Handout 1:
Grice’s Theory of Meaning
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1 Basics

• Both mental states (e.g., beliefs) and language (e.g., sentences) have intentionality.
• Grice’s idea: explain the intentionality of language by appeal to thought.
• Humpty-Dumpty’s Problem: You can’t make a word or sentence mean something just by wishing it.
• Grice’s solution: you get the belief into the sentence by thinking about the role the sentence plays in communication. More precisely:
  – Grice begins with an analysis of what communication is.
  – That analysis comprehends an analysis of the role of language in communication.
  – This analysis will then give us the tools to explain how specific bits of language have literal, linguistic meaning.

2 Natural vs. Non-Natural Meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURAL MEANING</th>
<th>NON-NATURAL MEANING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Those spots mean measles.</td>
<td>1. Those three rings on the bell (of the bus) mean that the bus is full.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Those spots didn’t mean anything to me, but to the doctor they meant measles.</td>
<td>2. That remark, ‘Smith couldn’t get on without his trouble and strife,’ means that Smith found his wife indispensable.</td>
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<td>3. The recent budget means that we shall have a hard year.</td>
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