

Article
**On Communicative Intentions: A
Reply to Recanati**

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In a recent paper in this journal, Francois Recanati (1986)¹ pursues two related goals: to improve upon Grice's characterization of communicative intentions, and to assess what he calls "the Neo-Gricean Claim", according to which [in its weak form] the fulfilment of a communicative intention somehow depends on its recognition by the hearer' (p. 214). He pursues them together in order to determine 'whether the Neo-Gricean Claim can be vindicated on the basis of the amended characterization' (p. 215). He is particularly concerned with a strong version of this claim ('SNGC'), 'according to which [audience] recognition of the communicative intention is necessary and sufficient for its fulfilment [and which] entails the (problematical) thesis that communicative intentions are reflexive' (pp. 240-1). Now I endorse the version of the SNGC as well as a reflexive account of communicative intentions to which Recanati occasionally refers (Bach and Harnish 1979; Bach forthcoming) and which he seems to lump together with others. I wish to defend these views by showing that they implicitly take most of Recanati's worries into account. Rather than support Recanati's effort to find a new way of characterizing communicative intentions, I must repeat the old saying, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'. In the course of defending our account I will argue that the SNGC is not as bold or objectionable as Recanati supposes. If anything, it is innocuous, following trivially from our account of communicative intentions.

The basic idea is this. Consider that Recanati characterizes the weak form of the Neo-Gricean Claim as saying that the fulfilment of a communicative intention *depends* on its recognition by the hearer and the strong form as saying that the recognition of the communicative intention is *necessary*

¹ All references to Recanati are to this article.

and sufficient for its fulfilment. In my view, its fulfilment *consists* in its recognition. This may sound even stronger, but not in the sense of implying a closer connection between two distinct items than is suggested by 'necessary and sufficient'. I am making an identity claim, that the fulfilment of a communicative intention just *is* its recognition by the intended audience. The rationale is this. In trying to communicate one aims to be understood, i.e. to have one's utterance taken in a certain way (of course one may have further, perlocutionary aims), and succeeding consists in being understood, i.e. in the audience's taking the utterance in the way intended. There aren't two items, the fulfilment of a communicative intention on the one hand and its recognition on the other, so there is no question of how one depends on the other.

Recanati is certainly right to point out that the SNGC, especially in the form I endorse, entails that communicative intentions are reflexive. However, as we will see, he has no basis for finding it 'problematical' that they should be reflexive. He finds this problematical only because he mistakenly assumes that reflexive intentions must contain infinitely many sub-intentions. I will suggest instead that there is nothing mysterious or otherwise problematical about reflexive intentions. Indeed, I will argue that a proper account of the contents of communicative intentions explains not only why they are reflexive but why the SNGC is an innocuous consequence of this fact.

It will be wise first to review Recanati's discussion in some detail. The running commentary is meant to pinpoint what is at issue. Only then will I try to spell out what seem to be the difficulties in his position. In so doing, I hope to defend the SNGC and, along the way, highlight certain important issues in the complex history of the analysis of communicative intentions.

I

Recanati begins by presenting a version of Grice's iterative account of what it is for a speaker to have a communicative intention (to mean something) in uttering *u*:² a speaker *S* must intend

- (G1) to produce a certain response *r* in an audience *A*,
- (G2) *A* to recognize intention (G1), and
- (G3) *A*'s recognition of intention (G1) to function as least part of *A*'s reason for *A*'s response *r*.

Notice that this version has the form of Grice's later (1969) account in

² Actually, Recanati uses the phrase 'by *u*', as Grice (1957) did originally, but clearly this has a different import, as Grice (1969) later realized: meaning something by *u* is not the same as uttering it with a communicative intention.

terms of iterative intentions, not his earlier one (Grice 1957) in terms of reflexive intentions, although Recanati retains the phrase 'produce a certain response *r*', which Grice later replaced. Searle (1969, p. 47) had pointed out that this phrase suggests an intention to produce a perlocutionary effect rather than the illocutionary effect of understanding, and Recanati makes much the same point. For this reason he argues that intentions (G1) and (G3) are inessential to communicative intentions and should be excluded from the analysis.³ That leaves intention (G2). At this point Recanati considers whether, if for every communicative intention there is a correlative perlocutionary intention, perhaps communicative intentions can be analyzed in terms of perlocutionary intentions. However, he is not sure that there is such a correlation and without further ado proceeds on the supposition that there is not (p. 219). In my view the correlation does hold, albeit in a trivial way. For I regard a communicative illocutionary act as the act of expressing an attitude, in which case there is, at the very least, a correlative perlocutionary intention that the audience believe that the speaker possesses the attitude he is expressing. For example, in making a request, a speaker is expressing a desire and also intends the audience to believe he has the desire he is expressing (normally he also intends the audience, or part of it, to do what he desires).

At any rate, so as to avoid any essential reference to perlocutionary intentions in his account of communicative intentions, Recanati introduces the notion of 'prototypicality conditions' (PC) associated with a given utterance. For example, 'It's a part of our prototype of assertion that, if someone asserts that *p*, he knows that *p* and wishes the hearer to share his knowledge. In the same way, if someone orders someone else to do something, then, prototypically, he wants the thing to be done and has some kind of authority over the addressee' (p. 219). Unfortunately, Recanati does not explain what makes a given utterance count as one kind or another, e.g. as an assertion or as an order. However, he does go on to suggest that a communicative intention is the intention '(G2a) to provide *A* with reason to believe that such and such prototypicality conditions are satisfied' (p. 220). He then examines the notion of '[providing *A* with a] reason to believe', which he points out has been used in various analyses. Following Bach and Harnish (1979, Section 3.6) he explains that if certain counterexamples (we emphasize the case of obvious insincerity) are to be avoided, this notion must be interpreted so as not to imply that the reason is intended to be a sufficient reason.⁴

³ Sperber and Wilson have argued similarly (1986, p. 29), although their subsequent discussion betrays a serious misunderstanding of the nature of reflexive intentions. Also, they misrepresent our account of understanding utterances as a 'code model' (p. 20) rather than an inferential model. But that is another story.

⁴ Recanati criticizes our rationale for this stipulation, but his criticism is based on a misunderstanding. He correctly reports us as stipulating that 'the speaker intends her utterance to give the hearer a reason, sufficient unless there is a mutually believed reason to the contrary, to believe the speaker has such and such an attitude' (p. 221), but he

At this point Recanati returns to the question of the Neo-Gricean Claim, which in its weak form, he explains, follows from the above analysis.

One peculiar feature of the communicative intention, analyzed so far as the intention (G2a), that the utterance *u* give the hearer reason to believe PC, is that its recognition by the hearer *necessarily results* in its fulfilment. Once this intention is recognized to lie behind the utterance, the utterance cannot but give the hearer reason to believe PC. Or, in other terms: *S's* having this intention (to give A reason to believe PC) provides the hearer with reason to believe PC. This peculiar feature — the '*self-fulfilling*' character of communicative intentions, . . . vindicates the Neo-Gricean Claim in its weak form. (p. 222; my italics)

The italicized phrases suggest that Recanati regards communicative intentions (or their recognition) as having special causal properties, but I will argue later that what makes them special is not causal. Keep in mind that it is only the strong form of the Neo-Gricean claim that he finds unacceptable, because of its unfortunate (to him) implication that communicative intentions are reflexive.

Recanati now asks what must be added to intention (G2a) in the analysis of communicative intentions in order to explain why they are self-fulfilling. He considers an augmented account which includes the intentions:

- (G2a) that *u* provide A with reason to believe that PC,
- (G2b) that A recognize intention (G2a), and
- (G2c) that the fulfilment of (G2a) depend on its recognition.

Notice that the only difference between Grice's original account (that is, the hybrid version which I quoted at the outset) and this revised formulation lies in the content of the first intention: there is no reference to any response or other perlocutionary effect. Recanati dismisses this version on the grounds that (G2c), though 'central in linguistic communication', is unnecessary. He contends that 'Gricean communication is consistent with "natural meaning"', as in Grice's vivid example of Herod bringing to Salome the severed head of St. John the Baptist. According to Recanati, 'there are two sorts of cases, [Grice's "non-natural"] cases where only the speaker's intention is intended to provide evidence . . . and cases where the

does not mention that the notion being defined is that of expressing an attitude and that in the passage he refers to we are concerned to account for the difference between nonliterality and obvious insincerity (the obvious insincerity of an utterance were it taken literally can provide the hearer with good reason to take it nonliterally). Then he says that we 'overlook the fact that the intended "reason" may well be insufficient even though there is no mutually believed reason to the contrary' (p. 221). But he overlooks the fact that if the speaker does not take the reason to be mutually believed, it cannot be within the scope of the communicative intention.

"utterance" is intended to provide evidence over and above the evidence provided by the speaker's intention' (p. 225; my italics), and he sees no reason 'to restrict the label "(Gricean) communication" to the first sort of cases, however important they are'. As the italicized phrases indicate, Recanati is under the impression that intentions are capable of providing evidence. As we will see, he is thereby led to misunderstand the role of reflexive intentions.

Recanati's version of the reflexive analysis of a communicative intention mentions two distinct intentions:

- (G2a) that *u* provide A with reason to believe that PC, and
- (G2b*) that the communicative intention be recognized.

Recanati observes that intention (G2b*) implicitly refers to itself, since it makes reference to the entire intention, which includes (G2b*), and then he asserts without argument that 'this reflexivity . . . entails [an] infinite number of intentions' (p. 227). He recognizes that an infinite regress need not be vicious and, in particular, he rejects Sperber and Wilson's objection (1986, p. 256) that a reflexive intention must contain a representation to itself but that this 'meta-representation' cannot be grasped because it cannot be spelled out. For they mistakenly assume that this meta-representation can only refer to itself if it displays its own content. Instead, he suggests that it can contain an 'attributive reference' to itself (p. 230), a 'general' rather than 'singular' meta-representation. The problem is that there seems to be no way to characterize the relevant intention in general terms.

Then Recanati considers the suggestion that 'the relevant reflexive intention is not the intention that 'all intentions in some bunch be recognized, but rather the intention that "this very intention" be recognized' (p. 232). However, he dismisses this suggestion on the grounds that the supposed intention 'is not a mental representation. It is just a form of words, a linguistic representation', and the problem is that the mental representation, if any, that corresponds to this form of words will be general or singular, . . . and we are back to the same problem' (pp. 232–3) as the one noted in the previous paragraph.

Recanati sees no hope for the reflexive analysis, but 'fortunately, reflexivity is not needed to insure overtness' (p. 233). Here he borrows a suggestion from Grice (1982), which Grice (1969) had previously considered without endorsing, that a communicative intention need not be reflexive but merely must not contain a 'sneaky' intention. That is, it must not contain any intention inconsistent with a would-be reflexive intention, and for this reason Recanati describes it as 'default reflexive'. Such an 'intention is fulfilled if and only if *u* gives A reason to believe PC, whether or not A recognizes *S's* intention to provide such reason' (p. 237). On Recanati's final analysis, a communicative intention is an open (= default reflexive) intention that

- (a) *u* give reason to believe PC, and
- (b) A recognize intention (a), and recognize it as open.

Moreover, 'A communicative act is performed by means of an utterance *u* if and only if *u* makes such a complex intention manifest, and communication succeeds when this intention is actually recognized by the hearer' (p. 239). Lest this seem impossible, Recanati contends that while 'hearer's recognition of the communicative intention is thus necessary for successful communication, ... it is not necessary for the communicative intention itself to be fulfilled' (p. 239). In this connection, Recanati draws a dubious distinction between the communicative intention and the 'intention to communicate', which requires recognition of (b) as well as of (a). Only the latter intention is reflexive.

In my view this distinction is based on the questionable assumption that a communicative intention can be fulfilled even if the act (of communication) with which it is being performed is not successful. Later I will explain why that is impossible.

II

As I see it Recanati's account, including his final analysis and the tortuous line of argument that leads to it, contains a number of difficulties: (1) he assumes that to be reflexive, an intention must contain infinitely many sub-intentions; (2) he dismisses the 'fulfilment by means of recognition' feature of communicative intentions; (3) he does not even consider the nature of the audience's inference involved in recognizing a communicative intention; (4) his account of the content of communicative intentions is uninformative — the key notion of prototypicality conditions is virtually vacuous; and (5) he does not consider what restrictions must be imposed on the contents of communicative intentions such that their fulfilment can consist in their recognition. I will take these up in order. My aim is not merely to defend the SGNC but also to highlight certain apparently overlooked or unappreciated aspects of the debate on communicative intentions since Grice (1957).

1. Reflexive vs. Iterative Intentions

Recanati recognizes that the inherent complexity of iterative accounts of communicative intentions makes them implausible psychologically. That is one reason why he turns to reflexive accounts, although he ends up finding them implausible for the same reason. Unfortunately, his discussion of reflexive accounts depends almost entirely on the undefended assumption that to be reflexive, an intention must contain infinitely many sub-intentions (p. 227). His reason for rejecting reflexive analyses and thus

his rationale for the analysis in terms of default reflexivity depend crucially on this assumption. However, the whole point of reflexive analyses is to avoid an infinite regress. As Harman observes,

Grice himself originally states his analysis as involving a self-referential intention ... but, because of worries about what he calls 'self-reflective paradox', he goes on to restate the analysis as involving a series of intentions, each about the preceding one. This turns out to lead to tremendous complexity in the resulting theory. Much of this complexity is artificial and due to Grice's refusal to stick with the original analysis and its appeal to a self-referential intention (1986, pp. 87–8).

And Blackburn, whom Recanati cites on this very topic (p. 227), 'suspect[s] that philosophers have avoided this simple concept in favour of the linear complexities because they are morbidly afraid of paradoxes of self-reference' (1984, p. 116). Harman mentions a variety of philosophical contexts in which the notion of self-referential attitudes has proved useful. There is no point in taking up these examples here, for the issue is Recanati's undefended assumption that reflexive intentions contain infinitely many sub-intentions.

It is worth recalling here the switch from reflexive to iterative intentions in the history of the analysis of communicative intentions. Earlier in the paragraph where he introduced the reflexive analysis (and explicitly denied that it involves a reflexive paradox), Grice wrote, '[S] must intend to induce by [*u*] a belief in [A], and he must also intend his utterance to be recognized as so intended' (1957, p. 383). This formulation sounds iterative, not reflexive. It appears to have led Strawson (1964) to take Grice's original proposal to be an iterative analysis, to which Strawson and later Schiffer (1972) added further iterations. In his subsequent paper Grice (1969) himself, perhaps now fearing paradox, opted for the iterative approach. Notoriously, the iterative approach has become 'extravagantly complex' (Blackburn 1984, p. 114), as more and more high-order intentions (intentions that other intentions be recognized) have been introduced in order to avoid the ever more intricate counterexamples produced by the likes of Strawson and Schiffer, among others. These involve 'various kinds of deception and concealment' (Blackburn 1984, p. 114) or what Grice has lately called 'sneaky' intentions. The result, as Grice aptly puts it, is that

what we specify A as intended to think of as the reason for thinking 'p' is always one stage behind what the speaker envisages as the reason why he wants A to think 'p'. ... We put in the extra clause in order to catch up, but we never do catch up, because by putting in the extra clause we merely introduce another thing to catch up with' (1982, 240).

Grice ends up repeating, and offering a new rationale for, the suggestion

he had made previously (Grice 1969, p. 159) that 'what we really required ... was the *absence* of a certain kind of intention' (1982, 243),⁵ i.e. a sneaky intention. Recanati converts this suggestion into his analysis of communicative intentions in terms of default reflexivity.

I believe that the lapse from reflexive to iterative intentions has been based not only, as Harman and Blackburn have suggested, on an aversion to reflexive paradoxes. It has been based also on a mistaken conception of what goes into the content of communicative intentions, such that there is a need to exclude sneaky intentions from the analysis. The iterative approach lends itself to making explicit the kinds of sneakiness that must be excluded, even if it does lead to the wild clause chase that Grice so colorfully describes (above), a parade of ever more complex analyses designed to avoid ever more fanciful counterexamples. In my view, a proper understanding of the contents of communicative intentions, i.e. of the purely communicative aspect of speech acts, shows that the issue of sneaky intentions is a red herring. This will become clear below under point (5).

There is a more immediately relevant issue which is obscured by Recanati's focus on the question of iterative vs. reflexive intentions, namely the nature of the audience's inference to the speaker's communicative intention. Grice's original suggestion that such intentions refer to themselves seems to have diverted Recanati's attention from Grice's fundamental insight, that the audience identifies the speaker's intention partly on the basis that he is to identify it. That is why Grice's original formulation contained the phrase 'by means of the recognition of this intention' (1957, p. 384), which suggests that the basic issue is not how a communicative intention refers to itself but how it can specify the means for its own fulfilment: the audience is to recognize it partly on the basis that he is to take himself is intended to do so. This issue will underlie the discussion of the next two points.

2. 'Fulfilment by Means of Recognition'

Recanati does not think the specification of the content of a communicative intention requires the clause 'that the fulfilment [of an intention] depend on its recognition', where the intention in question can be either the previous one in the analysis or the entire communicative intention, as with a reflexive analysis. He suggests that there are cases of 'natural' meaning (as opposed to Grice's 'non-natural' meaning), where reflexivity is clearly absent, which still qualify as communicative. Recanati argues that natural meaning is possible even in the case of a linguistic utterance,

⁵ It is a historical curiosity that I circulated a similar suggestion in Grice's seminar at Berkeley some twenty years ago.

e.g. of 'I am here' to communicate one's location. However, not every case of acting with the intention of making something known, even when it is clearly overt, is an act of communication. For if the audience's recognition of the intention is inessential to its fulfilment, the utterance is not communicative. Recanati might charge that I am begging the question, but even if he is right about these cases, he has not shown that genuinely *linguistic* communication can involve less than a reflexive intention. For his example of 'I am here' is admittedly a case where the words uttered make no difference — the hearer could infer the speaker's whereabouts even if he said 'I am in Rangoon' or merely blew his nose.

A truly linguistic case involves a special kind of inference, which ordinarily gets triggered by the presence of what Bach and Harnish call the communicative presumption (1979, p. 12). The CP is the presumption that when somebody says something to someone, he is doing so with an identifiable communicative intention. Indeed, it is on account of the CP that the audience supposes S to be speaking with some such intention or other; it is the content of the utterance (the words with their meanings) and its context that provide A with the basis for identifying the specific intention. In Recanati's examples, as in Grice's examples that do not involve utterances with conventional meanings, e.g. frowning deliberately to indicate one's displeasure (1957, p. 383), not just the identity of the communicative intention but its existence must be inferred from the 'utterance'. In the normal linguistic case, its existence is presupposed by virtue of the CP.⁶

I do not wish to suggest that the fulfilment by means of recognition property is limited to communicative intentions. Schelling (1960), a pioneer in cooperative game theory, describes numerous examples. Here's a simple one. I'll give you a reward, which I want you to win, if you guess the letter of the alphabet I am thinking of. This is mutually known. Then you will think of the letter 'a' partly on the basis of thinking that there is a certain letter that I want you to think of, and also on the basis that 'a', being salient by being first in the alphabet, is the only one of which this could be true.

3. The Audience's Inference

Recanati does not examine the nature of the audience's inference involved in recognizing a communicative intention, as to either what it actually involves or what the speaker intends it to involve. If he had, he would have attended more to the 'fulfilment by means of recognition' feature of

⁶ Grice's reductive analysis of linguistic meaning in terms of speaker meaning must do without the CP.

Gricean accounts of communicative intentions and worried less about reflexivity *per se*.

Simply consider why a person who is being addressed tries to identify the speaker's communicative intention. In general, a piece of behavior counts as an action (or at least an attempted action) of a certain sort by virtue of the agent's intention.⁷ Generally it makes no difference whether any witnesses happen to identify this intention, much less whether the agent intends them to do so. For example, your bodily movements count as practicing break dancing no matter what an observer thinks, or what you intend him to think, you are doing. However, in the case of an utterance, where there is a presumption of audience-directed communication, A has good reason to think that S intends him to recognize this intention, i.e. to identify what S is doing in making the utterance. Moreover, the intention for him to recognize this intention is not a distinct intention; rather, it is the very intention that he is to recognize. For this is the intention that constitutes S's utterance as an illocutionary act with a certain force and content, which act succeeds if A recognizes the intention with which the utterance is being made. No wonder that the fulfilment of a communicative intention depends on its recognition — the audience's recognition of it is precisely what its fulfilment consists in. There is no reflexive paradox involved in the audience's identification of the speaker's communicative intention. He does not identify it by way of recognizing it; he identifies it partly on the supposition that whatever its specific content, part of its content is that he is to identify it; A relies on the CP to suppose that S has some communicative intention or other for him to identify.⁸ Since the utterance is made with the intention that the intention with which it is being made be recognized and since the specific communicative act that it consists in its being made with this intention, A's inference is an inference to the very identity of the act.

⁷ Of course, convention as well as (or instead of) intention matters in many institutional cases. See Bach and Harnish (1979, ch. 6).

⁸ Harnish and I put the point as follows.

The intended effect of an act of communication is not just any effect produced by means of recognition of the intention to produce a certain effect, it is *the recognition of that effect*. There seems to be a reflexive paradox here, but in fact there is none. The effect, the hearer's recognition the speaker's intention to produce that effect, is not produced by the hearer's recognizing that intention — that would be worse than a paradox, it would be a miracle. Rather, it is produced by the hearer's recognizing that the speaker has an intention to produce a certain effect in him that he is to identify (and thereby have produced in him) partly by recognizing S's intention to produce an identifiable effect. (1979, p. 15)

Also, we describe the audience's inference as involving default reasoning. In Bach (1984) I examine the nature of default reasoning and discuss certain problems it has raised in the field of Artificial Intelligence.

4. Prototypicality Conditions

In order to exclude anything perlocutionary from the content of a communicative intention, Recanati employs the notion of prototypicality conditions: S's intention in producing *u* is to 'provide A with reason to believe that such and such prototypicality conditions [PC] are satisfied' (p. 220). Unfortunately, he does not explain how the PC of a given utterance *u* is determined. He recognizes that 'which communicative act is performed depends on how the variable "PC" is instantiated' (p. 239), but he says nothing about how the relevant PC is determined. This is a serious omission, not merely a straightforward matter of filling in details. It might seem that the PC of a given utterance *u* is determined by the literal meaning of the sentence used to make *u*, but utterances need not be literal. If *u* is not literal, then its PC is not determined by the meaning of the sentence being used but by the speaker's communicative intention.⁹ So Recanati's account of communicative intentions in terms of the PC of an utterance is not just insufficiently informative; it is vacuous. For the PC depends on the communicative intention with which *u* is being made.

I am claiming, then, that the PC of a given utterance cannot be specified independently of the communicative intention with which the utterance is being made, in which case Recanati's account is useless at best. Now it might be objected that the PC is determined by the literal meaning after all, on the grounds that a nonliteral (or indirect) utterance of a given sentence does not have a PC distinct from that of a literal utterance of that sentence. However, that would render Recanati's analysis (G2a) incapable of giving an account of the communicative intentions with which nonliteral or indirect utterances are performed. Utterances *qua* utterances do not have PC's, at least not of the relevant sort. What is determined by the linguistic meaning of the sentence is what we might call the locutionary PC of the utterance, that S intends to be uttering the sentence with a certain meaning.¹⁰ However, S's communicative intention can depart in various ways from the sentence's meaning.

So it seems that the values of the variable 'PC' in Recanati's account of communicative intentions cannot be specified in a noncircular way. Their specification for a given utterance presupposes knowing what the speaker's communicative intention is.

5. The Contents of Communicative Intentions

If Recanati had not opted so abruptly for the notion of prototypicality conditions, he might have asked himself what must be included in the

⁹ Of course, what a speaker can reasonably intend in a given context is constrained by the meaning of this sentence — the speaker cannot mean anything he wants. See Bach and Harnish (1979, ch. 4) for a detailed account of the intentions and inferences involved in the successful performance of nonliteral (as well as of indirect) speech acts.

¹⁰ See Bach and Harnish (1979, ch. 2) for a discussion of locutionary acts.

contents of communicative intentions in order that their fulfilment can consist in their recognition. That is, instead of dismissing the SNGC because of its appeal to supposedly problematic reflexive intentions (I agree that the specimens of reflexive intentions that Recanati presents are problematic, mainly because they mention PCs), he should have considered what the contents of communicative intentions would have to be like if SNGC were true. This is what Harnish and I do explicitly. Observing that Grice described a reflexive intention as the intention to produce an effect by means of recognition of this intention but that he did not impose any restriction on the intended effect, we ask 'what sorts of illocutionary (i.e. communicative) effects — effects consisting in recognition of reflexive intentions, can there be? In other words, what can be the content of a communicative intention?' (Bach and Harnish 1979, p. 15) Then we offer our definition of communicating as expressing an attitude:

(EXP) For S to express an attitude to A is for S reflexively to intend A to take S's utterance as reason to think S has that attitude.

A understands S's utterance if A identifies the attitude in question, e.g. a belief in the case of a statement or a desire in the case of a request. It is another question whether A takes S actually to possess that attitude, much less forms a corresponding attitude, such as a belief or an intention. If A thinks S possesses the attitude he is expressing, in effect A is taking S to be sincere in what he is communicating. However, there is no question about S being sincere in his communicative intention itself — in that regard there is only the question of what he is communicating, that is, of what attitude he is expressing. This intention must be identified before the question of his sincerity (in respect of that attitude) can even arise.

One important qualification should be made here. Speakers can and often do speak nonliterally and that, putting it roughly, is to say one thing and mean something else (there is also the case of indirection, where one says one thing and means something more as well). From A's point of view, the question of what S means (is trying to communicate), being a matter of what attitude he is expressing, can depend on what attitude he could reasonably be taken to have. A candidate based on the literal meaning of his utterance can often be ruled out on the grounds that he could not reasonably be taken to have that attitude.¹¹ Given the communicative presumption, A may infer that there is some other attitude (of a different type or with a different content) with an identifiable connection to the one in question, that he is intended to take as the one the speaker is expressing, say because this one is more likely for S to possess. For example, after listening to a prolonged sales pitch, one might say, 'I'm

glad you could be so concise in your description of this wonderful new widget', but mean something quite different. You would not be expressing pleasure at the conciseness of his description or belief in the wondrousness of his widget. In such a case the reason for inferring that S is even expressing the attitude associated with the literal utterance is overridden. So it should be understood that the reason specified in EXP above not be overridden by a reason for taking S to have some other attitude. Of course, this reason need not be conclusive, for the speaker might not possess even the attitude he is expressing in his nonliteral utterance.

At any rate, according to EXP to perform an act of communication, i.e. to make an utterance with a communicative intention, is to express an attitude; and the content of the intention in question is that A take S's utterance as giving him a reason to think that S has a certain attitude. Thus a speaker expresses not the communicative intention itself but a certain propositional (or other) attitude. He may or may not actually possess it, but that question is irrelevant to the purely communicative aspect of speech acts. The question of sincerity or deviousness arises only at the perlocutionary level. For this reason the issue of sneaky intentions is a red herring in the analysis of communicative intentions.

More importantly, the SNGC follows from the analysis of communicative intentions as embodied in EXP. For S's intended audience understands him in his utterance if it identifies the attitude he is expressing, and that is to recognize his communicative intention. In short, the fulfilment of S's communicative intention consists in its recognition.

All in all, Recanati's worries about reflexive analyses of communicative intentions are unfounded. He has not demonstrated anything problematic about reflexive intentions because he has not shown that they contain infinitely many sub-intentions. Moreover, in deleting Grice's phrase, 'fulfilment by means of their recognition', from the analysis of communicative intentions, not only does Recanati overlook the distinctive nature of linguistic communication, he ignores the distinctive character of the inference on the part of the audience in recognizing a speaker's communicative intention. In any case, his own account of the content of communicative intentions in terms of prototypicality conditions is uninformative at best and viciously circular at worst. Much more plausible is the analysis in terms of expressed attitudes which, after all, are essential to individuating types of communicative illocutionary acts. And finally, this analysis makes clear why what Recanati calls the strong Neo-Gricean thesis is much more plausible than he thinks, partly because it is not nearly as strong as it appears.

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¹¹ There are further, subtler issues about the relation between communication and obvious insincerity (see Bach and Harnish 1979, pp. 57-9 & 290-1) which are not relevant here.

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