

By KENT BACH

ESSENTIAL to Gricean theories of speaker meaning is the notion of reflexive (R-) intention. The main problem for such theories has been precisely how to characterize the requisite R-intention, in particular to give (1) a sufficiently strong account of its form and (2) a sufficiently weak account of its content. Attempts to produce (1) have resulted, in the face of successively more complex counterexamples, in successively more complex requirements on the R-intention a speaker must have if he is to mean anything in uttering something, but here our concern will be with (2), the problem of specifying the content of the speaker's R-intention that determines just what he means. This is the task of characterizing the sorts of R-intended effect a speaker (S) seeks to produce in an addressee (A), which effect determines what S means, but recently C. R. Carr (*ANALYSIS* 40.3, June 1980) has posed a dilemma for any such effort. He wonders whether it is possible to characterize the R-intended effect connected with speaker meaning in a way that, to avoid being too strong, does not turn out to be too weak.

Carr's specific target is a proposal by David Holdcroft in *Words and Deeds* (Oxford, 1978) who, borrowing an idea from Stephen Schiffer in *Meaning* (Oxford, 1972), suggests that not only the concept of speaker meaning but a taxonomy of illocutionary acts can be developed in terms of R-intended effects. Schiffer thought that the R-intended effect for statements is belief and for requests intention. But R-intending such effects is not necessary for making a statement or a request. Indeed, in stating S need not R-intend A even to believe that he (S) believes something; in requesting S need not R-intend A even to believe that S wants him to (intend to) do something. As John Searle pointed out long ago (*Speech Acts*, Cambridge, 1969), such effects are perlocutionary, not illocutionary.

In the case of illocutionary acts we succeed in doing what we are trying to do by getting our audience to recognize what we are trying to do. But the 'effect' on the hearer is not a belief or a response, it consists simply in the hearer understanding the utterance of the speaker (Searle, p. 47).

Since understanding an utterance is more than understanding the sentence uttered, we must ask how a speaker, in performing an act of communication, R-intends his audience to take his utterance.

Aware that previous accounts are too strong, Holdcroft adopts the notion of 'providing a reason' (to think that S intends A . . .), but Carr finds this notion ambiguous and worries about its being interpreted too strongly. He cautions (p. 165) that 'There must be some sense of providing a reason other than actually attempting to get A to respond', since

there are clear (though non-standard) cases of illocutionary acts in which S 'may clearly not intend to give any motivating reason for A at all'. And, Carr urges, some notion of providing a reason must be retained, for 'The reason being provided by the speaker very often does serve to individuate illocutionary force'. Thus, for example, the difference between ordering and begging someone to do something consists in the difference in 'reason for compliance, authority versus pity possibly, each provides' (p. 165).

How does Carr's dilemma arise? An adequate account of 'providing a reason' must allow for genuine but non-standard cases of, for example, ordering without intending compliance, so that ordering can be distinguished from begging even when compliance is not intended. But if ordering differs from begging solely in what S appeals to, S's authority rather than A's pity, and yet S does not intend (perhaps obviously) A to comply, then in what sense does S provide a reason for compliance at all? Not only must an adequate account of 'providing a reason' handle such non-standard cases, it must not allow acts like joking to count as illocutionary acts at all. For example, if A spills a drop of milk and S utters, 'I order you to shoot yourself', presumably S not merely does not intend compliance but is not giving an order at all. Such examples generate Carr's dilemma: an account of 'providing a reason' not too strong to exclude genuine but non-standard cases of illocutionary acts threatens to be too weak, making 'non-literal utterances literal' (p. 167; here I think that by '(non-)literal' Carr means '(non-)serious').

There is a real problem to be solved here but Carr's dilemma is illusory. It is illusory because there are two quite different roles that the notion of providing a reason plays in the theory of illocutionary acts. The dilemma can appear only if these two roles are not distinguished. To explain why I must introduce as background some central ideas in the Gricean account of illocutionary acts developed recently by myself and Robert M. Harnish in *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (MIT, 1979). Here I cannot defend these ideas but offer them merely to show how Carr's dilemma can be escaped.

The basic idea is to define a notion of expressing an attitude that is distinct from the stronger notion of (R-) intending A to think one has it (stronger still is intending A to form a corresponding attitude). Performing a communicative illocutionary act (as opposed to a conventional one like christening or voting) consists simply in expressing an attitude. Its success consists in A's recognizing nothing more than the attitude expressed, irrespective of any attitudes that A may be intended to form or does form. So if S asks A to close the window, the illocutionary act of requesting succeeds if A recognizes the desire being expressed that A close the window. As a perlocutionary act the request can succeed only if A believes S to have that desire, intends to close the window, and

does so. However, illocutionary (communicative) success requires only understanding—A's identifying the attitude expressed. In short, a request can be made and understood without being complied with.

Now the notion of providing a reason figures in the definition of expressing an attitude: 'For S to express an attitude is for S to R-intend the hearer to take S's utterance as reason to think S has that attitude' (Bach & Harnish, p. 15). By incorporating that notion this definition avoids requiring anything perlocutionary in the R-intended effect included in the content of an illocutionary intention, which is merely communicative. However, the reason a speaker provides by way of expressing an attitude is *not* the same reason that, as Carr observes, often serves to individuate illocutionary force, and so Carr's dilemma is really a mirage.

To see this consider again the difference between ordering and begging. It consists in the kind of reason connected with A's compliance. However, this is not the reason mentioned in the definition just given of what it is in general to express an attitude. Rather, this force-individuating reason is included in the content of the specific attitude expressed. So for S to order, rather than beg, A to do something is for S to express the intention that A take S's authority, rather than A's pity, as reason to comply, and that, applying the above definition, is for S to R-intend A to take S's utterance as *reason* to think S intends A to take S's authority (rather than A's pity) as *reason* to comply. Notice the double occurrence of 'reason': the first is essential for characterizing communicative illocutionary acts generally, whereas the second is what distinguishes particular kinds of 'reasons-identifiable' illocutionary act, e.g., ordering from begging.

Distinguishing the two points at which the notion of providing a reason enters into the theory of illocutionary acts dissolves Carr's dilemma. Nonetheless, there remains a problem not unlike the one he mentions, but it concerns only the first sort of reason, that provided in performing a communicative illocutionary act of any kind. The problem, as Carr recognizes, is to distinguish non-standard but genuine illocutionary acts, like ordering while obviously not intending compliance, from joking, which, as in the case of jokingly saying 'I order you to shoot yourself', is not an illocutionary act (of ordering) at all. Ironically, this specific problem is addressed by Bach and Harnish (pp. 57-59, 289-91), who focus on cases where S's insincerity is glaringly obvious. They argue that S can still express an attitude, such as intending A to do something, and thereby perform an illocutionary act, such as giving an order. Otherwise there would be nothing for S to be insincere about. Of course, when S is obviously insincere, he cannot rationally R-intend his utterance to be sufficient reason for A to take him as having the attitude expressed, but still he can R-intend his utterance as providing a

reason, albeit overridden. In the case of joking ('Shoot yourself') there is no such R-intention. Rather than being obviously insincere in giving an order, S is not giving an order at all.¹ He does not R-intend his utterance to provide even a weak reason for thinking he intends A to shoot himself. Of course it could be so taken, indeed be taken as intended to be so taken, but S has no R-intention that A so take it. Thus, as Bach and Harnish argue, S is not ordering A to shoot himself. S said 'Shoot yourself' to A but was not being serious. If he was giving a real order, then if he did not have the intention he was expressing (that A shoot himself), he would be insincere rather than unserious.

Both of the above cases, as well as nonliteral utterances, can be described as, 'S said something but did not mean it', a locution whose ambiguity can yield confusion. Is S being described as speaking (a) unseriously, (b) insincerely, or (c) nonliterally? Joking is a case of (a), Carr's 'non-standard' ordering an example of being insincere (b). The difference is between not expressing an attitude and not having the attitude one is expressing. As for (c), one could speak seriously and sincerely but not mean what one says in the sense of not speaking literally. If one utters 'I could never survive another of his lectures', the belief expressed is likely to be other than the belief that another such lecture would be fatal. That is the attitude one would be expressing if speaking literally. In speaking nonliterally S R-intends A to take his utterance as reason to think that S has a certain attitude other than the one he would be expressing if he meant what his words meant. (See Bach & Harnish, ch. 4, for a detailed account of the patterns of inference followed by the addressee to identify the attitudes that a speaker expresses in performing an illocutionary act nonliterally.)

In sum, the notion of providing a reason plays a dual role in the theory of illocutionary acts. It serves both in characterizing illocutionary acts generally in terms of expressing an attitude and in distinguishing certain specific kinds of illocutionary acts from one another. Understanding the first role enables us to distinguish serious from unserious utterances, sincere from insincere utterances, and literal from nonliteral utterances, and so long as this role is not confused with the second, Carr's dilemma is avoided.

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¹ Holdcroft's theory, Carr's primary target, seems unable to accommodate the difference between these two cases. In his own reply to Carr (ANALYSIS 40.4, 1980, p. 210) he claims that in cases of joking his crucial condition (iv) is not satisfied because the speaker 'only pretends to satisfy (iv)'. Since the speaker makes it clear that he is joking, the hearer is provided with 'an overriding reason for not acting'. However, there remains the question whether the speaker intends to provide the hearer with any reason at all. Accordingly, an adequate formulation of Holdcroft's condition (iv) must take into account the difference between obvious insincerity and unseriousness. To do so it would, I believe, have to incorporate the notion of expressing an attitude.