

# Psychological and Public Aspects of Speaker Meaning: Toward a Philosophy of Communication

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What is it like for individuals to mean something by their utterance? To adopt a term that philosophers use, what is *speaker meaning*? The aim of this book is to refute the most influential theory of speaker meaning, namely intention-based semantics, and to propose what I call *jointness-based semantics* in its place.

This book comprises an Introduction and three parts (“Intention-Based Semantics,” “Divorcing Meaning from Intention,” and “Starting from Jointness”); each part consists of two chapters.

## Introduction

Two notions are essential throughout this book: *the psychological and the public aspects of speaker meaning*. To assert that speaker meaning is both psychological and public is seemingly contradictory; thus, how this can be so must be satisfactorily explained.

The psychological aspect of speaker meaning comprises two interconnecting features. First, when a speaker means that  $p$  and an audience understands it, the audience is seemingly allowed to attribute the belief that  $p$  to the speaker. Second, when a speaker means that  $p$  and an audience understands it, the audience receives an explanation regarding what the speaker did and a prediction of what the speaker will do.

The public aspect of speaker meaning is as follows. If a speaker means that  $p$  and an audience understands it, the speaker must publicly commit to what she means. The public aspect of speaker meaning presupposes another of its related features, which I call *the transparency of speaker meaning*: if an individual means something, she cannot hide the fact that she means something. Without transparency, an individual could mean something without letting the audience know that she means something, which could exempt her from making a necessary public commitment.

## Chapter 1, “The Framework of Intention-Based Semantics”

In the first chapter, I demonstrate the intention-based semantic view of speaker meaning by focusing on Grice’s original proposal in his 1957 article “Meaning.” Generally, the analysis of speaker meaning is a teleological enterprise. Theorists attempt to specify the aim of a speaker’s utterance in cases of speaker meaning and on its basis, provide an analysis of speaker meaning. Thus, there are two challenges to the analysis of speaker

meaning: specifying the relevant aim (i.e., “the realization problem”) and the way in which the relevant aim is connected to the speaker’s corresponding utterance (i.e., “the connection problem”). Intention-based semantics represents the view that the connection problem can be answered by appealing to the notion of speaker’s intentions.

## Chapter 2, “Intention-Based Semantics and the Regress of Speaker’s Intentions”

Strawson and Schiffer assert that Grice’s original analysis, which appeals to the speaker’s three intentions, has a counterexample that forces us to appeal to a fourth intention. However, even if the fourth intention is adopted, we can construct a further parallel counterexample to this revised analysis, and the same goes on *ad infinitum*. Various theorists have attempted to resolve this regression, but as I demonstrate in this chapter, no attempt has succeeded.

## Chapter 3, “Why Does the Regress Problem Occur?”

Intention-based semantics has two assumptions. The first is the transparency of speaker meaning. The second is *representationalism about speaker meaning*, namely, the assumption that the connection problem can be answered by appealing to the speaker’s propositional attitude that represents the relevant aim of her utterance. In this chapter, I demonstrate that once an individual adopts these two assumptions, the regress problem inevitably occurs. Therefore, intention-based semantics is problematic from the beginning.

## Chapter 4, “Relation between Meaning and Intention”

Intention-based semantics is not supported by intuition either; to demonstrate this, I provide various cases where the speaker means something without having the intentions that she must have in order to mean it according to intention-based semantics, and various complementary cases where the speaker does not mean anything though she has such intentions.

## Chapter 5, “Jointness-Based Semantics”

Based on Taylor’s criticism of intention-based semantics and Gilbert’s view on collective belief, I propose that the aim of the speaker’s utterance in cases where a speaker means that *p* is for the speaker and audience to form a collective belief that the speaker believes that *p*; this is my answer to the realization problem. According to Gilbert, to participate in a collective belief, each participant must express her readiness. In cases of speaker meaning, the speaker’s utterance is supposed to be an expression of

relevant readiness; this is my answer to the connection problem.

## Chapter 6, "Explaining the Psychological Aspect"

Jointness-based semantics considers the public aspect of speaker meaning a starting point. So, the fact that it can explain the public aspect is trivial. Explaining the psychological aspect is more challenging. If the assumption is that when an individual means something and another understands it, they collectively believe that the former has a relevant belief, it does not necessarily follow that the speaker has the relevant belief. Thus, jointness-based semantics apparently cannot explain the psychological aspect of speaker meaning. In this chapter, however, I demonstrate that the speaker who means that  $p$  does not necessarily in fact believe that  $p$  but rather she only has to act as if she had such a belief. In this case, jointness-based semantics can explain the psychological aspect of speaker meaning better than intention-based semantics.

Jointness-based semantics provides a different view of human communication than intention-based semantics. According to the intention-based perspective, an individual can mean anything so far as she has the relevant intentions. This is an individualist view of communication. According to jointness-based semantics, an individual cannot mean anything by means that cannot be accepted by the audience as the expression of relevant readiness. Speaker meaning is, thus, not an individualist enterprise. This is a communitarian view of communication.