

# On the Equivalence of the Pretense Account and Echoic Account of Irony

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**Keywords:** irony, pretense, illocutionary force, enunciator, Moore's Paradox, maxim of Quality

## Abstract

On the classic conception, irony is a trope in which the speaker conveys the opposite of what the sentence she utters literally means. Both the pretense account and the echoic account mark a radical departure from this long-standing view of irony. According to the pretense account, a person who ironically says that P merely pretends to say that P, making the utterance forceless. The echoic account maintains that the ironist echoes a thought she tacitly attributes to some person or type of person, while dissociating herself from that thought. This paper attempts to show that, contrary to what Sperber and Wilson have repeatedly claimed, the pretense theory has at least as much explanatory power as the echoic theory. The misconception of the pretense theory has to do with the misrepresentation of Grice as a proponent of the classic theory. Although Grice claims that the ironist blatantly flouts the first maxim of Quality, thus making as if to say that P, it is incorrect to construe the ironist as saying that not P instead of P. As Dummett says, acting the making of assertions is not doing less than making assertions, but doing more than that. The fact that the outrageousness of the utterance 'P, but I don't believe that P', a phenomenon known as 'Moore's Paradox', persists even when P is uttered ironically suggests that the ironist presents P as true, or equivalently, presents herself as performing an illocutionary act of asserting that P. In Ducrot's terminology, the utterer presents the agent of the locutionary act, the speaker, as identical with the agent of the illocutionary act, the enunciator. What characterizes irony as opposed to normal forceful utterances is that, while the utterer presents P as true, the circumstances manifestly contradict S's believing in the truth of P, and that S expects this to be recognized as such. A clear distinction must be made between the fact that it is manifest that P is forceless and the fact that the speaker can avow that she attributes the belief that P to some other agent from whom she distances herself. The ironist presents P as forceful, while making it manifest, without avowing it, that she is distinct from the enunciator of P. The possibility for the ironist to pretend to perform the illocutionary act of asserting that P without thereby pretending to perform any locutionary act associated with P is what makes the pretense account of irony substantially equivalent to the echoic account.

## 1. Seriousness and Irony

Linguistic expressions are used sometimes literally, sometimes not. Despite the repeated warning to the contrary (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), the distinction between literal and non-literal has been viewed as a real one for both linguists and lay speakers, at least from a synchronic perspective. Thus, the adjective ‘sharp’ is used literally in ‘sharp edge’, while it is used metaphorically in ‘sharp boundary’. Exactly the opposite course has been followed by the distinction between serious and non-serious, which, despite its indisputable reality, is still firmly embedded in the philosophical jargon, largely inaccessible to those who work within modern linguistic frameworks. The idea is rather simple: if you utter the sentence ‘I am a student’ to tell your profession, you use the sentence seriously, and if, on the other hand, you read the same sentence found in a textbook, you use it not seriously. Only in the first case can we say that a serious assertion is being made. Although seldom encountered in the linguistic literature, the distinction in question is not new. As with many other notions of contemporary linguistics, it can be traced back at least to Frege, followed by a number of subsequent philosophers including Austin and Searle.

[...] Thus if the sense of an assertoric sentence is not true, it is either false or fictitious, and it will generally be the latter if it contains a mock proper name. [...] Assertions in fiction are not to be taken seriously: they are only mock assertions. Even the thoughts are not to be taken seriously as in the science: they are only mock thoughts. (Frege 1969[1897]: 141-142/1979: 130)<sup>1</sup>

[...] a performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance – a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use – ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language. All this we are *excluding* from consideration. (Austin 1962: 22):

I contrast “serious” utterances with play-acting, teaching a language, reciting poems, practicing pronunciation, etc., and I contrast “literal” with metaphorical, sarcastic, etc. (Searle 1968: 406, n. 3)

Characteristic of utterances not seriously made is the fact that they trigger no pragmatic implication. If you make a serious assertion to the effect that you are a student, you are deemed to believe that you are a student, and this is the reason why the utterance ‘I am a student, but I don’t believe I am’ sound decisively odd and irrational. In general, the utterance of a declarative sentence S implies (but does not assert) that the utterer believes (or knows) that S (Moore 1942: 542). This is called a pragmatic implication, as opposed to logical or semantic entailment<sup>2</sup>. The linguistic meaning of S tells nothing whatsoever about who believes

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<sup>1</sup> „Wenn der Sinne eines Behauptungssatzes also nicht wahr ist, so ist er entweder falsch oder Dichtung, und dies letzte ist er im Allgemeinen, wenn ein Scheiengename darin vorkommt. [...] Die Behauptungen sind in der Dichtung nicht ernst zu nehmen: es sind nur Scheinbehauptungen. Auch die Gedanken sind nicht ernst zu nehmen wie in der Wissenschaft: es sind nur Scheigedanken.“

<sup>2</sup> Historically speaking, the term ‘pragmatic implication’ is redundant, because, according to Grant (1958), the English word ‘imply’ was first attested as meaning ‘pragmatically imply’.

or disbelieves that S; S entails neither that someone believes that S, nor that someone does not believe that S. Thus, ‘I am a student, but he does not believe I am’ makes perfect sense (cf. Bar-Hillel 1954: 376)<sup>3</sup>. Since there is no logical or semantic obstacle to replacing the subject of the second clause by ‘I’, the oddity or irrationality of ‘I am a student, but I don’t believe I am’ must be sought for outside the realm of logic or semantics. As Austin (1961/1970/1979: 246) puts it, “this is an outrageous thing to say, but it is not self-contradictory”<sup>4</sup>, embodying a paradox called Moore’s Paradox<sup>5</sup>. Construed against the contemporary pragmatic background, the outrageousness of such utterances arises from the breach of felicity conditions governing illocutionary acts in general. The sentence ‘I am a student’ does not entail that I believe that I am a student, but the act of asserting, with the utterance of that sentence, that I am a student is felicitously brought off only when I believe that I am a student<sup>6</sup>. Asserting that I am a student without believing that I am is as infelicitous as promising that I shall be there without having the least intention of being there.

As we have just said, pragmatic implications arise from illocutionary acts, whose performance is expected to comply with felicity conditions. As Grant (1958: 340) says, “a statement pragmatically implies those propositions whose falsity would render the making of the statement pointless”. Nevertheless, there are special cases where pragmatic implications are false and yet the utterer is not deemed irrational.

If the pragmatic implications of these verbal performances are false, the speaker can escape the charge of absurdity and irrationality only if he has been using this language in a special context such as reporting a conversation, telling a story, acting, testing a microphone, rehearsing a speech, performing an exercise in elocution, etc. etc. (Grant 1958: 309)

Special contexts Grant alludes to are exactly ones in which no serious assertions are being made. Since pragmatic implications arise from illocutionary acts, it seems to follow that no illocutionary acts are being performed in utterances not seriously made. In other words, such utterances lack illocutionary force. When someone uses the sentence ‘I am a student’ not seriously, she makes no assertion with assertive force, thus only pretending to make an assertion.

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[...] in ordinary language “imply” means “pragmatic implication.” It is the logical theorists in their talk of strict and material implication who give the word special and odd senses. The O.E.D. gives 1581 as the date of the earliest use of “imply” as meaning “pragmatic implication” [...]

(Grant 1958: 219-320)

<sup>3</sup> Bar-Hillel (1954: 376) contrasts (i) with (ii). Unlike (i), (ii) has nothing mysterious.

(i) I believe he has gone out, but he has not.

(ii) Dick believes Bill has gone but Bill has not.

<sup>4</sup> The utterance discussed by Austin (1961/1970/1979: 246) is ‘The cat is on the mat but I don’t believe it is’.

<sup>5</sup> Moore’s (1942: 543) original example is ‘I went to the pictures last Tuesday, but I don’t believe that I did.’

<sup>6</sup> The relevant clause stated originally in Austin (1962) runs as follows:

(Γ.I) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves [...] (Austin 1962: 15, 39)

One of the forceless utterances as just defined is verbal irony, a much discussed issue in the literature. When someone says ironically, “He is a fine friend”, she does not believe that he is really a fine friend. If the utterer is to escape the charge of absurdity and irrationality, it must be the case that, with the utterance in question, she performs no illocutionary act of assertion, or engages in some kind of pretense. This line of reasoning leads to what is called the pretense account of irony, according to which the speaker in irony is not asserting but merely pretending to assert that so and so. Grice (1978/1989) is arguably one of the first modern authors to have advocated a version of pretense account of irony, subsequently elaborated by a number of researchers such as Clark and Gerrig (1984), Walton (1990), Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995) and Currie (2006, 2008)<sup>7</sup>.

[...] irony is intimately connected with the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation. I cannot say something ironically unless what I say is intended to reflect a hostile or derogatory judgment or a feeling such as indignation or contempt. [...]

While I may without any inappropriateness prefix the employment of a metaphor with *to speak metaphorically*, there would be something very strange about saying, among other things, *to speak ironically, he is a splendid fellow*. To be ironical is, among other things, to pretend (as the etymology suggests), and while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as a pretense would spoil the effect. (Grice 1978/1989: 53-54)<sup>8</sup>

A caveat is in order here regarding the interpretation of the frequently used term ‘the Gricean view of irony’. Despite the remarkable similarity between Grice’s passage just quoted and the following remark made by Walton (1990), a champion of pretense, Grice is commonly considered to be rather a proponent of the classical view of irony, according to which irony is a trope in which the speaker conveys the opposite of what she says literally.

To speak ironically is to mimic or mock those one disagrees with, fictionally to assert what they do or might assert. Irony is sarcasm. One shows what it is like to make certain claims, hoping thereby to demonstrate how absurd or ridiculous it is to do so. (Walton 1990: 222)

The reading of Grice as an advocate of the classic theory is defended, among others, by Sperber (1984), Wilson and Sperber (1992, 2002, 2012) and Wilson (2006).

Modern pragmatic definitions of verbal irony remain firmly in the classical tradition. According to Grice (1975: 53), the ironist deliberately flouts the maxim of truthfulness, implicating the opposite of what was literally said. The only significant difference between this and the classical rhetorical

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<sup>7</sup> According to Currie’s (2008: 14) remark, credited to Kevin Mulligan, a similar view was earlier defended by Rudolf Janke (1929) *Das Wesen der Ironie: Eine Strukturanalyse ihrer Erscheinungsformen*, Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth.

<sup>8</sup> The English word ‘irony’ comes from the ancient Greek ‘εἰρωνεία’ (eirōneía), which, according to *A Greek–English Lexicon* (1940, Oxford: Clarendon Press), means “*dissimulation*, i.e. *ignorance purposely affected to provoke or confound an antagonist*, a mode of argument used by Socrates against the Sophists”.

account is that what was classically analysed as a figurative meaning is reanalysed as a figurative implication or implicature. (Wilson and Sperber 1992: 54)

More generally, the definition of irony as the trope in which the speaker communicates the opposite of the literal meaning does not do justice to the very rich and varied effects of irony. The standard Gricean approach to irony thus fails to explain not only what triggers the pragmatic inference process, but what its output is. (Wilson 2006: 1726)

From Classical antiquity to Gricean pragmatics, there has been a rich literature in linguistics, rhetoric and literary studies on the nature and use of irony. With the exception of the Romantics [...] all this literature accepts the basic tenet of the Classical approach, that irony consists first and foremost in a reversal of meaning [...]. (Wilson and Sperber 2012: 125)

These remarks, however, largely misrepresent Grice's view, drawing exclusively on Grice's (1975/1989) brief remark:

*Irony.* X, with whom A has been on close terms until now, has betrayed a secret of A's to a business rival. A and his audience both know this. A says '*X is a fine friend*'. (Gloss: It is perfectly obvious to A and his audience that what A has said or has made as if to say is something he does not believe, and the audience knows that A knows that this is obvious to the audience. So, unless A's utterance is entirely pointless, A must be trying to get across some other proposition than the one he purports to be putting forward. This must be some obviously related proposition; the most obviously related proposition is the contradictory of the one he purports to be putting forward.)

(Grice 1975: 53/1989: 34)

In this passage, Grice by no means advocates the view that irony in general must be defined as the trope in which the speaker conveys the opposite of what the sentence she utters literally means. He merely says that, as far as the sentence '*X is a fine friend*' uttered in the specific context depicted is concerned, the proposition most likely to be conveyed is the contradictory of what the sentence uttered literally means. As Wilson (2006: 1724) rightly notes, Grice is fully aware that his brief remark is far from the definition of irony, acknowledging in a later work that "something is missing in this account" (Grice 1975/1989: 53). Sperber (1984: 136) contends that Grice's (1975/1989, 1978/1989) work should be interpreted in line with the classical approach of irony on the ground that Grice's later remarks "are not offered as a replacement for the former theory (actually, both articles belong to the same series of lectures), nor do they integrate with it in any clear way". There are, however, two points to be made about the way Sperber interprets Grice's remarks. On the one hand, as just noted, Grice (1975/1989) proposes no theory of irony, only suggesting that some ironical utterances may fall within the category of utterances called Group C (Grice 1975: 52/1989: 33), which give rise to implicatures in virtue of blatantly flouting some conversational maxim. As will be discussed below, this characterization is no less compatible with the pretense theory of irony than with the classical theory. On the other hand, Grice (1978/1989) makes no attempts to replace the

earlier account by a novel account, as attested by the fact that he says that something is “missing” in the former account, and not that something is “wrong”. The most natural reading of Grice’s later remarks would be that he attempted to supplement his earlier account based on conversational implicature with the notion of pretense, which, as often pointed out, was already lurking in his theory of conversational implicature. Indeed, the very definition of conversational implicature rests on the possibility of “making as if to say” something.

I am now in a position to characterize the notion of conversational implicature. A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q*, may be said to have conversationally implicated that *q*, provided (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* (or doing so in *those* terms) 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 1975: 49-50/1989: 30-31)

This possibility is closely tied to what Grice calls Group C, where, as noted above, one conveys some implicature in virtue of blatantly flouting some conversational maxim. When the maxim targeted is the maxim of Quality, the speaker is not saying what the sentence he utters literally means, that is, he is making as if to say what he says. My claim, therefore, is that one can hardly do justice to the equation of the classical view of irony with the ‘Gricean’ view, and, *a fortiori*, with the ‘standard Gricean’ view, as Wilson (2006) puts it. If there is a view one can qualify as ‘Gricean’, it should rather be equated with some form of pretense theory, as suggested by Grice’s own remark quoted above that “[t]o be ironical is, among other things, to pretend (as the etymology suggests)” (Grice 1978/1989: 54)<sup>9</sup>.

The Gricean view of irony, as properly understood, is often considered to be at odds with another view, ‘the echoic account of irony’ (Sperber 1984, Sperber and Wilson 1992, Wilson 2006, Wilson and Sperber 2012), according to which “verbal irony is a sub-type of echoic use in which the speaker (generally tacitly) expresses one of a range of dissociative attitudes (scepticism, mockery, rejection, etc.) to a (generally tacitly) attributed utterance or thought” (Wilson 2006: 1730). In what follows, I will show that the dispute between the two camps stems from the misconception of what it is for an utterance to be forceless. The distinction between the notions ‘pretense’ and ‘echo’ as applied to irony is, as has sometimes been suggested, largely (if not fully) terminological rather than substantial.

## 2. Forcelessness and the Maxim of Quality

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<sup>9</sup> Despite the textual evidence, Wilson and Sperber (2012) prefer, it seems, to stick to the alleged ‘Gricean’ account of irony.

Although Grice’s account of irony is very much in line with the Classic approach, he is sometimes credited, in particular by Clark and Gerrig (1984), with an early version of the pretense account.

(Wilson and Sperber 2012: 134)

Wilson (2006: 1734) mentions the view that Grice is a proponent of the pretense account of irony without yet endorsing it at all.

While there is a disagreement, as we have seen, about whether Grice may or should be viewed as a pretense theorist, it is beyond any doubt that, for Grice, the interpretation of an ironical utterance may involve an infringement of his first maxim of Quality: “Do not say what you believe to be false” (Grice 1975: 46/1989: 27). Wilson (2006: 1725) contends that this idea is detrimental to the overall Gricean framework as well as to the Gricean analysis of irony.

One problem is that in order to reanalyse figurative meanings as implicatures, Grice had to extend both his notion of implicature and his account of how implicatures are derived. A speaker’s meaning typically consists of what is said, together with any implicatures. Regular implicatures are added to what was said, and their recovery either restores the assumption that the speaker has obeyed the Co-operative Principle and maxims in saying what she said (in those particular terms), or explains why a maxim has been violated (as in the case of a clash). In Grice’s account of tropes, however, nothing is said. The speaker’s meaning consists only of an implicature, and the recovery of this implicature neither restores the assumption that the Co-operative Principle and maxims have been obeyed (if the speaker has said something she believes to be false, the situation cannot be remedied by the recovery of an implicature) nor explains why a maxim has been violated. In order to accommodate tropes, Grice thus had to abandon the basic idea that an implicature is an elaboration of the speaker’s meaning required to bring the overall interpretation of the utterance as close as possible to satisfying the Co-operative Principle and maxims. (Wilson 2006: 1725)

This is another, much more radical, misrepresentation of Grice (1975/1989), however. First of all, Grice does not reserve the term ‘regular’ for any of the three groups of implicatures he proposes.

*Group A: Examples in which no maxim is violated. or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated (Grice 1975: 51/1989: 32)*

*Group B: An example in which a maxim is violated, but its violation is to be explained by the supposition of a clash with another maxim (Grice 1975: 51/ 1989: 32)*

*Group C: Examples that involve exploitation, that is, a procedure by which a maxim is flouted for the purpose of getting in a conversational implicature by means of something of the nature of a figure of speech (Grice 1975: 52/1989: 33)*

According to Wilson’s interpretation of Grice, Groups A and B constitute typical or regular cases of implicatures, whereas Group C, to which irony belongs, constitutes a peculiar case for which an extension of Grice’s “notion of implicature and his account of how implicatures are derived” is required, because nothing is said when an implicature of Group C is produced. In (1), an example of Group A, the utterer of (1B) conveys both what he says and what he implicates.

(1) A: I am out of petrol.

B: There is a garage round the corner.

(1B) says that there is a garage round the corner to implicate that the utterer of (1A) should go to the garage to refuel her car. Similarly, in (2), an example of Group B, the utterer of (2B) says that his friend C lives somewhere in the South of France, implicating that he does not know in which town she lives.

(2) A: Where does C live?

B: Somewhere in the South of France.

What matters here is that the utterer of (1B) believes that there is a garage round the corner, and that the utterer of (2B) believes that C lives somewhere in the South of France. In alleged regular cases of implicatures, the utterer believes both what he says and what he implicates. This may not be the case with Group C, where the maxim of Quality may be infringed, as in an ironical utterance like (3).

(3) X is a fine friend.

Since the utterer of (3) does not believe that X is a fine friend, Wilson is certainly right in saying that, in (3), “[t]he speaker’s meaning consists only of an implicature”. But she misrepresents the Gricean framework in going on to say that “the recovery of this implicature neither restores the assumption that the Co-operative Principle and maxims have been obeyed”. To be sure, it is not the case that the utterer of (3) follows both the Cooperative Principle and maxims, but, crucially, there is no assumption in Grice’s theory that both the Cooperative Principle and maxims must be obeyed. Recall that Grice (1975: 49-50/1989: 30-31) begins his definition of implicature as follows: “A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q*, may be said to have conversationally implicated that *q*, provided (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the cooperative principle [...]”. The speaker is presumed, Grice here says, to be observing “the conversational maxims, *or at least* the cooperative principle”, not “the Co-operative Principle *and* maxims” as Wilson says (emphases mine). The phrase “or at least” is intended to make it clear that being possibly infringed constitutes a built-in feature of the conversational maxims. Without this feature, no utterance would be capable of generating implicatures of Groups B and C in any context, making the distinction between the Cooperative Principle and the four maxims utterly useless. Insofar as that distinction is essential in Grice’s theory, utterances of Group C, in which the speaker’s meaning may consist, as in (3), only of what she implicates, are no less “regular” than utterances of Groups A and B, in which what is implicated is conveyed in addition to what is said. Grice never endorsed “the basic idea that an implicature is [always] an elaboration of the speaker’s meaning”.

It bears emphasis that Grice spends many more pages discussing Group C than Groups A and B. Counting, as Wilson (2006: 1725) does, Groups A and B, but not Group C, as ‘regular’ cases of implicatures cannot be a correct move, insofar as one defines, as Wilson (2006: 1725) does, pragmatics as “a theory of overt communication and comprehension”. The question to be asked here is what is overtly communicated in each case. In Group A, both what is said and what is implicated are overtly communicated, because the

utterer of (1B) would not be judged to be rational if he did not implicate that the utterer of (1A) should go to the garage to refuel her car. The rationality of the utterance in (1B) rests on the utterer's intention to convey this implicature. In Group B, by contrast, only what is said is overtly communicated. As Récanati (1979: 101) points out, even if the utterer of (2B) intends to insinuate that he does not know in which town C lives, the hearer cannot recognize whether this is the point of his utterance. The implicature in question is conveyed by the utterer's saying what he says, without resting on his overt intention to convey the implicature. Whether or not the utterer may intend to imply that he does not know in which town C lives, his utterance conveys the implicature unless there is evidence to the contrary. Finally, in Group C, only what is implicated is overtly conveyed. The utterer of (3) succeeds in conveying that X is not a good friend only insofar as he succeeds in conveying his intention to convey the implicature. The hearer understands the utterance as an ironical one exactly at the moment when she recognizes the utterer's intention to be ironical. As Récanati (1979: 103) puts it, while the utterer of (2B) cannot be as informative as required, the utterer of (3) could respect the maxims if he wished, but he does not want to. To the extent that the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention is essential, implicatures of Group C fall within the realm of pragmatics as "a theory of overt communication and comprehension" without any qualification.

Following Wilson and Sperber (2002: 590), Wilson (2006: 1726, n. 7) gives yet another reason why utterances like (3) fail to fit into the overall architecture of Grice's framework. As said above, utterances of Group C give rise to implicatures in virtue of blatantly flouting a conversational maxim. In irony, the maxim violated is the first maxim of Quality, or, in Wilson's and Sperber's (2002: 585) terminology, the maxim of truthfulness. Wilson (2006: 1726, n. 7) maintains, following Wilson's and Sperber's (2002: 590) suggestion, that this account has no general validity, because, in her view, "the first maxim of Quality has no other pragmatic function in Grice's framework than to be violated in tropes". This view, however, departs from Grice's, which explicitly gives priority to the first maxim of Quality, whose satisfaction constitutes the very ground for the functioning of the other maxims.

It is obvious that the observance of some of these maxims is a matter of less urgency than is the observance of others; a man who has expressed himself with undue prolixity would, in general, be open to milder comment than would a man who has said something he believes to be false. Indeed, it might be felt that the importance of at least the first maxim of Quality is such that it should not be included in a scheme of the kind I am constructing; other maxims come into operation only on the assumption that this maxim of Quality is satisfied. (Grice 1975: 46/1989: 27)

The peculiarity of the first maxim of Quality is evidenced by Moore's paradox discussed in Section 1 above. Let P represent a declarative sentence. The sequence of utterances in (4d) can hardly occur felicitously in any context, in contrast with the sequences in (4a-c).

- (4) a. Quantity: P. But I can't say more.
- b. Relation: P. But I don't think this is relevant to the present discussion.
- c. Manner: P. But I don't think this is a good way of putting it.
- d. Quality: P. But I don't believe that P.

The oddity of (4d) is accounted for, in the Gricean framework, in terms of the first maxim of Quality, a maxim underlying the rationality of everyday conversation. To say that P is not merely to express proposition P, but to present P as true, in conformity with that maxim. One might object that this cannot be a general principle, because ironical utterances violate the maxim in question, or rather, nothing is said in tropes, as Wilson (2006: 1725) claims following Wilson and Sperber (2002: 590). Thus, the utterer of (3) does not say that X is a fine friend, merely making as if to say that X is. Since nothing is said in (3), there is in fact no violation of the maxim of truthfulness, making the Gricean account of irony virtually vacuous. However, this objection overlooks the fact Moore's paradox survives irony. An utterance like (5) is infelicitous, even if the first clause is intended as ironical.

(5) X is a fine friend, but I don't believe he is.

The outrageousness of (5) suggests that the proposition expressed by an ironical utterance is not merely expressed, but asserted. The first maxim of Quality is so fundamental as to force even an ironist to present every declarative sentence as one which she takes to be true. As Ducrot (1984: 210) says, for an ironical utterance to be successful, no sign of mentioning can appear in the utterance, and it is mandatory to make it appear as if a speech act were actually performed in that very utterance. This is arguably what Grice means when he says, as seen in Section 1, that "while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as a pretense would spoil the effect" (Grice 1978/1989: 54). Being ironical is, to employ Strawson's (1964) term, a form of insinuating in that the intention is essentially nonavowable.

The whole point of insinuating is that the audience is to *suspect*, but not more than suspect, the intention, for example, to induce or disclose a certain belief. The intention one has in insinuating is essentially nonavowable. (Strawson 1964: 454)

However, being nonavowable does not entail being covert, or equivalently, being overt does not entail being avowable. It is not only that, as Wilson and Sperber (2002: 627) say, "there is an infinite supply of true information which is not worth attending to", but also that, as Ducrot (1972: 5) says, there are a lot of things which are manifest but which one can hardly talk about, for mainly social reasons. What is characteristic of an ironical utterance P is that, while the utterer S presents P as true, the circumstances manifestly contradict S's believing in the truth of P, and, importantly, S knows this. It is plain that S does not believe that P, but this does not allow S, an ironist, to avow that his utterance contradicts his belief, as shown by the fact that even an ironical utterance succumbs to Moore's paradox. Grice's claim that an ironist S flouts the maxim of truthfulness should not then be interpreted as saying that S avows that he does so. For S to flout the maxim of truthfulness is not for S to present an utterance P as false, but rather for S to present it as true, while expecting that the circumstances will reveal that S disbelieves that P. There is a genuine violation here, as against Wilson and Sperber (2002) and Wilson (2006), albeit a nonavowable one. The relation between 'saying' and 'making as if to say' can be schematized as follows.

- (6) S {makes as if/pretends} to say that P if S says that P while blatantly flouting the first maxim of Quality.

It is important to note that ‘S says that P’ on the right side of ‘if’ must be read as ‘S presents P as true’, and not just ‘S expresses P’. Even in irony, the speaker says what he says, i.e. presents himself as performing an illocutionary act of assertion, and the Cooperative Principles and maxims come into play accordingly. What distinguishes irony from normal forceful cases is that, while presenting P as true, the speaker expects the circumstances to reveal that he in fact does not believe that P. As we have seen in Section 1, pragmatic implications are cancelled in irony, making the utterance forceless. This is what is meant by the left side of ‘if’ in (6), ‘S {makes as if/pretends} to say that P’, where ‘say that P’ amounts to ‘seriously/actually perform an illocutionary act of asserting that P’. In the Gricean framework, the verb ‘say’ means either ‘to present as true’ or ‘to seriously/actually perform an illocutionary act of assertion’. When Neale (1992) says, “If *U* utters the sentence “Bill is an honest man” ironically, on Grice’s account *U* will *not* have said that Bill is an honest man: *U* will have *made as if to say* that Bill is an honest man”, he uses the verb ‘say’ in the latter, stronger sense. *U* has not said, in the stronger sense, that Bill is an honest man, but *U* has said, in the weaker sense, that Bill is an honest man, i.e., *U* has presented his utterance as true. If Neale’s use of the verb were interpreted in the weaker sense, it would be the case that *U* had even not presented his utterance as true, leaving the oddity of ‘Bill is an honest man, but I don’t believe he is’ unaccounted for.

Now something has to be said about why the conjunction used in (6) is ‘if’ rather than ‘iff’. The use of the biconditional in (6) would suggest that the notion of pretense is defined in terms of the notion of falsity. This definition is unwarrantedly narrow, however. As Wilson and Sperber (1992: 54-56, 61) and Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995: 5) emphasize, one can be ironical without thereby violating the first maxim of Quality. Thus, an ironical understatement such as (7a) is obviously not false, since being blind with rage semantically entails being upset. Similarly, the statement in (7b) is true, “but is also insincere as a compliment” (Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown 1995: 5). Although questions are by definition neither true nor false, they can be ironically used as in (7c).

- (7) a. (About a man blind with rage) You can tell he’s upset. (Wilson and Sperber 1992: 54)  
 b. (Addressed to someone who is indeed knowledgeable but is being obnoxious about it)  
 You sure know a lot. (Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown 1995: 5-8, 19)  
 c. (Addressed to someone acting inappropriately for their age) How old did you say you were? (Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown 1995: 4) / How old are you? (Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown 1995: 6, 19)

The point of irony lies, Wilson and Sperber claim, in dissociating oneself from a thought one echoes, the reason for and degree of the dissociation varying from context to context. In some cases, the ironist may dissociate himself from the thought under consideration for exactly the reason that it is plainly false, as in (3) above, but this is far from the whole story of irony. Even though Wilson and Sperber construe this fact to argue against the Gricean view of irony, the discussion so far is sufficient, we believe, to regard Grice as a pretense theorist of irony. What Grice fails to do is to develop a sufficiently comprehensive theory of

irony to allow one to substitute ‘iff’ for ‘if’ in (6). Nevertheless, Grice succeeds in establishing that, at least in some ironical utterances, the notion of conversational maxim is closely tied to the notion of pretense.

### 3. The Pretense Account vs. The Echoic Account

In their series of papers, Sperber and Wilson defend the echoic account of irony, according to which the ironist echoes, as with free indirect speech, a thought tacitly attributed to some person or type or person, while dissociating herself from that thought. Although the pretense account and the echoic account have much in common, including the rejection of classic account (Sperber 1984: 130, Currie 2006: 112, Wilson and Sperber 2012: 126), Sperber and Wilson claim the echoic account to be superior to the pretense account. What the pretense account of irony fails to take into account is, according to Sperber and Wilson, the fact that “the attitude expressed in irony is primarily to a thought or utterance that the speaker attributes to some identifiable person or type of person, or to people in general” (Wilson 2006: 1735). Merely pretending to assert something is not sufficient to make the utterance ironical, as shown by Grice’s (1978/1989) famous example.

A and B are walking down the street, and they both see a car with a shattered window. B says, *Look, that car has all its windows intact*. A is baffled. B says, *You didn’t catch on; I was in an ironical way drawing your attention to the broken window*. (Grice, 1978/1989: 53)

In this situation, it is manifest to both A and B that the car in question has a shattered window. Thus, for B to utter (8) might appear to conform to the definition of pretense given in (6) above; B says that the car has all its windows intact, while blatantly flouting the first maxim of Quality.

(8) That car has all its windows intact. (Grice 1978/1989: 53)

As Grice points out, however, B’s utterance of (8) in this context sounds at most absurd rather than ironical. What is missing from (8) is, Grice (1978/1989: 53) says, “the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation”.

The absurdity of this exchange is I think to be explained by the fact that irony is intimately connected with the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation. I cannot say something ironically unless what I say is intended to reflect a hostile or derogatory judgment or a feeling such as indignation or contempt. (Grice 1978/1989: 53-54)

The problem with this view is that for B to add “the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation” to her utterance of (8) does not seem to remedy the absurdity of her utterance. What is really missing from the scenario is, according to Wilson and Sperber (1992: 60), the motivation for B to “[echo] a thought she attributes to someone else, while dissociating herself from it with anything from mild ridicule to savage scorn”. Irony embodies an attributive use of language together with indirect speech, i.e., it does not describe

a state of affairs, but represents another person's thought<sup>10</sup>. To the extent that, unlike the notion of pretense, the notion of echo essentially involves another person's thought to be echoed, the pretense account can be an alternative to the echoic account only when it is supplemented with what the echoic account is inherently equipped with (Wilson 2006: 1740). Wilson and Sperber (2012: 136) conclude:

[...] what would make the utterance 'Look, that car has all its windows intact' a successful case of verbal irony would be the fact that some recognizable person or a type of person has entertained, is entertaining or might entertain or express a thought with a similar content whose inappropriateness or inadequacy would be worth remarking on. This is the main idea behind the echoic account. Unless the pretense account is extended to include the idea that irony is tacitly attributive, it is hard to see how it can handle counterexamples such as Grice's at all. (Wilson and Sperber 2012: 136)

Wilson's and Sperber's conception of pretense is unwarrantedly narrow, however. The pretense account of irony is not dealing with the common understanding of the word 'pretense' or 'pretend', but the specific notion of 'pretend to say', as illustrated in (6)<sup>11</sup>. As Austin (1962) famously says, when one says something in the sense of the word 'say' relevant to pragmatics, one may simultaneously perform three distinct acts; "the locutionary act (and within it the phonetic, the phatic, and the rhetic acts) which has a *meaning*; the illocutionary act which has a certain *force* in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is *the achieving of certain effects* by saying something" (Austin 1962: 120). Austin elaborates these three notions in the following passage, appearing in lecture IX:

We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a *locutionary act*, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense. Second, we said that we also perform *illocutionary acts* such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also

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<sup>10</sup> In Wilson's and Sperber's (2012: 128-129) view, descriptive uses of language concern an actual or possible state of affairs, whereas attributive uses of language are targeted at a thought the speaker attributes to some source other than herself. As Wilson (2006: 1731) says, "[a]ttributive uses of language in general are constrained by considerations of faithfulness rather than truthfulness". Echoic use is a subtype of attributive use, and its primary intention consists in conveying the speaker's attitude or reaction to the thought attributed, rather than providing information corresponding to that thought. Since irony embodies an echoic use of language, it is constrained by faithfulness as opposed to truthfulness, which makes it look like a case where Grice's maxim of truthfulness is violated.

<sup>11</sup> The ambiguity of the term 'pretense' is noted by Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995: 5, n. 2):

We use the term *pretense* to refer to pragmatic insincerity. The same term was used by Clark and Gerrig (1984) to refer to an ironist who is "pretending to be an injudicious person speaking to an uninitiated audience" (p. 121). Their use of the pretense concept is confined to the use of propositions, in the tradition of Grice (1975). If such pretense is extended to the full range of speech acts, it becomes equivalent to our concept of pragmatic insincerity.

(Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown 1995: 5, n. 2)

As will be clearer below, the term 'pretense' refers, in my account, to the cases where there is a discrepancy between the speaker and the enunciator, while they are presented as identical.

perform *perlocutionary acts*: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading.

What concerns us here is the distinction between locutionary act and illocutionary act<sup>12</sup>. In most (or typical) cases, “[t]o perform a locutionary act is [...] also and *eo ipso* to perform an illocutionary act” (Austin 1962: 98). Thus, when you utter the sentence, ‘I am a student’, in response to the question, ‘What do you do?’, you perform a locutionary act of uttering a sentence of English which has a meaning specified by the grammar of that language, and thereby perform an illocutionary act of asserting that you are a student. Of particular importance is the fact that, although the locutionary and illocutionary acts are simultaneously performed, these are conceptually distinct, it being possible in principle to talk about either one without invoking the other.

[...] we have here an illustration of the different uses of the expression, ‘uses of language’, or ‘use of a sentence’, &c. –‘use’ is a hopelessly ambiguous or wide word, just as is the word ‘meaning’,

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<sup>12</sup> Searle (1968: 412-413) rejects the distinction under consideration here on the ground that it is not possible to define locutionary acts with the exclusion of corresponding illocutionary acts. For Searle (1968: 213), every locutionary act is an illocutionary act. Recanati (1987: 258-259 [1981: 246-247], 2019) objects to Searle’s reading of Austin by saying that locutionary and illocutionary acts can be neatly kept apart, because locutionary acts are nothing but ‘indicated’ illocutionary acts.

[...] perhaps we can keep the term “locutionary act” for those illocutionary acts that are indicated. To be sure, this move must be ruled out if it results in the claim that every locutionary act is an illocutionary act, then the locutionary/illocutionary distinction would collapse. [...] A painted unicorn is not a unicorn, it is a painting of a unicorn (Goodman 1949: 5). Now, in the same way as there can be a painted unicorn without there being a unicorn, there can be an indicated illocutionary act without there *being* a corresponding illocutionary act. This means that the speaker’s utterance may indicate the performance [= tropic] of a certain illocutionary act without the latter being actually performed [= neustic]. It follows that we can use the expression “locutionary act” for indicated illocutionary acts *qua* indicated illocutionary acts without giving up the locutionary/illocutionary distinction. (Recanati 1987: 258-259 [1981: 246-247])

Recanati’s (1987[1981], 2019) distinction between ‘indicated illocutionary acts’ and ‘illocutionary acts actually performed’ corresponds, Recanati acknowledges, to Hare’s (1970/1972) distinction between ‘tropic’ and ‘neustic’.

In that book [= Hare (1952)], I used a particle called the neustic, which did two jobs, one of them that of the Frege-Russell assertion sign [...]; the other job that my neustic did was that of a sign of mood to differentiate imperatives and indicatives. I now think that, in the supposed interests of simplicity, I sinned against the light by blurring the distinction between sign of mood and sign of subscription. The commonly used expression “assertion sign” can easily lead us to ignore this distinction [...]. For this sin I will now try to atone by using the term “neustic” more narrowly for the sign of subscription to an assertion or other speech act, and inventing a new term “tropic” (from the Greek word for “mood” [τρόπος (trópos)]) for the sign of mood. (Hare 1970: 20-21/1972: 90)

Although Recanati does not note, Hare’s position is not exactly the same as Recanati’s, in that Hare recognizes the presence of the force-neutral core in the meaning of a sentence, the ‘phrastic’, common to (i) and (ii) for instance.

- (i) Shut the door.
- (ii) You are going to shut the door.

We shall need technical terms for referring to these different parts of sentences. [...] I shall coin entirely new words. I shall call the part of the sentence that is common to both moods (‘Your shutting the door in the immediate future’) the *phrastic*; and the part that is different in the case of commands and statements (‘yes’ or ‘please’) the *neustic*. (Hare 1952: § 2.1)

which it has become customary to deride. But ‘use’, its supplanter, is not in much better case. We may entirely clear up the ‘use of a sentence’ on a particular occasion, in the sense of the locutionary act, without yet touching upon its use in the sense of an *illocutionary* act. (Austin 1962: 100)

To the locutionary and illocutionary acts correspond two conceptually distinct actors, who in most (or typical) cases happen to be one and the same. Ducrot (1980: 39, 43) calls the actor who performs the locutionary act ‘the speaker’ (‘locuteur’), and the actor who perform the illocutionary act ‘the enunciator’ (‘énonciateur’). On this view, a speech act is essentially polyphonic, both the speaker and the enunciator always coming into play (Ducrot 1980: 44)<sup>13</sup>. It is important to note that the distinction between speaker and enunciator is not stipulated, but derives naturally from the distinction between locutionary act and illocutionary act. Just as the notion of rent, for instance, activates the roles ‘tenant’ and ‘landlord’, so any speech act brings into play the roles ‘speaker’ and ‘enunciator’. Thus, when S utters a sentence P, S presents her utterance as involving two agents, one of whom is the speaker performing an act of uttering, the other being the enunciator performing an act of asserting that P, asking if P, promising that P, and so on and so forth, depending on the force (Hare’s (1970/1972)’s neustic) exhibited by the utterance of P. In uttering P, S attributes the thought corresponding to P to the enunciator, whoever it may be. So there is a sense in which every utterance is attributive, varying only as to who is the enunciator, a question particularly relevant to the interpretation of irony, as will be discussed shortly.

Wilson and Sperber (2012: 136) claim that “[u]nless the pretense account is extended to include the idea that irony is tacitly attributive, it is hard to see how it can handle counterexamples such as Grice’s at all”. The pretense account needs no extension, however, insofar as every speech act is inherently attributive. What is crucial is the fact that the speaker and the enunciator can be distinct, not only conceptually but also physically. While in serious assertions the speaker is identical with the enunciator (Ducrot 1984: 157, 212, 214, 231, Recanati 2019: 1410), there are a number of cases in which the two diverge. Thus, when an actor says on stage, “I am a student”, he performs a locutionary act of uttering a sentence of English which has a meaning specified by the grammar of that language, without thereby performing an illocutionary act of asserting that he is a student; he is just playing the part of a student. In this case, the speaker is the actor, while the enunciator is the student, a character in the play. The speaker attributes to the student, but not to himself, the thought that he is a student. The student believes that he is a student, while the actor does not

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<sup>13</sup> On Ducrot’s (1980: 38-41) view, there can be more than one enunciator in one and the same utterance, or equivalently, there can be more than one illocutionary act being performed by one and the same utterance. Thus, the utterance of (i) simultaneously invokes two enunciators, one of whom performs an act of promising addressed to his compatriots, the other an act of warning addressed to the enemy.

(i) We shall never surrender.

It is generally agreed that (ii) presupposes that Paul used to smoke and asserts that he does not smoke.

(ii) Paul stopped smoking.

Ducrot (1972: Ch. 3) puts forward the view that the utterer of (ii) performs an act of presupposing, in addition to an act of asserting. Ducrot (1980: 39-40) modifies his earlier view, claiming instead that (ii) brings into play two enunciators, each of whom performs an act of assertion. The first enunciator, corresponding to ‘the public voice’, asserts that Paul used to smoke, while the second enunciator, corresponding to the utterer of (ii), asserts that Paul does not smoke. For Ducrot, then, even a banal utterance like (ii) is essentially polyphonic, making the cases where the speaker is not identical with the enunciator(s) the rule rather than the exception (Ducrot 1980: 38).

believe that he, the actor, is a student, making his utterance forceless. As Recanati (2019: 1410) puts it, “[i]n these cases, the speaker does not ‘subscribe to’ or ‘endorse’ what he or she says”, and “[r]esponsibility for the illocutionary act is displaced to some other agent, actual or potential”. For an utterance to be forceless is for the speaker and the enunciator to diverge, not only conceptually but also physically<sup>14</sup>. The notion of forcelessness can now be defined as in (9).

- (9) An utterance U is forceless iff the speaker of U is physically distinct from the enunciator associated with U.

Two cautionary remarks are in order about the definition in (9). Firstly, it is not correct to construe ‘forceless’ merely as ‘lack of identity between the speaker and the enunciator’. This construal naturally arises when too much attention is drawn to the suffix ‘-less’ attached to ‘force’. In forceful cases, the speaker is identical with the enunciator, whereas forceless cases emerge, on the construal under consideration, when this identity fails to hold. This construal, however, is likely to distort the real nature of certain forceless cases. Although, as Recanati (2019: 1410) says, in forceless utterances “[r]esponsibility for the illocutionary act is displaced to some other agent, actual or potential”, the speaker does not merely escape responsibility, as we can see from the impossibility for an actor to utter (10) on stage.

- (10) I am a student, but in real life I’m not a student.

If the actor had no responsibility at all for the illocutionary act performed by the enunciator associated with his utterance, it would be possible for him to avow that his utterance had no assertive force, as in (10). This is clearly not the case. The fact that the utterance has no assertive force is nonavowable in Strawson’s (1965: 454) sense. This is in sharp contrast with indirect speech, as in (11a), where the speaker is John and the enunciator of the declarative clause “I am a student” is Mary. It is Mary, not John, who asserts or judges that John is a student. What makes (11a) different from (10) is the fact that John, the speaker, is entitled to avow that the subpart of (11a), “I am a student”, is forceless, explicitly ascribing the thought that he is a student to Mary rather than himself, as in (11b),

- (11) a. (John’s utterance) Mary believes that I am a student.  
b. (John’s utterance) Mary believes that I am a student, but in fact I’m not.

The contrast between (10) and (11b) suggests that utterances made by an actor on stage are not merely forceless. We should rather think that the actor always presents his lines as forceful, and that what makes the lines forceless is to be found outside the act of reciting lines. This is exactly what Dummett (1973) maintains in the famous passage:

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<sup>14</sup> Recanati (2019: 1410) says that in forceless utterances “[r]esponsibility for the illocutionary act is displaced to some other agent, actual or potential, or to some other temporal slice of the same agent, in an echoic manner”. It is assumed here that temporal slices of the same agent are physically distinct from each other, thus fitting into the definition given in (9).

The reason he [= the actor] is not making assertions is not that he is doing *less* than that – merely expressing thoughts, say – but that he is doing *more* than that – he is acting the making of assertions. What constitutes his doing this is his uttering the assertoric sentence [...] in a context which determines the significance of everything he does in that context – on the stage in a theatre at an announced time. This general context is enough: it is not necessary for him to preface every sentence (and every conventional action) by a sign to show that it has this special significance – a sign for the ‘dramatic force’. (Dummett 1973: 311)

Acting the making of assertions is not doing less than making assertions. On the contrary, the actor on stage presents his lines as forceful, as with normal forceful cases, while, in addition, intentionally making it plain, without yet being able to avow it, that responsibility for the illocutionary act is displaced to some other agent. Dummett says that “it is not necessary for him to preface every sentence (and every conventional action) by a sign to show that it has this special significance – a sign for the ‘dramatic force’”. To be more accurate, the word ‘necessary’ should be replaced by ‘possible. The actor presents his utterance of a declarative sentence as having an assertive force, not a ‘dramatic force’; otherwise the play would be spoiled. What actually gives the utterance a dramatic force as opposed to an assertive force is not the actor’s utterance *pe se*, but the circumstances surrounding the utterance. Hanks (2015, 2019) calls such circumstances ‘cancellation contexts’<sup>15</sup>.

Stage acting is a good example of what I mean by a cancellation context. Suppose an actor says ‘Clinton is eloquent’ while acting in a play. In uttering these words the actor does exactly the same sort of thing that Obama does when he asserts that Clinton is eloquent. Both the actor and Obama predicate the property of being eloquent of Clinton. The difference is that when the actor performs this act of predication he is subject to conventions about stage acting that cancel the normal requirements and consequences of acts of predication. (Hanks 2015: 94)

Pretending to say something is not doing less than saying something, contrary to what Sperber and Wilson assume; it is saying something in a cancellation context. This is what happens in irony. The ironist presents his utterance as forceful, i.e., presents himself as performing both locutionary and illocutionary acts, while, in addition, intentionally making it manifest, without yet being able to avow it, that he is not in fact the enunciator performing the illocutionary act. He is cognizant that the circumstances reveal that the

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<sup>15</sup> Hanks’s (2015, 2019) cancellation contexts include both linguistic and non-linguistic ones. The disjunction ‘or’ creates a cancellation context in which the assertive force of both disjuncts are cancelled. A similar remark applies to ‘if’. Stage acting is a non-linguistic convention that triggers a cancellation context, in which the illocutionary force of what actors say is systematically cancelled.

[...] cancellation is not a narrowly linguistic phenomenon. The cancellation contexts generated by uses of ‘or’ and ‘if’ are special cases of something more general. Cancellation contexts can arise in many different settings and under many different circumstances. A cancellation context can be triggered by conventions about a practice or activity, by the rules of a game, by the use of a linguistic device like quotation, by the use of certain words, or in any number of other ways.

(Hanks 2019: 1392)

illocutionary act in question is, actually or potentially, performed by some other person, from whom he dissociates himself.

In the analysis developed here, irony and stage acting have in common the property of being essentially nonavowable; the ironist can no more avow that his utterance is ironical than the actor on stage can say that his lines are fictitious. This is in contrast with indirect speech as in (11a), where the reporter is entitled to avow that the utterance reported is attributed to some other person. The pretense account of irony can thus accommodate the fact that irony is tacitly attributive no less well than its alleged rival, the echoic account of irony, according to which “[t]o claim that irony is echoic is to claim that it is closely related to other tacitly attributive uses of language such as free indirect speech or thought” (Wilson 2006: 1731). Moreover, the pretense account captures the similarities and differences between irony and negation in the same way it accounts for the similarities and differences between stage acting and indirect speech. A similar message can be conveyed by the negative utterance in (12a) and the ironical utterance in (12b).

- (12) a. John is not a nice friend.  
b. John is a nice friend.

This commonality is accounted for by the fact that both negation and irony attribute the thought expressed by the utterance to some agent other than the speaker. The utterance of (12a) makes reference to two agents: the speaker who performs the locutionary act of uttering the sentence of English “John is not a nice friend”, and, as a proper part of it, the sentence “John is a nice friend”, as well as the enunciator who performs the illocutionary act of asserting that John is a nice friend. The negative particle ‘not’ explicitly marks the speaker’s dissociative attitude toward the enunciator. This line of polyphonic analysis is developed in detail by Ducrot (1980: 49-56, 1984: 214-224), arguably inspired among others by Bergson (1907/1941), who considers negation to express a judgment on a judgment.

[...] to deny always consists in setting aside a possible affirmation. Negation is only an attitude taken by the mind toward an eventual affirmation. When I say, “This table is black,” I am speaking of the table [...] But if I say, “This table is not white,” I surely do not express something I have perceived, for I have seen black, and not an absence of white. It is therefore, at bottom, not on the table itself that I bring this judgment to bear, but rather on the judgment that would declare the table white. I judge a judgment and not the table. [...] a negative proposition expresses a judgment on a judgment. (Bergson 1907/1941: 287-288)<sup>16</sup>

The difference between negation and irony is that, whereas in negation the discrepancy between the speaker and the enunciator is explicitly encoded by the particle ‘not’ or the like, in irony the discrepancy is

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<sup>16</sup> « [...] nier consiste toujours à écarter une affirmation possible. La négation n’est qu’une attitude prise par l’esprit vis-à-vis d’une affirmation éventuelle. Quand je dis : « cette table est noire », c’est bien de la table que je parle [...] Mais si je dis : « cette table n’est pas blanche », je n’exprime sûrement pas quelque chose que j’aie perçu, car j’ai vu du noir, et non pas une absence de blanc. Ce n’est donc pas, au fond, sur la table elle-même que je porte ce jugement, mais plutôt sur le jugement qui la déclarerait blanche. Je juge un jugement, et non pas la table. [...] une proposition négative traduit un jugement porté sur un jugement. »

essentially nonavowable in Strawson's (1964: 454) sense. Contrary to the common wisdom, the effect of negation is not produced by a negative particle occurring in the utterance, but by the discrepancy between the speaker and the enunciator, a discrepancy which may sometimes be expressed by 'not'. To employ Hanks's term, negation creates a cancellation context (Hanks 2015: 100). Negation is fundamentally a speech-theoretic notion, on the pretense account of irony.

The second remark to be made about (9) is that the divergence between the speaker and the enunciator does not entail that the speaker disagrees with what the enunciator asserts or endorses. The actor who plays the part of a student may happen to be a student in real life. In this case, the student, a character in the play, believes that he is a student, and, in addition, the actor believes that he, the actor, is a student. This does not nonetheless make the actor's utterance forceful, insofar as the circumstances surrounding the theatrical play betray the fact that the illocutionary act of assertion is performed by the enunciator, i.e. the student, an agent conceptually distinct from the speaker, i.e. the actor. It would be a mistake to understand the utterance 'I am a student' made by the actor on stage as meaning 'the actor is a student', even when he happens to be a student. The utterance is presented as one made by the enunciator, and not by the speaker. As is the case with most utterances, one must understand not only the reference, but also the intended mode of presentation<sup>17</sup>. The same remark applies to irony. As we have seen, even true statements such as (7a-b) above can be used ironically. What makes these statements ironical is the fact that the circumstances make it plain that the utterer is the last person to willingly perform the illocutionary act associated with these statements. As said above, there are a lot of things which are obvious but which one should refrain from talking about for some reason or other (Ducrot 1972: 5). That a statement is true is far from justifying actually uttering it in order to seriously perform an illocutionary act of assertion. One can exploit this fact to dissociate oneself from those who would be likely to utter the statements in question, and this is exactly what happens in (7a-b). One can be ironical without violating the first maxim of Quality, which makes it impossible, as noted above, to strengthen 'if' into 'iff' in (6). The proper characterization of pretense should be something like (13).

- (13) S {makes as if/pretends} to say that P iff S says that P while it is manifest to both S and the hearer that S is not the real enunciator.

Wilson (2006: 1740) claims that pretense cannot do the job which it is supposed to do, on the ground that "the only type of resemblance relevant to the interpretation of central cases of irony is in content, not in

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<sup>17</sup> In the context under consideration, the indexical 'I' occurring in 'I am a student' must be understood not as 'the person who, as a speaker, utters this token of 'I'', but as 'the person who, as an enunciator, utters this token of 'I''. The inclusion of modes of presentation in the interpretation of an indexical is reminiscent of the case discussed by Loar (1976):

Suppose that Smith and Jones are unaware that the man being interviewed on television is someone they see on the train every morning and about whom, in that latter role, they have just been talking. Smith says 'He is a stockbroker', intending to refer to the man on television; Jones takes Smith to be referring to the man on the train. Now Jones, as it happens, has correctly identified Smith's referent, since the man on television is the man on the train; but he has failed to understand Smith's utterance. It would seem that, as Frege held, some 'manner of presentation' of the referent is, even on referential uses, essential to what is being communicated. (Loar 1976: 357)

form”. According to Wilson and Sperber (2012: 139), a thought, an essentially abstract object, can hardly be the target of a pretense, and, accordingly, the notion of pretending to perform a speech act can hardly be extended so that it may make sense to talk about ‘pretense to perform a private thought’.

[...] the object of the ironical attitude need not be a speech act, but may be merely a thought that has not been overtly expressed. While it makes sense to talk of mimicking, imitating or pretending to perform a speech act, it makes no clear sense to talk of mimicking, imitating or pretending to perform a private thought. Pretence accounts of free indirect reports of thought run into a similar problem. According to Recanati (2007), these might be handled by broadening the notion of assertion to cover both public speech acts and private judgments, so that a speaker who reports either can be described as mimicking an ‘act of assertion’. But this is a purely terminological proposal, and does not solve the problem of how a piece of public behaviour can mimic a private thought. By contrast, the notion of echoic attributive use [...], which is based on resemblances in content rather than in behaviour and which therefore need not involve imitation, applies straightforwardly to any representation with a conceptual content, whether this is a public representation that can indeed be imitated or a mental representation that cannot. (Wilson and Sperber 2012: 139)

This conception rests on a misconception of what speech act consists of. Austin says, as we have seen above, that when saying something, we may perform three acts simultaneously: “the locutionary act (and within it the phonetic, the phatic, and the rhetic acts) which has a *meaning*; the illocutionary act which has a certain *force* in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is *the achieving of certain effects* by saying something” (Austin 1962: 120). Wilson and Sperber, by contrast, have in mind only a locutionary act, or, for that matter, a phonetic act therein. If there are three types of acts being performed in one and the same utterance, there can in principle be three types of pretense corresponding to those acts. What the pretense account defended here stresses is that one can pretend to perform an illocutionary act, real or imagined, without thereby pretending to perform the associated locutionary act as well; the locutionary act can be genuine, namely the speaker’s own act, while the illocutionary act is tacitly attributed to some other agent. Sperber (1984: 135) claims that “ironies spoken in an ironic tone of voice fall outside the scope of pretense theory”, because the ironic tone of voice, unlike the tone of pretense and mockery, “makes any pretense impossible”. But the ironic tone of voice, a constituent of the phonetic act, need not be part of what is mimicked. As Currie (2006: 123) maintains, the ironist rather pretends, “using an ironic tone of voice”, to assert that so and so. If such is the case, pretense can, without any terminological modification, target a mental act of assertion<sup>18</sup>. We should take into account two fundamental facts here. On the one hand, a locutionary act may be defined mainly in terms of its form, whereas an illocutionary act is defined by its force, not by the form of the sentence uttered to perform that act. On the other hand, performing an illocutionary act of asserting that P pragmatically implies, as discussed in Section 1, that the speaker

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<sup>18</sup> Recanati (2007) uses “‘illocution’ in an extended sense, to cover thought acts as well as speech acts” (Recanati 2007: 228, n. 6). Wilson and Sperber (2012: 139) are skeptical about this move, saying that “this is a purely terminological proposal”. Recanati’s proposal can yet be construed as substantial rather than terminological, as discussed here.

believes that P. Put together, these two facts allow us to think that by uttering a sentence, whatever its form, which can naturally be used to assert that P, one can pretend to believe that P, while in fact the belief that P is attributed to some other person than the speaker<sup>19</sup>. Grant (1958: 321) maintains that “[t]hat a statement pragmatically implies those propositions whose falsity would render the making of the statement pointless is [...] a logical consequence of the definition of “statement””. This definition of statement logically entails that those who pretend to state that P must also pretend to believe that P; otherwise they would fail to pretend to state that P in the first place. This consideration leads Grant to juxtapose ‘pretend to believe’ with ‘believe’ in his definition of ‘assert’.

If, as I have argued, “assert” means “believe or pretends [sic.] to believe,” it follows that anyone who asserts *p* (i.e. anyone who would be correctly described as asserting *p*) cannot at the same time assert that he does not believe *p*, i.e. cannot be described as *asserting* disbelief.” (Grant 1958: 318)

Grant takes it for granted that assertion is necessarily presented as forceful, or otherwise the speaker would be deemed to be irrational.

Thus a man who fans a fire with bellows while simultaneously pouring water on it is doing something absurd and pointless in this sense. In some respects this is analogous to saying “*p*, but I don’t believe *p*,” because the natural consequence of asserting *p* is not only to induce hearers to believe *p*, but also to suppose that the speaker believes it – a consequence which is inhibited by the rider “but I don’t believe *p*.” (Grant 1958: 317)

Now, the question to be asked is whether an ironist who is making as if to say that P is as irrational as “a man who fans a fire with bellows while simultaneously pouring water on it”. What Wilson and Sperber fail to see in their criticism of the pretense theory is that the answer to this question is absolutely negative. The ironist is saying that P, rather than merely expressing the proposition that P, and this illocutionary act of assertion pragmatically implies that she believes that P. Mimicking of an illocutionary act necessarily involves mimicking of a thought. The pretense account, therefore, needs no amendment to ensure the echoic allusion to a private thought, of which the echoic account claims exclusivity.

As Wilson and Sperber (1992, 2002, 2012) and Wilson (2006) maintain, irony cannot be fully defined in terms of the maxim of truthfulness. But this does not preclude that it can properly be characterized in terms of the notion of pretense, on which the Gricean view of irony rests. To say that being

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<sup>19</sup> Ducrot (1984: 204-205) attempts to modify his earlier view, presented in Ducrot (1980), that the enunciator associated with an utterance is defined as the subject(s) of illocutionary acts. The difficulty of the earlier view lies, according to Ducrot (1984), in the fact that no words can be attributed to the enunciator who, unlike the speaker, makes no utterance. On my view, by contrast, the enunciator should be defined in terms of what she presents herself as believing, or in Recanati’s (2019: 1421) terminology, in terms of the “committal act” she performs. A committal act, Recanati (2019: 1421) says, “may be either an illocutionary act in the linguistic case, or a mental act/attitude in the nonlinguistic case”. The echoic theorist might perhaps object to this extension made to the notion of illocution. But the notion of committal act makes, it seems to me, at least as much sense as “the notion of echoic attributive use [...], which is based on resemblances in content”, defended by Wilson and Sperber (2012: 139).

ironical is violating the Gricean maxim of truthfulness is not to commit to the classic account of irony, but to describe a particular case of pretense, i.e., a particular case of the discrepancy between the speaker and the enunciator. To the extent that one acknowledges the distinction between locutionary act and illocutionary act, one can without further ado accommodate all the cases of irony within the Gricean pretense theory.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

Making as if to say that P is different from failing to say that P. Making as if to say that P is a way of saying that P. Saying that P, in general, consists in presenting P as true, or presenting oneself as performing an illocutionary act of assertion. What distinguishes making as if to say that P from normal cases of saying that P is that, when making as if to say that P, the speaker does more than just presenting P as true or presents herself as asserting that P: she simultaneously makes it manifest that the illocutionary act of assertion in question is performed, actually or potentially, by some agent other than herself. The idea developed here enables one to interpret Grice (1975/1989, 1978/1989) as an early proponent of the pretense account of irony. Grice says, on the one hand, that being ironical involves blatantly flouting the first maxim of Quality. This has led some authors to interpret Grice as advocating the classic view of irony, according to which irony is the trope in which the speaker conveys the opposite of what the sentence she utters literally means. This interpretation is possible only when one ignores the fact that Grice says, on the other hand, that “[t]o be ironical is, among other things, to pretend (as the etymology suggests), and while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as a pretense would spoil the effect” (Grice 1978/1989: 54). Grice draws a distinction between wanting the pretense to be recognized as such and announcing it as a pretense. To be ironical is not to say that it is a pretense, but to pretend to say what one says. Even in pretense, to say that P is to present oneself as asserting that P, or to present one’s utterance forceful. This position radically departs from the classic view that to say ironically that P is not to say that P, but to say that not P. On the Gricean conception, then, to pretend to say that P is to say that P, while wanting the hearer to recognize that the utterance of P is actually forceless. i.e. that the speaker does not believe that P. Appealing to the first maxim of quality is perfectly compatible with the pretense account of irony as opposed to the classic account. What Grice fails to say is that to flout the maxim of truthfulness is only one way of pretending to say something. The essence of pretense lies in not actually performing the illocutionary act which one presents oneself as performing. There are an infinite number of acts of assertion that we would not wish to make, even if we knew that we would thereby make true assertions. The discrepancy between the speaker and the real enunciator lies in attitude, not in belief. For S to say ironically that P is for S to say that P, while it is manifest to both S and the hearer that S, the speaker, is not the real enunciator. The discrepancy, though obvious, is essentially nonavowable.

The pretense account of irony as construed here is, in my view, has at least as much explanatory power as the echoic account, according to which “verbal irony is a sub-type of echoic use in which the speaker (generally tacitly) expresses one of a range of dissociative attitudes (scepticism, mockery, rejection, etc.) to a (generally tacitly) attributed utterance or thought” (Wilson 2006: 1730). The equivalence between the two is not at all endorsed by Wilson (2006) and Wilson and Sperber (2012).

Both echoic and pretense accounts reject the basic claim of the Classical and standard Gricean accounts, that the hallmark of irony is to communicate the opposite of the literal meaning. Both offer a rationale for irony, and both treat ironical utterances [...] as intended to draw attention to some discrepancy between a description of the world that the speaker is apparently putting forward and the way things actually are. Perhaps for this reason, the two approaches are sometimes seen as empirically and theoretically indistinguishable [...] We will argue, however, that the two accounts differ, and that the echoic account is preferable. (Wilson and Sperber 2012: 126)

The echoic account is preferable to the pretense account only when the latter is construed as exclusively concerning the form of the utterance ironically mimicked. Pretense theorists maintain, as Wilson and Sperber (2012: 136) say, that “irony involves the simulation or imitation of a (real or imagined) speech act, and therefore a case of pretense”. But Wilson and Sperber fail to notice here that a speech act consists of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and that what matters most to irony is the illocutionary act, which is defined by its force, rather than the form of the sentence used to perform it or the tone with which the sentence is pronounced. Even if one accepts the view that “it makes no clear sense to talk of mimicking, imitating or pretending to perform a private thought” (Wilson and Sperber 2012: 139), it does not follow that the notion of pretense is orthogonal to the mental realm. To pretend to perform an illocutionary act of assertion is to make an utterance, in whatever form or tone, which can naturally be interpreted as having an assertive force. The performance of the illocutionary act of asserting that P pragmatically implies that the speaker believes that P. Asserting that P involves, by definition, ascribing the belief that P to the speaker, without which the speaker would be deemed to be irrational. Accordingly, pretending to assert that P involves, by definition, pretending to ascribe the belief that P to the speaker. The only difference between genuinely asserting that P and making as if to say that P consists in the fact that, in the case of pretense, the speaker wants the circumstances to reveal that she is not the real enunciator. Pretending to perform the illocutionary act of asserting that P, therefore, amounts ultimately to echoing a thought one tacitly attributes to someone else. In this connection, Recanati says in a recent paper:

Sperber and Wilson and Clark and Gerrig criticize their respective accounts of irony (the “echoic” account and the “pretense” account) as if they were very different, but the differences seem to me a matter of emphasis and details rather than anything substantial. (Recanati, forthcoming: n. 14)

I hope to have substantiated Recanati’s conjecture that there is no substantial difference between the pretense account and echoic account of irony. The equivalence between the two camps is a substantial one, while the difference is arguably a historical one, another complicated issue to be dealt with elsewhere.

N.B. This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 18K00551.

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# アイロニーに関する「ふり」説と 「エコー」説の等価性について

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キーワード: アイロニー ふり 発語内効力 発話者 ムーアのパラドックス 質の格率

## 要旨

古典的定義によると、アイロニーは文の字義通りの意味と反対の意味を伝えるための修辞技法であるとされる。アイロニーに関する「ふり」説と「エコー」説はいずれもこの古典的定義からの脱却を図る。「ふり」説によると、アイロニー的にPを発話する者は、Pを言うふりをしているにすぎず、Pは発語内効力を伴わない。「エコー」説によると、アイロニーの発話者は、ある人ないしあるタイプの人に暗黙裡に帰属された思考をエコーし、その思考に対する乖離的態度を示す。この論文では、スペルベルとウィルソンが繰り返し表明する見解に反し、「ふり」説が「エコー」説と少なくとも同等の説明力を有することを論じる。「ふり」説に関する誤解は、グライスをアイロニーの古典的理論の擁護者とする誤読と密接に関連している。たしかにグライスは、アイロニーが質の第一格率にあからさまに違反する発話であり、Pを言ったかのように見せかける発話であると述べるが、これを「発話者はPを言っていない(むしろnot Pを言った)」と解釈するのは誤りである。ダメットの言うように、主張行為を行うように見せかけることは、主張行為を行うことから何かを差し引くことではなく、むしろそれに何かをプラスすることにほかならない。「Pである。しかし私はPだとは思わない」という発話が矛盾を含まないにもかかわらず奇異に響く現象は「ムーアのパラドックス」と呼ばれる。このパラドックスはたとえPがアイロニーとして発話された場合でも同じように生じる。このことから、アイロニーの発話者がPを真なるものとして提示している(Pを言っている)こと、すなわち自らを、Pを主張する発語内行為を遂行する者として提示していることがわかる。デュクロの用語では、アイロニーの発話者は、発語行為の遂行者である「話し手(speaker)」が、発語内行為の遂行者である「発話者(enunciator)」と同一人物であるという体で発話を行っており、この点でアイロニーとそれ以外に違いはない。アイロニーの特徴は、発話者SがPを真なるものとして提示する一方で、状況からしてSがPだと思っていないことが明白であり、かつその事実が認識されることを発話者が期待している点にある。「Pが発語内効力を伴わないことが明白であること」と「発話者がPを他の主体に帰属させていることを明言することができること」ははっきり区別される必要がある。アイロニーの発話者は、Pを主張する行為を遂行している体裁をとりつつ、同時に自らがPの発話者(enunciator)でないことが明白であるようにふるまう。Pを主張する発語内行為を遂行するふりをしつつ、Pを発する発語行為を遂行するふりはしないということは可能であり、このことが「ふり」説を「エコー」説と実質的に等価なものにする。

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