

Gricean Quality

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According to the Knowledge Account of Assertion, assertions are governed by the rule that *One must: assert that p only if one knows that p*.¹ Some philosophers oppose recent arguments for the Knowledge Account by claiming that assertion, being an act much like any other, will be subject to norms governing acts generally, such as those articulated by Grice for the purpose of successful, cooperative endeavours (Sosa 2009; Cappelen 2011; Goldberg 2013). Because asserting is part of a social cooperative activity aimed at varying goals, and because Grice's Cooperative Principle is a general principle meant to govern all rational social behavior (of which conversation is a subset), these philosophers suspect that Gricean resources will suffice for explaining any norm(s) relevant to assertion.

In this paper I show how Grice is a traitor to their cause; or rather, they are his dissenters, not his disciples. Contrary to what they suppose, Grice thought of asserting as a special linguistic act in need of its own norm, and his discussions of the maxim of Quality point to knowledge.² I develop an argument that the Quality maxim is not dependent, in the appropriate way, on the Cooperative Principle. If it is not thus dependent, then the Cooperative Principle cannot be the explanation of, or source of normativity for, the Quality maxim. Thus, not only is Grice of little help in resisting the Knowledge Account; in fact, leveraging powerful insights informing the maxim of Quality reveals new resources for a distinctive *positive* case that knowledge is the constitutive norm of assertion.

¹ Defended most prominently by Williamson 2000, Ch. 11. For recent advances, see especially Adler 2009, Turri 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2014a, Benton 2011, Blaauw 2012, Fricker 2012, Hawthorne 2012, and Buckwalter & Turri 2014.

² Gazdar (1979, 46) suggested reformulating Quality as (roughly) the rule given by the Knowledge Account. Rieger (2006) notes how assuming the knowledge rule helps Grice's own hook account of the indicative conditional.

1 Constitutivity and Strictness

Timothy Williamson's version of the Knowledge Account claims that the knowledge rule is constitutive of the speech act of assertion. The rule is *constitutive* of assertion in that it is essential to making the speech act what it is, much like the rules of a game constitute the game; and the rule is *strict*, in that "it imposes a perfect duty, one that applies strictly to each and every assertion" (Turri 2014a). Constitutivity of this rule implies strictness³ (though perhaps not vice versa); so a denial of its strictness entails a denial of constitutivity.

Some resist Williamson's view by maintaining that any rule that tends to govern assertions will be pragmatically imposed by principles inherently at work in cooperative efforts more generally. Thus David Sosa urges us to

consider giving up on the presupposition that there is a particular norm distinctive of assertion as such. It is normatively problematic even to risk causing someone to have a false belief, whether one takes that risk through assertion (ignorant or otherwise), through other forms of representation, or even through more direct means—by stimulating their cortex, for example. But this involves a norm that governs behavior in general: assertion is not normatively distinctive. (Sosa 2009, 272)

Similarly, Herman Cappelen argues for a "No-Assertion" view, on which assertion is not individuated by any norm essential to the speech act;

³One might wonder whether a constitutive rule really entails strictness; for if the rule itself contained a defeasible condition, it might delineate the range of cases which 'fall under its jurisdiction', so to speak, while leaving some discretion concerning when the rule applies. Given such a rule on assertion, the speech act is constituted (in part) by its relationship to that rule, but there may be scenarios in which the rule does not govern the act, and so the rule does not impose a perfect duty. (Thanks to Tim Williamson here.) My worry about this distinction is that it seems to undercut constitutivity: if the act is constituted by the rule that governs it, then it is essential to the act's being that act (rather than some other) that the rule applies. Acts on occasions where the rule does not apply look to be different (though similar) acts.

rather, declarative “sayings”⁴ are “related to norms in much the same way that kissing and driving are. . . . There is no one set of norms essential to either activity” (Cappelen 2011, 24). Declarative sayings are instead “evaluated by contextually variable norms,” namely Grice’s maxims of conversation:

Grice’s maxims of conversation are not constitutive of the acts they govern. Grice takes them to be derived from general principles of rational cooperation. . . . They are norms that guide behavior, not norms that are essential to (or constitutive of) the behavior they guide. (2011, 24)

Finally, Sanford Goldberg hopes to motivate a context-sensitive norm of assertion by appeal to Grice’s Cooperative Principle:

part of being cooperative is to say only that for which one has adequate evidence (Quality), where what counts as adequate evidence is determined by mutual beliefs regarding the needs and expectations of the various participants in the conversation. (Goldberg 2013, 188, fn. 41)

And again: “the determination of when evidence is ‘adequate’ to render an assertion proper is a matter of ‘the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange,’” (Goldberg forthcoming, Chap. 10, §2).

⁴A difficulty for Cappelen is that significant textual evidence suggests that when it comes to utterances that fall under Quality, Grice himself tends to mean by “say” simply “assert,” and this undercuts his use of Gricean resources to reject the notion of assertion in favor of the general category of ‘sayings’. Quality is the only maxim particular to assertion: assertions are plausibly the only speech subject to Quality’s injunctions (compare its irrelevance to questions, or imperatives, or even guesses), and its submaxims are the only ones for which Grice uses “say” rather than “contribution.” Moreover, in unpublished notes (Grice Papers, 1947–1989), Grice consistently clarifies ‘says’ and ‘said’ as denoting *assertive* utterances. For example, in handwritten notes from 1966–75 (carton 1, folder 23) entitled ‘*Saying*’: *Week I*, he distinguishes “between that which is actually said (‘asserted’) and that which is implied or otherwise conveyed or got across” (p. 1). And in earlier notes from that file, Grice contrasts the terms *imply*, *suggest*, *convey*, *indicate*, *get across* with *say*, *state*, *assert*: the latter are, he says, “*not right*” for the implicature idea he is trying to isolate (pp. 6–7).

Sosa and Cappelen think that the norm of assertion is not constitutive of the practice because that practice can be explained by more general principles, in particular those due to Grice. Goldberg claims that Grice's maxim of Quality is itself a flexible norm of assertion not strictly requiring knowledge, and that its flexibility derives from the Cooperative Principle. In the next section I shall show that Goldberg's claim is not well motivated, and that Gricean Quality, in its most plausible version, does require knowledge. Then in §3, I present an argument for the conclusion that the maxim of Quality cannot be explained by, because it is not dependent on, more general conversational principles such as the Cooperative Principle; indeed, this a point which Grice himself came to appreciate. Such an argument puts considerable pressure on those dissenters, such as Cappelen, who wish to claim both that the norm of assertion is not constitutive *and* that Grice's system provides the resources to support such a claim.

2 Understanding Quality

Grice's "supermaxim" of Quality is "Try to make your contribution one that is true," of which two more specific maxims are articulated:

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (1989, 27).

One might think that because neither the supermaxim nor the sub-maxims mention knowledge, the maxim of Quality does not require it. Indeed, read literally, Quality's maxims only require that one not disbelieve, and have adequate evidence for, what one asserts. Thus the literal reading would not require that one believe what is asserted, for one could fulfil the letter of the sub-maxims by asserting p on "adequate" evidence while being agnostic about p .⁵ Nor would this literal reading even require

⁵It is often overlooked (though see Williamson 2000, 243 n. 3) that fulfilling the Quality sub-maxims as they are written does not even require belief: for if a speaker had some weak evidence in support of some proposition p , but did not yet believe on its basis (perhaps she suspends judgment), and nevertheless thought that this evidence were 'adequate' for asserting, then she could assert p and fulfil Quality, including its sub-maxims: for she would be trying to make her contribution one that is true, she would not believe p false, and would have evidence for p . But on the one hand, arguing for

truth, for the supermaxim indicates that one should *try* to make one's assertion one that is true; and it is consistent with this that one assert something false (so long as one asserts it on the basis of adequate evidence). But understanding Quality in this way makes it implausibly weak: thus taken, it cannot aptly handle the wide range of conversational patterns that seem to demand factivity and belief.⁶

Given all this, it is better then to take a liberal reading of Quality and regard its sub-maxims as requiring one to assert only what one believes to be true, and only that for which one has adequate evidence; and if we charitably interpret Quality's supermaxim as being concerned with asserting truth rather than with *trying* to assert the truth, the norm is factive (indeed, as we'll see later in §3, Grice himself understands Quality as demanding truth and forbidding falsity). Putting these two together, we get the plausible norm of roughly justified true belief. Yet now we are very close to knowledge indeed.⁷

If this were all to be said in favor of the connection between Gricean Quality and the Knowledge Account, the case would be somewhat weak. But Grice elsewhere makes the important connection between Quality and knowledge: the possibility of clashes between the demands of Quality and other maxims can not only generate conversational implicatures, but can also reveal knowledge as the core of Quality.

For example, when someone answers a question in a less than informative way, the implicature is that one doesn't know the expected, more informative answer. Grice's own example is the following. If A asks B, "Where does C live?", and B responds with, "Somewhere in the south of

this literal reading would require the idea that the norm of assertion is weaker from the standard of evidence on which one is obligated to believe (something in which I have no interest in doing); and on the other hand, Grice elsewhere suggests that fulfilling Quality involves believing (or at least taking oneself to believe): see 1989, 41–42 (cited below in fn. 16).

⁶Patterns for which the Knowledge Account looks like the best explanation: see the literature cited above in fn. 1. Note also that Cappelen's 'sayings' approach seems woefully inadequate to explain why there would be such patterns at all; however, I cannot here give this the treatment it is due. For some other apt responses to Cappelen, see Goldberg *forthcoming*, Chap. 1, and Montgomery *forthcoming*.

⁷In fact, a candidate gloss on "adequate evidence" here would be "adequate to put one in a position to know", a gloss that would put us even closer to knowledge than if it is glossed as merely "adequate to justify belief". Indeed, the former gloss looks like it may be the ideal way to help Grice make sense of all that he says about Quality, including the ways he suggests it is tied to knowledge. Thanks to John Hawthorne here.

France”,

this infringement of the first maxim of Quantity [make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)] can be explained only by the supposition that B is aware that to be more informative would be to say something that infringed the second maxim of Quality, “Don’t say what you lack adequate evidence for,” so B implicates that he does not *know* in which town C lives. (1989, 32–33, emphasis mine)

Assuming that knowing entails having adequate evidence, B’s response, if it implicates that B lacks adequate evidence concerning in which town C lives, also implicates what this entails, that B doesn’t know in which town C lives (though this point likewise supports other standards weaker than knowledge). But it would be strange for Grice to invoke knowledge here if knowledge is a higher standard than what Quality requires.⁸ More plausibly, B’s response is best explained by B’s sensitivity to the demand of Quality, namely knowledge: it is *because* B doesn’t *know*, and realizes that he doesn’t know, that he would opt for the hedged claim. Thus Grice, by invoking B’s lack-of-knowledge implicature, suggests that knowledge, and not some weaker epistemic position (such as believing on the basis of moderate evidence), is intimately connected to whether one is in a position to assert.

⁸A referee notes that this might not seem so strange, given that we are supposed to be concise (cf. Grice’s third Manner submaxim); and isn’t “doesn’t know” more concise than “doesn’t justifiably believe” or “isn’t in a position to rationally defend anything stronger than”? (Thus rival norms requiring less than knowledge could explain away Grice’s mention of knowledge here.) This is a fair point; my reply is two-fold. First, Grice also taught us to “Be perspicuous” (Manner’s supermaxim). Second, Grice’s own published writings are known for both his careful exactitude, but also (as a result) for sometimes being less than concise: note how many times, in his very important paragraph characterizing conversational implicature (1989, 30–31), Grice uses commas, parentheses, and ‘or’ to add additional clauses. (For his care in getting his wording just right, see also his unpublished papers 1947–1989, carton 1, folders 22–23, for the many drafts and notes, as early as 1957 sent to G.J. Warnock, of what became ‘Logic and Conversation’.) Thus I think we should default to taking Grice’s exact wording to reveal something which he definitely intended.

Another common response to a clash between Quantity and Quality is important here. Suppose a question is asked directly about whether a proposition q is the case: schematically, “Is q ?” If one feels one cannot answer directly because one suspects that one does not fulfil the demand of Quality, one will often under such circumstances reply with “I don’t know,” or “I can’t say”.⁹ In unpublished papers,¹⁰ Grice regards the “I don’t know” response as conforming to Quality at the expense of violating Quantity, for it would seem to provide too little information: it offers no help with respect to whether or not q . Yet if Quality did not demand knowledge, it is puzzling how the “I don’t know” response could be perceived to be a clash between the requirements of Quantity and Quality.

Furthermore, if, against the Knowledge Account, we took Quality to be lax enough to permit non-known contributions, then the “I don’t know” reply would seem to violate the maxim of Relation (“Be relevant!”). For if Quality permitted assertions that are not known, it would seem irrelevant and unhelpful for one to point out that one doesn’t know. But when prompted by a question, the answer to which one does not know (or takes oneself not to know), we do not judge the “I don’t know” or “I can’t say because I don’t know” responses to be irrelevant or unhelpful. We deem them relevant because they signal to others the speaker’s own deference to the epistemic demand of the maxim of Quality, and we deem them helpful because we normally don’t want someone to answer with an outright assertion when he or she doesn’t (take him- or herself to) know.¹¹

⁹Where the “can’t” is denying the epistemic permission relevant to the maxim of Quality (rather than the permission pursuant to some other contract or interest—‘I cannot say more’—as in Grice’s case of *opting out* of the Cooperative Principle and its maxims: 1989, 30). On the importance of this data for the Knowledge Account, see Turri 2011, 38.

¹⁰Grice Papers, 1947–1989 (carton 1, folder 23, after page 6) contains the following chart:

Specific apparent failure (clash)

Quantity “I don’t know whether q ” [I say $p + q$ (stronger) required]

Quality no case

Grice has “I don’t know whether q ” as the candidate for a specific failure of Quantity; it would have to clash with Quality, for which knowledge, and not something weaker, would be required for properly asserting q .

¹¹There are, of course, occasions on which we press further with the question and ask for what the speaker merely ‘thinks’ or ‘suspects’; but this is to give the speaker

We can expand on this Gricean point to evaluate the asking of questions as *prompts* to assertion. As has been noted elsewhere (Turri 2010, 460), the prompts

(P₁) Do you know whether *q*?

(P₂) Is *q*?

are taken to be practically interchangeable in everyday conversation. This suggests something important about the relation of Quality to our standard expectations of what counts as an appropriate response to a prompting question. If Quality enjoins us to assert only what we know, we would expect asking whether *q*, and asking whether one knows *q*, to be practically interchangeable: for one answers each question appropriately, and felicitously, with an assertion that *q* just in case one knows *q*. Furthermore, noticing that weaker prompts, such as

(P₃) Do you have good reason to think *q*?

(P₄) Do you have any idea whether *q*?

are *not* practically interchangeable with (P₂) “Is *q*?”, suggests that Quality demands something stronger than merely having good reasons or some evidence to believe *q*.¹²

I submit then that the most plausible interpretation of Grice’s own discussion is that knowledge is at the core of the maxim of Quality. Even if he doesn’t explicitly endorse this, following his material where it leads results in understanding Quality in terms of the Knowledge Account. For only on this interpretation can we well explain why knowledge (and not some other epistemic status) figures in conversational patterns surround-

permission to answer in a hedged manner, acknowledging that fulfilling Quality, through outright assertion, is not to be had.

¹²McKinnon 2012 argues, against Turri 2010, that a reasons-based norm can handle the data from prompts and challenges at least as well as the Knowledge Account. But though she makes a decent case for this when it comes to challenge questions, she does not consider the practical interchangeability point made above, namely, that as prompts, (P₁) and (P₂) are, whereas (P₃)/(P₄) and (P₂) are not, practically interchangeable. And this is what we should expect if knowledge is at the core of the maxim of Quality.

ing prompts and their responses, as well as in the explanation of clashes between the demands of Quality and other maxims.¹³

3 Quality and Cooperativeness

In this section I argue that the maxim of Quality is not dependent, in the way that the other maxims are, on the Cooperative Principle.¹⁴ This argument is independent of the success of the claims made in the last section, that is, it is independent of thinking of Quality in terms of knowledge. And it is an argument that will hold interest for those who think of Grice's theory of communication as built up from fully general principles, governing all rational cooperative behavior, to more specific conversational maxims that hold in virtue of their relationship to the general principles.¹⁵

The Cooperative Principle is supposed to be a fully general principle at work in all rational social behavior:

¹³One (such as Goldberg) who adopts a context-sensitive norm of assertion might accept this reading of Grice yet insist that the above discussion only shows that the norm sometimes (perhaps occasionally, or perhaps by default) requires knowledge; yet it does not show that the norm *always* requires knowledge. I concede that much; the case for the latter is made elsewhere (see the literature cited in fn. 1 above). But note that, in view of what I've said here, such a context-sensitive theorist takes on two additional explanatory burdens. First: to explain why, even in a context where knowledge is not required by Quality, responding to a question with "I don't know" is acceptable even though on Gricean terms it would not (given the context-sensitive view) exhibit a clash between Quality and one of the other maxims. And second: to explain why, more generally, the conversational patterns and the linguistic data supportive of the Knowledge Account seem to appear even in contexts where knowledge is thought not to be the relevant standard (cf. Benton 2012, concerning Weiner's 2005 purported counterexample of predicting). Explaining these two, such that a context-sensitive norm comes out as a simpler and better explanation than the Knowledge Account, will be a challenge.

¹⁴See Cappelen 2011, 39 n. 20, who notes that Jason Stanley maintains that a similar argument can be given.

¹⁵Grice initially thought of his "ground plan" thus:

to identify a supreme Conversational Principle which could be used to generate and justify a range of more specific but still highly general conversational maxims which in turn could be induced to yield particular conversational directives applying to particular subject matters, contexts, and conversational procedures. (1989, 371)

Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (1989, 26)

Insofar as the Gricean aims to treat speech as a special case of purposeful and rational behavior, the more specific conversational maxims are imperatives which implement conversational cooperation. “[I]n paradigmatic cases, their observance promotes and their violation dispromotes conversational rationality”; but these maxims “are prevented from being just a disconnected heap of conversational obligations by their dependence on a single supreme Conversational Principle, that of cooperativeness” (1989, 370).

But the maxim of Quality seems to enjoy a distinctive status in comparison with the other conversational maxims: transgressing some of the other maxims (e.g. the maxims of Manner, or Quantity, by being overly prolix) may be thought to be less important, and subject to lighter criticism, than violating Quality. Thus Grice says,

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 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.*¹⁶ While

¹⁶Compare what Grice says about Quality and Moore’s paradox, at the beginning of “Further Notes on Logic and Conversation” (1989, 41–42):

When I speak of the assumptions required in order to maintain the supposition that the Cooperative Principle and maxims are being observed on a given occasion, I am thinking of assumptions that are nontrivially required; I do not intend to include, for example, an assumption to the effect that some particular maxim is being observed, or is thought of by the speaker as being observed. This seemingly natural restriction has an interesting consequence with regard to Moore’s “paradox.” On my account, it will not be true that

this may be correct, so far as the generation of implicatures is concerned it seems to play a role not totally different from the other maxims, and it will be convenient, for the present at least, to treat it as a member of the list of maxims. (1989, 27, emphasis mine)

Acknowledgement that Quality might best be given a class by itself, and that the other maxims operate only on the assumption that Quality is satisfied, is the first step toward realizing that the epistemic demands of Quality take a kind of priority over the demands of the other maxims. That is, Quality enjoys a special status from the other maxims in that *the other maxims plausibly do not operate unless Quality is itself assumed to be satisfied*. I assume that by a norm's being "satisfied", Grice does not mean to rule out cases where one conversationally implicates by flouting a maxim, for such implicatures depend for working them out that the other maxims are operative. To capture this notion, I shall instead talk of a maxim being *respected* when the maxim is operative and unviolated *except* by flouting/exploiting; in this sense one still respects a maxim when exploiting it to conversationally implicate, and one also trivially respects it when in engaging in other speech acts, such as asking a question.

This concern about priority generates a reservation about the whole framework which sets up the maxims as dependent on the Cooperative Principle. Quality in particular looks to be constitutive of a certain

when I say that *p*, I conversationally implicate that I believe that *p*; for to suppose that I believe that *p* (or rather that I think of myself as believing that *p*) is just to suppose that I am observing the first maxim of Quality on this occasion. I think that his consequence is intuitively acceptable; it is not a natural use of language to describe one who has said that *p* as having, for example, "implied," "indicated," or "suggested" that he believes that *p*; the natural thing to say is that he has expressed (or at least purported to express) the belief that *p*. He has of course committed himself, in a certain way, to its being the case that he believes that *p*, and while this commitment is not a special case of saying that he believes that *p*, it is bound up, in a special way, with saying that *p*.

Though Grice does not say this, it would seem, having understood Quality in terms of knowledge (from §2 above) that identical considerations follow for the knowledge-version of Moore's paradox: asserting a token of the schema "*p* but I don't know that *p*", or "I don't know that *p*, but *p*" will be paradoxical precisely because the conjunct asserting *p* outright *expresses* (cf. Turri 2011), or purports to express, the speaker's knowledge.

kind of conversational contribution being what Grice calls a “genuine” contribution (as opposed to a “spurious” one¹⁷) in the first place:

(1) The maxims do not seem to be coordinate. The maxim of Quality, enjoining the provision of contributions which are genuine rather than spurious (truthful rather than mendacious), does not seem to be just one among a number of recipes for producing contributions; it seems rather to spell out the difference between something’s being, and (strictly speaking) failing to be, any kind of contribution at all. False information is not an inferior kind of information; it just is not information.
(1989, 371)

Taking his last line literally might raise a worry about how, if false claims fail even to be conversational contributions, they would fall under the purview of the Cooperative Principle, which is about contributions (for if they are not even contributions, they can neither violate nor conform to that Principle). But we needn’t take this line literally, or follow Grice’s assumption that false information is not information, to appreciate his point: by making as if to contribute in accord with Quality, when one is in fact not (strictly speaking) thus contributing, one is thereby not being cooperative. So the condition that helps us discern whether one is being cooperative in this sense is that given by Quality. Thus Quality is seen to be conceptually prior to the Cooperative Principle: if a (non-figurative¹⁸) contribution fails Quality, it *ipso facto* fails the Cooperative Principle by not being a cooperative contribution.

¹⁷On which see Grice 1989, 28: “2. *Quality*. I expect your contributions to be genuine and not spurious. If I need sugar as an ingredient in the cake you are assisting me to make, I do not expect you to hand me salt; if I need a spoon, I do not expect a trick spoon made of rubber.”

¹⁸Of course, Grice has a way of handling metaphor and irony as exploitations of the maxim of Quality, such that these kinds of false utterances can be conversational contributions. But clearly, such figurative contributions are ones where (i) Quality is *respected* the sense I defined above, and (ii) they are contributions for which the categories of Quality (evidence, belief, truth) seem irrelevant to the contribution’s literal content, whereas with non-figurative assertive contributions, those categories are directly relevant to their evaluation.

We now have the makings of an *Independence Argument* for why (in non-figurative speech) the maxim of Quality is not dependent on the Cooperative Principle:

Independence Argument

- 1) If Quality is not presumed to be respected, then the other maxims do not operate.

- 2) If the other maxims do not operate, the Cooperative Principle cannot be operative.

So: 3) Unless Quality is presumed to be respected, the Cooperative Principle cannot be operative.

Thus Quality cannot depend for its operation, or its role in securing conversational rationality, on the Cooperative Principle. A brief defense of Premises 1 and 2, apart from Grice's endorsement of them, is in order.

First, Premise 1. Suppose a conversation in which it becomes clear that a speaker who has just flat-out asserted that p (and is not being ironic, joking, etc.) does not believe p , perhaps because the speaker admits to not believing it:

JUROR

Martin: The defendant was innocent.

Jane: What makes you think that?

Martin: Oh, I don't believe that.

Jane: Huh?

Martin: But he *was* innocent.¹⁹

¹⁹Envisioning a continuation of Lackey's selfless assertion case of Martin the racist juror (2007, 598); note, incidentally, that Lackey's *Reasonable-to-Believe Norm of Assertion* sanctions each of Martin's assertions in such a conversation. See also Turri (2014b).

Martin's disavowal of belief outs himself as having initially asserted in violation of Quality (under the liberal reading we've been assuming from §2) by his initial declaration of the defendant's innocence; but his reaffirmation of it shows he is not retracting or retreating from it either. Jane's interpretive position is now quite compromised: even if Jane concludes that Martin has fulfilled Quantity, Manner, and Relation, she still won't know what to do with his contributions. Alternatively, if Jane judges him to have transgressed either Quantity (he has either said too much, or not enough), or Manner (he has not been perspicuous in failing to hedge his initial assertion, or by representing himself as believing what he originally asserted), or perhaps even Relation (if he doesn't even believe it, why bring it up?), these seem less egregious offenses than having violated Quality. But on any such alternative, Martin comes off as being uncooperative (another option is that Martin is trying to conversationally implicate something by flouting those maxims. Yet no plausible implicature is available; so it seems he is being uncooperative). Given these considerations, the Cooperative Principle cannot be operative; this in turn supports Premise 2.²⁰

Notice that the conclusion of the Independence Argument is not committed to all false assertions being uncooperative conversational contributions. What it claims is that the Cooperative Principle cannot be operative (that is, available to the audience for working out what the speaker meant to implicate) unless Quality is presumed to be respected. However, one might worry that there are cases in which a speaker can assert falsely, and thereby violate Quality such that it is clearly not respected, but nevertheless still be making a contribution which depends on the operation of the other maxims for the audience being able to work it out. Wouldn't such a case cast doubt on Premise 1 of the Independence Argument?

Consider the case of a teacher who asserts something to her students, which she knows to be false, as part of a pedagogical approach to get her students to grasp some easier concepts before moving on to the

²⁰More generally, I submit, one can envision a scenario in which a speaker violates Quality but is not thereby being ironic, metaphorical, or jocular, and does not thereby conversationally implicate anything: in that scenario, is the speaker more criticizable for the violation of Quality than for having said something irrelevant, imperspicuous, or too much/too little? If it seems difficult to get past the Qualitative aspect to any other potential flaws in the contribution, this too supports Premise 1.

more complex (but more accurate) concepts. This would be a case where not even the speaker presumes herself to be respecting the maxim of Quality, and would thus undercut Premise 1. Consider this case of Rachel McKinnon's (2013, 124), which we'll call TEACHING:²¹

TEACHING

Suppose that Jenny is teaching a grade 10 science class. She wants to explain the structure of an atom and, more specifically, the electron configuration of different elements. Jenny is well aware that an early model of the electron structure of atoms, the Bohr model, is no longer considered accurate. Under the Bohr model, electrons travel in restricted *orbits* ... [and are often depicted] as planets orbiting the nucleus of an atom. ... More recently, though, the Bohr model has been replaced with the *valence* model. Under the valence model, due to incorporating principles of quantum mechanics such as Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, electron "orbits" are replaced with probability "clouds." Electrons are not restricted to rigid orbitals ... So knowing all of this, Jenny also knows that her students aren't yet able to understand the valence model, but they are able to understand the Bohr model ... and need to learn concepts such as the Bohr model as a stepping-stone. So when it's time to teach her students about the electron structure of atoms, she asserts, "Electrons behave according to the Bohr model."

Assume that Jenny's sentence—call it (J)—is false, and that she knows it to be false. My main interest in considering this case concerns how it might cast doubt on Premise 1 of the Independence Argument; but before doing so, I want to address two concerns about how one might go about evaluating Jenny's (J).

First, one might suspect that Jenny's utterance of (J) is actually not an assertion, or that she needn't have *asserted* (J) but instead could have tokened some other speech act to accomplish what she intends in the case.

²¹Thanks to a referee for recommending that I consider this case.

Against the idea that Jenny simply must assert (J) because (J) is the best assertive act she could make,²² it seems to me Jenny could make a number of other utterances, including some assertions, which are true, such as “We are now thinking of electrons as behaving as on the Bohr model. On this model, electrons behave thus... .” Similarly, Jenny might have, as is typical for a teacher, explicitly set up the didactic context using an imperative speech act calling for supposition: “Suppose that Bohr’s theory holds: electrons behave according to Bohr’s model. On this model... .” Having done this, all subsequent indicative claims in that context would be evaluated according to the supposition scenario, namely Bohr’s model. But the context of supposition means that such utterances are not interpretable as flat-out assertions of Jenny’s, just as the conditional statement *If p, then q*, is not an assertion that *q*, but at best a claim that *q* on the presupposition that *p*,²³ in which case Jenny’s real (conditional) claim seems true rather than false. Thus it’s not at all clear that Jenny is, or needs to be, engaging in the speech act of asserting the proposition expressed by (J), for that proposition can be competently raised in didactic fashion without asserting (J) outright. But even if we accept (as the case stipulates) that Jenny is asserting this, it does not seem correct to say that Jenny is doing the best she could by asserting the false (J), for there are many other alternatives, even given her pedagogical aims, that she could have more appropriately asserted instead.

Secondly, one might suspect that Jenny’s assertion (J) is warranted in a sense which is not epistemic: it is pedagogically warranted, or maybe practically warranted, because it enables her students to learn and eventually gain knowledge or well-supported beliefs later in the learning process. But its being warranted in that sense does not tend to shed any light on whether the assertion is epistemically warranted along the dimension of normativity given by the norm of assertion or the maxim of Quality;²⁴

²²McKinnon says that even though (J) is false, Jenny “makes the assertion anyway because, pedagogically speaking, it is the best assertion she could make. Anything else, including a qualified assertion, such as admitting that we now consider the Bohr model extremely inaccurate, would confuse her students or undermine the students’ willingness to learn the concepts that Jenny wants them to learn” (2013, 124).

²³Recall Ramsey’s (1931, 247 n. 1) claim about presupposition using conditionals, as well as Geach (1965) on the Frege point.

²⁴Note Williamson’s (2000, 256) argument that cases of practical urgency which warrant asserting *p* in violation of the assertion norm do not show that knowledge isn’t the

the worry here then is that our judgment of Jenny's (J) being warranted (in the practical or pedagogical sense) is unduly affecting one's judgment of it as being epistemically warranted. This concludes my reservations about the TEACHING case.

To return to our main task, namely how TEACHING bears on Premise 1. Recall what Premise 1 says:

- 1) If Quality is not presumed to be respected, then the other maxims do not operate

where a maxim is *respected* when the maxim is operative and unviolated except by flouting/exploiting. TEACHING appears to show that an assertion can be made in a context where the other maxims do operate, even if it is known by the speaker to be false; thus this is a context in which Quality is not presumed to be respected by the speaker herself. Thus the example trades on an ambiguity in Premise 1 concerning *who* in the conversation must be presuming the maxim of Quality to be respected, in order for the maxims (and the Cooperative Principle) to be operative.

Thus Premise 1, suitably cleaned up, should clarify that it is the *audience*, not the speaker, that must presume that Quality is respected, for it is the audience that will have to deploy the other maxims, or the Cooperative Principle, to make sense of what the speaker intends to communicate. Here then is the revised argument:

*Independence Argument**

- 1*) If Quality is not presumed (by the audience) to be respected (by the speaker), then the other maxims do not operate.

norm of assertion. McKinnon argues that Jenny's case is actually different, in that Jenny's pedagogical duties are informed by, and aim at, distinctively epistemic goods such that eventually her students will gain knowledge (of the valence model, not of J), and this makes Jenny's (J) "distally epistemically supported" though not "proximally" epistemically supported (2013, 126): "Jenny's performing her assertion in service of the further epistemic goal is what provides her warrant to assert something she knows to be false" (p. 128). By contrast, this just strikes me as a practical means (a locally epistemically vicious one) to an epistemic end.

2) If the other maxims do not operate, the Cooperative Principle cannot be operative.

So: 3*) Unless Quality is presumed (by the audience) to be respected (by the speaker), the Cooperative Principle cannot be operative.

In TEACHING, it is the students who are presuming that Jenny is respecting the maxim of Quality, and this is arguably crucial to their diachronic learning process: if the students didn't take their teacher to be asserting truthfully, and with good evidence in support of her claims, their learning process would be undermined.²⁵ Presuming that their teacher is respecting the maxim of Quality in this context means that, unless the students have reason to believe Jenny is flouting or exploiting Quality so as to conversationally implicate some other proposition, Jenny's assertion of (J) puts forth the proposition (J) as true, worthy of their belief, available from which to draw inferences, and so on; this contributes to why it is the students learn the concepts of the Bohr model. Thus we can see that, while TEACHING forced us to modify Premise 1 into Premise 1*, TEACHING is not a counterexample to the latter premise; in fact, Premise 1* helps explain why Jenny's (J), though false, can be a cooperative conversational contribution.²⁶

I do not take the Independence Argument* to show that one must think of the maxim of Quality as constitutive, in Williamson's specific sense,²⁷ of the speech act of assertion (though it suggests at least a strict duty as discussed in §1). I do, however, take it to put pressure on the dissenter to the Knowledge Account who wants to appeal to Grice as an

²⁵McKinnon repeatedly emphasizes that the students must assume something like this (2013, 124, 126, 132 n. 12, and 133 n. 14.)

²⁶One can imagine Jenny later being confronted by a student who discovered that she had asserted (J) falsely, and Jenny defending herself for asserting what she did not even believe to help the students learn enough to later grasp the more complex valence model (cf. McKinnon 2013, 124). But such a conversation would be different from our JUROR conversation earlier, because first, Jenny would not continue to maintain (J) in such a conversation; and second, Jenny's defense would be rather flimsy, since, as we noted above, Jenny could've accomplished her pedagogical goals just as well by saying something truthful.

²⁷See Williamson 2000, 241. Cf. Maitra 2011, and Goldberg forthcoming, Ch. 1.5.

ally. Such a dissenter cannot simply invoke contextually variable norms which are supposed to be explained, and justified, by their dependence upon something as general as the Cooperative Principle. For such a dissenter will need to provide compelling reasons for denying Premise 1* or 2 of the Independence Argument*, while also giving an alternative and unified explanation of all the conversational data which the Knowledge Account well-explains.²⁸

4 Conclusion

Though some have thought that accepting Grice's communicative framework provides the resources for resisting the Knowledge Account of Assertion, in fact, embracing Grice's framework makes resisting the Knowledge Account far more difficult than it seems. This is because, first, Gricean Quality is best thought of in terms of knowledge. Second, on Grice's view the maxim of Quality is distinctive from the other conversational maxims, in ways that support rather than impede thinking of the Quality maxim as constitutive of the speech act of assertion. Finally, third, the maxim of Quality is importantly independent of the Cooperative Principle: if anything, the Cooperative Principle depends for its operation on Quality, rather than the other way around.

Taken together, these point toward a new positive case to be made for

²⁸A task which Sosa nor Cappelen even attempt. Cappelen offers his alternative view without even addressing all of the conversational data; he makes little mention of the challenge data (though he is happy to appeal to the 'How do you know?' question when it suits his point: 2011, 42). Douven 2006 and Lackey 2007 try to handle each of the three primary data from lotteries, Moore's paradox, and conversational patterns, particularly knowledge challenges. But they both suffer from what I regard to be implausible handlings of the Moorean data. Douven tries to explain it by appeal to the infrequency with which we hear such paradoxical conjunctions (an explanation he retracts as inadequate in Douven 2009, 363–364; his new explanation, however, is unrelated to his explanation of the 'How do you know?' data given in his 2006, 468–470, thereby making his entire account of the data fragmented and less unified; on this, see Benton 2011, 685–687). And Lackey's attempt to explain the Moorean data appeals to a Gricean-inspired "Not Misleading Norm of Assertion" (NMNA, 2007, 615; and NMNA**, p. 617); but the NMNA/NMNA** would condemn as improper the very selfless assertion cases Lackey uses to support her rival RTBNA (because such selfless assertions mislead a hearer to think that the asserter believes what is asserted, as in the JUROR conversation above).

the Knowledge Account. Though the full details of such a case must await another occasion, the rough idea may be sketched thus: By beginning with the Gricean framework of conversational maxims, interpreted in the way Grice seems to have intended it, one gains considerations hitherto uninvoked in the debate over the epistemic norm of assertion. And those considerations—particularly that Grice’s maxim of Quality is best understood in terms of knowledge, and that Quality is independent of the other maxims and the Cooperative Principle²⁹—together provide new support for the Knowledge Account, on which the speech act of assertion is (at least partially) constituted by its relationship to the knowledge norm.³⁰

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²⁹And that Grice’s own account of indicative conditionals is improved by understanding Quality in this way (cf. Rieger 2006).

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