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## Grice's Unspeakable Truths

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# Grice's Unspeakable Truths

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Expressions featuring words of interest to philosophers often find homes in examples of everyday conversation. Should you voice your worries about whether Sam's coming, I may assure you that I know he's on his way. Should it happen to snow in May, I may say, surprised by what I see, "that looks like snow". Confronted with some obscure remark, I may ask after what it means. Should I fail to get a satisfactory response, I may throw up my hands and complain that I still don't understand.

In other examples, though, these same sorts of expressions come off as odd or inappropriate or untimely. Suppose, for example, that while I'm with Sam on the way to wherever, I say, "I know Sam's on his way". Suppose that while shoveling out after the biggest snowstorm this winter I say, nodding at the stuff in the shovel, "that looks like snow". Suppose that I order a large-coffee-for-here and add, "I meant that I'd like a large coffee for here". Suppose that in response the barista says, "I understood you as having asked for a large coffee for here".

Common to this last batch of examples—examples in which these expressions come off as perplexing—is that particular circumstances present in the first batch are here noticeably absent. No question has been raised about whether Sam might not show. That the stuff in the shovel is snow comes as no surprise. My coffee order needed no clarification and that's partly why the remark about how the barista took it comes as a surprise visitor. Worry and surprise and obscurity were afoot in that first batch of examples, and their presence seemed to keep the remarks in them on the up and up.

These facts give rise in philosophers to a couple of different kinds of reactions.

Some philosophers are tempted to think that the discrepancy between these two batches of examples betrays that the words or expressions involved in them carry along as a kind of prerequisite for their being in order that those particular circumstances that make all the difference are in fact present. The perplexities which follow on the heels of what's said in the odd examples, according to these philosophers, can be accounted for

by supposing that what's said in them fails to count as a genuine case of saying, since the circumstances surrounding what's said fail to satisfy prerequisites for successful talk. Philosophers tempted towards such a view may go on to suggest that when said in those suspect examples those suspect sayings are, because misfires, to be regarded as neither true nor false. They're liable to have it that perplexing examples in which expressions featuring, for example, the word "know" or "looks" can only be oddly uttered aren't to be regarded as examples of knowledge or of the presence of a way things look, since in those sorts of examples the words "know" or "looks" have no home.<sup>1</sup>

Other philosophers have it that those suspect expressions deployed in those suspect examples are meaningful and true too. These philosophers think the perplexities that arise in the examples in question are to be accounted for by attending to the fact that deploying these sorts of expressions in the absence of the right kinds of circumstances amounts to a violation of one or another among principles which when abided by keep our conversations tidy. They have it that these perplexing examples in which expressions featuring, for example, the words "know" or "looks" can only be oddly uttered are still examples which feature knowledge or a way things look, since what's said in those examples, odd as it is, is still true.

Paul Grice is interested in these curious kinds of examples. Here are variations on a case. Suppose we're in some forest standing next to the biggest tree of the bunch. We're chatting idly about the weather or some other nothing in particular when all of a sudden I say, as I aim my eyes and my finger at that biggest tree, "I know that's a tree" or "that looks like a tree". The tree in question, lets suppose, is not at risk of being mistaken for anything else. My eyes are not playing tricks on me. Dusk has not yet arrived. What I say, then, comes quite out of the blue. My saying "I know that's a tree" or "that looks like a tree" is odd in just the way at issue. There's no doubt that this is a weird thing for me to say. Grice agrees that in such an example saying "I know..." or "...looks..." is peculiar. But he doesn't think the oddness keeps it from standing as an example of knowledge or of a way things look to me. He takes the line that in these sorts of examples what's said is no doubt wildly bizarre and misleading but it's nevertheless meaningful and as true as can be. Grice finds himself, then, among that second group of philosophers.

Grice agrees with his opponents that what I say suggests certain conditions are satisfied which in this example aren't. "That looks like a tree" suggests, according to Grice, that whether that's a tree has been brought into question or that there's some reason to doubt whether that's a tree. If there's reason to doubt what I see or if suspicions arise about what I see, saying "...looks..." in the case in question wouldn't come off as puzzling. It's that none of those conditions are satisfied which makes my saying what I do seem so peculiar. Grice calls these conditions "doubt or denial conditions" (1961: 123). Grice parts ways with his opponents, though, in denying that the satisfaction of these

conditions should be thought of as a prerequisite for such a sentence as “that looks like a tree” to come to be counted as meaningful. Grice denies that the absence of these conditions in examples of the sort at issue keeps what’s said in them from being true. It’s because of these things that Grice thinks we can regard cases like these as comfortably locatable among other alleged items of support, for instance, for the causal theory of perception (Grice 1961: 141).

In taking aim at his opponents, Grice makes three different kinds moves against them. He argues that the presence of those particular circumstances isn’t in any way bound up with the meaning of the expressions uttered in the kinds of examples in question. He offers examples designed to show that utterances of the kinds of expressions in question may be true or false even when the circumstances supposed to be requisite for their coming to count as true or false are nowhere to be found. And he identifies what he takes to be unwritten rules of conversation violations of which account for the oddity attending those expressions uttered in the absence of the circumstances in question. Here I’ll work to show that each of these lines of argument fails and that as a result Grice’s case against his opponents is not at all decisive.

In an effort to give substance to the thought that the presence of doubt or denial conditions isn’t in any sense a function of the meaning of talk about how things look, Grice draws the now familiar distinction between what he calls “conversational” and “conventional” implicatures (1961: 126-7). Whereas the conventional implicatures of an expression are a function of the meanings of the words that make it up, the conversational implicatures of an expression are a function of the contribution those words make in particular instances of conversation. “Roscoe has impeccable penmanship”, for example, implicates that what issues from Roscoe’s pen is eminently legible. That it does, though, is thanks to what it means to say of anyone that they have impeccable penmanship. This implicature, because of that, is a conventional one. And because the implicature in this case is a function of the meanings of the words that make it up, where what’s implicated fails to be true so the utterance that does the implicating turns out to be false. To take a different case, in its occurrence in a letter of recommendation as the only instance of praise, “Roscoe has impeccable penmanship” carries the implication that Roscoe’s no good at philosophy.<sup>2</sup> This implication, though, hasn’t to do with the meanings of the words involved. It’s rather a result of the fact that, when employed in this kind of circumstance, it helps make sense of what the letter’s author was up to in so reporting. That Roscoe’s no good at philosophy, because of that, is a conversational implicature. Since the implicature in this case isn’t a function of the meanings of the words that make it up, even where what’s implicated fails to be satisfied still the utterance that does the implicating may well be true.

Grice thinks he has a test for determining which of the two sorts of implicatures we have before us (1961: 128-9). On the one hand, as we’ve seen, Grice has it that “Roscoe has impeccable penmanship” conventionally implicates that you can read his writing.

We can see that this is so, according to Grice, by noting the tension afoot in someone's saying that Roscoe has impeccable penmanship but also that she doesn't mean to suggest you can read his writing. This tension is accounted for by the fact that part of what it means to say Roscoe's penmanship is impeccable is that it's legible. Saying that Roscoe has impeccable penmanship as the only instance of praise, on the other hand, merely conversationally implicates that he's no good at philosophy. Grice suggests we can see this is so by noticing that there is no similar tension present in someone's saying Roscoe has impeccable penmanship but that she doesn't mean to suggest he's no good at philosophy. Roscoe may after all be good at laying down letters on the page even while he is also quite good at doing philosophy. This shows that the suggestion that Roscoe is no good at philosophy is, as Grice puts it, "cancellable" from saying that Roscoe has impeccable penmanship (1961: 128-9). Because the implication in this second case is cancellable, we can safely surmise it's merely conversational.

Grice wields the distinction between conventional and conversational implicatures against his opponents in the following way. He alleges that the satisfaction of doubt or denial conditions in cases where someone says "that looks like a tree" is a conversational rather than a conventional implicature. And because the suggestion that these conditions are satisfied is merely a conversational implicature, so the argument goes, it isn't in any sense a function of the meanings of the words involved. If Grice has rightly identified doubt or denial conditions as conversational implicatures, then those things said in the odd sorts of examples at issue are not to be regarded as examples of nonsense. They are instead meaningful and, where they are, also true.

Grice suggests that we can help ourselves to his test for the presence of conversational implicatures in order to see that the satisfaction of doubt or denial conditions isn't in any sense a prerequisite for "that looks like a tree" to come to be counted as meaningful. We need only to observe that we can coherently allege that a thing looks like a tree in the same breath with which we deny we've reason to doubt or deny that it is a tree. Since the implication that doubt or denial conditions are satisfied is cancellable from the allegation that it looks like a tree, that implication is in no sense a function of the meanings of the words involved. That doubt or denial conditions are satisfied, then, is merely a conversational implicature of "that looks like a tree". In the example in question, "that looks like a tree" remains meaningful even though it's a perfectly peculiar thing to say.

Though the account so far offered has appeared compelling to many,<sup>3</sup> a closer inspection of this particular application of his test for the presence of conversational implicatures shows that Grice has hasn't yet established that the satisfaction of doubt or denial conditions really is a conversational implicature of talk about how things look.

What's at issue between Grice and his opponents, recall, is in part what such a sentence as "that looks like a tree" comes to when said in those examples stripped of

circumstances which keep it from coming off as odd. In advance of settling that question, it's hard to see how Grice might go about establishing that there lurks no tension in the sentence "that looks like a tree, but I've no reason to doubt or deny that it is". In order to establish that the suggestion that doubt or denial conditions are satisfied isn't in any sense part of the meaning of, or a prerequisite for the intelligibility of, talk about how things look, Grice needs to provide some reason for thinking that such a claim really is coherent. Simply saying so won't do, for to do so would amount to a simple denial of his opponents' position.

Given what's at issue between him and his opponents, though, it's hard to see how Grice might argue in favor of the absence of such a tension without also taking it for granted. There is no question, we might grant, that the tension of interest shows up in saying "that's a circle, but I don't mean to suggest that it's round". Establishing that there's a tension here involves pointing out what the words "circle" and "round" come to or offering reminders about what sorts of things it is to which those words refer. In the cases in question, though, which involve expressions featuring such words as "know" or "looks", what those expressions come to, whether those words refer, and whether there are corresponding facts among the things Grice's opponents take to be in question. How Grice might move, in view of that, in offering support for the view that no tension is afoot in saying "that looks like a tree, but I've no reason to doubt or deny that it is" is perfectly unclear. Claiming without argument that "that looks like a tree" isn't at odds with "I've no reason to doubt or deny that's a tree" amounts to claiming without argument that "that looks like a tree" fails, at a minimum, to have as a part of its meaning that there are reasons to doubt or deny that's a tree. Whether that's so, though, is exactly what Grice and his opponents are fighting over. It certainly won't do to take that for granted.

There are reasons even to worry generally about the merits of the test Grice employs in an effort to distinguish conventional implicatures from conversational implicatures. In an example in which someone is writing a letter of recommendation, it's not entirely clear that the appearance of "Roscoe has impeccable penmanship" as the only instance of praise isn't at odds, at least in some sense, with the suggestion that Roscoe's good at philosophy. Imagining there's no tension between them seems to require imagining them when said outside of the circumstances at issue. There are cases, of course, in which these two are perfectly compatible—as, for instance, when "Roscoe has impeccable penmanship" is the frosting on a whole cake of praise or when there is a curious failure of understanding on the part of the author of the letter. But whether the things in question are at odds in either of these new sets of circumstances isn't what's at issue. That what we say an expression amounts to in one set of circumstances transfers over unproblematically to what we should say that same expression amounts to in a different set of circumstances needs to be shown and not simply assumed.

In view of these difficulties, it seems Grice hasn't yet established that the satisfaction of particular sorts of circumstances has nothing to do with whether the expressions at issue can come to be counted as meaningful.

Another of Grice's moves against his opponents involves trying to show that the sorts of expressions uttered in the curious examples at issue can still be counted as being true or false. He tries to show this is so by imagining examples which seem to him to be the odd sorts of examples at issue but in which what's said is nevertheless susceptible of being true or false.

Here's a version of one of the sorts of examples Grice imagines (1961: 134).

Roscoe and Cletus, lets say, are out for a stroll. Unbeknownst to Cletus, Roscoe suffers from "Smith's Disease"—a chronic condition invented by Grice which makes red things look blue to its victims. Suppose Roscoe is beset by a bout just now. As Roscoe and Cletus walk along, they happen across a red fireplug. Roscoe gazes plug-ward and says, quite out of the blue, "that fireplug looks red". Since neither Roscoe nor Cletus have reason to doubt or deny that the fireplug is red, doubt or denial conditions remain unfulfilled. Though what Roscoes has said is certainly odd, according to Grice what Roscoe has said is in this example pretty clearly false.

This example, however, fails to do the work it needs to do.

We might be inclined to go along with Grice and grant that "that fireplug looks red" is here false. Our temptation to think it's false, though, arises because we've been told the person so saying suffers from Smith's Disease. What Smith's Disease does, after all, is make red things look blue to those who suffer it. Provided we go along with that part of the stage setting of the example, we certainly won't be inclined to deny that "that fireplug looks red" is false, since it's an apparent consequence of the description of the example we started with. Because he's suffering from Smith's Disease, the fireplug looks blue to Roscoe.

This part of the stage setting for the example, then, is of some moment. What we're told is that Roscoe is afflicted with a disorder which impacts his vision. The presence of conditions which impact a person's vision, though, and cases of perceptual aberrancy more generally, are among the kinds of circumstances that in our ordinary talk lay the ground for remarks about how things look to arise. If you are color blind, for instance, part of what that amounts to, at least in certain of its incarnations, is that red things look green to you. That's part of our talk surrounding color blindness. In this sort of example, Grice asks us to surround Smith's Disease with similar sorts of talk. If you have Smith's Disease, what that amounts to is that red things look blue to you. It's against the background of the presence of this particular perceptual aberrancy, then, that we're given a way to take the claim that the fireplug looks blue to Roscoe. And it's

because of this that we find ourselves positioned to reject as false Roscoe's claim that the fireplug looks red to him. I gather we'd be in much the same position if we were asked to imagine a person who, so we were assured, is color blind but who nevertheless reports that the red fireplug before him looks red.

It's thanks to this stage setting, then, that we are privy to the presence of special circumstance that make a place for talk about how things look to arise in this particular example. This, I expect, has much to do with our reaction to it. It's because we, as witnesses to the example, are told at the outset that Roscoe has a disorder that wreaks havoc with his vision that we find ourselves equipped with a way to make heads or tails of Roscoe's talk about how things look. If we weren't privy to Roscoe's condition, it's not at all clear that we'd take this to be as unproblematic a case. I reckon that Cletus, who's in the dark about Roscoe's battle with Smith's Disease, is much worse off than we are as we look in on the example when it comes to figuring out how to take what Roscoe says.

In any case, it seems in view of the central role this particular stage setting plays in going along with his example, Grice hasn't yet shown that our making heads or tails either of the falsity of "that fireplug looks red" or of the truth of "that fireplug looks blue" really is here independent of special circumstances. Perhaps Grice shows that the range of circumstances which may help make heads or tails of talk about how things look is wider than the range of circumstances which involve the presence of doubt or denial. What remains for Grice, however, is to show that talk about how things look can be sized up as being true or false in examples in which circumstances that help make sense of that talk are nowhere to be found.

Here's a version of the second sort of example Grice imagines (1989: 17).

Suppose that on some early morning, Roscoe runs into Cletus heating mash in the still. A little later, Hazel asks Roscoe whether he's seen Cletus. Roscoe says, "I saw Cletus making moonshine." Later still, Brandine stops by and likewise asks about Cletus. Roscoe says the same, "I saw Cletus making moonshine." Suppose now that Brandine tells Roscoe that can't be, since the coil on the still has a hole in it. "Well," says Roscoe in reply, "I saw Cletus trying to make moonshine". Surely, so we might think, it would've been awfully odd for Roscoe to have told Hazel, in advance of hearing the news about the coil, that he'd seen Cletus trying to make moonshine. Brandine's later disclosure is what supplies the example with a reason to doubt whether Cletus' moonshining would bear fruit. It's only in that light that "...trying..." doesn't come off as odd when Roscoe says it to Brandine.

On the basis of this example, Grice argues like so. If "I saw Cletus trying to make moonshine", in view of Brandine's later disclosure, is true, we have to say that it would've been true had it been uttered in place of the first occurrence of "I saw Cletus

making moonshine". So, though odd, "I saw Cletus trying to make moonshine" would've been true even if it had been said in "I saw Cletus making moonshine"'s stead.

That Grice's argument here is decisive against his opponents, though, is nowise clear.

Peering in at the example, we may well be tempted to think it would've made sense to say "I saw Cletus trying to make moonshine" had Roscoe said so to Hazel in the first place. But that's only because we're once again apprised of the presence of circumstances which make saying so unproblematic. Though at that point in the example Roscoe and Hazel didn't realize that it would've made sense to say, we do. That's why "I saw Cletus trying to make moonshine" would've be puzzling to them but not to us. That's why, on reflection, we may count "I saw Cletus trying to make moonshine" uttered in that case as not all that odd after all, though in the example where nobody knows what we know it would've been odd to say.

In view of these considerations, we may take Grice's example to show that though saying this or that might be regarded as odd to those in the examples in which it's said, it wouldn't be odd and it would be meaningful to those witness to the example, provided the circumstances are right for those in the example to say so. But this really is perilously close to saying that it wouldn't be odd and that it would be meaningful to say this or that in an example in which the circumstances are right to say so. Grice certainly doesn't want to say that, though, since it's a version of the position he means to be arguing against. What remains to be shown, if Grice is to make his case against his opponents, is that saying someone is trying to do something is meaningful and counts as true in examples in which nobody—neither those in the examples nor those witness to the examples—knows whether the circumstances are right to say so. Meeting this challenge, though, seems rather like trying to meet Berkeley's challenge of imagining an object which exists outside of any minds at all.

In view of these deficiencies, it seems neither of the kinds of examples Grice offers gives us very good reason for thinking that the expressions uttered in the peculiar sorts of examples in question really are to be counted as being unproblematically true or false.

The final strategy Grice employs in an effort to make his case finds him offering an account of the peculiarity of what's said in the sorts of examples at issue. Imagine once more the example in which we're standing in a forest, next to the biggest tree of the bunch. I say, quite out of the blue, as I pat that biggest tree, "I know that's a tree" or "that looks to me like a tree". There's no doubt that these would be odd things for me to say. According to Grice it's true that I know that's a tree and that it looks to me like a tree. Those are things everyone in the example recognizes. It's obviously true to everyone involved, so Grice suggests, that I know that's a tree and that it looks like a

tree to me. Since it's obviously true, there's no reason for me to remark on my knowledge or on the way things look to me. My remarks in the case in question, then, are pointless. Because of that, what I say violates an unwritten rule of conversation which has it that we should provide in what we say no more information than circumstances require, that we avoid pointlessness. So according to Grice, it's because I've violated a rule of conversation that what I say here is odd (1961: 139-40 and 1989: 19).

Whether this move is effective in showing Grice's opponents are mistaken, though, depends on whether the things said in the cases in question really are obviously true.

So are they obviously true?

What's being said in my saying "I know that's a tree" or "that looks like a tree" in the sorts of examples at issue seems far from clear. It was just this sort of puzzle that gave rise to the dispute between Grice and his opponents in the first place. In advance of our having some notion of what it's supposed to mean when it's said in the kinds of cases in question, it's hard to see how we could confidently count what's said as being obviously true. If we can't claim for what's said that it's obviously true, of course, then we can't give substance to the suggestion that what's said is pointless. And if we find ourselves unable to give substance to the suggestion that what's said is pointless, then we haven't got an account of the oddity that attends what's said in the examples at issue.

In assessing the merits of this particular argument against Grice's opponents, then, it seems we need to worry about what the things said in these kinds of examples are supposed to mean as a way to see whether we have very good reasons for going along with Grice in taking them to be obviously so.

One way to move in trying to make out what's supposed to be obviously true in saying the things at issue would be to appeal to what we might regard as traditional philosophical analyses of the terms in question. If we help ourselves to this route in the case of the claim that I know that's a tree, we may come to think what I say is true in virtue of my believing it's a tree, its being a tree, and my being justified in believing it's a tree.<sup>4</sup> If we help ourselves to this route in the case of my claim that it looks like a tree, we may come to think what I say is true in virtue of the presence in me of visual impressions which represent a tree.<sup>5</sup>

In leaning on philosophical tradition as a way to account for the meanings of the claims in question, though, we find ourselves faced with difficulty in going in for the thought that the allegations at issue are obviously true.

If an important part of what it means to say I know that a thing is so is that I believe it's so, then it seems it must be obvious to others that I believe a thing is so in order for it to be obvious to them that I know it's so.<sup>6</sup> If we go in for traditional philosophical accounts of believing, though, it's hard to see how what another believes could be obvious. Should we take beliefs, for example, to be mental states (whether they're ghostly inhabitants of non-physical minds or neural goings-on in craniums doesn't effect the point) it's not clear how it could be obviously true to anyone but (maybe) me that I'm now beset by them. According to neither picture do we wear mental states on our sleeves.

Similar difficulties arise when it comes to sizing up how things look to others. If what it means to say a thing looks red to so-and-so is that so-and-so is being treated to a visual impression, which impression is private (even if not in principle) to the one who's so treated, it's not clear how it could be obvious to any outsider that such a thing is in attendance. And unless it's obvious what sort of representation so-and-so is beset by, it's hard to see how it could be obvious to others how things look to so-and-so.

We may find ourselves tempted, in the face of these difficulties, to help ourselves to the thought that it's by means of an argument from analogy that we come to think others know or that things look some way or another to others. Maybe we observe<sup>7</sup> in our own cases, for instance, that as our eyes are pointed plug-ward, so some fireplug looks red to us. We presently see so-and-so's eyes pointed plug-ward and surmise that the fireplug likewise looks red to so-and-so. Giving in to this temptation won't help us though, since as we posit arguments for regarding the sayings at issue as true we're forced to retreat from the allegation that they're obviously true. If it's thanks to an argument that we come to think a thing is true, it's hard to see how it's truth could be obvious.

That saying "I know..." or "...looks..." in the sorts of examples at issue amounts to saying something obviously true, at least if we take them to mean what philosophers have taken them to mean, doesn't seem to be obviously so.

In trying to defend the view that what's said in the examples at issue is obviously true, we seem to be faced with a dilemma. If, on the one hand, we think expressions featuring "I know..." or "...looks..." mean what standard philosophical lines suggest they mean, it's hasty at best to regard such claims as obviously true. But if these claims aren't rightly regarded as obviously true, we don't yet have a satisfactory account of the oddity which attends saying so in the examples at issue. If, on the other hand, we think expressions featuring "I know..." or "...looks..." as they appear in the kinds of examples in question are obviously true, then we still owe an account of what saying so comes to. They can't, after all, mean what philosophers routinely take them to mean. But then it's more than just a little suspicious that we might come to regard them as obviously true even when what's supposed to be obviously true remains to be said.<sup>8</sup>

Until we have some reason to go in for the view that what's said in the examples in question really is obviously true, Grice's final line of attack seems equally unsatisfying.

In view of these considerations I'm led to think that the dispute between Grice and his opponents hasn't yet been settled. And the stakes in settling it seem to me to be mighty high. If it's not clear, for instance, whether we can very generally sensibly say that cases in which we see are also cases in which what we see looks to us this way or that, neither is it clear whether we can draw a general distinction in every case of seeing between the way things look to us, for example, and the way they really are. But one of the most compelling versions of the problem of skepticism—the problem about how we can know whether the way things look to us is the way they really are—depends crucially on drawing such a distinction.

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<sup>1</sup> Philosophers inclined in directions of this kind have been lumped together under the heading of “ordinary language philosophers”. Some of the prominent perpetrators of moves that seem to have been informed by this sort of temptation include Austin (1962 and 1979) and Ryle (1949), among others. A less prominent but in many ways no less ingenious perpetrator of these sorts of moves is Ebersole (1967, 1979a, and 1979b).

<sup>2</sup> This kind of example is a variation, of course, on a now shopworn example first offered by Grice (1961: 129). It’s shopworn, I gather, exactly because it’s so illustrative.

<sup>3</sup> It has, in fact, widely been regarded as the death blow to moves central to so-called “ordinary language philosophers”. See, for one example of this view, Soames (2003: 195-220).

<sup>4</sup> Grice’s own account of knowledge is close to this, though instead of justification he requires “conditions placing restriction” on how a person came to think the thing in question (1989: 52-3).

<sup>5</sup> In “The Causal Theory of Perception”, Grice is himself curiously silent on what sorts of things he takes visual impressions to be. He says seeing involves having visual impressions but that what this allegation amounts to is that claims about how things look or seem to the one seeing are true of the one seeing (1961: 141). Grice never says what it is that people who see have going for them that makes these statements true. In the epilogue to *Studies in the Way of Words*, however, Grice is a bit more forthcoming. There he suggests that the right way to account for the applicability of talk about how things look is to suppose the one to whom that talk applies is beset by “the presence or occurrence of a certain sort of experience” (1989: 343).

<sup>6</sup> Here I’m not leaning on the very general thought that in order for it to be obvious that a thing is  $\phi$ , where  $\phi$  is made up of  $x, y, z$ , it must be obvious that  $x, y, z$  are in attendance. It may well be obvious to me that that’s Italian parsley even though, for instance, I am entirely ignorant of its physiological make-up. I’m instead leaning on the thought that where  $\psi$  is an important part of the meaning of “ $\phi$ ”, its being obvious that  $\phi$  requires its being obvious that  $\psi$ . It’s hard for me to imagine how it could be obvious that Joe is a bachelor unless it was obvious that Joe is unmarried. This principle, of course, doesn’t hold in every case of synonymy. It may be obvious to Joe, for instance, that two weeks have passed though it’s not obvious to him that a fortnight has passed. But it certainly seems that it ought to hold in some cases of synonymy. It’d be hard to see how it could be obvious to Joe that two weeks have passed, for instance, without it being obvious to him that fourteen days have passed. On the philosophical analysis in question, that a person believes a thing forms an important part of the meaning of the claim that she knows that thing. The relation between knowledge and

belief are in this way more like two weeks and fourteen days than they are like two weeks and a fortnight.

<sup>7</sup> What exactly the word ‘observe’ comes to here is of course crucially unclear.

<sup>8</sup> Here’s one of those unfortunate occasions where we philosophers may find ourselves tempted to think a thing is true, even obviously so, even while a story about what it is that’s supposed to be true is still forthcoming.