

---

## Can a Commitment be Ironic?

---

Soichiro KINOSHITA  
*The University of Tokyo*  
[gignerales@asagi.waseda.jp](mailto:gignerales@asagi.waseda.jp)

The commitment-based view of human communication has recently come into the limelight as an alternative to the Gricean intention-based view. Geurts (2019), *inter alia*, holds that the Gricean account can be “embedded” into the commitment-based cousin by redefining both beliefs and intentions as special cases of (social) commitments, namely *private commitments*. The redefinition of these psychological notions in terms of social concepts is based on their *normative* character; those who believe/intend that *p* are supposed to act on *p*. This conception of belief and intention, however, rests on the failure to acknowledge that a private commitment, be it telic or atelic, is no more a commitment than suicide is a murder. Moreover, even if one concedes that the private commitment is a full-blooded one, the commitment-based analysis of conversational implicature fails to account for irony. For irony, as Currie (2006) puts it, essentially involves pretence. Thus, if you want to ironically insinuate *q* by saying *p*, you can neither commit yourself to act on *p*, nor commit yourself to not committing yourself to act on *p*.

**References:** • Currie, G. (2006): Why Irony Is Pretence. In: S. Nichols (Ed.), *The Architecture of the Imagination: New Essays on Pretence, Possibility, and Fiction*: 111-133. • Geurts, B. (2017): Fictional Commitments. In: *Theoretical Linguistics* 43(1-2), 53–60. • Geurts, B. (2019): Communication as Commitment Sharing: Speech Acts, Implicatures, Common Ground. In: *Theoretical Linguistics* 45, 1-30. • Grice, H. P. (1975/1989): Logic and Conversation. In: P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics* 3, 41-58. (Reprinted in Grice, H. P., 1989: 22-40.) • Grice, H. P. (1978/1989): Further notes on logic and conversation. In: P. Cole (Ed.), *Syntax and semantics* 9, 113–127. (Reprinted in Grice, H. P., 1989: 41–57.) • Grice, H. P. (1989): *Studies in the Way of Words*.