

# Gricean Communication and Transmission of Thoughts

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**Abstract** Gricean communication is communication between utterers and their audiences, where the utterer means something and the audience understands what is meant. The weak transmission idea is that, whenever such communication takes place, there is something which is transmitted from utterer to audience; the strong transmission idea adds that what is transmitted is nothing else than what is communicated. We try to salvage these ideas from a seemingly forceful attack by Wayne Davis. Davis attaches too much significance to the surface structure of sentences of the type ‘*S* communicates the belief (desire ...) that *p* to *A*’ by assuming that the communicated entity is denoted by the grammatical object following ‘communicates’. On our proposal, what is communicated in all Gricean cases is a thought. And since *S* communicates the thought that *p* to *A* only if *S* means that *p* and *A* understands what *S* means, the thought that *p* will be transmitted from *S* to *A*.

## 1 Introduction

According to an old tradition, words and sentences are means for the transmission of thoughts (ideas, information ...). An early adherent of this view is Augustine (1995, II.3, pp. 59f.), but the most famous one is presumably Locke:

Besides articulate Sounds therefore, it was farther necessary, that [Man] should be *able to use these Sounds, as Signs of internal Conceptions*; and to make them stand as marks for the *Ideas* within his own Mind, whereby they

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might be made known to others, and the Thoughts of Men's Minds be conveyed from one to another. (Locke 1689, III.I.2, p. 402)

More recently, Jerrold Katz has said:

Natural languages are vehicles for communication in which syntactically structured and acoustically realized objects transmit meaningful messages from one speaker to another. (Katz 1966, p. 98)

Note that Katz uses the word 'communication' to capture the transmission of meaningful messages. Generally, it seems to be an assumption implicit in many contemporary accounts of language and linguistic meaning that 'communication' is a suitable term for the exchange of information, and that the typical purpose of using linguistic signs is communication. Furthermore, it is often assumed that communication is even *constitutive* of the meaning of words and sentences.

One sizable movement in which it is tried to analyse semantic notions in terms of communication is made up by exponents of the *Gricean Programme*. This project goes back to Paul Grice's seminal article 'Meaning' (1957), where he suggested an analysis of "non-natural meaning" that is meant to provide a basis for defining sentence and word meaning (cf. also Grice 1968). Grice himself did not make use of the word 'communication', but preferred analysing linguistic meaning in terms of *speakers meaning something* by their utterances. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the concept of communication is at least implicitly involved in his account of speaker meaning.<sup>1</sup> Grice took speaker meaning to include the—secondary—intention to let the addressee know that one has some—primary—intention, such as the intention to convince the hearer of something. It would thus appear that he conceived of speaker meaning as including an *attempt to communicate* that one has this primary intention. Some of his followers therefore turned to analyses in which the notion of communication plays a central role.<sup>2</sup>

'Communication' is a term with a tremendously broad range of application. Senders, such as neurons, communicate electronic signals to receivers. Speakers communicate information, news, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, desires ... to hearers. Broadcasting corporations communicate tomorrow's weather to radio listeners. Human beings and other animals communicate diseases. The present text is especially concerned with what may be called *Gricean communication*. Following the previous remarks, Gricean communication is communication between utterers and their audiences, where, first, the utterer *means* something and, second, the audience *understands* what is meant. We try to show that this type of communication essentially involves *transmission of thoughts (information ...)*. That may sound like a platitude, as it does to us; but since we shall be concerned with an objection to this assumption, we provide some preliminary support for it.

Let us start with the etymological roots of the word 'communication'. According to the *Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*, the earliest known occurrence can be found in the *Wykliffe Bible*, dated about 1384, where this word is to be interpreted as

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Strawson 1964: 29, Sperber and Wilson 1986: 21ff., Meggle 1997: 17.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., e.g., Bach and Harnish (1979), the early Searle (1969) and Meggle (1984, 1997).

“imparting or transmitting of something” (Barnhart 1988, p. 195). Its roots are put down to the Latin verb ‘communicare’ (from the adjective ‘communis’), which means “making common to many, share, impart”. In order to impart something or to make it common, one has to transmit something (e.g., property or information). The etymological roots of ‘communication’ thus perfectly meet the notion that communication entails transmission.

In accordance with these roots, *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* explains communication as “[t]he action of communicating heat, feeling, motion, etc.; *spec.* the transmission or exchange of information, news, etc.” (Brown 1993, p. 455). Prima facie, all of these processes include the transmission of something; and the specific sense is even explicitly explained in terms of transmission of information. In general, contemporary dictionaries tend to reduce the main sense of ‘communication’ to such notions as ‘impart’, ‘transmit’ and ‘share’; and it is furthermore common to assume a specific sense of ‘communication’ which refers to the transmission particularly of information.

However, this assumption has recently come under forceful attack. In ‘Communicating, Telling, and Informing’ (1999), as well as in his book *Meaning, Expression, and Thought* (2003), Wayne Davis claims that transmission is far from being a *ubiquitous* ingredient in communication. He does not deny that there are cases in which to communicate entails to impart something:

The transmission model certainly fits electronic communication, in which a sender transmits an electronic signal to a receiver. The transmission idea also applies to the markedly different sense in which people communicate diseases, as well as that in which actions or other events communicate information. [It] even fits the communication of thoughts by speakers. When a speaker communicates the thought that it is a nice day, he has the thought and expresses it, typically in words. The hearer hears the words, “decodes” them, and winds up having the thought herself. (Davis 2003, pp. 96f.)

But Davis rejects the idea that transmission is always present when a speaker is said to communicate something to an audience, that is, when Gricean communication takes place:

The transmission model loses all its plausibility [...] when we examine the communication of mental states other than occurrent thought. Imagine a known liar telling you that your son has cheated. The liar communicated the belief that your son has cheated. Yet he did not have the belief to begin with (since he was lying), and you did not end up with it (since you knew he was lying). So transmission of a belief is not necessary for communication. [And it] is similarly irrelevant to the communication of desires, intentions, and emotions. (Davis 2003, p. 79)

We try to show that this is too hasty. In Sect. 2, it is pointed out that there are actually two variants of the transmission idea, a weak and a strong one. The weak version is defended in Sect. 3. We argue, first, that the analysis of communication which Davis extracts from *Grice’s* account of speaker meaning implies transmission in the weak sense; second, that Davis’s *own* theory of communication also entails it;

and third, that it must be entailed by *any* account of Gricean communication. In Sect. 4, we scrutinise the cited argument against the transmission model. It will be shown that it attaches too much significance to the surface structure of such sentences as ‘He communicated the belief that your son has cheated’ by assuming that the communicated entity is denoted by the grammatical object following ‘communicated’. There is a quite plausible alternative according to which Davis’s own model of communication, like every account of Gricean communication, implies transmission even in the strong sense.

## 2 Two Variants of the Transmission Idea

There are two versions of the transmission idea, being reflected in Davis’s formulations. In his book *Meaning, Expression, and Thought*, he makes clear that he tries to refute the notion “that to communicate something is to transmit *it* to someone else” (Davis 2003, p. 96, our emphasis). Although the claim he objects to in ‘Communicating, Telling, and Informing’ seems to be the same, you can also find a weaker wording in this article: “to communicate is to transmit *something* to someone else” (Davis 1999, p. 31, our emphasis). This may be read as merely stating that whenever communication between a speaker *S* and an addressee *A* takes place, then *something* is imparted:

$$\text{Weak TI: } S \text{ communicates } x \text{ to } A \rightarrow (\exists y)(S \text{ transmits } y \text{ to } A)$$

We will see that for the kind of communication which is at issue here, i.e., the one which requires an utterer to mean something and an audience to understand what is meant, this claim can be strengthened: there is always some *thought* (in the sense of a content) conveyed.

In contrast, the formulation in Davis’s later work says that what is transmitted is *nothing else than what is communicated*. For example, if the speaker communicated the thought that 29 is a prime number to the hearer, then it is not any old thing which flew from the former to the latter but exactly the thought that 29 is a prime number:

$$\text{Strong TI: } S \text{ communicates } x \text{ to } A \rightarrow S \text{ transmits } x \text{ to } A$$

Like Davis, we do not provide an explicit definition of transmission. Obviously, transmission of a thought from *S* to *A* is a process at the beginning of which a speaker has a thought and at the end of which the addressee entertains this thought, too. But it is equally clear that not just any process counts. Consider Mary and John who are at the beach early in the morning. While Mary is telling John about yesterday’s party, the sun starts rising. Mary thinks: ‘What a beautiful sunrise. It’s a crime to disturb it by talking about dinner parties.’ But she continues telling her story. A moment later, while listening to Mary, the same thought occurs to John. Here we would probably not say that this thought was transmitted because the connection between Mary’s and John’s thinking it is, as it were, too loose.

We do not know how to specify the required closeness in a general way. However, in the examples we present it will be perfectly obvious that the thought in question is imparted in the relevant sense. For the hearer entertains it by

understanding the speaker's utterance. That is, it is not just any accompanying circumstance, such as a sunrise, which makes him think the same thought but the fact that he recognises on the basis of the utterance what the speaker means by it.

Note that there is a challenge to the transmission idea which is not at issue here. When Mary entertains the thought that *the author of the Prior Analytics* was a philosopher, while the thought that *the teacher of Alexander the Great* was a philosopher occurs to John, do they have the same thought? Or to make use of an example that will soon become relevant, what about Mary's thinking that *she* (Mary) intends *John* to believe that *p* and John's entertaining the thought that *this woman* (Mary) intends *him* (John) to believe that *p*? Some would say that these thoughts differ because there is, in Fregean terms, a difference in the "mode of presentation" of Aristotle, Mary and John. However, since this nicety does not seem to be what Davis has in mind when he objects to the transmission idea, we shall ignore it.

Finally, having the thought that *p* must not be confused with believing or judging that *p* (cf. Davis 2003, pp. 27, 296). For the latter two entail that the thinker takes it to be true that *p*, whereas one can entertain a thought in an uncommitted way, viz., without agreeing (or disagreeing) to it. Moreover, although judging that *p* implies entertaining the thought that *p*, this is not true for believing. While dreamlessly sleeping, Mary does not think the thought that Aristotle was a philosopher; but she might possess a belief with this content.

### 3 In Defence of the Weak Transmission Idea

We shall now defend Weak TI by showing that both the theory of communication that Davis gathers from Grice's account of speaker meaning and Davis's own theory imply transmission in the weak sense. Furthermore, we will see that transmission of a thought should be entailed by any account of Gricean communication.

Although Davis rejects Grice's proposal as an analysis of *speaker meaning*, he suggests taking it as an initial step towards an analysis of *communication*. Grice (1957, p. 220) has claimed that an utterer *S* means that *p* just in case *S* does something with the intention that an addressee *A* believe that *p* by means of recognising that *S* intends her to acquire this belief. Such a meaning intention is surely not sufficient for communication because it can be present without the hearer understanding what the speaker means. Davis observes, however, that it might be taken to define *attempts* at communication, so that communication consists in the fulfillment of such an intention. Accordingly, what he calls the "Gricean analysis of communication" reads as follows:

*S* communicates the belief that *p* to *A* iff *S* produces in *A* the belief that *p* by means of *A*'s recognition of *S*'s intention [to produce in *A* the belief that *p*].  
(Davis 2003, p. 87)

To be sure, this account does not require the *belief* in question to be conveyed. After all, *S* can be a liar who makes *A* believe that *p* without himself believing that *p*. It entails, however, that some *thoughts* are transmitted, including the thought that *p*.

The Gricean analysis rules that *S* possesses the secondary intention that *A* recognise her primary intention to produce in *A* the belief that *p*. But *S* can hardly possess this secondary intention without having in mind her primary intention. Moreover, it is assumed that the intentions of the speaker are satisfied. But her secondary intention is satisfied only if her primary intention is recognised by the addressee. Thus, the hearer will also have a thought representing the primary intention. And since this thought is produced by *S*'s getting *A* to recognise the primary intention, it is fair to say that it is transmitted in the process of communication. So the Gricean analysis of communication implies the transmission of the thought that *S* intends *A* to believe that *p*. Furthermore, one cannot entertain the thought that *S* intends *A* to believe that *p* without thereby entertaining its components, that is, among other things, the thought that *p* (cf. Davis 2003, p. 307). Consequently, this is also a thought flowing from speaker to hearer.

Second, let us have a look at Davis's own analysis of communication. As the basic form, i.e., the form to which all other relevant expressions containing 'communicate' can be reduced, he proposes '*S* communicates *M* to *A*'. '*M*' is here an individual variable ranging not only over beliefs but also over other mental states, such as desires, hopes and emotions. In further contrast to the Gricean analysis, Davis does not take the communication of a mental state to require that the utterer intends the addressee to be in this state. (As Davis (2003, pp. 64f.) and many other philosophers of language have emphasised, such an intention is not necessary for meaning something by one's utterance.) The state must rather be *expressed* by the speaker (which implies neither an intention to produce it in the hearer nor that the speaker or hearer is in the state):

*S* communicates *M* to *A* iff *S* does something by which *S* expresses *M* and from which *A* recognizes that *S* is expressing *M*. (Davis 2003, p. 94)

Expression of mental states is then explicated as follows (Davis 2003, Ch. 3):<sup>3</sup>

*S* expresses *M* iff *S* performs an observable act by which *S* intends to indicate that she has *M*.

There are, however, several kinds of expressions which do not straightforwardly meet the basic form '*S* communicates *M* to *A*'. Davis (2003, p. 98) takes them to be reducible to "supplementary schemas", that is, to the "basic concept of communication" complemented by certain additions. For example, there are sentences like 'Mary communicates *her* belief that 29 is a prime number to John' in which a possessive personal pronoun indicates that the speaker is in fact in the mental state denoted by the direct grammatical object of 'communicate'. Davis defines them as follows:

*S* communicates his *M* to *A* iff *S* communicates *M* to *A*, provided *S* has *M*. (Davis 2003, p. 97; cf. 1999, p. 32)

<sup>3</sup> We leave aside Davis's further constraint that *S* does not covertly simulate an unintentional indication of *M* because it is irrelevant to our argumentation. Siebel (2003) is concerned with the question whether Davis's account of attitude expression provides a basis for analysing illocutionary acts.

Moreover, there are locutions like ‘Mary communicates the *fact* that 29 is a prime number to John’. Owing to the factivity of the noun following the definite article, they entail that the given content is true. Davis incorporates them in terms of communicating a belief (‘*F*’ stands for factive nouns):

*S* communicates the *F* that *p* to *A* iff *S* communicates the belief that *p* to *A*, provided the *F* that *p* obtains [...]. (Davis 2003, p. 98; cf. 1999, p. 32)

The crucial point now is that Davis’s basic definition, the definition of ‘*S* communicates *M* to *A*’, implies transmission of at least two thoughts. The definition says, among other things, that the speaker intends to provide an indication of the mental state *M*. But *S* cannot have this intention without having in mind the thought that she gives an indication for her having *M*, and thus also the thought that she has *M*. Furthermore, the addressee *A* must recognise that *S* expresses *M*, that is, that *S* intends to indicate that she has *M*. So, the thought that *S* provides an indication for *M*, and hence also the thought that *S* is in *M*, occurs to the audience. Since the occurrence is due to the hearer’s recognition of the speaker’s intention to express the mental state, these thoughts are transmitted from speaker to hearer. Thus, Davis’s own account of communication entails Weak TI.

A possible objection should be considered. In his paper ‘Expression of Emotion’, Davis (1988) draws a distinction between two “modes of expression”: expressing *descriptively* and expressing *emotively*. Expressing an emotion descriptively is doing something as an indication of the *belief* that one has this emotion. In contrast, expressing it emotively is performing an action in order to provide an indication of the emotion *directly*. This latter sense of ‘expressing’ might raise doubts upon our previous argument. One might maintain that, even if expressing a mental state *descriptively* implied entertaining the thought that one is in that state, expressing it *emotively* would not. Hence, communicating *M* by emotively expressing *M* appears to be a case of communicating *M* without thinking anything about *M*.

However, Davis (1988, p. 283; 2003, p. 61) also mentions that when we are expressing anger emotively while not being angry, we are *insincere*; and insincerity seems to be a property which belongs to intentional actions in the full sense. We may take for granted that there is something like expressing emotively which does not imply that *S* provides an indication of the *belief* that she is in the mental state. Nevertheless, one cannot be insincere with respect to a matter one has no idea of, that is, which one does not think of. So even *S*’s expressing *emotively* a mental state implies *S*’s having the thought that she is in the mental state. And since the audience must recognise that the utterer is providing an indication of her being in the state, this thought will be conveyed. Thus, Davis’s distinction between expressing descriptively and expressing emotively does not generate counter-examples to Weak TI.

Finally, each and every conception of Gricean communication, that is, of cases where the utterer means something and where an addressee understands what is meant, must imply Weak TI. In order to see this, remember an important remark Stephen Schiffer (1972, p. 49) made in his book *Meaning*. He emphasised that an account of speaker meaning has to show what the *content* of the meaning act is: “No account of *S*-meaning will be complete unless it provides a definite means for specifying what *S* meant by uttering *x*.” But if we are forced to specify what is

meant, then we are forced to specify something that will necessarily be *transmitted* if the speaker is understood by an audience. On the one hand, the utterer will certainly have an idea of what she means. On the other hand, she will not be understood unless the addressee, as a result of the speaker's utterance, also has an idea of what is meant. Hence, however the details are spelled out, the thought that the utterer means a certain thing will be imparted. Thus, *any* account of Gricean communication will involve the transmission of a thought.

#### 4 In Defence of the Strong Transmission Idea

What about *Strong* TI? Until now, we have only shown that there is always *something* transmitted in Gricean communication because a thought will be imparted. The strong transmission idea, however, goes beyond this assumption. It claims that it is not just any old thing which is conveyed but nothing other than the *communicated entity*. In order to examine whether this is reasonable, it is necessary to know what the communicated entity is. In this connexion, Davis makes a certain implicit assumption in the section on the transmission model:

“communicated” can be followed by noun phrases like “the time of the attack,” “the location of the mine,” and “the number of voters.” These phrases of course denote things that could not possibly be transmitted from speaker to hearer in any literal sense. (Davis 2003, p. 98; cf. 1999, p. 32)

Davis argues here in favour of the thesis that what is communicated in these cases is not transmitted. Notice that he thereby presupposes a certain view about what the communicated entity is. It is meant to be *the referent of the noun phrase standing as the grammatical object of ‘communicate’*:

Premise 1: In sentences of the form ‘S communicates \_\_ to A’, the phrase filling in the blank refers to the communicated entity.

The argument then proceeds by pointing out—second premise—that times of attacks, locations of mines and numbers of voters may be denoted by such phrases but cannot be transmitted. If both premises are true, then there are cases where the communicated entities are not conveyed.

Premise 1, however, is wrong. If the phrases filling in the blank in ‘S communicates \_\_ to A’ always referred to what is communicated, then replacing them by a term with the same extension must not result in nonsense.<sup>4</sup> There should be no impediment, then, to picking out the object of communication with the help of a different expression. For example, if the time of the attack is 1 a.m., then ‘Mary communicated 1 a.m. to John’ would have to be just as meaningful as ‘Mary communicated the time of the attack to John’. The former string of words, however, sounds entirely odd. Although, obviously, times of attacks cannot literally be

<sup>4</sup> We do not claim thereby that the given context is *extensional*, i.e., that the phrase filling in the blank can be replaced by a co-extensional expression without a change in *truth-value*.



*transmitted*, they neither appear to belong to the kind of things that can be *communicated*. But if so, then such formulations as “Mary communicated the time of the attack to John” tell against Premise 1.

In fact, Davis’s own account is hardly in line with Premise 1. Remember that Davis takes all instances of ‘*S* communicates \_\_\_ to *A*’ to be reducible to the “basic concept of communication”, which is captured by expressions of the form “*S* communicates (mental state) *M* to *A*”. For example, to account for such expressions as ‘Mary communicated the time of the attack to John’, Davis provides the following “supplementary schema”:

*S* communicates *f(a)* to *A* iff *S* communicates the belief that *f(a)* is *G* to *A*, for some *G* such that *f(a)* is *G*. (Davis 2003, p. 98; cf. 1999, p. 32)

Premise 1, however, jeopardises this reductionist programme. According to it, the analysandum entails that the (one and only) communicated entity is a certain subject matter (e.g., the time of the attack), whereas the analysans implies that it is a very different beast, namely, a belief about this subject matter (e.g., the belief that the time of the attack is 1 a.m.). Hence, Davis’s supplementary schema suggests that he does not take sentences like ‘Mary communicated the time of the attack to John’ at face value but holds that what is communicated in these cases is not the entity it seems to be at first glance.

Now let us turn to the objection against Strong TI that was already presented in the introduction:

Imagine a known liar telling you that your son has cheated. The liar communicated the belief that your son has cheated. Yet he did not have the belief to begin with (since he was lying), and you did not end up with it (since you knew he was lying). (Davis 2003, p. 79)

This argument starts from the assumption that what is communicated here is the mentioned belief. This assumption rests upon Premise 1. As we saw, however, Premise 1 does not appear to hold, or is at least unavailable to Davis given his supplementary schemas. So the argument is inconclusive.

However, the case to which Davis directs our attention must still be taken very seriously. Since the communicated entity in ‘*S* communicates the belief that *p*’ need not be the belief that *p*, we are faced with the questions (1) what else the communicated entity is supposed to be, and (2) whether the answer to (1) can be accommodated with Strong TI. We want to argue now that there is an answer to (1) which appears to go rather well with Strong TI. Since, except for some details, the account presented by Davis strikes us as very plausible, we shall expose our idea using his framework.

According to Davis, each and every expression of the form ‘*S* communicates \_\_\_ to *A*’ can be reduced to an expression of the form ‘*S* communicates *M* to *A*’ (possibly plus some extra condition). Our suggestion is that we have not reached the bottom of the reductive line thereby. For it seems to us that sentences of the form ‘*S* communicates *M* to *A*’ are, in turn, capable of being transformed into sentences of the form ‘*S* communicates to *A* that she has (or is in) *M*’ (perhaps plus some additional condition which is irrelevant to the question of what the communicated

entity is).<sup>5</sup> For example, ‘Mary communicates the belief (desire, hope ...) that there is still beer in the fridge to John’ appears to be equivalent to ‘Mary communicates to John that she believes (desires, hopes ...) that there is still beer in the fridge’. And since ‘that she has *M*’ is nothing but a special case of a that-clause, expressions of the type ‘*S* communicates *M* to *A*’ are thus reducible to ‘*S* communicates to *A* that *p*’.

If this is correct, then all cases of Gricean communication can be captured by such sentences containing that-clauses, given that Davis’s account is right as far as it goes. In contrast to Davis, however, our further translation into ‘*S* communicates to *A* that she has *M*’ does *not* suggest that the object of communication is the mental state *M*. Instead, it is the denotation of the given that-clauses. And what else should these denote apart from thoughts (in the sense of contents)? Communicating to someone that such-and-such is the case means communicating to her the thought that such-and-such is the case.<sup>6</sup>

Incidentally, it even seems to us that there are cases where Davis’s reduction, in terms of a mental state, is hardly adequate, whereas ours, in terms of a that-clause, can be applied. Recall the case of ‘Mary communicated the time of the attack to John’. Davis suggests that it can be reduced to ‘Mary communicated the belief that the time of the attack is *G* to John’, given that the time of the attack is in fact *G*. Imagine, however, that Mary’s words were the following: ‘Peter advised me to tell you that the attack will be at 1 a.m.; but be careful, I’m sure he wants to deceive you.’ Imagine furthermore that her suspicion is wrong, that John is aware of this and that the time of the attack is in fact 1 a.m. (perhaps Mary is being used by the secret service).

Then we may still say that Mary communicated the time of the attack to John. However, does Davis’s translation, ‘Mary communicated the belief that the time of the attack is 1 a.m. to John’, fit this case? We do not think so. One difficulty here is that, in the light of Davis’s theory, this would mean that Mary expressed this belief, that is, intended to indicate that she has it. But, as Grice (1969, p. 98) has pointed out and as Davis (1984, Sect. II) has admitted, “one cannot have intentions to achieve results which one sees no chance of achieving”. Thus, Mary can hardly intend to indicate that she has the belief in question when she deliberately makes it clear that she does not possess it.

So Davis’s translation seems to fail in such a case of communicating the time of an attack. In contrast, there is no barrier to describing this case in terms of a that-

<sup>5</sup> At first glance, ‘*S* communicates that he has *M*’ does not imply ‘*S* communicates *M*’ because, after visiting a psychoanalyst, John may communicate that he has an unconscious desire without communicating any unconscious desire. But remember that ‘*M*’ is an individual variable ranging over mental states, i.e., a placeholder for singular terms referring to such states (cf. Davis 2003, 94). This entails that ‘John communicates that he has *an* unconscious desire’ does not instantiate ‘*S* communicates that he has *M*’. Rather, it has the form ‘*S* communicates that  $(\exists x)(x \text{ is an unconscious desire} \ \& \ \text{he has } x)$ ’.

<sup>6</sup> There might also be a sense in which a novelist who writes ‘New York was nuked’, while communicating *the thought that New York was attacked with nuclear weapons*, does not communicate *that New York was attacked with nuclear weapons* (cf. Davis 2003, p. 93f.). In this sense, ‘*S* communicates that *p*’ is not equivalent to ‘*S* communicates the thought that *p*’ because the former amounts to ‘*S* communicates the *belief* that *p*’. In the weaker sense we allude to, however, communicating that *p* just means expressing and being understood as expressing the *thought* that *p*.

clause: ‘Mary communicated to John that the time of the attack is 1 a.m.’ Parallel examples are yielded by other sentences of the form ‘ $S$  communicated  $f(a)$  to  $A$ ’, as well as by locutions of the type ‘ $S$  communicated the  $F$  that  $p$  to  $A$ ’. It is easy, for instance, to imagine an analogous case where both ‘ $S$  communicated the fact that  $p$  to  $A$ ’ and ‘ $S$  communicated to  $A$  that  $p$ ’ apply whereas ‘ $S$  communicated the belief that  $p$  to  $A$ ’ overshoots the mark because  $S$  does not intend to indicate that she believes that  $p$ .

To come back to our main issue, the crucial point now is that, regardless whether Davis’s reductive programme fits these cases or not, our further reduction to locutions with that-clauses enables us to preserve Strong TI anyway. Let us leave aside for a moment our misgivings by tentatively assuming that Davis is right in analysing all sentences about communication of speakers with audiences by means of his basic schema ‘ $S$  communicates  $M$  to  $A$ ’. A second look at this schema suggested that it amounts to ‘ $S$  communicates to  $A$  that she has  $M$ ’ (plus additional conditions), so that the actually communicated entity is not the mental state  $M$  but the thought that  $S$  has  $M$ . Hence, in the light of Davis’s analysis plus our further reduction, whenever Gricean communication takes place, the communicated entity is a thought to the effect that  $S$  has  $M$ .

But if it is such a thought that is communicated in Gricean communication, then it is a trivial consequence of Davis’s theory that what is communicated will be transmitted. For his theory says that  $S$  communicates the thought that  $S$  has  $M$  only if  $S$  intends to indicate that she entertains this thought. Since she cannot have this intention without grasping its content, and since the thought that  $S$  has  $M$  is a part of its content, it will occur to  $S$ . Furthermore, this thought is communicated to  $A$  only if  $A$  recognises that  $S$  intends to provide an indication of her thinking this thought. Thereupon, the thought that  $S$  has  $M$  will be imparted to  $A$ .

In a nutshell, since (i) Davis takes all cases of Gricean communication to be analysable with the help of ‘ $S$  communicates  $M$  to  $A$ ’, since (ii) this schema can in turn be reduced to ‘ $S$  communicates to  $A$  that she has  $M$ ’, since (iii) the latter picks out the thought that  $S$  has  $M$  as the communicated entity, and since (iv) Davis’s account rules that this thought will flow from speaker to hearer, it follows in the end that Davis’s own account of communication supports Strong TI.

However, we voiced some reservations towards Davis’s reductive programme. In our view, it is not clear that ‘Mary communicated the time of the attack to John’ can be captured by ‘Mary communicated the *belief* that the time of the attack is ... to John’. It is therefore no less doubtful whether it can be transformed into a locution with a that-clause of the *special* form ‘that  $S$  has  $M$ ’, viz., into ‘Mary communicated to John that she has the belief that the time of the attack is ...’. But, as we also pointed out, this does not mean that sentences of this type are incapable of being analysed with the help of that-clauses. After all, the *general* form of such clauses is ‘that  $p$ ’, and it seems reasonable to paraphrase the target sentence by ‘Mary communicated to John that the time of the attack is ...’. There is thus no impediment to treating it by means of what we take to be the basic formula, ‘ $S$  communicates to  $A$  that  $p$ ’.

But if this is the formula to which all relevant locutions can be reduced, then Strong TI again pops its head out of the hole in which Davis tried to lock it up. Less

metaphorically, if we assume that all cases of Gricean communication can be described by ‘*S* communicates to *A* that *p*’ (plus supplementary conditions), then what is communicated in this type of communication, the thought that *p*, will be imparted from *S* to *A*. For Gricean communication is distinguished by the fact that the utterer communicates (the thought) that *p* to an addressee only if the utterer means that *p* and the addressee understands what she means. Now, on the one hand, in order for *S* to mean that *p*, the thought that *p* has to occur to *S*. On the other hand, in order for *A* to recognise what *S* means, *A* must entertain this thought, too. This thought will thus be transmitted. For example, in communicating the number of voters to John, the thought that the number of voters is, say, 1,023,476 flows from Mary to John. In communicating his desire for a beer to Mary, John conveys the thought that he wants a beer to her. And so on.

## 5 Summary

Despite the doubts Davis puts forward, not only the weak but also the strong transmission idea can be saved. As to Weak TI, Davis’s own theory, like any theory of Gricean communication, entails that whenever communication by a speaker with her audience takes place then there is something, namely a thought, which the former imparts to the latter. As to Strong TI, if we assume that Gricean communication is always communication of thoughts, then, again, Davis’s account and, moreover, every account of this type of communication rules that what is communicated is also transmitted. There are thus good reasons for maintaining the traditional notion that transmission of thoughts is an essential ingredient in Gricean communication.

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