something subtler than an inclination to apply a psychological reading of calculability to the speaker. Conversationally implicating something, as well as understanding a conversational implicature, is a behavior that requires consideration of one's interlocutor as a thinking being capable of and keen to cooperation, who in turn considers his or her interlocutor as a thinking being capable of and keen to cooperation. This reading of Grice's condition (3) for conversational implicature is fully compatible with supporting the rationality of conversational implicature by reference to calculability.

In fact, what emerges from the above exploration of the nature of the calculability requirement is that the calculability of an implicature is important not because it defines the way in which the implicature is actually planned and understood, but because it guarantees for the rationality of the implicature, testifying that the attribution of that implicature to the speaker who has issued a certain utterance can be supported by argument.
We can thus take as confirmed that conversational implicature is rational because it is calculable.\(^4\)

5. Two Ideas of Rationality

The two hypotheses about why conversational implicature can be deemed to be rational, which we have extracted from Grice's work in §2 above, make implicit reference to two distinct conceptions of rationality and so do also the two conceptions of calculability (as requiring actual psychological implementation or as mere replaceability of the grasping of a conversational implicature by an argument) that we have discussed in §3. I call these two conceptions of rationality "Instrumental rationality" and "Argumentative rationality". I will try to show that our second hypothesis about the rationality of conversational implicature (that conversational implicature - defined along the Gricean lines - is to be considered rational because it is calculable), and particularly the reading of it that envisages calculability as replaceability by an argument, rely upon the argumentative conception of rationality. Whoever accepts hypothesis (2) as true should prefer the argumentative conception of rationality over the instrumental one.

Let us illustrate the contrast between the two conceptions and their association with our two hypotheses.

For Instrumental Rationality, I adopt the following definition:

\(\text{(IR)}\) A course of behavior is rational if it is characterized by the agent's non-accidental use of effective means, or of means believed to be effective, for achieving his or her goals.

This conception of rationality, widespread and pervasive (but perhaps it is a whole family of conceptions), is typically concerned with means-ends relations.

It is instrumental rationality that Grice relies upon in his attempt to qualify implicature as rational by establishing the rationality of the Cooperative Principle (see our hypothesis (1) about why conversational implicature is rational). Grice attempted to show that the Cooperative Principle is something that it is rational for speakers to follow by considering their interest in participating in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1989: 30). In such a perspective, the Cooperative Principle is assumed to hold, and conversational implicatures are retrieved, because

\(^4\) Davis (1998), 62. He has argued that conversational implicatures are not in fact calculable. Here I am claiming that they are rational (according to Grice) because they are calculable (according to Grice). But the interpretation of calculability I have given might escape Davis's argument anyway, since what he calls the "determinacy requirement" (his main reason for rejecting the calculability of implicature) is no longer essential to the role that the inferential path has to play.
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it is profitable to do so: because, for example, this enables the receiver to squeeze more information from the speaker's utterance, and when that does not yield more information about the world, it yields at least more information about the intentions, beliefs and other attitudes of the speaker him or herself. Since the availability of the conversational implicature mode of communication depends on the talk exchange being conducted in general accordance with the Cooperative Principle, the speaker's choice to communicate through conversational implicature may also be taken to inherit the same kind of rationality as the adoption of the Cooperative Principle. As already said above (§ 3), Grice abandoned the project to support the rationality of conversational implicature on the basis of means-end relations.

But post-Gricean and neo-Gricean approaches have read the rationality of conversational implicature as instrumental and have retained this feature in their reformulations of the Gricean framework. When implicature is viewed as instrumentally rational, it is natural enough to consider it as a means for the optimization of communication (in various possible senses) and to this aim it is quite reasonable, or perhaps even mandatory, to assume that it has to do with how communication actually functions, that is, with the processes actually occurring in the minds of speaker and hearer. So instrumental rationality is fully compatible with, or even requires, a view of the calculability of conversational implicatures as psychologically implemented in actual calculations. It is not a problem for instrumental rationality that there is often no introspective evidence of the relevant calculations, because these may well be sub-conscious. Under the instrumental conception, sub-conscious mental processes can nevertheless count as rational, if they succeed in providing efficient and economic means to the given ends.

Argumentative rationality does not focus on means-end relations, but stresses the connection of rationality with argumentative reasoning, that is, reasoning aimed to provide support to the acceptance of a belief or the making of a decision. Such an idea of rationality plays a remarkable role in Grice's posthumous writings, such as Lectures on Value (Grice 1991) and Aspects of Reason (Grice 2001). The following definition of it can be extracted from Lectures on Value:

(AR) Rationality is a concern that one's moves are justified and a capacity (to some degree) to give effect to that concern (Grice, 1991: 82-83).

5 For Relevance Theory, human cognition tends not merely to sufficient results, but to optimal ones (Sperber and Wilson (1995), 266) and these have to be achieved by optimizing relevance, which is itself a balance of costs and benefits and therefore a matter of instrumental rationality. For Generalized Conversational Implicature Theory, language use suffers from a "bottleneck" problem: we most often need to convey more information in a given stretch of time than the linear production/reception of speech allows for (Levinson (2000), 6); and the heuristics that generate generalized conversational implicatures provide us with the means for doing so.
In this definition, an important role is played by reference to justification. The argumentative character of rationality is one and the same thing with its function as a source of justification. The relation between argumentation and justification, as I view it, is double: on the one hand, justification is a practice of citing one or more assertions in support a certain conclusion or decision, which is the typical or even the basic move in arguments; on the other hand, an argument is good insofar as its steps and their connections justify the conclusion. The connection between argumentation and justification explains, in turn, why argumentative rationality is connected to value: justification is a matter of value and being justified is one and the same thing as being of value.

It is interesting at this point to recall that argumentative rationality plays an important role in Grice’s defense of absolute value (Grice, 1991: 80-91; 114-120; cf. Sbisà, 2001). There is absolute value, according to Grice, insofar as there are essentially rational beings, whom he calls “persons”, who have absolute value and can attach absolute value to what they evaluate. Humans turn themselves into such essentially rational beings when they consider rationality, which they possess contingently and accidentally, as their essential property. What I call argumentative rationality comes into the picture because a rational being is for Grice a being who seeks for justifications for his or her choices. A person, or essentially rational being, is a kind of being who does not behave like this only accidentally or on occasion, but in whom seeking for justifications is essential: such a being, therefore, essentially possesses argumentative rationality.

When considering argumentative rationality as a contingent property of humans, we must say that somebody who refuses to provide a justification for a move of his or her, or fails to provide appropriate reasons or evidence in support of one of his or her claims, is not, on that occasion, rational. Argumentative rationality, by the way, does admit of borderline cases, in which for example there is the concern for giving justifications but the justification provided is under some respect flawed (Grice, 2001: 6-14). But we may also, with Grice (Grice, 1991), consider humans as essentially rational, even in those circumstances or stages of development at which argumentative rationality is not contingently present. We thus recognize that the justification of one’s moves remains a task for every human being who wants to take him or herself seriously as a person.

The connection between argumentative rationality and the calculability of conversational implicature is never directly focused upon by Grice. But it should be recalled that he shows a preference for explaining implicatures, whenever possible, as conversational as opposed to conventional. He even adds that the choice of dealing with an implicature as conventional is in need of “special justification”. Indeed, only conversational implicature is calculable and therefore inherently rational in the argumentative sense. Explaining a certain part of the meaning conveyed by an utterance as a conversational implicature, rather than as part of what is said or conventionally implicated, requires that there be an inferential path leading to that...
implicature and thus an argument in support of it. If argumentative rationality is a value (as we have seen, Grice collocates it at the very root of values), calculability makes conversational implicature preferable as an analyst’s explanatory strategy for the implicit communication of a certain thought. This explanatory strategy is also the most charitable one with respect to the rationality of speakers and hearers, since it assumes that the fact that they communicate and understand a certain thought has an (argumentative) justification. The Modified Occam’s Razor, the well-known and debated principle according to which senses should not be multiplied beyond necessity (Grice, 1989: 47), turns therefore out to be not merely a matter of achieving theoretical economy, but of preferring, whenever possible, argumentatively justifiable meaning assignments.

The request to give “special justification” to analyses of implicit meaning considering a certain implicature as conventional suggests that all interpretive, analytic moves are according to Grice in need of some justification. The advantage of conversational implicature is that its attribution is supported by an argumentative path, while conventional implicature does not by itself provide a justification of the inferential connection it consists of.

The reading of calculability as replaceability by an argument is well fit in the framework of argumentative rationality. As we have already remarked, it is quite counterintuitive to maintain that conversational implicatures, in order to be such, must be consciously planned and understood by speaker and hearer through the inferential path outlined by Grice (or a similar one). In fact, approaches maintaining that conversational implicature must be actually worked out through the implementation of such an inferential path admit that this happens at the sub-personal level of unconscious cognitive workings. But argumentative rationality, being connected to justification, requires personal-level involvement. Thus a conception of calculability as necessarily implemented in the minds of the interlocutors is not suitable for the framework of argumentative rationality, in which alone it makes sense to claim that conversational implicature is rational because it is calculable. Under the argumentative conception of rationality, instead, calculability can be conceived as availability of an argument in support of the assignment of the implicature to the speaker’s utterance. What the rationality of conversational implicature requires of speaker and hearer is only that they should be willing to justify their understanding of the implicature and capable (to a certain degree) to provide such justifications by replacing their intuitive graspings by some more or less complete version of the relevant inferential path.
6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our exploration of the rationality of Gricean conversational implicature leaves several questions open. First of all, is the contrast between instrumental and argumentative rationality genuine? Are these two conceptions of rationality incompatible or may they be reconciled?

Both conceptions of rationality are represented in Grice's work. We have already cited his argumentation-based definition of rationality and shown that his theory of conversational implicature presupposes a commitment to argumentative rationality. But in his philosophical psychology (Grice, 1989: 283-303), as well as in his analysis of practical reasoning (Grice, 2001), he makes use of the received folk-psychological connections among belief, desire and behavior and seems therefore to consider the rationality of behavior as instrumental: an agent behaves rationally if he or she does what he or she believes to help the achievement of what he or she desires. Also in his theory of value (Grice, 1991), when he introduces the demand for absolute value (to which his argument for absolute value attempts to respond), Grice seems to consider it as a "rational" demand just because answering it would be instrumental to the satisfaction of the human aim of validating acceptances and attitudes objectively. Sure, the concern for such objective validation is in turn integral to argumentative rationality, but this only shows that in Grice's thought, argumentative and instrumental rationality can but coexist.

At least insofar as the explanation of behavior and the analysis of practical reasoning are concerned, Grice seems to suggest that the instrumental facet of rationality should be dealt with as a sub-case of the argumentative. In fact, when an agent justifies his or her behavior as a means for achieving a certain goal, the instrumental rationality of the behavior coincides with the argumentative rationality of the subject. But not all possible justifications or validations of acceptances and attitudes are of this form. So, even if instrumental rationality were a sub-case of argumentative rationality, the distinction survives.

That such a distinction should be drawn, however, is strongly suggested by the comparative consideration of the two conceptions. Instrumental rationality, as already noted above, does not presuppose self-awareness, while concern for justification does. Instrumental rationality bears no relationship to values, or rather, has effectiveness as its only value, so that it is of value only derivatively, while argumentative rationality may be claimed to be itself a value. Finally, instrumental rationality cannot raise questions about goals, except insofar as they are the means for other goals. That is a main source of dissatisfaction with instrumental rationality, which argumentative rationality may prove able to cope with. So we can safely enough admit that, within Grice's thought but also beyond it, a distinction between argumentative and instrumental rationality is not otiose.
I turn therefore to further and more central queries. Is the outlined distinction actually relevant to the theory of linguistic communication and to what extent? What are its consequences?

Instrumental rationality inspires the view of the calculability of conversational implicatures as involving actual psychological implementation. In this perspective, conversational implicature is seen as the effect of actual efficient processing. Inferential paths are taken to spell out the form of the causal chains through which speaker and hearer come to utterance production and understanding. Argumentative rationality inspires the view of conversational implicature as rational just because calculable. According to this view, conversational implicature is meaning made available by the speaker to the (argumentatively rational) hearer, that the hearer should understand. The point of spelling out inferential paths is just offering argumentative support to the attribution of implicatures, but these need not be actually calculated through them. We face then, not so much a theoretical dispute or competition between Grice's philosophical project and the post- or neo-Gricean cognitive projects, but two kinds of project with different aims and means (as Saul has remarked in her 2002b: 371). Post- or neo-Gricean cognitive projects cannot replace the kind of philosophical consideration of linguistic communication offered by Grice. Rather, the two kinds of project are best seen as complementary. The distinction between instrumental and argumentative rationality we have been discussing yields some suggestions for both.

On the one side, the normative features of the perspective inspired by argumentative rationality provide a powerful means to the analysis of discourse. In conversational practice as well as the practice of reading, it is often difficult to distinguish implicit meaning from mere psychological associations or fanciful assumptions of the hearer that the hearer projects onto the speaker's utterances. When non-psychologically understood, the Gricean calculability requirement offers us a criterion at least insofar as conversational implicature is concerned, and in general, a model for the monitoring of discourse comprehension. Conversational implicature attribution must be supportable by argument, and by an argument following an inferential path of a certain kind. Likewise, also other kinds of meaning that are made available but not explicitly formulated should be attributed to an utterance or text only with some justification, possibly spelled out in the form of a motivated inferential connection.

On the other side, in cognitively oriented approaches to linguistic communication, it should no longer be taken for granted that the processes actually leading to comprehension mirror the rational justifications we may give for our understanding of an utterance or text. Research on utterance processing might need to free itself from the model originally offered by the reflection on the inferential paths that justify conversational implicature attribution. Efficient processing may not be isomorphic with what is and remains, in the perspective of the reasoning subject, good argument.
REFERENCES


Lakoff, R.T., (1973), "The logic of politeness: or minding your P's and Q's", *Papers from the 9th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*.


