A truth that’s told with bad intent
Lying and implicit content

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In recent years, a lively debate has emerged about the question of correctly defining lying. Two strands of argumentation have evolved in the philosophy of language: First, the idea that lying is not necessarily connected to an intention of the speaker to deceive the hearer (e.g., Carson 2010); second, the idea that there is a fundamental distinction between lying and mere misleading (e.g., Saul 2012). This paper deals with both assumptions from the vantage point of the semantics-pragmatics interface and relates them to the question of how it is possible to lie while drawing on implicit content of an utterance. It is argued that lying necessarily involves an intention to deceive and that many cases of misleading are either cases of misunderstanding or cases of untruthful implicature (Meibauer 2014a).

1. Introduction

The title of this article alludes to the “Auguries of Innocence” by the Romantic poet William Blake which contains the following verse:

“A truth that’s told with bad intent
Beats all the lies you can invent.”

As readers we may wonder whether it is possible to implement one’s “bad intent” by saying something which is true. “Lying while saying the truth” seems to be a case in point that has aroused the interest of several scholars. For instance, Vincent and Castelfranchi (1981) treat lying while saying the truth as a subset of deceptive acts. Falkenberg (1982) analyses “indirect lying” in close analogy to indirect speech acts. Adler (1997) conceives of falsely implicating as a deceptive act in opposition to lying. More recently, in Meibauer (2005, 2011, 2014a, b), I explore the possibility that deliberately implicating what is false is a part of the complete act of lying.
My basic approach is that lying while saying the truth happens by conveying deliberately false implicatures, according to the following definition (with S = Speaker, p = propositional content, q = conversational implicature):

(1) Lying (extended version)
    A speaker S lies iff
    a. s/he asserts that p while not believing that p, or
    b. s/he conversationally implicates on the basis of her/his assertion that q
       while not believing that q.

Hence implicit content, i.e., a conversational implicature, is included into the total signification of an utterance which is a lie. Consider the following classical example drawn from Grice (1989a: 37): If the speaker Ken utters *X is meeting a woman this evening* [= p], thereby conversationally implicating that “The person to be met was someone other than X’s wife” [= q], yet knows for sure that the person to be met is X’s wife, then, according to definition (1), Ken is lying. Obviously, Ken leads his addressee Barbie into the false belief that the person to be met was someone other than X’s wife.

This conception of lying may appear counterintuitive at first. However, there is some initial theoretical motivation and empirical evidence that point into the direction of an extended notion of lying as in (1).

The theoretical motivation is to take Grice’s (1989b: 41ff.) notion of the “total signification of an utterance” seriously. Conversational implicatures have a propositional status; they are bound to utterances; they are intended. So, if they are used for deceptive purposes, an extended notion of lying along the lines of (1) seems plausible.

Initial empirical evidence stems from those studies in the tradition of Coleman and Kay’s (1981) questionnaire study that probe into the applicability of verbs of lying to the following scenario (Coleman & Kay 1981):

(2) **Ex-boyfriend**
    John and Mary have recently started going together. Valentino is Mary’s ex-boyfriend. One evening John asks Mary, ‘Have you seen Valentino this week?’ Mary answers, ‘Valentino’s been sick with mononucleosis for the past two weeks.’ Valentino has in fact been sick with mononucleosis for the past two weeks, but it is also the case that Mary had a date with Valentino the night before. Did Mary lie?

With respect to a 7-point-Likert-scale (7 points = lie, 1 point = no lie) participants judged as follows. Spanish – Ecuador speakers (Hardin 2010): 4.84; American English speakers (Coleman & Kay 1981): 3.48; Arabic speakers (Cole 1996): 3.19.
Interpreted cautiously, this shows that at least some speakers are willing to judge that Mary’s utterance was a lie. It also suggests cultural and social variation.

In this article, I will address the following questions that arise with respect to my approach:

– Does lying require an intention to deceive on the part of the speaker?
– Is the speaker committed to a deliberately false implicature in the same way as to the assertion on which it is based?
– Shall one assume that a deliberately false implicature is rather a case of misleading?

I will address these questions in turn (Sections 2–4), before finally coming to the conclusions (Section 5).

2. The intention to deceive

In recent philosophy of language, several scholars (e.g. Carson 2010; Fallis 2011; Saul 2012; Sorensen 2007; see Stokke 2013a) defend the following hypothesis (H1):

(H1) Lying does not require the intention to deceive on the part of the speaker.

Others oppose this view (Faulkner 2007; Lackey 2013; Mahon 2007, 2008; Meibauer 2011, 2014a, b) and favor a more orthodox approach. Let us call the first group the Non-Deceptionists and the second group the Deceptionists.

With respect to (H1), I will show how deception (broadly understood as deliberately leading someone into a false belief – see pertinent work of Adler 1997; Mahon 2007, 2008; Dynel 2011; Gupta, Sakamoto, & Ortony 2012) arises on the basis of the view that lying basically is an insincere assertion. Also, I will show that the typical examples being intended to support the truth of (H1) are problematical in one or more respects.

As for the first question, it is obvious that a definition of lying can include the speaker’s intention to deceive, as in the following definition adapted from Stokke (2013a: 348):

(3) Definition of lying including the intent to deceive

S lies to H if and only if there is a proposition p such that
a. S says that p to H, and
b. S believes that p is false, and
c. by saying that p to H, S intends to deceive H into believing that p.
However, this is not the only possibility. If lying is seen as an insincere assertion, as in the speech-act theoretical tradition (cf. Reboul 1994), it is reasonable to build its definition upon this analysis. To provide a fully satisfying definition of assertion is by no means easy, as Jary (2010) has recently shown. So let me assume a simple definition of assertion for the sake of showing that lying implies an intention to deceive (see Meibauer 2014a:65–101).

(4) Assertion
   A speaker S asserts p iff
   a. s/he utters a sentence s meaning p, and
   b. presents p as being true.

Condition (4a) should be fairly uncontroversial.¹ Condition (4b) means that the speaker is committed to the truth of p. The exact epistemic relation between the speaker and the propositional content is left open: it could be belief or knowledge. Researchers are unanimous in this respect (Jary 2010). Since in lying, someone asserts p while not believing p (as explicated in 1a), it follows that s/he deceives the hearer, not only with respect to a certain propositional content, but also with respect to their own epistemic state (= believing or knowing that p). This deception arises with respect to a conversational norm such as the maxim of Quality (Grice 1989a:27) that entitles hearers to assume that the speaker is sincere in the default case. For instance, Ken lies to Barbie that he has a Ph.D. in physics. This is false. Barbie believes what Ken asserts since she trusts him. However, she is deceived since Ken does not believe in the truth of what he has asserted.

Consider the second question, i.e., the plausibility of examples meant to support (H1). As counterexamples to the traditional view that lying involves the intention to deceive, Carson (2010) presents a set of three cases. Let us call these examples The Witness, The Cheating Student, and The Upright Heir. I will focus on the first two cases because these are mostly discussed in the literature.

Furthermore, Sorensen (2007, 2010) portrayed the so-called ‘bald-faced lie’ and the so-called ‘knowledge-lie’ as cases that seem to throw doubt on the necessity of an intention to deceive. We will discuss the cases of Seierstad’s Interview and Spartacus. With respect to these cases I will argue that they can be convincingly analyzed when implicating is taken into account, and that all of these cases are lies with an intention to deceive. Note that I side with Lackey

¹ In the default case, assertions have the grammatical form of a declarative sentence. Thus, the declarative sentence can be considered as an illocutionary force indicating device and the definition of assertion may refer to this device. See Meibauer (2013b) for a general discussion of the grammar-pragmatics interface with respect to sentence types and sentence modality and Meibauer (2014a:47–61) for a discussion of the relation between sentence types and lying.
A truth that's told with bad intent 101

(2013) in my opposition to the Non-Deceptionists while I do not side with her distinction between deceit and deception. I will come back to this issue below.

Consider the case of The Witness in (5), as explicated in Carson (2010:20):

(5) The Witness
Suppose that I witness a crime and clearly see that a particular individual committed the crime. Later, the same person is accused of the crime and, as a witness in court, I am asked whether or not I saw the defendant commit the crime. I make the false statement that I did not see the defendant commit the crime, for fear of being harmed or killed by him. However, I do not intend that my false statements deceive anyone. (I hope that no one believes my testimony and that he is convicted in spite of it.)

Cautiously, Carson speaks of a mere “false statement.” In contrast, I argue that the witness deceives the court on the basis of his “false statement.” Her/his utterance I did not see the defendant commit the crime has the meaning $p = 'S did not see the defendant commit the crime’ and counts as a testimony in this context. It is impossible to report on the witness’ utterance as in (6):

(6) *The witness said that s/he did not see the defendant commit the crime. By her/his assertion, s/he did not want to deceive the jury.

The false belief the witness installs in her/his audience is that s/he did not see the defendant commit the crime.

The point of this story is that the witness lets shine through that s/he lies because of fear of the defendant. I would propose that this is a conversational implicature. Since it is evident to the jury that the defendant committed the crime, the obviously false assertion of the witness is interpreted as triggering the conversational implicature in (7):

(7) I did not see the witness commit the crime.
   $\Rightarrow$ ‘I only made this assertion for fear of being harmed by the defendant’.

On the basis of which Gricean maxim can (7) be derived? For me, the most plausible candidate is the maxim of Relation. Thus, falsely asserting something in a context in which it is crystal clear that what is asserted is false is a violation against the conversational norm that speakers should utter things that are relevant. In short, lying in this context appears irrelevant for hearing of evidence and violates the Cooperative Principle. Yet it may be construed as relevant if it is assumed that the witness will convey the (highly particularized) conversational implicature in (7). By the same token, should it turn out that the jury and the witness were
mistaken with respect to the defendant’s crime, the witness can argue that s/he delivered true evidence.  

An anonymous reviewer proposes to derive the extra content with respect to the maxim of Quality, under the (strong) assumption “that everyone present realizes what is said is false.” Let us compare both possibilities: In the Relation case, the triggering question is: How can the liar’s utterance be relevant in the context of the interrogation, when the jury has evidence for the lie, and assumes the liar to know this? In the Quality case, the decisive question is: What motivates the lie (that violates the maxim of Quality) when the jury has evidence for the lie, and assumes the liar to know this? Comparing the two approaches it seems that in the latter case, the implicature is not triggered via a certain maxim, but via a clash between the occurrence of the lie and the jury’s contextual knowledge about the evidence.

Basically, the conversational implicature in (7) is a representation of the liar’s motive. Indeed, the jury will realize that the witness has lied; they will look for a motive and hypothesize, for instance, that the witness has lied for fear of being harmed. Yet inferring a possible motive for the lie does not necessarily amount to deriving a conversational implicature. As far as I see, this would lead to the implausible assumption that a detected lie always implicates a possible motive for the lie. For instance, another motive for the liar could be that the defendant has bribed the witness. In this case, it is implausible that the liar conversationally implicates ‘I only made this assertion because I took bribes.’

Whatever the evidence is, and whatever the jury thinks about the motives of the liar, the lie remains deceptive. The liar does not know for sure what the evidence of the jury really is and whether the jury will be able to derive the implicature s/he intends them to derive. So what is asserted commits the speaker in any case, whether there are attempts at undermining this commitment or not.

Note that Fallis (2009: 35) presents a similar example in which Tony, the witness, is “winking” while uttering his lie, thereby indicating that his utterance is not to be taken at face-value (cf. Stokke 2013b: 5–6). “Winking” is conceived as a sort of facial expression indicating that there is no intent to deceive. However, it

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2. An anonymous reviewer objects that “saying that she did not see the crime is clearly relevant – even though it is false”. I agree; however, my aim was to reconstruct the implicature in (7), arising on the assumption that an obviously false utterance is regarded as relevant in the context of an interrogation. Note that with regard to the latter, there are special expectations of relevance and truthfulness that should also be taken into account (cf. Wendler & Hoffmann 2009).
can also be thought of as a trigger for deriving a conversational implicature since it signals a contrast between what is said and what is meant.\(^3\)

I present the case of *The Cheating Student* in the version of Lackey (2013:238):

\[(8) \text{ The Cheating Student} \]

[...] suppose that a student is caught flagrantly cheating on an exam for the fourth time this term, all of the conclusive evidence for which is passed on to the Dean of Academic Affairs. Both the student and the Dean know that he cheated on the exam, and they each know that the other knows this, but the student is also aware of the fact that the Dean punishes students for academic dishonesty only when there is a confession. Given this, when the student is called to the Dean’s office, he states, ‘I did not cheat on the exam’.

Note that in both cases – (5) and (8) – there is a super-ordinate goal for the speakers: In (5) the speaker wants to avoid revenge of the defendant or his gang, in (8) the student wants to get around the relegation by the Dean. Again, I argue that the student’s utterance is a lie. To try to deceive the Dean may be ineffective in the given context, nevertheless the student falsely asserts that he did not cheat and hence lies.

Lackey (2013:236–237) provides the following definition of lying, with the overall goal to save the idea that lying involves the intention to deceive and acknowledge the special case of the cheating student:

\[(9) \text{ Lying} \]

A lies to B if and only if
- i. A states that p to B,
- ii. A believes that p is false and
- iii. A intends to be deceptive to B in stating that p.

The idea is to distinguish between “being deceptive” – as in (9iii) – and being deceitful. Lackey (2013:241) defines these notions as in (10):

\[\text{3. Winking is a gesture that can signal shared secret knowledge, approval or comfort, or flirting. While liars may use winking in order to comfort their targets (Biland et al. 2008), it is surely inadequate in the context of an interrogation, since the speaker appears to signal that something s/he has said was untrue or misleading. Winking, in this context, can be analyzed as a trigger for a conversational implicature with the help of Levinson's M-Principle (Levinson 2000: 136–137). Uttering s plus winking is a marked message in comparison to simply uttering s.}\]
(10) Deceit versus deception

a. Deceit: A deceives B with respect to whether p if and only if A aims to bring about a false belief in B regarding whether p.

b. Deception: A is deceptive to B with respect to whether p if A aims to conceal information from B regarding whether p.

While the definition of “deceit” in (10a) relates to the traditional idea of deception, the definition of “deception” in (10b) highlights the concealment of information as another strategy to be deceptive. It is obvious that this implies that normal lies also have to do with deception in this sense.

With respect to the case of The Cheating Student, Lackey (2013: 242) argues that “concealment is the central aim of the student’s statement”. Accordingly, “the student does not deceive the Dean, but he does intend to be deceptive to him” (Lackey 2013: 242). While it is plausible that the student wants to conceal her/his misbehaviour it is not clear to me whether deception has to with concealment across the board. Concealment has to do with the motives for lying; however, these motives are usually not listed in definitions of lying.

In addition, the relation of concealment to ‘deception by omission,’ as Chisholm and Feehan (1977) put it, should be taken into account. This type requires specific contexts, e.g., an interrogation.4 (Note that The Witness and The Cheating Student are about situations of interrogation.) Thus, I would like to argue that the distinction between deceit and deception is not necessary, and that the “bringing about of a false belief in someone” (with the intention to deceive) is sufficient in order to account for the cases under discussion.

Fallis (2013), in his reply to Lackey (2013), takes the analysis of deception by Chisholm and Feehan (1977) as a benchmark and tries to show that Lackey’s definition of deception does not successfully apply to the case of The Cheating Student. According to Fallis (2013), the student does not succeed in concealing the information that he is guilty; furthermore, he may not even aim at concealing the information that he is guilty, he does not conceal evidence of his guilt, and he does not withhold evidence of his guilt. Hence, he cannot be considered deceptive on all counts.

While the cases of the witness and the student are sometimes treated as bald-faced lies, the case of a bald-faced lie introduced by Sorensen (2007) is somewhat different, because it is unclear to which extent the speaker believes what he says. In contrast, in The Witness and The Cheating Student, it is clear that the liars do not believe what they say and that their interlocutors do not believe it, too. The following dialogue, taken from an interview by the journalist Asne Seiderstad

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4. I agree with the observation of an anonymous reviewer that deliberate omission of relevant knowledge, when demanded in a truth-seeking context, is a violation of the maxim of Quantity.
during the Iraq war, is presented by Sorensen (2007) as a case of a so-called bald-faced lie. According to him, bald-faced lies are utterances where there is mutual understanding that the speaker does not believe that p.

(11) **Seierstad’s Interview**

Takhlef: Everything [President Saddam Hussein] did in the past was good and everything he will do in the future is good.

Seierstad: How can you be so sure about that?

Takhlef: I know it as a result of my belief in the party and his leadership.

Yet it appears unclear to which extent Takhlef believes in the truth of his utterance. It cannot be excluded that he really believes what he says. It can also constitute bullshit, i.e., Takhlef has a lack of concern for the truth and does not want the hearer to recognize this (Meibauer 2013a). If he really does not believe in the truth of his utterance, he is lying and he has the intention to deceive Seierstad. Nevertheless, there may arise a conversational implicature of the type ‘I only made this assertion because I am under pressure to do this’, etc. – as in the case of the witness. After all, Takhlef’s answer appears to violate the maxim of Quality as well as the maxim of Manner.

Scenarios where no institutional punishment is to be feared – although there is a mutual understanding that one participant lies – may also be constructed. Imagine a husband coming back early in the morning excusing himself by uttering *I had to stay in the office this night*, while it is mutually obvious to both him and his spouse that this is not true. In this case, I would like to argue that we do not face a lie because the falsity of what is said is completely transparent to the interlocutors. Instead, I analyze such an utterance as an act of verbal aggression: blatantly violating the Cooperation Principle in the sense of Grice (1989a) amounts to a severe attack on the addressee’s face (Mooney 2004) and is best analyzed as a special case of insulting (Meibauer 2014b).

As a further case consider the following example of a so-called knowledge-lie, as proposed by Sorensen (2010:608):

(12) **Spartacus**

In *Spartacus* (Universal Pictures, 1960), the victorious Roman general, Marcus Licinius Crassus, asks the recaptured slaves to identify Spartacus in exchange for leniency. Spartacus […] rises to spare his comrades crucifixion. However, the slave on his right, Antoninus, springs to his feet and declares, ‘I am Spartacus!’ Then the slave on Spartacus’ left also stands and declares ‘I am Spartacus!’; then another slave, and another until the whole army of slaves is on their feet shouting, ‘I am Spartacus!’

Sorensen (2010:608) comments that “with the exception of Antoninus, none intend to deceive Crassus about who they are.” Instead, “the slaves are preventing
Crassus from learning who Spartacus is.” I agree with the latter remark, but how is this concealment of the correct interpretation achieved? The answer is, I think, quite simple. Since the series of assertive outbursts which are deceptive lies violates several conversational maxims, the General Crassus is entitled to derive the conversational implicature that the slaves want to conceal the identity of Spartacus and prevent him from learning who he is. Let us assume that Crassus’ question is “Who is Spartacus”? This presupposes, via the \textit{wh}-element, that there exists only one person who is Spartacus. Therefore, the series of outbursts (let alone the final collective answer) cannot all be true; it is a clear violation of the maxim of Quality. In addition, they cannot all be relevant, because there is only one true answer to Crassus’ question. Thus, there is a violation of the maxim of Relation. Finally, there is a violation of the maxim of Manner, i.e., the submaxim “Be perspicuous!”  

Staffel (2011: 301) replies to Sorensen’s approach. She ventures that “Sorensen’s thesis that knowledge-lies don’t involve deception only occurs when someone is brought to flat-out believe a false proposition;” this, she argues, is an “implausibly narrow” conception of deception, “because it overlooks the possibility of deceiving someone by merely making them more confident in a falsehood.” Though I see the argument, I am not quite convinced because in the case of Spartacus it is plausible that the Roman general becomes sceptical right after the second slave (after Antoninus) utters his false assertion.

My conclusion, then, is that these examples do not really show that a lie does not include an intention to deceive. In fact, the scared witness, the cheating student, and the patriotic or suppressed guide, they all can \textit{never admit} that what they said was false. And since they cannot admit it (although this should be possible if they had no intention to deceive), their utterances have to count as lies, at least with respect to the definition in (1). Hence, I consider (H1) refuted, at least with respect to the above examples.

3. Commitment to conversational implicatures

Let me now turn to the second question: Is the speaker committed to a deliberately false implicature in the same way as to the assertion proper? While critics may share the view that there is an important difference between assertion-commitments and implicature-commitments (e.g. Dynel 2011; Fricker 2012), I would like to argue that (H2) is basically correct:

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5. It goes without saying that the outbursts are relevant with respect to the slaves’ goal, namely to prevent Crassus from learning about Spartacus’ identity.
The speaker is committed to the (false) assertion in the same way as to the (false) implicature.

In order to show this, I have to go into the notion of commitment, the certainty of an implicature, and its cancellability. After that, I will go into Fricker’s (2012) epistemological approach in more detail.

3.1 Commitment, certainty, cancellability

(1) **Commitment:** Let us start with the notion of ‘commitment.’ As pointed out by De Brabanter & Dendale (2008), there are several notions of commitment on the market; with respect to speech-act taxonomy, Harnish (2005) compares the approaches by Searle (1969), Alston (2000), and Bach & Harnish (1979).

Harnish (2005: 12) draws a distinction between “more or less ‘Austinian’ approaches, which rely on rules and/or conventions” (including Searle 1969, 1979 and Alston 2000) and “more or less ‘Gricean’ approaches, which rely on propositional attitudes” (including Bach & Harnish 1979, albeit the latter actually are “a mixed case,” as Fn. 2 tells us). As it happens, the first mentioned speech-act theorists use normative notions like “commitment” (Searle) or “taking responsibility” (Alston) when they define illocutionary acts. Harnish (2005: 25–33) points out several difficulties with both approaches. In particular, he criticizes Searle’s (2001) speculations on the so-called “dira,” an abbreviation for “desire-independent reason for action.” I cannot go into these criticisms in any detail here. Harnish (2005: 38) concludes:

> […] we saw that such notions as “commitment”, “taking responsibility” etc. do not in fact seem to be easily explicated in terms of desire-independent reasons for action or being subject to a speech act rule. They do, however, seem connected to notions of being liable to criticism and blame.

I agree to this latter conclusion and view “commitment” as the social obligation of the speaker to provide evidence for what they assert. If it turns out that the speaker asserts something while not having any evidence for it, they indeed are “liable to criticism and blame.” Hence, I think that normative notions like commitment or taking responsibility do not need “high-level” notions that are “too high-level for basic theorizing about language use”, as Harnish (2005: 38) worries.

I will endorse the classic Searlean definition, according to which the illocutionary point of an assertive speech act is “to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something’s being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition” (Searle 1979: 12). Austinian and Gricean approaches are easily reconciled, when
speech-act definitions are related to the notion of what-is-said that is so important for any attempt at clarifying the semantics-pragmatics divide. Indeed, the set of accompanying commitments can also be taken to define the Gricean notion of what-is-said (see Terkourafi 2010), as Camp (2006: 303) does:

The content of what a speaker says \( T \) in uttering \( S \) in context \( C \) is fixed by the set of commitments \( O \) which a competent hearer is entitled to hold the speaker accountable for having obviously undertaken by virtue of assertively uttering \( S \), and which the speaker is obliged to acknowledge as consequences of having assertively uttered \( S \), in \( C \).

More recently, Moeschler (2013: 88) tries to open up another avenue: Basically, he assumes “that the speaker’s degree of commitment vis-à-vis her utterance depends on the nature of the inference it gives rise: a speaker is more committed to a semantic content than to a pragmatic one.” In short, there is a scale of the “strength of the content” such that entailment > presupposition > explicature > (generalized conversational) implicature, with “>” meaning “stronger than.” While this is an attractive proposal, it is not easy to see why a generalized conversational implicature should be “weak,” at least in comparison to the other meaning entities.6 For instance, if Ken ironically says to Barbie You are a fine friend then Ken is heavily committed to his ironical remark. To be sure, Barbie will never forget what he has conveyed.

I assume that the speaker is committed to the truth of a conversational implicature in the same way as they are committed to the truth of an assertion. For instance, if someone utters \( X \) is meeting a woman this evening \([= p]\), conversationally implicating ‘The person to be met was someone other than X’s wife’ \([= q]\), then the speaker is committed to their implicature. That conversational implicatures are evaluated in the truth/falsity dimension follows from a remark by Grice (1989a: 39):

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\text{Since the truth of a conversational implicatum is not required by the truth of what is said (what is said may be true – what is implicated may be false), the implicature is not carried by what is said, but only by the saying of what is said, or by ‘putting it that way’.}
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Kissine (2013: §3.9) discusses reservation hedges that seem to reduce commitment to the truth of \( p \). I take it that these reservation hedges can be exploited for

\[\text{6. Furthermore, while this approach is framed in Relevance Theory, it seems that the general idea that “a speaker is more committed to a semantic content than to a pragmatic one” (Moeschler 2013: 88) is debatable, even from the point of view of Relevance Theory, since the latter puts much weight on the contextual construction of meaning.}\]
lying. For instance, Ken says that he believes that he saw Barbie at the beach, while knowing it for sure.

(2) **Certainty:** Let us turn to the second issue mentioned above: Is commitment attribution for conversational implicatures more uncertain than in the case of assertions? It could be argued that commitment in the case of assertion is different from commitment to a conversational implicature, since the hearer is more uncertain with respect to the latter. This seems to be the view of Morency, Oswald & de Saussure (2008:210–215) who argue (p. 212):

> [...] it is the hearer who is responsible for invoking the appropriate hypotheses, and in this sense there is always a degree of uncertainty (a hearer can never obtain formal proofs that the assumptions he considers in processing implicatures correspond to those the speaker has mobilized herself, unless he asks her, *a posteriori*).

While I agree with that statement, the speaker is nevertheless responsible for her/his implicatures because the hearer is entitled to ascribe certain intentions to her/him. Commitment misattribution is only possible when the speaker's intention and the hearer's recognition of that intention do not match. The psychological uncertainty of the hearer – “Do I really have derived the ‘right’ implicature?” – should not be confused with the fact that it is certain that the speaker has an intention when conveying an implicature.

(3) **Cancellability:** This leads directly to the further question whether all conversational implicatures are cancellable (see Weiner 2006; Capone 2009; Jaszczolt 2009; Burton-Roberts 2010, 2013 for recent discussion). In particular, we may ask whether there is a proper distinction between the cancellability of generalized conversational implicatures (GCI) versus particularized conversational implicatures (PCI).

We know, of course, that conversational implicatures are cancellable/defeasible. Grice (1989a:39) points out that there is either explicit cancellability (“by the addition of a clause that states or implies that the speaker has opted out”) or contextual cancellability (“if the form of utterance that usually carries it is used in a context that makes it clear that the speaker is opting out”). However, applying the criterion of explicit cancellability to certain cases of implicature will lead to implausible results, for instance in cases of irony or certain indirect directives. Observations like this have led researchers to some scepticism with regard to explicit cancellability (Weiner 2006).

Burton-Roberts (2010) argues that the notion of cancellation should be replaced by the notion of clarification. This is because implicatures are intended while intentions can never be cancelled:
(13) No cancellation of intention
   EITHER the speaker intended by her utterance to implicate that P – in which
   case she cannot undo (or ‘cancel’) it, OR she did not so intend, in which case
   there is no implicature to cancel in the first place. (Burton-Roberts 2010:146)

However, Burton-Roberts draws a distinction between cancellation of PCIs ver-
sus GCIs. The former are never cancellable, while the latter are.

While I consider Burton-Roberts (2010:138) slogan “What was intended
was intended” as basically correct, the idea that GCIs (e.g., scalar implicatures),
understood as “potential implicatures,” can arise “independently of speaker-in-
tenttion,” is somewhat problematic. For Burton-Roberts, the crucial idea is that
failure of a GCI in context amounts to a cancellation of a potential implication
(Burton-Roberts 2013:20). I would object that even GCIs must be intended, since
the speaker intentionally chooses a certain expression or construction in order to
convey the GCI (note Burton-Robert’s 2010:151 relativization of his claim, say-
ing that “to the extent that they [= GCIs] arise independently of the intentions of
the speaker, to that extent they are cancellable (for that reason).” Furthermore,
while immediate (explicit) cancellation (or retraction) of an expressed intention
is indeed weird, the criterion of contextual cancellation will still apply (Jaszczolt
2010).

Note in addition that Mayol & Castroviejo (2013) provide some evidence for
the view that the success of cancellation of a GCI depends on the QUD (Question
under Discussion); they point out that “a cancellation is a legitimate move only
if the cancelled content was not really the main point of the speaker’s previous
move” (Mayol & Castroviejo 2013:96). Hence it appears that explicit cancellation
can be problematic, even in the case of GCIs.

I take it that lies, be they realized by untruthful assertion or by untruthful
conversational implicature (both of the GCI-type and the PCI-type), can never
be cancelled and never be clarified; all the speaker can do is deny that s/he lied or
to confess that s/he lied. To take up our standard example: If Ken knows that the
person to be met is X’s wife and says: X is meeting a woman this evening
thereby conversationally implicating ‘The person to be met was someone other than X’s
wife,’ then it is implausible when he adds This (=q) was a lie (cancellation) or How-
ever, I did not intend to convey q (clarification). All he can do is to deny that he lied
(I only said that X is meeting a woman this evening without implicating anything)
or admit that he lied (Yes, it was a lie. I wanted to deceive you.) In sum, then, I
conclude that (H2) is on the right track.
3.2 “… a subtle weapon in the armoury of diplomat, manipulator and crook” – Fricker (2012) on “Implicit Secondary Message”

Yes, deliberately false implicatures are a subtle weapon because they allow the liars to dissociate themselves from their lies – after all, it is the hearer who derives the false implicature (see Adler 1997). However, in her epistemological approach, Fricker (2012) exaggerates the differences between what she calls the “Inexplicit Primary Statement” on the one hand, and “Implicit Secondary Message” (alias conversational implicature) on the other hand. According to her, the raison d’être of the Implicit Secondary Message is deniability (disavowability) and economy. This is in line with common observations on the cancellability of conversational implicatures and Levinson’s bottleneck argument (Levinson 2000: 28).

Fricker (2012: 85) presents a (seemingly) “boringly straightforward case” to make the point that there is an epistemological difference between explicit statements (tellings) and conversational implicatures:

(14) **Charcoal at the garage**

Suppose we have friends coming round for a barbecue lunch, and I say to you, ‘We are out of charcoal for the barbecue.’ You reply, ‘There’s a garage just down the road.’ If I know that garages generally sell barbecue fuel, I can infer from what you have explicitly told me that I can probably get some charcoal at the garage, but in this case my inference will be via a hypothesis about your further intentions in saying what you did. Assuming you conform in your utterance to the Gricean conversational maxims, you will have said this because it is relevant to the conversational context created by my opening remark; which it will be only if I can get charcoal at the garage. If you are not busy, and are a careful person, you may add, ‘You can probably buy some charcoal there.’ But if you are busy, and if you trust me to make the inference on my own, you may leave it to me to figure out the consequence you intend me to get to, without spelling it out. Suppose I drive to the garage, and they have no charcoal. On my return, I complain to you, ‘I went to the garage, and they have no charcoal.’ You may reply, ‘I just told you about the garage, I never said they would definitely have charcoal.’

The moral Fricker (2012: 85) draws from this story is:

It is only what a speaker explicitly states that she incurs overt, full and undeniable responsibility for the truth of. Things she leaves it to her audience to figure out, even if she fully expects and intends the audience to figure them out, and this is part of the perlocutionary point of her utterance, are not committed to by her – not, at any rate, to the same full and undeniable extent.
In contrast, I would like to argue that the one who says *There’s a garage just down the road*, is committed to the content of their implicature that the garage sells charcoal. If this is not the case and the speaker knows this, they are lying (see definition (1) above). If they are unsure, they should express that they are unsure about the availability of the charcoal (observing the maxim of Quality). Fricker (2012:85) notes that “disavowing replies like this [i.e., *I just told you about the garage, I never said they would definitely have charcoal*] are often made in bad faith; nonetheless, they are often made.” If it was not a misunderstanding, and if it was not an outright lie, then it was the brashly impertinent attempt to reject commitment (and responsibility) for the conversational implicature.

Fricker mentions the “ambiguous epistemics” (Fricker 2012:87) of conversational implicatures, as well as “the lack of assumed responsibility” (Fricker 2012:89) in acts of insinuation as two reasons for why “the speaker is not treated as having assumed full responsibility for truth” (Fricker 2012:87). However, this amounts to begging the question. How can it be proved that speakers are not committed to the content of an implicature “to the same full and undeniable extent”, as Fricker puts it, as they are with respect to “explicit statements”? If implicatures are additional propositions that are true or false, that go into the common ground, that are intended, that contribute to the total signification of an utterance, then it is not easy to see why the speaker should not be fully committed to them. This question should not be mixed up with the cancellability of implicatures, as discussed above.

4. Misleading

I now turn to the concept of misleading, as introduced by Saul (2012). (For a careful review, see Stokke 2013c.) In particular, I will ask whether (H3) is appropriate:

(H3) Deliberately false implicature is a case of misleading.

Saul (2012) argues that misleading is distinct from lying or accidental falsehoods. In contrast to lying, misleading is a success predicate. This means that a speaker can be said to mislead the hearer, only when the deception is successful. In contrast, the speaker has successfully lied even when the hearer does not believe what the speaker untruthfully asserted. In addition, whereas lying happens always intentionally, misleading can happen accidentally (i.e., the speaker had no intention to mislead) (Saul 2012:71). These distinctions can be summarized in the following Table 1.
Table 1. Lying versus misleading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Success</th>
<th>Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lying</td>
<td>Hearer need not believe p.</td>
<td>Must be intentional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misleading</td>
<td>Hearer must believe p.</td>
<td>Can happen accidentally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I propose the following definition of misleading in the hope that it meets the spirit of Saul’s approach (as far as I see, Saul gives none):

(15) Misleading
    A speaker misleads iff
    a. s/he utters a sentence s meaning p, and thereby
    b. intentionally or unintentionally (accidentally)
    c. leads the hearer into a false belief.

Let us have a look at two examples Saul discusses. The first is about the Lewinsky trial:

(16) Lewinsky Trial
    [Bill Clinton, asked about his relationship to Monica Lewinsky, the White House intern:] There is no improper relationship.

Many hearers had interpreted this utterance meaning that there never existed an improper (sexual) relationship between Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. However, they overlooked that he spoke in the third person present tense. So, he literally spoke the truth, while possibly misleading the jury.

In my approach, this is a case of falsely implicating. Bill Clinton chooses his words carefully with the intention to deceive the interviewer (or the wider audience). The interviewer assumes that Clinton observed the maxim of Quantity (his information was sufficient) and the maxim of Relevance (his answer was relevant to the interviewer’s question).

The second example discussed by Saul at length draws on an imaginary incident located at the Empire State Building (Saul 2012: 33).

(17) Billy and the Empire State Building
    Imagine that I watch Billy go to the top of the Empire State Building and jump up and down three times. Returning from my day I recount what I saw, by uttering ["Billy went to the top of the Empire State Building and jumped"] – not realizing how my audience will interpret me. My audience, Fred, interprets me as claiming that Billy jumped off the edge of the building.
In this scenario, the speaker did not say something false; so Saul concludes (2012: 34): “Intuitively, then, my utterance was true but misleading: I neither lied nor accidentally said something false.”

On closer inspection, it seems to me that in this case we have two possibilities. Either it is a case of misunderstanding, that is, the hearer infers something which was not intended by the speaker, e.g. “jumped from the edge of the Empire State Building.” Had the speaker chosen her words more carefully, for instance by uttering

(18) Billy went to the top of the Empire State Building and jumped **up and down** three times.

this misunderstanding would not have occurred in the first place. (Note that the string \textit{up and down} is considered an explicature in a very similar jumping example provided by Carston 2002: 128.)

Speaking of a misunderstanding is in line with the definition of a misunderstanding given by Schlesinger & Hurvitz (2008: 577) who define misunderstanding in relation to understanding. Understanding happens when the following conditions hold: (i) The message recovered by the hearer is identical to the one the speaker intended the utterance to convey. (ii) The speaker-intention does not differ from what the hearer actually recovered. (iii) There is no discrepancy between the hearer-perspective and the corresponding speaker-message and speaker-intention. Schlesinger & Hurvitz (2008: 574) admit the intentional creation of misunderstandings which I would subsume under the label of a deliberately false implicature.

A further possibility with respect to (17) is that the speaker has the intention to lead the hearer into the false belief that Billy committed suicide. In this case, I would argue, we have another scenario where the speaker falsely implicates that q (Billy jumped from the edge of the building).

In sum, then, I conclude that misleading has to do with utterances that invite for misunderstandings. Untruthful implicatures are a different case, because they are intended.

5. Conclusions

My conclusions are, in short: (H1) – lying does not include the intention to deceive – is wrong; (H2) – the speaker is committed to the truth of an assertion as well as to the truth of an implicature – is right; (H3) – deliberately false implicatures are a case of misleading – is wrong, at least for the cases discussed. My main
point is that conversational implicatures are intended; they are at least cancel-
lable by context (Jaszczolt 2009). Furthermore, conversational implicatures are
bearers of truth values, as Grice (1989a: 39) has stressed, i.e., they can be true or
false. In addition, conversational implicatures go into the “total signification of an
explains the notion likes this:

The TSU consists of everything communicated by an utterance however it was
communicated – i.e. everything the hearer has on his communicative plate at the
end of the day. Grice makes clear there that the TSU includes what is said and
what is implicated. And it must clearly include anything deductively/semantical-
ly derivable from (or equivalent to) the conjunction of what is said and what is
implicated.

For instance, when what-is-said is *X is meeting a woman this evening* [=p] and
the implicature *The person to be met was someone other than X’s wife* [=q], then
the TSU is ‘*X is meeting a woman this evening* [= p] & *The person to be met was
someone other than X’s wife* [= q]’. With respect to this notion, it is clear that a
definition of lying along the lines of (1) – as explicated in Meibauer (2005, 2011,
2014a, b) – makes sense.

An anonymous reviewer, being sceptical with respect to my extended notion
of lying, refers to “intuitions” that are “well documented and even incarnated in
legal practices concerning perjury” according to which there is a fundamental
difference between lying and merely misleading. These intuitions, however, are
shaky. At least Green (2006: 146), on the basis of a careful inspection of legal cas-
es, concludes with respect to “everyday morality:”

(19) How many cars?
Imagine that *A* needs to borrow a car for the evening and asks *B* how many he
owns. *B*, who in truth owns four cars, replies, ‘*I have one car, and I’m using it
this evening*.’ Has *B* lied in saying that he owns ‘*one car*’? Has *B* made an assertion
that is literally false, or has he merely led *A* draw an improper inference
from a misleading statement? It seems wrong to say that *B* has merely misled.
After all, *B* told *A* that he owns ‘*one car*’. Perhaps *A* could have asked the follow
up question, ‘*are you saying that you own only one car and no more*?’, but this
seems to take the principle *caveat auditor* to extremes. In terms of everyday
morality, one who responds to a specific quantitative inquiry by baldly under-
stating a numerical fact should be regarded as uttering a lie.

My approach can be seen as an attempt at implementing such a view.
References


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A truth that's told with bad intent


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