

Illocutionary acts: a case for assertion

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Contents:

<i>Introduction: Assertion: illocutionary act, social act</i>	<i>1</i>
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Part I. Stating the problem: Assertion from the point of view of Searle's theory26

<i>1. Truth, knowledge and belief and the doctrine of infelicities. A variation of the assertion fallacy</i>	<i>26</i>
1.1. Truth, belief and knowledge	27
1.2. Characterizing assertions: a case of the assertion fallacy	37
<i>2. Linguistic form as a substitute for act?.....</i>	<i>51</i>
2.1. The F(p) division: some remarks	51
2.2. Illocutionary force indicators	54
2.3. Propositional act	64
<i>3. Searle's concept of illocutionary act</i>	<i>73</i>
3.1. Convention	73
3.2. The seven components of illocutionary force	79
3.3. Intention	86
3.4. Summary	89
<i>4. How many speech acts? Taxonomy and analysis</i>	<i>94</i>
4.1. Taxonomic principles: an overview	94
4.2. A classification of illocutionary acts	96
4.3. An exercise in taxonomy-making	114
<i>5. Applying criteria to data: expounding the problem</i>	<i>117</i>
5.1. Summary of Part I	129

Part II. The Neo-Austinian assertion132

<i>6. Austin's conception of illocutionary act</i>	<i>132</i>
6.1. Outline of the notion of illocutionary act	134
6.2. Two conditions for illocutionary acts	141
<i>7. Considerations on the conventional effect of assertion</i>	<i>147</i>
7.1. Intention and responsibility	148
7.2. Conventional effect	153
<i>8. Content and act, the view-point of hearers</i>	<i>162</i>
8.1. Propositional content	163
8.2. Austin's locutionary act	166
8.3. Illocutionary uptake	177

<i>9. Context and participant roles: putting illocutionary acts back into communication</i>	<i>186</i>
9.1. The doctrine of infelicities	187
9.2. Context	198
9.3. Summary of Part II	203
 <i>Part III: Validating results (excursus).....</i>	<i>205</i>
 <i>10. Strategic interaction: the social actor and managing the self</i>	<i>205</i>
10.1. Managing the self	206
10.2. On classifying acts	214
 <i>11. Indirect speech acts: Searle's mistaken assumptions and conversational implicature ...</i>	<i>219</i>
11.1. Searle's indirect acts	221
11.2. Austin's perspective	232
11.3. Indirect assertion	236
 <i>12. Explicit performatives</i>	<i>238</i>
12.1. Performatives are statements, too	239
12.2. Declaratory analysis	245
12.3. Summary	252
 <i>Conclusions: Assertion: criteria and conditions. Extending the analysis</i>	<i>254</i>
 <i>Appendix: list of articles and abstracts used for the main corpus</i>	<i>262</i>
 <i>References</i>	<i>265</i>

Introduction: Assertion – illocutionary act, social act

Imagine a doctoral student reading articles on the speech act of assertion. Imagine, further, the student saying “There are a lot of articles on the speech act of assertion.” The logical form of the utterance is an existential assertion, with the classical words-to-world direction of fit, expressing a proposition that describes a state of affairs. The student is further taken to believe that there are a lot of articles on the speech act of assertion; even it could be said that she knows that there are a lot of articles on assertion. The student is committed to the justifiable true belief that there are a lot of articles on assertion and that she counts as having undertaken to the effect that the hearer be aware that there are a lot of articles on assertion. What is common to all these explanations is that they are all variations to the allegedly pragmatic account of the speech act of assertion. Since the performative-constative distinction it has been quite uncontroversially accepted that assertion is a kind of speech act, or a kind of doing. It is disturbing to realize that in the accounts cited the doing dimension is somewhat lost. Can we count as doing the conformity to externally existing states of affairs or the commitment to a belief? The student’s expressing of a belief does not seem to qualify, either. Making the hearer aware of a state of affairs the speaker¹ believes to obtain is hardly distinctive, for it is an aspect that we find in a wide variety of representatives. The various accounts that abound in research do little to help alleviate the confusion that surrounds this act, if not make the confusion even bigger.

What do we mean by the term “assertion”? Cohen (1964) identifies three different meanings to the term “statement”. First, statement as contrasted with hint or hypothesis, where the leading idea is the commitment of the speaker to the proposition (this will be referred to as sense 1). Second, statement as a logical term, contrasted with “predicate” or “operator” (sense 2). Third, statement as contrasted with command or request, which can be seen as speech act distinctions, differentiating between different illocutionary acts² (sense 3). Some authors see a difference between statement and assertion as two different types of illocutionary acts. There is a further distinction that some recognize: assertion as act and

¹ Throughout this study, I will use the term “speaker” to refer to whoever performs the illocutionary act, no matter of the way (verbally, non-verbally, orally or in writing), and “hearer” to refer to whoever hears (reads, grasps etc) and takes up on the act performed. When a different term is used, its usage will be specially explained.

² Récanati (1981:185) proposed that the term also named what declarative sentences do, or the expressing of a proposition regardless of the force.

assertion as the result from the act (one notable example is Searle 1968). The first meaning is better called a “sign of subscription” (as in Frege³ and Hare):

I mean "assertion as opposed to merely supposing, entertaining or the like". (...) Because the word "assertion" can be confusing, I propose now to abandon it, and speak instead of a sign of subscription. This has the further advantage of being readily applicable to other kinds of sentences, speech acts, etc. than those expressed in the indicative mood. (Hare 1989: 25)

The sign of subscription deals with belief and discloses a judgment operation. The important thing to note in this respect is that an utterance of “Leave my office right now!” can have the sign of subscription as an utterance of “Snow is white” can⁴. Descriptivists sometimes confound asserting a proposition with subscribing to a proposition⁵. Then, it is reasonable to suppose that belief is strongly linked with the sign of subscription, and further that it is not a distinctive feature of the speech act of assertion. Further, a common amalgam in literature is made between an act type and a force genus; that is assertion as a separate illocutionary act and assertion as an umbrella term for the whole class of representatives. Throughout this study I will be concerned with assertion in the illocutionary sense of the term. But before I can further restrict the approach, I need to specify what I will and what I will not be taking into account. I will briefly sketch the direction my investigation will take by outlining some of the problems I will be concerned with.

Proposition and judgment; sign of subscription

An assertive utterance (in sense 1) is assessed in terms of truth conditions. The proposition is not a neutral concept, an abstraction without any relation to reality. The proposition has truth value. It describes a state of affairs. A sentence cannot be true or false. The proposition it expresses can be true or false.

(1) It was raining.

Thus, (1) can express an infinite number of propositions, true or false depending on whether or not it was raining in the moment and place of reference (McCawley 1981:3). When we dissociate the force of the utterance from its meaning, *p* must be an illocutionary neutral

³ Frege 1956

⁴ It would of course be a different sign of subscription.

⁵ Although this may seem as splitting hairs, it is important, because this is one of the reasons of the indirect acts treatments and of describing performatives as indirections or assertions, and part of the reason for the declarative sentence being associated with the assertive speech act.

content.

The proposition is a string of words expressing an idea proposed into consideration and so assessable in terms of truth value, which is neither asserted nor transformed in any way when asserted (Geach 1972:255). This idea is in the same tradition as established by Frege and Hare: the difference between an asserted and unasserted proposition. An asserted proposition is the sign of the speaker's commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition. The proposition has to be differentiated from assertion.

(2) If Sam smokes habitually, he will not live long.

(3) The proposition that Sam smokes habitually is uninteresting.

We find the same proposition in the two utterances, but in both cases it is not asserted.

A strong sign of subscription would express a strong belief in the propositional content and by definition it cannot be found in cases of suggesting a propositional content or of hypothesizing (this confirms the terminological confusion mentioned). It follows that linguistic rules determine what the speaker is committed to by uttering a sentence. By convention, the speaker cannot assert (in the first sense) in court that the defendant was seen at the scene of the crime and then say it was a joke. (Although it can be argued that this situation is ruled out not because of the use of assertion in the first sense, but by some institutional convention about statements before a court of law; linguistic conventions do not have this kind of scope.) Laws of logic forbid asserting (in the first sense) the conjunction $p \wedge \sim p$. The speaker cannot subscribe to a propositional content and refuse to subscribe to the same content at the same time. This is confirmed by Moore's paradox. Utterances like (4) are evidently incoherent:

(4) ? The cat is on the mat, but I don't believe it is.

The incoherence consists in asserting p (by or in the first proposition) and denying p (by the second proposition). The first proposition implicates a belief in the truth of the proposition. To deny the belief in the first proposition is in fact to assert the opposite: $p \vee \sim p$, which is a logical contradiction. This logical operation is amalgamated to speech acts satisfaction conditions and this led to the idea that utterances like (4) are self-defeating, because they deny that the sincerity condition obtains (Vanderveken 1980:264).

Sincerity conditions determine the mental states the speaker must have in order to do a particular illocutionary act. These mental states are part of the illocutionary goal of speech

acts and determine their felicity conditions. Thus, the belief in the truth of a proposition *p* is a part of the illocutionary goal of assertion and it has to obtain if the act is to be happy. In (4) the second part of the utterance denies that this condition obtains, which leads to paradox.

The logical structure of utterances (constructed around the distinction Frege makes between asserted vs. non asserted proposition), according to Hare (1989), has three subatomic particles: phrastic, tropic and neustic. The term “phrastic” indicates propositional content as an articulate combination of words (a suitable notion that covers even WH-questions that do not contain a complete proposition), neustic stands for the speaker’s subscription, a sign that the speaker expresses a propositional content, an idea in a strong way, expresses a belief in the said idea and tropic for the actualization of the propositional content of the utterance (this is a sign of mood; a sign that directly relates the speech act performed by the utterance and the form of the sentence uttered)⁶. Together, neustic and tropic represent the illocutionary force of the utterance. The three components, Hare claims, allow for a more detailed account of the structure of illocutionary acts.

(5) The cat is on the mat.

Assertion (in the first sense) is linked with the indicative mood. Imperative mood does not assert. Subscription is obtained in *realis* mood (as opposed to *irrealis*). Assertion according to Hare’s analysis is a combination of indicative tropic and assertive neustic. By the utterance of (5), a sentence in the indicative mood, we can identify the type of speech act we can perform by the utterance of (5) in a standardized manner. Tropics classify utterances according to the speech act they are assigned to by convention. But tropics are not enough to differentiate between different acts. What allows us to say that (5) is an assertion is the use of categorical assertion. A hypothetical assertion with the indicative tropic is not an assertion. The sentence *if p then q* has a neustic, but the clause *p* in the complex sentence does not. It is not the phrastic that is the bearer of truth value, but different combinations of neustic-phrastic-tropic. A complete sentence containing all three elements would be false if the tropic is indicative, and the phrastic denotes something which is not the case, the speaker being committed to the belief that *p* by the assertive neustic. The combination phrastic-tropic denotes something which does not have truth value, but could be evaluated potentially as something that is or is not the case. Hare does not give further indications as to what this must be, but it is reasonable to suppose that it would denote reference and predication. In the case of (5), the phrastic

⁶ A fourth particle - clistic - adds finality to the utterance, thus delimiting the construction.

would be [the cat – BE- on the mat], two referential expressions that can obtain or not, and a predicate that we can evaluate on its applicability to the expression “the cat”. What we obtain is an entity smaller than the logical proposition. Mood is essential to the attribution of truth value.

There are three tacit assumptions that underlie this division. First, the acts under scrutiny (the would-be illocutionary acts) are utterance acts as they consist in uttering a sentence. In the proposed analysis one can substitute all references to illocutionary acts with “sentence types” or “clause types” and it will still make sense. The obvious conclusion is that this analysis does not handle at all illocutionary acts (it is consistent with Hare’s explicitly articulated focus of the distinction, the assertion sign). Second, the Frege distinction is super-ordinate to illocutionary act distinctions: according to Hare’s analysis, the tropic actualizes a propositional content in a special mood that is sufficient to distinguish between assertion and order, but we need the neustic component to distinguish between what is asserted and what merely supposed. Third, utterances (or sentences, as it does not seem that distinction is relevant) seem self-contained, that is they carry in their very structure an element exemplifying the type of the illocutionary force (act?), regulated by linguistic conventions. To anticipate, this does not seem consistent with the concept of illocutionary act as outlined by Austin, and does not otherwise seem plausible (recall the crash of the Performative Hypothesis⁷).

Frege introduces his judgment stroke based on the following opposition: the thought of the speaker is the expressed proposition, the judgment is the verified state of affairs (speaker believes it true). The assertive sign indicates judgment. Frege’s assertion is judgment expressed in a communicative context (that is, something very similar to illocution, hence the confusion of terminology). But the judgment stroke is better characterized as attitude to content, not bearing social significance relevant to communication.

Searle’s notion of propositional content relies heavily on Hare and Frege’s tradition (Searle 1969:30), but differs from the logical proposition and semantic content. Searle’s notion of “propositional content” was meant as a more abstract entity. It is what is spoken of and not the totality of the utterance act. These considerations, however, presuppose a direct relation between the content of the sentence used to perform an act and the content of the act itself, namely that the propositional content of the utterance always coincides with the content

⁷ Ross 1970

of the act performed⁸. Searle distinguishes a propositional content in imperatives and interrogatives, so Searle's propositional content should not be truth-evaluable for several reasons. Being an abstraction, this notion excludes the mood and tense which actually allow us to situate the predication in a specific time and evaluate it. What is more, if we want to keep the idea that directives, commissives, expressives and declarations all have propositional content, we want to keep its abstract status. Or else, all speech acts would have truth value, which is simply not the case. Truth value is characteristic of assertive utterances. Searle does not say which element should bear truth value in assertions, unless it is a function of the assertive IFID.

Strictly speaking, mood is counted twice in Searle's analysis: once as a part of propositional content and once as an IFID. This apparent contradiction makes it impossible to decide whether or not meaning and illocutionary force are distinct. This contradiction is seen best in his treatment of assertive acts (or representatives): prediction, he says, is only different from assertion because of a special propositional content condition, concerning a future state of affairs. If we count the future tense as a part of the propositional content, then imperative and interrogative propositional contents must be derivable from and/or reducible to propositions. This, in turn, commits the Declarative fallacy and reduces illocutionary force to semantics.

In (5), according to Searle, the propositional content should be described as follows: there are two indexical expressions x and y that are put in relation, specified by the illocutionary force and the illocutionary intention of the speaker. The truth condition is satisfied when the content is linked to a context to specify the references of the indexical expressions and when the predication is understood. This description does not include the illocutionary act, which is described as follows: the speaker wants the hearer to become aware of p , which is true and for which the speaker has sufficient evidence. The truth of the proposition, however, is not the purpose of the act of assertion. It is the speaker's commitment to the belief that p that is the essential characteristic of the act and its communicative value. This explanation, though, still conflates the two senses of assertion, as it assumes, once again, an identity between the propositional content of the act and the proposition, the utterance of which carries out the act. That such an identity does exist in a large number of cases is incontrovertible, but assuming that every illocutionary act is subject to such an identity means

⁸ A more thorough examination of the theoretic framework proposed by Searle will be conducted in chapters 2 and 3, showing its utter inconsistency. It suffices to show that Searlean account of assertions fails even if we assume the theoretic framework flawless.

to undermine the whole concept of illocutionary force⁹.

There are four conditions that rule the distribution of the illocutionary force indicating devices for assertion:

1. Propositional content condition: any proposition *p*.
2. Preparatory condition: A. S has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of *p*. B. It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) *p*.
3. Sincerity condition: S believes *p*.
4. Essential condition: counts as an undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs.

Along with those conditions, there are further restrictions as to what must obtain in order for S to be able to assert non-defectively: S must be speaking seriously and literally (that is, she must mean what she says) and normal input-output conditions must obtain. An extended version of these conditions can be grafted from the analysis of promising:

1. Normal input and output conditions obtain.
2. S expresses the proposition that *p* in the utterance of T.
3. There is no restriction on the propositional content, or *p* is any proposition.
4. S has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of *p*.
5. It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) *p*. (Or else, no remark without remarkableness, 1969:144)
6. S believes *p*.
7. S intends that the utterance of T will commit him to the truth of *p*.
8. S intends (i-1) to produce in H the knowledge (K) that the utterance of T is to count as undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs. S intends to produce K by means of the recognition of i-1, and he intends i-1 to be recognized in virtue of (by means of) H's knowledge of the meaning of T.
9. The semantical rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered if and only if conditions 1-8 obtain.

It is unnerving to see the act dimension disappear from this account. All this account is capable of telling us is that any proposition *p* can be only correctly and sincerely uttered in performing the speech act of assertion if we R-intentionally produce in the hearer the knowledge that we want him to recognize that intention by virtue of the meaning of the

⁹ This problem will be discussed in chapter 3.

utterance¹⁰. So, there must be something in the meaning of the utterance that should enable the hearer to recognize this intention. If this is the illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), then it is surprising to see that IFID would here be indicating not force, but the complex R-intention, and, simultaneously, be a part of the meaning of the utterance. On the other hand, those conditions are in fact rules for the use of the indicating devices. So, in order to correctly use a device, we make ourselves understood by getting the hearer to recognize our intention to use the device seriously by understanding the meaning of the utterance that same device helps to construct. This does not look remotely plausible.

So, the following preliminary questions can now be articulated, around which the investigation will be conducted:

- Does assertion in sense 3 necessarily include assertion in sense 1, “asserting of a proposition” (in sense1) as an act of subscribing¹¹ to the truth of a proposition, even if it is false?
- Is there a relation between the sentence content (utterance content) and the act content? How exactly are we to understand the notion of act content?
- Further, is there a relation between the felicity conditions of the act and the meaning/truth conditions of the proposition contained in the utterance that is used to perform the act in question?
- How do we approach illocutionary acts altogether?

The declarative form as an IFID

Searle proposes that illocutionary acts have the formal representation $F(p)$ where F is the indicator of illocutionary force and p is the indicator for propositional content. A strong definition of IFID would be the following:

IFID: an expression is an IFID iff it shows invariably the same illocutionary force in all and every occurrence in a speech act.

But even performative verbs fail to conform to this definition: “I apologize” can be uttered as an answer to “What do you do every time you promise to take me to the movies and

¹⁰ This is specified in Searle’s condition 8 and will be commented upon in detail in chapter 1.

¹¹ This is not exclusively found in the illocutionary act of assertion. In this sense, the performative utterance of “I state that our position is not negotiable” also contains an asserted proposition /I state that p / in the first sense, but it is not this feature that makes the utterance of this performative a statement. This is the Declarative fallacy legacy.

you don't?" A weak definition, as the one proposed by Searle, can potentially be extended to so many different elements of the utterance, that it makes the very notion of IFID inefficient.

The notion of IFID implies that illocutionary force is an internal and inherent characteristic of utterances and can be non-ambiguously shown. But is it so?

(6) You will go home tomorrow (Gazdar 1981)

This sentence can be uttered according to the speaker's intention as an assertion, a question, a prediction or an order. In order to reconcile this possibility with the IFID constraint, we must assume that this utterance contains once an IFID of assertion, once an IFID of question, once an IFID of prediction and once an IFID of order. Then, the question is: what are the entities that are illocutionary force indicating devices?

Illocutionary force indicating device shows how the proposition is to be taken, or, in other words, what is the illocutionary force of the utterance, or what illocutionary act the speaker intends to be performing by the utterance. Searle mentions word order, accent, intonation, punctuation, verbal mood and performative verbs. And he postulates that force is shown, not signified. There are several problems with the tentative outline of the IFID. First, it is expected that a theory postulating the bipartite structure of the illocutionary act should provide a list of IFID for every act. Searle's theory does not. Second, it should be clearly described what exactly an IFID is supposed to show or indicate – a type act or a genus of acts. The analysis proposed by Searle does not explicitly settle the matter, and it seems that IFID come in different varieties: some showing the genus and some the type of act. But whatever the answer to this question, there is a problem with questions and orders (exemplified by two sentence types the interrogative and the imperative) both being of one and the same generic illocutionary force – directive. Third, the IFID doctrine does not fit well with condition 8 on R-intention. That is, the speaker is to use IFID *Assert* for assertion if he intends the hearer to recognize the complex intention by virtue of the meaning of the sentence. Condition 8 is in itself circular, for it posits that the hearer's recognition of the R-intention is rooted in the meaning of the utterance, and the successful recognition of this intention means that the speaker has correctly used the IFID *Assert*. But then aren't IFID supposed to show or indicate what act is being performed? Are we to understand that IFID in fact are comprised in the "meaning of the utterance"? What is the "meaning of the utterance": semantic meaning (a kind of propositional content) or pragmatic meaning (including the force of the utterance)?

Another implication of the bipartite analysis of the structure of illocutionary acts is that it follows that IFID should be a form and what is more, it should be distinct from the

propositional content. We are, then, faced with a contradiction: according to condition 8, the hearer recognizes the force of the utterance in virtue of his understanding the meaning of the utterance; on the other hand, IFID is a form distinct from the propositional content. Then, if the meaning of the utterance does not comprise the IFID, then IFID is a useless notion, because condition 8 wants the hearer to recognize the R-intention in virtue of the meaning of the utterance alone. This poses a major validity problem for Searle's theory, for it amounts to saying that if IFID are void, then the illocutionary force is an empty notion too. The other solution - saying that IFID are a part of the meaning of the utterance - amounts to saying that illocutionary force is encoded in semantics, a solution which confirms Cohen's reservation towards the notion (1964) and underlines the circularity of condition 8.

There are many problems with the notion of IFID not the least of which are performative verbs, their status and treatment, and by extension explicit performative utterances, the relation between mood, illocutionary force and the sentence type used to perform a speech act. Illocutionary force adds to the linguistic expression a communicative value, that is, the occurrence of a morpho-syntactic and semantic entity is the linguistic aspect of the utterance, whereas the communicative aspect is to conceive of the utterance as the accomplishment of an illocutionary act.

If there is more than one IFID in the structure of the utterance (as it is bound to be), how do hearers decide which IFID takes priority, especially when there is contradiction between the forces shown by the IFID? Such a conflicted situation¹², and a very typical one, is the explicit performative utterance. The two conflicting IFID are the verbal mood and the performative verbs. So, to what extent can we actually assume that illocutionary force is reflected in the syntactic structure of the utterance¹³?

Social act, conventional act, intentional act, communicative act, illocutionary nullity

Speech act theory is rooted in the assumption that a speech act is a social act in that it is a doing linking (at least) two social actors, a speaker and a hearer. A social act has a social value and an intentional social effect, both of which are communicated in the performing of the act (Pagin 2004:834). Explicit performatives explicitly communicate their social value. Primary illocutions also express their social significance. Pagin lists the following examples:

¹² It is a very important issue that has led to the performative fallacy: that is, because of the indicative mood and the performative verb, explicit performatives are said to be statements and only indirectly orders, apologies, declarations or whatever act is named by the performative verb. This is a view that I strongly oppose.

¹³ I deal with this problem in chapter 2.

- (7) Leave!
- (8) I shouldn't behave like that.
- (9) The meeting is open.
- (10) I'll come.

The communicative situation supplies the information that helps complete the meaning (in the large sense) and the value of the utterances. They involve speaker and addressee and this is important for the grasping of the illocutionary force. There are two of the utterances that do not seem to fit the criteria for a social act as defined by Pagin: (9) and (10). The contextual features that make the utterance of (9) a declaration and the utterance of (10) a promise are somewhat constitutive for their being illocutionary acts of the declarational type and a promise. Assertion, in Pagin's view, does not communicate a social dimension, as it is not necessary for the comprehension of an assertion to be marked for social actors. It is a judgment about the world and its existence is independent from the use the assertion may be put to in communication. This explanation is somewhat erratic with regard to the various senses of the term assertion, and focuses on the assertion in sense 1. Indeed, assertion in sense 1 can be put to various uses and (8), (9) and (10) exemplify that. But if we assume that Pagin meant assertion in sense 3 then such a view of the assertive act can be somewhat misleading, for it implies that assertions are self-satisfying and self-sufficient. According to such a view, in order to assert something one does not need to utter the judgment. One way out of this situation is informativity: every act performed in a conversational situation becomes a constitutive element of the situation; it is context-constitutive. Preparatory conditions (qua Searle) of assertion establish the link between assertion and informativity. Informativity is not a property of linguistic signs; it is a relation between the sign and its possible antecedent occurrences that determines the regulatory context restricting the appropriate responses after the sign's reception (Brandom 1983: 693-640). Assertion is thus a function of conversational context and its informative value is calculated in terms of knowledge/information it adds to the situation. Speakers will take into account every context-change operated by assertion in their subsequent contributions. That is the social value of assertion. Apart from the judgment on the world, the uttering of the judgment in a communicative setting is not conditioned by a metaphysical desire to reflect upon the world, but by an intention to perform a conversational move. The self-satisfying judgment need not be verbalized.

Pagin's argument for assertion being non-social is just a variation of the descriptive fallacy. It consists in confounding assert₁ and assert₃ and imputing more force to social

theories than they would claim themselves. Does that mean that an assertion must be social and in what way?

In Austin's and Searle's understanding, illocutionary acts are conventional in that their force can be made explicit by a performative formula. But they understand conventions in a different way. Austin-conventions want the act to be performed according to a procedure and create a conventional effect. Searle-conventions are ambiguous. According to Searle, conventions rule the use of illocutionary force indicating devices. But a different set of conventions rule the pronouncing of a meeting's opening and the ordering to clear off. A linguistic convention encodes a property into the grammatical form of the imperative sentence: to issue an order is then to conform to conventions of using linguistic expressions; whereas the capacity of being the chairman and having the task of opening proceedings for them to count as a social setting of meeting requires not only the linguistic convention, but convention governing this particular social activity.. Let's call those Searle-convention1 (as in the order example) and Searle-convention2 (as in the opening of the meeting example). Both types of acts use conventional means of performing them. That is, there is a formula that accompanies their performance. In the same way, the red flag means_{nn}¹⁴ that an offence has been committed by a football player. It is not the meaning of the sign "red flag", but it has this meaning by virtue of rules that specify that the rising of the red flag signifies that an offence has been committed. The utterance of the declarative sentence does not in the same way signify that an assertion has been performed, so it does not fit well in acts that are Searle-conventional1, nor does it fit acts that are Searle-conventional2. But the performance of an assertion does display a certain Austin-conventional dimension that is common to illocutionary acts: it creates a fact in the institution of communication. The speaker counts as having made a move in the communicative "game" and this move changes the setting of the game: assertion adds a piece of information along with the speaker's commitment to it, an order adds the obligation of the addressee to act accordingly (with which she can comply or not), a verdict alters reality by supplying and implementing the change etc. So in a way, illocutionary acts are Austin-conventional, and some acts are Searle-conventional2. In order to account for the Austin-conventional nature of assertion, an account of the procedure and effects is needed.

I now propose an overview of different accounts of assertion that will be evaluated with regard to the following premises:

¹⁴ It is a reference to Gricean non-natural meaning (1957).

1. The account of the speech act of assertion must conform conceptually to an understanding of what a speech act is and what an illocutionary act is. It necessarily has a social dimension, for it relates (at least) two interlocutors, a speaker and an addressee.
2. It should not conflict with an account of explicit performative utterances.
3. It should be applicable to data.
4. It should provide explanation of linguistic behavior in data.
5. It should be accountable for from the addressee's point of view. We must be able to recognize assertions when we are confronted with one.

General connections of speech act theory with intentionality, epistemology, rationality and cognition will not be discussed. A general assumption, then, will be that we understand notions such as truth, intention, belief, knowledge. We assume that people generally have the intention to communicate and do so on their own free will.

Convention accounts

Austin held that “[t]here must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances” (1962:14). This is one of the rules expounding the necessary conditions on illocutionary acts, and conventional in Austin's usage is often interpreted as meaning only that there is a conventional formula that conventionally expresses what illocutionary act is being performed: explicit performative utterances. Such a reading is fairly restrictive, as it does not take into account the procedure and the effect, mentioned in the rule. I called this conception of convention “Austin-convention”. The restrictive reading, though, is the basis for Searle's concept of conventionality of illocutions: in performing an assertion, the speaker commits herself to *p*, it counts as an undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs (Searle 1969). Searle-convention then governs the distribution of the so-called illocutionary force indicating devices, which are grammatical features (performative verbs, mood, intonation curb etc) that define and restrict the clause type. Thus Searle establishes a relation between the sentence and illocutionary force. A representation of the latter is found, according to Searle, in the syntactic deep structure of sentences, though he does not explicitly say that the standard sentence types indicate illocutionary force. The uneasy idea that sentence types are somehow conditioned to perform a particular illocutionary act type morphed into a weaker partial explanation of their having an

illocutionary force potential (that is, that in the normal literal use, the declarative sentence will assert things, the interrogative will inquire about things, the imperative will give orders), although it would be very difficult to come up with a distinctive feature that would point out at normal (or default) contexts that are necessary to activate the illocutionary potential¹⁵.

Strawson (1964) and Bach and Harnish (1979) object to the convention account of illocutions: declarative sentences can be used to perform a wide variety of illocutionary acts and this without relying on convention to recognize the force. It seems intuitively correct to say that hearers understand the illocutionary act performed in the utterance of a sentence by a combination of contextual features and the meaning of the sentence. There seems to be a discrepancy between the process of the speaker's action and the hearer's recognition of it, and these two processes make it difficult to come up with a uniform account of acts. Kemmerling (2002) stresses that acts presuppose the existence of rules (those are conventional in the sense that every speaker who engages in a communicative process has knowledge of them); thus in asserting a speaker is taken to express a belief, regardless of whether she has it or not, and this approach to assertion clearly subsumes instances of lying. Such an approach acknowledges the hearer's point of view but says little of the motivation of the speaker in making the communicative move. The difference is apparent in cases like the following: in saying that the station was closed, I may have failed to tell Tom that it was closed, because he left the room, but I still have asserted that the station was closed because I believed he was still in the room (the example comes from Pagin 2007). It is not clear to me how I can still have made an assertion. I may have uttered the sentence "the station is closed" and may subscribe to its truth and may have the required intention to communicate my belief, but in the illocutionary sense of the term assertion, I haven't performed one¹⁶.

Sbisà (2007) proposes to shift the conventional burden from the means to the effects of illocutionary acts. This captures in a better way Austin's concern about uptake, but again faces the problem of describing what the conventional effects of every illocutionary act are and defining the nature of conventional effect. One important feature, says Sbisà, is that this effect should be produced in a non-natural way (that is, different from the mere change in the natural state of events).

¹⁵ Also, see Kölbel (2009) suggesting the idea that performing an act is a rule-governed activity and assertion is conventionally specified by the rules of language.

¹⁶ This issue is closely related to the question of uptake and felicity: for Austin, performing an illocutionary act amounts to producing the uptake of the meaning and the force of an utterance. It seems clear that the act just failed to achieve its goal, and that is to communicate to Tom my belief and by so doing to make Tom aware of a state of affairs.

Intention accounts

Intention is found in Searlean account, although later accounts use Gricean intention. Searle's account of intention does not fit well with the conventional view of illocutions. He says the speaker's intention is to be understood and this is achieved by getting the hearer to recognize that intention. The recognition of the intention is achieved by the conventional rules that govern that use of illocutionary force indicating devices, which, in turn, indicate the illocutionary act being performed. Intention, thus spelled, is somewhat redundant given our view of communication being an intentional activity, in which the participants join of their own free will. Their intention in engaging in communication is *eo ipso* to be understood.

Gricean communicative intention goes as follows (Grice 1957, 1969):

(NN) *S* non-naturally means something by an utterance *u* if, and only if, there is a hearer *H* such that

- (i) *S* intends *u* to bring about a response *R* in *H*
- (ii) *S* intends *H* to recognize that (i)
- (iii) *S* intends *H*'s reason for *R* to be that (i).

Applied to assertion, this intention will be for the hearer to form the same belief that *p* because of his recognizing my intention that I intend him to form a belief that *p*. This view is problematic in that the speaker's intention to make the hearer believe *p* is not a necessary condition of the intention to assert that *p*. This problem is avoided by Récanati (1987) in the following way: In performing an assertion, the *S* intends to give the *H* reason to believe that she knows *p* and wishes to share her knowledge of *p* and she intends the *H* to recognize this intention and to recognize it as open. Although Récanati stresses on intention, his account is subject to the weaknesses of the knowledge accounts and will be further commented upon there. Bach and Harnish (1979) posit that assertion is a communicative act of the constative category that expresses the belief that *p* and the intention or desire of *S* that the *H* forms the same belief. Stainton (1995) examines sub-sentential phrases to conclude that assertion is the exterior manifestation of certain complex intentions and that the uttering of an indicative sentence is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for asserting. Plunze (2002) proposes that there are two kinds of assertives: communicative involving an addressee-oriented intention to communicate that speaker believes that *p* represents a true state of affairs and non-communicative. Searle's objection to the Gricean intention is that one cannot require the speaker to intend perlocutionary effects (verbal or physical responses, the forming of a belief

etc), for they are not essential to performing illocutionary acts (Searle 1969:46). Curiously, this would also subsume the making the hearer aware of a state of affairs.

All these definitions of intentions lack a very important dimension: any indication of how the hearer recognizes the intention. Different intentions may motivate different kinds of communicative situations and the grid of the intentions involved can be very complex. Postulating reflexive intentions does not help either. Consider strategic discourse, cooperative discourse, intention to mislead, misinform or lie. Whatever the process of recognition of intention may be, it can certainly be simulated, just as (Searle-) conventional means to perform an act may be misused to make the hearer believe that an act has been performed sincerely, where in fact sincerity was lacking.

“Intentionalists” generally support a very special view of how explicit performatives achieve their illocutionary force: by being literal assertions that succeed in being orders, namings or bets in an indirect way. This suggests the strong inconsistency in the view of what a theory of speech acts should be. According to such a view, in uttering “I order you to leave” I am performing the illocutionary act of assertion, expressing the belief that I am ordering you to leave and the intention or desire that you form the same belief. So then, I figure that once you have formed the belief that I am ordering you to leave, you will infer that I indirectly intend to order you to leave. It is not clear how the correlation between the declarative form and the speech act of assertion is established, and how such a correlation ought to affect the whole taxonomy of speech acts (most of actual occurrences of illocutionary acts will turn out to be indirect)¹⁷, and how the hearer is to infer the intention to order when what I did express was my intention to assert. Similar problems arise with Récanati’s illocutionary potential.

Knowledge accounts

Knowledge accounts of assertion provide a connection between knowledge (epistemology) and assertion (philosophy of language).

Williamson comments that:

“It is, however, painful to ask why we have such a speech act as assertion in our repertoire. (...) No doubt we need a speech act something like an assertion, to communicate beliefs, but could we not have done so just as well by using a speech act whose rule demanded less than knowledge?(...) One obvious answer is that we need assertion to transmit knowledge. In normal circumstances, when the hearer knows that the speaker asserted *p*, the speaker has no reputation for unreliability, and so on, a speaker

¹⁷ A similar point is made by Levinson 1983.

who asserts *p* thereby puts a hearer in a position to know *p* if (and only if) the speaker knows *p* (...).” (2000: 267)

According to Williamson, the obvious account of assertion is “the default use of declarative sentences”, though it is not clear how we recognize those from non-default use. Bierwisch (1980) suggests something very similar, that is when there are no indications to the contrary then the direct literal utterance of a declarative sentence is to make assertion. But this is a very problematic position, which amounts to describe a category negatively, somewhat in the sense of “when a declarative sentence is not used to do anything else, then it is used to make an assertion”. The default-use account is routed in the confusion between sense 1 and sense 3 of the term assertion. That is, subscribing to a proposition (or expressing a proposition in the strong mode) cannot be justified with a mere belief that something is the case; it has to be sufficiently supported by evidence. A belief supported by evidence is then knowledge. Transmitting knowledge means (in the Gricean sense) to undertake responsibility of justifying it and making it possible for the hearer to claim whatever follows from it (Brandom 1983). Or, in other words, the point of assertion is information (Jones 1991).

Knowledge accounts are crafted on the idea that there is a knowledge norm that governs the production of assertion. Proponents of such analyses are DeRose (“one is positioned well-enough to assert that *p* iff one knows that *p*” 2002), Hawthorne (“the practice of assertion is constituted by the rule/requirement that one assert something only if one knows it” 2004) and Fricker (“the speech act of assertion is (...) governed by the norm: one should assert that *p* only if one knows that *p*... in asserting that *p*, the asserter gives her word that *p* entitles her audience to believe that *p* on the strength of her say-so, so that her audience may complain if *p* subsequently turns out to be false, or the asserter not to have known it to be true” 2007:104, cited in Lackey 2008:106) A speaker who asserts that *p*, but does not know that *p*, is subject to criticism. Williamson even suggests that asserting that *p* without knowing that *p* is like giving a command without the authority to do so (2000:275). Such a view on the act constraints the felicitous (or proper) assertions that speakers are entitled to make: loose speech will automatically be qualified as parasitic or out of order¹⁸. In the strong version of

¹⁸ An interesting refutation of the counter-example levelled by contestants of the knowledge account is presented in Lackey 2008: Fricker (2007) claims that cases like the CREATIONIST TEACHER assertions fail because the basis of the speaker’s assertion is their own belief that they are speaking from knowledge, and since this belief is based on a false premise then it is not knowledge (cited in Lackey 2008: 106). It is not very conclusive, because there is no objective criterion to evaluate the truth or falsity of beliefs. But even so, this does not mean that CREATIONIST TEACHER is not entitled to make the assertions that she believes to be true. It does mean, however, that the knowledge account is too strong to propose an adequate handling of data.

the knowledge norm for assertion, it would follow that all assertions that comply with the norm are necessarily true.

There are generally two obvious objections to the validity of the knowledge account (those are cited in Lackey 2008): assertions that are clearly about states of affairs that the speaker does not know to be true (me shouting “This is your train” as I see a train approaching the station; to such counter-examples Williamson objects that they only show that the knowledge norm can be overridden by other norms) and the Gettier¹⁹-type counter-examples (the one real barn among the barn façades and the assertion “there is a barn” made when seeing the one real barn; in other words, coincidence does not satisfy knowledge, even if it is true).

The barn example is replicated in a strongly exaggerated way in the following exchange (coming from Robert Heinlein, *Stranger in a strange land*) about the fair witness:

"Take it easy, Jill. You're disputing a report by a Fair Witness and not just any Fair Witness. Cavendish himself. If he says it, it's gospel. (...) You know how Fair Witnesses behave."

"Well ... no, I don't. I've never had any dealings with Fair Witnesses."

"So? Perhaps you weren't aware of it. Anne!"

Anne was seated on the springboard; she turned her head. Jubal called out, "That new house on the far hilltop-can you see what color they've painted it?"

Anne looked in the direction in which Jubal was pointing and answered, "It's white on this side." (...) Jubal went on to Jill in normal tones, "You see? Anne is so thoroughly indoctrinated that it doesn't even occur to her to infer that the other side is probably white, too. All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't force her to commit herself as to the far side - . . . unless she herself went around to the other side and looked-and even then she wouldn't assume that it stayed whatever color it might be after she left because they might repaint it as soon as she turned her back."

To be more in keeping with the fair witness concept, Anne should have said “Today, on the such and such day-month-year, at so and so o’clock the house is white on this side.” If our beliefs were as short-lived as it transpires from the explanation Jubal offers in this quotation, then it is not very clear what would count as knowledge and how it is formed. Our judgments are not formed in such a way. We can reasonably assume that in ordinary circumstances the façade we see is in fact part of a house, and that it is likely to be white on every side. So if Wendy passes in a field with barn façades and there is nothing extraordinary in the circumstances, she may felicitously assert that there is a barn (or barns) in the field. In this case we can only say that the evidence that her eyesight (and certain knowledge about the

¹⁹ Gettier 1963.

world) provides is sufficient for her to entertain that belief. If we follow the reasoning of knowledge accounts it is not knowledge, so her utterance cannot be an assertion unless there are some other norms that override the knowledge norm. Knowledge account clearly does not accommodate the data.

There is another problem with “strong” knowledge accounts of assertion: if I indeed communicate knowledge about p , then my interlocutor will be compelled to take me on my word. That is, the knowledge norm in assertive speech acts would entail the truth of the proposition that I communicate to know and it would entail that I am in possession of evidence that supports my knowing that p is the case. All of this should be reason enough for my interlocutor to believe that p is true. This is, however, counter-intuitive and does not fit data. Testimony (in whatever context and legal actions like “bearing witness”) admits for such strong conditions. The very essence of the act lies in its being accepted at face-value and it is constrained by a clearly defined responsibility on the part of the speaker. Assertion needn’t be that way.

It is very difficult to distinguish between things that we believe are so and so and things that we know are so and so. People seem to appropriate beliefs even if the evidence is not available for them to comprehend. In scientific discourse non-specialists learn about a particular state of affairs and can form the appropriate belief that such and such is the case even if they are not the ones to have formed the judgment and even if the evidence is too complex or unavailable for them. If I am told by a reliable source of information that the universe is expanding, I may form a belief that the universe is expanding. I may accept this piece of information to use in practical reasoning, but I cannot non-ambiguously say that I am made to know that the universe is expanding. Rather I am made to know that the speaker believes that the universe is expanding. In such cases I do not know that the universe is expanding (neither does the scientist, for that matter). I believe that it is possible that it is the case. Proof in such cases can only go as far as to suggest the plausibility of such a belief. My own assenting to the content of the speaker’s assertion follows a rather different procedure. This leads us to belief accounts.

Belief accounts

There certainly are cases in which we assert things in the absence of knowing that p , and this without being subject to criticism in any relevant sense. Lackey (2008) makes that point and maintains that knowledge cannot be required for proper assertion. She supports a

Reasonable to Believe Norm of Assertion (her term) that avoids the problems afflicting the knowledge account and accommodates better our intuitions about the act and the perpetrator: “one should assert that p only if one reasonably believes that one knows that p ” (2008:108).

Before we tackle the notion of belief, we should turn to the notion of judgment. Peirce (1991) gave the following account of assertion: “to assert a proposition is to make oneself responsible for its truth”. Tuzet (2006) puts forward the idea that the belief and the judgment operation are closely linked: that is, we form a belief following the internal procedure of assenting to a proposition. It is clear that in different types of judgment (in the Kantian sense) the beliefs we form are different and it is very hard to imagine how we can divide the stable and well-supported by evidence beliefs and non-stable ones. Asserting is the exterior act of communicating the formed belief. It does not discriminate between the different judgments that underlie the assertion as an act. We are, of course, responsible for the beliefs we openly assert we have: we may be compelled to provide support, or we may be questioned on the validity of the judgment procedure that led to the formation of the said belief. How does this fit in with the real data? The train example (above) exposes an inferential process of the speaker, who exposes that belief that this is the hearer’s train, which involves a consideration of several contextually salient features: the immediacy of the departing time, the approaching train, the desire to catch the train, the need to hurry in order to catch it. The looseness of language expression permits such “imperfect” assertions (based on circumstantial evidence, though displaying a strong conviction in the belief exposed). It is highly counter-intuitive to take the utterance of “This is your train” to be a suggestion, or a hypothesis, or a guess even, because those acts are too weak to elicit (or achieve) the perlocutionary (I am using this term for simplicity’s sake) effect of making the hearer entertain the said belief in a sufficient degree, so that she acts on it (by speeding up and/or checking the truth of the allegation by looking at the notice-board). How far can the responsibility of the speaker be stretched? Is responsibility applicable to the content of the assertion or the content of the belief?

Language users transmit information by means of assertion. Owens (2006) contrasts the Assurance model and the Belief model. The Assurance model consists in the following: we can learn that p if someone tells us that p ; telling someone involves asserting that p with a view of providing them with an assurance that p is true. Audience is usually entitled to accept these assurances thereby acquiring a belief which it is up to the speaker to justify. When all goes well, the audience thereby learns that p . Belief expression model: we can learn that p when we hear someone assert that p . To sincerely assert that p is to express your belief in p , where expressing a belief differs both from indicating to others that you have it and from

giving assurance that it is true. The example Owens gives is of the analyst who convinces me that I believe that my brother drove my father to an early grave. If I say “my analyst has convinced me that I do believe this” I am indicating that I have this belief, but I am not expressing the said belief. Expressing a belief is asserting that p or behaving in a way which constitutes a natural sign of beliefs. Owens maintains that the expression of belief is directly motivated by the belief expressed and directly motivates the adoption of that belief by others.

He proposed that to sincerely assert that p is at least to intend to express the belief that p , using language. He raises the following questions in this regard:

- How does the public meaning of the words used in making the assertion relate to the content of the belief expressed?
- How much of what is communicated by the speaker to the hearer is part of what she literally asserts and how much is something else (an implication, a presupposition)?
- How is the belief expression model to accommodate insincere assertion, given that expression can't be insincere?

Although Owens' preoccupation is to account for the act of testimony, he arrives at this by using assertion: “the act of assertion expresses belief and thereby enables its audience to acquire not knowledge of the speaker's belief but a belief with the same content and epistemic credentials and thus knowledge of the fact testified to” (2006:127)

This begs the question “Doesn't it make perfect sense that one who believes something should wish to assert it, whether or not they have any further purpose in mind?” (Owens 2006:109)

Truth as norm accounts

Truth and assertion are very closely linked in all accounts of this act. It is in the basis of the representative category, the acts that constitute it “say how things are” (Searle 1969). There is much to be gained by making the following distinction: in making the assertion that there are blue swans, do I convey that the content of the assertion, namely /that there are blue swans/ is true or that I hold the true belief that /there are blue swans/, or else that I hold the belief that the content of my assertion is true? I will return to that point later.

Dummett (1981) explores the relation to truth in saying that a man makes an assertion if he says something in such a manner as deliberately to convey the impression of saying it with the overriding intention of saying something true. It is an interesting mix of convention, both in the means of performing the action and in conditions and the truth norm that he

compares to the winning of a game: this is not just a classification of an outcome, but something the speaker aims at (cited in Pagin 2007).

The appeal to truth can be viewed as a desire to establish a difference between asserting and weak manifestations of the same illocutionary type as hypothesis or conjecture. It is not clear how truth helps to establish the sought distinction, as it is incontrovertible that we aim to say something true in conjecturing and in hypothesizing. In this spirit Sayward (1966) says that asserting is making a truth-claim, but the converse does not hold. Wright (1992 cited in Pagin 2007) proposes to substitute the confusing term “truth-claim” by the following formulation: “to assert is to present as true”. It is not clear whether or not he means “to assert is to present a proposition as true”. How do we present a proposition as true? The mere act of uttering a proposition does not seem to qualify. So unless we are provided with an explanation of what it is to present as true, this formulation is completely useless. Fried (1978, cited in Owens 2006) goes along similar lines of reasoning: “To make an assertion is to give an assurance that the statement is true. The analogy to promising is very close. An assertion may be seen as a kind of very general promise; it is a promise or assurance that the statement is true. It is offered not as evidence of the speaker’s state of mind but as a deliberate act on the speaker’s part on which the hearer is intended to rely.” The act of assertion itself cannot function as an assurance that the content is true. The only assurance it can claim for itself is that of the existence of a belief, which the speaker claims to hold²⁰.

Weiner (2005) maintains that assertion is a broad category not restricted to acts based on evidence. They are more than just reports: the same declarative sentence can be used to assert something known firsthand, heard about, inferred or arrived at through speculation. Holmes arriving at a crime scene and telling Watson “this is the work of Dr. Moriarty” is not based on knowledge, says Weiner. It is clear that unless Holmes has some supernatural ability to acquire the knowledge without any seeming access to evidence, then his assertion is based on a hunch, previous experience of Dr. Moriarty’s crimes that underlie his judgment about the events. This assertion’s conformity to truth is somewhat retroactive (it can turn out to be true or false), and if they turn out to be false, the addressee is entitled to feel resentment towards the speaker, which is not the case when suppositions turn out to be false, or hypotheses. But

²⁰ Recent accounts blur even further the notion of assertion, as can be seen from the following classification by Schang (forthcoming): assertion as a statement of fact (that can be about a true sentence) is an assertive illocutionary act with the words-to-world direction of fit; assertion as a factual assertion (that is a truth claim that can be about a true or false sentence) can either be a declarative act with a double direction of fit, or else an expressive act with no direction of fit, but a mere psychological attitude. In order for this distinction to make any sense at all, the term “assertion” should be replaced by “a declarative sentence”. To say that an assertion can be a declaration or an expressive misses the point.

resentment is not the same as the liability to criticism, and certainly this does not disqualify the act as being an assertion.

An interesting discussion of the relation between assertion and truth is proposed by Jager (1970). He suggests that we should adopt a realistic view of truth, namely the representational view. It is not the case, then, that something's being true can be a different matter for the different persons involved. "To make a statement, to assert something, is somehow to incorporate the claim that what is asserted is true." (Jager 1970:161) He proposes a working definition of truth conditions and the truth dimension of assertions. Truth conditions are something that propositions have (to ask "wherein does the truth of p consist?"), whereas the truth dimension of assertions is something that has obtained and that is claimed to hold (1970:167). He further says that where truth is concerned, my assertion is not the proposition asserted. This is a very promising distinction, and he explains that "I can identify a proposition and label it as one that is true or as one I believe true; but I cannot identify my assertion, and unredundantly label it as one that is true or as one I believe true" (Jager 1970:166), because assertion already is what I believe true.

The inability to distinguish between truth conditions and truth value is probably why Récanati (1987) suggests that it is not the case that the words-to-world direction of fit is a prerequisite on a proposition's having truth-value. The value "true" can be assigned to a proposition no matter of the direction of fit. Truth in Austin's "narrow" sense is the correspondence to reality. Truth in the "liberal" sense of the logicians is the correspondence to reality no matter of the direction in which this correspondence is achieved, according to Récanati. It is not clear what the source of such a conception of truth is, for the logician's concept of truth derives from the fact that a proposition involves a subject and a predicate, and the predicate is the assignment of a property, or a description. Descriptions have the words-to-world direction of fit by definition. It is no surprise that given the two definitions of truth Récanati comes up with two types of assertion: the speaker makes a constative assertion if she intends p to be true independently of her saying so, and the speaker makes a performative assertion if she intends p to be true because of her saying so²¹.

²¹ Accounts such as Récanati's and the one proposed by Bach and Harnish are sometimes called "descriptivist" accounts (Nicoloff 1986). They support a non-conventionalist view of speech acts; an action is performed in virtue of the meaning of the expression used in its performance, not because of conventions. The main tenets of descriptivism are: 1) every declarative sentence has an assertive illocutionary potential: the utterance of a declarative sentence performs invariably an assertion (explicit performative formulae are no exceptions: they assert and indirectly perform an action specified by the performative verb); 2) every declarative sentence uttered has truth-value; 3) it is not convention that determines the illocutionary force of the utterance; it is the linguistic meaning of the utterance.

In the view that assertions provide information, it is natural for hearers to want to know whether or not the content of the information provided is true. But what should be defined under the heading of “content of the information”? Further, what counts in communication is both the content of the utterance and the act performed by the utterance. This is exemplified by context accounts of assertion.

Context accounts

Context accounts of assertion do not rely on the form of the utterance to signal force, nor do they rely on complex intention recognition. They focus on the notion of uptake, which is the hearer’s standpoint in grasping the act that is being performed. Thus, they do not necessarily clash with an attempt to characterize the performing of assertions as having conventional effects. In a way, this conventional effect is the nature of the contextual change the acts operate. Gazdar (1981) proposes the following account of the act of assertion: assertion is a function from a context where the S is not committed to p to a context where the speaker is committed to p . Illocutionary acts are context-constructing: they build the context by adding a string of information to it. The content of an assertion is then a piece of information which will become part of the situation if the assertion is successful (Stalnaker 1978). Why are our assertions subjected to a truth-verification? If a speaker says something we need to establish whether it is true or not. This does not make the act any less valid, of course. The content of the assertion is not only the proposition that is uttered, but also the commitment to the proposition; thus both the content of the proposition and the speaker’s being committed to it become part of the information enriching the context.

Context accounts of assertion are formalizable, although the difficulty consists in the question how to establish criteria that account for the relevant features of the communicative situation that build up the context.

Summary

The point of this investigation is the act of assertion – heir to the philosophical statement and the logical proposition, creator of ontological truth, and in the later, pragmatic, tradition an illocutionary act. The intrigue around this act is heightened by the large plethora of different kinds of accounts of which I presented an overview above. In a recent article, Cappelen (2011) suggests that there is no correct way of characterizing assertion, as different

theoretical needs yield different explanations. I believe that, partly because of the amorphness of the term assertion, this is the most comfortable view to hold. From illocutionary nullity to the constative logical fact-stating construct, from the proposition-expressing form to the context-altering language move, the only way one could disentangle the question of which account of assertion is plausible or correct is by applying consistently a unifying definition of illocutionary act. Incidentally, the lack of such a unifying definition is, I believe, the reason for the variety of accounts of assertion. In the course of this investigation, I hope to provide enough as to explain that as far as illocutionary acts are concerned, there is one which is best called assertion, and this investigation aims at providing at least some directions to its description.

The investigation is organized in the following manner: in Part I, I launch the discussion by focusing on some conditions of adequacy of what would be a valid account of assertion. I choose to focus on Searle's theory of speech acts mainly because it remains to this day the first and most widely known theory of speech acts which is fully articulated to the point of formalization. As stated above, it is also a hybrid theory in that it contains elements of both intentional and conventional accounts. I will argue that the accounts of assertion that Searle's theory provides are not compatible with each other and create problems for the description of other illocutionary acts as well, not to mention methodological problems for the entire theory. The importance of having a definition of an illocutionary act is emphasized in my discussion of Searle's theory, which, incidentally, does not provide such a definition. The theoretical constructs are checked against a corpus of real data, mapping theoretical predictions of the theory onto actual utterances and our intuitions about their illocutionary force. Since an account of the illocutionary act of assertion is possible only if one knows what an illocutionary act is, I turn back to Austin in search for the missing definition. Part II suggests the reconstruction of the missing definition of illocutionary act in Austin's original exposition and a detailed discussion of what the illocutionary act of assertion would be in the light of that definition, with the necessary modifications. Part III picks up on some residual problems that acquire a new reading after the discussion of illocutionary act.

Part I. Stating the problem: assertion from the point of view of Searle's theory**Chapter 1: Truth, knowledge and belief. A variation of the assertion fallacy**

The Declarative fallacy consists in assuming that the declarative form in which the act of assertion is performed is somehow more central than other types of encoding content. It is therefore very important that in our considerations of speech acts we are guarded from relying too much on proposition or assertion. It is then important to distinguish ontological and epistemic preoccupations from interest in speech act theoretic issues. Conditions of adequacy of any serious speech act theoretic analysis will include a careful handling of questions concerning propositions and linguistic content. Austin's approach to the matter is insightful in the tacit realization of the spuriousness of any proposition-centered analysis of what is done with words. Searle's approach, however, does seem guilty of the Declarative fallacy, and that will be argued for below.

There is another guard against the Declarative fallacy, and it is spelled out by Searle under the name of Assertion fallacy. The gist of the Assertion fallacy is in the confusion between the conditions of the act of asserting and the content of the assertion itself. That is, it is not because the concept of free will is at fault that I cannot felicitously assert that I am writing this paper of my own free will in every circumstance. I can felicitously assert that I am writing this paper of my own free will if the circumstances are such that warrant my asserting to that effect. This argument can be generalized so as to read: we are not to confuse features of the act with features of the linguistic expression the utterance of which constitutes the performance of the act. I intend to show that Searle is guilty of this fallacy.

Before tackling this question, we need to be able to identify what categories of concepts need apply if we are to describe the illocutionary act of assertion. Matters of truth and falsity fall outside the scope of speech act analysis, for an illocutionary act cannot be true or false, but felicitous or infelicitous. The specific linguistic expression in the utterance of which the illocutionary act is performed may be subject to truth-falsity evaluation, but the question of the truth or falsity does not pertain to the illocutionary act itself. Confusing these matters is succumbing to the Assertion fallacy. In what follows I wish to argue that truth need not be of any concern of speech act analysis. I further propose that neither knowledge nor belief can be retained as norms for the illocutionary act of assertion.

The last section of the chapter will concern the notion of the illocutionary act of assertion in Searle's writings and present evidence of some inconsistencies between different expositions of Searle and between his description of the act of assertion and the principles underlying his theory of illocutionary acts.

1.1. Truth, belief and knowledge

In speech act theoretic research the class of representatives (or assertives or constatives, depending on the taxonomic terminology) are generally heirs to the philosophical category of statement or judgment (perhaps best systematized by Kant): assertion is then the paradigmatic case of uttering a declarative sentence (a proposition), that tells something that can be true or false. Even more to the point, the illocutionary act of assertion is the proper heir to the philosophical statement (this amendment is necessary because of the hinting, suggesting, and other "weak" assertive acts that also fall in the class of representatives). Statements or judgments are indeed a very important subject of investigation in philosophy and philosophy of mind in that they relate to ontological and epistemic knowledge. In other words, assertion produces knowledge by a special relation to truth. Assertion then is intrinsically related to truth in more than one way: the proposition is truth-evaluable, and the result is aimed at truth. What is more, a condition of asserting the truth-evaluable proposition is the knowledge that *p* (knowledge that *p* presupposes the truth of *p*). However the concept of truth is construed, I wish to argue that the relationship between truth and assertion is subject to circularity and it does not say anything significant about assertion.

Let me briefly summarize the main tenets of the belief (B), knowledge (K) and truth (T) accounts of assertion, presented in the introduction.

B: One should assert only if one believes (that one knows) that *p*.

K: One is positioned to assert if and only if one knows that *p*.

T: To assert is to present *p* as true.²²

There is an obvious difference between the formulations of these accounts: B and K seem to focus on conditions for asserting, whereas T focuses on the nature of asserting, so B and K do

²² These formulations do not reflect any particular view of any particular researcher on the subject (though they may coincide with a specific formulation of a particular researcher), but are generalizations from the points of view that fall under the scope of the relevant accounts of assertion. The discussion, then, is about the general validity and adequacy of such notions in an analysis of the speech act which is the main concern of this study, not the point of view of any particular researcher.

not exclude T, and T can be said to incorporate both B and K. In other words, in order for me to engage in the act of presenting p as true, I must conform to condition K, which in turn entails condition B (condition B, on the other hand, does not entail condition K: if I believe that I know p it does not follow from my belief that I know p ; this is the reason for leaving those accounts separate in the presentation; although a more accurate wording would be that my knowing that p is not inconsistent with my believing that p). It is implicit in conditions B and K that to know that p equals knowing that p is true and to believe that one knows that p equals believing that one knows that p is true. K is stronger a requirement than B, that is why I will proceed by analyzing the stronger claim first, then the weaker one.

One way of characterizing truth is to say that adding the truth predicate to an assertion is redundant, as the assertion is already a “claim to be true” (Sayward 1966). Then truth and assertion are coextensive in that assertion exemplifies what it is to be true. While this view may coincide with a rough concept of asserting in sense 1, it does not say much about the illocutionary act of assertion. Or, if we take truth to be the belief that the proposition p conforms to a fact or a state of affairs, then to assert is to present p as conforming to a fact or a state of affairs. The following description can be produced for a successful assertion:

D1: One is to present p as conforming to a fact or a state of affairs only if one knows that p and one believes that one knows that p .

But what is it to know²³ that p ?

To know that p amounts to knowing that p conforms to a fact or a state of affairs. This account is subject to the following assumptions: a) the speaker has the ability to evaluate the “conformity” to facts or states of affairs; b) the relationship between the proposition p and facts or states of affairs is direct (the proposition p is a representation of facts or states of affairs, in that it stands for the fact or state of affairs in the mind); c) asserting always amounts to uttering a declarative sentence expressing a proposition. Further, the speaker is required to be in a position to evaluate whether or not she indeed knows that p .

An important implication of D1 is that if you utter p and you do not know that p , then your utterance does not satisfy the condition for assertion and hence is not an assertion²⁴. Instances of lying are then automatically excluded from consideration: we either count them

²³ The view that knowledge is a justified true belief is contradicted by Gettier-type examples. But whatever concept of knowledge one may adopt, the argument exposed in what follows is not flawed for its core amounts to presenting cases that can be assertions where the speakers cannot be correctly described as knowing p .

²⁴ But see Pagin (2011): accounts of assertion do not give conditions of being an assertion, but conditions of a correct assertion. But if that is the case, all conditions of success can be violated and the utterance will still be an assertion, so basically we would still need an explanation (a constitutive rule?) to say what assertion is.

as void acts, or devise a special speech act type for them, a sort of “anti-assertion”. There is a further difficulty with D1: in order for it to be accepted in the framework of speech act theory, it should specify how the act takes effect by putting the speaker in a relation to a hearer²⁵. However, D1 does not say anything about the hearer. As the transmission of knowledge in relation to the issue of testimony is at the core of such investigations about assertion, we can assume that an implicit condition on asserting is present in the account that puts a speaker in a relation to a hearer. So how does an assertion according to D1 take effect? There are two possibilities. First, the speaker communicates what she knows, and second, the speaker creates knowledge for the hearer. Let me comment briefly on these. If we assume the first possibility, then the act of assertion is a goal in itself. It consists in vocalizing propositions that are part of our knowledge. The hearer must possess the same ability to evaluate the conformity of *p* to a fact or state of affairs and be able to distinguish assertions (those that satisfy the K condition) from non-assertions (those that do not satisfy the K condition). If we assume the second possibility, then assertion is a knowledge-creating act: the hearer knows that the speaker utters *p* only in conformity with condition K and takes the assertion at face-value because the hearer knows that asserting that *p* is the same as *p* is true.

Both possibilities create contradictions. The way D1 is formulated it aims at giving necessary as well as sufficient conditions for asserting. For knowledge to be a sufficient condition for asserting it means that knowing that *p* should suffice in the performance of the act of assertion. I know that there are cows (I have this knowledge by experience), so this should be sufficient for my asserting that there are cows. My assertion (result) that there are cows seems justified by the knowledge I have, but my asserting (act) that there are cows is not justified by the knowledge that there are cows. It can be reasonably assumed that my interlocutor will be aware of the existence of such animals. So my assertion that there are cows seems to be a self-satisfying goal. This conflicts with the second possibility, for I cannot create knowledge if the hearer already possesses it, but my knowledge that there are cows warrants my assertion that there are cows. Is it possible that my assertion has misfired somehow? How can it, if knowledge is a sufficient condition? This does not fit well with the first possibility either, for it would take purpose out of communication. Self-satisfying

²⁵ Although this requirement is somewhat lost in Searle and Vanderveken (1985) where they say that “statements need not [...] be aimed at any specific hearer, but rather simply involve the speaker’s adopting a certain stance to the propositional content” (1985:180) and that asserting actually does not require an overt public performance, and is perfectly acceptable in silent soliloquy. This contradicts both Searle’s earlier accounts of the act and Austin’s insights on the matter of illocutionary acts.

assertion amounts to saying “I know that p ” and it entails that it is always true. The knowledge condition does not seem to be sufficient.

If we pair this description with speech act theoretic condition on successful assertion – the hearer does not know that p or needs to be reminded of p etc. – then assertion should create knowledge for hearer. How does the hearer sort it all out? If we assume that the speaker asserts always when she knows that p is true, then the hearer must just take in the truth of p at face-value, so the assertion creates knowledge in virtue of being performed. If we assume that the hearer is capable of evaluating the conformity of p to facts or states of affairs, we are obliged to say that assertion creates a conditional knowledge: if p turns out to be true, then the hearer acquires knowledge; on the other hand, if p turns out to be false, then the speaker didn’t make an assertion (it follows from D1 that if you do not know that p then your uttering p is not asserting that p). But as D1 is formulated, for the hearer, every utterance of p must be an assertion, for the hearer knows that the speaker only asserts what she knows to be true and the question of whether or not p really conforms to a state of affairs should never arise. Suppose it arose, though. Taking into account that the decision of whether or not the speaker made an assertion is post-factum (after evaluating whether or not p conforms to facts or states of affairs), what is it that makes the hearer evaluate the utterance for conformity to truth in the first place, knowing that this sort of evaluation is only applicable to acts of asserting? In other words, how do we know that an assertion was made, if we are to evaluate its conformity to facts and/or the speaker’s knowledge in order to see whether or not the assertion was really made?

Let me return to the Holmes example (taken from Weiner 2005). The situation is the following: Holmes and Watson enter the crime scene for the first time just after they have learnt that a crime had occurred. Holmes utters “This is the work of Dr. Moriarty”. According to D1 Holmes is not making an assertion, for there is no way imaginable that he can have knowledge about whether or not it is the case. Nevertheless, this utterance clearly aims at presenting p as conforming to a fact, that is, aims at being true and it unmistakably implicates that so Holmes believes. It is not a guess (for a guess presupposes that Watson knows whether or not p is the case²⁶), nor is it a conjecture, for it would imply that the proposition is not even asserted in sense 1. It does not create knowledge for Watson, but at most, communicates that Holmes entertains the belief that p is the case. It seems, then, that K condition need not be satisfied for an utterance to be an assertion. It is not a necessary condition either.

²⁶ This is a disputable characteristic; either way, the guess is uncalled for in the situation depicted.

A revised description of the assertion then is the following:

D2: One is to present p as conforming to a fact or a state of affairs only if one believes that one knows that p .

An additional condition can be obtained by relying on a slightly different conception of truth: according to the coherence theory, truth is the belief that a proposition is true to the extent that it agrees with other true propositions (reliable beliefs constitute an inter-related system, each element of which entails every other). Let me start by recalling some trivia about belief. Belief is a propositional attitude - that is, belief has content. Belief seems to be less under voluntary control²⁷ in that one cannot intentionally come to hold a belief: in that belief differs from judgment. We may not be aware of holding a particular belief; in fact, we can even explicitly endorse a statement of belief that contradicts the belief we actually hold. Consider lying, then: if my having the belief in question is a condition for my asserting that p , then lying is not asserting from the speaker's standpoint. Imagine that the hearer, however, does not have the possibility to check whether or not p conforms to a fact or a state of affairs, and by extension, whether or not the speaker has the relevant belief. The hearer may still take the speaker to be performing an assertion. Then, having the belief does not seem to be a necessary condition to asserting. It is not sufficient, either, for we fall short of explaining an utterance of "(I believe that) some form of extraterrestrial intelligence is possible" without any links to the situation other than the urge to express a belief. The question of Owens (2006) "Doesn't it make perfect sense that one who believes something should wish to assert it, whether or not they have any further purpose in mind?" makes the point about the inadequacy of B as a norm for asserting: if I was to make an assertion of every belief I come to have, I would be talking almost all the time²⁸. People generally hold a lot of beliefs. But holding a belief does not entail in any way acting on a belief. Our beliefs are not all available for use in a specific speech situation simply because they are not relevant to it. Audi (1994) proposes the following example:

Perception, for instance, is overinformative: it normally gives us, non-propositionally, more information than we need to navigate the world. To step over a protruding paving block, I do not need to believe that it sticks up more than one inch, though this may be evident. So long as the mind is retentive, the extra information is ready to issue in new beliefs as problems or reflections indicate the need for it; and

²⁷ Cf. Audi 1994.

²⁸ This was pointed out to me by P. G. Meyer (personal communication).

because memory of objects and events is analogously overinformative, we can retain much of this non-propositional information in a similarly accessible way. (1994:429)

And also:

Moreover, if the color [of the paper] changed before my eyes, my belief system would tend to follow suit, and my belief that it is white would be replaced by a different one: the process of belief formation responds to changes in experience. Belief formation is discriminative both because it is selective, depending on our needs or interests in the context, and adjustive, varying with relevant changes in its experiential basis. (1994:429)

Even if we applied the same restrictions on the act of assertion, we would still be constrained to assert our contextually selected and stimulus-adjusted belief every time this happens. It is to be hoped that the communicative process is more sophisticated than that.

How do we account for Moore's paradox, if belief is not a valid condition of assertion? What we have to appreciate in Moore-paradox utterances is the unacceptability of "*p*, but I do not believe that *p*." One way out of this situation is to treat belief as an effect of the assertive act (this proposal has the advantage of incorporating instances of lying). In other words, when I assert that *p*, the effect of my act is that I present myself as holding the belief that *p*. In instances of deliberate lying (that is, I do hold the opposite belief to the one I purport to be holding), the point is that I purport to be holding a certain belief. My not holding this belief does not prevent me from asserting that I do.

One obvious objection to this position is the following: how is communication possible at all if we deny any stable relation between intentional states and speech acts? Is not the hearer then under constraint to look out for clues of the speaker's sincerity all the time? First, let me say that I do not deny that speech acts are expressions of intentional states. I am simply saying that in order to succeed in communication, the speaker is not required to have the intentional state associated with a particular speech act. The speaker's speech act certainly portrays her as having a particular intentional state, and if we assume that she displays rational behavior, then her portrayed intentional states should coincide with her actual intentional states, but this does not need to be so. Consider an imaginary situation where I know that my son is in a rebellious stage, where he makes it his job not only to disobey every order I give him, but actually to do the exact opposite thing. I therefore utter "Don't you dare eat the asparagus!" in order to achieve the opposite effect of him eating the asparagus. My portrayed intentional state is that I want him not to touch the asparagus, but my actual intention is to make him eat them. Does that situation display irrational behavior on my part?

It is the portrayed or manifested intentional states that count in speech acts. (Of course, when my son finds out that I tricked him his pattern of response to my orders can change.²⁹)

Second, the demand to be sincere is encoded in SAT as a condition on performing speech acts. Sincerity condition of assertion is that I believe that *p*. So, in lying I violate the sincerity condition and my act is infelicitous, my assertion is thus a professed, but hollow act³⁰. But if I do not have the belief I professed I have, how can the hearer know that I do not have the relevant belief that makes my act infelicitous? My act then will not be infelicitous from the hearer's point of view. There is nothing that guarantees my being sincere to the hearer. There is surely nothing in the utterance itself that is able to encompass such a guarantee. In all, if I, the speaker, am not always in the position to know what sort of beliefs I entertain in my mind, or whether I am aware that I entertain them or not, then the hearer is not in the position to decide upon the matter either.

Let me focus on lying or pretending: I can pretend that I hold a belief by asserting that *p*. Lying is not a separate speech act from assertion; and although I intend to deceive, that is I want the hearer to take me as holding a certain belief, this intention succeeds only if the hearer does not know that I have this intention. It is not a perlocutionary effect either, for it relies on the procedure of asserting to succeed; in other words, I succeed in lying only when the hearer takes my utterance to be the performance of the speech act of assertion. It is not a parasitic use of language, for I speak seriously and literally mean what I say. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that my assertion takes effect in presenting me as holding the belief *p*.

Third, once my assertion takes effect, the hearer takes me as holding the belief that *p* regardless of whether or not I actually hold the said belief. Let me go through every permutation of the situation: a) the hearer finds out that *p* is true; b) the hearer finds out that *p* is false; c) the hearer finds out that I do not believe *p*; d) the hearer finds out that I believe *p*. As a) and d) are clear (in the former situation the hearer takes me to be holding a true belief and I did not succeed in lying for I mistakenly assumed that my professed belief is false, in the latter situation I am not clear about my own beliefs or I did not succeed in communicating exactly what I wanted), I turn to b) and c). If situation b) arises, then the hearer can point out to me that what I believe is not correct (can categorize that belief of mine as false, can correct some piece of knowledge of hers etc.). If situation c) arises, the hearer can rightly accuse me

²⁹ My utterance of "Don't you dare eat the asparagus" may not qualify as a serious utterance in Searle's sense. If directives are attempts to get the hearer to do A, then it is inconsistent for me to issue a directive and not intend to make the hearer do A. But, in order for my son to disobey the order I gave him, he must believe that I am serious and sincere, that is, that I really want him not to touch the asparagus.

³⁰ This is Austin's terminology. Searle would say that my act is successful but defective.

of lying, can never speak to me again, can ruin my reputation etc. Notice that in all four cases the question of whether or not I actually performed an illocutionary act of assertion never arises. It can be argued that sincerity (or rather insincerity) does not succeed in making the illocutionary act infelicitous. Sincerity, then, appears to be a self-imposed criterion for communication that does not need to hold, and is flouted at one's own risk. It certainly does not appear as if my lack of the appropriate belief in asserting that *p* prevents me from communicating, or prevents the hearer from understanding what I am saying.

It seems that B condition cannot be retained in the description of assertion. We are left with the following:

D3: To assert is to present *p* as conforming to a fact or a state of affairs.

This description does not even succeed in defining instances of assertion in sense 1. The so-called truth-claim is found in utterances that serve to perform a whole range of other acts: account, accuse, acknowledge, admit, claim, assent etc. Even conjecturing, guessing and hypothesizing are (somewhat cautious) truth-claims. If, nonetheless, we want to keep D3 as a description of the act of assertion, we are faced with the following problem: it would seem, then, that the class of representatives contains a 'subatomic' (to borrow a term from Hare) act that is invariably found in every act of the class of representatives. It even may raise the question of whether or not we can actually find instances of this 'subatomic' act in data. All other acts of this class would be assertions plus something else. Whereas this is not such a big problem in itself (although it may raise the legitimate question whether or not assertion satisfies the criterion for being an illocutionary act at all, but I will consider such a question in the following chapter) it certainly raises another legitimate question: seeing that no other class of illocutionary acts does possess such a 'subatomic' act, how do we account for this taxonomic oddity³¹?

Condition (T) implies that truth is something a speaker aims at in asserting. The fact-stating approach to assertions would then exclude all evaluative judgments that are not about a fact. As Pagin rightly points out (2007), the assertion of "Bardot is good" is neither true nor false, for there is no objective fact in existence that would be the referent of the description given. One way out of it would be to say that utterances like "Bardot is good" are actually performances of another illocutionary act type, say judgments. But this could further raise the question about the validity of such a distinction on the basis of some obscure difference of

³¹ This question is reserved for chapter 4.

predicative nature. It is evident that “Bardot is good” and “Bardot is a French actress” have something in common besides the fact that both utterances contain propositions. Couldn’t it be that both utterances can be produced in a context where the hearer will take them to be the expressions of the relevant beliefs?

To sum up, neither of the descriptions D1, D2 and D3 seems to be adequate to account for the illocutionary act of assertion. The inadequacy of these descriptions does not mean that we are to exclude truth from consideration. But it appears that truth does not exhaust what the act of asserting is about. Or in a stronger version, truth is not in the scope of speech act theoretic preoccupations. It is but a way of describing the utterance-product of the performance of this act that is even not a characteristic feature, as other acts have that dimension to a various extent. In other words, the act of assertion has nothing to do with truth; the resultant utterance can be evaluated as to its conformity to facts, but this evaluation does not concern the act of asserting, only the content that is asserted. Further, the adoption of either D1 or D2 or D3 commits the Declarative fallacy (as Belnap 1990 uses the term): it promotes and presupposes the idea that assertions are somewhat primary to all other speech acts. This is deeply infelicitous for any researcher in speech act theory³². Further, I believe that any association of the speech act of assertion with the declarative sentence expressing a proposition not only commits the Declarative fallacy, but actually does not succeed in accounting adequately for data.

All of the considerations above presuppose that the content of the utterance (the verbalized proposition) coincides with the belief that the audience takes the speaker to be committed to. In other words, that the public meaning of the words used in making the assertion is the verbatim expression of the content of the belief. Although there is nothing wrong with this assumption in itself, it does pose some restrictions on the way the act can be performed. It would lay down the requirement for the relevant belief to be verbalized³³. Let us consider several counter-examples to this claim. Consider the following statements:

³² Belnap (1990:4) actually argues that speech act theory commits the Declarative fallacy from the beginning: Searle’s division $F(p)$ presupposes a supremacy of propositions and thus commits the Declarative fallacy. I will return to this point later.

³³ It would follow from this that an indirect assertion is not possible. There is further discrepancy between illocutionary acts: some of them can be performed indirectly, others cannot. The mechanism that is supposed to underlie the generation of indirection itself cannot operate such restrictions. However, it is my belief that the phenomenon that goes under the name ‘indirect speech acts’ is improper in the following way: the content and form of the utterance is taken to have supremacy over whatever illocutionary intention the speaker might have in performing them. The act itself cannot be indirect; the content may not express verbatim the intentional state or the belief that is intended to come across in the performance itself. The full argument on this issue will wait until chapter 11. For the moment I am using the conceptual grid of Searle’s theory.

- (11) In the face of war, you believe there can be peace.
- (12) In the face of despair, you believe there can be hope.
- (13) In the face of a politics that's shut you out, that's told you to settle, that's divided us for too long, you believe we can be one people, reaching for what's possible, building that more perfect union.³⁴

In order for these assertions to make sense whatsoever, given the “No remark without remarkableness” condition, there must be more to the utterances than their content. What makes the act of asserting them complete is their taking effect as beliefs that the speaker also believes what his audience believes in. There is something circular and counterintuitive in the assumption that the speaker gets his actual assertion across by asserting something infelicitously defective, that is telling the audience something they are supposed to know. Then I propose that in assigning a particular force to an utterance we keep the two things separate in our consideration: first, the illocutionary act that is thereby being performed, and second, the wording of the utterance itself. What is the exact nature of the relationship between the public content of the utterance and the content of the act is yet to be determined. There is a lot to be said about the speaker’s desire to convey something more by the specific wording of his utterance and these are from the realm of conversational implicature. In these three examples we can easily infer that the speaker wants the audience to pair the illocutionary act taking hold as the belief “I believe in these things” and the wording “You believe in these things” the idea that the speaker seeks to affirm closeness between himself and his audience as having the same aspirations and beliefs. The establishment of common ground is important for the further purpose of his address. This implicature is implicitly confirmed in other parts of the speech. It is then plausible to assume that a rush assumption that an utterance must be the verbatim expression of the belief we intend our audience to take us as being committed to gives an *ad hoc* flavor to the entire analysis. We can take the speaker to be asserting his belief that he is aware of the beliefs of the audience, but that does not fit well with the contextual impact of his illocution, and is unlikely. It does seem more likely when paired with the belief that he himself shares those beliefs³⁵.

³⁴ The three examples come from Barack Obama’s speech announcing his candidacy for president.

³⁵ This may fall into the classic indirect speech act schema of Searle’s: the audience took the utterance for what it literally is: an assertion that the speaker is aware of the audience’s beliefs, and that in order to justify the relevance of this conversational move, proceeded to infer the primary assertion achieved via the secondary assertion, namely that the speaker shares this belief. It is not very clear, though, why should the speaker opt for such an oblique way to achieve his goal. The indirect acts doctrine does not provide us with answers to this question.

I will use these examples to make yet another point: the propositions expressed in the utterance of (10), namely that you believe p in the face of war and that there can be peace, are truth-evaluable in the sense that we know under what conditions they are true. We cannot reasonably assume that we are in a position to check whether or not these conditions obtain. It is reasonably supposed that we would be inclined to anticipate that if we had the actual possibility to check whether or not said conditions obtained, we would find out that these propositions are true. But that an illocutionary act of assertion has been performed in the utterance of these sentences expressing these propositions is perceived regardless of the truth or falsity of the propositions involved. We are, as it is, not in a position to evaluate the truth of the propositions, but nonetheless we perceive that an assertion has been made. We ascribe the relevant belief to the speaker and hold him committed³⁶ to the said belief regardless of the truth or falsity of these propositions.

1.2. Characterizing assertions: a case of the assertion fallacy

It is very difficult to pinpoint Searle's view on assertion (throughout most of his writings he uses assertion interchangeably with statement, but I will use only assertion for the sake of clarity), as in different writings he has different things to say about it. This section is dedicated to disentangling this issue³⁷.

According to Searle, speaking a language is performing speech acts in accordance with certain rules (Searle 1969:16)³⁸. The only detailed account of assertion is presented as a set of felicity conditions governing the use of the illocutionary force indicating devices of asserting in the following terms:

1. Propositional content condition: any proposition p .
2. Preparatory condition: A. S has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of p . B. It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) p .
3. Sincerity condition: S believes p .
4. Essential condition: counts as an undertaking to the effect that p represents an actual state

³⁶ Questions of credibility, authority, fairness and academic integrity are really of a different kind and are of social interest rather than of speech act theoretic interest. Some comments on these matters will be offered in chapter 10.

³⁷ I use the following works as a basis for the discussion in this section: Searle 1968, 1969, 1971, 1975, 1976, 1983, Searle and Vanderveken 1985. The unifying feature is that all of these works are explicitly claimed to form integral parts of the theory of Speech acts as presented in 1969 and 1979. 1985 is an attempt to formalize the said theory.

³⁸ This will be referred to as his thesis in later chapters.

of affairs.

The extended version of the analysis reads as follows (1969):

1. Normal input and output conditions obtain.
2. S expresses the proposition that p in the utterance of T.
3. There is no restriction on the propositional content, or p is any proposition.
4. S has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of p .
5. It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) p .
(Or else, no remark without remarkableness, 1969:144)
6. S believes p .
7. S intends that the utterance of T will commit him to the truth of p .
8. S intends (i-1) to produce in H the knowledge (K) that the utterance of T is to count as undertaking to the effect that p represents an actual state of affairs. S intends to produce K by means of the recognition of i-1, and he intends i-1 to be recognized in virtue of (by means of) H's knowledge of the meaning of T.
9. The semantical rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered if and only if conditions 1-8 obtain.

To this, we add the following additional remarks:

10. Assertion as act is different from assertion as result in that it is the latter that is evaluable in terms of truth and falsity, not the act itself. (1968)
11. Statements are not by definition attempts to produce perlocutionary effects in hearers. (The illocutionary effect is the essential condition) (1976)
12. Statements have the word-to-world direction of fit. (1976)
13. Statements do not require an extra-linguistic institution for their performance. (1976)
14. The truth-falsity dimension of assessment is typical and characteristic of the class of representatives. (1976)
15. "Statements need not [...] be aimed at any specific hearer, but rather simply involve the speaker's adopting a certain stance to the propositional content" (1985:180)
16. "[W]e need to distinguish those acts that require an overt public performance from those that can be performed in silent soliloquy. Declaring war and resigning from office require a public performance, conjecturing and asserting do not." (1985:180)

Let me present two made-up examples to illustrate the various accounts: imagine a doctoral student deep in reading up on the literature, who says to herself (in silent soliloquy):

(14) There are a lot of articles on the speech act of assertion.

Imagine the same doctoral student saying in front of an introductory class in pragmatics:

(15) There are a lot of articles on the speech act of assertion.

Now, in order to analyze these speech acts, we shall see whether they satisfy the conditions stated above. The propositional content condition seems to be satisfied: both utterances contain a proposition (condition 3), such that the act has the word-to-world direction of fit (condition 12). Condition 4 is satisfied for it is reasonably assumed that the speaker has first-hand evidence for the truth of the proposition. Condition 6 is very unstable: we do not know whether or not the speaker actually believes *p*; we can only assume that it is the case. Condition 7 is not very clear either: we are not strictly speaking committed to the truth (that would make us responsible for the truth of our assertions); in order for us to be committed to the truth, we must know what the truth is. Reasons and evidence can produce a more or less stable belief, so a more cautious formulation would be that we are committed to the truth or correctness of the belief that *p*. So far, so good. Now according to the essential condition (condition 8), (15) is an assertion, but (14) is not. Condition 1 is not applicable in the case of utterance (14), for there can be no input-output conditions in silent soliloquy. Condition 15 seems to be satisfied for both (14) and (15), but as it is, it contradicts the essential condition (condition 8). The case of utterance (14) does not satisfy conditions 2 and 5 (5 being the preparatory condition for the act of assertion, and 2 following from the Axiom 1 of linguistic conventions; I will return to that). Let me point out something else: the uneasy feeling about qualifying (14) as a speech act in the first place stems from the fact that as the situation is depicted there is no evidence for its performance whatsoever. The problem is not in the absence of any verbal utterance in the performance, but in the absence of any recipient of the act. In other words, in (14) the essential condition for asserting does not obtain, so it is not an assertion. But (14) satisfies the criteria for asserting according to conditions 15 and 16. If we expect the later account of Searle and Vanderveken to provide us with an explanation about the essential condition for asserting being simply dropped out, we run the risk of being disappointed. It is clear that the conditions stated above yield two contradictory accounts of the act of assertion. I will summarize both accounts below:

Account 1 (traditional):

- 1) Normal input and output conditions obtain.
- 2) Propositional content condition: any proposition *p*.
- 3) Preparatory condition: A. S has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of *p*. B. It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) *p*.
- 4) Sincerity condition: S believes *p*.
- 5) Essential condition: counts as an undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs.
 - 5.1. S intends that the utterance of T will commit him to the truth of *p*.
 - 5.2. S intends (i-1) to produce in H the knowledge (K) that the utterance of T is to count as undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs. S intends to produce K by means of the recognition of i-1, and he intends i-1 to be recognized in virtue of (by means of) H's knowledge of the meaning of T.
6. The semantical rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered if and only if conditions 1-8 obtain.

Account 2 (derivational or the minimal conception of assertion):

- 1) Propositional content condition: any proposition *p*.
- 2) Preparatory condition: A. S has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of *p*.
- 3) Sincerity condition: S believes *p*.
- 4) Essential condition: the speaker's adopting a certain stance to the propositional content.
- 5) Does not require a public performance.

Account 2 lacks not only any reliance on linguistic conventions³⁹ (that bring about the performance of illocutionary acts), but also is robbed of intention of any kind (intention to communicate, intention to achieve effects, illocutionary as well as perlocutionary); those are meant to be two of the necessary conditions applicable to performing illocutionary acts, the first will be referred to as Axiom 1 and the second exemplifies the communicative process⁴⁰.

³⁹ But see chapter 3 for a later development in Searle's theory.

⁴⁰ The Axiom 1 takes the form: "The conditions of success for the performance of the act are – except for the general conditions on any kind of linguistic communication [those are the input-output conditions] – a function of the meaning of the sentence" (1968:409). The intention component Searle borrows from Grice and is explained thus: "In speaking I attempt to communicate certain things to my hearer by getting him to recognize

This is a rather big leap from the early formulation, according to which “the essential condition [of assertion] has to do with the fact that the utterance is an attempt to inform the hearer and convince him of its truth” (1971:53), and even “the essential condition [of assertion] has to do with the fact that the proposition is presented as representing an actual state of affairs” (1969:64). The uptake that is required for any successful performance of an illocutionary act is no longer a condition of success according to Account 2. The act need not be directed at anybody. Illocutionary acts no longer need communication.

Account 1 has weaknesses of a somewhat different nature. In Searle’s view the conditions on speech acts should give us insight into what is required for an act to be successful and specify the procedure that has to be followed in the performance of the act in a set of constitutive rules. But at closer scrutiny, the conditions in Account 1 fail to provide the necessary restrictions for the performance of the act of assertion. Such as they are stated, they satisfy any declarative sentence, but do not constrain in any way conditions for the act of asserting. Consider the following set of examples:

- (16) We all made this journey for a reason.
- (17) I am Moses.
- (18) I want to get a cup of coffee first.
- (19) I need you here.
- (20) I will do whatever is in my power to prevent that.
- (21) The meeting is open.

These sentences all satisfy the criterion for assertion in that they contain a proposition p , they can be uttered by a potential speaker such as having evidence or reason for p , believing p , and p looks like a representation of an actual state of affairs. The input-output conditions can be understood as conditions for well-formedness of sentences. There is so much nothing significant in such a description of the act of assertion that some authors ascribe sentences like “I declare war” and “I order you to go” to being assertions⁴¹ as well as a declaration and a directive. The intention to get the hearer to recognize the intention to communicate is reduced to the hearer’s knowledge of the linguistic conventions that make

my intention to communicate just those things. I achieve the intended effect on the hearer by getting him to recognize my intention to achieve that effect, and as soon as the hearer recognizes what it is my intention to achieve, it is in general achieved.” (1969:43)

⁴¹ Récanati 1987 and Bach and Harnish 1979 are prominent examples. The self-referential character of explicit performatives drives the point home, for it has been claimed that we perform an act by saying (to be equated with stating) that we do. Considering “say” as a basic illocutionary verb also contributes to such a view (also, see chapter 8).

these sentences have meaning in the first place. And, given that the act is a function of the meaning, then to know the meaning amounts to knowing the act. The only way out of this perfect illustration of the Declarative fallacy is in supplying that the act is performed in the utterance of the sentence (so we would expect the utterance to contain some aspect that the sentence does not possess, something other than providing reference in the broad sense, like an intention to perform an act); but then we are told that “[a distinction between the literal meaning of the sentence and the intended force of its utterance] has no special relevance to the general theory of illocutionary forces, because the intended illocutionary force is only one of the aspects (sense and reference are the others) in which intended speaker meaning may go beyond literal sentence meaning” (Searle 1968:413).

This account results in both the Declarative and the Assertion fallacies: the Declarative fallacy for the stress on proposition which, despite the desire for it to be force-neutral, still carries unmistakable logical traits, the Assertion fallacy for the very introduction of Axiom 1 that reduces illocutionary force to a function of the meaning of sentences, and thus, a property of the sentence. What is left of the accounts? The propositional content condition is redundant in the conditions for asserting, as long as it consists in a meaningful utterance, which is already vouched for by the input-output conditions. The truth - falsity is a category applicable to propositions, so it must be completely outside the scope of the act of assertion itself. The preparatory condition is divided into two parts: 1) evidence of p being true, and 2) non-obviousness of p . What kind of evidence can count as sufficient for our knowing that p is true? Does a justified true belief count as evidence? Does our judgment count as evidence? If Sherlock Holmes asserts “This is the work of Dr. Moriarty” on a hunch, can we count his hunch as evidence for the truth of the proposition? The non-obviousness part can concern either informativity or salience; and those can actually be plausible candidates for delimiting the procedure or the effect of assertion. The sincerity condition requires that the purported belief coincide with the actual belief of the speaker. It reposes on a vague rationality assumption on human behavior, but it can be disregarded, for in a communicative situation the purported belief matters, not the actual belief. Any consequences the act may have stem from the purported belief⁴² only. The essential condition must exemplify the actual procedure and a description of what the act consists of. As the above examples show, the essential condition is utterly insufficient for delimiting assertion from any other illocutionary act on the

⁴² Hearers tend to assess speech acts by asking questions such as “did S mean that”, “was S sincere”, but such questions have implications on the overall conversational setting, not exclusively on the particular illocutionary act.

basis of the act being derived from the sentence meaning. It reduces the act of assertion to something very basic and insignificant to the point that it no longer “does” anything.

The conditions are supposed to define a felicitous assertion, so failure to comply with any of them would result in an infelicitous assertion. The propositional content condition is not restrictive in any way, so much so that it allows “I bequeath my watch to my brother” as a candidate for the act of assertion (note that as it is spelled out, the propositional content condition does not contain mention of direction of fit; direction of fit is by no means a property of the proposition). The preparatory condition cannot provide enough ground to separate assertion from other types of illocutionary acts of the same class (consider conjecturing or hypothesizing – both can be described in terms of the same preparatory condition, as they both involve some reason or evidence for proposing *p* as a true proposition⁴³; but how that comes off in a conversational situation is a very puzzling question indeed). Further, it subsumes both the evidence for the content of the proposition expressed and motive for the performance of the act (which are not to be equated). My having evidence for *p* is relevant if the effect I seek is to convince my hearer of the truth of *p* (as stated in 1971). It is then better spelled as a part of the propositional content condition: any proposition *p* such as the speaker has evidence or reasons for. Additionally then, in order for me to assert this proposition so restricted, it must be non-obvious for the hearer. Such as it is this condition is too vague to be of any practical use and, incidentally, it tends to categorize utterances such as (16) and (17) as defective assertions, which they most certainly are not. The sincerity condition is supposed to flaw my act, but a strong case can be made against including sincerity as a condition on illocutionary acts. It is intuitively true that specific illocutionary acts are associated with specific mental (or intentional) states; assertion is associated with belief, order is associated with desire, promises are associated with commitment etc. But the lack of the correspondent mental state cannot make the act void. I can successfully and non-defectively assert with the intention to lie; I can order my son not to touch the asparagus with the intention to make him eat them; I can promise to come and see you on Monday even though I do not want to come and have the excuse ready; and I can apologize to a perfect stranger for having stepped on his foot in a crowded bus as an automatic culturally accepted ritual move while not feeling at all sorry about it because I do not feel responsible since it is hard to keep one’s balance in a rocking crowded bus. Apologizing to a stranger for an (inadvertent) inconvenience is part of “being civil”. It is then purely ritualistic. It does not

⁴³ This problem will be taken up in chapters 2 and 8.

exclude my feeling genuinely sorry for my stepping on their foot, but does not require me to feel sorry either. These acts do seem socially conditioned in a way, for they have a steady pattern in their taking effect. But the depicted acts are certainly neither infelicitous nor void.

Most alarmingly, Account 1 does not seem to be distinct from the logical positivism trend in philosophy (so fiercely opposed by Austin as to motivate the study of performative versus constative utterances in the first place), as it makes use of the same categories of concepts. The preparatory condition corresponds to condition K, the sincerity condition is in effect the B condition and the essential condition (counts as an undertaking that p represents an actual state of affairs) is in fact the T condition. It is safe to assume that the account is subject to the same weaknesses. In other words, Account 1 amounts to the following: an assertion must satisfy the following conditions: any proposition p warranted by K and B counts as T. As I have argued in the first section of this chapter, this is not a satisfying account of the act of asserting.

It seems that from all of the conditions stated above, there are only two that deserve attention: the notion of illocutionary effect and the second part of the preparatory condition, or the non-obviousness condition, which in a careful wording could provide some basis for discussion. I will turn to them in what remains of this section.

There are several principles that underlie Searle's discussion of illocutionary acts, but here I will state the most relevant for the discussion:

Axiom 1: The conditions of success for the performance of the act are – except for the general conditions on any kind of linguistic communication [those are the input-output conditions] – a function of the meaning of the sentence. (Searle 1968)

Axiom 2: Speech acts are minimal units of linguistic communication. (Searle 1969:16)

Illocutionary Effect (IE): Illocutionary effect is conventionally associated with the meaning of the items uttered by the speaker. (Searle 1969)

Axiom 2 is one of the basic assumptions that underlie the initial discussion of illocutionary acts. Combining Axiom 1 and IE we arrive at a description of what it is to perform an illocutionary act: the act is successfully performed when the speaker utters a meaningful sentence to which the illocutionary effect of the act is conventionally associated. Further, as illocutionary acts are minimal units of linguistic communication, they are constrained by further conditions, the input-output conditions. In Searle's own words (Searle 1968:409), those are to be equated with Austin's notion of uptake. I want to argue that as far

as this argument goes, it is inconsistent with Austin's idea of uptake despite Searle's claim that it is equal.

Uptake is defined by Austin as the taking of effect in an audience. Austin says in this respect: "I cannot be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense" (1962:115-6). And leaving no doubt whatsoever as to the way we are to understand the "taking" in a "certain sense", he continues "An effect must be achieved on the audience if the illocutionary act is to be carried out" (1962:116). This effect is conventional in that it is invariably present in illocutionary acts. Further, this effect does not consist solely in the audience's understanding of the meaning of the utterance. It has to do with bringing about changes or producing consequences that are not in any sense natural changes in the natural state of events. So, Austin's conditions of success are rooted in the act's taking effect (which is conventional) and the audience's uptake (that is, the understanding of both the meaning of the utterance and the illocutionary act thereby performed which is, roughly, the conventional effect of the act). Searle's input-output conditions are restricted to the linguistic competence (knowing and understanding a language) that in turn secure the performance of the illocutionary act which in fact is postulated to be the function of the meaning of a sentence. The IE is of no help, for it is a reiteration of the Axiom 1, tying the effects of an illocutionary act to the meaning of linguistic expressions. In other words, the meaning of linguistic expressions has a conventionally associated illocutionary effect, "it consists simply in the hearer understanding the utterance of the speaker" (1969:47). In this claim alone Searle commits the assertion fallacy that he warns about, or to spell it out more clearly, he confuses the issuing of the content of the sentence with conditions of performing an act and betrays a somewhat misconstrued reading of Austin's idea.

The only time when Searle raises doubt about the proposed description of IE is in 1971:

Strictly speaking this condition [condition 8 – M.C.] could be formulated as part of the condition (1), but it is of enough philosophical interest to be worth stating separately. I find it troublesome for the following reason. If my original objection to Grice is really valid, then surely, one might say, all these iterated intentions are superfluous; all that is necessary is that the speaker should seriously utter a sentence. The production of all these effects is simply a consequence of the hearer's knowledge of what the sentence means, which in turn is a consequence of his knowledge of the language, which is assumed by the speaker at the outset. I think the correct reply to this objection is that condition (8) explicates what it is for the speaker to 'seriously' utter a sentence, i.e. to utter it and mean it, but I am not completely confident about either the force of the objection or of the reply. (1971:51)

Whatever the actual role of reiterated intentions in communication, with or without them, according to Searle's description the illocutionary act comes off in the same manner, and that is: the speaker seriously utters a sentence (with or without iterated intentions); the sentence has a conventionally associated illocutionary effect as a function of its meaning; so in 'seriously' uttering the sentence the speaker performs the illocutionary act, whose effect is a consequence of the meaning of the sentence, and this in perfect accordance with Axiom 1. Ironically, this description has an unforeseen consequence: as long as the speaker utters sentences seriously, every illocutionary act thereby performed is felicitous. In other words, the propositional content, sincerity, preparatory and essential conditions necessarily obtain in the serious utterance of a sentence.

Illocutionary effect⁴⁴ is then a void notion: it can be glossed as the hearer's understanding of the meaning of the sentence uttered by the speaker. Incidentally, this is what Austin called 'securing of uptake', which is a condition for the successful performance of illocutionary acts, and thus, a condition for the implementation of the illocutionary effect. An obvious objection to Searle's notion of illocutionary effect will go along the lines of his objection to Austin's locutionary vs. illocutionary act distinction: if the correct description of the meaning of the sentence includes the illocutionary act (which, according to Axiom 1, is a function of the meaning of the sentence), do we need another label to name something that we know as "meaning of the sentence"? It will be enlightening to look into what Searle has to say on the matter of meaning.

What is the difference between *just* uttering sounds or making marks and performing an illocutionary act? One difference is that the sounds or marks one makes in the performance of an illocutionary act are characteristically said to *have meaning*, and a second related difference is that one is characteristically said to *mean something* by the utterance of those sounds or marks. (1969:42, emphasis in the original)

It seems that when Searle uses 'meaning' he means 'speaker-meaning'. But then he says:

Characteristically, when one speaks one means something by what one says; and what one says, the string of sounds that one emits, is characteristically said to have a meaning. (1969:42-3)

It seems that utterance meaning is the speaker-meaning. Still further:

The reason why we are unable to do this [say "it's cold here" and mean "it's warm here" – M.C.] without further stage setting is that what we can mean is *at least sometimes* a function of what we are

⁴⁴ It does not follow that the notion is completely devoid of interest. It does follow, however, that Searle's theory does not provide an adequate frame for it to be explained.

saying. Meaning is more than a matter of intention, it is also *at least sometimes* a matter of convention. (1969:45, my emphasis⁴⁵)

It is not clear which meaning is at issue in this paragraph, but it hardly matters anymore, since, as we have seen, speaker-meaning and utterance meaning are equated earlier in the discussion. The bridge between the speaker's and the hearer's side is provided by language. It goes as follows: the speaker and the hearer share a language; understanding a sentence is knowing its meaning; the meaning of the sentence is determined by rules, and those rules specify both conditions of utterance of the sentence and also what the utterance counts as, in accordance with Axiom 1 (1969:48); add to that Gricean reflexive intentions and we have the recipe for performing illocutionary acts. So what this bridge procedure achieves is spelled as follows:

Meaning Claim (MC): Sentence meaning determines both utterance meaning and speaker-meaning.

Whatever cases fall outside of the scope of MC are considered of “no special relevance to the general theory of illocutionary forces” (1968:413). And further, we may conclude that a sound theory of illocutionary acts is no different from a theory of meaning of sentences⁴⁶. This discussion casts serious doubt on the validity of Searle's account of assertion, and by extension, on the validity of his account of illocutionary acts.

If we assume that Axiom 1 is wrong, the question remains as to know what the relation between utterance content and act content is and what the relation between the utterance and the act is. Intuitively, there must be a relation between these pairs of concepts. Also, intuitively, the relation cannot be punctual. We can be in a position to attempt to answer this question when we have delimited what exactly counts as an illocutionary act and cleared up the boundaries between different kinds of meanings⁴⁷.

I turn now to the non-obviousness condition, which, I believe, has some potential to salvage Searle's account. This condition at least could be extended to other types of illocutionary acts. There are two distinct dimensions in the second part of the preparatory

⁴⁵ The careful wording of these claims makes it difficult to predict the form of the illocutionary act understanding procedure and it can in part justify the use of the expression “literal meaning”. Such an expression is redundant according to MC. If we understand a sentence at all, we thereby understand both the rules of its use and the illocutionary act that is thereby performed. Thus meaning cannot but be literal.

⁴⁶ Searle says so explicitly (1969:18).

⁴⁷ A tentative answer to the latter question will be offered in Part II, chapter 8. Meanwhile, we will assume certain dividing boundaries, but we will not attempt to argue for them. As to the former question, Searle does not provide an answer.

condition: first, informativity, and second, salience. Both dimensions are recipient-specific, speaker-specific and context-specific, that is, for a given speaker S and a hearer H in a context C, the act of assertion A can be evaluated as informative (or salient) for S, but not for H, informative (or salient) for H, but not for S, or for both (logically, the second situation should never arise if it really is a valid condition for asserting that S considers A to be informative (or salient); but then, if there is no universal criterion for informativity (or salience), we allow for such a situation). There is a clear difference in the assessment of the act depending on the standpoint of the speaker and that of the hearer. Which standpoint will yield the best results for an analyst is yet to be established.

The non-obviousness condition can be interpreted as an attempt to provide a motivation or a reason for an act. Thus, requesting is motivated by the need to elicit a deed, response or whatnot, since it is not obvious for both participants that the hearer will do so in the normal course of events or on his own accord (Searle 1969:66-7). The same condition applies to asserting, questioning, advising, warning and promising. Oddly, ritual acts of thanking, greeting, congratulating, and apologizing do not need a “reason” to be performed; or rather they are self-sufficient in this respect. We thank to thank, we congratulate to congratulate, etc. but it feels weird to say that we order to order. We usually order to get something done. So, why do we assert? A natural response will be that we assert to inform, to give an opinion, to pass judgment. The non-obviousness condition alone cannot operate the necessary distinctions between different types of illocutionary acts. It seems that in order to use this condition in any description of illocutionary acts, we need to take into consideration the recipient and features of context (both notions receive hardly any attention in Searle’s theory, due mainly to the thesis that the production of illocutionary acts is a rule-governed activity, so communication can be exhaustively accounted for by reconstructing these rules⁴⁸, with the assumption that a certain context or appropriate circumstances already obtain).

Needless to say, the non-obviousness condition and the condition that the speaker is in possession of evidence are rendered void when applied to the second account of the act. Some additional observations can be gathered from the following paragraph:

[...] it⁴⁹ does not have the defect that we confuse the intention to make a statement with the intention to make a true statement, or the intention to make a statement with the intention to produce certain effects such as belief or conviction on our audience. (Searle 1983:168)

⁴⁸ Also, see Streeck 1980.

⁴⁹ The account of illocutionary acts separating the intention to represent from the intention to communicate.

The essence of statement making is the representing something as being the case, not communicating one's representation to one's hearers. (Searle 1983:169)

This succinct description of the essence of statement-making entails that there is a special meaning intention that I, the speaker, wish to realize. This intention is different from the intention to make the hearer believe that the state of affairs obtains and it is different from the intention to speak the truth. This pursuit of illocutionary purity produces a puzzled question instead: how the intention to speak the truth is different from the intention of representing something as being the case? The representing intention in Searle's terms produces a meaningful sentence /utterance, in other words, one speaks. To represent something as being the case is to say it exists. To say it exists is to claim it is true. Then, the intricate terminology does not succeed in differentiating the two intentions, nor does it succeed in clarifying why these have to be differentiated. The intention to produce (clearly perlocutionary) effects on one's audience is hardly worth commenting upon: whether or not one of my intentions in performing the act is convince the hearer of its truth, it is not something that makes up the act of asserting itself. But if asserting is claiming that something is true, the making of this claim surely makes sense only in relation to a hearer.

We are now in a position to summarize the main ideas presented up to this point. First, truth, belief and knowledge are not adequate conditions in restricting the performance of the illocutionary act of assertion, and cannot be felicitously used to describe the nature of assertion. Searle's original notion of assertion contains all three of these notions and thus suffers from the same weaknesses. But later writings provide two contradictory definitions of assertion to a point where it is not clear what concept of illocutionary act it is supposed to conform to. In order to disentangle this issue, we must turn to the concept of illocutionary act (and the related concept of illocutionary force) in order to evaluate the different descriptions of the act of assertion presented by Searle in his writings. The problem is that there is no definition available in the writings of Searle of what an illocutionary act is, and what illocutionary force is. The task of the following chapters will be reconstructing the missing definition from his writings.

In order to sketch the outlines of the phenomenon Austin was originally in pursuit of, I suggest the following pre-theoretical ideas. It is safe to assume that first, speech acts have some external manifestation (there are assertions performed in the uttering of a sentence, there are assertions that are performed in the uttering of non-sentential units⁵⁰, there is in principle

⁵⁰ Stainton 1995.

the possibility to perform assertion in some other fashion); second, the external manifestation needs not be conventional because it is interpreted in certain circumstances (that is, the means of performing the act need not be conventional; this should not be confused with the fact that the devices themselves can be subject to a convention of some kind); third, the external manifestation must have a target (an audience) in order to come to exist and be accordingly interpreted; fourth, speech acts create non-natural effects (or take effect in some way, be it only in virtue of their being understood by an audience).

Chapter 2: Linguistic form as a substitute for act?

At the end of the previous chapter I proposed the following ideas about illocutionary acts as intuitively plausible: that acts have some external manifestation, that they have a target and that they take effect. These fragmentary and tentative conjectures are necessary because of the lack of a definition of illocutionary acts. Searle, in his program of finding out what illocutionary acts are, concentrated on the external manifestation of acts; further, he concentrated on full-blown explicit external manifestations, proposing some observations and generalizations about the very nature of illocutionary acts based on the formal properties of the sentences the utterance of which constitutes the external manifestation of the acts in question. The danger of such an approach can be articulated in two ways: that the analyst can mistake features of the sentence that make it unambiguous for the factors that determine that its utterance has the force it has (Stampe 1975:2), or that the analyst conflates language and language use in the desire to find features in the formal properties of sentences that unambiguously show what this sentence can be uttered to do (Bierwisch 1980:2). In this chapter I will seek to find whether we can accept a full correspondence between the act and its content on the one hand and the two indicators in the structure of the sentence on the other. I wish to argue that a full correspondence is not acceptable for several reasons: first, a correspondence of this kind reduces illocutionary force to an aspect of meaning; second, it relies on a very peculiar notion of proposition, prone to semantic paradoxes; third, it is not clear what exactly illocutionary force indicators are and what their scope of work is.

2.1. The F(p) division: some remarks

It would seem that the F(p) division is among the least controversial propositions that Searle makes in his 1969 exposition. Such as it is stated it seems to be an elegant idealization that adequately expresses our intuitions about what exactly is the common element in the sentences “Sam smokes habitually”, “Would that Sam smoked habitually” and “Does Sam smoke habitually”, and the equally incontrovertible intuition that all of them can be used to perform different illocutionary acts. It is a very appealing idealization. It amounts to saying that the same proposition can be expressed with various propositional attitudes (illocutionary forces).

The variable F has as its values illocutionary force indicating devices⁵¹; p takes expressions for propositions (Searle 1969:31). This very distinction comes in another variety: $F(n)$, where n is replaceable by referring expressions, to accommodate acts such as “Hurrah for Manchester United” or “Down with Caesar”. This generalization is based on the observation that the same content can be used to perform a wide range of illocutionary acts, so it is reasonable to assume a distinction between the illocutionary act and its content. There are, however, two classes of acts in Searle’s own taxonomy that do not fit this idealization: expressives and declarations. To illustrate this point, I will assume that the listed verbs name illocutionary acts, and that these indeed are illocutionary acts is supported by the fact that they possess the characteristics listed above⁵².

Consider expressives: they require (at least in explicit performative formulas) a gerundive transformation in the verb in the lower sentence node (Searle 1979:23) because these acts do not have a direction of fit: “I apologize for stepping on your toe”. We equally have “I congratulate you on winning the race” and “I thank you for giving me the money”. We can, nonetheless, recover the $F(p)$ deep structure of these examples, as is implicit in Searle’s explanations. We get respectively: I apologize + I stepped on your toe, I congratulate you + you won the race, I thank you + you gave me the money. In Searle’s terminology, this would mean that the proposition “I stepped on your toe” is expressed with the force of an apology, the proposition “you won the race” with the force of congratulations and the proposition “you gave me the money” with the force of thanking⁵³. This is not remotely plausible. It is more intuitively plausible to suppose that the content contained in the gerund clause names the reason that prompted the act itself. It would be more plausible to suppose that these are acts with no content at all, and to remark that sometimes in their performance, a reference to the reason for the act is needed, if only to give our audience a clue for our behavior. The idea that these acts have no content does not cast doubt on their being illocutionary acts. Not less puzzling is the idea of analyzing “Hurrah for Manchester United” as expressing the referring expression “Manchester United” with the force of praising.

⁵¹ The reason why the problem of illocutionary force indicating devices is so important lies in the particular focus on them in the speech act theory outlined by Searle. Roughly, to perform an illocutionary act is to use illocutionary force indicating devices according to a set of semantic rules. This remains the basis for Searle’s approach to analyzing illocutionary acts despite the fact that we can perform illocutionary acts without using any IFID. Searle’s own example of “It’s really quite late” that can be used to perform a wide variety of illocutionary acts (even simultaneously) is another argument against the IFID Axiom. This casts serious doubt over the validity of any of the ideas put forth by Searle.

⁵² As already mentioned, we are not yet in a position to judge whether or not a verb names indeed an illocutionary act on a principled basis. This will have to wait until chapter 3.

⁵³ I owe this point to F. Nicoloff (personal communication).

The class of declaratives is puzzling in more than one respect⁵⁴, but one of the most interesting aspects is the case of the ‘suitcase’ verbs, such as “I resign” and “You are fired”. These verbs curiously enclose both the indicators of force and indicators of content, thus displaying a most misleading simple syntax, concealing the paradigmatic structure of “I declare + my job is terminated” and “I declare + your job is terminated”. There is, however, nothing to suggest that we are not to understand “I declare” in the phatic and not the illocutionary sense. It is perfectly acceptable to substitute it for ‘announce’ and still achieve the same purpose, that of making public a decision at the time when it is being carried out. The explanation is, therefore, not conclusive. Even if we accept the division being an abstraction detailing the structure of illocutionary acts⁵⁵, it is not clear how it could be applied to indicators of force and content in the linguistic structure of sentences.

Assertive acts seem to fit into this division nicely: the proposition *p* is expressed with the force of asserting, as in “I assert + my mission is accomplished.” The problem is, this idealized division in the structure of illocutionary acts is devised on the basis of explicit performative utterances, and the difficulty consists in finding out what in the structure of the sentence “My mission is accomplished” functions as an indicator of the assertive force. It is not clear whether it is the representation of the state of affairs (the mission of the speaker being accomplished) or the belief that the mission of the speaker is accomplished should be the content of the act of assertion. If assertion is the expression of the said belief, then the act of assertion should be broken down into two parts: the assertive force + the belief that *p* (or expression of belief + the belief that *p*). This in turn begs the following question: is it not plausible to suppose that the content of the paradigm-sentence the utterance of which constitutes the illocutionary act of assertion does not really coincide with the content of the act of assertion? In any case there is something left unanalyzed here - the notion of expression (which clearly is more than just uttering a sentence) - and the gap of the missing explanation cannot be waved aside, as the later account (of representation intention and communication intention in Searle 1986) still suffers from this incompleteness.

⁵⁴ Not the least to mention is the lack of any principled characteristic that would unify the different acts it subsumes. More on this topic will be said in chapter 4.

⁵⁵ Once we wave aside the objections concerning the classes of expressives and declarations.

2.2. Illocutionary force indicators

From the semantic point of view, Searle distinguishes between two (not necessarily separate) elements in the syntactical structure of sentences: the propositional indicator and the indicator of illocutionary force. Illocutionary force indicating devices are mirrored in the syntactical deep structure representation of sentences, but need not be invoked, for in many cases the illocutionary force of the utterance is made clear by the context. Searle also cautions that although a deep structure representation can contain the illocutionary force indicating device, it “is not to say, of course, that there is in general some single element in the underlying phrase marker of every sentence which marks its illocutionary force.”(1969:31) On the contrary, we are warned that in natural languages illocutionary forces are expressed by a variety of devices, some of which very complicated syntactically.

Still, Searle claims that the illocutionary distinctions that come up as different types of illocutionary acts are, in virtue of the Meaning Claim, semantic distinctions, and therefore must be mirrored in syntactical distinctions. We extract from these the IFID Axiom which goes as follows:

IFID Axiom: Every sentence contains an IFID.

This axiom comes to complete the list of underlying assumptions of Searle’s theory, which are not argued for. There is one major flaw in the argument exposed above: it is not very clear how the step is made from the structure of illocutionary acts to the IFID Axiom which is about sentences. It is the Principle of Expressibility that supplies the missing argument:

Principle of Expressibility: Whatever can be meant can be said.

Together with Axiom 1, we can reconstruct the steps of this reasoning:

1. **Axiom 1** “The speech act or acts performed in the utterance of a sentence are in general a function of the meaning of the sentence” (1969:18)
2. **Principle of Expressibility:** Whatever can be meant can be said.
3. Explicit performatives are the perfect example for fully explicit utterances where the meaning of the sentence corresponds fully to what the speaker wishes to express. Those cases, where the speaker-meaning diverges from the meaning of the sentence are of “no special relevance to the general theory of speech act” (1968:413).
4. Conclusion: **IFID Axiom** – every sentence contains an IFID.

To expand a little bit on point 4, it should be noted that despite the cautious remarks on the actual availability of IFID in sentences, Searle explicitly endorses the IFID Axiom when speaking about the various ramifications of the Principle of Expressibility:

But most important for present purposes it [the Principle of Expressibility – M.C.] enables us to equate rules for performing speech acts with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements, since for any possible speech act there is a possible linguistic element the meaning of which (given the context of utterance) is sufficient to determine that its literal utterance is a performance of precisely that speech act. (1969:20-21)

Now the shift in the notional apparatus is obvious: the logical structure of illocutionary acts, roughly divided into two abstract elements, the force and the content, are amalgamated with the linguistic structure of sentences⁵⁶.

There are, in fact, two possible types of IFID: first, IFID are form-content elements (or structural features of sentences) specifying the illocutionary act type that is being performed in the utterance of the sentence, and second, that it is the meaning of the sentences that conditions their being instances of an illocutionary act type. In order to approach this issue, I will compare the following two utterances under the following assumptions: they are uttered in the same circumstances, by the same speaker to the same addressee with the intention to perform the illocutionary act of assertion:

(22) I hereby state that my mission is accomplished.

(23) My mission is accomplished.

The illocutionary act performed by S is that of assertion to the effect that her mission is accomplished. The illocutionary act is not something that is palpable; the evidence of its performance is that there was a hearer who was the addressee of the said act, who understood the performance of it as committing the speaker to a certain belief about the world. The act thereby performed can be logically broken up to an F component (that is, the force of asserting) and *p* component (the mission being accomplished). In the utterance of S there are two elements that coincide with these abstract theoretical components, namely the performative prefix “I hereby state” and the proposition “that my mission is accomplished”.

⁵⁶ The distinction between sentence and utterance that I assume in this study follows the one by Levinson (1983:17-19), according to which a sentence is an abstract theoretical entity defined within a theory of grammar, and utterance is the issuance of a sentence in an actual context. So, by analogy, sentence meaning and utterance meaning would be different. Furthermore, yet another subdivision of meaning is the speaker meaning. We will not be concerned with elucidating the question of the boundaries between the different kinds of meaning. It can be tentatively supposed that illocutionary force is an ingredient of utterance meaning or speaker meaning, but not of sentence meaning.

The performative prefix would then be both a form-content element (a pure IFID) and it so happens that this phrase's meaning is that an assertion is being performed. In (23) the logical structure of the act would be the same, but can we claim that the sentence *S* uttered can be broken up into two elements? It is highly doubtful. Unless we postulate a deep structure performative prefix, we cannot reasonably claim that there is an element in the syntactic structure of the sentence "My mission is accomplished" that would be an IFID. In both cases the hearer understood that the utterance is used to perform the illocutionary act of assertion. The speaker can even assert that her mission is accomplished by uttering "Yes" in response to the question "Is your mission accomplished?" and still her speech act would logically be analyzable into two components, but can we postulate any IFID, from a linguistic point of view, in this utterance? Structural or formal properties such as the declarative word order and/or the indicative mood do not seem strong enough to function both as meaning-fixers and IFID, if only because these features are shared by a wide variety of sentences that can be used to perform many different illocutionary act types. The meaning of example (23) seems also insufficient to help grasp the illocutionary act it is used to perform. No matter how we define the act of assertion (through commitment to a state of affairs or through a belief that a state of affairs obtains), neither commitment, nor belief is part of the meaning of the sentence. In other words, that I assert *p* is not part of the meaning of *p*. There is the possibility that (23) is one of these instances where the IFID is simply not invoked; in this case we rely on the circumstances of the utterance to help us fix its illocutionary force.

We face the following question: are we to postulate two sets of factors that determine the illocutionary force of utterances: one set that involves the use of IFID and another that involves no such use? There are two possible solutions to the issue: first, that the illocutionary force of utterances is the function of the same factors; and second, that the illocutionary force of utterances is the function of different factors. The second assumption does not survive the Ockham razor, according to which entities are not to be multiplied without necessity, so it can be discarded⁵⁷. It follows from the first assumption that if we can show that the utterance of (23) has no IFID such as to conform to the rules for IFID postulated by the theory, we will have thereby refuted the IFID Axiom. Still, it would then follow that both (22) and (23) are

⁵⁷ Even if we sacrifice elegance for explanatory satisfaction, the second assumption will theoretically lead into inconsistencies: we will be compelled to provide a list of IFID the meaning of which literally attaches an illocutionary force to the sentence and to provide a means of recognizing IFID-free sentences and stipulate what it is in the circumstances of their utterance that fixes the illocutionary force and how. Needless to say, the second process of fixing the force contradicts both the Principle of Expressibility and the Meaning Claim.

assigned an illocutionary force as a function of the same factors, and these do not include IFID in the sense of Searle⁵⁸.

Searle claims that performing illocutionary acts is using illocutionary force indicating devices according to a set of semantic rules. Why these rules should be semantic is not very clear from the exposition: is it because these rules stipulate what it is for a linguistic phrase to mean a specific illocutionary act, or is it because those are rules that delimit a meaning for a specific linguistic phrase, the usage of which constitutes the performance of a particular illocutionary act? Taking into account the fact that Searle focused on full-blown explicit promises, the articulation of rules may have been influenced by the explicit performatives' linguistic structure. (More on this later)

Let me recall these rules of using the illocutionary force indicating device for promising in Searle's phrasing:

Rule 1: *Pr* is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence *T*, the utterance of which predicates some future act *A* of the speaker *S*. I call this the propositional content rule.

Rule 2: *Pr* is to be uttered only if the hearer *H* would prefer *S*'s doing *A* to his not doing *A*, and *S* believes *H* would prefer *S*'s doing *A* to *S*'s not doing *A*.

Rule 3: *Pr* is to be uttered only if it is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *S* will do *A* in the normal course of events. I call rules 2 and 3 preparatory rules.

Rule 4: *Pr* is to be uttered only if *S* intends to do *A*. I call this the sincerity rule.

Rule 5: The utterance of *Pr* counts as the undertaking of an obligation to do *A*. I call this the essential rule.

We can reconstruct rules for the use of IFID for asserting thus:

Rule 1: *Assert* is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence *T*, the utterance of which is the expression of any propositional content. (Here and below, *Assert* is used to stand for any IFID of assertion.)

Rule 2: *Assert* is to be uttered only if the speaker *S* has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of *p*.

Rule 3: *Assert* is to be uttered only if it is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *H* knows (does not need to be reminded of etc.) *p*.

Rule 4: *Assert* is to be uttered only if *S* believes *p*.

⁵⁸ This does not exclude the possibility for a language to possess a set of expressions that can be felicitously used to indicate the force of an utterance. Thus, Stampe 1975 lists as possible candidates for such indicators for promises "you have my word", "you can count on me", "as God is my witness", "cross my heart", but, as Stampe rightly claims, they all have different meaning and cannot be governed by the same semantic rules (that is, a rule that would determine their meaning).

Rule 5: The utterance of *Assert* counts as the undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs.

From these rules⁵⁹ we can discard Rule 1 as it does not operate any restrictions. Rule 5 exemplifies the conventional⁶⁰ nature of the illocutionary act under scrutiny. Such as it is, this rule is self-sufficient in the sense that being a constitutive rule, it requires and postulates that every instance that satisfies a certain description (that is, is an assertive IFID) counts for the performance of the illocutionary act in question. Further, these rules for using IFID presuppose that we know all relevant IFID for every kind of illocutionary act and these rules are generalizations on their correct usage. This is not the case.

We assume that illocutionary acts can be performed non-verbally⁶¹ and verbally. To speak of illocutionary force indicating devices in the case of non-verbal acts is not serious. There is something in the setting that warrants the performance of non-verbal acts. But verbally performed illocutionary acts pose enough problems to be dealing with. Verbally performed illocutionary acts can be further subdivided into non-sentential utterances and sentential utterances. Non-sentential⁶² utterances as “John’s father” or “Red” do not contain any indication whatsoever as to the use they may be put to in communication, unless we specify some extra-linguistic context (Stainton 1995:289) and this regardless of the type of IFID we are looking for, as there is no form (declarative or what not), nor anything in the meaning of these utterances that specify any kind of illocutionary act. So it must be the context that helps grasp the illocutionary act that is thereby performed. Sentential illocutionary acts come in two varieties: implicit and explicit performatives. The case of explicit performatives is the only one that contains identified illocutionary force indicating devices: the performative prefix. Implicit performatives are a far less clear case to solve. In what follows, I am going to exclude from my exposition cases where we rely on the context to grasp the illocutionary force of an utterance and concentrate on the case of explicit and implicit performatives to see how force recognition can be accounted for.

⁵⁹ These are necessary and sufficient conditions for the performance of a successful and non-defective illocutionary act.

⁶⁰ I will not discuss here what exactly is meant by ‘conventional’ as the following analysis will not be altered anyway. It seems clear, though, that what is meant is that some manifestation stands for or is to be taken to be a manifestation of a particular act.

⁶¹ As Austin 1962, Dörge 2004 and MacFarlane 2009 do. That an illocutionary act is performed non-verbally does not mean that it does not have an external manifestation: other than gestures, silence can be construed as a manifestation by the mere absence of words. Incidentally, Searle admits to this possibility (Searle 1969:38)

⁶² It is important to note that Searle does not discuss the possibility to perform an illocutionary act in uttering a non-sentential unit. He does accept the possibility to perform an act uttering “Yes”. It will advance us little to conduct a discussion of whether or not “Yes” is a sentence or not. It is, again, the context that determines the kind of illocutionary act performed (Searle 1969:19).

Such as they are, the rules stated above specify both the necessary and sufficient conditions for performing successful and non-defective illocutionary acts and the use illocutionary indicating devices that help the hearer realize what illocutionary act is being performed in the utterance of the sentence. If the speaker has all the relevant intentions for performing a non-defective illocutionary act of assertion, she thereby knows how to use the devices that point to the act in question. According to Rule 1, the content “my mission is accomplished” is well fit to be used in pairing with the IFID of assertion. Rule 2 specifies that this content is to be paired with an IFID of assertion only if the speaker has evidence for it being true. Rule 3 wants the speaker to pair this content with the IFID of assertion only if it is not obvious to both participants that the hearer does not know that it is true. Rule 4 stipulates that the content is to be paired with the IFID of assertion only if the speaker truly believes that it is true. Finally, Rule 5 says that the very use of the IFID of assertion counts as the undertaking to the effect that the speaker is committed to the content’s representing an actual state of affairs.

Let us consider several possible candidates for IFID in the case of the utterance “My mission is accomplished” such as word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, verb mood and performative verbs. Indeed, word order is very important for meaning ascription: an utterance of “is mission accomplished my” is not a grammatically well-formed sentence in English and does not mean anything. But that is not the sense in which word order is considered to be an IFID-candidate⁶³. Word order here is to be understood as declarative word order. For this particular IFID, Rule 5 will then take the following form:

Rule 5*: An utterance in the *Declarative word order* counts as the undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs.

According to Rule 5* the following utterances will be qualified as assertions: “I promise to come”, “I will do whatever I can to help”, “You are fired” and “You will hear me out”. But, while they all can be used to perform assertions, given an appropriate setting (and intention) it is by no means their declarative order that makes them assertions. It may be objected that all the 5 rules have to apply simultaneously in order to restrict uses of IFID as instances of a particular speech act. It would appear, though, that these sentences do not constitute a breach of these rules: rule 1 is satisfied for all of them, the speaker certainly

⁶³ Of course, the utterance of “My mission accomplished is” is intelligible and meaningful for a speaker of English, even if it is not grammatically well-formed. We were all able to understand the meaning of Master Yoda’s utterances, which share this particularity, the SOV word order.

believes in what she says, and believes in the informativity of her utterances. It may be further objected that in the presence of a performative verb it is the performative verb that takes priority over word order as force indicator. Still, when the utterance “I promise to come” is used to state a usual action of the speaker (as in answering the question “What do you do to get me to throw all these parties?”), it is not clear how the performative verb is neutralized as a force indicator in order to pave the way for another interpretation. Not once in Searle’s theory do we encounter the idea that there might be a hierarchy of illocutionary indicators, some of which supersede and overpower others. So, based on the fact that explicit performatives come in every illocutionary variety and have the declarative word order, it can be concluded that declarative word order is not a useful candidate for an IFID of assertion. However, even if we leave explicit performatives aside, there is still the troublesome realization that sentences like “I will come” can be used to perform different illocutionary acts: it can be used to state, to promise, to threaten, to warn, to confess, etc. Even if we narrow it down to two different illocutionary act types, Rules 1-4 will be disjunctive in form⁶⁴ as in “utter X if p or Q ”, and will not serve the purpose of determining the illocutionary force of the utterance. It seems that IFIDs are impractical in their own environment.

With the possible exception of performative verbs, a lot of short-listed candidates for IFID do not operate enough restrictions as to be used as non-ambiguously showing or pointing to a specific illocutionary act type – not even to illocutionary act genus. There is another element in Searle’s exposition that is invariably present but not taken into account: the circumstances of the utterance. Often the discussion of illocutionary act makes use of the words “in the appropriate circumstances” or “in the appropriate context”. So, basically, as far as illocutionary force is concerned, the context is the ultimate fixer of it, given an utterance of the type “My mission is accomplished” or “I will come”.

Regardless of these considerations, let us assume that there is some device, present in every sentence such as it indicates the illocutionary act of assertion. In this case Rule 5 makes the other rules unnecessary: if there was such a thing that functions as a sign that an assertion is thereby being performed, Rule 5 would commit us to the performance of the illocutionary act of assertion whether or not we conform to the other rules. Then the act of assertion would be manifested by the presence of this element in a conventional way, that is, regardless of the intentions we have, our sincerity, beliefs or what not. Assertion would be the uttering of this element in virtue of the very nature of Rule 5 that Searle calls “constitutive”; that is, the

⁶⁴ This argument is detailed in Stampe 1975:14

utterance of the element in question would constitute the illocutionary act of assertion. Theoretically, the implications of the existence of such an element would be that misunderstandings and unsuccessful illocutionary acts will be impossible to come into being. These theoretical questions have already been considered by others and the possibility for a strong sign of assertion (Begriffsschrift) dismissed⁶⁵.

In keeping with IFID Axiom is the later account of Searle's in which communicative intention and the intention to represent are separated. According to this account (Searle 1986:213), representation consists in a propositional content in an illocutionary mode. When the speaker intends to communicate, he communicates the representation of the state of affairs in question that exists independently of the utterance. So, the speaker may utter a sentence without the intention to communicate and this sentence will already contain an illocutionary force indicating device, or, in other words, the propositional content will be in a particular illocutionary mode, regardless of the fact that the speaker may not intend to communicate anything to anybody in uttering this sentence. There are two general objections to this new account (that, incidentally, is meant to deal with cases of soliloquy, diary entries and cases of speakers and hearers not sharing the same language, or cases that violate the normal input-output conditions). First, to take up an example of Searle's⁶⁶, in drawing a picture of a broken crankshaft, the speaker only represents an object or a state of affairs that need not to be tied down to any specific time-place reality. Succeeding in communicating that it is the speaker's crankshaft that is broken now and the general idea that a broken crankshaft is not something that the speaker finds to her taste is (ironically) context-dependent. The speaker could succeed in communicating the same thing by drawing just a crankshaft or a rudimentary representation of a mechanic (be it a stylized figure of a man with any tool in hand). A foreigner in a bakery can succeed to communicate that he would like to buy a loaf of bread by pointing at it. It is the reference or the identification of a particular context-dependent and context-salient object that does the trick. Not all instances of communication need involve representation. In other words, this objection can be spelled out thus: it is intuitively implausible that representation should contain illocutionary force. I will return to that.

⁶⁵ See Green 1997 and 2002.

⁶⁶ The speaker has a problem with a broken crankshaft and needs to get it repaired.

Second, illocutionary force is not something that can be represented, meant or said. In this account the underlying idea that illocutionary force is (part of) meaning is clearly discernible in the following paragraph (1986:209)⁶⁷:

People perform illocutionary acts: they make statements, give orders, ask questions, etc. In doing so they make noises, or marks on paper; they draw pictures, or wave their arms about, etc. Now my problem is: what must be added to these noises, marks, etc., in order that they should be statements, orders, etc.? What, so to speak, must be added to the physics to get the semantics? In short, that question can be posed as, ‘What is it for a speaker to mean something by an utterance?’, but it should not be thought that the question is solely or even primarily about the meaning of ‘meaning’ in English.

When speaking of illocutionary acts, it seems normal to say that in uttering U, the speaker meant to give an order to be brought soup, or the speaker meant to state that she was hungry. But it is not to say that the meaning of her utterance is an order, or a statement⁶⁸.

Another major inconsistency with the new representation account of illocutionary acts and communication is the paradoxical results we get when we seek to apply it to assertion. If representation already consists in a proposition in a particular illocutionary mode, then assertion would be definable solely by the representation part of the process: it would be the representation of a particular state of affairs. It is not very clear what an account of assertion would be, since it is no longer hearer-directed (for the hearer is not involved in the representation part of the process, but in the communication part). We can no longer use commitment to account for assertion: commitment for its own sake is superfluous, and as we are told, cases of soliloquy are not to be analyzed as illocutionary acts directed to oneself (that is, when the speaker is also the hearer). And we no longer require a vocal output⁶⁹ (as assertion can be performed silently). To sum up: the new account makes Rule 1 of the use of IFID unnecessary (the normal input-output conditions do not apply) and Rule 3 is not necessary, as assertion is no longer hearer-directed. Rule 2 seems as a shallow constraint, since it is of questionable utility whether or not the speaker needs to vouch for the truth of the content that is never directed at any recipient. Idem for Rule 4: assertion is just the embodiment of the speaker’s belief, though never shared nor directed at any recipient.

⁶⁷ The danger of reducing illocutionary force to an aspect of semantics and illocutionary acts to meaning lurks behind this paragraph.

⁶⁸ In these cases it seems that ‘mean’ is equivalent to ‘intend’ (this is a remark of Stampe’s 1975). The words or the sentence that the speaker utters can have the meaning of “I order you to bring me some soup” or “I state that I am hungry”, but whether an illocutionary act of assertion or order is being performed is not a meaning issue.

⁶⁹ Here ‘vocal output’ is not meant to say that assertions should always be performed by uttering words (as non-verbal speech acts are also possible), but the idea that there is no external manifestation needed as a sign that an act is being performed, and, indeed, nobody to acknowledge the deed.

According to the new account, assertion is a self-satisfying goal which consists in a representation of a state of affairs, being the expression of the speaker's belief. It is, in short, a non-existent act. It does nothing.

We set out from the premise that what determines the force of an utterance must be the same factor in all utterances or instances of illocutionary acts. It seems that all sentences cannot hold an element that Searle wished to call an illocutionary force indicating device such as to signify a particular illocutionary act. A formal property of sentences cannot have such a wide supra-grammatical function and scope as to point at what intentions the speaker has and what actions the speaker performs in uttering them. The secondary claim that the rules are semantic in nature cannot be extended to the whole list of IFID that Searle mentions: the declarative order (and the indicative mood for that matter) does not mean that the speaker asserts, just as the imperative order (or mood) does not mean that the speaker orders. Even if we concede that simple sentence types allow for partial sentence type – illocutionary force correlations, a complex (compound) sentence does not do so easily. Consider the following:

- (24) Despite the well-formedness of the sentence, we perceive a distinct pragmatic anomaly that prompts us to wonder: can there be a pragmatic principle such a sentence would be in violation of?

It can hardly be categorized as an interrogative sentence, or as a declarative sentence. If the main objection that interrogative and declarative are not what matters for the ascription of force, because these are syntactic and not semantic categories, it would be an oversimplification to say that an interrogative sentence type expresses a question and a declarative expresses an assertion or a statement. How can basic semantic categories such as these help us figure out that (given the appropriate setting) (24) is an objection, a conjecture, acknowledgment, a hypothesis, an assertion, a question or all of those acts at the same time?

A final observation is in order: it is clear that linguistic description and grammar provide enough evidence of syntactic forms that have a special function attached to them. Sadock and Zwicky (1985) offer a comprehensive survey of these, major and minor sentence types alike. There is one important point to be made in this respect: while there are syntactic forms that seem to grammaticalize or conventionalize⁷⁰ a particular function or act, this cannot be used as an argument in support of IFID Axiom. That there should be a conventional

⁷⁰ Ironically, this can be objected to in Strawsonian words that to suppose that there is always a conventional form for acts would be like supposing that there could be no love affairs which did not proceed on lines laid down by the Roman de la Rose (Strawson 1964:154).

way to perform an act does not exclude the possibility of it being performed in a non-conventional way. If we must call these conventionalized syntactic forms IFID is not a question of terminology, but of methodology, for different languages will have different conventionalized forms and maybe for different reasons. It is clear that to speak of basic illocutionary acts (that is, acts that are more important for the speech community than others) that have conventionalized forms is devoid of any principled basis⁷¹. It does seem that the IFID Axiom can be held to be disproved.

2.3. Propositional act

This subpart will be built up in the following manner: first, I will look into the propositional act out of Searle's division $F(p)$, exploring the methodological difficulties connected to it; second, I will draw a parallel between the notions of predication and judgment and some correlations with meaning; and third, I will look into the later development of Searle's theory separating an intention to communicate from the intention to represent as the ultimate embodiment of the Declarative fallacy.

The propositional content of assertion is any proposition that p . Since proposition can be defined in many different ways, I adopt here the definition from the face value theory: a proposition is an abstract entity in the sense that it has no spatial location, it is mind- and language- independent (that is, its existence is independent of the existence of thinkers or speakers, and it belongs to no language), it has a truth condition essentially and absolutely (Schiffer 2008:5). This is what that-clauses ascribe in propositional-attitude and speech act reports.

Searle's propositional content is an abstraction of the total speech act. It is called a propositional act and it contains the reference act and the act of predication. It is an abstraction in the sense that one cannot just perform a propositional act separately from an illocutionary act, but a propositional act is always performed together with an illocutionary act. The propositional act is sometimes performed not by uttering a proposition within the performance of an illocutionary act, but by uttering a phrase within the performance of an illocutionary act. Further, the propositional act is not a necessary act to the performance of speech acts, as there are speech acts that lack propositional content.

⁷¹ Although it may be an interesting empirical basis, the existence of some conventionalized forms and not others begs the question of why these forms have been conventionalized and not others?

There are some basic ideas that constrain Searle's account of propositional content and it is what we may call a propositional content constraint:

Propositional content constraint (PC): Illocutionary acts have propositional content, not sentences.

Speakers express propositions, not sentences. The propositions are referred to by that-clauses in sentences. Nicoloff (1986) even suggests that that-clauses are meant to be indeed propositional content indicators. Such a stance is suggested by Searle in his early exposition and it can provide us with an answer to the question of what exactly the relation between sentence content and act content is. Every illocutionary act has a content component (with some notable exceptions); in the serious literal performance of the act, the sentence contains a propositional content indicator which instantiates the content of the act. This is consistent with Searle's subsequent analysis of the so-called indirect speech acts: these are cases where the sentence does not mirror literally the content of the illocutionary act that is being performed⁷². In the following discussion I will limit my comments to serious and literal performances⁷³.

In Searle's words, the speech act comprises different acts such as:

Utterance acts = uttering words

Propositional acts = referring and predicating

Illocutionary acts = asserting, ordering, promising etc.

And "in performing an illocutionary act one characteristically performs propositional acts and utterance acts" (Searle 1969:24). But, it is important to note that propositional act is not a separate act in the sense that one cannot just perform a propositional act and do nothing else. One necessarily does so in performing an illocutionary act too (Searle 1969:29). This idea seems to be motivated by the fact that that-clauses are not complete sentences.

Speakers express propositions; as we are not told what exactly expressing a proposition amounts to, it must be different from just uttering the words (for this is the utterance act). Expressing a proposition involves referring and predicating. For the utterance of sentences such as

⁷² And the story does not end here: not only does the propositional content indicator not mirror the content of the act, but the IFID does not indicate the intended illocutionary force! There is one very embarrassing question that the analysis of indirect illocutionary acts does not answer (and cannot): why does the speaker perform an entirely different illocutionary act instead of a serious and literal variant thereof? This and other issues connected with the so-called indirect illocutionary acts will be dealt with in chapter 11.

⁷³ The very fact that there can be illocutionary acts performed in uttering a sentence which does not mirror literally the content of the act is in itself a valid argument against the kind of steady relation between form and force that Searle's theory assumes.

(25) “Jill goes out”

(26) “Jill, go out!”

(27) “Does Jill go out?”

(28) “Would that Jill went out”

the same propositional content is said to be expressed, or the propositional act is the same, but the illocutionary force is different. But if we imagine the same speaker, the same hearer and the same context, only in speech act reports will we get the same propositional content:

(25.1.) He stated that Jill went out.

(26.1.) He ordered that Jill go out. (non-factual) also He ordered Jill to go out.

(27.1.) He asked whether Jill went out.

(28.1.) He wished that Jill went out. (non-factual)

These theoretically useful examples contradict the unity of setting that Searle posits as a requirement for identity of propositional content: the first utterance excludes the possibility that Jill is the hearer, which the second utterance presupposes. An order or a request is serious and literal in the form “Go out”, and it can refer depending on the setting, to any hearer whatsoever. It does not contain the proposition that X goes out, just as the second utterance does not contain the proposition that Jill goes out; it refers to a property that the speaker desires X (or in the case of the second utterance, Jill) to acquire. As Hausser (1980:84) explains, the semantic content encoded by an imperative sentence is that of a property in the form $\lambda x[\Gamma_2\{x\} \wedge \text{go out}(x)]$, where Γ_2 is a contextually dependent variable denoting the property of being the hearer. It determines a propositional attitude that is delimited by the expressive capabilities of the structure. Incidentally, this structure allows for a wide variety of intentions as motives of its use (that is, many different illocutionary act types can be performed in uttering that structure). Is the same proposition expressed in the utterance of the sentence “Jill is going out”? What about “Jill leaves her residence” and “Jill takes part in social life outside home”? Searle says:

Whenever two illocutionary acts contain the same reference and predication, provided that the meaning of the referring expression is the same, I shall say that the same proposition is expressed⁷⁴. (1969:29)

⁷⁴ This is supposed to state a sufficient, but not a necessary condition, for existential statements have no reference (Searle 1969).

Let us suppose that there is one and only one person in the setting named Jill and that the speaker intends to refer to her when uttering the name Jill⁷⁵. The predication is of more interest to the discussion.

There are several rules that govern the speech act of predication:

- A) A neutral predicate expression is governed by IFID which put it in a certain illocutionary mode in which “the question of the truth of the predicate expression is raised *vis-à-vis* the object referred to by the subject expression” (1969:122)
- B) Linguistic expressions and not universals are predicated of subjects
- C) To predicate an expression *p* of an object *R* is to raise the question of the truth of the predicate expression of the object referred to (1969:124)
- D) The predicate act is subject to conditions of success and to rules of using any predicating device.

What we get from A) is the possibility to abstract from our examples the non-material propositional content /Jill, go out/, that is, a neutral predicate /go out/ that is put into different illocutionary modes by the IFID: in (25) the assertive IFID forms the truth-evaluable proposition /Jill goes out/, in (27) the interrogative IFID raises the question of the truth of the proposition /Jill goes out/. It is less clear what it is that we get in the imperative illocutionary mode and the wish-expressing illocutionary mode. Intuitively, we cannot obtain a truth-evaluable proposition in a specific illocutionary mode: first, both that-clauses in the report sentences indicate propositions that are not factual, so the usual truth-falsity category cannot apply to them (they are not truth-evaluable). They do not realize the required ‘direction of fit’ between words and world. We cannot hope to encase a success dimension in saying that the proposition aims at visualizing a successful alteration of the world conforming to the words, because an order that has not been obeyed is still a successful order. Searle dismisses this problem by admitting that the formulation may be awkward, especially for imperatives, and by imputing to the phrase “raising the question of truth” the status of a technical term. But even if we concede to use this as a technical term, we run into difficulties with all illocutionary acts for which we want to isolate the propositional act. Consider declarations:

(29) I hereby appoint you chairman.

According to the analysis, the predication act would be raising the question of the truth of being chairman in relation to the referent /you/, and the propositional act would be /you, be

⁷⁵ Harnish (1990b:183) points out some problems that arise from the reference act: pronouns can be used indexically or anaphorically, but Searle’s rules do not specify the correct usage for these cases.

chairman/ in the declarational illocutionary mode. Here we run into the first hitch of the analysis: propositional content of illocutionary act must be an illocutionarily neutral content (this follows from the $F(p)$ division). The predication is also a neutral linguistic expression. It is, therefore, incorrect to speak of propositions (which can be true or false) and, furthermore, incorrect to speak of identical propositions expressed in the utterance of sentences. At the most we may speak of identity of experiences conceptualized by linguistic expressions (synonymous linguistic expressions can, according to Searle, be used as expressing the same predication, although this conflicts with D)⁷⁶. In order to be able to compare propositions, we need some illocutionary mode of expressing the predication (as the assertive mode) to obtain a truth-evaluable entity, for which we know under which conditions it can be true or false.

But then we run into two more inconsistencies of such an account of predication. First, we are told that “[t]o know the meaning of a general term and hence a predicate expression is to know under what conditions it is true or false of a given object” (Searle 1969:125). It is not clear how this traditional view of predication correlates with the Searlean view of predication. The traditional view puts truth and predication into a correlation, such as we obtain predication only in the assertive mode. Then, asserting is committing oneself to there being a state of affairs in which the predicate is true of an object. The *mutatis mutandis* postulated by Searle does not seem to hold for all kinds of illocutionary acts, as we have seen with directives and declarations. From the old Austinian postulate that illocutionary acts are not descriptions, we cannot make use of the notion of truth, even in the phrase “raising the question of the truth”, for that would invariably commit the Declarative fallacy.

Second, we are told that “[t]he very act of predication of such an expression⁷⁷ may introduce new illocutionary forces” (1969:125). In the utterance of “Either he is a Fascist or he isn’t” the illocutionary act of assertion in fact raises the question of his being a Fascist. In certain contexts this can be paraphrased as a weak suggestion that he might be a Fascist. It is not clear how the act of predication (being a neutral expression) can introduce new forces, since meaning is obtained by putting the neutral predicate expression in a particular illocutionary mode. It would seem that ‘raising the question’ is far from being neutral, in certain contexts, and that the relation of a neutral predicate expression being put into illocutionary modes is not a stable one. This contradicts both A) and C).

⁷⁶ Indeed, we cannot even begin to speak of what would make two predications identical. We would need a special account of synonymy incorporated in the account of predication.

⁷⁷ “His being a Fascist” – this comes from Searle’s example.

The conditions for successful and non-defective predicating the expression *p* are grafted on the success conditions of illocutionary acts: we predicate successfully if, under normal input output conditions (1), *p* occurs as part of some utterance (2) that is the performance or purported performance of an illocutionary act (3), in which we have successfully referred to the object *X* (4) and *X* is such that *p* can logically be true or false of *X* (5); we intend to raise the question of the truth or falsity of *p* of *X* (6) and intend to produce in the hearer the knowledge that *p* raises the question of the truth or falsity of *p* of *X* by means of the hearer's recognition of that intention, achieved by the means of the hearer's knowledge of the meaning of *p* (7). Condition (8) stipulates that *p* is uttered successfully if conditions 1-7 obtain. The formulation of these conditions does not give us any clue as to what is a failed predication versus what is a defective predication (the point is raised by Harnish 1990b:183). Condition (5) is most puzzling as it has two readings. The first is the one suggested by the existential statements Searle takes as examples: we can say of windows that they are red, but we cannot say the same of prime numbers. Here the conceptual nature of the objects that Searle wants to exclude from the account of predication influences his reasoning, because ascription of the property 'colored' to an abstract concept such as 'prime numbers' is logically impossible. This logical connection is entailed by the semantics of the expressions we use. But what about "the prime numbers that you see printed on this page are red"? Is this a problem for the predicate expression or a problem for the reference of the referring expression "the prime numbers"? Either way, condition (5) somehow presupposes an assertive illocutionary mode in a very traditional way. The reflexive intention spelled under condition (7) makes an analysis of the act of predication reminiscent of that of illocutionary acts. There is nothing in the theory that prevents us from doing so (Harnish 1990b:184). Another very trivial observation concerning predicate expressions is the question of grammatical tense. How does Searle's theory construe tense? It cannot be a part of the predicate expression, because we need a particular illocutionary mode paired with tense in order to get a meaningful entity, and if it is part of the neutral abstract predicate expression, then we presuppose some mode of realization of the predicate expression, which results in a contradiction⁷⁸.

Another contradiction seems to arise from condition (3): apparently one can only perform an act of predication in performing an illocutionary act or purporting to perform an illocutionary act. Suppose that I have attempted to perform the illocutionary act of appointing

⁷⁸ In the same line of reasoning modal verbs and lexical ways of expressing modality have the same ambiguous status in Searle's theory: on the one hand, they seem to fall naturally in the predicate slot, on the other, some of them have been explicitly categorized as illocutionary force indicating devices. Can an expression be both an IFID and a propositional content indicator? Funnily, the appeal to meaning seems to make this very claim.

you chairman in uttering “I hereby appoint you chairman” but failed (I do not have the authority etc). Has my act of predication failed? It should, because the declarational mode in which my predication should have been realized failed to obtain. Yet, my utterance is still intelligible and meaningful. Or, to take another example, I attempt to order you to close the window and utter “I order you to close the window”, but you do not recognize my authority and my illocutionary act is thus defective. Is my predication defective and if so, in what way? Maybe predicating the expression /close the window/ to you in the imperative mode is not logically true or false? It is hardly worth noticing that all of these conditions reiterate condition 1 of illocutionary acts, which already postulates that the speaker and hearer both speak the language, and as such, they presumably know which predicate expressions can be used with which subjects. Predicating correctly would be a matter of speaking the language correctly, and including an account of predication in a discussion of illocutionary acts does not advance us in our better understanding of what an illocutionary act is.

Let me turn to a familiar example. Consider the utterance of “You will leave tomorrow”. This utterance may be an assertion, a prediction, a warning, an order, a threat etc. So the illocutionary modes in which the predicate expression can be realized can have the same grammatical form. In this example, contrary to condition (7), the intention to produce in the hearer the knowledge that we raise the question of truth does not seem to be affected by the particular illocutionary mode in which the predicate expression is realized. In other words, the semantic meaning of the expressions used cannot affect directly any assignment of illocutionary force.

In this respect there are two different things that get confused in Searle’s exposition. First, the nature of the illocutionary act itself and second, formal properties of the sentence incorrectly called illocutionary force indicating devices. That an assertion is performed in the utterance of “Jill is going out” is not in any way part of the meaning of the sentence. The meaning of the sentence only correlates a person Jill and the action of going out. The act of assertion is warranted by speaker’s intention and hearer’s uptake. Formal properties of the sentence cannot indicate conclusively at a particular illocutionary act. At the most, they situate a meaningful entity, a factual entity, an idea.

Searle’s treatment of the notion of predication is highly reminiscent of the judgment forming mechanism: hypothesis, inquiry, result (Tuzet 2004:6). The hypothesis stage coincides with Searle’s raising of the question of truth of the predicate being associated with the subject. Note that the raising of the question of truth presupposes the assertive illocutionary mode. The inquiry is the effort of deciding whether or not the predicate is true of

the subject and the result is the fully-formed judgment, which incorporates the belief with the judgment as content. Whether or not this new judgment will be communicated or not depends on the intention of the speaker and the particularities of the setting. If speech act theory is seen as a new angle in approaching meaning, we need a specification about which meaning it is concerned with. Directives, I speculate, are the result stage of a desire-forming mechanism, during which a desire is formed, a decision is made concerning the way it is to be expressed using language. Although the forming mechanism itself must be fascinating, it falls well outside of speech act theoretic concerns. The distinction between the intention to represent and the intention to communicate follows quite consistently from the IFID Axiom⁷⁹: if every sentence contains an illocutionary force indicator, the indicator does not vanish in cases where the sentence is not used in the performance of an illocutionary act. Then sentences (and not utterances) have illocutionary force, which contradicts the intuitive idea that speakers and not sentences perform illocutionary acts. In any case, it would be more accurate to say that a representation cannot contain any other illocutionary force than assertive force, as a representation aims at conveying how something is, or it necessarily has the words-to-world direction of fit. It is also quite unclear what is the intended object of the representation: is it an idea (in which case the representation would bear assertive force, or rather, have the judgmental form, embodying the speaker's belief) or an object (in which case we need to ask ourselves how a representation of our understanding of objects gets fixed in our minds). More difficult to construe is the representation of an intention or an intentional state, as the exposition suggests must be the case for non-assertive forces: the sentence "Get out" would be a representation of the speaker's intention to get something done.

It seems, though, that the representation stage of the process cannot escape the Declarative fallacy, for it amounts to saying that linguistic expressions are representations of illocutionary acts that may or may not come into being. The intention to communicate is a sign that the speaker does indeed possess the corresponding intention to perform whatever illocutionary act is represented in the sentence, the utterance of which embodies the intention to communicate. If the appropriate communicative intention is realized in the utterance of a sentence which is the result and realization of the intention to represent, how can we claim that soliloquy assertions are at all possible?

It seems that the idea that speech act theory must take on the burden of accounting for meaning outside of communication is still persistent in this latest development of Searle's

⁷⁹ It is also consistent with the idea that speech act theory is a study of langue, expressed by Searle (1969). This consistency gives credit to the theory, despite the fact that the premises may be wrong.

(1986). I believe that speech act theory is not that powerful a tool as to manage this feat. It does not need to, though: its focus ought to be a special kind of speaker-meaning and the mechanism of doing things with words. It ought to concentrate on different types of acts speakers perform using language. In this chapter I have presented my case on the implausibility of the idea that, first, sentences have indicators of illocutionary force in their structure and second, that the content of sentences has a direct bearing on the illocutionary act that is being performed in their utterance. Fully explicit performative utterances, for instance, contain both an explicit reference to illocutionary force and propositional content. Such an utterance is perfectly unambiguous as to the illocutionary act we perform by it. Thus “I ask you whether Jill goes out” is a fully explicit unambiguous question about Jill’s going out. Some authors choose to challenge the need of a special term to name something that is already contained in the sentence that we utter: that a question is being asked does not depend on anything else but on the meaning of the words our sentence consists of. The logical structure of the illocutionary act is mirrored exactly in the sentence, the utterance of which constitutes the performance of the illocutionary act in question and this is deemed to be reason enough to doubt the validity of the notion of illocutionary force itself⁸⁰. The problems in Searle’s exposition that have been under scrutiny in this chapter can be a reason to doubt. Another reason is the lack of a proper definition of illocutionary act in Searle’s work, despite the fact that one important step of the program outlined by Searle (1969) is to reach a definition (an explication) of this notion.

It seems counterintuitive to challenge the view that there are indeed conventionalized forms that are normally used to perform specific illocutionary acts (although it would be wrong to say that they do so because of their meaning), or that there are lexical items that are best accounted for by saying that they have a special pragmatic function in the sentence (extra-sentential adverbs, or interjections, or expressions such as “So help me God”). It is equally counterintuitive to claim that it is the meaning that enables us to assign illocutionary force to a particular utterance. Semantic or sentence meaning does play a role, but so do a number of other features. In order to clarify how hearers understand what illocutionary act is being performed, we need an account of what an illocutionary act actually is. I turn to this question in the following chapter.

⁸⁰ Cohen 1964 is a prominent example.

Chapter 3: Searle's concept of illocutionary act

The theoretical grid of Searle comprises several different elements. In performing illocutionary acts convention is involved, intentions are realized, meaning is created. Illocutionary acts themselves are distinguished by the different rules that constitute them, and by a different combination of the seven components of illocutionary force that build them. There is no non-recursive definition of illocutionary act to be found in Searle's exposition, but there are to be found elements and guidelines towards a definition, and these are going to be examined in the present chapter.

Searle's theory seems to assume that it is capable of predicting one and only one correct analysis of an issuance of a sentence based on the following tenets: first, every sentence contains an IFID indicating the illocutionary act that is thereby being performed and second, the meaning of the sentence is a conventional realization of the underlying set of constitutive rules of the particular illocutionary act under consideration. This assumption is effectively contradicted by empirical data and we find Cohen's (1970:554-555) question curiously relevant: "Since the same utterance may constitute the performance of several different illocutionary acts, how do we know that the correct analysis of "Jones will pay Smith five dollars" is into an indicator of assertive force plus an expression of the proposition that Jones will pay Smith five dollars?"

3.1. Convention:

In the abundant literature on speech acts six different kinds of convention can be identified:

- 1) demonstrative conventions (as in Strawson 1965): these are conventions of reference;
- 2) descriptive conventions: these are linguistic conventions or conventions of meaning;
- 3) conventions of use (as in Morgan 1975): usage conventions enable us to utter "Could you pass the salt" and thereby make a request for the salt;
- 4) conventions of means: some device that functions as a sign for something else (I contrast Austin's performative prefix and Searle's IFID);
- 5) conventionality of effect: in the ritualistic sense this is the necessary consequence which ensures the realization of the act;

- 6) social conventions: there is an institution which warrants the existence and impact of the act under scrutiny.

These different kinds of convention illustrate the different meanings of the notion, ranging from “social contract”, “institutional use” and “ritual” to “rule-governed” and many others. In a way, all illocutionary acts can be conventional in one or other sense of the notion. My goal in this section is not the examination of the notion itself, but seeing how this notion is exploited in Searle’s exposition.

Two remarks are in order. First, Austin’s remark on the conventionality of illocutionary acts is usually interpreted in senses 4, 5 and 6 above: illocutionary acts are conventional first, because “at least they can be made explicit by the performative formula”, which is very similar to a magical spell that unleashes a conventional effect (second) and this according to a conventional procedure (third)⁸¹. Second, conventionality of means cannot and does not determine the utterance’s having the illocutionary force it has. To take a non-linguistic imaginary example, if a society convenes that a wave of the hand will stand for a warning that a storm is coming, the occurrence of the wave does not determine that a warning is being made, but merely realizes a pre-existing convention, namely that the wave should stand for the warning⁸².

In his exposition, Searle (1969, 1989) provides us with the following directions as to his notion of conventionality: illocutionary acts are conventional because they are constituted by a set of constitutive rules, they are conventional because we use language to perform them and language is the realization of the underlying constitutive rules, and they are conventional because they create institutional facts (they have conventional effects, constituted by the set of constitutive rules)⁸³. Constitutive rules determine new forms of behavior; they define what it is to assert or to promise. Violating a constitutive rule is destructive of the action itself (Nicoloff 1986:560); that is, opening by moving the foot-soldier (pawn) from e-2 to e-5 is not opening (it is not an opening move in chess): the move is invalid or illegal. In the same way,

⁸¹ I will return to these matters in chapter 6, but I must say that I do not believe, with Warnock (1973), that Austin meant linguistic conventions, quite unlike Searle.

⁸² See chapter 2. If there were devices for acts, we would use them because we wanted to convey that particular act. Our audience would grasp the act in a kind of short-circuited fashion because of the device, but our act is not an act of that particular type because of the device used. The consequence of such a mechanism would be a zero margin for communicative failure. Such a conception of act-performing entails that the devices are non-ambiguous and exclusive for the particular acts.

⁸³ Acts also rely on background abilities (first mentioned in Searle 1978), but as far as Searle’s explication goes, these abilities are not conventional.

if we do not follow the rule for asserting, we do not count as asserting⁸⁴. Constitutive rules in games define and shape the game itself: in chess the pieces involved are defined by the moves they make in the game progression.

The formulation of the rules is extracted⁸⁵ from the conditions for the performance of a particular illocutionary act. Illocutionary acts are supposed to be defined by a series of sets of constitutive rules (1969:37). By way of formulating these rules, Searle proceeds to formulate conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the performance of the act and formulates rules for using illocutionary force indicating devices for the act in question (1969:54). The problem is we cannot equate rules for the use of expressions with constitutive rules of types of behavior, as this program seems to suggest. If we do not use the expression according to the rules, we may be guilty of poor language mastery or we could have another intention in mind: in performing indirect speech acts the speaker does not use the expressions quite according to the rules of use of the IFID for the primary illocutionary act⁸⁶. It would also seem that performing illocutionary acts is subject to one super-rule – it is constituted of using expressions according to certain rules. For example, asserting would be using expressions according to certain rules. The rules for the use of expressions are certainly not supposed to be constitutive of the meaning of the expressions, nor of their occurrence⁸⁷, but regulating at the most (with a strong *ad hoc* flavor).

Let us look at the rules for asserting:

Rule 1: *Assert* is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence *T*, the utterance of which is the expression of any propositional content *p*. (Here and below, *Assert* is used to stand for any IFID of assertion.)

Rule 2: *Assert* is to be uttered only if the speaker *S* has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of *p*.

Rule 3: *Assert* is to be uttered only if it is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *H* knows (does not need to be reminded of etc.) *p*.

⁸⁴ Questions: what does ‘following the rule’ amount to? Is this the right predicate to use with respect to this kind of rules? How does one violate the rule? If one knows the rule and one intends to perform the act it describes, then one either does the act or does not the act; there is no possibility for one to be in violation of the rule of F-ing, for one would not be describable as F-ing or as having F-ed in the first place. I return to that in Part II.

⁸⁵ As Kreckel (1981) observes, it is not clear what Searle means by ‘extracting’ the rules from the conditions and how it is even possible.

⁸⁶ It may be objected that the speaker does in fact use the expressions according to the rules for the type of act he literally performs. But if the literal act comes off successfully, what would be the hearer’s cue to look for another act – the intended act?

⁸⁷ This was pointed out by Ransdell (1971:394, footnote 8). The rules for the use and the meaning/descriptive convention can probably be equated, but it is not clear which would be constitutive: whether meaning conventions are constitutive of the way we use the sign or the way we use the sign is constitutive of the meaning of the sign.

Rule 4: *Assert* is to be uttered only if S believes *p*.

Rule 5: The utterance of *Assert* counts as the undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs.

In the semiotic reading, we get a complex linguistic sign that counts as the performance of an illocutionary act, and this in virtue of its meaning; or, in other words, we get that performing an illocutionary act is the uttering of a complex linguistic sign according to rules, and, further, that the uttering of this complex linguistic sign is constitutive of the act under scrutiny. Asserting (but also any other illocutionary act) thus has one constitutive feature: it consists in uttering some expression containing an IFID of asserting. I will return to that.

In later developments of the theory, we learn that communication is not necessary for the possibility of illocutionary acts. That is, we do not need to direct our utterance at an audience for it to be an illocutionary act, but in order for the act to be non-defective, it needs to be directed at an audience (Searle 2002:144). In other words, the illocutionary act, being the basic unit of speaker-meaning and the basic unit of communication at the same time, is fully determined, albeit defective, in language. This means that although the description of the act itself does not change, the act is sufficiently determined by the intention to utter/form/think of a representation of the act and communication is necessary for the non-defectiveness but not for the possibility of the illocutionary act altogether. How does that affect the necessary and sufficient conditions of the illocutionary act of assertion? For asserting (although defectively⁸⁸), then, it is sufficient that we just utter or think *Assert* (which is the IFID for asserting; illocutionary force indicating devices are conventional realizations of the rules in question, that is, there are expressions or items or structural elements that are part of language, that bear intrinsically a representation of the rules in question) in the context of the sentence T in silent soliloquy (rule 1), T exemplifying a proposition that we reasonably (rule 2) believe (rule 4) to be true and to be unknown or forgotten by an arbitrary/any/every audience (rule 3), and our utterance of T or our thinking of T counts as undertaking to the effect that T represents an actual state of affairs (rule 5).

There are two different claims that are made by the wording of these rules: first, the claim that the act of asserting is thereby intrinsically defined (that is, when confronted with verbal behavior people are able to say that such behavior is asserting), and second, that these rules underlie the semantic representation of language (any language and all languages). The

⁸⁸ What does it mean to perform a successful but defective illocutionary act? For the speaker, for the hearer and the entire speech situation – if the act takes effect nonetheless, what is the effect of the defectiveness? These questions are not addressed in Searle's exposition.

rules are then simultaneously rules defining the kind of behavior that illocutionary acts name and are rules that account for meaning. Such an explication is circular, for it amounts to saying that first, in virtue of its meaning an expression counts as a performance of act A; second, an expression has the meaning it does due to a set of constitutive rules that underlie the semantic representation of language; and third, the performance of act A is defined by a set of constitutive rules which underlie the semantic structure of languages. Thus, Searlean theory seems to define illocutionary acts using meaning and meaning using illocutionary acts⁸⁹.

Matters get even more complicated by the statement that not all illocutionary acts are constituted by rules:

The test for whether or not a particular type of speech act requires constitutive rules can now be stated generally: Does the content of the meaning intention or of the communicative intention make reference to *entities* that require the existence of constitutive rules? (Searle 2002:153, my emphasis)

The meaning intention, as was already mentioned, determines the (albeit defective) illocutionary act type. To know the content of the meaning intention is *eo ipso* to know the description of the illocutionary act type. So we are supposed to decide whether or not an illocutionary act type must be constituted by rules by relying on a conception of the illocutionary act type. But having a conception of that illocutionary act type presupposes that we know whether or not it is constituted by rules. The account gets circular again. Unless we pick on the italicized word and introduce yet another complication in the analysis. It would suggest that the reference to certain entities is what requires constitutive rules. Here constitutive rules seem to refer to an additional institution that provides the framework for analyzing the entities in question. The existence of this institution then is what defines (or underlies) the actions: we only speak of promises because there exists the institution of obligations and we only speak of assertion because of the institution of commitment. Requests and greetings, on the other hand, do not require an extra-linguistic institution, so these acts do not require constitutive rules. I will quote the explanation at length:

⁸⁹ This circularity is also exposed by Dörge (2004) and generalized by Love (1999:23) in the following terms: “What is ‘in’ a language is a set or sets of self-identifying entities that can be cited by using the language according to its own ‘rules’. This painful circularity is the root cause of the unsatisfactoriness of Searle’s account of linguistic ‘rules’. Despite his attempt to establish the analogy, linguistic rules ‘constitute’ a language in a sense quite different from that in which the relevant rules constitute, say, chess. It is as if the rules of chess could only be formulated by making the moves that the rules define.”

It may be objected that Searle meant speaker meaning, not meaning in general, but it is difficult to argue for this objection, bearing in mind the dangerous equation of both kinds of meaning in the exposition of 1969 (see chapter 1).

So, for example, if I make a simple request to someone, then I need to represent the state of affairs that I wish brought about and I need to communicate to the hearer the representation of this state of affairs and that my speech act will be satisfied only if the hearer brings about that state of affairs in virtue of the fact that I have performed the speech act. But I don't in addition need to make reference to any institutional notions, such as commitment or obligation. (Searle 2002:153)

Interestingly, in Searle 1969, both requests and greetings followed the traditional speech act paradigm: they required constitutive rules, which can be clearly seen in the formulation of their essential conditions (1969:66-67) in the "X counts as Y in context C" form. Speech acts fall into two kinds, then: institutional and simple (whatever that means).

Among the different descriptions of the act of assertion in Searle's writings, there is no clear indication whether or not the requirement of constitutive rules should be dropped. The 1985 description only points out that asserting consists in the speaker's adopting of a special stance towards the propositional content: there is no reference to any institutional notion, so there is no demand for constitutive rules.

So performing an illocutionary act is to utter a complex linguistic sign that may or may not be subject to constitutive rules.

Illocutionary acts are essentially linguistic, and thus, conventional.

It is in general possible to have a linguistic convention to the effect that such and such utterance counts as the performance of an illocutionary act. (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:12)

In comparison, perlocutionary acts such as persuading are not conventional, because "there is no way that a conventional performance can guarantee that you are persuaded" (Searle and Vanderveken, *ibid.*). Informing, ordering and promising are illocutionary acts. The conventions of informing guarantee that you are thereby informed, the conventions of ordering guarantee that you are thereby obliged to do an action, the conventions of promising guarantee that the speaker has thereby undertaken an obligation. The conventions of asserting guarantee that the speaker is thereby committed to the belief that *p*. So the conventions of illocutionary acts guarantee a special conventional effect on the participants involved. Illocutionary acts bring about changes, these changes being intrinsic to the act in question, because they are brought about conventionally. These changes are referred to in various ways throughout the development of the theory: first, they are mentioned as illocutionary effects (following Austin), then they are mentioned as being illocutionary points realized in the performance of the act. However these may be called, it is important to underline that these

effects (or illocutionary points) are not due to linguistic conventions. Linguistic conventions cannot guarantee that an utterance is the performance of the speech act of assertion.

But these changes, it would transpire, are not a necessary condition of the possibility of illocutionary acts, as we can perform speech acts to people with whom one shares no common language (Searle 2002:152). Assuming that both the meaning intention and the communicative intention are present (though not fulfilled), then the sufficient conditions for the existence of illocutionary acts obtain. In such a case our statements would not commit us to anything, our promises would not put us under any obligations (in other words, the conventional effect that is conventionally associated with the particular illocutionary act is not brought about), but our illocutionary acts come into existence and this is what matters.

These fluctuating requirements make it difficult to see what the common distinctive feature of the class of illocutionary acts is supposed to be. Or else, what is it that illocutionary acts do, seeing that they do not require communication or a target/audience, and they do not change the world in any socially significant way? It seems that various illocutionary acts require different conditions in their description. The class of illocutionary acts turns out to be an extremely heterogeneous class of doings that are difficult to define.

3.2. The seven components of illocutionary force:

Instead of providing a definition of the notion of illocutionary act, Searle describes initially twelve characteristics, which are later reduced to seven components of illocutionary force (these are italicized in the list below). These components are supposed to define uniquely every illocutionary force type⁹⁰.

1. *Illocutionary point*
2. Direction of fit (1976)
3. *Degree of strength of the illocutionary point*
4. Utterance in relation to the rest of discourse (1976)
5. Acts that always must to be speech acts vs. these that must not (1976)
6. Extra-linguistic institution (1976)
7. Acts that have performative verbs vs. these that do not (1976)
8. *Mode of achievement*

⁹⁰ I will discuss the taxonomic problems in chapter 4. I will, therefore, limit my discussion in this section to the defining characteristic – illocutionary point.

9. *Propositional content conditions*

10. *Preparatory conditions* (Relative status of speaker and hearer (1976); Utterance in relation to S and H interests (1976))

11. *Sincerity conditions* (Expressed psychological state (1976))

12. *Degree of strength of sincerity conditions*

The use of the components is straightforward: in “A Taxonomy” these components are supposed to provide a reliable basis for distinguishing illocutionary acts one from the other, since any reliance on differences in the illocutionary verbs does not yield a valid distinction. In “Foundations of illocutionary logic” the seven components of the illocutionary force determine under which conditions that type of illocutionary act is both successful and non-defective (1985:13). Such a presentation would suggest that all of the seven components must be conjointly present for the act to be what it is.

Illocutionary point is introduced in Searle (1976) and it is explained as being a defining and characteristic trait of illocutionary acts grafted on the essential conditions, so it is the most important of all the components of illocutionary force. It provides the basis for the taxonomy of illocutionary acts in terms of guaranteeing a disjunctive classification. The following requirement can be spelled out:

Illocutionary point requirement: Issuance T is an illocutionary act A because it has the illocutionary point I. Act A’s having illocutionary point I means that it cannot have any other illocutionary point, as illocutionary point is an intrinsic defining characteristic of act A.

In order to get a full characterization of an illocutionary force we need all of the components. The term is not defined, nor is it defined in Searle and Vanderveken (1985) where it is formalized:

The notion of illocutionary point is the fundamental undefined primitive notion of illocutionary logic. (...) We believe a formal definition of this notion could be given within a theory of intentionality, but as such a theory goes beyond the scope of this book, we will simply list the various illocutionary points of possible utterances and thus define the notion in extension. (Searle and Vanderveken, 1985:37)

Following remarks by Siebel (2002) and Dörge (2004), illocutionary point is hardly a primitive notion that does not require additional explanation. It certainly requires a definition being used as a technical term. What Searle and Vanderveken thought constituted a definition

by extension cannot even begin to form any foundation of an understanding of the term. The point of asserting is to say how things are. The point of commissives is to commit the speaker to doing something. The point of expressives is to express feelings and attitudes. The point of directives is to try to get other people to do things. The point of declarations is to change the world by saying so. It is not clear, for example, whether if we had a sixth category (as Searlean assertive declarations) we could use the apparently intuitive knowledge about what an illocutionary point is to pinpoint its illocutionary point. The authors postulate the existence of only five illocutionary points, the only motivation for which seems to be a reference to Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. There is nothing in the theoretical construction of the components that should point to there being only five illocutionary forces, and without any definition of the notions involved this seems as another one of the *ad hoc* axioms validating a random and arbitrary feature. The impression of randomness is increased when we consider that some of the components seem to be tailored for some of the illocutionary categories but not others. Thus, the category of declarations does not have a degree of strength of the illocutionary point; the mode of achievement is qualitatively different and operates with notions that are not part of the other categories⁹¹.

Further, if someone was to challenge one or other illocutionary point, there is nothing we could present as an argument to support Searle's claim⁹². There is nothing in the alleged principles that could operate restrictions. Searle claims that illocutionary point determines the direction of fit. But consider the following: as Siebel (2002) points out, the illocutionary point of expressives is realized in the performance of other acts too. Assertives are expressions of the psychological state of belief; directives are expressions of the psychological state of desire; commissives are expressions of the psychological state of intention. Then it turns out that the same illocutionary point determines different directions of fit. It may be objected that in expressives the illocutionary point is paired with a special propositional content, but when we discuss the theoretical foundation of acts the notion of force is contrasted with content, and the illocutionary point is only a part of the force.

In Searle and Vanderveken we find the following remark regarding illocutionary point:

A speaker can be committed to an illocutionary point that he does not explicitly achieve. Thus, for example, if he promises to carry out a future action he is committed to the illocutionary point of the assertion that he will carry out that course of action, even though he may not have explicitly *asserted* that he will do it. (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:15, emphasis in the original)

⁹¹ This and other issues will be discussed in chapter 4.

⁹² This is a point raised by Dörge (2004:197).

In this remark we unearth an interesting distinction regarding illocutionary point: a speaker can be committed to an illocutionary point and can achieve (explicitly and, I speculate, implicitly) an illocutionary point. It is not clear what it means for a speaker to be committed to an illocutionary point. This claim is all the more puzzling for it contradicts the **Illocutionary point requirement** that we reconstructed above. The reason behind this claim is completely obscure. Both acts involve different communicative intentions and invoke different concepts. In Searle's account, promising involves the speaker's undertaking an obligation, whereas asserting is having a certain stance towards a propositional content. Does the fact that the speaker is committed to the illocutionary point of assertion in this case entail that the speaker performs an assertion in addition to the promise? But the illocutionary point is just one part of the overall illocutionary force of assertions, and this point is not even realized, it is not achieved. If the point is not achieved, then the act is not successfully performed. There is nothing that would suggest the speaker actually intending to assert that she will carry out that course of action (unless it is a necessary condition on promising that the speaker should also assert the sincerity condition). If we start from the premise that only the promise has been performed, as the quote suggests, then how are we to understand the speaker's commitment to an illocutionary point? This claim is so obscure that it begs the following question: what is the requirement for a speaker to be committed to an illocutionary point other than the one she achieves in performing an illocutionary act? Can the speaker be committed to the illocutionary point of asserting that the meeting is terminated in declaring the meeting terminated? This phenomenon is called illocutionary commitment by the authors. There are illocutionary acts the performance of which commits the speaker to other illocutionary points in two types of situations: first, when the performance of one act is *eo ipso* the performance of the other, and second, "where the performance of the one is not a performance of the other and does not involve the speaker in a commitment to its explicit performance" (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:23). For example, an order commits the speaker to the illocutionary act of permission, because there is no way for the speaker to issue an order and deny the permission. It is trivially true that the simultaneous performance of an order and denial of permission concerning the same action of the hearer is contradictory and would be self-destructive for both the order and the denied permission. But does this inconsistency necessarily mean that the speaker is committed to granting permission in giving an order? Granting permission has as part of its conditions that the speaker is not opposed to the hearer's doing A, with a possible supplement that maybe the hearer desires to do A. The speaker is not attempting to get the hearer to do A, and there is nothing that would suggest

that the speaker actually desires that the hearer do A. The speaker's attitude towards the hearer's doing A is neutral: she does not desire it, but she is not opposed to it. One additional trait in permissions is that the status of A was not clear. In orders, on the contrary, the speaker desires the hearer to do A and the order is the actual attempt to get the hearer to do it. It is true that if the speaker is attempting to get the hearer to do A, then she is not opposed to the hearer's doing A. There is nothing to suggest, for the order, that the hearer actually wants to do A, quite the opposite, there is nothing that indicates that the hearer would do A, unless he is ordered to do it. This action A was not previously forbidden. When the speaker orders the hearer to do A, the hearer is required to do A. If he does not do it, he will be guilty of disobedience. In permissions, the hearer is free to do A if he so wishes. But if he does not do A, he is not guilty of anything. These acts have different illocutionary points, different intentions condition their performance and it is not clear why the performance of one should commit the speaker to the other.

Another example involves the class of assertives: a report commits the speaker to an assertion, reminding commits the speaker to an assertion, giving testimony commits the speaker to an assertion and complaining commits the speaker to an assertion. The generalization is worth quoting at length:

“As a general definition we can say that an illocutionary act of the form $F_1(P_1)$ commits the speaker to an illocutionary act $F_2(P_2)$ iff in the successful performance of $F_1(P_1)$:

- 1) The speaker achieves (strong) or is committed (weak) to the illocutionary point of F_2 on P_2 with the required mode of achievement and degree of strength of F_2 .
- 2) He is committed to all of the preparatory conditions of $F_2(P_2)$ and to the propositional presuppositions.
- 3) He commits himself to having the psychological state specified by the sincerity conditions of $F_2(P_2)$ with the required degree of strength.
- 4) P_2 satisfies the propositional content of F_2 with respect to the context of utterance.” (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:24)

This paragraph still does not provide an answer as to what being committed to an illocutionary point amounts to. If the illocutionary point is achieved, then the act this illocutionary point defines is performed. In that case, nearly all of the members of the assertive class would entail the performance of the illocutionary act of assertion, just because they achieve (strong) the illocutionary point of assertion. The effect of the commitment (weak) is less clear. It is safe to say that the act of permission is certainly not performed in ordering. What are the ramifications of the illocutionary commitment? Is it a spelled-out

constraint for the speaker that she should not perform a denial of permission? It would be better qualified as expectations of the hearer for appropriate behavior on the part of the speaker.

In the same vein we could claim that in promising the speaker is committed to the expressive illocutionary point of expressing the intention to carry out the course of action, though she may not have explicitly expressed the intention in addition to her being committed to the illocutionary point of assertion. This begs the questions first, how it is possible and second, what is the theoretical use of such an explanation? It does not tell us anything new about the act of promising and it does not add in any way to the proper explanation of linguistic behavior. All it does is breach the disjunction requirement. Incidentally, Searle's class of assertive declarations also violates the **Illocutionary point requirement** in that it combines the features of two different classes of illocutionary acts, and so we end up with acts that have two illocutionary points: that of assertives and that of declarations.

This leads to another problem: what is it for an act to have an illocutionary point? In Searle and Vanderveken we are told that:

By saying that the illocutionary act is internal to the type of illocutionary act, we mean simply that a successful performance of an act of that type necessarily achieves that purpose and it achieves it in virtue of being an act of that type. (1985:14)

Siebel (2002) points out that there are two readings of what it is for an act to have illocutionary point. First, the illocutionary point is achieved in the performance of the act regardless of the speaker's intentions. Second, the illocutionary point must be both intended and achieved if the act is to be successful. Both readings present difficulties. The quoted explanation seems to suggest the first reading. But as the term of illocutionary point is 'extracted' from the essential condition on illocutionary acts, this reading is not compatible with it, since the essential condition specifies the speaker's intention in the performance of the act (intention which intrinsically defines the act itself). This reading is corroborated by the phenomenon of illocutionary commitment, which, roughly, ties the performance of particular illocutionary acts to committing the speaker to illocutionary points that are not intrinsic to them. The second reading is not compatible with the component of sincerity, which specifies the presence or absence of the psychological state the speaker necessarily expresses in the performance of an act. Thus, an insincere promise is commitment to do something without the intention to do it. If the presence of the psychological state or intention really is internal and intrinsic to the act itself, then insincere acts should not be possible (the point is made in Siebel

2002). The introduction of the notion in Searle and Vanderveken 1985 exhibits a minor case of circularity. The seven components of illocutionary force define the successful and non-defective performance of acts. So, illocutionary acts are described by their components. But then we are told that the illocutionary point is necessarily achieved in the successful performance of the act. That is, the achievement of the point depends on the successful performance of the act. For issuance T to be an act A, it must have the illocutionary point I; and if T is a successful realization of act A, then the point I is achieved. But the achievement of the illocutionary point is one of the conditions for the successful performance of the illocutionary act of that type; that is, if the point is achieved, the act is successful. The old circularity problem resurfaces once more.

The features degree of strength and mode of achievement are closely linked to illocutionary point in that it is the illocutionary point that is realized in different degrees of strength and modes. Some of the components may “approach or even reach zero”, as we can observe in the following examples of acts: conjecturing and hypothesizing have the zero degree of strength of the illocutionary point, assertions have the null mode of achievement and null propositional content conditions. In the case of assertion the null mode of achievement does not exclude achievement of the illocutionary point; it only means that the point is achieved in a kind of default or neutral mode. The same is true for the null propositional content conditions: there is nothing that can be required as restrictions on the content. But consider the null degree of strength: if conjecturing has the zero degree of strength of the illocutionary point, then the degree to which the speaker is committed to the state of affairs *p* in hypothesizing is zero. This means that the speaker is actually not committed to the state of affairs at all. But the speaker’s lack of commitment in the case of hypothesizing means that the illocutionary point of this kind of illocutionary act type is not achieved, which contradicts the idea that illocutionary point is a necessary distinguishing component of illocutionary force. The conclusion we ought to draw from this case is that either hypothesizing is not an act of the assertive type, or that we need a revision of the notion of illocutionary point. It is not clear how these components can be necessary when they seem to be missing in many illocutionary act types.

3.3. Intention

Performing illocutionary acts is engaging in an intentional activity. Illocutionary acts are realizations of very complex intentions. In the table below I summarize the different intentions that come into play in the performance of illocutionary acts.

<i>Act level</i>	<i>Intention</i>	<i>Realization of intention</i>
Propositional act = predicate act + reference act	Intention to refer Intention to predicate	It produces the utterance of a referring expression R that should pick out or identify X to the hearer; It produces the utterance of expression <i>p</i> that should raise the question of the truth or falsity of <i>p</i> of X; Together, the realization of these intentions produce a proposition (1)
Illocutionary act = linguistic act	Meaning intention Illocutionary intention Intention to realize the illocutionary point of the act Intention to represent	Produces an utterance with a meaning that should have conditions of satisfaction that are proper to that particular illocutionary act (2) Language shapes the possibility of illocutionary acts – illocutionary acts are sufficiently described by the intention to represent (3)
Communicative act	Intention to communicate	The act is intentionally directed at an audience - the hearer's recognizing the meaning intention and the intention of the speaker to have the intention to communicate recognized. (4)

- (1) Since the propositional content is the content of the illocutionary act the speaker attempts to perform, it is the particular illocutionary act which determines the mode in which the intention to predicate is realized. As such, the speaker's attempt to assert that *p* (which can be semi-formally represented in the following way R be P, where R is a referring expression and P is the predicate expression) determines that P is realized for R in the assertive mode⁹³.
- (2) When I assert that there are a lot of articles on the speech act of assertion, the intention behind my utterance is a) that the intention should produce an utterance; and b) that the utterance should have as conditions of satisfaction with the word-to-world direction of fit that the thing asserted represents an actual state of affairs.

⁹³ Incidentally, the use of the phrase "assertive mode" is ambiguous between assertive-genus and assertive-act-type: consider the utterance of a sentence such as "You made it" which can be uttered to perform an expressive and an assertive act in different situations. Do we say that, in the case where it is used to perform an expressive, the predication is realized in the expressive illocutionary mode? If so, how can the claim that illocutionary force is determined by sentence meaning be sustained?

- (3) Such as they are presented, the meaning intention and the intention to represent may seem an unnecessary reiteration; indeed, the intention to represent is a later refinement in disentangling all the relevant intentions. The intention to represent is a later gloss of the idea that illocutionary acts are contained in language by the language's being a realization of underlying rules. One cannot communicate without intending to represent; that is, meaning intentions are somewhat prior to the intention to communicate (Searle 1983:166). The intention to represent is explained in the following terms: suppose that, according to a prearrangement, my raising the arm should count as a signal that the enemy has retreated. Then my raising my arm would count as an expression of belief that the enemy has retreated because it is performed with the intention that its conditions of satisfaction are precisely those of the belief. My action is meaningful in the linguistic sense because those conditions of satisfaction are intentionally imposed on it. The conditions of satisfaction of my intention are that my arm should go up, and its going up has conditions of satisfaction which in the example are truth conditions (Searle 1983:168). Similarly, my utterance "the enemy has retreated" is a meaningful statement because conditions of satisfaction are intentionally imposed on it: that my intention to produce the utterance has as conditions of satisfaction the production of the utterance which in turn has as its conditions of satisfaction truth conditions.
- (4) The practical use of separating the intention to communicate from the intention to represent is accounting for cases of soliloquy (speaker achieves meaning and does not intend to communicate anything to anybody) and cases in which the speaker produces all the meaningful sounds infused with the intention to represent the particular illocutionary act determined by these meaning intentions, but does not communicate (the speaker yells insults at foreign customs officers in her own language fully aware that they will not understand her). The success conditions of an illocutionary act performance are that both the intention to represent and the intention to communicate must be satisfied. However, since we admit of cases of soliloquy as being cases of the speaker's performing illocutionary acts, then the intention to communicate is not achieved since there is no audience and the speaker cannot possibly mean to communicate. It is then the case that some illocutionary acts can be successful even without the intention to communicate. This is corroborated by the following remark:

Of course, in the case of orders especially, and even in the case of some commissives (such as promises, though not for the case of other commissives such as vows), the speech act only takes effect if it is

understood by a hearer, only if, to use Austin's jargon, we achieve "illocutionary uptake". (Searle 2002:148)

This remark implies that there are acts such as vows, for instance, that do not require illocutionary uptake; that it, for a vow to be made, no hearer needs to recognize the intention of the speaker to make a vow. But, the insistence that orders require that the hearer recognize the intention of the speaker to make an order is not clear, since it is hardly part of the felicity conditions of ordering that the hearer actually does the action ordered. Thus, the generalization that the meaning intention alone determines a defective illocutionary act is here contradicted.

Gricean intentions, which account for non-natural meaning in producing utterances, are ultimately partially rejected by Searle. The reasons for his objections to Gricean intentions change over the different stages of development of his program of speech acts. At the beginning, he stresses that meaning cannot be solely produced by intending that the utterance means exactly this, because meaning is conventionally bound. On a later stage, the focus of the objection is that Gricean intentions that are important for producing meaning cannot be intentions to produce effects on audiences. The meaning intentions are intentions to represent and they are completely separate from intentions to communicate. The generalizing character that the discussion of these problems takes reveals one important fallacy: that neglecting to clarify precisely the way one uses a certain term (be it technical or common⁹⁴) can undermine the best effort to construct an explanation of related issues. The disturbingly unclear use of "meaning" throughout all of Searle's writings makes it difficult to assess the actual quality of his allegations. I have already pointed out the equation of speaker-meaning and sentence-meaning in the initial introduction of his theory of speech acts. In later expositions, "meaning" is even a larger concept. Consider the following paragraph:

The problem of meaning would arise even for people who are communicating with each other without using a common language. It sometimes happens to me in a foreign country, for example, when I attempt to communicate with people who share no common language with me. In such a situation the problem of meaning arises in acute form, and my question is: What is it about my intentions in such a situation that makes them specifically meaning intentions? (Searle 1983:162)

It is difficult to explain what exactly is "meaning" in this paragraph. As no common language is shared by the participants in the conversation, they cannot rely on conventional means to mean things (roughly, to let the others know about intentions, desires, beliefs etc.). Then non-

⁹⁴ If it is a common term, the problem is even bigger.

conventional means, such as gestures, become infused with intentionality which gives meaning to them. But if we consider solely non-linguistic instances such as this, we cannot help but accept the idea that whatever means of expressing our desires, intentions, beliefs or whatnot we choose to employ, these means actually serve the purpose of letting others know about the desires, intentions, beliefs etc. So it would follow that even if we accept the divisions between meaning intention and communicative intention, they are interrelated in that they are mutually co-referential: our meaning intention is conditioned by the intention to communicate, and our intention to communicate cannot come off without the meaning intention. Construed in such a way, meaning intention cannot be descriptive or representative: it does not provide description or reference to the intentional states; it realizes them, but only with the intention to communicate.

3.4. Summary

I am now in a position to summarize what is left of Searle's program of finding an explication to the notion of illocutionary acts. I will use the conditions of adequacy I tentatively outlined in chapter 1 and selected claims which constitute the foundation of Searle's theory of speech acts that I list below:

- a) Illocutionary acts consist in the production or issuance of linguistic tokens under certain conditions (1969:16)
- b) The linguistic tokens must be produced with certain kinds of intentions (1969:16). Whenever a speaker utters a sentence in an appropriate context with certain intentions, he performs one or more illocutionary acts. (1985:1)
- c) **Thesis:** The semantic structure of a language is a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules and speech acts are acts characteristically performed by uttering expressions in accordance with these rules (1969:37)
- d) The meaning of the sentence determines an illocutionary force of its utterances in such a way that serious utterances of it with that literal meaning will have that particular force (Searle 1968). (Or later: illocutionary force is a component of meaning (Searle and Vanderveken 1985))
- e) **MC (meaning claim):** Sentence meaning determines both utterance meaning and speaker-meaning.
- f) **IFID Axiom:** every sentence contains an IFID.

- g) One way to understand the notion of an illocutionary act is in terms of the notion of the conditions of its successful and non-defective performance (Searle and Vanderveken, 1985:12)
- h) Illocutionary acts are encoded in language, and find a token representation in the intention to represent (Searle 1986); thus, communication is not needed for illocutionary acts, as communication is another complex intention that goes beyond the token representation of illocutionary acts. (But for a successful and non-defective performance of illocutionary acts both intentions must be present and fulfilled)
- i) **Axiom 1:** The conditions of success for the performance of the act are – except for the general conditions on any kind of linguistic communication [those are the input-output conditions] – a function of the meaning of the sentence. (1968)

First, Searle concentrates on fully explicit external manifestations of illocutionary acts, making it a necessary condition for performing an illocutionary act that the speaker utters a grammatically well-formed sentence. Such an approach restricts the scope of the analysis proposed by Searle to sentences the serious and literal utterance of which determines the illocutionary act that is thereby performed. The definition of illocutionary act we thereby derive is the following:

Illocutionary act I (definition I): to perform an illocutionary act is to utter a meaningful sentence, which is the realization of underlying constitutive rules for the type of act being performed. The illocutionary effect is the hearer's understanding of the sentence uttered.

This definition suggests that no illocutionary act can be performed unless a sentence is uttered:

With these very few sorts of exception [sentences such as “Ouch” or “Damn” – M.C.], all illocutionary acts have a propositional content and hence (with such exceptions) all performances of illocutionary acts are performances of propositional acts. (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:9)

This definition displays another difficulty with Searle's analysis: circularity. The analysis of illocutionary acts should not mention the term illocutionary act; however, the conditions for the performance of illocutionary acts make reference to the act itself.

Second, these external manifestations are subject to certain conditions which we can divide into conditions that pertain to the linguistic tokens and conditions pertaining to the production (or use) of the linguistic tokens. Thus, on the one hand, the semantic structure of the language is a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules; on the other hand, linguistic tokens must be produced with certain kinds of intentions. The first of these conditions is translated into a Meaning Claim, which in turn allows for the IFID Axiom, which is perfectly consistent with **definition I**. The second condition is problematic in that it does not seem to be a sufficient condition (according to Searle's objection to Gricean analysis of non-natural meaning, meaning is also "at least sometimes a matter of convention" – 1969:45), but also it does not seem to be necessary that the speaker does indeed have the appropriate intention - in performing an action the speaker will count as having the intention required by the illocutionary act. Further, the conventionality of the illocutionary acts has the consequence that in case of a felicitous or successful performance of an illocutionary act (which, according to the definition above, consists in seriously uttering a sentence with the appropriate IFID), all conditions that are supposed to accompany it necessarily obtain. The mixture between intention and convention in the explication of illocutionary acts makes it difficult to account for the way in which illocutionary acts actually come about. The complicated way in which acts are supposed to be conventional relies on meaning and indicating devices, but also on constitutive rules, which are realized in the semantic structure of languages. I already argued for the implausibility of the IFID Axiom. The explication of the notion of illocutionary act in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions cannot succeed, for there are always one or more types of acts which do not require the condition in question.

Third, it is not clear what the scope of the theory should be: is it a way to account for communication or a way to account for meaning? This question arises from the fact that at an early stage of its development, the theory requires that the speaker produce a linguistic token that must be understood by the hearer (as is seen from the definition above). As Searle will have it, this is a theory of meaning-in-communication. At a later stage, however, communication is not required for the possibility of speech acts. Illocutionary acts are part of a study of *langue* (Searle 1969); as such, they are encoded in every meaningful sentence of a particular language. The intention to represent already consists in a propositional content in a certain illocutionary mode; the intention to communicate is simply the intention to convey that representation to a hearer. We obtain the following definition of illocutionary act:

Illocutionary act II (definition II): To perform an illocutionary act is to realize an intention to represent a particular intentional state with a particular propositional content. This intention is realized in the ability of the speaker to form meaningful sentences.

Or:

To perform an illocutionary act is to realize the meaning intentions by intentionally imposing conditions of satisfaction on conditions of satisfaction.

This second definition of illocutionary act does not make reference to any target of the act, since a representation of illocutionary acts does not require communication. It is not clear how specific acts such as an order or an apology could realize their conditions of satisfaction, when they contain a reference to a target. As already mentioned, Searle explicitly confirms that some acts of the directive and the commissive type, necessarily require that a hearer understand that they are being performed, so these acts do not conform to the suggested definition. There are two possibilities out of this situation: either the definition is not adequate, or some directives and some commissives are not illocutionary acts.

Fourth, in Searle's theory speech acts create institutional facts (as opposed to brute facts) which are the realizations of the acts themselves. These facts are social in character and they exist against the background of a human institution. The spelling of the constitutive rule "X counts as Y in context C" contains a reference to non-natural effects Y that are produced in the performance of an illocutionary act. But not all of the successful acts create conventional (and thus non-natural) effects – assertion should conventionally commit the speaker to the belief that *p*, but in the absence of a taker this commitment is not realized.

The recursive definition of the notion of illocutionary force and illocutionary act that we get from Searle and Vanderveken (1985:20) is:

Illocutionary force: An illocutionary force is uniquely determined once its illocutionary point, its preparatory conditions, the mode of achievement of its illocutionary point, the degree of strength of its illocutionary point, its propositional content conditions, its sincerity conditions, and the degree of strength of its sincerity conditions are specified.

The difficulties with this definition are provided in this chapter. To highlight only the most prominent ones, it is not clear what it means for an act to have an illocutionary point. If it is the act that has the illocutionary point or if it is in the performance of the act that the

illocutionary point is realized, then it is not clear how one act can commit the speaker to an illocutionary point which is not explicitly achieved in the performance of the act in question. It is not clear how illocutionary point can enable the elaboration of a disjunctive classification of acts. The components of the illocutionary force are not explicated in such a way as to enable the description of novel illocutionary act types. Some of the components can reach zero, which means that we cannot support the claim that they are individually necessary for an act to be an act of a particular type.

To take up on Cohen's question from the opening paragraph, it exhibits a major flaw in the entire approach to illocutionary acts. It should not be possible to look at the sentence "Jones will pay Smith five dollars" and say that it is best analyzed into an assertive IFID and the proposition /Jones will pay Smith five dollars/, because the sentence does not encode any indication as to the communicative intention of the speaker, any indication as to the conversational setting, the hearer and other contextual features that may help the hearer shape up the intended act. Now that we know that illocutionary acts can be performed without realizing any intention to communicate, we still face the same problem. If we take the intention to represent to be an intention that is realized relatively to a certain setting, a certain time and a certain occasion, it will turn out that illocutionary acts depend on a lot of extra-linguistic features in order to be shaped up. But then it is not the sentence that exhibits as part of its meaning the illocutionary force it has. It is the particular speaker on a particular occasion. After all, it is the speaker who performs illocutionary acts, not sentences. The fact that we are unable to consistently answer questions about illocutionary acts in Searle's framework has the following implications (with the assumption that illocutionary acts are a tangible phenomenon of intentional behavior): the framework is not suitable to account for the phenomenon at hand.

The results of Searle's program are not very encouraging: the somewhat confusing account of illocutionary acts it sketches does not allow us to decide of any new linguistic performance whether or not this performance constitutes an illocutionary act. Such as it is, the theory does not allow us to say why, for example, asserting is an illocutionary act. If there was a person saying that asserting is not an illocutionary act, there is nothing in the theory that could help us to argue that asserting is an illocutionary act.

Chapter 4: How many speech acts? Taxonomy and analysis

4.1. Taxonomic principles: an overview

When we speak about illocutionary acts, we use names such as “assertion”, “order”, “request”, “apology” etc. Naming these phenomena presupposes that these names refer to discrete types of acts that differ in some respects from one another. Probably the best known taxonomy of illocutionary acts is that proposed by Searle (1976). But the taxonomy of speech acts has been quite a controversial issue in speech act theoretic research. It seems that the idea that speech act categories are pragmatic universals⁹⁵ regardless of the linguistic means used to perform them and the specific language of the speaker is somewhat lost in the taxonomy of Searle (1979[1976]), which seeks a syntactic distinction for every illocutionary type, and in Vanderveken (1990) who presents a semantic analysis of illocutionary verbs. Austin’s taxonomy is criticized for its overlapping categories, Searle’s taxonomy for its focus on illocutionary verbs semantics; Vendler (1972) adds two more categories of illocutionary acts, Bach and Harnish (1979) separate intention-driven from convention-driven acts in a 6-class taxonomy; Allan (1994b,c) proposes four classes isolated according to hearer’s evaluation criteria. Ninio (1986) proposes a text-editing criterion for categorizing illocutions, and Verschueren (1999) isolates a principle explaining the lack of performative verbs naming some illocutionary acts. Sadock (1994) summarizes the efforts and proposes a new criterion for distinguishing speech act types.

From a conventionalist point of view, speech acts must be a finite number of conventionalized social games, though there is a potential for developing more illocutionary types. From an intentionalist point of view, speech acts can be infinitely many, as long as they are motivated by an intention the S has to convey an intentional state. Either way, a detailed taxonomy is bound to a regress, for the proliferation of criteria for distinguishing speech acts can result in lengthy and practically useless taxonomies. The selection of criteria seems at best random, and the usefulness of the taxonomy depends on the purpose of analysis.

Of course, speaking about speech acts is speaking within the framework of a taxonomy, but this does not presuppose the existence of an absolute and definitive taxonomy of speech acts. (Kannetzky 2002:71)

⁹⁵ Searle’s illocutionary act components strongly suggest the view that illocutionary acts are pragmatic universals.

It is not unreasonable to suppose, therefore, that a complete taxonomy of speech acts is an impossible feat. A rather interesting issue arises from the taxonomic controversy and it concerns the status of assertion. Several (if not all) taxonomies take assertion to be representative of the class or category of assertives (representatives) and tend to build up other assertive acts on additional features they have. Thus, admitting is asserting + a special condition on the propositional content. Assertion seems then to be the null case in regard with conditions of accomplishment. This nebulous act of assertion is an easy prey for assertive theories of explicit performatives due to the dangerous and fallacious conflation between propositions (and, by extension, the declarative sentence) and the speech act of assertion.

In pure science, taxonomies are classification systems which first, organize phenomena into groups to facilitate discussion; second, help identify new phenomena of the same type, and third, uniquely define each member by the position it has within the taxonomy and its relationship with other members. An obvious example is the classification of flora and fauna in biology (or else, Mendeleev's periodic table). In speech act theory the taxonomy can have the following purposes: first, defining types of acts and second, predicting new types of acts. This is why any taxonomy should be based on the following principles Searle assumes in the elaboration of his taxonomy: an illocutionary act cannot be a part of more than one class; any class of illocutionary acts is uniquely defined by its characteristics, and classes should not overlap. I wish to argue that Searle's taxonomy, which will be the focus of the discussion in this chapter, breaches all of these principles.

Austin's original taxonomy classifies types of behavior and does not have the pretense to be final nor non-overlapping. It consists of five classes⁹⁶:

- 1) Verdictives – giving a verdict, an estimate, an appraisal, a finding.
- 2) Exercitives – exercising of powers, rights or influence.
- 3) Commissives – commit to something and declare intentions.
- 4) Behabitives – attitudes and social behavior.
- 5) Expositives – how our utterances fit into the discourse.

Intuitively, the organizing principle in Austin's taxonomy appears to be the purpose of the act, the function it fulfils in discourse. Searle's critique of it is sound with respect to the following problems: first, the discreteness of the classes, second, the taxonomy should be

⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that once one has an in-depth understanding of the notion of illocutionary acts Austin outlined in 1962, the much criticized taxonomy of his can get a new reading: it seems to be devised loosely around the conventional effects the acts achieve. Some scholars take it that way and keep on using the original category names (e.g. Sbisà 2001).

classifying acts and not verbs (for convenience, and because there is no other way of doing this, we use illocutionary verbs naming illocutionary acts), and third, the taxonomy should be based on clear and identifiable criteria. Searle's taxonomy, though, suffers from similar weaknesses. These weaknesses are related to the methodological problems that I have already discussed in previous chapters, and this discussion merely confirms the points that I have presented. I will be especially concerned with evaluating the criteria for the taxonomy, and the discreteness of the classes.

4.2. A classification of illocutionary acts

Out of all the twelve components that build up illocutionary force, Searle picks out seven, which ultimately are supposed to define five and only five classes of illocutionary acts. Even more restrictive, Searle claims that the basis for the taxonomy is the illocutionary point (being the most important characteristic of different acts) and its corollaries – direction of fit and the expressed psychological state. These criteria give way to the following classes of illocutionary acts:

- 1) Representatives (assertives): commit the speaker to something's being the case + words-to-world direction of fit + Belief (symbolized B)
- 2) Directives: attempt to get the hearer to do things + world-to-words + Desire (want or wish - W)
- 3) Commissives: commit the speaker to future course of action + world-to-words + Intention (I)
- 4) Expressives: express the psychological state + no direction of fit
- 5) Declarations: declarational illocutionary point + double direction of fit (world-to-words and words-to-world) + no sincerity condition

Note: a subclass of Declarations (which is only mentioned in 1976 and 1979[1976]) Representative (assertive) declarations: the illocutionary point is “issuing a representative with the force of a declaration”, triple direction of fit (the representative words-to-world and the double direction of fit of declarations), the sincerity condition is belief (B).

I offer the symbolic representation of the classes in a table, as it makes it easier to compare:

Act	Illocutionary point	Direction of fit	Psychological state	Propositional content
Representatives	┐	↓	B	P
Directives	!	↑	W	H does A
Commissives	C	↑	I	S does A
Expressives	E	∅		P / S/H + property
Declarations	D	↕	∅	P
Representative declarations	D _r	↕↕	B	P

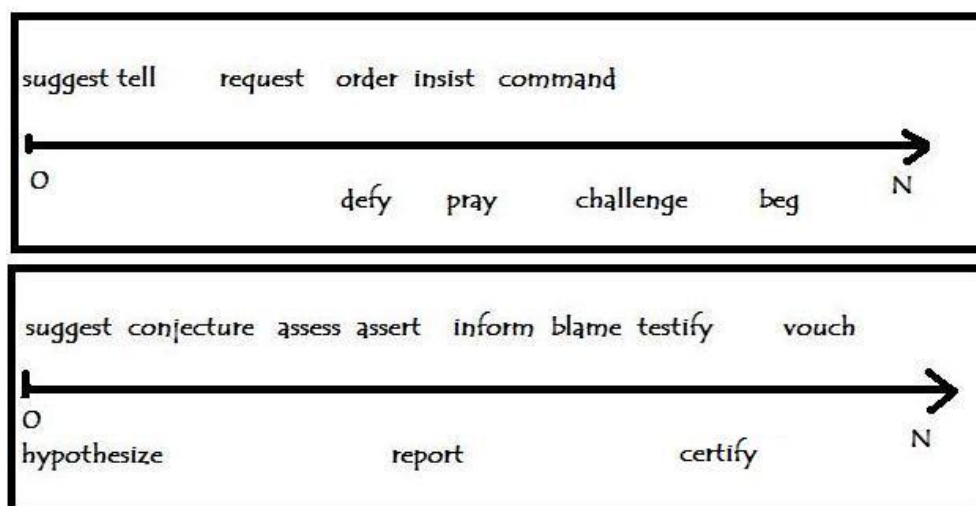
The fact that we have classes that miss some of the defining characteristics and the fact that in categorizing acts we rely on differences of content alone point out that there is something fundamentally wrong with the entire taxonomy. Before going into details, note the absence of any specification in the psychological state of expressives – it is difficult to decide how to fill that slot because the expression of the psychological state is what expressives are about. The zero slots of direction of fit (for expressives) and psychological state (for declarations) can be construed to mean that other classes of acts are possible, containing as their specifications zero slots for one or other feature⁹⁷. This zero slot should put the analyst on their guard for the fact that if a feature is not shared by all of the phenomena, then it cannot be one of the fundamental features on which we base the entire taxonomy. Despite all of the *ad hoc* modifications of the taxonomy in order to accommodate as many acts as possible, it seems that if we can find at least one act that does not fit into any one of the five classes, we can hold the taxonomy to be invalid.

The methodological problems of Searle's exposition are mirrored in his classification of acts. The illocutionary point, which is supposed to be the most important feature of different classes of illocutionary acts, does not really do the job it is supposed to. As it is articulated, the illocutionary point should be the guarantee that the classes are discrete (disjunctive) categories. The internal purpose of performing acts of particular types is articulated in a very awkward way for most of the classes. The additional criteria for the classification depict a fundamentally different way of organizing acts into classes. The class of representatives and the class of directives exhibit the following organizational pattern (different from the other classes): the acts that are part of each of the respective class seem to be different points on a scale or a continuum (even continua) of the force-type. The following tables provide an illustration of this point: first, the assumption is that the acts share one and the same illocutionary point which is depicted as an axis in the graphs. Second, the degree of

⁹⁷ Dörge 2004 made a similar point.

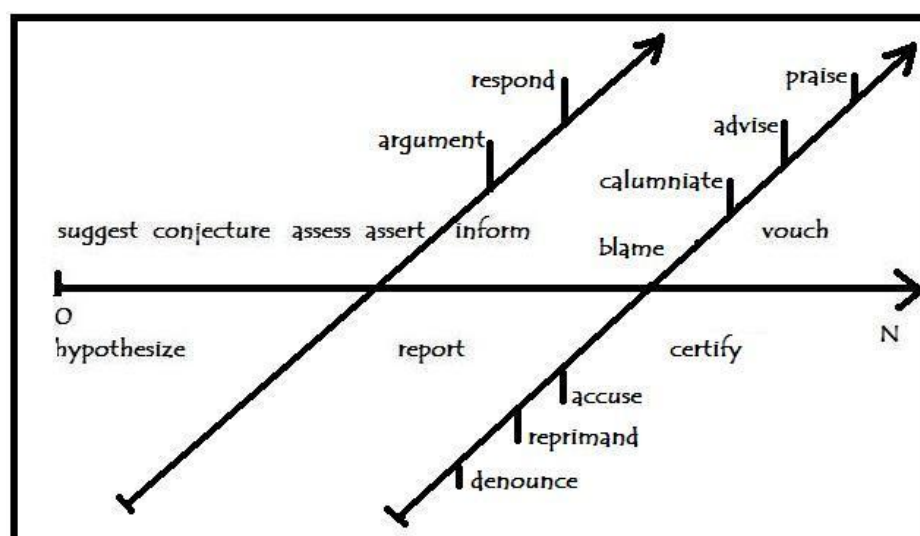
intensity (or the degree of strength) of the illocutionary point is marked on the axis, starting from zero (the null degree of strength, which is said to obtain for the act of hypothesizing or conjecturing) to N, where N is a relatively strong degree the exact measuring of which is not relevant for the taxonomy. The degree of strength is actually relevant in the relative sense: we are only interested in the degree of strength of pairs of acts in comparison. Third, as it turns out, illocutionary point and the degree of strength of the illocutionary point cannot account for all the differences between acts within the same class – I included “blame” in this table, but the sample of verbs is by no means representative of the variety of acts that we have in the class of representatives. Rather, we need other scales that cross into each other to represent the diversity of the class of representatives.

Table 1: The illocutionary force continua of directives and representatives



If we include the different acts marking the text-editing function and the acts that involve the hearer, the class of representatives would look like this:

Table 2: The continua of illocutionary force of representatives - sample



The first axis that crosses the main axis can be dubbed “special preparatory condition axis”; the second – “special hearer-oriented condition/ special propositional content condition”. What this table suggests is that the illocutionary act of assertion seems to be somehow basic for the entire class in that it seems the only act that purely embodies the illocutionary point of representatives. Every single act on that scheme can be described by being assertion + other feature. This particularity of the class of representatives is not shared by other classes. Although in Searle and Vanderveken we are told that there are paradigm acts for every class, the paradigm is not meant as an element that can be found in other instances of acts, but as something that exhibits in the most explicit way an identifiable and typical pattern. Whereas there is nothing wrong *per se* in having such a basic or elementary illocutionary act, it does pose some problems of delimitation, to the point that one may wonder whether or not this act actually exists in its pure type. Add to that the impossible account of assertion that I have tracked down in Searle’s exposition, and there is reasonable doubt as to whether assertion is a fully-fledged illocutionary act or just a theoretical abstraction (as proposition is).

This scale-like organization of the classes of directives and representatives is not replicated in any of the other classes of acts. Commissives may seem as a scale or a continuum of force where the particular acts are placed, but there is really no way to establish the degree of strength of the illocutionary point, and I doubt that, even if we could establish it, it would be significant for distinguishing one act from another. The verbs that are explicitly pointed out to be members of the class of commissives are: promise, vow, pledge, contract, guarantee, and swear. How are we to measure the degree to which I am committed to the future course of action? Such as they are presented, it is not clear to me that these verbs actually name different illocutionary acts. Consider wedding vows, which are a sort of moral contract (as marriage is a kind of social contract) or a ritualistic promise. And do we not say that a person uttering “I swear to serve the Master of the Precious” is making a pledge?

The classes of expressives and declarations do not exhibit the same scale-like organization, the former because it is counterintuitive to arrange psychological states on a scale (for the obvious reason that it is not clear what the criterion for scaling them would be) and the latter because the illocutionary acts are so different that even the formulation of the illocutionary point has to be vague enough in order to encompass them all, to the point that it does not offer any note-worthy distinction. I will return to that.

The requirement for the discreteness of classes is somewhat compromised in the very spelling out of the illocutionary point. For example, the point of representatives and

commissives is to commit the speaker to something – even the additional stipulation that commissives commit the speaker to a future course of action cannot help distinguish assertion from promise if it is phrased “I will finish this by 5 o’clock”. Assertion accepts as its propositional content any proposition, and this includes propositions about the speaker’s future course of action. The class of expressives is a very peculiar one because of its illocutionary point: evidently, the urge to express one’s psychological state is a defining trait of these acts. It is peculiar because all the acts that are part of the class of representatives, directives and commissives have a psychological state associated with them. As the formulation of their illocutionary point suggests, there must be something in the expressive acts that make the psychological state take precedent over any other purposes that one may have in performing these acts. However, as I already mentioned, it feels weird to say that we apologize to express regret or that we congratulate to express pleasure. It seems more accurate to say that we apologize to make amends for a piece of behavior (no matter if it was linguistic or physical). As we cannot undo the behavior, the apology serves to first, acknowledge that there was a piece of behavior that was in some respect inappropriate on the part of the speaker (or somebody in the responsibility of the speaker), and second, to try to minimize the effect of that piece of behavior by placing oneself under a moral responsibility for it. In short, we apologize to apologize. Just expressing regret does not cover the extent of the act. Let me take one more example: greeting. Once again, the illocutionary point that greeting is supposed to have is to express pleasure. This act is once more a ritualistic act that serves the purpose of acknowledging that the other person is in the conversational setting and maybe signifying to that person (make it manifest) that one is prepared to enter into a conversational exchange. Pleasure (I am afraid) has nothing to do with it (at least not in the constitutive sense)⁹⁸. These acts do have a social purpose of tying, creating, perpetuating and whatnot social ties between participants in a conversation. But then so do other illocutionary acts. What we can conclude, however, is that the class of expressives is not properly defined by the supposed illocutionary point. Such as it is stated, expressing the psychological state collects all acts that have psychological states as sincerity conditions so that all acts of the class of representatives, directives and commissives end up being expressives.

Ironically, this is precisely the type of account that was discarded concerning the illocutionary act of assertion. It is not plausible as an explanation of linguistic behavior to say that one asserts to express a belief, just as it is weird to say that we request things just to

⁹⁸ Greetings are closely linked to wishes: in Russian and Bulgarian some greetings stem from wishes of good health.

express a wish or a desire. It is not clear how the expression of the sincerity condition can be an illocutionary point, and more specifically, why the expression of the sincerity condition is that important in some acts, so that it becomes their illocutionary point and how we decide which acts ought to be treated in this way. Let me take an example. Boasting is classified by Searle to be an act of the representative (assertive) type. Its illocutionary point is to commit the speaker to something's being the case. But it is hardly a belief that is expressed in the performance of this act; it is happiness/ pride/ joy/ superiority etc about something. It seems that the psychological state of pleasure/ pride etc takes supremacy over the "representative" point. There is nothing that can prevent us from classifying boasting as an expressive. Consider the following made up example "This is my Egyptian tan. I got it from walking around the Valley of the Kings." The content of the act of boasting is not the proposition that /this is the Egyptian tan of the speaker/, but the fact that the speaker feels that her being to Egypt is a source of joy/ pride/ superiority etc. In the linguistic expressions uttered the idea that the speaker has been to Egypt is presupposed. The proposition /this is the Egyptian tan of the speaker/ is not part of the content of the act of boasting, but boasting comes about in the uttering of the sentence containing this proposition⁹⁹.

The declarational illocutionary point is "make things happen by saying how things are". The trouble with this formulation is that it is too vague in order to encompass every declarational type of act Searle could think of, and thus non-operational. This formulation is strongly reminiscent of the way Austin described his performatives, or the "doings". This close relation is acknowledged by Searle (1976:14), but he does not specify what additional criteria allow him to let some of the old Austinian explicit performatives in the class of declarations, and not others. The feeling of randomness of the taxonomy criteria is strengthened. As it is, every explicit performative utterance satisfies this description¹⁰⁰. It is also an interesting fact about declarations that they seem to lack other of the illocutionary force components. Let me illustrate this with an example. To utter "You are fired" is to perform an act of the declarational type. So its illocutionary point is to change the world by saying that it is changed, that is I effectively fire you by saying that you are fired. The degree of strength of the illocutionary point: the intuitive response would be that this component does not apply because there cannot be degrees in the point that I achieve in uttering this. The

⁹⁹ It is important to note here that this particular act would be classified as an act of boasting by the hearer if the hearer knew that the speaker was the kind of person to flaunt her trips abroad and use them as a source of feelings of superiority. Otherwise, this utterance can just be taken to be an act of asserting/ informing with the content /this tan the speaker got in Egypt while walking in the Valley of the Kings/.

¹⁰⁰ In fact, Searle claims that explicit performatives take effect as declarations do. This problem is best left for the chapter on explicit performatives (chapter 12), where it will be given full attention.

mode of achievement is not distinctive in any way – for most acts of any class of the taxonomy this slot would just contain the phrase “characteristic mode of achievement” (as Searle and Vanderveken put it, 1985:16), but the characteristic mode of achievement is not distinction-worthy. What this means is that we somehow expect that different acts are performed so that they achieve their illocutionary point in some mode which should be characteristic to them, but we do not dispose of any directions for characterizing this mode. In short, this component is useless. There are no sincerity conditions to speak of, and no degree of strength of the sincerity conditions either. The preparatory conditions would include the entire burden of characterizing the act: the speaker must have the necessary authority over the hearer and be in the position to fire employees. The successful performance of this act depends on the institution of hiring people and the employer – employee relations conditioned by regulations on labor. It seems that declarations, being institutional acts, rely on a qualitatively different way of coming about. The supernatural power that enables God to say “Let there be light” and thereby make light come into existence is replicated by institutionally conditioned power that enables the boss to say “You are fired” and thereby make you redundant. This is the main reason of separating these quasi-magical acts from the simple linguistic or communicative¹⁰¹ acts in taxonomies. But it seems to me that linguistically encoded functions may have influenced these researchers into overlooking the following trivial facts about the performance of these so-called communicative acts (which are not institutionally conditioned): it is no less mysterious that people can utter some words and thereby order, or assert, or promise, or apologize. There is something that (the temptation is to say magically) enables speakers to say things and thereby do acts¹⁰². Finding out what this something is lies at the very core of speech act theoretic research. Searle’s phrasing of this point is: how can saying you are fired effectively fire you and saying I hereby fry an egg does not succeed in frying the egg? This peculiar class of acts has one major characteristic in common – their reliance on an extra-linguistic institution to come about. One last remark concerning declarations: if they lack most of the components that are supposed to build up the illocutionary force, what is our reason to count them as being illocutionary acts at all? Neither the taxonomy-elaborating principles, nor the reconstructed definitions of illocutionary act and force in Searle’s writings provide an answer.

Representative declarations suffer from the same vagueness: the description of the point of these acts is quite puzzling, and does not allow us to decide, of any new kind of

¹⁰¹ This term comes from Bach and Harnish’s taxonomy of illocutionary acts (1979).

¹⁰² More on this magical component will be said in Part II.

behavior, if it is a member of this class or not. How can issuing a representative with the force of a declaration be a valid illocutionary point? As it is phrased, the first part of the performance “issuing of a representative” acquires an ambiguous quality. There is no generic sense of issuing a representative; rather, the performance of any of the acts that are part of the class of representatives can be described as issuing a representative. If we issue a representative (make an assertion, for example), it has the force of representatives. Speech act theoretic principles make it impossible on a methodological basis (and there is nothing in actual occurrences of linguistic production that should be a case of that kind) to perform an act of one kind with the force of another. Let me state this more carefully and distinguish this case from the case of performing two separate illocutionary acts (with their respective illocutionary forces, as the so-called indirect acts) in the issuance of one utterance. What this description of the illocutionary point of this class of acts suggests is that one issues an act of the representative type with the force of an act of the declarational type, which, itself, consists in changing the world by saying that the world is changed. The only way this explanation can even begin to make sense is when we take the phrase “issue a representative” to mean “utter a declarative sentence”. Since it is a trivial fact about speech acts that if an act (to be distinguished from the utterance of a sentence) is a representative, then it is not directive, or commissive, or expressive, or declarational, this is the only interpretation that is available for the illocutionary point of representative declarations. Obviously, it is the linguistic form of the utterance that prompts Searle to speak of “misleading syntax”. It is hardly syntax that is responsible for an act’s being an act of a particular type (cf. chapter 2). There is another quite important implication of this phrase: it assumes that the whole point of representatives is the issuing of sentences containing truth-evaluable propositions. Asserting, then, would just be issuing a declarative sentence without any other objectives/ purposes/ additional features whatsoever. Assertions do nothing.

If we take the direction of fit as a basis for the classification, it becomes clear that even a binary concept such as this can be modified to fit the purpose of analysis. Logically speaking, there are only two directions of fit: words-to-world and world-to-words. The term “direction of fit” is a modern way to account for the difference between belief and desire as psychological states in the Theory of Motivation: belief has a representational quality in that it is a reflection of the world; desire, on the other hand, projects itself onto the world¹⁰³.

¹⁰³ For an intricate discussion of and comments on the original terminology, see Humberstone 1992; for the contrary view, see Sobel and Copp 2001. The controversy related to the belief/desire dichotomy lies in the way

According to the initial introduction of the term, as it applies to psychological states, no psychological state can have both directions of fit. I would supply the idea that no psychological state can have the null direction of fit. Let me explain. Psychological states come in two varieties: descriptive and projective; they represent or mimic states of affairs or facts in the world, or project states of affairs back to the world. Incidentally, this is consistent with Searle's insights about mental (or intentional) states (Searle 1983). Searle's introduction of this term uses the metaphorical example of Anscombe (1957, cited in Searle 1976): assuming that there is a pre-established list of groceries, me buying the items that are on the list realizes the world-to-words direction of fit (my actions – the world - are made to match the list). A detective following me writes down what I buy, so he realizes the words-to-world direction of fit (his record – the words - is made to match my actions). But in Searle's doctrine, direction of fit is transposed on illocutionary acts, and it is the illocutionary force that determines how the propositional content is supposed to relate to the world (Searle 1976:4). It follows that direction of fit is achieved on the propositional content. Acts cannot have a direction of fit for it is the wrong way to talk about acts; but if we had to describe acts in terms of direction of fit, being something that we do, they necessarily have the world-to-words direction of fit because when we do the act the world is changed as it now contains our act. When I assert, the world is changed to a world where I am committed to a certain belief; when I make a request, the world is changed to a world where I have attempted to get somebody do something; when I excommunicate somebody, the world is changed to a world where I have excommunicated a person; in short, with every (successful) act we perform, the world changes to bear a trace of this action. This is why in Searle's terms direction of fit is something which is achieved on the propositional content. Illocutionary acts have psychological states that are associated with them; it is then no surprise that when we assert we achieve the words-to-world direction of fit on the propositional content, because assertion is associated with the psychological state of belief. When we make a request, we achieve the world-to-words direction of fit on the propositional content, for request has desire associated with it. It is more or less clear why in promising one realizes the world-to-words direction of fit: the associated psychological state is intention, and intention is always an intention to do. There is a state of affairs (an action, specifically) that is projected to the world. A remark is in order here: it seems that we do not even achieve the direction of fit in the performance of the acts; we achieve the direction of fit when our acts are satisfied. Our order or request achieves

they relate to action-motivation: belief being not enough to make the possessor of the belief act on it. There is a steady trend that rejects the utility of direction of fit in accounts of the dichotomy altogether.

the direction of fit when it is obeyed or complied with. Similarly, our promise achieves the direction of fit when we honor it. In asserting the question is difficult to decide: do we assess our assertion as true because it has achieved the direction of fit or do we say that the direction of fit is achieved because the assertion is true? It seems that the former is the correct description. But if this is a drawback, it is a minor one.

Now, in performing expressives, says Searle, we do not achieve any direction of fit, because the content is presupposed. Searle phrases this in a rather confusing manner: there is no fit because there is already a fit. But if the use of the notion of direction of fit is to ground illocutionary acts (as manifestations of these psychological states) into the world in a certain kind of relation, then either the world-to-words or the words-to-world direction of fit need obtain. As the propositional content of expressives picks out verifiable facts from the reality, then the propositional content of expressives is more like the one of representatives. If this verifiable fact is presupposed, then it is true, so the fit which is achieved is that of representatives, or words-to-world. Even if we do not accept the additional idea that null direction of fit is not possible, there must be a very good explanation of why acts that are about expressing psychological states do not bring about a direction of fit. The problem with expressives arises from the fact that what Searle wants to be their propositional content is a fact in the world, and the illocutionary force component is not really giving a certain value to that content, but the illocutionary act is performed because of that fact. Consider: I apologize for stepping on your toe. The precise reason for the apology need not be mentioned in the performance of the act. I will go even further and claim that any reference to the reason for the act is not necessary, nor sufficient for performing this particular act. One cannot apologize by uttering "I stepped on your toe!" regardless of the tone, gesture or what not. The force of apology does not achieve direction of fit on the content /I stepped on your toe/. It achieves fit on itself (so to speak): by saying "I apologize" the speaker achieves the world-to-words direction of fit proper to any linguistic doings. That is why it is so weird to say that a fit is achieved on the alleged content of expressives. But if we take as a basis the expressed psychological state, in the case of apology it is regret. Regret entails belief in that you cannot regret that you stepped on somebody's toes if you do not believe that you stepped on their toes. If belief is necessary for regret, then it is reasonable to suppose that apologizing achieves the words-to-world direction of fit on the propositional content. Of course, it is still counterintuitive to say that apologizing brings about a representation of a verifiable fact of reality. It seems that the class of expressives cannot have the null direction of fit, but also that it is inappropriate to speak of direction of fit in regard to expressives altogether.

Consider the following: if we take assertion to be the expression of belief, we run into a similar reluctance to describe this act as achieving the words-to-world direction of fit. Belief being a psychological state, as we assert, we report on or indulge in a psychological state. Whatever caused the psychological state is no longer relevant as we only seek to express our possessing this psychological state. The following idea emerges: we either qualify assertion as expression of belief, or we qualify assertion as saying something true (saying how things are), because both solutions entail different directions of fit. Further, if we embrace the direction of fit approach, the possibility to describe the act of assertion as an expression of belief is contrary to the theory of motivation: the possession of belief is not enough motivation for the possessor of the belief to act on it (Humberstone 1992). Whatever place we cut to the notion of direction of fit in a theory of speech acts, its scope is the propositional content (or the object) of acts (psychological states). The illocutionary force cannot be accounted for using this notion. In other words, direction of fit is not something that is part of the illocutionary force (or acts for that matter).

Most of the problems with this notion come from the class of declarations. We deal here with a double direction of fit: we change the world by saying that the world is changed. However, if we follow the same reasoning as before, the picture we get is somewhat confusing. Take declaration of war: the content of the declaration of war is that war thereby is. The direction of fit achieved on this propositional content should be, intuitively, world-to-words, because in declaring war we change the world from one where no war is to one where war is. But as there is no war in the world prior to our declaration of war, we do not and cannot achieve the representative direction of fit, because there is no fact in the world that our words could be the reflection of. To say that declarations have also the representative direction of fit means that declaration ought to be assessable in the truth-falsity dimension. The declaration of war effectively declares war; it does not represent, but it creates a state of affairs, namely that war has been declared.

Also, consider two contradicting facts about this class: we are told that this class does not have sincerity conditions; that is there is no psychological state to speak of. Yet, not only do these acts achieve a direction of fit, but they achieve a double direction of fit on the same propositional content. Just as it is not possible for one and the same psychological state to have both directions of fit, it seems to me trivially true that the same propositional content referred to in the performance of one and the same illocutionary act type cannot have both directions of fit. If we do not take into account the linguistic form of the sentence, in the utterance of which the illocutionary act is performed, the only plausible direction of fit that is

realized on the propositional content is that of world-to-words. When I declare war, my act realizes the world-to-words direction of fit on the content /war is/. When I appoint you chairman, my act realizes the world-to-words direction of fit on the content /you are chairman/. There is no other explanation possible. There is no such fact in the world prior to my performing the act of declaring war that should justify the achievement of the words-to-world direction of fit. *Idem* for appointing you chairman. These facts are created in and by my act.

The triple direction of fit is an even fancier mind-twister:

Some members of the class of declarations overlap with members of the class of representatives. This is because in certain institutional situations we not only ascertain the facts but we need an authority to lay down a decision as to what the facts are after the fact-finding procedure has been gone through. (...)Both, the judge and the umpire, make factual claims; 'you are out', 'you are guilty'. Such claims are clearly assessable in the dimension of word-world fit. (Searle 1976:15)

Let me look into these two acts more closely. First, the ruling of the judge in court: the giving away of a verdict is clearly an illocutionary act in Searle's taxonomy. The judge gives the verdict by saying, for example "I find the defendant guilty as charged". Now, the propositional content is that the defendant is guilty. What Searle says is that the judge picks out a state of affairs /the defendant is guilty/, thus achieving the words-to-world direction of fit – ascertaining the facts, then he lays down the decision (world-to-words) by saying how things are (words-to-world). This begs the following question: if the guilt of the defendant is an objective ascertainable fact, why do we need a judge to lay down a decision on it? The judge does indeed ascertain some facts (like witness testimony, material evidence, coroner's reports, inspector's reports on the investigation, statements of the defendant, and whatnot), decides how they fit together and whether or not they indicate beyond reasonable doubt the defendant's implication in the deed, and then he lays down a decision. The judge's decision is not assessable in the truth-falsity dimension. This decision is a result of an interpretation of the facts presented to the judge, not a result of some obscure correspondence with a representative (assertive) state of affairs. The verdict implements some very important social changes for the defendant and his/her place in the community: a guilty verdict makes the defendant liable to a specific punishment as defined by law, doing time in prison, being denied civic rights and privileges etc. Of course, the verdict can be criticized: we, as observers, may believe that the defendant did not do the deed he/she is accused of and thus find the verdict unjust, or harsh, but the verdict cannot be false (nor true, for that matter).

Whether the defendant did the deed and whether the defendant was found guilty are two different questions (which are directly connected). The judge cannot lie giving away a verdict as we can lie when we assert. A corrupt judge can give out a non-guilty verdict when actually he is convinced of the defendant's guilt. But if one can offer proof that the judge was bribed, the judge is liable to punishment. The verdict he declared is then annulled and a new trial is fixed. The important thing to note here is that for every concerned party, with the obvious exception of the judge, it is as if the verdict was never issued. The judge's accepting the bribe is a breach of the procedure of issuing verdicts (I will not discuss the moral or ethical issues related to it). When we lie and are exposed as liars, the assertion is not annulled in the sense that any effects it had are erased from memory or from the conversational proceedings. Note that the judge is still liable to punishment in case it is proved that he was bribed even if the verdict he gave was consistent with the facts and the presented evidence. In other words, the judge is punishable for breach of procedure or of moral conduct: in cases of judges with a personal interest in the case, they should remove themselves from the case; otherwise the verdicts can be annulled or overruled by a court of appeal. Belief, then, is not something that is strictly speaking evaluated in giving away verdicts – all the facts and testimonies can point to the defendant's being guilty, and I, the judge, may still have trouble believing¹⁰⁴ that the defendant did the deed (perhaps because the defendant is a young frail-looking girl who cried during most of the trial, or who perhaps reminds me of my daughter). What exactly should the content of that belief be: that the testimonies and facts about the case fit together to depict a story that incriminates beyond any reasonable doubt the defendant or the subjective perceptions of the judge?

The second example presents a similar situation. I, being the referee, observe a certain situation obtain in the real world, which I find to correspond to a type of situation that is forbidden for a player to be in the game. I then call the player offside. So, a special observable set of facts (a special position of the player vis-à-vis the football, the goal-keeper, the other players etc) are such that I interpret them as liable to sanction, namely rule that the player is offside. I may be mistaken about the observable facts because I was not able to see everything in this situation, but if I have enough suspicions that this particular situation occurred, I will stop the game. Then again, I may be a crooked referee and take money to play in favor of one of the teams. I may then use the fact that the speed with which the events unfold on the pitch

¹⁰⁴ There is also a slight problem with defining the sense in which I have trouble believing in this situation: it is that I am reluctant to admit that young and vulnerable-looking girls are capable of committing crimes. I have evidence that she indeed committed the crime, but on some level, I would have preferred not to have the evidence, for it threatens to undermine another belief of mine – that people are generally good.

prevents others from ascertaining the facts, and thus prevents them from challenging me, in order to give away crooked rulings. But they are rulings nonetheless, and I am only liable to punishment if foul-play is proved. The common denominator in these situations is that both rulings are subject to assessment, but both assessments do not concern correspondence of the propositional content of the rulings with some facts of the reality (we cannot know what the reality is because we did not witness the defendant do the deed), but for correspondence with our interpretation of the reality. Further, a guilty verdict and a ruling that a player is offside are institutional (conventional, in some sense) facts, that are created in the performance of the respective acts; it feels counterintuitive to look for a correspondence between observable facts (a certain position of the player vis-à-vis other players and the ball is something that is independent from the referee's ruling) and institutional facts (the ruling that the player is offside is a fact that is of the realm of the game – it has special significance and bearing on the unfolding of the game). An interesting comparison can be made with a 'pure' declaration, such as firing someone or excommunicating. When we fire somebody, there is an observable fact in the reality which warrants our decision to let that person go – she is always late for work, she cannot cope with the tasks she is assigned, she does not do the work she is required to etc. So, again we have ascertainable facts, we make a decision based on those facts. The firing of the person cannot be said to be true or false, but once more, it can be merited or not, justified or not. I can also fire somebody, despite the fact that she is a wonderful employee, for economic reasons, or in order to hire a friend in her place. Thus, my act will still be valid and successful, although it can be assessed as being unfair/ unjustified, not to mention the fact that I can land into law-suits. Curiously, it is precisely because my act is successful that I can land into law-suits for firing somebody. Excommunicating works in a similar way: there are observable facts the interpretation of which leads me, the church elder, to make the decision to expel the person from the spiritual community.

The giving of a verdict and the statement do have something in common – they are both results of the process of judgment, as are different findings, assessments and rulings. But they have one crucial difference: the defendant is guilty only when the judge gives the guilty verdict and the player is out only when the referee calls him out; on the other hand, the grass is green regardless of my asserting that it is.

These observations lead us to ask the following question: what is the reason for these mutant double and triple directions of fit? The reason is the syntactic form of the utterances. Consider the following quotation:

Furthermore, since basic semantic differences are likely to have syntactical consequences, a third purpose of this paper is to show how these different basic illocutionary types are realized in the syntax of a natural language such as English. (Searle 1976:1-2)

Although the claim is a true one – it is a trivial fact about language that semantic differences are connected to syntactic differences - it is an absolutely irrelevant observation to make with regard to illocutionary acts. This claim may be justified if we are interested in the way different verbs, which are part of the English language and which name illocutionary acts, require different syntactic structures. But illocutionary verbs are not the object of the classification effort, acts are. The syntactic differences spotted by Searle shift the classification into a classification of sentences with a special deep structure conditioned by semantic differences in illocutionary force (this formulation alone has a peculiar ring to it). Here is a sample:

- 1) Representatives: I verb (that) + S
I verb NP1 + NP1 be pred.
- 2) Directives: I verb you + you Fut Vol Verb (NP) (Adv)
- 3) Commissives: I verb (you) + I Fut Vol Verb (NP) (Adv)
- 4) Expressives: I verb you + I/you VP → Gerundive Nom.
- 5) Declarations: I verb NP1 + NP1 be pred.
I declare + S
I verb (NP)

The deep structure of representatives and declarations turns out to be identical: they are reducible to /I verb + S/. I do not see how /NP1 be pred. / is syntactically significant to be mentioned separately from /S/. Further, there is nothing special about the verb “declare” to justify the special paradigmatic position Searle wants it to have, especially if we take into consideration that it can be ‘declarational’ verb as well as ‘representational’ (with the idea of making it publicly known that something is the case). This syntactic closeness may be one reason for the double (and the triple) direction of fit. But there is more to illocutionary acts than forward-oriented predicates that require a non-finite verb as a complement or reactive predicates that require nominalization (gerund). If we look at greeting, for example, it does not follow the syntactic paradigm of expressives, and nor should it have to. Cheering and booing do not, either: “Hurray for Manchester United” and “Down with Caesar” cannot be fitted into the “I cheer you + you winning” or “I boo you + you losing”. Deep structure is not an abstract structure with virtually no connection to the surface realization of syntactic

elements, which means that whatever deep structure we postulate for a particular surface realization, we ought to be able to recover it using transformations. This is not the case with Searle's syntactic proof. The postulation of suitcase-verbs that encompass both indicators of force and indicators of content, such as "You are fired" and "I resign" cannot possibly be surface realizations via syntactic transformations of the desired deep structure, respectively, "I declare + you employment is terminated" and "I declare + my position is terminated".

It is explicitly acknowledged in Searle's exposition that there are some illocutionary verbs that exhibit the syntactical paradigm of two distinct classes of illocutionary acts. Their status in the classification is quite ambiguous. Such verbs are swear (commissive and assertive), tell (directive and assertive), declare (declarative and assertive), suggest (directive and assertive), warn (directive and assertive), assure (commissive and assertive), advise (directive and assertive), insist (directive and assertive), and certify (commissive and assertive). In the classification proposed by Searle there are illocutionary verbs that are markers of illocutionary point, and illocutionary verbs that are markers of some other feature. This distinction is far from being very clear. For example, we are told that both "insist" and "suggest" are illocutionary verbs that mark the degree of intensity with which the illocutionary point is presented, and this is the reason for their exhibiting both the representative and the directive syntax. Basically, what Searle says about these two verbs is that we can have an assertion with a strong degree of intensity of the illocutionary point (insist) and an assertion with a weak degree of intensity of the illocutionary point (suggest). We have, respectively, a request the illocutionary point of which can be realized in three different degrees of intensity: strong (insist), default (request) and weak (suggest).

But the situation is different with verbs like "warn" or "advise". The stronger claim is made for these verbs that they can "take more than one illocutionary point" (Searle 1976:22). Now, illocutionary point is something that acts are supposed to have, not verbs. Does that mean that we just happen to have one verb that names two illocutionary acts (an illocutionary act can have one illocutionary point, so if one verb takes two illocutionary points then it names two illocutionary acts)? If the idea behind this claim is that these verbs happen to name two different acts with two separate illocutionary points, two questions arise: first, how should we account for this linguistic oddity, and second, are we justified in distinguishing two different acts based on syntax? Consider warning¹⁰⁵, for example. Undoubtedly, in English one can say both "I warn you that the bull is about to charge" and "I warn you to stay away

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed analysis of the act of warning, Mew (1971) and Bird (1981) offer interesting insights. I do not attempt an analysis of the act.

from the field” in the same setting, namely that the speaker and the hearer are in proximity of a field where a dangerous-looking bull is grazing. In the first case the act of warning is supposed to have the representative illocutionary point, that of saying how things are. But this is not the purpose of our act at all. The content of the warning (of any warning) is that the hearer is on alert vis-à-vis a state of affairs, an action of others or himself. The content of the warning is your watching out for the bull. Quite similarly, in saying “I warn you to stay away from the field” my point is to guard you against getting in harm’s way. The content of my warning is your watching out for the bull. Regardless of the way we phrase our warning (it could even be “Watch out for the bull” or “Beware the bull” or just “Be careful”), we project the idea that first, there is something that can potentially be harmful for the hearer and second, in order for the hearer to avoid something bad or undesirable happening to him, he is well advised to take a certain course of action (or avoid taking a certain other course of action). We may choose to warn the hearer by verbalizing the potentially harmful state of affairs/ person/ thing, or by verbalizing the evasive action we judge appropriate in the face of the danger perceived. It seems that there is nothing to support the idea of two distinct illocutionary points in the different wording of the warning. The ‘directive’ syntax of the second variant is due to the rule of equi-NP deletion (in transformational grammar): I warn you that you stay away → I warn you to stay away. Therefore, it can be concluded that syntactical differences do not give rise to illocutionary differences. There is another problem with the act of warning: it is not clear which class of illocutionary acts should collect it, after all. This is not really an attempt to get the hearer to do something: it does not lay any obligations on the hearer, nor does it present any expectations of the speaker (other than expectations of rationality; but what the speaker may believe to be dangerous for the hearer may not be perceived as being that by the latter party). This act is not about saying how things are, for the propositional content of the warning is not *p*, but the hearer’s watching out for Y (I use Y, for Y can collect references to people, their actions, states of affairs and many others). It is not a commissive for it does not commit the speaker to any action. It is not an expressive for the only very general psychological state that can be associated with warnings is the belief that the hearer might be in danger. Warnings, it transpires, do not belong with any of the classes, as the class of declarations does not readily accept them, either – warnings are not acts that change the world by saying how it is.

This misleading terminology involving illocutionary verbs makes it difficult to decide which verbs actually mark illocutionary acts, and which verbs mark some other feature. The criterion for verbs marking features other than illocutionary point is far from being clear. How

do we decide that “announce” just marks the non-defining mode of achievement feature and “lament” marks both a defining illocutionary point and some additional feature? It does not seem that there is any principled basis to prevent us from analyzing “lament” as marking just the additional feature that the content is regretted by the speaker. Further, as can be seen from the commentary on warnings, it seems that Searle’s taxonomy succumbs to the fallacy of classifying illocutionary verbs and not acts.

The subatomic act of assertion or the minimal conception of assertion is lurking behind any utterance of a declarative sentence containing a proposition. This is in the root of the illocutionary commitment rule. Let me repeat the example in Searle and Vanderveken: a promise commits the speaker to the assertion that he will do the action promised. We need to decide one crucial point here: what is the minimal requirement for the performance of an illocutionary act in Searle’s framework? According to my reconstruction, it is either to utter a meaningful sentence (definition I) or to realize an intention to represent an intentional state (definition II). Illocutionary point being the defining trait of illocutionary acts, the realization of any illocutionary point should entail the performance of the respective illocutionary act. Moreover, the idea that being committed to an illocutionary point effectively entails the performance of the act in question is corroborated by the very specific nature of the commitment: it is not a representative commitment (generic for the class sharing the representative illocutionary point), but a commitment to the illocutionary point of the assertion that *p* (a specific illocutionary act with a determined propositional content). The objection to this theoretical construct is that it does not add to the analysis: if we were to compare the commitments of the speaker, the commitment of the promise entails a self-imposed obligation towards a course of action; on the other hand, assertion entails a completely different type of obligation for the speaker – undertaking to the effect that *p* is a fact. It is then not clear how promising would commit to asserting. In fact, the only way this could be theoretically sound is if both acts – promising and asserting – were ordered on a single continuum of forces, a scale, where commitment to a stronger member entails commitment to the lesser members. But such an explanation would undermine the entire difference between acts of the class of commissives and acts of the class of representatives. The same argument can be made for denying such a commitment to assertion that is entailed by the performance of other acts of the class of representatives. It is because the act of assertion is under-analyzed that its vagueness makes it susceptible to such postulations. Incidentally, not once in the entire voluminous amount of work by Searle does he state that accusing commits me to suggesting, or that asserting commits me to hypothesizing (the left-

handed terms are lower on the supposed scale – see Tables 1 and 2 above).

4.3. An exercise in taxonomy-making

The following exercise in taxonomy-making takes up illocutionary verbs cited in Vanderveken (1990:ch. 6) and Schmid (2000). The idea is to present how different lower axes to the major axis of the illocutionary point scale would look like for the class of representatives. I first present the taxonomy and then offer comments on the difficulties of the exercise¹⁰⁶.

In the class of representatives I distinguish several subclasses:

- 1) Informings¹⁰⁷: this subclass is distinct by the information-centered purpose. It collects the following acts: account, affirmation, assertion, claim, description, informing, instructing, notice, notification, observation, remark, report, statement, tale
- 2) Revelatives: this subclass has the additional propositional content condition and the preparatory condition that the content is specially significant for the hearer. It collects disclosures, divulgations and revelations.
- 3) Predictives are closely related to revelatives. They have a special propositional content condition picking out a future event: forecast, foretell, prediction, prophecy, viticination are part of these.
- 4) Judgments: these acts ascertain states of affairs. Assessment, assumption, comment, conclusion, criticism, evaluation, judgment, qualification are members.
- 5) Conjectures are characterized by the hedged commitment (or the lack thereof). They collect conjecture, feeling, guess, hypothesis, impression, suggestion, retrodiction.
- 6) Testimonies have an additional burden of responsibility laid down on the speaker. They collect attesting, certifying, testimony, vouching.
- 7) Acknowledgements play on the additional feature that the hearer is /was once familiar with the content of the act. Such acts are acknowledgement, admission, agreement, assenting, concession, confirmation, insistence, maintaining, sustaining, confession, assurance, reassurance, reminder, contention.
- 8) Corrections are acts that are prompted by another act the content of which is judged to be somehow deficient by the speaker. These are contradiction, correction,

¹⁰⁶ Ideas about the acts involved were checked against the corpus.

¹⁰⁷ The neologisms that crop up in this exercise are quite transparent as to their meaning.

counterclaim, denial, disagreement, disclaimer, negation, retraction.

9) Justificatives: defence, explanation, justification.

10) Hearer-directed acts: they take the hearer as the object of the act. This subclass collects accusation, advice, blame, calumny, denouncing, forewarning, praising, reprimand, and warning.

11) Responses: the text-editing function is leading in this subcategory. Answer, argument, reply, response, retort, riposte are examples.

12) Speaker-directed acts: they take the speaker as the object of the act. Boast, complaint, and lament are examples of these.

The taxonomy was created by analyzing the verbs and gerunds according to several criteria: according to their main focus (representative, judgmental, evaluative, explanative, argumentative or conditional), the degree of strength of the commitment expressed, additional psychological attitude, special significance of the propositional content for either speaker or hearer, the hearer's perspective, the place of occurrence of the act in discourse and a consideration of the intention in performing the act. An obvious flaw of this taxonomy despite the sense of a neatly arranged, detailed classification is the familiar sense of randomness in picking up the leading criterion, just as the fault we find with Searle's taxonomy. It does not seem correct that we do not find the main components of illocutionary force in the list of the criteria; meanwhile, other components out of the original classification appear, along with others that are nowhere to be found in Searle's explanations. Some of the verbs can easily cross over to another subcategory. The only use of this taxonomy can be providing an inventory of verbs, with no direction as to whether this inventory corresponds to illocutionary acts or not, just as I showed Searle's taxonomy to be. The exercise goes to show that a detailed taxonomy cannot be elaborated based on Searle's criteria for illocutionary acts.

The obvious difficulty is to decide whether or not the nouns and verbs cited are illocutionary verbs and nouns. Unfortunately, Searle's taxonomy and the entire doctrine of speech acts cannot help us to decide. The possibility to use the verb in the explicit performative construction does not constitute a valid test, for there are verbs for which it is not possible to utter them and thereby perform the act, but the act they refer to is an illocutionary act nonetheless. Consider insulting: to say "I hereby insult you" is not insulting you, but saying some other things effectively performs the act of insulting you. In the same vein, most of the verbs in this classification cannot be used as explicit performative verbs. To say "I boast" is not to boast; saying "I explain" is not explaining.

An important remark about this classification is that it is non-exclusive in the sense that it does not collect utterances: one and the same utterance can be correctly characterized as being the realization of two (or more) illocutionary acts in the same context under the same circumstances. Let me explain: consider the following made-up exchange where the first participant is a judge and the second is the defendant:

(30) ‘What do you have to say in your defense?’

‘James stole that money, that’s what I have to say.’

First, from the text-editing criterion, the first act in the exchange being a question, the second one is correctly described and perceived to be an answer. But it is also a defense (denying accusation by presenting evidence and/or testimony to one’s innocence), and an accusation (accusing somebody else of doing the crime). It is also correctly described as testimony. All this vast array of acts is performed in one utterance. It seems that all of these acts form a kind of a system together: the defendant defends himself by accusing James of the theft. He delivers these acts as to provide an answer to the question of the judge (validating their appropriateness in the discourse) in the larger frame of giving testimony; that is, presenting his view on the events, with all that testimony in a court of law entails. If we look into these acts more closely, any felicity conditions that we might want to impose on them obtain: the act of defending himself consists in providing evidence that he is innocent; accusing another person of the deed constitutes a defense (of course, we expect the defendant to provide reasons/ evidence for the accusation); answer has the constraint that whatever is uttered after a question is deemed relevant in all of the preferred senses (content and rationality demands); this utterance effectively performs a testimonial act in that any communication under subpoena is constrained by a special demand of truthfulness, the non-compliance with which is punishable by the law. Several observations: first, the different acts performed are not related to a separate semantic-syntactic cluster, so basing any classification of illocutionary acts on syntactic differences misses the point. Second, in order to see how acts fit together in their actual occurrence, we are interested in the immediate consequences they produce on the setting.

Chapter 5: Applying criteria to data: expounding the problem

The components that make up illocutionary acts listed in the previous section allow us to speculate on how hearers recognize illocutionary acts. According to the various definitions, the hearer has the following input in dealing with illocutionary acts:

- 1) The hearer first recognizes the speaker's intention to communicate;
- 2) Given that normal input-output conditions obtain, the hearer understands the particular meaning of the utterance of the speaker – understanding the meaning of the sentence is understanding the illocutionary act thereby performed;
- 3) The hearer recognizes the IFID for the particular illocutionary act the speaker intends to perform;
- 4) The hearer recognizes the intention of the speaker that the utterance is the realization of that particular illocutionary act;
- 5) The hearer recognizes the intention of the speaker to realize the illocutionary point.

The minimum requirement for understanding illocutionary acts is the one under 2): understanding the meaning is grasping the act. The reconstructed principles that build up the concept of illocutionary act from the previous chapter are to be mapped onto examples from a corpus of academic texts and political texts in order to test their validity. The corpus comprises 33 academic articles and abstracts from different domains (anthropology, astronomy, biology, computer science, history, humanities, physics, and linguistics) and a secondary corpus of political speeches. The aim of the study is to conduct a qualitative analysis of the texts looking for any phrase/ element/ device that can be described as an IFID according to Searle's theory. The main question that drives the corpus search is whether there is enough information in Searle's theory in order to distinguish between different illocutionary acts and distinguish that an illocutionary act is performed of a particular type. The following discussion is based on the results I obtained from the primary corpus.

Searle and Vanderveken (1985:21-22) claim that the seven components of the illocutionary force are reduced to four conditions for the successful and non-defective performance of the illocutionary act of the form $F(p)$ which are:

SC¹⁰⁸ 1) The speaker succeeds in *achieving in that context* the illocutionary point of F on the proposition *p* with the required characteristic mode of achievement and degree of strength of illocutionary point of F.

SC 2) He expresses the proposition *p*, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F.

SC 3) The preparatory conditions of the illocution and the propositional presuppositions obtain in the world of the utterance, and the speaker presupposes that they obtain.

SC 4) He expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F.

I voice again the reservation regarding, first, the mention of context, which assumes the burden of all features that are left out of the analysis of illocutionary acts, and, second, the troublesome idea of achieving the illocutionary point, which tends to suggest that something more is needed for the point to be achieved than merely uttering the sentence the meaning of which determines the illocutionary act. Another remark is in order. It is an underlying assumption that hearers recognize assertions when they are performed. The theoretical challenge is finding a way to account for that ability of the hearers together with an answer to the question of what assertion really is about.

The primary difficulty in applying these considerations in an empirical analysis is the question of the delimitation of the illocutionary act. Searle's theory gives different answers to this question: he explicitly supports the idea that in the issuance of the utterance the speaker may perform one or more illocutionary acts; on the other hand, the Meaning Claim would tend to suggest that the production of the illocutionary act coincides with the boundaries of the simple sentence. In Searle and Vanderveken (1985) there are some instructions concerning complex sentences that are so called because they are used to perform complex illocutionary acts (acts that are not of the simple F(*p*) form). Connectives of conjunction, for example, are used to connect two illocutionary acts in one utterance. The authors generalize:

In general, the utterance of a sentence which is the conjunction of two sentences constitutes the performance of the *two illocutionary acts expressed by the two sentences*. Thus in a certain context by uttering (9) "I will go to his house, but will he be there?", a speaker both makes an assertion and asks a question. This conjunction of two illocutionary acts constitutes the performance of a complex

¹⁰⁸ SC stands for "success condition".

illocutionary act whose logical form is (F1(P1) & F2(P2)). (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:4, my emphasis)

Such an explication is plausible, considering the fact that readers and hearers take in the utterance in a linear fashion. But a slight irritation arises from the claim in the italicized phrase, which continually ties up illocutionary acts to sentences. The irritation is somewhat strengthened when we are told that illocutionary force is a component of sentence meaning (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:7). Following the IFID Axiom, which is stated in an absolute way in Searle and Vanderveken 1985, it is to the meaning of the sentences that I turned my attention in dealing with examples.

The intention to communicate is implicitly contained in any written academic production. Academic texts aim at disseminating knowledge and describing the academic process of coming to know (Meyer 1997). The expectation is that we will find essentially assertive acts in the academic texts, as they are mainly reports on work done. As such, the speaker is more interested in getting across content or information. The description of the class of assertives (or representatives) goes as follows:

The point or purpose of the members of the representative class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. All of the members of the representative class are assessable on the dimension of assessment which includes true and false. (Searle 1976:10)

Inform acts and report acts constitute the majority of the acts performed. In academic speech, the speaker constructs his or her system of beliefs relative to a topic and describes the process of coming to form these beliefs by describing the work done, be it empirical studies or theoretical analyses. Presuppositions about the reader's familiarity with the topic under investigation constitute a constraint on the target audience. These additional features of academic discourse build up the context of utterance. Some specifications are in order. I preserve the familiar speech act theoretic terminology and I call "speaker" the author of the academic text. The text itself is the utterance (the communication), which comes with the following additional features: this communication relates a system of beliefs relative to a topic relative to a time which is specified from the date of the issuance of the text and up to the time of the actual consumption of the text, unless another subsequent communication contradicts/ refutes/ corrects/ or expands on the system of beliefs thereby presented. I call "hearer" the actual reader of the communication. The hearer may be a target of the communication (in that case there are certain presuppositions that hold in this respect) or not (in that case, some of the

subtleties of the communication may be lost to him). The co-text is also a part of the context of the production of every illocution, for it helps to fix a specific illocutionary force onto the utterance.

The seven components of the illocutionary force determine conditions for the successful and non-defective performance of an illocutionary act of the type thereby defined. As a first step, the corpus examples were analyzed one by one for compliance with the conditions for the successful and non-defective performance of the illocutionary act of assertion. For every sentence of the declarative type, containing one or more propositions and having the meaning defined by its semantic and syntactic features, and according to Meaning Claim (at least) the following conditions are satisfied:

- 1) Illocutionary point: say how things are
- 2) Degree of strength of the illocutionary point: default
- 3) Mode of achievement: default (or null?)
- 4) Preparatory conditions: the speaker has evidence that *p* and the hearer does not know *p* (or needs to be reminded that *p*)¹⁰⁹
- 5) Propositional content conditions: any proposition that *p*
- 6) Sincerity conditions: the speaker believes *p*
- 7) Degree of strength of the sincerity conditions: default.

In mapping these conditions onto sentences, the additional contextual features in the issuance of the sentence as described above are not taken into account. The preliminary conclusion from these observations is that all these sentences are used to perform the illocutionary act of assertion. There is nothing in the theory of speech acts that contradicts the suggested conclusion. Academic communication may well be about producing long lists of assertions, describing states of affairs and relating beliefs. When we take into consideration the occurrence of every issuance at a specific place in the communication, its co-text and other features of context, the results we get contradict the suggested conclusion: some of the sentences under scrutiny are used to perform illocutionary acts that are not assertions. But even if we use other features in the context of the act production to help us fix an interpretation of the move, it is still the case that the above conditions are indeed satisfied for all of the sentences under scrutiny. This suggests that an assertion is necessarily performed in

¹⁰⁹ Some of the examples in this category do not satisfy entirely the second part of the preparatory conditions, but I prefer to keep the option open. Nonetheless, non-compliance with this sub-condition results in a defective act of assertion. More on this later.

the issuance of these sentences because it is a primitive act. Searle and Vanderveken (1985) actually propose a claim to that effect¹¹⁰, and in “A classification of illocutionary acts” Searle proposes the following:

Once we recognize the existence of representatives as a quite separate class, based on the notion of illocutionary point, than the existence of a large number of performative verbs that denote illocutions that seem to be assessable in the True-False dimension and *yet are not just 'statements'* will be easily explicable in terms of the fact that they mark features of illocutionary force which are in addition to illocutionary point. (1976:10, my emphasis)

Analogously a person who makes a statement in his capacity as a witness in a court trial *does not merely make a statement*, but he testifies, and his status as a witness is what makes his utterance count as testimony. (1985:16, my emphasis)

One gets the idea that statements or assertions are a basic, even a default interpretation of any proposition-expressing sentence. And while there is nothing wrong in principle with such an idea, a valid question would be: what instances would count as performances of this primitive act? It is too costly in effort spending to say that the hearer would negatively ascribe to an issuance the illocutionary force of assertion after eliminating all other features that can obtain, if this issuance was a performance of another illocutionary act of the assertive type¹¹¹. In chapter 1 I suggested the idea that we assert to inform, to give an opinion, to pass judgment. Then the question arises whether informing and asserting are two different acts? As it is, the conditions outlined above are satisfied for every asserted proposition in sense 1. I have already argued that assertion in sense 1 is not a part of the preoccupations of speech act theory, so it may be that the conditions we have are not the right conditions.

A closer look at the corpus examples reveals that some of the sentences that qualify for compliance with the seven conditions stated above are used to perform other acts than acts of the assertive type – commissives and expressives. A third suggestion imposes itself, namely that in performing certain acts the speaker is committed to the illocutionary point of an assertion, which is explicitly endorsed by Searle and Vanderveken (see chapter 3). Thus, a report commits us to an assertion because the report is a species of assertion, and reminding commits us to assertion because it is a species of assertion. If we compare these three acts

¹¹⁰ Searle and Vanderveken 1985:60.

¹¹¹ Tautological statements qualify: *Triangles have three sides* is always true, because of the very nature of the statement; if we want the primitive statement to have the form “The Truth” we rule out every other statement which is not necessarily true, but then performative sentences would qualify as they are self-verifying. Existential statements also have a strange flavor about them not assuming novelty, but communicating that the speaker has recently acquired that belief: “There are no hardware stores open past midnight in the Village.”

with their conditions for successful and non-defective performance, we get (excluding the conditions that are similar):

Condition:	Assertion	Report	Reminding
Illocutionary point	Say how things are	Say how things are	Say how things are
Preparatory conditions	S has evidence that p & H does not know p	S has evidence that p & H does not know p	S has evidence that p & H once knew and might have forgotten p
Propositional content conditions	Any proposition p	A past (or present) state of affairs	Any proposition p

It is still a mystery why a report or a reminder should commit the speaker to an assertion when the report achieves the same illocutionary point Searle and Vanderveken claim the speaker is committed to when performing the primitive assertion. Illocutionary commitment to the primitive assertion seems redundant and completely unnecessary. Why doesn't the report commit us to informing, or assessing, or reminding, for that matter? One tentative interpretation of the authors' insisting on this illocutionary commitment lies in the lack of a comprehensive answer within the theory of illocutionary acts to the question of the effects of every illocutionary act type. If one maintains that the only relevant illocutionary effect is the understanding of the meaning of the sentence wherein the illocutionary act is encoded, then illocutionary acts are no more than fancy names for a kind of semantic interpretation of sentences. That the speaker is committed to saying how (particular) things are when making a report is what the report is about: I report that my car has been stolen, I report that I have complied with previous orders, I report on the experiment I have conducted or I report on the book I have read. One underlying feature of these may be that I did, heard, read, saw, understood, found out, was told etc the things I am reporting about. Other underlying feature may be that the hearer needs, has requested, might find relevant or interesting or necessary the things that I am reporting about. The theoretical explanation of what a report is can do without postulating such a commitment. Or, to put it more bluntly, saying that a report commits the speaker to an assertion does not help us elucidate the act of reporting (or the act of asserting). It does not help us explain communicative behavior and creates taxonomic issues.

Statement of intention (which is the paradigm act of the commissive type) seems to commit the speaker to the illocutionary act of assertion. This is in accord with Searle and

Vanderveken's suggestion that a promise commits the speaker to an assertion. The illocutionary point of commissives is to commit the speaker to doing a certain action specified in the propositional content. The close relation between the commitment to a belief and a certain responsibility for the asserted content on the one hand, and commitment to do an action makes it difficult to capture the difference between the two classes of acts. Originally, it is the direction of fit that sets them apart: since the action the speaker is committed to doing is represented but not yet part of the world, the utterance establishes the world-to-words direction of fit, that is, the speaker commits to bringing about the necessary actions in order to make the world match the words. The direction of fit, however, is not conventionalized in linguistic structure. Since both assertive acts and commissive acts take propositions as their content, the temptation to ascribe commitment to an assertion in the performance of a commissive is understandable. But this can hardly count for an explanation. First, if the speaker commits herself to doing A, it is really incompatible for her to be committed to A's being the case, because A is going to be the case once she has effectively done A. It may be that the form of the sentences used to perform the act in question misleads the analyst about the commitments of the speaker.

Let me offer some specifications on the values ascribed to the components of assertion stated above. First, it is not very precise as a formulation as it ties assertion with the truth-falsity dimension. There is a difference between saying how objective things are, as in "the goal of the book is to explain the ethical, legal, and practical arguments on which current U.S. policy is based, and to make the cultural property debate comprehensible to all" (ANTHRO100) and saying subjective things as "the goal of the book is ambitious and worthy" (ANTHRO100). The former act refers to evaluable states of affairs that exist independently of the speaker, whereas the latter refers to states of affairs that are dependent on the speaker. Some hearers may find that the goal is worthy but not ambitious, some can find it ambitious but not worthy; some can agree with the speaker, some can disagree with her. But, even if for any particular hearer the latter assertion is false, the speaker would not be guilty of lying. On the contrary, if the hearers found that the former assertion was false, the speaker would be guilty of lying (or if not lying, then of misleading the hearer due to a false belief). The latter type of act is a judgment (not necessarily a value judgment) and is not assessable in the standard truth-falsity dimension. As such, it does not strictly speaking say how things are, but what the speaker believes about the things that are. It is an incontrovertible fact of the speech act theoretic panoply that value judgments are assertions. Then these are assertions that do not quite correspond to the description of the act proposed

above. Further, the illocutionary point of assertion proves to be very vague and permissive – this is corroborated by the fact that it seems satisfied for every declarative sentence in the corpus. The illocutionary point of assertion as it is spelled out has the disadvantage of being ascribable to every proposition-containing declarative sentence and thus cannot operate enough restrictions. Illocutionary point is an intrinsic defining characteristic of an act of that type. But the act is defined by the meaning of the sentence since illocutionary force is part of the meaning of the sentence. If the sentence meaning cannot unambiguously determine one and only one illocutionary point in a certain speech situation, one of two things obtain: either the illocutionary point such as it is spelled out is not completely accurate, or there are other elements that take part in the fixing of illocutionary force above and besides sentence meaning. This illocutionary point seems hardly to be a point, and is far from being illocutionary.

The degree of strength of the illocutionary point is a condition tailored to distinguish only pairs of acts, not every act separately, and it is not even applicable to every random pair of acts. This is the reason why I left this condition with the value “default”. There is no answer to the question “what is the degree of strength of the illocutionary point of assertion” other than saying that it is stronger than that of hypothesis, or it is weaker than that of vouching. For a vast majority of assertive acts, the degree of strength of the illocutionary point is actually not act-type distinctive. The degree is not zero, but the exact ‘numeral’ value of the degree is neither relevant, nor can it be measured. We can intuitively accept the idea that hypothesis has the zero degree of strength, and that vouching has a degree of strength bigger than assertions, but as to the degree of strength of assertion relative to informing, reminding, assessing, testifying and confessing, there is no way to tell (and even if we do venture a guess, intuitions may vary).

As for the mode of achievement of the illocutionary point, the situation is even more complicated than with the degree of strength: if there is no definite requirement in the theory of speech acts whether the lack of a special mode of achievement must be understood as null mode or default mode (whatever that means). The exposition of Searle and Vanderveken tends to suggest the former reading, as they say that additional features that distinguish acts from other acts are called modes of achievement. So it may be inferred that when there are no additional features, there are no modes of achievement. Once more, mode of achievement only makes sense in comparisons between pairs of acts. When there is no special mode of achievement, the condition does not play a role in the success of the illocutionary performance. How can it, if the condition has zero as its value? On the other hand, whatever

the mode of achievement of an act is, it is called a characteristic mode of achievement (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:16). So, an assertion achieves its illocutionary point in a characteristic mode of achievement which cannot (and does not need to be) described.

In order to assess preparatory conditions, we need to attend to what counts as evidence for *p* and what the speaker expects about the hearer. In the performance of an illocutionary act the speaker presupposes that the preparatory conditions obtain. The successful and non-defective performance requires that the preparatory conditions obtain. What is the speaker's evidence for asserting "the goal is ambitious and worthy"? The only evidence the speaker has is the judgment that she makes about a certain state of affairs. Evidence can pertain to truth or to reason, that is, for some assertions we can inquire the speaker's justification for claiming that *p* is true, for others we may ask for his justification for claiming *p*. These are two different justifications because the first concerns the content, whereas the second concerns the performance of the act itself. Let me explain: if I state "the goal of the book is "to explain the ethical, legal, and practical arguments on which current U.S. policy is based, and to make the cultural property debate comprehensible to all", I both say what the goal is, and provide evidence for my saying what the goal is by quoting the relevant passage in the book itself. In this case my evidence is about the truth of what I say. It is true that *p* because it says so in the book I am commenting on. But in the case of saying "the goal is ambitious and worthy", I have evidence for the reason of my saying so, that is, because I have formed a judgment after reading the book. There is no evidence for the truth of *p*; but there are arguments for my saying that *p*.

Now, the expectations about the hearer deserve a closer investigation. What exactly constitutes the novelty for the hearer? Is it the content *p* of the act or the speaker's belief that *p*? If we take the traditional view (that the content of the assertion is the proposition that *p*), then the requirement says "the hearer does not know that *p*, or may need reminding that *p*". An assertion that breaches this requirement is defective. Or an act which satisfies all of the above stated conditions save the second part of the preparatory condition can be qualified as reminding. But qualifying such acts as reminding does not really account for the speaker's intention in producing them. In academic communication, there are a lot of assertive acts the content of which is something the hearer knows, but it seems counterintuitive to describe their performance as defective, for they serve the purpose of establishing the context for other illocutionary acts, or serve to ground the discussion. Consider:

(31) Exact real numbers constitute one of the prime examples of infinite objects in computer science. (COMSCI100)

If exact real numbers are prime examples of infinite objects, it is highly plausible to suppose that any hearer reasonably acquainted with the subject matter, will be aware that this is so. A layman hearer, who is not acquainted with computer science, will not know what infinite objects are, and will therefore not know that exact real numbers are examples of infinite objects. The content of the assertion will be incomprehensible to him, and the communication will completely miss its purpose, namely, introducing the ground of the discussion to come. Such assertions that establish a common ground by invoking a familiar state of affairs are abundant in academic discourse. If this is a drawback in the description of this particular condition of asserting, it is a minor one. We can rewrite the second part of the preparatory conditions to read as follows: The hearer does not know p , or may need reminding that p , or the hearer knows p , but p is particularly salient for the particular situation or otherwise serves to establish common ground for subsequent acts. What is more, a speaker can consistently assert that p and then say that the hearer already knows this – that is, perform the act and deny its compliance with one of the success conditions. Another rather trivial observation is that the speaker may be warranted in asserting a propositional content the hearer is familiar with because it serves as a way to activate that particular content for the conversational situation at hand. In academic speech such assertions are prefaced by the phrase “we know that”, “it is generally accepted that”, “it is intuitively true that”. The appeal to the hearer is to consider something that he may already know in the context of the current discussion.

Propositional content conditions further dilute any attempt at defining assertion in a conclusive manner. Consider the following illocutionary acts:

	Assertion	Report	Prediction
Illocutionary point	Say how things are	Say how things are	Say how things are
Propositional content	Any proposition p	p =Past state of affairs	p =future state of affairs

All other conditions are said to be equal for these acts. It is very difficult to tell a report from an assertion or a prediction from an assertion because the propositional content condition on assertion actually contains past, present and future states of affairs. The propositional content condition for predictions of p describing a future state of affairs is not enough to distinguish prediction-force from assertion-force, because assertion-force admits as

its content the description a future state of affairs. The hearer must rely on something that would help him understand the performance as being an act of reporting, predicting or asserting. As propositional content appears to be the only difference in the illocutionary force components, then it must be the IFID of reporting, predicting and asserting respectively, that does the trick. But consider the pair of utterances:

(32) The time of exposure for each obsidian sample was one hour. (ANTHRO400)

(33) If a suitable warrant is uncovered, this process will not only tell us that there is an argument in the text, but will also yield a complete reconstruction of the argument in question. (PRA500)

Utterance (32) can be an assertion or a report, and (33) can be an assertion or prediction (if conditional). Given the fact that the same sentences can be used to perform both sets of acts, Meaning Claim is not satisfied for these pairs of acts. There is nothing in these utterances that can be satisfactorily pointed out to be IFID for one or other type of act, not in the sense Searle postulated it. (32) is understood as being a report in a specific speech situation: the academic communication that relates the relevant experiment done by the speaker. Similarly, (33) is understood to be a prediction because of special features of the situation: the communication details similar processes in argument reconstruction, according to which future results are envisioned.

As I expounded most of the discussion on sincerity in a previous chapter, I will here offer a brief corroboration of the ideas from the corpus examples. Academic assertions portray the speaker as believing that *p*. The question of whether or not she really holds the relevant beliefs is superfluous. The hearer takes the speaker to hold the beliefs she expressed. In asserting, it is impossible for the speaker to detach herself from being committed to holding the belief expressed. So, Searle rightly emphasizes the importance of this feature. It is less clear what a defective illocutionary act entails: a defective act, in Searle's understanding, is an act the performance of which does not meet all of the necessary components. Since the performance of the act ties the speaker to a particular intentional state and the hearer grasps the performance of the act, then the actual intentional state is not relevant for understanding an act as being an act of that type. The lack of the relevant intentional state does not play a role in the hearer's rejection of the speaker's acts; rather, it is the hearer's belief about the speaker's having a particular intentional state which has a role in rejecting a particular act. If a hearer believes that the speaker is not sincere in apologizing – the hearer believes that the speaker feels no regret or sorrow for having done A – he can reject the apology regardless of

the fact that the speaker was being sincere. And vice versa, if the hearer believes the speaker to be sincere, he will accept the apology even if in fact the speaker feels no regret or sorrow for having done A.

The degree of strength of the sincerity condition is perfectly understandable, but it raises a serious question about the correct description of the illocutionary point and its corollary the degree of strength. Note that it was not originally present in Searle 1976 and the explications for it we find in Searle and Vanderveken are reminiscent of these they gave for the degree of strength of the illocutionary point. By way of explicating this condition, the authors give the following example:

The speaker who makes a request expresses the desire that the hearer do the act requested; but if he *begs*, *beseeches*, or *implores*, he expresses a stronger desire than if he merely requests. (Searle and Vanderveken 1985:19, emphasis in the original)

Let me restate here the degree of strength of the illocutionary point of directives: it is attempts (at various degrees) to get the hearer to do A. That is, in making a request, my attempt to get the hearer to do A is less strong than in insisting that he do A. This difference between strong and not so strong attempts seems to miss the point: degree of strength seems to be the wrong dimension of assessment for attempts¹¹². Insisting seems to contain the idea that the speaker renews an attempt that was already made once but was unsuccessful, so it is really about reiteration of attempts prompted by a stronger desire to get the hearer to do A. Further, the source of the greater degree of strength of the illocutionary point of directives may be different: either the degree of strength of the sincerity condition or the mode of achievement can make the act achieve the illocutionary point in different degrees of strength (Searle and Vanderveken 1985). Now, commitment can be said to be in different degrees. But it is again the strength of the belief or the confidence in one's evidence for asserting *p* that is the prominent feature here. It is extremely peculiar to say of vouching that the illocutionary point of committing to the state of affairs that *p* is achieved in a strong degree of strength. What does it really mean? If I am committed that the state of affairs that *p* obtains, degrees of commitment are of little importance. If I vouch instead of asserting, this necessarily indicates to my hearer that my confidence that a state of affairs obtains is very high to the extent that I intentionally claim responsibility for the unlikely event of it failing to obtain and can

¹¹² Master Yoda's remark comes to mind: "Do or do not; there is no try."

guarantee that it obtains. The blending of the two is even more obvious for cases of expressives¹¹³.

5.1. Summary of Part I

The most important goal of the empirical investigation was to map the theoretical predictions in my discussion of Searlean conception of the illocutionary act of assertion onto examples taken with their conversational situation. The empirical approach permitted to determine the following directions for further investigation:

A. Illocutionary acts:

The illocutionary acts in the corpus were assigned force intuitively. The task for a sound theory of speech act is to find out what it is that allows us to assign force to an utterance. It is, therefore, important to separate the production end or the performance from whatever it is that allows the hearer to interpret or grasp the illocutionary force of the utterance. Concentrating on the performance means defining what a performance of an illocutionary act is; concentrating on the understanding or the grasping of the illocutionary act helps check the definition obtained. The non-existent definition of the notion of illocutionary act in Searle's writings makes it a difficult task to distinguish acts between them, or even deciding whether an occurrence is an illocutionary act and what kind of illocutionary act. The recursive definition of the notion of illocutionary force cannot be corroborated by empirical data in that various components seem *ad hoc* and not necessary for a large number of act types. What is more, Searle's theory of illocutionary acts is ambiguous as to the focus of the program undertaken, which hovers between different kinds of meaning (utterance meaning, speaker meaning, semantic meaning) and communicative success, reducing the term of illocutionary act to a nostalgic tribute to its founder. A return to Austin's original ideas is needed, in order to see whether a reconstruction of the concept of illocutionary act is possible, which could provide a basis for further investigation.

B. Assertion:

¹¹³ As I already argued, in expressives, the illocutionary point, which is to express psychological states, actually coincides with the sincerity condition; so the degree of strength of the point will also coincide with the degree of strength of the sincerity condition; Searle and Vanderveken give the example in the former condition – “If I express regret for having done something my utterance has a lesser degree of strength than if I humbly apologize for having done it”, that is, it is the degree to which a psychological state is expressed is emphasized; but again for pairs of acts only.

What assertion amounts to is a question that is unresolved by Searlean framework. The conditions are too vague and too permissive to yield an operative definition of the act. The common element between the different descriptions of the act of assertion in Searle's writings is the proposition that p , which seems to tie the performance of the act to the declarative sentence. The criteria we are provided with by Searle's theory are checked in a default manner against the examples of the corpus: the only possibility to apply those is assume by default that a declarative sentence is used assertively, then look for differences in degree of strength of the commitment, mode of achievement or special preparatory conditions in a completely arbitrary fashion. For a vast majority of acts of the assertive kind differences are only spelled out in terms of differences of the propositional content, thus emphasizing the permissive embrace-all nature of the description of assertion. Of course, the possibility is still open that assertion may just be a primitive non-illocutionary act that is transparent in every assertive act (even in commissives and expressives). In order to be able to answer definitively this question, we need to have at least some minimum requirements for counting an occurrence as an illocutionary act performance of a certain type. We do not have such requirements in Searle's framework.

C. Gaps in the discussion:

There are features in the production setting of illocutionary acts that help the hearer grasp the force of the utterance: it is important to define them and incorporate them formally in a sound theory of illocutionary acts¹¹⁴. The vague reference to context in Searle's exposition glosses over features of the conversational setting that must be analyzed in order to get an accurate picture of act performance. One important step is to define uptake and the taking of effect of the acts. Another is to define context and features that are relevant to production and uptake. Defining context falls largely outside the scope of this study; nevertheless, some steps will be taken towards understanding the relevant features in the speech situation that help grasp the illocutionary force of the utterance. In Searle's theory, as far as the speaker is concerned, the illocutionary act is defined for her uniquely by the intention specific for every particular illocutionary act. Thus, the intention to get the hearer to do A is sufficient to define a directive act for the speaker; the intention to make the hearer aware of p is enough to define informing. The hearer's task in a speech situation is to understand that intention. This leads to neglecting the role of the hearer.

¹¹⁴ It is certainly not part of the goals of the present investigation to formulate a fully-fledged theory of illocutionary acts.

D. The neglected participant:

The requirement of a hearer who should be recognizing intentions is suspended for the possibility of illocutionary acts (Searle and Vanderveken 1985). Only in communicating does the speaker direct yet another intention to a hearer, namely the intention to communicate the illocutionary act. Assertion does not get to benefit from this requirement, though, as for adopting a certain stance towards a propositional content p the act does not need to be directed at anybody. Even so, it is an empirical fact about communication that hearers do not always grasp the intended force of utterances and that negotiation takes place as to reach an agreement concerning the act being performed. A careful examination of the role of the hearer is needed. Part II takes up on these issues.

Part II. The Neo-Austinian assertion

Chapter 6: Austin's conception of illocutionary act

The reason for turning back to Austin's original suggestions is merely this: no linguist or philosopher of language, Searle included, provides a comprehensive or at least working definition of the term "illocutionary act"¹¹⁵. Followers and critics alike rely on an intuitive and approximate understanding of the notes on the words and deeds, published under the editing of J. Urmson in 1962, and use these intuitions as a basis for an interpretation and further construction of their own account. This is how we do things with other people's ideas: we look for clues and fit them into our own system of beliefs. It is a common misconception about Austin's text that he did not provide a clear and non-ambiguous definition of illocutionary act. It is, then, only natural to look for directions as to how we are to understand the term and what characteristics the phenomenon it names has in the writings of the person who introduced the term¹¹⁶. I follow Dörge when I say that in the absence of good reasons for redefining a technical term, it should be used as it was originally introduced.

It is not my intention to propose an entire reconstruction of Austin's text. I will not, therefore, closely examine the performative vs. constative distinction, its collapse and reasons for its replacement by the tripartite locutionary – illocutionary – perlocutionary distinction. I will, however, devote the space in this chapter to propose how Austin's doctrine should be read. The initial distinction between performative and constative sentences relies on the observation that there are some sentences which look as statements on the surface, but do not state anything and are not truth-evaluable. These "masqueraders" serve the purpose of doing an action when they are uttered. As they serve to do rather than to say things, they are evaluated as being happy (felicitous) or unhappy, and are liable to different kinds of infelicities. At a later stage, Austin offered some refinements on the different kinds of acts one can perform in uttering a 'performative' sentence: locutionary act or the uttering of the words, illocutionary act or ordering, betting, apologizing and promising, and perlocutionary act or

¹¹⁵ In an article, Hornsby (1994) claims to have a definition of illocutionary act: to perform an illocutionary act is to Φ . This definition, together with rejecting the conventional nature of illocutionary acts, is not capable of discriminating illocutionary acts from acts of other kinds.

¹¹⁶ Dörge 2004 uses the phrase "copyright holder" to say that Austin has copyright over the term. Incidentally, Dörge conducted a full reconstruction of Austin's text and the subsequent development of these ideas in Searle's theory to conclude that Searle's theory is fragmentary and circular and that it relies on a fundamentally different conception of illocutionary acts (Dörge 2004).

persuading, intimidating etc. It is when he considers the fact that stating is in the same line of phenomena like betting or ordering that most of the notions he uses fall into place. My assumption concerning Austin's exposition stems from these observations: the performative utterance in the pursuit of which Austin started his lectures and the subsequent description of the illocutionary act name one and the same phenomenon¹¹⁷.

The reasons and arguments for this assumption will be given somewhat sporadically in the course of this chapter, but I will present here the basic reason for making this assumption. The initial distinction of performatives versus constatives was about sentences, not utterances. This is suggested by the search for a grammatical criterion to distinguish this class of sentences and is corroborated by Austin's speaking of "uttering of the sentence" (1962:6). So the initial idea can be presented in the following way: there is a special class of sentences, sharing a common grammatical characteristic which distinguishes them from the other class of sentences, such as when uttered, in compliance with additional conditions, a special kind of act is performed. The impossibility to isolate a class of performative sentences became clear when such sentences as implicit performatives entered the scene. The fact that one could utter a sentence lacking the special grammatical feature and still be able to pull off the special kind of act (assuming the compliance with other conditions), made it clear that there is no special class of performative sentences in the sense cited above. Admitting statements into the fold of the special acts that speakers perform equals the following theoretical shift: if a special kind of act can be performed in uttering a sentence of the class of constatives (which was supposed to be about truth-evaluable fact-stating sentences), then the special act Austin is interested in elucidating can be performed in compliance with other conditions regardless of the type of sentence one may use, and even without using any sentence whatsoever. The special act performed in the utterance of a performative and of a constative sentence is of the same kind. Additional arguments for this assumption are provided by Austin himself (1962, lecture XI): the statement is also a special kind of act for it is a doing, just as informing or betting are, it is evaluable in terms of happiness vs. unhappiness in addition to the traditional true-false dimension, and it is liable to every infelicity that can befall these special kinds of acts. Most importantly, the ultimate direction for the rightness of the assumption is derived from the conclusion that Austin offers, which I will quote at length:

What then finally is left of the distinction of the performative and constative utterance? Really we may say that what we had in mind here was this:

¹¹⁷ Cf. Dörge 2004 and Sbisà 2007

(a) With the constative utterance, we abstract from the illocutionary (let alone the perlocutionary) aspects of the speech act, and we concentrate on the locutionary: moreover, we use an over-simplified notion of correspondence with the facts - over-simplified because essentially it brings in the illocutionary aspect. We aim at the ideal of what would be right to say in all circumstances, for any purpose, to any audience, &c. Perhaps this is sometimes realized.

(b) With the performative utterance, we attend as much as possible to the illocutionary force of the utterance, and abstract from the dimension of correspondence with facts. (1962:144-145)

Roughly, the sentence issued with its sense, reference and other linguistic characteristics is the locutionary act and the special act performed in uttering the sentence is the illocutionary act. In what follows, I will present the characteristics of the kind of special act Austin was so interested in, although from now on I will refer to it by its given name – that of illocutionary act.

6.1. Outline of the notion of illocutionary act

In the preliminary remarks on performative utterances Austin voices the following question: “Can saying make it so?” (It may be useful to note here that it is part of Searle’s doctrine that saying can indeed make it so, for a vast majority of illocutionary acts are defined by semantic rules.) Understanding that a particular act is performed does not depend (solely) on the utterance of the speaker. The circumstances must be appropriate, other related actions must be performed (or must already have been performed) by the speaker or the hearer. These circumstances are tied to the doctrine of infelicities which predicts various ways in which an act performance can go wrong. These conditions are spelled specifically for performances of acts involving the uttering of an explicit performative utterance. The conditions under A and B are necessary in that if any one of them should be flouted, the act is void; conditions under Γ are such that their non-observance makes the act unhappy.

(A. 1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

(A. 2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B. 1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B. 2) completely.

(Γ. 1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further

(Γ. 2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

The first and foremost characteristic of illocutionary acts is that they are conventional: they invoke a conventional procedure with a conventional effect. There are at least three distinct senses associated with Austin's use of "convention":

- a) Convention of means
- b) Conventionality of effect
- c) Social conventions.

The conventionality of means is generally referred to being described by Austin as the possibility for an illocutionary act to be made explicit by an explicit performative formula. Thus, the erroneous claim is often imputed to Austin that acts are paraphrasable¹¹⁸ into explicit performatives, thus tying the performance of illocutionary acts to the uttering of linguistic expressions. I do not think that is the idea behind the use of "conventional". I will quote the relevant paragraph:

Speaking of the 'use of "language" for arguing or warning' looks just like speaking of 'the use of "language" for persuading, rousing, alarming'; yet the former may, for rough contrast, be said to be conventional, in the sense that at least it could be made explicit by the performative formula; but the latter could not. Thus we can say 'I argue that' or 'I warn you that' but we cannot say 'I convince you that' or 'I alarm you that'. (Austin 1962:103)

This is thought of as a test for distinguishing illocutionary acts from the perlocutionary act. The explicit performative formula in Austin's sense invokes directly and explicitly the conventional procedure which makes the act valid. It means that in performing illocutionary acts we can rely on that convention to make it the case that our direct invocation of that very convention will make our act what it is. Saying "I argue that" is to argue, saying "I apologize"

¹¹⁸ The claim dates to the 70s, when the Performative Hypothesis had a big influence on speech act scholars, Searle included. The paraphrase would mean that explicit performatives and implicit performatives were connected on the level of the linguistic deep structure. In no way did Austin suggest that explicit performatives were implicit performatives with their deep structure explicitly referred to. I will not dwell on the crash of the Performative Hypothesis.

is to apologize. This is something that cannot be done with perlocutionary acts – one cannot persuade someone by saying “I persuade you”. The reason why no performative prefixes are available for use with perlocutionary acts is that there are no conventions that can be invoked. There is a huge difference between making an explicit reference to illocutionary act conventions and the claim that the explicit performative is a paraphrase – the latter ties the illocutionary force with the sentence even in its implicit form and is not what Austin meant. Austin’s sense of “conventional” does not involve any linguistic conventions (also Warnock 1973). It is not the meaning of words and sentences that make an act be an act of that type. The uttering of linguistic expressions is not essential to the performance of illocutionary acts - acts can be performed without uttering words and confusion is possible because many illocutionary acts seem to be performed in uttering words, but it is far from being usually “the sole thing necessary if the act is to be deemed to have been performed” (Austin 1962:8). Austin underlines that the only reason to include the second part of the rule (A.1.) is to accommodate cases of linguistic utterances, but he maintains that this addition is not important in principle.

As any direct relation that is attempted to be established between acts and linguistic conventions constitutes the major objection that I voice (as in the case of Searle’s theory), it is important to argue this point carefully¹¹⁹. There is an important distinction that Austin makes: in rough terms, he contrasts meaning (sense and reference) with force (roughly, the different functions or uses of language). Whatever the differences in the functions of language that we need to explain as relative to a certain context are, they should not be explained in terms of meaning of the words (Austin 1962:100). Curiously, it is the special character of perlocutionary acts that provides a solid argument against the interpretation of “conventional” in terms of linguistic conventions. Since we cannot persuade someone by simply saying “I persuade you that”, it means that the linguistic conventions that give to the sounds “I persuade you that” their meaning are not enough to make the act come to exist. There must be other conventions, most likely of a constitutive kind, that are invoked in performing illocutionary acts such as they make it the case that the act comes to exist. It may be objected that the special linguistic conventions exist only for acts of the illocutionary type, which are essentially linguistic in that they are tied to the utterance of linguistic expressions, whereas acts of the perlocutionary type may come off as an additional product of the utterance, but they are not essentially linguistic, so no linguistic convention can exist in order to ensure the

¹¹⁹ Although the focus of this study does not include a vindication of the locutionary act, a detailed discussion of the tripartite distinction will be conducted in chapter 8.

production of an act of the perlocutionary type. The force of such an objection is somewhat undermined by qualifying illocutionary acts as being essentially linguistic¹²⁰. Consider the case where I go to the docks, say “I name this ship the Generalissimo Stalin” and for good measure kick away the chocks (Austin’s example). Austin says in this case that the ship is not named. A Searlean would say that the circumstances are not appropriate for using the device for naming ships. Even if one agrees with this interpretation, it still transpires that in order for the illocutionary force indicating device to work, other conditions must be satisfied. So if there are linguistic conventions that make it possible for the act to come to be, they are not nearly enough to do so. Or if I say to a person “Get some wood, will you” and the person snaps back “You are not the boss of me”, I have not successfully ordered, even though my words mean precisely that. That is, again, the linguistic conventions (relied upon for the production of the utterance) are not enough to ensure the performance of illocutionary acts.

As illocutionary acts can be performed without uttering any words, some restrictions ought to bind these non-verbal performances. More specifically, we are told:

Strictly speaking, there cannot be an illocutionary act unless the means employed are conventional, and so the means for achieving its ends non-verbally must be conventional. But it is difficult to say where conventions begin and end; thus I may warn him by swinging a stick or I may give him something by merely handing it to him. But if I warn him by swinging a stick, then swinging my stick is a warning: he would know very well what I meant: it may seem an unmistakable threatening gesture. (Austin 1962:118)

Indeed, it is difficult to qualify swinging a stick as a conventional means of warning (threatening) somebody. It may be argued that there is certain iconicity in the swinging of the stick that stems from the fact that making ostensible display of a tool which can be used to inflict physical pain carries an indication (for lack of a better word) to the holder’s ability to use the said tool. And this iconicity carries over to other tools as well: toying with a gun or a rifle, handling a heavy bat, swinging a bicycle chain, even tossing a heavy rock up in one’s hand can, in the appropriate circumstances, be warnings/ threats. Swinging a bag does not have the same iconic value, although a blow with a heavy bag can also inflict physical pain. In this case, the meaning of “conventional” certainly cannot be “socially acceptable”, for the act of threatening somebody is not something people generally condone. It is more along the lines of “recognizable”, although in this case the discussion point shifts to a discussion of what the hearer took to be a performance of the act. In tacitly promising to uphold a certain course of

¹²⁰ I will come back to this point in a later chapter.

action there is no conventional gesture we can identify to be the means of making the promise. Imagine a situation in which the wife tells her husband who is going out mountaineering “Promise you’ll be careful” and he silently kisses her in response¹²¹. Of course, opinions can vary as to whether or not the husband has indeed promised to be careful or avoided to make the promise. If the husband in this situation nods, then he indicates clearly compliance with the requested action and thereby the promise is performed. The indication he uses is a conventional sign for indicating compliance. He may be said to have used the kiss as an indication of compliance. In that case the indication cannot be said to be a conventional sign of compliance. But, the important thing is, no matter how we construe of the indication, it is not an indication of promising, but indication of compliance with the request, which entails that the husband undertakes the obligation which is requested of him and thereby effectively can be taken to have promised. Tacit agreement is in the same line of business. There are situations in which it is usual to voice disagreement, so in some peculiar way the absence of voicing disagreement is construed as agreement. To sum up, the utterance of some words can be dispensed with if the circumstances for the invoking of a special procedure are appropriate, if my audience took up on my (deliberately) performing an act and my act took effect. Therefore, it does not seem to be essential for an act to be performed using conventional means (they only need to be recognizable).

The second way in which Austin’s acts can be said to be conventional is that the effect they create is conventional for the act of that type. In his exposition, Austin tries to clarify what he means by “effect”. It is not a consequence of the act, for an act can have lots of different and often unforeseen consequences. The effect of the act is a special kind of implementation which only comes off when the act is performed in a felicitous manner and which would not come to exist save for the act. Thus, naming the ship the *Queen Elizabeth* has the effect of naming the ship, that is, from now on the ship is to be referred to as the *Queen Elizabeth*. This is not a natural change in the course of affairs: this effect is tied to the performance of the illocutionary act of naming the ship. Promising to buy three kilos of sweets has the effect of placing the speaker under the obligation to buy three kilos of sweets. Testifying in court has the effect of making the speaker liable to punishment if she should bear false witness. These effects are not natural consequences in the sense in which the pulling of the trigger has the natural consequence of firing the gun, which in turn has the natural consequence of killing the donkey (Austin 1962:111). Illocutionary acts are then

¹²¹ This example was inspired by Dörge 2004.

contrasted with physical or material actions such as the act of pulling the trigger or firing a gun. The effects of the illocutionary acts are then in a peculiar sense non-natural (if I may echo Grice) and they are described as being conventional because they are tied by convention to the performance of illocutionary acts in the sense that they necessarily obtain upon the successful performance of the act.

There is a difference between the kind of effect that is conventional for an illocutionary act A and the intentions of the speaker to achieve a certain effect by or in the performance of the act. Assuming the act was successfully performed, the act takes effect by implementing or validating the conventional effect associated to it regardless of the intention of the speaker to produce exactly this effect. On the other hand, the speaker may have a vast array of other intentions but there is no convention that can guarantee their accomplishment.

The third way in which the acts are said to be conventional is that they invoke a social ritual or ceremony which is accepted or usual for a performance to be a particular kind of act. The example given is that a contemporary speaker can utter in all seriousness and with all the required thoughts, feelings and intentions “My seconds will call on you” and still not succeed in challenging the hearer to a duel because the procedure or ritual for dueling is no longer accepted in our society. The hearer can understand the meaning of the utterance without taking up on the act; the attempted act does not succeed in invoking any accepted procedure. The idea of ritual can be seen in almost every aspect of the discussion: there is a usually non-material performance that implements non-material effects, where both the performance and the effects are previously agreed upon by a certain group of people and/ or implemented by them¹²². But the term “ritual” can be a bit misleading because it carries the additional burden of a performance standing symbolically for another performance. Curiously, one of the senses in which Searle construed illocutionary acts to be conventional is that utterance of X counts as act Y in context Z, which is heavily reminiscent of this ritualistic sense of “conventional”. This does not quite fit the explications Austin provides us with. The illocutionary act does not stand for its effects; the utterance does not stand for the illocutionary act. The performance of the act is said to invoke the procedure, which is “accepted” for the members of that group. The word “accepted” is supposed to be used as a technical term here – at least, Austin tries to set it this way (1962:27-29) - meaning that the members of the group have conjointly defined a socially significant act with socially significant effects; it should not be confused with

¹²² Consider worship-related rituals in primitive societies: for instance, it is a commonly shared belief that a ritualistic dance (which is to stand as a symbol for the humble prayer to deities) brings about abundant crops and lots of cattle.

accepting the performance (as being correct, valid, and what not) and rejecting the invoking of the procedure altogether¹²³.

The conventional procedure which is invoked in the performance of the act has been the target of most of the criticisms of Austin's doctrine. In the initial stage of elaborating his theory, Searle refers to it rather vaguely by saying that some acts are institutional in the sense that they are only possible within the frame of an institution. A similar stance is advocated by Bach and Harnish (1979) who argue that even though there is a class of acts which are typically institutional, the vast majority are linguistic acts, essentially communicative, in that they exist solely within the institution of language. But whereas in Bach and Harnish's use institutional acts are a rather narrow class of acts pertaining to a special domain of social life, relying for their validity on the existence of the institution which makes use of them, Austin's procedure is the entire sequence of actions, intentions, consequences, ritual, circumstances, the role and status of the speaker and hearer involved, the effects – in one word, everything. Austin says:

It is inherent in the nature of any procedure that the limits of its applicability, and therewith, of course, the 'precise' definition of the procedure, will remain vague. (1962:31)

Because procedure is so difficult to define, it well may be the case that every putative case of act performance should be decided for its own sake as to whether or not it satisfies the criteria for being an invocation of that procedure. Two observations arise in this regard: first, as Austin remarks, in order to avoid certain arbitrariness, we tend to be bound by the precedent we set (there are many examples to this in law). Second, it would appear that every speaker and every hearer would have their own personal brand of understanding what the procedure of one act or another should be and judge the success (or felicity) of the acts accordingly. Empirical facts seem to corroborate this: society cannot afford that kind of arbitrariness about how certain acts come into being and whether they are executed correctly and completely. Institutional (in the narrow sense) illocutions are generally defined in an official way in constitutive texts. Life in society is thus regulated. We know what the procedure for marrying somebody, for selling a property, for casting votes in elections, for testifying before a court of law etc., is. Even in these heavily regulated cases there is room for singular cases which need to be decided upon. It is customary before testifying in a court of law to take an oath to the effect that one shall speak nothing but the truth. Strictly speaking, the oath cannot stop a person from lying or from misleading by relating false or incorrect

¹²³ According to the doctrine of infelicity, rejecting the invocation of the procedure makes the act void.

things, but the ostentatious manner of this conventional move serves to validate in a way the status of the oath-taker as witness and thus bind him to his word – once the oath is taken, the person testifying is liable to be punished by the law for any falsehoods he may utter. In ordinary life, allowances are made (Austin 1962:32). Hearers may accept that an act has been performed even if there is variation in the procedure. This lenience can account for the communicative acts (in Bach and Harnish's use) and their performance. Many of Austin's critics demanded to see the institution of asserting, or the procedure for asking questions. Curiously, the variation in the various speakers' and hearers' personal brand of understanding what the procedure for different illocutionary acts should be can account for the many different accounts of the act of assertion, and thus, indirectly, confirms the very existence of a conventional procedure the invocation of which is necessary for the performance of the act. Consider those linguists who require that the speaker have the knowledge that *p* in order to be able to assert that *p*. This requirement is reminiscent of Austin's comments that the speaker saying "there are fifty people in the next room" cannot be taken to be stating this, because there is no way for him to actually know this (1962:137). Being somehow in the right position to state or assert something is clearly part of the procedure for asserting or stating. Other linguists allow or accept statements and assertions from a speaker who has not knowledge, but a justifiable true belief.

Austin does not himself explicitly specify in which of these three senses illocutionary acts are said to be conventional. However, it is safe to rule out the first of the senses. Despite the variation in the speaker's and the hearer's idea of the procedure, the conformity to a procedure must be invariably present if the illocutionary act is to be successful. Moreover, illocutionary acts have invariably a conventional effect attached to them.

6.2. Two conditions for illocutionary acts

The rules specified by Austin serve two distinct purposes. First, they outline the characteristics of illocutionary acts and second, they define what it is for an act to be happily (or felicitously) performed. I keep these two purposes distinct, for breaches of the rules specified under A and B lead to void performances, that is, the act does not come off. Then the rules under A and B are supposed to state necessary conditions for an act being an illocutionary act. Breaches of the Γ rules lead to infelicitous acts, so they specify neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for an act being an illocutionary act. Combining the ideas

of the rules A and B, it is now possible to formulate the first necessary condition for an act to be an illocutionary act:

Condition 1: An act is an illocutionary act if it is a conventional act in the sense that it invokes a conventional procedure and has a conventional effect.

Austin certainly held that illocutionary acts must have some manifestation. The reason for keeping the vague phrase “manifestation” is that it is not a necessary, nor a sufficient condition for performing illocutionary acts that the speaker should utter a meaningful sentence. But if no words are uttered, what makes it the case that an act has been performed? If no words are uttered what can be taken to be the manifestation of the act? The speaker has indeed ordered (asserted, promised etc) if I understood / or grasped / or took up that she did. This is called securing of uptake. In order for the act to take effect, the speaker must secure uptake. Roughly, the speaker needs to be sure that the hearer understood that a particular act has been performed:

I cannot be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense. (Austin 1962:115)

The act cannot take effect unless there is someone to acknowledge¹²⁴ the performance. Austin says in this respect:

Is it essential for me to secure *correct understanding* as well as everything else? In any case this is clearly a matter falling under the B rules and not under the Γ rules. (1962:36, emphasis in the original)

B rules specify that the conventional procedure of the performance of the act must be executed correctly and completely. Correct understanding of the hearer seems to be a part of the procedure, or, in other words, it is something that makes the act come into existence. The consequence is that if no one heard, understood or grasped that an act is being executed, then the act does not come into existence¹²⁵. The condition I spelled out above is, then, not

¹²⁴ It is interesting to mention that Searle seems to confuse the public performance of an act and the non-verbal performance of an act: he says it is important for declaring war that the act should be public, but it is not required for some acts to be publicly performed. The distinction is this: if there is no hearer, whether I utter words or not does not matter – the act cannot take effect. Is declaring war somehow more socially significant, so that it requires a public, and assertion does not? This issue will be taken up in Chapter 10.

¹²⁵ Notice that this condition does not suffer from the “speaker is the king” effect of Searlean kind: the hearer can grasp that the utterance is used to perform a different kind of act than what the speaker intended to perform. The hearer may not even be sure which one out of two acts was intended. Adjustment and precisions and discussions are common in such cases, so as to clear up the acts involved.

sufficient for an act to be an illocutionary act. A second condition is necessary if we are to say that an act is an illocutionary act:

Condition 2: An act is an illocutionary act if uptake is secured on the part of the hearer.

It is because of this requirement that the study of illocutionary acts goes beyond preoccupations with linguistic meaning. A doctrine of illocutionary acts ought not to account for the issuance of every little bit of language, and it certainly ought not to account for the meaning of sentences. Illocutionary force is the value an utterance can have if it is issued as a part of the performance of an illocutionary act. As such, it is not linguistic meaning. Thus, the study of illocutionary acts is not a study of *langue*, *contra* Searle - it is at best a study of *parole*¹²⁶. One curious consequence of this requirement is that it rules out cases of soliloquy¹²⁷. When I am alone in the office and say out loud “I still need to grade these papers”, this is not an illocutionary act: I may have successfully invoked a conventional procedure, but there is nobody (except myself) to acknowledge that a special procedure is invoked which in turn implements the conventional effect. My utterance satisfies condition 1, but it does not satisfy condition 2. In Austin’s terms my act is void (1962:22). We cannot seriously accept the explanation that in the situation described I needed to remind myself to grade the papers and that saying “I still need to grade these papers” was necessary so that I came to be reminded of that. In order for me to utter “I still need to grade these papers” I need to know or remember that I still need to grade the papers. If I know or remember that I need to grade the papers, then my reminding myself is self-defeating, for I cannot simultaneously know (remember) and not know (not remember) that I need to grade the papers. The plausible explanation is that I remembered that I still have one task to do in the office, namely, to grade the papers. Maybe I saw them lying in a stack on my desk and it jogged my memory, or I saw the post-it on them which said “To be graded”. So it is something in the situation (context) that reminded me of the papers I need to grade. The vocalizing of things in soliloquy certainly has its explanation – we tend to vocalize things when we are practicing pronunciation, learning a poem by heart, or venting our feelings. The latter could be the case in the situation described; I could simply be uttering this to vent my feeling of deep frustration that I am not finished or vent my feeling of surprise at the realization that I still have one task to do, or in

¹²⁶ A speech act would then be a special kind of an illocutionary act, the performance of which involves the utterance of a linguistic expression.

¹²⁷ It is an interesting later addition to Searle’s theoretical framework that he considers cases of soliloquy to be instances of illocutionary acts.

uttering this out loud I want to brace myself to perform the tedious task that is grading. A possible solution concerning acts performed in soliloquy is found in Austin (1962:22) - consider these as a special case of illocutionary acts with etiolation of address¹²⁸. That is, the requirement of the act to have an addressee is suspended somehow.

Searle's other example of the speaker uttering a bunch of well-chosen expressions from colloquial English to customs officers who do not speak the language does not satisfy the conditions for an illocutionary act for other reasons. Although the expressions chosen may satisfy the condition of invoking a conventional procedure to insult / threaten etc, no uptake is secured. This case is peculiar in the following way: it is perfectly plausible to suppose that a stranger held at customs for an extensive period of time, engaged in an angry linguistic tirade, can be taken up as protesting/ cursing/ insulting/ threatening/ complaining. Complete understanding of the precise act the speaker is engaged in executing is not possible for the hearers. So the act cannot take effect, for it is not completely fixed. Thus, even though the officers probably suspect what the stranger is trying to do, their refusal to take up on the act makes it void. Their refusal to take up on the act has nothing to do with language. This same situation can unfold in a different manner as the customs officers can detain the speaker at the border because they took up on his act as being an insult. Let me consider one more example involving non-verbal performances of illocutionary acts. Imagine a tourist who does not speak the language of the country he is in, as he goes in a bakery and points at a loaf of bread. The conventional procedure is duly invoked – there is something the speaker wants, that the hearer can give him in exchange for money. The act of the speaker is a successful illocutionary act if the hearer takes the loaf of bread and hands it to the speaker. The speaker has secured uptake. The analysis does not change if we imagine the speaker pointing and saying in his own language that he would like a loaf of bread, or if he utters the word “bread” in the language of the hearer and points.

Combining the two conditions, I can now lay down the entire definition of what an illocutionary act is in Austin's terms:

¹²⁸ Sbisà 2007 proposes a similar solution, arguing that it is a common misconception that Austin's exposition excluded non-serious uses of language. But we ought to distinguish cases in which there is an audience to the speaker's monologue, from cases in which there is no audience, and the speaker talks to himself (or thinks). The suspension of the requirement for an addressee is something else; condition 2 specifies that an audience must take up that I have performed an act. If I am reciting a monologue for purposes of entertainment, the requirement of addressee is suspended, but I do this in order to entertain; the monologue is how I try to perform the perlocutionary act of entertaining people. In Sbisà 2007, the term is spelled “aetiolation”.

Illocutionary act: an act is an illocutionary act iff:

- 1) It is a conventional act in the sense that it requires conformity to an accepted conventional procedure and has a conventional effect, and**
- 2) It requires the securing of uptake in order to take effect.¹²⁹**

This definition states two conditions that are separately necessary and jointly sufficient for an act to be an illocutionary act. Three remarks are in order here. First, it is necessary to emphasize, that the fact that there are non-verbal illocutionary acts does not mean that whenever there is an actual utterance as part of the performance of the illocutionary act, it is a mere sign that a non-material internal act is taking place. The uttering of the words is effectively performing the act. Austin warns against committing the mistake of taking the words as an outward sign reporting on an inward act (1962:9). Saying “I apologize” is not reporting on an inner act of feeling sorry, it is indulging in the act of apologizing. Similarly, saying “There is a traffic jam on Brooklyn Bridge” would not be reporting on an inner act of judgment, it would be making it. Second, which can be an extreme consequence of the first, illocutionary acts are not a consequence of the locutionary acts (the locutionary act is described by Austin as the act of uttering sounds forming a meaningful sentence with sense and reference) and such an idea must be avoided:

What we do import by the use of the nomenclature of illocution is a reference, not to the consequences (at least in any ordinary sense) of the locution, but to the conventions of illocutionary force as bearing on the special circumstances of the occasion of the issuing of the utterance. (1962:113)

In other words, the meaning of the utterance which is uttered as part of the performance of an illocutionary act does not make the act an illocutionary act of a certain type. The meaning of the utterance is not in any way constitutive of the act’s being an illocutionary act of that type. And third, in the light of the previous two remarks, it is important to interpret the following claim:

To perform a locutionary act is in general, we may say, also and *eo ipso* to perform an *illocutionary* act, as I propose to call it. (Austin 1962:98, emphasis in the original)

Clearly, this claim contradicts the examples that Austin gives in which performing the locutionary act is not *eo ipso* performing the illocutionary act. In order to reconcile this claim with the examples, I suggest that it is to be taken in a conditional manner. Some illocutionary

¹²⁹ This outline corresponds to conclusions made by both Dörge 2004 and Sbisà 2007.

acts can be performed without performing any locutionary acts – this is consistent with the examples of non-verbal acts and the definition of the illocutionary acts given. If an illocutionary act involves the uttering of words, then if the locutionary act is successfully performed (the utterance is both meaningful and constructed recognizably within the grammatical requirements of the language used) and the constitutive conventions are successfully invoked in accordance with the conventional procedure such as the hearer understood which conventions are being invoked, then in vocalizing the sounds, the speaker performs both a locutionary and an illocutionary act (maybe even a perlocutionary act to boot). It is trivially true that one can perform a locutionary act without performing an illocutionary act – in cases when infelicities of the A and B kind arise, even though the locutionary act is performed, the illocutionary act thereby attempted does not come into existence. So, this claim should not be read in the absolute sense, but in the success sense. This interpretation reconciles this claim with the overall doctrine of illocutionary acts we find in Austin¹³⁰.

The rules under Γ provide felicity conditions; compliance with these rules makes the act happy. Non-compliance with these rules cannot make the act void, but unhappy or infelicitous. These rules amount to saying that the speaker ought to have all the appropriate feelings, thoughts, intentions and so on in the performance of an act and her subsequent actions are supposed to be consistent with the act performed.

The reconstructed definition of illocutionary act does not contradict the intuitive conditions of adequacy that I spelled out in chapter 1: indeed, illocutionary acts are certain actions that have a manifestation (any linguistic or semiotic sign that can be grasped and understood by an audience as being an act performance in the circumstances of its appearance), which need not be conventional because it is interpreted in particular circumstances by a target audience and which implements a conventional effect upon its successful performance. The task of the following chapters is to offer some details on what an account of the illocutionary act of assertion would be according to this definition. A secondary preoccupation will be to see if the reconstructed definition escapes some of the problems faced by Searle's theory, which I discussed above.

¹³⁰ I will return to this problem in chapter 8 where I discuss this in more detail.

Chapter 7: Considerations on the conventional effect of assertion

In this chapter I will consider the second part of condition one: that an illocutionary act (a successfully performed act) necessarily creates a conventional effect. The entire process of the illocutionary act performance following the definition is this: first, the speaker initiates the illocutionary act move, by invoking the relevant procedure; the hearer accepts the invocation of the procedure, that is, there is uptake on the act; the act takes effect in the very acceptance of the procedure by the hearer. If the hearer rejects the invocation of the procedure, the illocutionary act does not come off: it is without effect. The conventional effect associated with the (successful) performance of the act does not take in the speech situation. Following my take on Austin's exposition, there is one distinct sense in which I understand the term 'conventional' in relation to illocutionary acts: it is socially conditioned. A social act does not only require the participation of social agents in a social setting; it also signifies a social contract (or agreement¹³¹). But before getting into the discussion, however, one small digression will be made on the topic of intention.

I need to address an objection here. This objection was voiced to Austin's doctrine by Strawson (1964) and it consists in questioning the idea that illocutionary acts are conventional. Strawson targets this claim central to Austin's doctrine by presenting examples that do not exhibit this trait, as it is understood by Strawson. Subsequently, he proposes that while some acts undisputedly present this trait and are in some traditional sense conventional – that is, performed in a set of special circumstances by appropriate people with the appropriate institutional sanctions etc., for example marrying somebody or giving out a verdict. Other acts are performed by getting the hearer to recognize the intention to produce a particular communicative effect by means of recognition of this very intention¹³². Rather than reproaching to Austin a hasty overgeneralization, Strawson takes his insistent repeating that illocutionary acts are conventional to mean that illocutionary acts can be performed by conventional means – using an explicit performative formula. In order to address this objection, I will first turn to intention.

¹³¹ Compare with Sbisà (2001), O'Neill (1972:225).

¹³² This idea is later picked up by Bach and Harnish (1979) and developed into a theory which distinguishes two major kinds of acts: communicative acts and conventional acts.

7.1. Intention and responsibility

Two questions first: assuming that acts are conventional in the former sense (that is, require a special set of circumstances, appropriate people etc.), can I not go through the entire procedure of performing an act with no intention whatsoever and still be taken as having performed the act? Would that not make the intentions of the speaker irrelevant? Austin does not exclude intentionality from consideration. In fact, he can be taken to hold that performing illocutionary acts is engaging in an intentional activity. This can be seen in one of the tests for performativity (I quote the entire section):

Yet a third test would be, at least in some cases, to ask whether we could insert before the supposed performative verb some such adverb as 'deliberately' or such an expression as 'I am willing to': because (possibly) if the utterance is the doing of an action, then it is surely something we ought to be able (on occasion) to do deliberately or to be willing to do. Thus we may say: 'I deliberately bade him welcome', 'I deliberately approved his action', 'I deliberately apologized', and we can say 'I am willing to apologize'. But we cannot say 'I deliberately approved of his action' or 'I am willing to be sorry' (as distinct from 'I am willing to say I am sorry'). (Austin 1962:80)

Leaving aside considerations of language and the appropriateness of the use of these linguistic expressions, the core importance of this paragraph is in the emphasis on the intentional character of illocutionary acts. This is something that is done deliberately and is subject to the will. Indeed, one leading idea can be discerned in the quoted paragraph – that of the underpinning of action being closely related to responsibility¹³³. Further, intentions are part of the felicity conditions that come into play in our performing and assessing the performance of an illocutionary act; they are, in fact, part of the doctrine of infelicities under the heading of Γ rules. The felicitous illocutionary act presupposes that the speaker has all of the appropriate intentions, according to which she will subsequently behave; in other words, the speaker has the additional intention to behave accordingly. The problem is that intentions abound in every performance of illocutionary acts and the difficulty in distinguishing those which define intrinsically the illocutionary act and those which are not defining for the act in question can be seen even in Austin's discussion of the difference between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Another distinction that is difficult to make is whether a particular intention is necessary for the performance of that particular act. There is a difference between performing an

¹³³ Austin's ideas on different linguistic manifestations of the intentional underpinning of action amount to saying that one's actions if performed deliberately, willingly, intentionally, on purpose engaged the responsibility of the performer (Austin 1966).

illocutionary act and communicating the intention to perform an act. The performance itself is the manifestation of certain intentions (and a rationality claim of a sort on the part of the speaker, together with an expectation of rationality on the part of the hearer) and the uptake requirement embodies a communicative intention in that it is an intrinsic characteristic of communication to have our hearer recognize the signs we produce. But the absence of intention (just as the absence of belief in our discussion of assertion, etc) cannot make the act void, as it is the manifested intention that counts. Also, our intention alone is not enough to ensure the successful performance of the act. Further, the recognition of our intention by the competent hearer is still not enough to make the act felicitous. What motivates a rational act (the intention behind it) can be something that has nothing to do with the way the act is performed. The obvious example is lying: my intention in lying is to deceive; either to make you believe something which is not true, or represent myself as believing something which is untrue. These intentions have nothing to do with the way assertion is performed or grasped. In fact, these particular intentions are realized only if you are unaware of them. If we take the intention behind assertion to be the intention to commit oneself to the truth of *p*, there is nothing in the act itself that can guarantee that I really have the intention I purport to have.

Some acts make manifest an intention of the speaker (but not all of them); in these cases the hearer assumes the purported intention in a default manner¹³⁴. The impossibility to define illocutionary acts using the intention behind them can be seen if we consider the following acts: whereas it is intuitively acceptable that ordering is motivated by an intention to get the hearer to do A, the majority of speech-act theoretic researchers agree that getting the hearer to do A is a perlocutionary effect. Searle also believes that, for he makes the qualification that ordering is an attempt to get the hearer to do A. The natural expression of the intention behind the act of ordering does not fit into the theoretical frame, for it is theoretically unsound to describe the illocutionary act by the intention to achieve a perlocutionary effect. Concerning apologies, the natural expression of the intention behind the apology is an intention to make amends (albeit just verbal ones) for a piece of behavior; not an intention to express a psychological state of regret. Indeed, expressing regret is something that is connected to apologizing: assuming that I am sincere, it is a realization of the inappropriateness (or harmfulness) of my behavior, regret it ever happened and a desire to

¹³⁴ I will return to this point in chapter 8. Moore's paradox and pragmatically anomalous self-defeating speech acts make the case in favor of there being a manifested intention associated with particular illocutionary acts. Marrying somebody, appointing chairpersons or declaring war also fall into this kind of infelicity. All this is only interesting in a very general sense: the act seems undermined by our negating that we engage in the act willingly and in a motivated way; this is a stab at rational behavior.

make amends for it together motivate or form the intention behind an act of apology. Explaining the act of apology by an intention to express regret seems at best an oversimplification to me. Acts that involve a special extra-linguistic institution also exhibit this trait: if we take acts like declaring war or appointing somebody chairman, the intentions are best spelled out as being an intention to declare war and an intention to appoint somebody chairman. It is interesting to point out here that voicing or communicating an intention to declare war or an intention to appoint somebody chairman does not constitute a valid declaration of war or an act of appointing somebody chairman, just as merely expressing regrets does not make an apology¹³⁵. Merely making an intention manifest is not enough to perform the act.

In a game situation, the actions that occur in the game are in some way motivated by the game itself. Kicking a goal is motivated by the purpose of the game, which is to win. The team with most goals wins the game, so the main purpose of the game is to try and score as many goals as possible. In chess, putting the adversary's king in a position of attack such as no move will leave it un-attacked is the motivation for all the moves of the chess figures. In strategic games we make a difference between the super-goal (here winning the game) and immediate goals (secure the king, pave way for a figure's move by taking or sacrificing another figure etc). The purpose of the language game is to perpetuate itself.¹³⁶ Let me take three example acts, say issuing a verdict, asserting and ordering. It is part of social regulations that a person who is indicted for a crime stands trial. The purpose of the trial is in settling the question of the person's guilt, which results in issuing a verdict. One can, therefore, say that issuing a verdict is motivated by legal regulations and has a purpose which is self-satisfying: the purpose of issuing a verdict is the verdict itself (that is, resolving the particular legal problem). The judge's motivation can be the desire to do justice, the desire to send a message, the desire to do his duty, the desire to serve one's country. The intention behind the act is the realization of these desires. None of these are part of the act's being what it is and intuitively, none of these intentions are internally descriptive or defining of the act of issuing a verdict. In ordering, I may have the desire to see A done, the desire to assert my authority, the desire to humiliate you, the desire to provoke you to a fight etc. So the intention can be spelled out as an intention to realize these desires. Now, it is important to note that even if it is (contextually) clear that I order you to bring me the mail only to assert my authority (as in a situation where the mail is closer to me than to you), the order is not invalidated. That is, the

¹³⁵ This point was suggested to me by P.-G. Meyer (personal communication).

¹³⁶ In such cases we see how the game analogy fails.

speaker lacks the defining intention and the act still comes off successfully (assuming that I am in the position to issue orders to you). In asserting, I can have the desire to inform you of a belief that I have, to validate a belief, to establish common ground, to please you etc. One important generalization from these three examples is this: whatever the motivating intention of an illocutionary act can be, the purpose of the act is in satisfying this intention. And this is true of any intention whatsoever, to the point where we cannot make a principled difference between the act-defining intention (in Searle's framework, the illocutionary point or purpose embodies that) and other non-defining intentions¹³⁷.

Now, considering the sense in which illocutionary acts are said to be conventional, I have already offered one interpretation to Austin's doctrine. I now wish to suggest a way to restrict even further the way in which illocutionary acts are said to be conventional. Even with all the concessions on the vagueness of the term 'procedure' of an illocutionary act, I think that ultimately this is not something that can provide an operative description of an illocutionary act. Particularly, I do not think that all illocutionary acts have a procedure in the sense of protocol or ritual or institutional sanction, which, above all, should describe their performance in the sense of what is done by whom and how. My reticence is not connected with the Strawsonian objection that no procedure for entreaties or warnings can be isolated, or that the so-called communicative acts are essentially linguistic and not bound by institutional conventions. It is connected with the other fundamental feature of Austin illocutionary acts: the need for securing uptake. I feel that if the speaker could invoke a special conventional ritual or protocol, all that the hearer would be required to do is to recognize the procedure invoked. However, the speaker must secure uptake, that is, do what she can to bring about the hearer's understanding of the procedure. Further, the invoked procedure can be validated or not by the hearer, making the hearer equally responsible for the performance of the act. This is why in my understanding it is a social contract and not an institutional convention, which is the correct interpretation of the meaning of 'conventional'. It is an accepted practice which is sanctioned by a particular social group. It is important to underline that Austin does not regard illocutionary acts to be universals – recall his example of saying "I divorce you" by a husband to his wife in a Christian country when they are both Christians (Austin 1962:27). The reluctance to talk about universals is consistent in Austin's philosophical thought:

¹³⁷ I realize that two distinct senses of intention come into play in this discussion: intention behind an action and a communicative intention (or a Gricean-type of intention). Discarding intention from the definition of illocutionary acts does not mean that I oppose Gricean communicative intention; on the contrary, I think that in elucidating speaker meaning and capturing conversational implicature, this is one of the best spelled mechanisms yet. Only, as illocutionary acts are not meanings of utterances (perhaps in a very general way a kind of speaker meaning), it belongs in another discussion.

Neither Mr. Mackinnon nor Mr. MacLagan would claim, I think, to have told us carefully what they are talking about when they talk about "concepts". Both seem, however, to imply that the word "concept" could not be explained without using the word "universal": and this seems also the common view, though how the two are related is no doubt obscure and controversial. I propose, therefore, to make some remarks about "universals": because I do not understand what they are, so that it is most unlikely I shall understand what concepts are. (Austin 1939:83)

Taking conventional procedure to mean socially conditioned (agreed upon) practice is compatible with the condition of securing uptake in that the exact way the act comes to be is vague enough to accommodate any subjective variations and the necessity for the hearer to acknowledge that the performance witnessed is an instance of that accepted practice. I take a social action to involve social agents and a social environment, but I do not intend 'social' to mean 'institutionally organized'. Sbisà explains the importance of the social environment in the following terms:

By 'social action' we can mean any action whose agent and patient are members of a society, but also, more intriguingly, any action whose performance needs a social environment. Hitting somebody may be a social action in the former sense, offending somebody is a social action also in the latter. (Sbisà 2002:421, footnote 1)

What it means for illocutionary acts to be social acts in the latter sense is that they operate non-natural (pre-arranged, agreed upon) changes on that social environment in that those changes occur as the conventional (socially conditioned) effect of an accepted (and contractual) practice. If we take a look at the examples of acts discussed by Austin, it is clear that illocutionary acts serve the purpose of building up interpersonal relations, regulating social relations; generally, it is about exercising influence over one's (social) environment, acting upon it. A social act, in my understanding, is not an act that communicates its own significance (as Pagin 2004 formulated it). I do not know how an illocutionary act can communicate its own significance. Even though I concede that some utterances can communicate their social significance, this is not a universal trait, and the significance they communicate does not always correspond to a knowledge (or information or what not) of the illocutionary act thereby initiated. Understanding the utterance is not enough to yield understanding of the social significance it is presumed to have. Further, the actual social significance of an act being a joint venture of the speaker and hearer, I believe it is not appropriate to speak of utterances communicating their own social significance.

7.2. Conventional effect

Social acts with a conventional effect - this is the preferred sense of conventionality of illocutionary acts in my reading of Austin. In a previous chapter¹³⁸ I already sketched some ideas about illocutionary effect. Let me briefly summarize them here. The illocutionary effect as Austin intended it, does not equate with the understanding of the utterance by the hearer – this is (partly) covered by Austin's idea of securing uptake¹³⁹. One may understand the utterance and still reject the procedure¹⁴⁰, so that the act is attempted but void. Rather, what Austin had in mind, is a special kind of consequence that can only be brought about by the successful performance of the act in question. The successful performance of the act subsumes two distinct conditions: first, that the hearer understands both the meaning and the force of the utterance; second, that the hearer responds or reacts to it. In other words, what makes an illocutionary act successful is the achieved social contract between the two participants in the exchange, the speaker and the hearer. This social contract takes effect in implementing the conventional effect associated with this particular illocutionary act. The effects are in a way conditioned by the procedure of the act, in that accepting a performance to be an illocutionary act of a particular type binds both the speaker and the hearer to the illocutionary effects thereby implemented. Another important feature of this kind of effect is that it is subject to correction: the very core of the doctrine of infelicities is in regulating (cancelling or modifying) effects. Illocutionary acts, in this understanding, create and regulate social and interpersonal relations; their performance far outstrips the mere linguistic competence which is needed for their reception according to Searlean theory. The Searlean notion of illocutionary effect, which consists in the hearer's understanding of the meaning of the utterance, reduces the hearer to a passive party with the linguistic competence to grasp the meaning of the utterance, which guarantees the successful performance of the act in accordance with Axiom 1¹⁴¹.

Austin distinguished three ways in which illocutionary acts have effects: they involve the securing of uptake, they take effect in a way which is distinct from having consequences in the 'normal' way, and they invite a response or a sequel (Austin 1962:116). I will postpone the discussion on uptake for the following chapter, to concentrate on the second and the third

¹³⁸ Part I, chapter 1.

¹³⁹ I say "partly", because securing uptake subsumes understanding both the meaning and the force(s) of the utterance.

¹⁴⁰ I will come back to that.

¹⁴¹ Part I, chapter 1.

kind of effect. In the formulation of the conditions of illocutionary acts both uptake and the effect have a prominent role. As for inviting a response, it is best left outside of the technical definition of the illocutionary act for the following reason: some acts invite a verbal response by convention, such as offers or bets; others do not invite a verbal response, but rather invite the hearer to behave in a particular way. Responses would be extensions on the uptake condition in that they can be construed as signals that the act was taken up by the hearer.

Illocutionary effect is conventional in the sense that it is invariably attached to the successful performance of the illocutionary act. In view of the complete speech situation, illocutionary effect is the actual operative change we as speakers produce in the context of our performance and on the context. This is how our acts take effect. Hardly any scholar (after Searle's modified version of it) paid a lot of attention to the conventional effect of illocutionary acts. One who did is Sbisà (2001, 1984)¹⁴². Her suggestion, which deserves a lot of merit, is that conventional effects are to be understood in terms of 'deontic modality' - "namely, as assignments to or cancellations from each one of the participants of modal predicates related to the necessity or possibility of actions with respect to norms" (Sbisà 2001: 1797). The reason for choosing the deontic lexicon is explained by Sbisà by the conventional character of the assignment or removal of obligations – a process depending on social factors, the main of which is the relevant intersubjective agreement¹⁴³. In the sense of building and regulating interpersonal relations, such a take on conventional effects falls at the right place. Matters of power, entitlement, rights, obligations, commitments can thus be linked with performing illocutionary acts and this is the fundamental feature in the original Austin's doctrine that set him apart. One important feature related to the conventional effect thus construed is that in the performance of an illocutionary act, both the speaker and the hearer take active part. First, the hearer takes up on the act (the hearer's uptake must be secured by the speaker) – this effectively validates the act; second, the act takes effect by operating the change in the speaker and hearer's respective positions vis-à-vis each other.

The obvious remark in the case of performing a felicitous illocutionary act is that it operates a change in the world, which brings a change in status, position, obligations, rights, entitlements and what not. Austin himself talks about how acts can commit the speaker to a certain course of action or that others (other than the speaker) can be compelled to do something, or can be allowed to do something (Austin 1962:154). The classes within his

¹⁴² Also Gazdar 1981 in a different reading, construing illocutionary acts as functions from contexts into contexts.

¹⁴³ Sbisà 2001: 1798.

tentative taxonomy also bear an unmistakable hint to intersubjective relations and redistribution of obligations and rights. A successfully performed order puts the hearer under the obligation to do something (namely, the action referred to by the speaker). A successfully performed promise puts the speaker under the obligation to do something (the action referred to). The declaration of independence, successfully performed, redefines the entire status of the speaker, with all the relevant rights, obligations and entitlements that it entails. A declaration of war commits the speaker to a specific course of action, and a whole group of people also have their status changed with the respective obligations attached. It is important to emphasize that these obligations are conventionally attached to the successful performance of those acts. If a social actor does not behave in the way she is expected to, the social status of the actor suffers. Being under the obligation to do A and not doing A can lead to sanctions for disobeying (military sanctions conditioned by the military code in case of a command; moral sanctions in the case of a misbehaving child or depriving the child of some privileges she used to have etc.); but disobeying the order does not invalidate the order, and it certainly does not cancel out the conventional effect associated with this particular act. In case of a disputed order (when the hearer does not accept the speaker's authority) the act cannot take effect – therefore, no obligation is put on the hearer.

In initiating the illocutionary act move, the speaker is making a specific claim (in a manner of speaking – I do not mean to say that this is an intentional act of making a claim), bearing on the felicity conditions on the performance of that illocutionary act: that she is invoking a particular procedure, that she is the appropriate person, entitled to invoke it. For ordering, the said claim would be that the speaker is in the authoritative position to put the hearer under the obligation to execute the action referred to. Recognizing that this felicity condition obtains, the hearer consents to suffer the effect of the act thus validated.

Let me consider assertion. I will first follow some of Austin's observations on assertion¹⁴⁴. There is one specific idea I wish to discuss – the requirement of being in the right position to assert something.

Just as we often say, for example, 'You cannot order me', in the sense 'You have not the right to order me', which is equivalent to saying that you are not in the appropriate position to do so: so often there are things you cannot state-have no right to state-are not in a position to state. You cannot now state how many people there are in the next room; if you say 'There are fifty people in the next room', I can only regard you as guessing or conjecturing (just as sometimes you are not ordering me, which would be

¹⁴⁴ All of the infelicities that an assertion can be subjected to will be taken up in a later chapter. I will limit my discussion to those which have bearing on the effect discussion.

inconceivable, but possibly asking me to rather impolitely, so here you are 'hazarding a guess' rather oddly). (Austin 1962:137)

The special requirement that the speaker need to be in the position to assert can easily be confused with the familiar requirement that the speaker be aware of a certain state of affairs before she can assert that state of affairs. In other words, that knowledge about that particular state of affairs is required (or knowledge of the truth). This is not what is meant in this paragraph. First, I consider as a major argument against the requirement of knowledge of the truth Austin's discussion of assessing the truth of statements. The relativity of our assessments of truth in contexts where loosely phrased states of affairs are acceptable despite being not strictly speaking true, or the impossibility to assess the truth of some statements should not be interpreted as arguing the case that a speaker can felicitously assert something, which she does not know (in the relevant sense) is true. In some cases, the most relevant feature will indeed be the speaker's knowledge which will warrant the issuance of an assertion. Not all cases of asserting concern issues of knowledge or truth. Authority and truth are of interest when we are assessing the act and they certainly come into play in triggering perlocutionary effects (as believing in or being persuaded of something). What is meant by 'being in a position' to assert is something closer to having the right or being entitled to assert something in the sense of being in the position to commit oneself to what is asserted. Asserting brings about a responsibility of the speaker for whatever she asserts¹⁴⁵. So, this requirement of Austin's is linked to the effect of assertion – assertion takes effect by engaging the responsibility of the speaker for a state of affairs. This is a rather vague formulation, so I expect a clarification is in order. That the speaker's responsibility is engaged does not mean that the speaker is responsible for a state of affairs being what it is – states of affairs exist independently of speakers. Rather, it is about claiming a special relation between the speaker and that particular state of affairs. This special relation can be evaluated in terms of authorship (it is important that it was speaker A who asserted B), or in terms of position (it is important that B was asserted by speaker A). If we use the social environment and social actors to explain this, it would mean that asserting constructs the public self of the speaker: it conventionally associates claims to her, displays her espousals of beliefs, engages her responsibility for those claims and beliefs.

How do we assess this 'being in a position' requirement? Consider another sample of the questions that Austin asks in this respect:

¹⁴⁵ Peirce, Collected papers (p. 1908), also Tuzet 2006.

(...) (W)hat about statements about other persons' feelings or about the future? Is a forecast or even a prediction about, say, persons' behaviour really a statement? (1962:137)

One possible interpretation of these questions, which is compatible with my own criticism (see chapter 1 above) to the effect that in order to be committed to the truth of an assertion we need to know what the truth is, is along the lines of justification. That is, a person is in the right position to assert something if she is prepared to be committed to providing justification for the assertion-product if needed. This formulation escapes the difficulties of the knowledge norms for making assertions and accounts for the counter-cases rather comfortably. Now, Sherlock Holmes, upon an imaginary challenge after asserting "This is the work of Dr. Moriarty", would probably give his reasons for it, in the unmistakable style of his – be it experience, visual prompts that fit in with Moriarty's style, and what not – "It is simplicity itself, dear Watson". Asserting exemplifies a judgment which the asserter commits to uphold. This is a clue to understanding the idea of "being in the right position" to perform a particular act – for asserting, it is the undertaking of justificatory responsibility (as Brandom calls it in 1983:641) for what is asserted. This is an indication that the speaker comprehends in regard of a judgment what would count as its justification.

A common verbal behavior involves people quoting another person's claim. Whether the person quoting the claim has formed the relevant belief or knowledge is not important in accounting for this piece of behavior. The authorship and the responsibility for the claim are imputed to the person who originally made the claim in question. So, there is another kind of social contract that the asserter needs to be prepared to make: that the original claim can be utilized by the hearers by re-asserting it. The commitment of the speaker thus extends to justifying the claim if challenged and authorizing further assertions on the part of the hearer, both asserting the original assertion-product and inferences that the hearer may draw on its basis. The validity of the social significance of asserting thus construed is corroborated by the fact that the speaker's authority as an asserter is undermined if she consistently fails to provide the required justification. Subsequently, the asserter's authority entails that she withdraws the assertion when it proved to have been untrue. Withdrawing the untrue assertion preserves the authority of the asserter in that the asserter needs to show both flexibility and integrity: the impossibility to justify a claim would restrain asserting. Also, disclaimers, retractions, admitting that one was wrong (to put in ordinary words) preserve the authority of the asserter. Thus, we can capture these intuitive requirements on human interaction without the dubious need to lay down the principle to aim for the truth, or the legal (and moral) sounding requirement of speaking "nothing but the truth". This line of reasoning leads

MacFarlane to favor an explanation of commitment along three distinct ideas: in asserting the speaker is committed to withdraw the assertion when it is proved untrue, to justify it if challenged, and to be held responsible if someone else acts on it and it proves to have been untrue (MacFarlane 2005:334). But does this mean that, strictly speaking, the asserter is responsible for the truth of what she asserts? After all, the most salient dimension of assessment of the assertion-product is the truth-falsity dimension: in communication settings, assertion is an information-bearing act as well as responsibility-binding act, rather than an act of pure signification¹⁴⁶. The answer to this question is connected with the difference between being wrong and lying. In both cases the asserter puts forth a claim which is false. The difference is in the asserter's belief: in the former case, the asserter believes that so and so is the case; in the latter case, the asserter does not believe that so and so is the case. The responsibility of the speaker cannot be stretched to facts, but to the awareness that her claim is going to be evaluated regarding its truth or falsity, entailing that her responsibility is to be regarded as a warrant for further use of the assertion-product. The impossibility to utilize the assertion-product (that is, the assertion turns out to be false) involves the speaker's responsibility to withdraw it¹⁴⁷.

Withdrawing or retracting an assertion is in a way making the effect of it null and void. As one cannot erase the act performed, one can nevertheless undo the conventional (or illocutionary) effect of the act. The information made available in the act of asserting is not undone in the sense that the audience is magically made to forget about it. It is about cancelling the commitment of the speaker: the speaker indicates that she no longer is committed to providing justification for the assertion, that she can no longer authorize the hearer to re-assert the assertion-product or inferences from the original assertion. This interpretation accounts for Austin's insight that without any contextually conditioned information, given a lecturer and an audience in a lecture hall, the lecturer cannot take the audience to be asserting that there are fifty people in the next room (Austin 1962:137) without further setting.

The conventional effect of the illocutionary act of asserting is clearly seen in academic and political texts. In disseminating findings, the speaker (who is the researcher, in fact)

¹⁴⁶ But cf. Tuzet 2006 and Peirce, Collected papers.

¹⁴⁷ Tuzet (2006) makes the speaker responsible for the belief she entertains; so that in asserting something true, which the speaker does not believe in, the speaker is lying. This speaker-centered take on commitment takes the analysis a little off track. Although, the case can be made in favor of it considering an insincere speaker who, even though she is telling the truth, fails to induce the relevant belief in her audience. Is the insincere speaker's authority of asserter undermined? Rather, the value of the information imparted is sabotaged. Consider a priest who lost his faith talking to a swaying audience who takes the words to be true, but the lack of conviction in the priest has the effect of deterring the people from the message.

explicitly and often preemptively produces justification for every assertion she makes. Additional conditions on the performance of assertion in academia may be that the asserter does not contradict herself. The dimension of authorizing others to re-assert the original assertion-product can be seen with the additional dimension of authorship - that is, “deferring the author of the original assertion the justificatory responsibility which would otherwise thereby be undertaken” (Brandom 1983:642). In politics, the statement of an official policy or position regarding a particular issue also goes in the same direction.

The advantage of describing illocutionary acts by their effects is that the creating of a conventional effect is something that depends on the successful performance of the act and it can be a reliable test for checking the performance of acts. Often, the exact way in which a particular performance has taken effect is seen in the responses it gets. Austin cites this as the third sort of effect a performance of an illocutionary act can have (this sort of effect is not necessary, in the sense that a verbal response is not required for all illocutionary acts; behavior and social changes account for an act that has taken effect). Intention, on the other hand, does not depend on the successful realization of the act (and vice versa). I can recognize one or another intention of yours even if I indeed reject the invocation of the particular procedure for a particular illocutionary act – I can recognize your intention to make me get some wood, and at the same time I can reject your authority, thus challenging the correct invocation of the procedure for successful ordering.

We are now in a position to suggest a preliminary description of the illocutionary act of assertion in terms of its conventional effect:

Preliminary description 1: An illocutionary act of assertion has the effect of engaging the responsibility of the speaker and committing the speaker to:

- a) Justifying the assertion;**
- b) Authorizing further assertions of the original assertion-product or assertions that are inferred from the original assertion-product;**
- c) Retracting the assertion if and when the assertion-product is proved to have been false.¹⁴⁸**

I have three remarks on the description above. The justificatory responsibility is not meant to provide a link to truth; after all, speakers cannot be responsible for states of affairs that exist independently in the world. The responsibility can engage the speaker’s holding the belief – it

¹⁴⁸ This description is inspired by ideas of Peirce, Brandom 1984, Sbisà 1984 and 2001, Tuzet 2006 and MacFarlane 2005.

both imputes that belief to her and commits her to provide justification for her holding the said belief¹⁴⁹. The second commitment follows from the first one: the speaker claims to be in a possession of a belief and should bear the burden of being referred to as having so claimed. For the sake of caution, the second part of the second commitment should either be reformulated to read “any assertion that is materially entailed from the original assertion-product” or dropped altogether. It is really difficult to stretch the responsibility of the speaker to claims that she did not herself put forward and the material implications of a claim can be many. The third kind of commitment has more to do with the speaker’s public self than with preoccupations with truth in that the speaker is committed to retract the assertion if it no longer corresponds to a position or judgment that she is willing to uphold. For reasons I explained in great detail (see chapter 1), I prefer to formulate this commitment as directed to the act-product and its relation to the speaker. It is conceivable that in many cases the assertion-product would be withdrawn because it turns out to be untrue (cf. MacFarlane 2005). But if we wish to encompass cases that are not readily truth-evaluable, the focus of the assertion would be not a state of affairs, but rather the justification, or reason behind the claim. Therefore, the formulation of the conventional effect of asserting will be altered in the following way in order to accommodate those remarks:

Description 1: An illocutionary act of assertion has the effect of engaging the responsibility of the speaker and committing the speaker to:

- a) Justifying the assertion-product;**
- b) Authorizing further assertions of the original assertion-product;**
- c) Retracting the assertion-product if it is no longer endorsed by the speaker.**

One important argument in favor of the idea that illocutionary acts are social acts is the conventional effect, as it satisfies two crucial conditions outlined by Sbisà (2007:465): it is defeasible and dependent on social agreement. The first condition mirrors the possibility of an act to be made null and void: retracting the act makes it null and void and entails cancelling the effects of the act, as the performance itself cannot be erased. For asserting, retracting or withdrawing an assertion is the marker of the effect’s defeasibility. The second condition mirrors the interpretation of the conventionality of illocutionary acts as a social contract or agreement, making the point that the effect of illocutionary acts is not something which

¹⁴⁹ Incidentally, the familiar formulation of assertion being a commitment to the truth is rather ambiguous in that it could amount to the claim “It is true that so and so” or “so and so is the case” or even it could be providing a warrant for it being the case. I dealt with those questions in chapter 1.

follows naturally and materially from the performance of the act in question. It is trivially true that unless the effect is the result of a social agreement, it cannot be defeasible in the way illocutionary effects are. Further, it is another emphasis on the importance of felicity conditions, which can make the act null and void even if the speaker has indeed completed the performance of the act in question.

It is important to mention here that the conventional effect thus described is not meant to be a rule that speakers ought to follow in their illocutionary act performance. This effect is meant to capture what the hearer will take the speaker to be committed to after the act's successful completion and, in virtue of the very nature of illocutionary acts, by engaging in performing the illocutionary act of assertion the speaker willingly agrees to place herself under the commitment described. Breaches of the commitment are sanctioned in the social group – the public self of the speaker suffers from failure to uphold the commitment she undertook (her credibility or authority suffers; more on this later).

Before we move on, one remark is due at this time. Throughout this chapter, and the previous one, I was careful not to refer to what was asserted as the 'proposition'. I have done so for two reasons, one is methodological, the other is practical. The former is that Austin in his discussion of illocutionary acts makes a break from proposition-centered descriptions of what is done using language. I take this to be significant not only in the theoretical strive to stay true to the theory Austin sketched, but also because of all the reasons against using proposition in speech-act theoretic research I already suggested earlier (see chapter 2 above). The second reason has to do with the speech act delimitation problem: because there is nothing in the utterance itself that can reliably point out how many illocutionary acts are thereby being performed, I cannot assume that the content of the assertion is a proposition, or a verbalized proposition (a proposition that is expressed using language). I accept the possibility of non-verbal assertions, non-sentential assertions, even multiple-proposition assertions as well as one-proposition assertion in equal measure. I would like to emphasize that not speaking of propositions does not in any way mean that the actual words the speaker utters are not significant for the act. This issue will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Content and act, the view-point of hearers

The greatest merit that Austin's theory claims for itself is the attempt to break apart from the proposition-centered view of language. When devising his locution-illocution-perlocution distinction, Austin does not mention propositions. The basic distinction that comes to be the foundation of this division is the meaning-force distinction. Both followers and critics alike subjected these dichotomies to scrutiny, indicating that the boundaries between locution and illocution on the one hand, and illocution and perlocution¹⁵⁰ on the other hand, were not sufficiently clarified. Proposition crept back into speech act theoretic research with Searlean $F(p)$ dichotomy in an attempt to clarify and remedy the problems of the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary act. Following Frege and Hare, Searle claimed that elements of the sentence endorsed different roles in the performance of the illocutionary act: either that of content-bearers or force-indicators. I already argued that such a stance committed the declarative fallacy (Part I, chapters 1 and 2). Although the introduction of proposition in speech act theoretic dealings has been rather universally accepted¹⁵¹, some scholars (Sbisà prominent among them) feel this introduction has done more damage than good to the overall conception of illocutionary acts:

Once a propositional content is specified, a truly minimal force indicator (indicative mood) is sufficient to yield assertion. No role is left to play to felicity conditions, to the corresponding possible infelicities, or to illocutionary effect in Austin's sense. Felicity conditions, as matters of pragmatic appropriateness, are viewed as inessential to the core of assertion, which is (like in Frege) the recognition of a proposition as true. So the assertion cannot be a real action – rather, it is a *cognitive gesture* (or its linguistic manifestation). Speaking of assertive speech acts or calling assertion a speech act become simply ways of speaking. (Sbisà 2006:166-167, emphasis mine)

I suggest that the main reason Austin is criticized for the locutionary – illocutionary act distinction, is that his readers endeavored to find a way to make these two terms abstractions from one phenomenon – the speech act. Somehow, meaning and force were to be conceived of as being two aspects of utterances. There is nothing in Austin's concept of illocutionary act which would warrant taking illocutionary force as a feature that utterances have. The same sentence can be used in the course of the performance of different illocutionary acts and the same utterance-type can occur in different illocutionary act

¹⁵⁰ Delimitations of perlocutionary acts are not among the aims of this study and will be subsequently ignored.

¹⁵¹ With truly fascinating results: for a detailed discussion, see Love (1999) and Rajagopalan (2000).

performances. If we are to conceive of speech as action, then the illocutionary act is an act which consists in evoking a particular conventional procedure with a certain conventional effect. The linguistic utterance that the act in question sometimes involves is a part of the invocation (or a part of the procedure). In a way, the utterance mirrors the effort of the speaker to secure uptake on the illocutionary act being performed. This is quite consistent with the idea that illocutionary acts are conventional in the sense that they are socially conditioned and represent social contracts of a sort because they only come off if the hearer takes up on the act.

8.1. Propositional content¹⁵²

Criticism of Austin's locutionary-illocutionary distinction slowly diverted the point Austin was concerned with – namely, that linguistic items with a certain meaning can be regarded as acting on one's environment – to the almost universally accepted dichotomy of force realized on a particular content. The force-content distinction closely invokes the familiar form-content distinction, especially if we take Searle's indicators of illocutionary force into account. Thus, proposition became the ready-made candidate to replace the locutionary act in Austin's initial division. As far as assertion is concerned, it is no more than expressing a proposition. Some authors even claimed that there is no need for the hearer to recognize it as being an assertion – there is no speech act of assertion but the act of expressing a proposition, governed by contextually variable norms (for a recent example, see Cappelen 2011). Such a stance does not even remotely touch upon the phenomenon Austin was concerned with elucidating and calling expressing a proposition an act does not help forward the discussion. The operative component, or the action component, which is inherent to Austin's concept of illocutionary acts, is lost in proposition-centered preoccupations. Focusing solely on language and disregarding the operative side of language use is thus completely out of tune with the original theory. Notwithstanding the limitations that Searle's brand of theory imposes on utterances, namely a conjunction of the Expressibility Principle and the Meaning Claim, which makes it that the meaning encoded by linguistic means determines the illocutionary act thereby performed, an important question concerning content arises. It will be taken up in this chapter and it goes as follows: what is it that is asserted and does it coincide with the (meaning of) linguistic expressions that make up the utterance

¹⁵² Ideas and arguments from this subpart were presented at the Meaning, Context and Cognition conference in Lodz, Poland, arguing against Cappelen's No-Assertion view (2011).

involved in the performance of the illocutionary act? It follows from the Meaning Claim that these represent one and the same content.

Consider the following situation: I come in late for a meeting because of a traffic jam and I utter “There was such a traffic jam” as an apology (excuse) for being late. Presumably, apologies have contents that are typically rendered by gerundive constructions. An intuitive report on my act would then be “She apologized for being late”. It is quite evident that the presumed content of the apology /being late/ is not part of the meaning of the utterance. As noted by Sbisà, who gives this very example, “illocutionary reports part considerably from reports of the words used” (2006:171). The same utterance can be reported¹⁵³ in more than one manner, for example: “She said that there was such a traffic jam”. There are cases, then, which display linguistic content not found in the content slot of the illocutionary act. The obvious objection would be that such utterances are indirect speech acts and they are regulated by a different set of rules¹⁵⁴. But the minimum IFID contained in this utterance cannot operate the necessary distinctions for us to even decide whether or not the act is indirect. Rather, the content of the utterance is not something that can successfully (should I say ‘grammatically’) fill in the slot of the propositional content for the apology I can be expected to make in these circumstances.

(34) (?) She apologized for (the fact that) there was such a traffic jam.

It would appear that such utterances do not strictly speaking breach the literality requirement: in the example above I seriously and literally mean what I say. The illocutionary force indicating devices do not indicate categorically a particular illocutionary force – apart from the performative verb¹⁵⁵, there appears to be no IFID that would appear typically in implicit performatives for apologies. The utterance does not satisfy the description of an indirect act. If one insists on classifying this utterance as an indirect act, it appears that in this case it is the content of the utterance that is the indicator *par excellence* that the utterance is an indirect

¹⁵³ It is worth pointing out that in the specific situation where an apology is required/ expected/ intended etc. we would not report on the utterance by “She stated that there was a traffic jam”. Speakers’ intuitions may vary.

¹⁵⁴ This objection does not hold. First, even proponents of the Searlean indirect speech act theory cannot claim that different rules govern the production of direct and indirect acts, for that would entail having two different conceptions of the term ‘illocutionary act’, thus undermining the analysis. Second, if we hold on to a unified conception of illocutionary act, namely the one devised by Austin, the term ‘indirect illocutionary act’ appears to name a non-existent phenomenon: there are no indirect acts according to Austin’s theory. Even if we admit cases such as the one discussed to be indirect acts based on indication of the content, then the grasping of the force component is not accounted for by the process. Then force may be grasped via other things than linguistically encoded indicators. This is another argument against Searle’s conception of indirect act as well as his conception of illocutionary acts.

¹⁵⁵ It would appear in a later development of Searle’s theory that the performative verb is not an IFID, as explicit performatives are thought to be declarations – more on that topic will be said in chapter 12.

speech act in a rather peculiar way. Even for proponents of Searlean theory, this is yet another caveat in delimiting the class of indirect acts. The mechanism that would appear to be relevant for act recognition would be that the propositional content determines the force of the utterance, and hence determines the illocutionary act thereby performed. To say that propositional content determines the illocutionary act is both nonsensical and implausible¹⁵⁶.

The other possible way out for proponents of the doctrine of indirect acts is to claim that the act the speaker performs is an explanation for being late, thereby performing an apology. This cannot be calculated using the inference process. Even assuming that the audience expects an apology, the declarative sentence they get instead is so devoid of indicators that one may be tempted to say an assertion was performed. In this case we need to calculate the explanation from the assertion, and then the intended apology from the explanation. This inference chain artificially multiplies the number of levels of acts performed, complicating the analysis and using assertion in the non-illocutionary sense. All it does is carefully disguising every case in which the serious and literal utterance of the linguistic expressions involved does not directly point out to the intended illocutionary force.

If we take this utterance to be a direct illocutionary act, then two distinct sorts of content are to be acknowledged in respect with the act performed: the one we find in the wording of the utterance itself, and the other is the one that could fill in the propositional content slot of the illocutionary act. Applied to asserting, the latter content has to do with what is asserted. The speaker is committed to what I called the assertion-product¹⁵⁷ – in Searle's terminology that would be the propositional content. The former content is better identified with the meaning of the utterance, which has the following distinct aspects: the wording of the utterance and the sense and reference of the utterance. Should these two contents be identical, should they be equivalent or should they coincide? This might seem as a futile question, but it seems that this utterance does not breach the literality requirement of Searle's and yet, there is a difference between the content of the act and the content displayed by the content indicators. There is nothing in Austin's theory that would require such a stipulation. What is more, Austin does not speak of act content – with good reason. If ordering and asserting can be readily split into force-content clusters, the argument would be that we order different things to different people and conversely we assert different things to different people. But consider acts such as declaring war or resigning from office: in Searle's taxonomic effort, these acts are analyzed as illocutionary acts of declaring with the

¹⁵⁶ I dealt with this question in detail in chapter 2.

¹⁵⁷ I do not take this term to be self-explaining, so I will come back to that.

propositional contents of /war is/ and /my job is terminated/. These acts appear to have a surprisingly rigid propositional content because any attempt to change the propositional content results in changing the illocutionary act altogether, which is not the case with the former examples. It may be said that the propositional content requirements are more restrictive for these acts than for other acts. Why not, if we already have empty condition slots, have exclusive propositional contents? The very nature of the propositional content is not very well defined: if it is a state of affairs the act implements with the relevant direction of fit, what is the relation of that state of affairs to the linguistic expressions that make up the sentence the utterance of which constitutes the performance of the act in question? In the light of these examples, the motivation behind distinguishing a locutionary act from the illocutionary act is more or less clear. I will look into the locutionary act without any attempts at vindicating Austin's analysis, with the simple purpose of finding out whether we can dispense with proposition in our account of illocutionary acts. It well may be that the concept of Austin's locutionary act would need considerable refining and description, but this is not part of the aims of the present study.

8.2. Austin's locutionary act

Following Austin's conception of illocutionary acts, the above mentioned utterance can be taken to be a (direct) apology (excuse) for being late. According to Austin's conception of illocutionary acts, they are conventional acts with a conventional effect that require the hearer's uptake. In the context of the utterance, the speaker's desire to remedy the harm done to the hearer(s) by not showing up on time for the meeting, together with the desire to redeem the speaker's own public self (image) by either feeling genuinely (sincerely) sorry for being late or by going through the ritual formally to save appearances offer but one possibility for the utterance's intentional motivation. Likewise, from the point of view of the hearer(s), the possible interpretation of the utterance goes along similar lines. The operative element, or the action element, in the illocutionary performance is that this performance consists in influencing one's environment: new states of affairs are created (new social facts, so to speak), which are instantiated by the implementation of the conventional effect of the act. The performance of the apology effectively places the speaker in a position of responsibility for the event thereby acknowledging responsibility. The problem of the two contents does not arise in Austin's theory – illocutionary acts do not have contents. For

Austin's theory the question would rather be about the relation between the locutionary act and the illocutionary act.

It follows from the outline of the conventional effect of the illocutionary act of assertion that one important feature of its perception is assessment (a truth-falsity assessment, a sincerity-insincerity assessment and many others). With propositions in the analysis, it is easy to pinpoint the truth-bearing element in the performance of the act. Is it at all possible to account for the truth-bearing function¹⁵⁸ in a different way? It is the hearer to whom the burden of assessing the performance is assigned and who validates it as an invocation of a particular illocutionary act procedure, thus sealing the social contract. There are two aspects to uptake which are relevant in that respect: the point of view of the speaker (who is supposed to secure uptake) and the hearer (who relies on every available information, be it contextual, locutionary and an understanding of which procedure invocation is appropriate or acceptable, in order to grasp the illocutionary act performance). The reason for connecting the discussion of the locutionary act with the discussion of uptake is the following: from the hearer's point of view, the performance of an illocutionary act has a certain manifestation, which is interpreted by the hearer in a particular set of circumstances. The locutionary act (if any) is such a manifestation and, further, it is part of the circumstances of the illocutionary act performance. It would appear, then, that the act-product – whatever it is the hearer evaluates or the manner in which the hearer can provide a description of the act – is function of both the locutionary and the illocutionary act. I will come back to this.

Austin's locutionary act was meant to capture the utterance itself, the words that are articulated by the speaker in her performance of the illocutionary act. Thus, he proposed three distinct ways of looking at the locutionary act:

- 1) Phonetic act: the act of uttering noises
- 2) Phatic act: the act of uttering noises as vocables or words belonging to a language
- 3) Rhetic act: the act of using vocables with a certain sense and reference, that is, utter meaningful strings of discourse. (Austin 1962:92)

These are called refinements on the act of saying something in the full sense of 'say' (Austin 1962:92-93). These are not abstractions in the sense that we can take down the utterance into these three separate and mutually exclusive components - if I perform a rhetic act, I

¹⁵⁸ Sbisà seems to think that this is the primary function of propositions in Searle's theory (2006:156). I do not think this is the case. Searle's theory does not provide an answer as to what the truth-bearing element is. It is a combination of the propositional content realized in a particular direction of fit. Since predication is conceived of as bearing traces of the illocutionary act, what is evaluated as true is not clear in Searle's account.

necessarily do a phatic and a phonetic act. But there is one relevant sense in which this distinction is sound: I can report on the precise words used by a speaker and I can report on the meaning of the utterance of the speaker. In the former case, I would be focusing on the phatic act; in the latter case, I would be focusing on the rhetic act¹⁵⁹. The case can be made in favor of references to the phonetic act: think of the “say ‘cheese’” line when preparing to take a picture. The point of vocalizing [tʃi:z] is not in uttering the word /cheese/ of the English language, but in getting the mouth to stretch in a certain way. Of course, the word /cheese/ may be chosen especially for a quirky invocation of an object that has nothing to do with picture-taking, thus providing more incentive to be amused (or entertained or to be made to laugh)¹⁶⁰.

Although there is no principled way to distinguish the production of noises which are not words of a particular language and noises which are words, belonging to a particular language, there is certainly a different perspective in taking a person as just doing noise vocalizations and taking a person to be uttering words that belong to a language (also see Sbisà 2006). The problematic part of these refinements for most of Austin’s critics is the rhetic act. More specifically, the cases in which the rhetic act reports are indistinguishable from illocutionary act reports were said to undermine the distinction because the meaning of the rhetic act (and by extension the locutionary act) exhausted the illocutionary force (especially Searle 1968). The argument is that it is hardly possible to have rhetic act reports without any reference to the illocutionary force of the utterance, which in turn means that every rhetic act is an illocutionary act. It is true – and Austin himself said this – that to perform a locutionary act is *eo ipso* to perform an illocutionary act. This claim becomes clearer with the specification that a speech act generally is both a locutionary and an illocutionary act. The locutionary act and the illocutionary act are abstractions of the total speech act in the same way the phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts are abstractions of the locutionary act (Austin 1962:146). This does not mean that we can take a speech act and take it down to two mutually exclusive parts, one for the locutionary and the other for the illocutionary act. The illocutionary act can be separated only in terms of the particular social contract it picks out and the particular conventional effect it necessarily has. Within the total speech act, there is no way for us to separate words or expressions that are the performance of

¹⁵⁹ I can also report on the phonetic act – reproduce noises made by somebody, which I do not perceive to be words of a language.

¹⁶⁰ Russian (and Bulgarian) physicians often say the following to children when they want to examine their throats: “Say ‘Aaa’”. The exhortation would be to produce merely the phonetic act – a certain noise and the corresponding shape of the mouth.

the illocutionary act. The illocutionary act is performed in the utterance of the words, or in performing the locutionary act. I will clarify: uttering certain words can certainly be part of performing an illocutionary act, but this is not all the illocutionary act is. Other conditions need to be satisfied in order for a performance to be an illocutionary performance, such as special felicity conditions. So this claim takes the following form: if all the felicity conditions are satisfied and the act has been taken up by the hearer, then to perform a locutionary act is *eo ipso* to perform an illocutionary act. So even if in some cases it may seem that rhetic act reports coincide with illocutionary act reports (although I do not think this is defensible), this does not mean that rhetic acts are illocutionary acts. It is quite a trivial observation that one can perform only a locutionary act (as when we are practicing pronunciation or learning a poem), or perform only an illocutionary act (without uttering anything). The *eo ipso* is not intended to give a description of what an illocutionary act is. To perform an illocutionary act is not to utter a sentence belonging to a particular language with a certain sense and reference. Nor is it a consequence of the meaning of that particular sentence. Thus, Austin's *eo ipso* does not concern the meaning of the sentence which is uttered; it only concerns the fact that sometimes the performances of a locutionary act and an illocutionary act coincide in the utterance of a particular string of discourse, when the felicity conditions for the performance of the illocutionary act are satisfied.

Searle's criticism, then, only makes sense if a completely different conception of an illocutionary act is applied. It certainly does not make sense to talk about a dichotomy, based on a difference between a locutionary act of uttering a meaningful sentence and an illocutionary act which, according to Searle's definition, is the act of uttering a meaningful sentence (with the necessary restriction of the sentence's being serious and literal), which is the realization of underlying constitutive rules for the type of act being performed (see chapter 3, definition 1) – this would actually be like talking about dogs and terriers, as Searle phrases it (1968:413). In the light of these specifications, Searle's objection seems at best misguided: while conceding that two different concepts are embodied in the notions of locution and illocution, he maintains that they “denote overlapping classes”. To be even more specific, in Searle's objection, what is being compared is the concept of a locutionary act being roughly that of an utterance with a certain meaning and the concept of the illocutionary act being roughly that of an utterance with a certain force. If utterances or sentences with a certain meaning are envisioned in both cases, then the classes Searle evokes are coinciding, not merely overlapping. One way out of this objection is suggested and rejected by Searle himself - that the locutionary-illocutionary distinction is reduced to a distinction between attempting

to perform an act and successfully performing an act, which is “a much less interesting distinction” (Searle 1968:408-409). This claim equally misses the point, since the attempt-success dichotomy is meant to be regulated by the felicity conditions and the uptake of the hearer. Dörge (2004:53) comments in this respect that categorizing a distinction as being ‘uninteresting’ does not succeed in arguing the case against the validity of such a distinction. Be it as it may, claiming that the performance of the locutionary act is an attempt to perform an illocutionary act entails: a) that illocutionary acts always involve producing linguistic utterances, and b) that the illocutionary act is a consequence of the locutionary act. Both assumptions are refuted as incompatible with Austin’s doctrine and, once again, they only make sense if a completely different conception of illocutionary act is applied (such as Searle’s).

Is there anything in Austin’s exposition about the locutionary act that can warrant the introduction of propositions in the theory? The description of the locutionary act as being an act of saying something in the full sense, that is, having a certain meaning, is closer to the conception of an idea, structurally and semantically articulated – this is a sentence. The examples provided by Austin are all complete sentences in different sentence moods. Consider the following pairs of reports on phatic and rhetic acts, provided by Austin:

Phatic act	Rhetic act
He said "The cat is on the mat"	He said that the cat was on the mat
He said "I shall be there"	He said he would be there.
He said "Get out"	He told me to get out.
He said "Is it in Oxford or Cambridge ?"	He asked whether it was in Oxford or Cambridge.

The report of the phatic act takes up on the exact words or vocables used by the speaker on a particular occasion, thus emphasizing yet another responsibility of the speaker – that of the choice of words. The report of the rhetic act picks up the message/ meaning/ idea conveyed. I have two remarks in this respect. First, in relation to Searle’s objection mentioned above, Austin was blamed for blurring the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary act by referring to the rhetic act using the verbs ‘say’, ‘tell’ and ‘ask’ which already are illocutionary verbs (Searle 1968). This was used to claim that there is no distinction between locutionary and illocutionary act because every rhetic act is already an illocutionary act. I believe the choice of the verbs used in the rhetic act reports was determined by the desire to capture to the fullest the differences in the meaning, reflected in the syntactical form of the

sentences uttered in all of these occasions. If the case of ‘say’ can be easily dismissed – it is sufficiently neutral to allow for interpretations ranging from ‘utter’ and ‘vocalize’ to ‘state’ and ‘give the word’ – the second one deserves a closer look. Specifically, Searle claimed:

Consider "He told me to X." Does not the form "He told me to" cover a very general class of illocutionary forces, which includes such specific illocutionary forces as "He ordered, commanded, requested, urged, advised, me to"? The verbs in Austin's examples of indirect speech reports of rhetic acts are all *illocutionary verbs of a very general kind*, which stand in relation to the verbs in his reports of illocutionary acts as genus to species. That is, there are different species of the genus telling someone to do something—for example, ordering, requesting, commanding –but "tell . . . to . . ." is as much an illocutionary verb as any of these others, and a little reflection will show that it meets Austin's criteria for illocutionary verbs. (Searle 1968:411-412, emphasis mine)

The italicized claim that these are illocutionary verbs of a general kind such as they name a whole general class of illocutionary forces does not really succeed in arguing the point for Searle. Nothing warrants the idea that there are general kinds of illocutionary acts which represent the respective illocutionary genus as paradigm acts (as I already discussed above, general, or elementary, or primitive, in Searle and Vanderveken 1985 illocutionary acts raise the question of whether these are mere theoretical abstractions, a cluster of characteristics to be found in all of the other members of the class or exhibiting an identifiable pattern). The claim that the verb ‘tell’ in this report refers to an illocutionary act amounts to claiming that it refers to a very general illocutionary act being performed. I am not sure what exactly that would mean in a putative situation: there is a speaker who performed the act of, say, ordering me to get out. I later report on the act by saying “He told me to get out”. There is nothing in the report that indicates beyond reasonable doubt that the speaker indeed performed an illocutionary act in telling me to get out, or that I took the utterance to be the performance of an illocutionary act (and which act precisely I took it to have been); further, the report can also be a report on the perlocutionary act achieved on me by any locutionary or illocutionary act the speaker might have performed (see Sbisà 2007). Searle’s claim that such a report necessarily refers to an illocutionary act, albeit of a very general kind, is flawed.

To be even more specific, the way Searle phrased his objection was by saying that ‘tell’ was a general illocutionary verb, so in reporting on a particular illocutionary act I can use a general illocutionary verb naming the genus of the act performed. This claim does not make any sense if we apply it to the Austinian tentative taxonomy, for in that taxonomy both ‘tell’ and ‘ask’ are listed as members of the class of expositives. They cannot, therefore, evoke any general kinds of illocutionary forces. The five Austinian classes are not constructed

around one prototypical embrace-all general illocutionary verb as Searlean taxonomy aspires to be. But even Searlean taxonomy cannot accommodate the fact that in some of its uses, ‘ask’ can be substituted for ‘tell’, as in “He asked me to get out”, and can be interpreted as a report on a whole plethora of acts (request, beg, entreat etc). These two illocutionary verbs are actually of the same class – the directives. All things being equal, Searle’s claim can either be that ‘tell’ and ‘ask’ invoke the same general illocutionary force, or that ‘tell’ and ‘ask’ invoke different general illocutionary forces. If we take him to make the former claim, there is nothing that could account for the use of two different verbs to report on the same kind of general force, but performed using sentences in a different sentence mood. If we take him to make the latter claim, it is glaringly inconsistent with the principles of his own taxonomy, according to which requesting, begging, entreating, ordering, commanding etc. are all members of the class of directive illocutionary acts. But this is an issue that Searle does not pick up. Further, there are no precise criteria for a verb being an illocutionary verb (as distinct from act); in fact, in his attempt to clarify the distinctions he introduced, Austin toys with the formulae “*In saying*” and “*By saying*”, which served as a basis for the terms he introduced, to little avail, only to conclude that the feature which picked out illocutionary acts satisfactorily is convention (1962:127). Illocutionary verbs are just names for the acts and are certainly not special in any way¹⁶¹.

It is often overlooked that Austin speaks about the ambiguity of the verb ‘say’ between the locutionary and the illocutionary interpretation (1962:123). I take this to be an indication that Austin is aware of the difficulties this ambiguity might present for the elucidation of the distinctions he is interested in. Even though he does not explicitly claim that for the verbs ‘tell’ and ‘ask’, both verbs appear later in his list of expositives, so we can take Austin to believe these verbs to be ambiguous between the two interpretations. Concerning the rhetic reports in the table reproduced above, it is the locutionary interpretation Austin has in mind:

We cannot, however, always use ‘said that’ easily: we would say ‘told to’, ‘advise to’, &c., if he used the imperative mood, or such equivalent phrases as ‘said I was to’, ‘said I should’, &c. (1962:96-97)

¹⁶¹ It is important to mention that illocutionary verbs and performative verbs do not coincide (the latter being used in explicit performative utterances). Further, another rather interesting question would be whether synonymous illocutionary verbs denote one illocutionary act type. Austin seems to suggest precisely that, if we take into consideration his interchangeable use of statement and assertion. It would seem that the illocutionary verbs ‘state’ and ‘assert’ denote or are used to refer to the same illocutionary act type.

It is the sentence mood which Austin was keen on underlying as being of importance for the construction of the meaning of the utterance and sentence mood is the reason for the use of these verbs.

It is hard to generalize that every locutionary act consists of a complete sentence. It is hard to generalize that an illocutionary act involves the production of a locutionary act. The question of the delimitation of the borders of an illocutionary act performance is not something scholars tackle willingly. It seems intuitively correct to say that there is nothing in Austin's conception of illocutionary acts that could delimit the performance of one illocutionary act to the production of one locutionary act. There is equally nothing in Austin's concept of locutionary act that could restrict the performance of one locutionary act to the utterance of one simple sentence. So, we can take a person telling a scary story by the fire as performing one locutionary act (think of the quantity of the sentences, simple, complex and elliptical that could build that up). We can take a person uttering "James stole that money, that's what I have to say" (remember the judge – defendant example from chapter 4) as performing one locutionary act and several illocutionary acts. In short, the social contracts we may find ourselves involved in making cannot be easily restricted. In the strong sense, the potential number of illocutionary acts one can perform using an utterance is indefinite and it makes it virtually impossible to fix one particular illocutionary force to one utterance, which makes the Meaning Claim appear as a hasty oversimplification.

Second, given the variety of forms we see in the left-hand column, picked up in the reports on the rhetic act, it is really difficult to apply the concept of proposition to whatever it is that makes up the locutionary act. Imperative sentences do not contain propositions, nor do interrogative sentences (with the possible exception of general questions). It is plausible, then, to conclude that Austin did not intend propositions to have any role in the theory of speech acts. Even less so, I doubt he would have endorsed the concept of a proposition expressed with a certain illocutionary force which is Searle's description of the illocutionary act. It seems undeniable that some sentences contain propositions and, further, that these propositions would most likely appear in a rhetic act report. Austin talks about propositions only to situate the locus of the speech act preoccupations above and beyond any dealings with propositions:

In conclusion, we see that in order to explain what can go wrong with statements we cannot just concentrate on the proposition involved (*whatever that is*) as has been done traditionally. (Austin 1962:52, emphasis mine)

Truth, however, is something Austin considers in a rather extensive detail. What is remarkable about the way he goes about it is that the accomplished utterance (that is, the utterance which is a successfully performed illocutionary act, the act-product, not the act itself) is subject to different kinds of assessment, be it truth-falsity, correctness-incorrectness, valid-invalid, merited-unmerited, good-bad etc. All of these assessments translate a relation (in complicated ways) of the illocutionary act-product to the facts, the reality, or the perception of the reality, both objective and social (1962:141). Although Austin's concept of truth is a variation of the correspondence theory ("he is running" is true only if he is running), there appears to be a certain relativist twist to it, so that truth-falsity assessment does not qualify to be an objective and stable assessment category. Examples such as "Lord Raglan won the battle of Hastings" or "France is hexagonal" display this characteristic: in some situations these statements can be said to be true, but not in others; in other words, for some purposes, the facts are sufficiently accurately displayed, but not for others. Further, Austin argues against making the truth-falsity category a different class of assessment. Descriptive utterances that we may use in acts other than statements can even bring in the temptation to separate in the performance of the act two different acts, one of which is necessarily a statement. If we consider warnings, for example, the choice of the words for our locutionary act is not prompted by our desire to perform another illocutionary act in addition to the warning (recall the two syntactical paradigms in which a warning can appear: 'I warn you to' and 'I warn you that'); the point (purpose, act sought by the speaker) is the same no matter which phrase we use. It could be objected that it must certainly be important that the state of affairs described in the utterance of "That bull is about to charge" be true. I would say not necessarily. Following Austin's take on truth, I, the speaker, may believe that the bull is about to charge, which would in turn prompt the warning, whereas the bull is actually not about to charge. I may just be very bad at deciphering animal behavior, but I meant well, since I was concerned with my interlocutor's well-being. So, at the time of the performance, it is true for me that the bull is about to charge, whereas it may not be so for my interlocutor. This does not make my utterance (or my warning) false, for the truth-falsity is not the relevant assessment to make. It makes my warning uncalled-for from the point of view of my interlocutor, it makes my warning infelicitous. My act misfired. Notice that my act misfires even if I utter "Beware of the bull" in the situation depicted above. The utterance cannot even be considered in terms of being false (or true, for that matter). My interlocutor can take me to be overly protective, deeply paranoid, hysteric, or simply a wimp.

It can be even suggested that the category of truth-falsity need not be at the center of the discussion of the illocutionary act of assertion. The best examples that seem to argue such a stance are academic assertions, especially ones that do not involve any observable or objective facts: such statements are evaluated using categories such as reasons or evidence, or plausibility, or the quality of the argumentation. The evaluation of the accomplished utterance may involve evaluating for a correspondence between facts and the depiction of facts, but the depiction of facts may not even be something that is explicitly and fully contained in the utterance. We may even tentatively say that the rhetic act can sometimes contain a proposition, but in many cases the proposition evaluated is nowhere to be found. The only difference would be that the assertion in the latter case would involve a depiction which only the hearer is aware of. The speaker can subsequently deny she ever performed that particular act. This can be used to argue the case for the tendency in interpersonal relations to favor an explicitness of the endorsed facts: to the extent that people wish to “hear the words”¹⁶². There is a difference between endorsing an idea, thus taking upon oneself the responsibilities this act entails, and not contesting the validity/ truth/ correctness of an idea expressed by another. That I am not contesting an idea of yours does not necessarily mean that I endorse it, although it may be interpreted that way. Another point in this respect: that an assertion has been made has nothing to do with subsequent assessments of truth, validity, correctness and what not. This follows from Austin’s idea that the accomplished utterance (the one which was taken up as being the performance of a particular illocutionary act by the hearer) is what is being assessed. We can further suggest that just because we used a sentence expressing a proposition it does not automatically make the hearer assign to an utterance the illocutionary force of a statement.

Why is truth important at all? The assessment of truth-falsity regarding assertions has to do with two distinct aspects: first, the information gathered by the hearer from the illocutionary act performed; and second, the credibility of the speaker. The two aspects are indeed related: if the speaker has lost her credibility with me, I will not take her assertions to be informative. Information can be interpreted in different ways. Brandom suggests the following:

In mathematical information theory, the information content of a signal is not an intrinsic property of the sign itself. That content is rather a relation between the signal and a set of antecedently possible

¹⁶² I will come back to that in Part III, chapter 10.

performances on the part of the recipient, in the context of a set of rules or practices restricting the set of performances which are still appropriate as responses once the signal is received. (1983:639-640)

In this sense, information is not to be equated with knowledge or belief: when I read a linguistic article, I certainly acquire information in the sense of a cluster of facts. I do acquire knowledge about the beliefs or commitments or actions or research hypotheses of the author (however short-lived it may be). But my knowing that the author stated that so-and-so does not entail my believing that so-and-so. The information we get does not necessarily become something we know or believe in. If the information is true, it has better chances of becoming something we also believe in. Pagin's idea of the relation between information and assertion is the following (2011):

Assertion P: An utterance *u* is an assertion iff *u* is *prima facie* informative.

Informative: An utterance *u* is informative iff *u* is made partly because it is true.

Although in many situations the act of assertion, felicitously performed, is enough for the hearer to come to form the relevant belief, defining an assertion as being informative seems as a way to avoid defining assertion as being true. Informativity seems to me to be just another way of assessing the product of the act, which, if found non-informative, cannot really be invalidated. What is more, the reason for the performance of one act or another cannot account for the essence of the act: I may assert because I want you to believe something, I may assert because I want to present a point of view, I may assert to pass judgment. Yes, all of these reasons are information, but that would be a different sort of information: information about my beliefs, my opinions, my judgments, my goals, and also, but not exclusively, about what I think is true. The information that the hearer can gather out of an illocutionary performance is varied and not limited to whatever the utterance contains. The content of the utterance (the locutionary or rather, the rhetic act) is the only thing which is material (tangible) enough to be subsequently put into use. Strictly speaking, the information that the hearer can gather from an illocutionary act performance is the wording of the claim, the purported claim, the actual claim, and most importantly, the endorsement of a claim. In a way, the conventional effect of the illocutionary act is also a piece of information that becomes available to all the participants in the interaction once the hearer took up on the act.

A slight specification needs to be offered in regard with the third of the speaker's commitments which make up the conventional effect of the illocutionary act of assertion. The commitment to retract an assertion when proven to be false involves the reliability (or

credibility) of the speaker as an asserter. In political contexts, a justified but false assertion calls for retraction if the asserter wishes to retain credibility. Note that even foreknowledge of the speaker that the claim is false cannot invalidate the act. In academic contexts, an implausible assertion impossible to be verified and which is not argued for calls for retraction or argumentation if the asserter is to retain credibility. In class, a student who is unable to justify a correct answer (or a true assertion) has performed an infelicitous act or a different act altogether - she has ventured a guess rather than asserted.

8.3. Illocutionary uptake

What is the relation between the locutionary and the illocutionary act? Let me recall what an illocutionary act is: it is a conventional act entailing conventional effects; a social contract. As such, it is non-material. So how do we know whether an illocutionary act is performed? We rely on the means of its performance, which is the manifestation that an illocutionary act is being performed. It can be a gesture (non-verbal; for example, swinging a heavy bat in warning, or raising one's hands to surrender), or some words ("Get out!") or a special formula ("I hereby pronounce you husband and wife"). The locutionary act, then, has to do with the mechanism of the hearer's understanding of the act. It is also the way the speaker can secure uptake.

Now uptake is introduced by Austin as a necessary condition of the performance of illocutionary acts. According to the reconstructed definition, unless the audience takes up on the act, the act is not felicitously performed. To repeat Austin's words, I have not succeeded to warn the hearer, unless she heard what I said and understood it in a certain way.

One of the things that cause particular difficulty is the question whether when two parties are involved '*consensus ad idem*' is necessary. Is it essential for me to secure *correct understanding* as well as everything else? In any case this is clearly a matter falling under the B rules and not under the Γ rules. (Austin 1962:36, emphasis in the original)

The most important point here is the phrase 'the correct understanding', which entails understanding beyond the understanding of the meaning of the words uttered (if any) that linguistic competence warrants. In Searle's exposition this was the limit of the understanding needed, because it was the sentence (utterance) that carried within it all the necessary specifications of illocutionary act performed therein. The correct understanding involves here understanding of the illocutionary act that the speaker is performing. In Austin's conception,

both parties need to be in agreement on the act which is being performed, so that the act can be jointly validated. It thus seems that this condition can be split neatly into two separate conditions: first, that my audience heard me, that is, understood that I am performing an act, and second, that my audience understood which act it is I am performing.

The implications of having this condition as a necessary condition for the performance of illocutionary acts are many. First, the mechanism of the illocutionary acts taking effect is explained in relation with this condition. The act cannot take effect unless the audience took the performance to be a particular kind of performance. If the uptake condition is satisfied, then the effect condition is also satisfied. And vice versa: if the uptake condition is not satisfied, the effect condition cannot be satisfied. My discussion of the conventional illocutionary effect makes it quite plain that the so-called Gricean turn in talking about speech acts is based on a misinterpretation of Austin's ideas. Uptake (conceived of as the understanding of the utterance) was thought to be the only effect that illocutionary acts could have, leading to amalgamating illocutionary acts with Gricean speaker-meaning (this shift is already present in Searle as early as 1968).

Second, it helps alleviate an important misconception in Searle's theory, which Streeck calls "the action theory principle". According to this principle, understanding utterances is a matter of knowing and finding the rules according to which the utterances have been produced; rules for producing utterances are rules for performing speech acts; hence communication can be exhaustively be accounted for by a reconstruction of rules for the production of speech acts (Streeck 1980:136-7). What the uptake condition underlines is that the illocutionary act performed is neither determined by what is said, nor is it encoded in what is said. Rather, the locutionary act (what is said) can help understand what illocutionary act is being performed. Highly significant for such an interpretation of the relation between these two acts is Austin's distinction between explicit performatives and implicit performatives. Explicit performatives involve "highly significant and unambiguous expressions" which explicitly name the act which is being performed (1962:39). The hearer is thus given clear indication of the act the speaker is engaged in performing. Provided that the felicity conditions required for the act in question obtain, and both speaker and hearer concede that they do, then the act is deemed to have been successful. Implicit performatives, on the other hand, do not indicate in any unambiguous way which illocutionary act is being performed. The hearer might take it to be either one or another; Austin ventures that the hearer does not have to understand it as a particular performance. I suggest that the fixing of a particular illocutionary act label on a performance is a joint effort of the speaker and the hearer. In this

respect, it would be incorrect to speak of meaning exhausting the force in explicit performatives, as Strawson does:

The meaning of a serious utterance, as conceived by Austin, always embodies some limitation on its possible force, and sometimes – as, for example, in some cases where an explicit performative formula, like “I apologize”, is used – the meaning of the utterance may exhaust its force; that is, there may be no more to the force than there is to the meaning; but very often the meaning, though it limits, does not exhaust, the force. (Strawson 1964:23-24)

The locutionary act can indeed be chosen in a way as to limit the possibilities of the hearer to interpret the utterance. The performative effort of the speaker consists in selecting the means in such a way as to secure uptake, that is ensure that the hearer understands which procedure the speaker is evoking. In whatever way the act is performed (non-verbal or verbal), the speaker needs to provide enough indications that can reasonably lead the hearer to the correct interpretation of the procedure involved. Grice formulates this common-sense requirement for achieving this non-natural sort of meaning in the following words:

“As I recently remarked, one cannot in general intend that some result should be achieved, if one knows that there is no likelihood that it will be achieved.” (Grice 1969:161)

The responsibility of the speaker is to make it clear for the hearer which conventional procedure is being invoked. The interpretative effort of the hearer consists in grasping which procedure the speaker is evoking in her performance.

The third important implication of the requirement of uptake is that an illocutionary act performance is always directed at a recipient. Acts in general do not need to be directed at a target: if I am working up a sweat in the gym alone, I do not need any audience to validate that action. In order to perform a locutionary act, I do not need an audience to direct my act at: I can very well practice pronunciation or recite poems alone. It is not so with conventional actions, especially so with illocutionary acts, the essence of which is in the implementation of the conventional effect associated with them. It is consistent with the conception of illocutionary acts as social contract of a special kind that a hearer is required to validate the completion of the social contract in question by accepting the invocation of the procedure. The player has not scored a goal unless this goal was validated as conforming to the rules of the game: the ball has passed the goal line, the player has not committed any offense prior to scoring, he has not committed a fault, he was not offside etc. Likewise, unless I was understood as asserting that the train leaves in 5 minutes, I am not bound to my words. If I utter alone in my office “I still have these papers to grade”, I have not performed an

illocutionary act: even if we consider me to be the recipient of the act, no effect is implemented. It is futile to talk about ordering to oneself, pleading with oneself, electing oneself, stating to oneself, questioning oneself, apologizing to oneself: one and the same person cannot hold two different social roles in one situation at the same time (maybe except in cases of schizophrenia/ or was it multiple personality disorder)¹⁶³. Such labels can be used, but what they denote is a mental process of reflecting upon something: ordering to oneself would denote dissatisfaction with one's procrastination and an intense wish to get moving; pleading with oneself would denote a conflict on a particular course of action; stating to oneself would denote the process of passing judgment (engaging in reasoning). There are indeed cases in which people seem to use language in a way that would suggest illocutionary act performance. In movies, characters often speak when there is no hearer present: a girl trying to call her boyfriend, repeating "Be home!" over and over again is not entreating the boyfriend to be home (this example comes from the Friends series); the audience behind the screen is the target of quite a different act (maybe even perlocutionary), namely that it is made aware of the strength of the emotions and the desires that are to be attributed to the character. The same effect on the audience can be achieved by having the actress adopt the relevant facial expression and bodily movement, which confirms the idea that the line "Be home" is a sign of the emotive state of the character, which in turn builds up the plot. Even in real life situations, a small child, sent to apologize to the neighbors for breaking their window, can vocalize on the way "Please be out", betraying an intense feeling of distress (and/or shame) and a strong desire to postpone the meeting.

The requirement of uptake as a necessary condition on the performance of illocutionary acts translates as a requirement that there should be a target, or a hearer. This underlines the peculiar conception of illocutionary acts of Austin's, which Searle's theory did not take up: that illocutionary acts are conventional in the sense of social acts. An interesting question arises in this respect: do we need to know who performed an act as well as who was the target (or the hearer) in order to understand what illocutionary act was performed in that particular situation? I believe that there are two ways to approach this question: from the point of view of the analyst and from the point of view of the participants in the conversation themselves. I think it is trivially true that the speakers adjust their choice of words (their locutionary acts) bearing in mind the hearer they are addressing, the concern of the speakers

¹⁶³ There are some special cases, such as self-appointed lawmen (vigilante who decide that a certain action should be that person's responsibility), or self-proclaimed monarchy, that can be mistaken for refutations of the claim above, but the target of the act is still a social actor which is other than the speaker.

being the correct grasping of the illocutionary act they are engaged in performing. It is also quite uncontroversial that the hearers will take into consideration the identity of the speaker in their interpretative effort. It is quite different with the special position of the analyst, who generally does not interpret or validate the acts herself, but assesses the interpretations already made by the actual participants in the conversation. An analyst who takes a transcript of a conversation without any information about the relative status of the participants or the situation in which the conversation took place will generally have more trouble with assessing the acts performed by the participants. Every subsequent contribution will allow the analyst to decide how that particular act was taken by the participants. Since we do not have any objective criteria about what full understanding of the interaction would amount to, virtually any assessment would be acceptable, with a reasonable margin of error. In this discussion of illocutionary acts, it is not the needs of the analyst that are at the core of the problem, but the needs of the participants themselves.

There is a third conventional aspect of illocutionary act that Austin lists in his exposition which I did not include in the reconstructed definition of the act, namely that illocutionary acts involve by convention a response or a sequel. As it is quite difficult to generalize that either a verbal response, a verbal or non-verbal reaction necessarily follows the performance of any illocutionary act, I did not include it in the definition of the illocutionary act I reconstructed from Austin's exposition. However, it can be argued that an indication of the hearer's uptake can be found in subsequent (verbal or non-verbal) behavior of the hearer. Austin's uptake requirement finds an unexpected argument in cases of misunderstanding. Misunderstanding can be described as a situation in which the speaker performed act A and mistakenly assumed the hearer took it up as act A; the hearer took it up as act B, holding the speaker to the effects act B entails, whereas the speaker holds herself bound to the effects of act A¹⁶⁴. Once the misunderstanding is established, the situation is reassessed; the speaker and hearer take the previous act to be void and the performance is re-defined¹⁶⁵.

The sequel is a way to signal the acknowledgement of completion of the illocutionary act. The sequel also indicates how the hearer took up the act of the speaker, and can be used in cases where there is ambiguity in the hearer about the illocutionary act of the speaker. Exchanges such as the following are a case to the point:

¹⁶⁴ A rather famous example in literature is Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*, where misunderstanding brought Mr. Pickwick and his landlady Mrs. Bardell to court.

¹⁶⁵ McHoul (1987) calls it negotiating the illocutionary act. The notion of negotiation is an interesting one and certainly plausible.

(35) “You do not know who you are dealing with.” – “Are you threatening me?”

(a) “No, I am warning you.”

(b) “Why yes, I am!”

In a situation where the speaker was indeed threatening the hearer, the hearer took up on the act, but refuses to put herself in the position of a person who can be threatened, thus challenging the felicity of the act. The speaker can deny the threat by claiming that it is a warning, an act which does not put speaker and hearer in opposition in any way. If there is enough information in the situation itself that would rather point to the speaker as threatening, the speaker’s denying the threat on the surface may pursue another goal, that of making it difficult for the hearer to claim she was threatened. It may be argued that by explicitly denying the threat, the speaker denies the implementation of the effects of the threat. What is at all important in this situation is that the hearer came to consider those effects even for a short time, which might be the whole point of the disguised threat anyway. The answer presented in (b) translates as the willingness of the speaker to engage in an open conflict with the hearer, at the expense of being judged to be of anti-social behavior (a threat being something which is generally not condoned by society).

Uptake can be defined for acts performed via a written medium as deferred in time and conditioned by specific modalities that apply to that medium. In academic texts, the shared assumption of academic legitimacy to report on findings is one such modality. Most of the constraints on the (super-) act of reporting the findings or disseminating the findings are contained in the peer-review process of publishing the paper. The differences in the different hearers’ uptake (whether they take something to be a claim or not, a hypothesis or a prediction) are not available for the speaker to observe; the speaker can explain or make precisions on the acts that she purported to have performed. Different text-building conventions help clarify these differences. In the case of political speeches their public performance in front of an audience does not automatically resolve questions of uptake: different hearers can have different uptake. The speaker-politician is never fully confident which of her performances took hold as which illocutionary acts. There are many cases of politicians who are taken to be promising one thing or taken as defaming or accusing or whatnot and needed to apologize or explain publicly that it was not what they meant to do.

The uptake requirement embodies and underlines the importance of the interlocutors involved in the performance of a particular illocutionary act. For assertions, I will not take my interlocutor as having asserted if I do not value their opinion: whatever they claim will not be

taken seriously by me; if it turns out to be false, I will not blame them for it, but be strengthened in my belief that they are not worthy asserters. In many cases, the truth-falsity assessment may not even come into play, because I do not take them as asserting anyway. This would be yet another reason for me not to take them up on their assertions.

It is interesting to note something else in this respect. The paradigmatic cases of assertions discussed in the literature involve the following statements:

(36) Snow is white.

(37) The earth is flat.

In (36) we deal with an utterance which is obviously true for any human being familiar with that particular atmospheric phenomenon¹⁶⁶. It would seem that the information this utterance contains, namely a particular state of affairs, does not depend on the speaker or the hearer for its truth. This is obviously the case. What does depend on the speaker and the hearer involved is the interpretation of the message on the one hand, and the assessment ascriptions on the other hand. Recall the warning about the charging bull: the state of affairs that is related to the act in question – the bull being about to charge – is referred to as existing independently in the objective world. The speaker's interpretation depicts it as being true, in other words as existing in the objective world. The hearer's interpretation may assess it as being false or non-existing in the objective world. So as I understand it, the relativist twist to the notion of truth is nothing else but a way to account for the difficulty of devising a notion of objective world or any kind of absolute knowledge that comes into play in assessments. Rather, something like Stalnaker's possible worlds come into play, in which assessments are made based on a strictly subjective and actor-dependent interpretation of the reality. The attempt of using the utterance of sentences like (36) and (37) as arguments to support the idea that the identity of the speaker and hearer does not matter in the performance of illocutionary acts because of the independence of the truth of the propositions contained in them is deeply flawed and cannot succeed. The proposition contained in the utterance may be obviously true or false for every person involved in the exchange, but that has nothing to do with the kind of illocutionary act which is being performed.

The illocutionary act that the speaker may perform in the utterance of (36) or (37) is not determined by the content of the proposition these utterances contain, or by whether or not the proposition contained therein is true. The locution we see in both (36) and (37) has its own

¹⁶⁶ Painters would probably disagree. Any white surface reflects glimpses of the colors of nearby objects.

fluctuating requirements (contextual dependence of meaning, indexicality, resolution of ambiguity etc). The illocutionary act we can perform thereby depends on the speaker and the target of the act. However difficult it may be to imagine a speaker who will assert (36) or (37) in a default context (and not, say, asserting (36) to toddlers or aliens, or asserting (37) as the thesis of an alternative science society), there is nothing in Austin's doctrine of illocutionary acts that could rule out the possibility of such utterances to be used in performing the illocutionary act of assertion. The state of affairs that they refer to (or describe) does not have any bearing on the performance of the act: in the performance itself the speaker evokes a procedure which is associated with a particular conventional effect the implementation of which will subsequently alter the social facts upon the uptake of the hearer. It is precisely because of the difficulty in coming up with a situation in which a speaker will utter (36) to a hearer who is not a toddler or an alien that some may fail to see what asserting is beyond the locution itself.

The reason act assessments are largely present in this discussion (and many others) is that any assessment only makes sense in the context of an accomplished illocutionary act performance. We can of course take an isolated sentence such as (36) or (37) above and consider the truth-value of the proposition contained therein. The interest of this assessment would be self-satisfying as we would be establishing a feature of the logical form of the proposition just for the sake of it. Assessments of accomplished illocutionary acts have a bearing over our reaction to a certain act, or can potentially shape up our behavior (verbal or otherwise). Isolated, (36) cannot be qualified as appropriate or inappropriate, as uncalled-for or as valid and it does not qualify to be assigned an illocutionary act label at all: we miss crucial information for such assessments, such as the identity of the speaker, the act she attempts to perform, the larger (social) situation etc. What I suggest is that truth-falsity assessments work in the same way. We resort to such an assessment only if the situation or our personal interest in such an assessment calls for it. In many situations, we are inclined to take the claim of the speaker as being true, without trying to assess its truth for ourselves. Acts of informing somebody of something (with the special condition of the informant possessing exclusivity over the information imparted) usually call for the default acceptance of the truth of the information, especially if the speaker herself is a reliable source.

The act-product would then be what the hearer took up on, shaped by the locutionary act on the one hand, and the context or the overall situation on the other, construed in the context of the performance of the illocutionary act. Such a notion applies comfortably to illocutionary acts realized in the utterance of sentences which do not contain propositions,

such as orders. We can assess an order as being legitimate, valid, sensible etc, and what we target by making these assessments is the very act of giving the order and the thing ordered with respect to our identity as people being put under a certain obligation as well as with respect to the identity of the person giving the order. The emphasis would be on the fact that the hearer has her own understanding what it means to be entitled to do act A or act B, and often the reasons for the hearer's uptake can be very much outside of the theoretically plausible ones: I may choose to hold you to your word even if the performance was flawed just because I want to have somebody to blame.

To sum up, two important ideas need to be emphasized here and one further remark is needed. The uptake requirement underlines the importance of the target requirement for the illocutionary act performance and the important role that the hearer plays in the fixing of the illocutionary force onto an utterance. Nonetheless, misunderstanding can still arise as to who took what to be the performance of which illocutionary act and the implementation of illocutionary effect is subject to the same risks. Misunderstanding cannot undermine the uptake requirement.

Chapter 9: Context and participant roles: putting illocutionary acts back into communication

Having reconstructed a definition of illocutionary act in Austin's writings, I need to spell out the implications this recovered definition is going to have. Austin lists assertion as an illocutionary act, so he can be taken to claim that it satisfies the conditions stipulated in the definition of illocutionary act, although he does not offer any analysis of the illocutionary act of assertion with regard to offering specifications as to these conditions. I did not take the assumption that assertion is an illocutionary act at face-value. In the previous two chapters I suggested how the act of assertion can be accounted for using Austin's notions in the way he originally conceived of them. I showed how assertion can be said to satisfy the criteria for illocutionary acts outlined by Austin: first, assertion is an illocutionary act with a conventional effect; second, assertion comes into existence upon securing of uptake. The leading assumption in this second part was that if one can show that asserting satisfies the two conditions of illocutionary acts, then one can safely assume that description of the procedure, effects and uptake of the act would effectively constitute an account (a description) of the act of asserting. But in order to get a relatively complete picture of illocutionary act performance the definition of illocutionary acts will be supplemented with considerations of context.

One of the thorniest paths in speech act theoretic research is accounting for the role of context. Regardless of the way we describe illocutionary acts, they necessarily occur in the following minimum conditions: first, there is a speaker, second, there is a hearer, and both speaker and hearer are in a set of circumstances that defines the set of presuppositions¹⁶⁷ they carry (about both of the interlocutors, their relations, knowledge about the world, each other, etc). It is not easy to define context, nor is it easy to pinpoint exactly the number of features that build it up. However, some observations will be offered that can clarify the very performance of illocutionary acts. Without any consideration of the role of context, the theory of illocutionary acts leaves the realm of social action and enters the realm of meaning (just where the Searlean brand of theory put it). In Austin's own words, it is "the total speech act in the total speech situation" that we are engaged in elucidating (1962:147).

Speech act theoretic research has long since recognized the role of context in the speech act performance: in Searle's exposition, context is the "appropriate circumstances" for

¹⁶⁷ If we follow Stalnaker's idea somewhat loosely.

using a particular illocutionary force indicating device (1968:418). However, the idea that a set of circumstances deemed appropriate for the performance of a particular illocutionary act obtain or are given, tends to distort the way we conceive of illocutionary action for it amounts to the following idea: in a given context, the speaker issues contextually appropriate devices to stand for the act she intends to perform. The illocutionary act is then an act of making manifest a communicative intention that we intend the hearer to recognize. This is not what we find in Austin's conception of illocutions. The very performance of the illocutionary act builds up the context by operating an important change; that is, implementing conventional effects upon uptake. In recent discussions on context, there prevails the idea that context has a dual role in that it both helps understand what the speaker says and is influenced by what the speaker says (Bach 2005, Stalnaker 1998). It is important to emphasize that context does not in any way determine¹⁶⁸ that an illocutionary act is an act of a certain type. Illocutionary acts come into being by a conjoint effort of the speaker and the hearer: the speaker evokes a procedure, which is taken up by the hearer (so the act comes off) or it is not (the act does not come off). I will first turn to the felicity conditions on illocutionary acts, arguing that felicity conditions tie the act to extra-linguistic features, which can be taken to support the social nature of the illocutionary acts. The second part of the chapter will take up on context.

9.1. The doctrine of infelicities

Let me first turn to Austin's notes on the act of assertion. Statements are liable to every infelicity arising from breaching of the six rules, so Austin concludes that assertion is an illocutionary act on a par with other acts. Specifically, Austin noted the following infelicities:

- In saying "The cat is on the mat" it is implied that I do so believe (**Γ.1.**)
- Saying "The cat is on the mat" commits me to saying "The mat is under the cat" (**Γ.2.**)
- Saying "The cat is on the mat" where there is no cat to speak of makes the statement null and void (**A.1.**)
- Saying "The cat is on the mat" while I cannot see the cat's whereabouts (**A.2.**)
- Saying the wrong word – "The bat is on the mat" instead of "the cat" (**B.1. & B.2.**)

¹⁶⁸ It is important to make the following distinction in this respect: when I say that context does not determine what kind of act is being performed, I do not mean to say that context does not help assign the specific force to a performance. In the production end, context is constructed by the performance; in the reception end, context is an objective entity used in deciphering performances.

These and other observations in Austin's exposition give us the entire picture of what can make an assertion a misfire or a hollow act. Being bound to the infelicities which arise from the breaching of the felicity conditions of the acts could be construed as a feature of conventional or social acts. A constative would not be bound to felicity conditions. Of course, it is plausible to assume that the collapse of the performative-constative dichotomy amounts to claiming that there are no constatives¹⁶⁹. The inventory below follows Austin's exposition (lecture XI):

- Failure of belief (follows from **Γ.1.**)
- Failure of truth (this is an assessment of the act-product as discussed in the previous chapter, so strictly speaking it need not be part of the present discussion)
- Failure of presupposition (follows from **A.1.**)
- Failure of reference (follows from **A.1.**)
- Failure of informativity (it is related to the competence of the speaker and is also an assessment of the act-product; it was also discussed in the previous chapter)
- Using the wrong word (from **B.1. & B.2.**)
- Failure of addressee (derived from the uptake condition)

It seems obvious that not all of these failures (or infelicities) have to do with the illocutionary performance – some of them concern the assertion-product, and some, as I will argue, concern the locutionary act, in the performance of which the illocutionary act came off. The infelicities that affect the act of assertion may embody features that are external to the act; if that is so, then these features may help sketch up a way of approaching context, at least for the act of assertion.

The lack of belief when performing the act of assertion results in a successful but infelicitous (or unhappy) act. I can go through the necessary conventional procedure that conditions assertion and secure your uptake successfully without believing what I say. Given that my act is successfully executed, you will know that I have expressed a certain belief. My not having the professed belief leads to a later reassessment of the product of my act as a lie. But the importance of the assumption of sincerity gives us interesting insight into the place of our assertions in the conversational setting: the hearer constructs a sort of list of things related

¹⁶⁹ At least not in the way that dichotomy was first introduced since it was mainly about sentences that do things and sentences that do not do things. The failure to find a grammatical criterion that would set those apart makes the discarded notion void. It is not something I will explore; inasmuch as communication is concerned, there is always something the speaker is attempting to do and so is the hearer.

to me (a list of beliefs that I have). If I assert that I do not drink alcohol, the hearer will expect me to conform to this statement and to behave accordingly. Thus, if he sees me drinking a martini at a party, he can excuse my behavior by assuming that the circumstances must be in some way exceptional, so that he can reconcile the image I constructed in words and my actual behavior. But if he sees me drinking on several different occasions, he will probably characterize me as a liar. As to the question whether belief is important for the performance of the act, I would say that it definitely does not matter for the performance of the act whether or not the speaker really believes what she says. If the hearer takes the speaker to be asserting, the speaker will be bound to the conventional effects of the act, regardless of the beliefs she may or may not entertain.

There is another way in which the belief may not be pertinent for act ascription: in ordinary circumstances speakers (and hearers) take it for granted that they have been understood correctly and their acts taken upon in the way those were intended¹⁷⁰. The hearer takes it for granted that my act of asserting met all the felicity conditions it was supposed to. We tend to take it for granted that the interlocutor has all the appropriate beliefs and intentions and feelings to that particular illocutionary act. We also tend to take it for granted that our interlocutors are in the appropriate position to perform that particular illocutionary act. To take an example from Sbisà (2002), when a person in a police uniform stops us and asks for our license, we take it for granted that it is a policeman who, by virtue of his status, is entitled to require our license, as opposed to a crook dressed in a police uniform. In ordinary circumstances, we do not question the social roles of our interlocutors and we do not look for subversive intentions or beliefs. In some contexts, the belief condition may even be suspended for the particular act, to the point that it may not even be among the evaluated features. The speaker “trying out” a claim in a philosophical seminar or a creationist teacher asserting something which goes against her personal convictions in her biology class (the examples come from Cappelen 2011) have the belief condition suspended; it would certainly be an oversimplification to say that these speakers are conveying their beliefs in those cases; it would be misleading to say that these speakers are taken as asserting. For any participant in the philosophical seminar in the first case it would be clear that the contribution is to be taken as “mock-assertion”, that is the speaker makes as if to assert, without being sure that the act would meet all of the requirements for it. The second case is rather more difficult to decide. The school children listening to their teacher talk about evolution, provided they are aware of

¹⁷⁰ A similar idea is voiced by Sbisà (2002).

the beliefs of the teacher, can be expected to ask the question of which is the truth (however misleading that qualification may be). If they are not aware of the teacher's beliefs, they are more likely to take the act to be an assertion. Either way, the effects of the acts performed in both of the cases may be suspended as well, again depending on the audience. It is also up to the audience's discretion to decide to take up on the act as being an assertion or something else. Note that even interlocutors present in the philosophy seminar can be misled into taking it up as assertion, so that the speaker would find herself in need to clarify that she did not actually assert that. The situations constructed in both of the cases have to do with an artificial environment of philosophical discussion or transmission of scientific knowledge which is not necessarily within the responsibility of the person transmitting it. The teacher can act just as a vehicle for the said information, or the animator¹⁷¹. As the animator, the speaker would only be responsible for the accuracy of the information itself, but not be accountable for any effects of the act; then the effects would be suspended. The act of the speaker would be best described as "teaching" and the label of "assertion" would not be appropriate for it. At best, a biology class is a report on the state of the art of our knowledge in that domain. What particular persons doing the teaching believe is irrelevant. Expounding a point of view is not necessarily endorsing it.

Failure of belief does not invalidate the act, but in some situations it may be relevant enough to induce a feeling of wrongness about it. It is also up to the hearer to reject the entire procedure, in other words, to make the act invalid regardless of how complete the execution of the procedure was, based on this feeling of wrongness provoked by the insincerity of the speaker. An interesting question would be the delimitation between acts that have not been taken up by the hearer and acts that are rejected on the grounds of finding fault with it. I will return to that¹⁷².

Failure of truth is often related to the breach of A.2. rule mentioned above: if the cat is not on the mat, one ought not to assert that it is. In other words, the state of affairs reported in our utterance needs to obtain if our assertion is to be successful. Since the breach of this rule makes the act null and void, it may be inferred that asserting aims to be true, or that asserting is regulated by a truth norm. I have already argued against normative accounts of assertion, and specifically against an account of assertion governed by a truth norm. I wish to argue that

¹⁷¹ Following Goffman's division of the participant roles, the animator only vocalizes the message, the author is responsible for the wording of the message, and the principal endorses the message (Goffman 1981, Levinson 1988). It is important to emphasize that asserting in the illocutionary sense of the term assigns the role of the principal to the speaker.

¹⁷² Chapter 10.

the breach of A.2. condition referred to does not concern the category of truth at all. Truth or falsity in Austin's theory is an assessment which can be made about the assertion-product; that is, once the illocutionary act of assertion has been performed, and taken up to be an assertion. If I assert something which is not true, my assertion is not null and void. Am I, the asserter, concerned with truth when I am asserting something? Most probably I am; I am also concerned with questions such as which words to use to be more effective, to be less offensive, to sound smarter, to be more plausible, more believable and so on. The performance of the act of assertion does not depend on the truth of whatever I am asserting, just as it does not depend on how plausible it is, how smart it sounds or how offensive it may be. Is the hearer concerned with truth? Most probably she is; also with my sincerity, my hidden intentions, my credibility and so on. Truth, as I argued, is but another assessment category of the product of our illocutionary act of assertion, along with many others, and holds no privileged position. I believe that this condition has to do with what Austin called "being in the right position" to assert. Let me, for the time being, call this the entitlement felicity condition.

It may seem from the example above that the speaker's entitlement to assert something is no more different from knowing that something is the case (or true) and that this is just another way of postulating the truth norm while escaping the problems a truth-norm-based account faces. It is not so. First, the entitlement condition is related to the conventional effects of asserting (see chapter 7 on the effect). The speaker's entitlement is connected with the belief that she can offer justification for asserting that so-and-so, which is not to be equated with proof that the statement is true (which cannot even be offered for a vast array of statements). The entitlement felicity condition engages the asserter's responsibility in another manner: any material implication of the original statement can be asserted by the hearer. This can also be applied to another way of construing said responsibility: the hearer can re-assert the original assertion attributing it to its author. Second, the entitlement felicity condition is related to the uptake in that it can effectively make the act of assertion void. This time the perspective is hearer-oriented: if the hearer considers the speaker not competent to perform that act, she will not take up on the act as being assertion. Thus entitlement has to do with the way the speaker positions herself in the interaction vis-à-vis her interlocutor and the way her interlocutor construes her. Entitlement concerns the social role or position of the speaker; it conveys a particular relation between the information string and that particular speaker. As such, entitlement can be a plausible candidate for a felicity condition: it provides a restriction on the hearer's perception of what can be taken to be assertions by a particular speaker. This

is not a restriction on the speaker and the content she can successfully assert, but rather a hearer-based restriction in the sense that the entitlement condition allows the hearer to take up on an act of assertion or not. This condition can help account for the difference between an act of hypothesizing and an act of assertion performed in the uttering of the same locutionary act. It is to be expected that speakers and hearers may have different conceptions of what makes the speaker in the right position to assert something. This felicity condition is found in other illocutionary acts, as promising something one is not able to provide or apologizing for something one did not do¹⁷³. Whereas the relevant sense in which performing those acts without being entitled to is that the speaker is not bound by the conventional effects of the acts, it is difficult to say that the attempt to perform them has no value or importance to the situation whatsoever. On the contrary, the deliberate performance of an act one is not entitled to perform adds to the social environment nonetheless. Consider the following example: a father says the following to a heart-broken daughter “He will be back. I promise” and the daughter answers “You cannot promise that, but thanks for wanting to” (Twin Peaks series). Although the daughter notes that the father is not entitled to make a promise to the effect that her boyfriend will come back because it is not in his power to provide, she acknowledges the effort to express hope for her future well-being or his sympathizing with her emotions. The promise is not successful, then – the father is not bound to the obligation (or commitment) to honor the promise, but some change in the social relations of the participants occurred. This goes on to say that in communication it is not necessary for the act to be successful in order to have impact on the situation.

The natural question is: am I entitled to make a certain statement if I do not believe it to be true? There is no principled criterion to measure entitlement to make one or another assertion¹⁷⁴. The relativist twist on the notion of truth makes it impossible to use truth (or belief) as such a criterion. In performing the illocutionary act of asserting in cases where we do not have the relevant belief it is our credibility of asserter which is at stake. As it is the case with any other socially conditioned action, we take our chances. For asserting I construe entitlement as the understanding of the hearer that the speaker is engaged in making a judgment. Entitlement would set apart cases of weaker commitment from cases of stronger

¹⁷³ This was pointed out to me by P.G. Meyer (personal communication).

¹⁷⁴ Or any other act, for that matter. In the father-daughter example, the promise can be taken to be felicitous if it was construed as being a promise to ensure that he comes back. Although there is no criterion for entitlement, it is the hearer’s personal brand of understanding what it means to be entitled to assert something which is at play. Also, see previous chapter.

commitment: suggesting, hypothesizing, even educated guesses do not implement the kind of effect asserting does.

Failure of presupposition makes the act void (Austin 1962:51). The statement “John’s children are bald” is void in case John has no children. The statement “The King of France is bald” is void if there is no King of France. Leaving aside the peculiar insistence on baldness, I will consider a case which is more likely to leave the realm of theoretic interest and occur in an actual interaction. It is indeed very hard to imagine a situation in which the speaker will commit herself to an idea based on a false presupposition. If I know that John has no children, I am not likely to assert that they are bald. I may, however, assert that I invited Lilly, Mary, Jenny and their husbands to dinner, even though Jenny is not married¹⁷⁵. It should be noted that in this case my act of assertion can only come off if my interlocutors are aware that the presupposition is false, that I often use loose language (in this case there is a real person I am referring to – Jenny’s boyfriend) and there is nothing in the situation that could prompt the hearers to doubt their knowledge about Jenny’s marital status¹⁷⁶. The hearers tend to adjust in situations like this one. In cases of a false assumption that a presupposition is part of the common ground, the illocutionary act is not invalidated by the hearer’s not sharing the presupposition. The hearer will adjust and accept the presupposition for the purposes of the conversation. Theoretically speaking, I can mislead my interlocutor into adjusting to a presupposition which is false, when my interlocutor is not aware of this. That is, a hearer who is not aware of Jenny’s marital status will be misled by my assertion that I invited Jenny and her husband to dinner into thinking that Jenny has indeed a husband. The realization that the presupposition is false does not invalidate the act: the information that the hearer got out of my assertion will be slightly modified (the hearer will still take me as having asserted that I invited Jenny and a man who she is in a relationship with). False presuppositions alone cannot invalidate the act. In argumentation it is common to accept something for the sake of argument. This suspends the conventional effect that would normally be attached to the performance of the illocutionary act and we can presuppose (in the sense of “take for granted”) things which are not true or things which are not verified.

The situation itself provides a frame for interpretation of the locutionary act of the speaker: the presupposition may be a pragmatic phenomenon, but it is the locutionary act which contains clues to calculating it. False presuppositions can also be interpreted as signs of the speaker’s incompetence to perform the illocutionary act and can lead to the subsequent

¹⁷⁵ This example comes from Stalnaker 1998:7.

¹⁷⁶ This example works better in Bulgarian, where the colloquial word for ‘husband’ and ‘man’ is the same.

rejection of the invocation of the procedure. Some of these cases are linked with reference. When I refer to something which is not, I hinder my hearer's understanding what exactly is that I am trying to say, and by extension what I am trying to do.

But recall that reference in fact belongs to the locutionary act, together with sense. The question that arises is how a failure to refer properly, which should lead to a defective locutionary act, can lead to a void illocutionary act? One way to answer that question is to say that if the rhetic act (if any is involved) is not successful, then the locutionary act is not successful. The locutionary act is the manifestation of the illocutionary act; so an unsuccessful manifestation cannot be used by the hearer to grasp successfully which illocutionary act the speaker is performing. If we take referring to be roughly equivalent of picking out one particular item in the world via language, failing to do so may be due to selecting the inappropriate referring expression. Since the relation between the locutionary act and the illocutionary act is by no means direct, not every failed locutionary act will lead to a failed illocutionary act, as we can see from the example of Jenny's husband above.

Both presupposition and reference can be linked to the common or shared content (information or context, however one wishes to name it), so the infelicities that can arise are not only related to failures in the speaker's utterance, as referring to something which is not, or presupposing something which is not, but also if the reference does not succeed to pick out a referent for the hearer, or if the hearer deems that the presupposition is something which is not. Both presupposition and reference can be considered to be felicity conditions in their hearer-based interpretation in that they display the common ground shared by both the speaker and the hearer as both items and knowledge about the participants.

Concerning informativity, I already mentioned the failed attempt to link assertion to information in one of Searle's descriptions of assertion on the one hand, and on the other hand, the new information-based account of Pagin's (2011). The basic idea is that in asserting the speaker makes the hearer aware of a particular content, an idea, a proposition. Informing appears to be just like assertion in that it carries the idea that the speaker occupies a special position vis-à-vis the information imparted in that she has exclusivity over it. But informing does not engage the speaker's responsibility in the same way. Informing carries a presumption of authority, of the speaker either being the authority person or being the person authorized to relay the information on the authority person's behalf. A different commitment to justification is undertaken by the speaker¹⁷⁷. It would then seem that informativity is but a by-product of

¹⁷⁷ If two acts have different conventional effects, then the illocutionary acts associated with them are different.

assertion and following Brandom's conception of informativity the assertion is not in any way invalidated if the content is not informative to the hearer. Informativity does not qualify to be a felicity condition, but remains a way to assess the assertion-product.

Concerning the saying of the right word, consider the following example:

(38) Newscaster: "This is your eleven o'clock newscaster bringing you an on the pot report... I mean on the spot retort... I mean on the tot resort... oh, well, let's just skip it!" (Goffman 1981:310)

Regardless of the fact that most probably what the newscaster was about to do is announce the next segment of the program, the slip of the tongue – or the numerous slips of the tongue in this case – leads him to abandon the attempted act altogether. The curious thing about this example is that we are reluctant to describe the newscaster as having announced the next segment of the program; at best we can say that he tried to announce the next segment of the program. Once again, the situation may call for another assessment altogether. If I say "Paul, take out the garbage, will you" instead of saying "Peter", is my order invalidated? What if the hearer takes the garbage bin and says "I'm Peter, actually"? He would clearly be responding as if he took up on the act. Would the situation be different if the reason for my using the wrong word was a slip of the tongue or if it was my inability to remember the names of my newly hired staff? Further, the speaker may not be aware of the mistake/ wrong word/ slip of the tongue until later; in which case the act can nonetheless come off if the hearer has a means to calculate the proper word from the content and the context of utterance. The hearer can ask for clarification on the word the speaker wanted to utter, which effectively signals the uptake on the act.

I must secure uptake in making a statement; make sure that my utterance was heard and understood by the hearer as being a statement. An additional dimension of assessment of statements is the question of whether or not they are true. "True" in Austin's use is the correspondence with the facts. It is important to underline that the question of truth or falsity of a statement can only arise after the act of stating has been felicitously performed. The truth-falsity dimension of assessment may be important for the communicative situation, for the accuracy of the information exchange or for establishing the credibility of the speaker, but it has nothing to do with the act's belonging to the group of illocutionary acts. That means that the statement is taken up by the hearer and it has taken effect. Only once it has taken effect can the hearer proceed to assess its conformity to the facts (if indeed such an assessment is required for the situation at hand). More broadly speaking, a similar dimension of assessment

can be applied to many illocutionary acts¹⁷⁸: Austin cites giving a verdict, pronouncing the batsman out, estimating, giving advice – acts are generally assessed in their relation to the reality they help to build. In all of these cases, the act performed does not depend in any way on these assessments, and assessing that an act was bad/ false/ incorrect/ unmerited etc does not invalidate the act. But such assessments can give rise to other acts that seek to correct/ annul/ retract etc the original act. If the defendant assesses that he was incorrectly found guilty, he can (and will) make an appeal. If I think I was given bad advice, I will not take it (advice was given to me nonetheless). If the coffee machine I bought reveals a secret vice, I will demand an annulment of the transaction. If I think that what you asserted is false, I will correct you, demand explanations, secretly label you a liar and never trust you, etc. The truth/falsity dimension is an evaluation of the assertion-as-result for correspondence with states of affairs. Such an evaluation is relative to speakers, hearers, and states of affairs talked about. The claim and the evaluation are always relative to a time, place, knowledge of speaker and hearer, etc. This goes to say that even a happy illocutionary act is not exempted from all criticism¹⁷⁹. Different dimensions of assessment can show what categories speakers and hearers associate with different act-products. But assessing an act-product is not part of the uptake to the act, and thus is certainly not required in order for the act to take effect. Truth, then, is not part of the illocutionary act description of assertion.

There is one other peculiarity to statements:

The most that might be argued, and with some plausibility, is that there is no perlocutionary *object* specifically associated with stating, as there is with informing, arguing, &c.; and this comparative purity may be one reason why we give 'statements' a certain special position. (Austin 1962:139-140, emphasis in the original)

Although it is quite often the case that the illocutionary act of informing is associated with making someone believe that something is the case (this being the perlocutionary object of the act), and the act of arguing is associated with persuading or convincing someone that something is the case, the speaker is not required to pursue a particular perlocutionary effect in performing illocutionary acts. This so-called “purity” of assertion or statement can be a partial explanation of the special status that was imputed to statements (the Descriptive

¹⁷⁸ It would be better to clarify the terminology here: it is not the act which is assessed; it is the act-product, so to speak. The act-products of different illocutionary acts are different: the product of the assertion is a piece of information; the product of giving a verdict is a verdict; the product of an order is an action related to an agent. Curiously, the product of an apology is the very performance of the apology – usually assessed in terms of sincerity. I will come back to that.

¹⁷⁹ This will be taken up in part three, in chapter 10. But how do we differentiate between happy acts that are just being criticized from defective acts, especially if we are in the process of describing the act as it is?

fallacy). It is certainly not a requirement of illocutionary acts that they have a perlocutionary object associated with them. That we do not have any particular perlocutionary object when asserting does not mean that the illocutionary act of asserting is not directed at anybody. Our assertions must have an audience in order to come to be. This reference to purity can remind of the neutral status of Searle's assertions, performed in the utterance of any declarative sentence. But whereas Searle's neutrality borders on illocutionary nullity, Austin's purity acquires the idea of being devoid of intentions to achieve particular perlocutionary effects.

The infelicities I described above can be construed as referring to felicity conditions that are all part of the conventional procedure for the illocutionary act of assertion. Admittedly, the phrase "conventional procedure" cannot quite play the role of a technical term – Austin himself pointed out the relativity of the phrase he chose. We cannot expect to provide a detailed and exhaustive description of conventional procedure for the reasons I presented earlier (chapter 6). The felicity conditions seem to pick out features of the speech situation – or the context – relevant for the hearer's uptake on the act. The addressee condition picks out the social role of the hearer, her beliefs, her understanding of what would be accepted as a completed illocutionary act of assertion. These features determine the accepted conventional procedure by that particular hearer. The entitlement condition picks out the feature I'll call the social role of the speaker, but taken from the hearer's perspective it also picks out the beliefs and information the hearer has about the speaker. The reference condition and the presupposition condition, if applicable, pick out the linguistic dimension. The presupposition condition also picks out the shared information by speaker and hearer. It seems to me, though, that felicity conditions do not exhaust all the relevant features that the hearer may have any use for in her attempts to grasp the particular illocutionary act that is being performed. The felicity conditions provide a minimal set of objective features that only have to do with a non-defective act. They do not serve the purpose of helping the hearer grasp which act is being performed. Keeping in mind the fact that there can be considerable variation in which performance counts as a valid and felicitous illocutionary act of a particular kind, there must be something in the way the hearer perceives it that can account for that. There is a certain amount of subjectivity in the way any participant in interaction perceives the speech situation, not to mention the individual set of beliefs, desires, motivation, etc. that each of those participants carries with him or her. Those subjective features influence to a certain degree the lenience towards the procedure involved in the production of an illocutionary act.

9.2. Context

The role of the context in the performance of the illocutionary act is threefold: first, the performance of the illocutionary act effectively builds a context by its very performance; second, context helps the hearer grasp the act that is being performed; third, the effect of the illocutionary act operates a change on the speech situation. How exactly should we construe context in its interaction with illocutionary acts?

Speech-act centered studies involve a vast array of different notions, some of which seem incompatible with each other. This can be easily seen if we try to compare different trends in speech act theoretic research, specifically with regard to assertion. Communication-centered theories talk about making intentions manifest; context-changing theories add propositions to a set of presuppositions shared by the participants; states of affairs get altered; commitments and obligations are redefined. Context itself is a notion that resists defining, to the point that there exist different conceptions of context for different purposes. According to one view, context is a set of propositions taken for granted by the participants (Stalnaker 1978, 1998). According to another, context has three dimensions: setting, behavioral environment and language itself. Ochs (1979 cited in Goodwin and Duranti 1992) summarizes the dimensions of context as follows: it comprises setting (social and spatial framework), behavioral environment (as a source for framing and organizing talk), language (linguistic choices and genres of text production) and extra-situational context (subsuming all the background knowledge necessary for conducting and understanding discourse). Roberts (2004) proposes a combination of the two views by saying that the three dimensions are setting (and participants), language and information, both conveyed and presupposed. Stalnaker (1998) underlines the dual role of context in that speech acts affect the situation and are context-dependent in that they are interpreted using the information about the situation. Bach (2005) vocalizes the same idea in saying that context determines what is said in the sense of ascertaining it, but not shaping it. Holdcroft (1979) suggests that for different illocutionary acts there are sets of particular context-relevant features which come into play. Thus, for assertive acts, these features are the dimension of commitment, the domain of evidence, the dimension of assessment and the discourse placing dimension. These features touch upon different aspects of the performance of the speaker: first, the discourse-placing dimension helps fix the illocutionary force assignment; second, the dimension of commitment captures the conventional implications of the assertive act; third, the domain of evidence and

the dimension of assessment together deal with the way the act takes effect from the viewpoint of the hearer.

Despite the difficulties in describing the notion of context and the impossibility of picking out the aspects relevant to that description, Sbisà (2002) suggests three main characteristics of context which are consistent with Austin's conception of illocutionary acts. Context is constructed, limited and objective. Although it may seem that Austinian felicity conditions call for their satisfaction prior to the performance of the act, conceiving context as being constructed takes into account the hearer and the discourse as parts of that notion. Thus context is not something which is out there independently of the act, but makes the performance of the act a genuine part of the environment in which it occurs. Context is limited because Austin's felicity conditions single out particular aspects against which the felicity of the act is to be evaluated. Finally, it is objective rather than cognitive (recall the division described by Penco 1999, 2006) since mental or intentional states would rob the performer of her role in the performance of the illocutionary act by making it sufficient for the performance that the speaker possesses a certain intentional state, which is incompatible with Austin's doctrine of illocutionary acts. The claim that context must be limited in order to be at all applicable in analysis is based on considerations of plausibility. If we take Searle's view on background assumptions to be true (Searle 1980), then the stretch of the said assumptions is unlimited, and the interpretation of the act under the influence of these unlimited features would really be open-ended (Sbisà 2000:426). Any consideration of context would make more complex any consideration of a particular performance of an illocutionary act, rather than simplifying it. Many a researcher warned against such a proliferation of features that can be deemed relevant in their role of helping map a particular illocutionary force onto an utterance. Such a view would suggest that there must be a way to determine which features of context would be described as pertinent to this task. There is a discrepancy between theorizing about context from the point of view of the analyst and the point of view of the participant in the interaction. The participant in the interaction and the analyst differ greatly in the amount of insight into the psychological states the participant has, and the assumptions about the psychological states of her interlocutor. It is equally quite difficult to determine on a principled basis what information can be regarded as mutually shared by the participants. There is always the possibility that speaker and hearer have quite different ideas about what the other one believes and knows respectively, what they remember from prior conversations,

how they interpreted them¹⁸⁰, what obligations and commitments they undertook during previous conversations; the participants may be mistaken or wrong about who has what information about the exchange. The analyst cannot possess even half of that information, so the best the analyst can do is judge about the uptake of the hearer by the response given.

It can be argued that these three characteristics of context can be traced to be against the Searlean brand of illocutionary acts for three reasons (at least): first, his doctrine calls for a fixed context which already obtains prior to the performance of the act; second, because the possession of intentional states is what illocutionary acts in Searle's understanding seem to be about; and third, because of a Gricean turn on communication that can be perceived in Searle's writings, which centers around knowledge, thus allowing for a conception of context as being unlimited, seeing that the kind of knowledge involved is unlimited in any principled manner (background knowledge, encyclopedic knowledge, presuppositions etc.).

Every illocutionary act is produced in an environment including a set of participants (speaker, hearer, their mutual status), a physical setting (including the circumstances of the performance, the place and time etc), inferences the participants draw out of the available information about motives, reasons, social acceptability and appropriateness, expectations of the interlocutor, aims and goals. It may sometimes be the case that the hearer speculates about the intentions behind a particular performance. But if every performance had to hang on such indeterminate variables and if communicating intentions was the crux of the illocutionary behavior, then talking about utterances in terms of illocutionary acts would be unnecessary.

There are two ways to approach context with regard to illocutionary acts: taking the viewpoint of the speaker is one, which has proved to be a source of a fallacious conception of illocutionary acts; the other is taking the viewpoint of the hearer, which has not been taken up in speech act theoretic research up to now. The inventory of felicity conditions I presented above seems to suggest unequivocally the latter point of view. Indeed, the speaker is just as important for the performance of the illocutionary act and it is the speaker's responsibility to secure uptake, that is, make sure that the act she is performing is properly grasped. But making sure our act is understood is taking into account whatever information about the hearer we have so that our act is understood by him in the desired way. Being the target of a performance is larger a role than that of being the person who is to carry out the deed in the case of an order or who is to get the job in the case of hiring; it is also being the person who is

¹⁸⁰ These come from Cappelen and Lepore 2005: 212.

assigned the burden of being the warrant of the social contract that is being undertaken by the speaker.

Recreating the entire mechanism of the hearer's perception of the utterance and the speech act ascription procedure is not something that can be easily done and it is certainly not something that this study aims at. The complexity of the mechanism involved can be emphasized by just pointing out that the fixing of the semantic content of the utterance is not that easily described. Sbisà (2000:426) notes the phenomenon of the hearer accommodating to the situation which triggers a default assumption from the hearer that the act performed is felicitous and that the presuppositions are satisfied for the act in question. The idea that participants in the exchange take for granted that their acts have been successful make it possible for people to construct models for paradigm setting and frames (also see Goffman 1981). The illocutionary act taken up by default activates the relevant features of context that are to be assessed if there is any event triggering the need to do so. The utterance itself, the ideas of the hearer about the situation and the subjective features shape up the hearer's uptake of the act that is being performed.

Finally, whatever our insight on the nature of context might be, it is important to steer clear of a representation of context as a set of propositions. There is nothing that prevents us from considering the context as being a set of propositions in principle. It seems to me that regarding context as a set of propositions has to do more with a conceptualized representation of all the information which is somehow relevant in a particular setting, and thus is subjective¹⁸¹. Different participants may (and in lots of cases will) have different ideas about the propositions that make up the set. The analyst may have a completely different idea altogether. The objection to the proposition containing view of context has almost nothing to do with the proposition that may be the content of an assertion. In the performance of a particular speech act, say assertion, there are lots of strings of information that are picked up by the interlocutor, most of which are not accounted for in theories of speech acts. These strings of information may be conceptualized as sets of propositions. On hearing the utterance "The train station was blocked by the heavy snow" in a particular situation, the interlocutor can pick up information as diverse as the following: that the speaker uttered some sounds, that the speaker uttered a sentence in English, that the speaker addressed the hearer, that the speaker is cooperating in the exchange, that the train station was blocked by the heavy snow, that the speaker used the air quotes when uttering the words "heavy snow", that the speaker is

¹⁸¹ Cf. Sbisà (2000): she calls it "cognitive context" vs. objective.

keen at avoiding talking about a particular topic, that the speaker does not believe that snow was solely responsible for blocking the train station, that the speaker is concerned by the public transportation issues which will prevent her from getting home on time, etc. Not every proposition of these reflects an objective representation of a state of affairs; some of them are arrived at via an inferential process (after observing patterns of behavior, or because of a particular piece of knowledge about the speaker). Whether we are considering the interlocutors or the analyst, the set of propositions which will build up the context information for each of the participants and the analyst, can be different. The analyst can retrospectively (after each of the contributions) hypothesize about the propositions that are shared by the participants, but there is no way the analyst can reconstruct the entire set of propositions each of the interlocutors takes into account at any given time during the interaction. Further, the exact amount of information in an interaction which gets added to the set of presuppositions (the propositions taken for granted and shared by the participants) is virtually indeterminable in that it is really difficult to predict which pieces of information the hearer is going to accept as beliefs. The cognitive context consists of beliefs of the interlocutor; the set of propositions Stalnaker suggests as the essence of context are actually propositions taken for granted or believed to be true. In interaction, not every string of information obtained via an assertive act is taken for granted by the interlocutors; in fact, assertion does not necessarily create knowledge. The hearer may not share the belief the speaker communicated, but respond in such a way as to signal that she understood or acknowledged the expression of the said belief.

Illocutionary acts are defined by the conventional effect they necessarily implement upon the uptake of the hearer. Uptake, on the other hand, is hearer-specific, which amounts to saying that there may well be a set of hearer-specific features that make up the procedure that hearer accepts as felicitous for that illocutionary act. Illocutionary acts occur in a social environment, they are grounded to a set of participants, in certain places, with certain relations and beliefs, with goals and ideas – that is, they necessarily have a context, a certain locus which bears a trace of their performance by incorporating the changes they operate on that social environment. The most salient feature of that environment is that it is dynamic and there would then be a certain degree of indeterminacy about it, to the point that a stable definition of context would be extremely impractical for the purpose of talking about illocutionary acts. The elusive notion of conventional procedure echoes in the notion of a dynamic and indeterminate context.

9.3. Summary of Part II

In this final section I will try to summarize the picture of the illocutionary act performance that emerged from my investigation in Part II.

A. Concerning illocutionary acts:

The lack of a proper definition of the notion of illocutionary act was remedied by the fact that the reconstruction of Austin's text yielded a workable definition. The reconstructed definition does not contradict the intuitive pre-theoretical ideas I had about using language in performing acts. Following Austin, I argued for the view that illocutionary acts are conventional acts that involve a conventional effect implemented upon the securing of uptake. They are a kind of social contract in that their essence is in arriving at a conjoint agreement by the participants upon the change in the interpersonal relations which is to be implemented by socially conditioned acts. From a methodological point of view, the discussion of uptake helped account for usual communicative behavior by acknowledging the role of the hearer (or the target of the act) in the realization of the social contract between the participants in the exchange. Speech act assignment involves hearer-specific felicity conditions – conventional procedure, entitlement, contextual features taken into account – which help focus the discussion of illocutionary act performance on the action component rather than on the linguistic component thereof. Such a conception of illocutionary acts is flexible enough to accommodate common occurrences in communication such as misunderstanding, negotiation, adjustment, rejection, etc., without involving linguistic competence in the discussion. It also breaks free of the assumption that the illocutionary act is the minimal unit of linguistic communication, since defective acts, rejected acts, infelicitous acts, aborted acts etc., are common in communication and assigning illocutionary act labels does not exhaust what communication is about.

B. Concerning assertion:

The definition of illocutionary act allows us to pinpoint the minimum requirements for a performance to qualify as being an illocutionary act. Assertion is an illocutionary act since it involves a special entitlement requirement on the part of the speaker and it has a conventional effect that is implemented after it is taken up by a hearer who does take up on it according to hearer-based conditions on conformity to the conventional procedure associated with it. The

conventional effect is what can be taken to be the distinctive characteristic of the illocutionary act of assertion. Abandoning propositions in our consideration of the illocutionary act of assertion eliminates the possibility for asserting to be a minimal ‘subatomic’ or primitive act which is found in virtually any declarative sentence any speaker may utter. It also successfully eliminates truth from the methodological explanation of illocutionary act performance.

What I have presented in Part II should not be mistaken for a theory of communication, or a theory of illocutionary acts. If analysis of what goes on in communication is what one is after, a theory of illocutionary acts can provide only insight into which socially accepted actions are performed with what kind of conventional effects redistributing commitments, obligations and so on. This is not a complete picture of communication. The discussion I conducted is not enough to be called a complete theory of illocutionary acts either, since a more thorough examination of the notion of context would be needed, along with a description of the conventional effects of different kinds of acts and a way to make up for the necessarily vague notion of conventional procedure involved in act performance. What I think this discussion can claim for itself is the description of the importance of the ideas that Austin had in considering our language use as performing actions and at least paving the way for a theory of illocutionary acts that incorporates most of Austin’s insights and escapes most of the criticism leveled at those, while being in tune with empirical facts and intuitions we have about how we communicate. Part III will take up on some residual problems and show that in the light of the notion of illocutionary acts I am advocating they do not arise.

Part III. Validating results (excursus)

Chapter 10: Strategic interaction: the social actor and managing the self

Austin's discussion of illocutionary acts amounts to accounting for one particular type of action that more often than not is done in the utterance of a string of language. That action does not exhaust everything that happens in interaction, as it is not supposed to, and that action does not succeed in explaining how we use the words that we use with the meanings we convey, as it is not its scope. What is the scope of that action is that it involves acting upon (and thus changing or influencing) our environment. Driving a nail through the wall or pulling the trigger to kill the donkey (to echo Austin 1962) is also acting upon and changing our environment, one could say. The environment that gets changed is actually our social environment: with the illocutionary acts performed roles and interrelations are altered, commitments and obligations are redistributed, and social environment is redefined. It is certainly not my aim to propose the way the theory of speech acts can be used in discourse analysis or in text analysis; it is my belief that it would be very difficult to do so since assignment of illocutionary act labels would not be sufficient to generate a picture of discourse that would be exhaustive and complete. The perlocutionary effects are also very important, so are the information transfer and the formation of beliefs by the participants in the exchange, but without any stable mechanism of relating illocutionary act labels to utterances one cannot expect to be able to suggest any plausible mechanism of perlocutionary effect ascription. Nonetheless, there are questions that need to be addressed concerning illocutionary act performance and uptake. It would be useful to suggest a way to account for situations that involve more than two participants and see how the illocutionary act comes off. The shaky boundaries between accepting or rejecting procedures (in validating the act) and criticizing and challenging successful acts can also provide some insight into how to accommodate the definition of illocutionary acts I am advocating to empirical cases. I will also undertake a brief overview of Austin's classification of illocutionary acts in the attempt to answer the question how many acts there are and whether we need taxonomies.

10.1. Managing the self

This part is concerned with tying up loose ends. Most prominently, it is about fitting the theoretical picture into a more realistic view of illocutionary act performance than the one painted by the solemn, almost sacred nature of the distribution of obligations and commitments by virtue of socially accepted procedure. Let me explain. The theoretical picture that emerged after the discussion conducted in Part II was the following: the speaker initiates an illocutionary act by invoking a conventional procedure striving to secure uptake on the part of the hearer; the hearer relies on his knowledge about the conventional practices accepted in his culture, on the locutionary act (if any) and on contextual features to understand which procedure is being invoked thus validating the act if the performance conforms to the hearer's idea of what the complete procedure is supposed to be (the hearer's brand of the felicity conditions is satisfied). The illocutionary acts that occur in discourse are by no means objectively identifiable for at least three reasons. First, a particular performance cannot be mapped onto the production of one locutionary act in a consistent manner. Second, the variation in the procedure requirements of the hearer may lead different hearers in a situation to assess the same utterance as being the performance of different illocutionary acts. Third, the hearer (and the speaker, for that matter) is not a disinterested participant in a regulated and stable exchange: she has her own aims, desires, wants, emotions, feelings, intentions, etc. by which the interpretation of reality (meanings, actions, intentions and what not) is affected. McHoul's notion of negotiation (McHoul 1987) falls at the right place in such a picture of act performing, where not only meaning gets negotiated, but also the commitment/ obligation/ etc. the speaker is willing to take upon himself or to impose on the hearer, that is which illocutionary act will be jointly accepted to be performed. This last point is especially valid for acts that Brown and Levinson call face threatening¹⁸² (1987:65). Two notions can be borrowed from the study of politeness: on record and off record strategies for act performance. These notions provide a way to account for the intuitive ideas of the link between the locutionary act and the illocutionary act of the speaker and the importance of uptake on the part of the hearer. The terms are explained by Brown and Levinson in the following way:

¹⁸² Brown and Levinson's study of politeness is a natural addition to the theory of speech acts as it can help account in greater detail for the way social actors navigate in their social environment, with their concern with face management and the link to linguistic expressions used to achieve that. I will sporadically refer to their study, but I will not attempt to spell out the exact way they are complementary.

An actor goes *on record* in doing an act A if it is clear to participants what communicative intention led the actor to do A (i.e. there is just one unambiguously attributable intention with which witnesses would concur). (...) In contrast, if an actor goes *off record* in doing A, then there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent. (Brown and Levinson 1987:68-69, emphasis in the original)

If we try to accommodate these descriptions for illocutionary act performance, the speaker will be performing an illocutionary act on record when it is unambiguously clear to the hearer which conventional procedure is being invoked by the speaker. For instance, when I say to you “I bet you five dollars that Polly-go-lightly will finish first”, the hearer will take my performance to be on record. And I will be performing the act off record if there is more than one possible illocutionary act procedure that I can be invoking in my performance. For example, I may say to you “There is a very interesting movie tonight at the Cineplex” and claim that I was aiming to inform you rather than invite you to go with me. I wish to emphasize that the identities of both speaker and hearer, the situation they are in and any additional knowledge is very much relevant for what actors can count as being performed on or off record. The latter example can be considered to be an on record invitation if the speaker is a person who does not like to impose on people on principle, or be considered as an on record informing if the speaker is somebody who is not likely to invite the hearer to the movies anyway. So the locutionary act is by no means the most prominent indication of the illocutionary act initiated by the speaker. Such considerations are relevant for asserting: off record assertions allow the speaker a way to undo or annul the conventional effect that is associated with them. Since words are the only objectively observable thing, it is a comfortable explanation for the preference (or insistence) of people to “hear the words”.

I already mentioned (chapter 8) the real life preference of “hearing the words”. This is a practical preference which comes to naturally resolve the potential problem of unlimited illocutionary act ascription. But this is only a practical preference that cannot carry over to every situation since tacit agreement, endorsement, entering into a contract, giving a blessing or what not are acts that come off in spite of this preference. Usually the “hearing the words” preference comes into play when there is doubt about the illocutionary act performance. Consider the following exchange from an animated movie:

(39) ‘Tell me Kuzko is dead. I need to hear these words.’

‘You need to hear these words exactly?’

The example involves a boss and an assistant discussing a task the assistant was supposed to do, namely, kill Kuzko. He could not do it, but he could not tell his boss he could not do it, leaving her to believe that he had done it. As soon as the boss came to doubt that he had complied with the task, she demanded that the assistant explicitly endorse the idea vested in those precise words. In that case the reluctance to vocalize an idea is interpreted as reluctance to endorse the idea as true/ correct or existent. We may tacitly agree to something or endorse something, but we cannot do so openly. The reasons for this most probably are moral (we cannot lie to a particular person); they may be strategic as well: not endorsing something explicitly means we cannot be legally charged. Remember when Tom Hagen refused to take Kay's letter to Michael for it could be used as proof that he knew Michael's whereabouts (*The Godfather*, Mario Puzo). While explicitly stating that nobody knew where Michael was, Tom Hagen explicitly says that his taking of the letter could be interpreted as him knowing Michael's whereabouts. Accepting the letter could be interpreted as compliance with the request of forwarding the letter to Michael, which in turn entails that Tom is aware of where to forward that letter to. Or rather, we can strategically take advantage of the fact that the lack of open disagreement can be confused with tacit agreement, although that we did not disagree openly does not necessarily mean that we (tacitly) agreed.

The doctrine of infelicities that was the basis of the discussion of speech acts distinguishes between the different way acts can be said to fail or to be infelicitous. Three big groups of infelicities can be distinguished in Austin's doctrine: invoking a procedure which does not exist, executing the procedure incompletely, and being insincere. The first kind of infelicity can be waved aside as it is unusual for speakers to create new forms of behavior on a whim. New forms of behavior are certainly created (but those have to do with redefining social roles or of the declarational kind of attempts, the success of which depends on the concessions the participants are willing to make.) Insincerity, as I argued above, is something that is taken into consideration by the participants in the interaction, but since it cannot invalidate the act, it is of no concern to me here. I will be concerned here with the second kind of infelicity, that of executing the procedure incompletely or incorrectly. From a methodological point of view it would be very difficult to pinpoint exactly which performance is a misexecution (since it is a breach of procedure that is involved in it) and which performance is taken up on, but criticized by the hearer on some other grounds. This question is particularly relevant for assertion, since the procedure for asserting is not easily specified. Closely related to this question is the question of rejecting the procedure vs. taking up on the act for what it is, but reacting negatively to it. In other words, how important the difference is

between taking up on the act, but refusing to abide by the illocutionary effect thereby implemented on the one hand, and not taking up on the act at all on the other. For orders the difference can be spelled in the following terms: if I do not believe you are entitled to order me, I reject the invocation of the procedure altogether, that is, I do not take you as having successfully ordered and I will not consider myself in any way bound by the illocutionary effect an order conventionally has. If I take up on the order, that is, I believe that you are entitled to give orders to me, but I feel a little rebellious, so I refuse to comply with the conventional effect the order has. My refusing to comply with the conventional effect does not invalidate the implementation of the said effect. In the former case, I am not liable to any sanctions that non-compliance with the order entails, in the latter case I am. The trouble is that the speaker issuing the order may have a different idea of her entitlement to issue orders to me, so in the former case a misunderstanding (or even conflict) can arise.

For asserting, the situation should be similar, but it is rather difficult to grasp if we consider cases of asserting which involve the verbatim expression of the object of our assertion, such as asserting that the Prime Minister discredited himself by saying “The Prime Minister discredited himself”. The mere fact that the hearer understands the meaning of the utterance used to perform the assertion stands in the way of appreciating all other things that can go wrong with the performance of the act itself. In performing the illocutionary act of asserting, the object of the assertion itself has less to do with the evaluation of the act performance than the judgment-expressing element, which is a function of the relation between the speaker and the object which the speaker passes judgment on. Recall the example that Sbisà (1992) gives in this respect: responses such as “you shouldn’t think” or “leave that to the pros” or anything else in that vein suggest that asserting was considered flawed in some crucial respect, namely that the hearer does not take the speaker to be entitled to make that assertion. Entitlement is found in the non-technical terms as credibility, authority, fairness and academic integrity. The basis of the assessment of entitlement is quite difficult to describe; the closest description could be that the hearer does not think that the speaker can authoritatively make judgments on that particular matter¹⁸³.

The second kind of situation can arise in cases in which the hearer does not believe the speaker’s assertion. Assessments of the kind “you’re wrong” or “it’s not true” or “it’s not possible” can be indications that even though the hearer took up on the act as being an act of assertion, she rejects the illocutionary effect or challenges the entitlement of the speaker to

¹⁸³ The principle of the freedom of speech could be a problem in this respect. This principle means that we can express whatever judgments we may see fit (with appropriate limitations).

make this kind of judgment. To complicate matters, our insight of usual communication is in a way ‘contaminated’ by considerations of politeness. It would be considered impolite to ignore one’s interlocutor’s illocutionary acts, or to act as if no (felicitous) act was performed, as in rejecting the procedure altogether. From the point of view of politeness, it might be said that confrontation is avoided whenever possible and, even in reports on acts, participants prefer the neutral and non-committing verb “say” instead of using a verb which bears a distinct illocutionary tint.

Not every string of discourse that is produced by speakers constitutes a fully and completely executed illocutionary act: a lot of the cases are just about negotiating which acts are being initiated, corrections on procedure, and other adjustments before any move towards redefining the social roles and obligations is undertaken. It is common for speakers to say in response to people performing particular acts “You cannot do this!” or “You don’t have to do this!”, or comment on their own performance by saying “I was not criticizing you, I was merely stating a fact”. A comment such as the latter can give rise to the idea that asserting (stating) is less important or having less implication on the situation than other acts. I suggest that comments on one’s own illocutionary act are attempts at minimizing the harm (the cost, in politeness theory) to the interlocutor’s face after an evaluation of the impact of the act on the situation. My assertion does not engage the responsibility of the hearer in any way (as it involves my - the speaker’s - responsibility), whereas criticizing does – it puts the hearer in a position of responsibility and makes him liable to blame.

Of course, those are mere speculations on what happens in discourse and they do not necessarily have a place in the methodological investigation of how illocutionary acts come to be. Rejecting assertions has nothing to do with how truthful they are: we may believe that the Prime Minister has indeed discredited himself, and yet not take the speaker as having asserted so because we may believe that the speaker cannot possibly be in a position to comment on that either because she does not follow politics, because she has herself done the same thing as the Prime Minister which she does not think is discrediting her in any way, or because we know for a fact that this is a judgment her father expressed which she merely parrots. In real life conversations, the default assumption applies that attempted acts are successful in that they do not invoke procedures unduly or incompletely.

One thing we need to comment on is what it is that makes the performance of an act an assertion. Just as with the Searlean description of asserting, it seems that asserting just to express a particular belief to be not enough to call this an act. The Austinian approach gives the speaker more of a motivation to perform the act: it is actively making oneself responsible

for the assertion-product. The ostensibility of the act alone makes it a rare occurrence in discourse: stating a position, an opinion or a belief would be among the typical performances of the act, especially in political discourse, in academic discourse (asserting the position of the researcher), giving a statement to the police, before court etc.

There is one very salient aspect of the role of the hearer in the illocutionary act performance, namely that the hearer is not an objective assessor or judge of the performances initiated by the speaker. The hearer is a participant in the situation with all that this entails: she has her own aims, motives, beliefs, desires, emotions, feelings etc. This can blur the difference between acts that are taken up but criticized and acts that are rejected completely. To illustrate this point, I offer the following exchange between two women. Some specifications on the situation: Zhenya flies to St Petersburg by mistake; his fiancée Galia is distressed because she believes Zhenya has deserted her to join Nadia – which is not true. Nadia – a complete stranger to both Galia and her fiancé, who has her own problems at the time – tries to explain the misunderstanding and that it is not Zhenya's fault. Galia regards the explanation to be too emotional to be completely devoid of any personal interest and suspects Nadia is lying to her. She then asks:

(40) Galia: Are you married?

Nadia: What does it have to do with anything?

Galia: So, you are not married. So, he did fly to St Petersburg to celebrate New Year's with you. (*The irony of fate or enjoy your bath*)

The utterance of "Are you married" looks for confirmation that Nadia has a personal interest in the affair and that is why she lied badly, so that Galia gets the lie and gives up on Zhenya. Nadia's utterance in response indicates her unwillingness to answer a personal question: it can be said that she rejects the question by rejecting the proper invocation of the procedure – Galia is not entitled to ask such a personal question. Galia does not take the question procedure to have been rejected, and interprets Nadia's utterance to be an attempt to avoid having to answer the question because the answer would confirm Galia's suspicion. In terms of conventional effects, Nadia does not hold herself to be required to provide an answer, but Galia does so hold her. Another way of construing that is that Galia does not hold her required to answer either, but Nadia's not providing an answer is meaningful to Galia nonetheless. The outcome of the dialogue would not differ regardless of whether or not Nadia is married: she can react in the same way in case she is married and does not think the

question appropriate and in case she is not married and does not think the question appropriate (in the scene involved she is not, in fact, married).

To sum up, the hearer's rejecting the proper invocation of the procedure does not necessarily involve a communicative failure of some kind. A communicative failure may, and will typically involve a situation where the locutionary act of the speaker together with any contextually available indications make it impossible for the hearer to grasp which illocutionary act is being attempted and, subsequently, make it impossible for her to judge whether the procedure is properly and completely executed. Or, in the other case, the hearer may understand the locutionary act, recognize the intention of the speaker to do act A, and still reject the procedure as improperly invoked or executed. In both cases there is no uptake, but in the former case, the hearer cannot pass judgment on either the procedure or the performance because it is not sufficiently clear which procedure is being invoked, whereas in the latter case, the hearer finds fault with the procedure or the performance.

Austin's idea that illocutionary acts have an audience (or a target, as I called it in previous chapters) does not simply mean that acts need to be 'witnessed' when being executed by a hearer in her capacity of a 'validator' of the act. The target of the act is the person (or persons) the act is intended for. The methodological description of illocutionary acts does not really need this specification since it is the target audience that defines the performance of the act, and any other participants in the speech situation, such as overhearers or bystanders¹⁸⁴, may simply seem to be not relevant for our investigation. The important thing is that the conception of illocutionary acts I endorse allows for multiple hearers who can potentially grasp a certain performance to be different illocutionary acts. Despite later additions of background in Searle's theory, his original ideas do not take the hearer to be any kind of a factor in the act-ascription, since all any hearer does is recognize the intention to produce that illocutionary act by recognizing the IFIDs associated with that performance. It is still quite interesting to point out that in situations involving multiple participants, every participant can take up on the illocutionary act performed with quite various results. Consider the following situation. Joey gets on stage to congratulate the bride and the groom for their wedding by toasting them:

(41) I look back to our memories together. There were some happy memories (*laughs*), some sad memories (*sniffles, suddenly on the verge of tears*), - I am so sorry

¹⁸⁴ The terms come originally from Goffman (1981). Levinson (1988) offers a detailed analysis and improvement on the participant roles. My remarks on participants concern merely the way illocutionary acts are taken up and provide a way the theory of illocutionary acts can be used in analyzing discourse.

- and some scared memories (*reacts as if startled*). But I'll always be their friend; their friend who can speak in various dialects and is willing to do partial nudity. To the happy couple! (*Friends*)

Leaving aside the question as to whether or not toasting is an illocutionary act (at the least, congratulating is), the act performed by Joey has a clear target – the guests at the wedding reception, who are invited to join in the celebration of the happy couple. The guests are the formal target of the act and they will probably take up on it as being a toast in celebration, albeit a very unusually phrased one. They will probably not reject the procedure, but they may form the belief that Joey lacks the social skills to perform this kind of social action. The bride and groom are also targets in the sense that they are supposed to be praised in the toast for they are the cause of the celebration. The bride is likely to dismiss the toast as inappropriately executed and will probably consider it void or improperly executed (the attempt misfired, as far as the bride is concerned). The groom, mostly due to his strong ties of friendship with Joey and his overboard sense of humor, will appreciate the ingenious albeit gross way Joey has of advertising his acting skills; he will probably take the tirade to be a quirky and funny toast. The Broadway director who is one of the guests at the reception is the ultimate target of Joey's act of advertizing his acting skills. He is likely to judge the toast to be improperly executed and will be stunned by Joey's lack of tact in using the celebration to pursue his own goals. The desired outcome of the performance for Joey is the realization on the part of the Broadway director of the acting skills and the creative way of displaying them. The formality of going through the procedure of congratulating/ toasting/ celebrating his friends' wedding is a means to that end, and if he is taken to have successfully toasted them, it is an additional bonus – after all, Joey was truthful in his sentiment (they have been friends for a long time and the ties are strong).

The implications of such a situation are that different participants will have formed a different idea of what transpired in the conversational situation. Incidentally, this reminds one of yet another common behavior: often different witnesses have completely different accounts of what happened on a particular occasion. The fact that illocutionary act performance is evaluated by hearers on the basis of hearer-specific conditions makes this the most natural consequence for a situation involving multiple participants. Some speakers may take advantage of that and use this very phenomenon to achieve different effects on different hearers. This phenomenon should not be understood as the ultimate argument in favor of the vague and all-permissive conventional procedure that increases the feeling of arbitrariness in

the performance of illocutionary acts. On the contrary, illocutionary acts are socially accepted contracts (procedures) the performance of which should be stable enough to be recognizable and to make sense to the participants. Once again, it is the involvement of the hearer as a subjective participant with her own motives, desires, wishes and goals that influences the uptake and yields these results. This is the reason why as far as any putative situation is concerned it is often very difficult to distinguish a defective or void act from a rejected act. Interestingly enough, this methodological problem emphasizes the important role the hearer has in the performance of illocutionary acts.

10.2. On classifying acts

The question of the distinctions between the different illocutionary acts is generally associated with a question of a taxonomy of acts which classifies the acts according to (a set of) objective criteria, usually different features that acts share. At least such is the basis of Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Austin's last lecture tentatively proposes a list of illocutionary acts (1962:148), which has a purely descriptive function in the sense that it constitutes an inventory of the things we do through language. The five classes or families of acts Austin suggested are criticized primarily for the lack of a consistent principle of classification, the fact the many of the verbs listed do not satisfy the definition given for the class, the heterogeneity within the classes, the overlapping between the classes, the fact that not all of the verbs listed are illocutionary verbs, and the persistent confusion between acts and verbs (Searle 1979:12). I have already argued that Searle's alternative taxonomy commits the same offense regarding the confusion between acts and verbs and actually presents a classification coinciding with the semantic differences between verbs (calling them 'illocutionary' does not change the fact that such a classification does not really say anything about acts), the internal heterogeneity is found in the classes of declarations and expressives, the overlap can be traced to the class of directives and commissives sharing the same direction of fit. Taken separately, the classes of representatives and directives in Searle's taxonomy are the only ones that raise less questions as to the consistency of the classificatory criterion used than the other acts (remember the empty slots in the classification grid). The features that Searle enumerates as underlying the classification are themselves an intricate mix of an attempt at objective constitutive criteria (as the illocutionary point and the direction of fit) and criteria that are at best defined as (contextual) features that help the hearer determine which

act is being performed (the text-editing criterion, the co-text), but not features that intrinsically define those acts.

A classification of illocutionary acts in the sense I am advocating here (let me call it the neo-Austinian view) would actually provide a snap picture of the social practices for a particular society at a given time. A case can be made in favor of the idea that illocutionary acts evolve and become obsolete – challenging somebody to a duel or asking a person about their intentions are no longer part of the accepted practices in our society. The exact mechanism of that change may be found in the development and change in values that underlie the group's organization. If a certain practice occurs in a society, its specificity cannot be predicted by taxonomic principles as the ones I described earlier (chapter 4) in the way morphological variation in biology can. Linguistic changes may or may not capture the relevant changes in the practices, which means that what are called 'illocutionary verbs' may not exist for a particular act. They probably do, though, be it for the sheer convenience of being able to refer to the act using language. The principle or criterion of such a classification could be either the conventional procedure involved in the production of the act or the conventional effect that is implemented upon the successful performance of the act. If we take the former to be the basis for a classification, we run into several difficulties that I will try to present below. First, the conventional procedure mentioned is not an objective and observable criterion in the sense in which a ritual can be objectively observed in the performance of the act. There are acts that involve a special ritual that can be observed, but deviation from the sequence of actions (and/ or utterances) is possible and often admissible in actual performances. The degree of formality of the situation (or solemnity, in the use of Akinaso 1985) can influence the completeness of the procedure. For other acts, the procedure is invoked in the sense that there are elements or clues in the situation to indicate to the hearer which procedure is supposed to apply in that case: imagine a general who tells a subordinate in a pleasant tone "You will be cleaning the den today". Could the subordinate later claim that the general was only making a prediction, which did not in any way engage the subordinate's compliance with the action predicted? The procedure for ordering applies in this case, which is the only procedure that can make sense of the situation (the relation between the interlocutors being of importance in this case). Second, for different acts the procedure may involve different things such as the relation between speaker and hearer, the relevant domain of application of the act (interpersonal relations, institutional organization, legal relations, social relations, matters of the public self of the speaker, etc.), echoing the necessarily undetermined scope of the procedure itself and accommodating practices to different kinds of

situations. It would be impossible to pick out a feature and claim that all acts have it in one or another realization without a strong feeling of arbitrariness. Consider classifying acts according to the speaker-hearer relation: one class could be grouped according to the speaker's authority, another – because of a special institution-based status of the speaker, yet another – because the speaker's authority is not relevant at all for the acts concerned (as in betting, for example). In my discussion of the condition of entitlement, I emphasized that entitlement is hearer-specific in the sense that the hearer's personal brand of understanding is involved in the decision of whether or not the speaker is entitled to perform that particular act. Uptake equally depends on the good will of the hearer (for lack of a better term): imagine a very shy person trying to make an offer to go to the movies. Unable to formulate the offer clearly out of embarrassment, she stutters, starts over, uses the vaguest phrases possible so that to cushion the blow of the rejection, etc. A charitable hearer will take up on the offer despite the incompleteness of the performance, whereas an uncharitable hearer can make as if nothing was said to him¹⁸⁵. The fact that different performances can be realizations of the same act type makes the procedure not suitable for a taxonomy basis.

Conventional effect seems to be stable in the following sense: act A has the conventional effect E, then if one successfully performs act A, the conventional effect E is implemented. Such a consideration would make talking about illocutionary verbs, performative verbs, syntactic realizations, and what not, completely pointless. In order to make the inventory of the illocutionary acts, one would have to look into the practices of a social group and try to outline the conventional effects those practices implement. One way of sorting out the acts would be to distinguish between acts that impute an obligation on the speaker, those that involve an obligation of the hearer and so on. Austin's taxonomy can be partially vindicated because it seems to fit (albeit in a very loose way) such effect-oriented classes. I suggest a way to read those classes below:

Class	Austin's description (1962)	Conventional effect
Verdictives	giving a verdict or a finding	lay down a ruling
Exercitives	exercising of powers, rights or influence	change the status of the hearer and/ or assign an obligation on the hearer
Commissives	undertaking and espousals	assign an obligation to the speaker
Behabitives	attitudes and social behavior	redefine social relations
Expositives	how our utterances fit into the discourse	regulate discourse

¹⁸⁵ Grice's Cooperative Principle exemplifies this very trait.

It is fairly obvious that the classes are not devised to be strictly rigorous, nor do they contain verbs that can be happily associated with an illocutionary act, which once again argues in favor of abandoning any dealings with verbs. The specification of the conventional effects is also very much an approximation, bordering on arbitrary vagueness. Intuitively, the class of verdictives, exercitives and commissives illustrate very well what kind of phenomenon is under scrutiny: the acts involved are conventional in more than one sense and they create new states of affairs effectively redefining the social environment. The class of behabitives is also intuitively socially important, involving ritualized acts that are performed for their own sake, tending to the face or the public self of the participants although no distribution of obligations or commitments is involved. The description of the last class of expositives does not fit the conception of illocutionary acts I am advocating and it emphasizes distinctions that are not illocutionary (socially conditioned or act-like), although it is conceivable that some of the verbs listed do refer to illocutionary acts, as ‘state’ or ‘testify’. It would be part of the taxonomic effort to sort out how to refer to acts (we may preserve the term ‘illocutionary verb’, with the specification that it does not mean that syntactical expressions that are commanded by that unit of the lexicon are in any way relevant for the classification itself; just to be on the safe side, one should probably try to use the gerundive form to refer to the acts) and which of those doings really are of the illocutionary kind. It could be the case that illocutionary acts would turn out to be members of more than one class: asserting seems to fit in the exercitives as well as commissives; it could also be argued that it could be part of the class of behabitives in that it certainly serves the purpose of building up the public self of the speaker. Pure types (I mean to say such acts that can only be assigned to one class) would not really exist, because if we lay down a rule, it entails a change in the social role of the participant(s) and all kinds of obligations and commitments are attached to any such a change; in a very general way, all illocutionary acts redefine and regulate social relations, to the point that every taxonomy seems arbitrary. Consider declaring independence: it is clearly not a natural act, as it is socially conditioned; if successful, it involves a change in the social status of the participants (more importantly the speaker); it consists in the self-assignment of rights in a very curious way (the success of the act makes the speaker to become in a position to claim those rights, but at the moment of initiation, the speaker is not entitled to assign those rights to herself); the act is successful if the hearer ratifies it (acknowledges it in the sense that the hearer validates the act by consenting it was successful; again, consenting that the act was successful makes the act successful); and finally, apparently not all the hearers (or audience) need to take up on the act for its success (the act would be

successfully performed for some hearers, but not for others, which in turn will have different implications on the social reality). I fail to see which class would be best suited to collect the declaration of independence, as in a way it fits into exercitives and verdictives¹⁸⁶.

However loose it may be, a classification of illocutionary acts could be useful in applying the theory of illocutionary acts to discourse analysis, if only to clarify the nomenclature of illocutionary acts to be used in illocutionary act ascription. The effort should be directed not only at providing a list of illocutionary acts, but also at the description of the illocutionary effect they implement upon their successful performance. There are a lot of acts that we assume to be illocutionary, though it is really difficult to account for their illocutionary effect. Defective and rejected acts have an impact on the conversational situation just as successful ones do, providing either additional information about the participants that can help in the interpretation of subsequent contributions.

¹⁸⁶ Incidentally, Searle's class of declaration has little practical use. It is a collect-all heterogenic class that does not provide any theoretical information that can be used in describing acts. I have argued the point in great detail in chapter 4.

Chapter 11: Indirect speech acts¹⁸⁷: Searle's mistaken assumptions and conversational implicature

Recall the tentative outline of an illocutionary act performance that I suggested in Part I: there is a manifestation which may or may not be conventional, a target and a non-natural effect. The essence of the illocutionary act is in the social contract the speaker proposes to undertake and the hearer takes up on, which necessarily brings about a special conventional effect. If the performance of the illocutionary act involves a locutionary act, then it is the manifestation or the means by which the social contract is undertaken. I already pointed out that the words we use in the locutionary act may refer directly to the social contract we propose to undertake, or in a less direct manner. Thus, explicit performative utterances name explicitly the illocutionary act attempted by the speaker, whereas other utterances do not contain such an explicit reference – they were originally called implicit performative utterances. I also argued that nowhere in Austin's brand of theory do we find a restriction as to how we can fix one particular illocutionary act to a particular utterance or even whether this is at all possible. I further wish to suggest that as far as communication is concerned, the particular illocutionary act the speaker aims at is not the only thing the hearer can gather from the utterance which could qualify as information about the speech situation¹⁸⁸. In this chapter I will concentrate on implicit performative utterances and I will discuss the plausibility of the term "indirect speech act" according to the reconstructed definition of the illocutionary act from Austin's lectures. It is my belief that such a notion is empty and/ or not compatible with the concept of illocutionary act I am advocating. Further, I wish to argue that the notion of indirect speech act that Searle devised (Searle 1975) is in conflict with his own conception of illocutionary acts.

The term "indirect act" took a separate standing in Searle's 1975 paper prompted by questions such as the following: how it is possible for the speaker to say one thing and to mean that plus something else and how it is possible for the hearer to understand the indirect act when the sentence he hears and understands means something else. In Searle's understanding, the indirect act is the act of uttering a sentence the literal meaning of which

¹⁸⁷ In the introduction of his 1979 *Expression and Meaning*, Searle explicitly claims that the collection of essays represents a "continuation of a line of research begun in *Speech Acts* (1969)" (1979:vii). His discussion of indirect acts is then intended to be conducted within the same theoretical framework, the one developed in 1969.

¹⁸⁸ As I argued in the previous chapter, strategic interaction, politeness, manipulation etc. are all cases to the point that there is a lot going on in interaction that goes beyond illocutionary acts.

diverges from the speaker-meaning by either containing illocutionary force indicating devices that point to a different act, and/ or having a propositional content that is not the content of the intended act. The indirect act then comprises a primary act, which is the act intended by the speaker, and a secondary act, which is the literal act performed by the speaker. According to Searle, the hearer is able to calculate the primary illocutionary act by means of an inference process.

There is only one mention of indirect acts in Austin's lectures, but it depicts a somewhat different conception of indirect acts:

(...) When one performative utterance is used as an indirect means to perform another act. Thus in the example: 'By saying "I bid three clubs" I informed him that I had no diamonds', I use the performative 'I bid three clubs' as an indirect means to informing him (which is also an illocutionary act). (Austin 1962:129)

There are two important elements in this paragraph: first, the mention of performative utterances and the phrase "indirect means" of performing the act. First, I believe that "performative utterance" in this paragraph is intended to mean "explicit performative utterance". This reading alone is compatible with Austin's overall ideas about illocutionary acts. Since primary (or implicit) performatives do not contain any unambiguous reference to an illocutionary act, only an utterance which unequivocally refers to a particular illocutionary act can be used as indirect means to perform another act. Such a point cannot be made about implicit performatives because they do not inherently carry any explicit mention of the illocutionary act the speaker may be performing in uttering them.

Second, the phrase "indirect means" of performing the act takes us closer to our insight about acts and does not have the awkward ring of the idea of indirect action. It is also important to emphasize that the act performed by the speaker in uttering "I bid three clubs" is performed felicitously for any hearer who took up on it. This example is peculiar in that the act of informing the hearer that I do not have any diamonds cannot be performed by either an explicit or an implicit performative since it is not a valid move in the game (be it bridge or some other game)¹⁸⁹. It would be impossible to evoke a conventional procedure of informing that one has no diamonds in the game. Further, it cannot be calculated by the inference process devised by Searle.

¹⁸⁹ If the speaker is taken up on his bid, he is bound to honor the contract for three clubs. For comparison, if the request for the salt phrased "Could you pass the salt" gets a mere "yes" for an answer, the hearer will not count as having reacted in the appropriate way.

11.1. Searle's indirect acts¹⁹⁰

The very distinction of a literal act and a primary (or intended) act within the mechanism of performing indirect acts is quite disturbing. This distinction presupposes that there is a literal illocutionary force contained in the sentence uttered by the speaker. Indeed, the notion of indirect illocutionary act only makes sense if one subscribes to the notion of literal illocutionary force, as noted by Levinson (1983: 263). Indirections seem to split neatly into two groups: conventionalized indirect acts (or idiomatic acts, such as “Can you pass the salt?”) and free indirect acts for which there is no systematic idiomatic use. Conventionalized indirect acts provide a “short-circuited” grasping of the intended illocutionary act in that the literal act is not even registered by the hearer. Free indirections work in a different way – both the literal act and the primary act are important for the speech situation and both are added to the conversational ground. One of the leading ideas in Searle's doctrine is that illocutionary force indicating devices carry the burden of signaling the force of the utterance. Indirections contain IFIDs that point to the literal illocutionary act; the primary illocutionary act is inferred by the hearer by an inference process. However, regardless of the way the hearer grasps the primary (or intended) act, it is still an illocutionary act, so it must possess the same characteristics that the literal act possesses and have the same conditions of satisfaction (or felicity conditions). Let me spell this assumption below:

Assumption A: a request (an assertion, an apology or what not) must have the same conditions of satisfaction and the same characteristics regardless of the way it is performed (literally or indirectly).

As it turns out, this assumption is flouted for Searle's indirect acts.

The important thing about the inference process is that the speaker intends to perform the primary indirect act and intends the hearer to recognize that the act has been performed. The hearer recognizes the act relying on mutually shared background information (linguistic and nonlinguistic), on general powers of rationality and inference. In a 10-step inference process, the hearer is able to reach a necessarily probabilistic conclusion as to the primary illocutionary act that has been performed. There are two purposes to this inferential strategy: first, establish that the primary illocutionary point departs from the literal illocutionary point,

¹⁹⁰ A large part of this material was presented at the Beyond the Words conference in Leipzig, May 2010.

and second, establish what the primary illocutionary point is (Searle 1975:64). To take a sample case:

(42) “Welcome, Sam,” he said. “Sorry to get you out of bed.” U1

The deuce he was sorry! “I was on leave,” I answered shortly. He was the Old Man, but leave is leave – and damned seldom! U2

“Ah, but you still are. We’re going on a vacation.” (Robert Heinlein, *The Puppet Masters*)

According to Searle, the hearer of U2 goes through the following steps of reasoning:

Step 1: I have made an apology to Y for pulling him out of bed so early in the morning and, in response, he made a statement to the effect that he was on leave (facts about the conversation).

Step 2: I assume Y is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his remark is intended to be relevant (principles of conversational cooperation).

Step 3: A relevant response must be one of acceptance, rejection, challenging, etc. (speech act theory)

Step 4: But his literal utterance was not one of these, and so was not a relevant response (inference from Steps 1 and 3).

Step 5: Therefore, he probably means more than he says. Assuming that his remark is relevant, his primary illocutionary point must differ from his literal one (inference from Steps 2 and 4).

Step 6: I know that when a person is on leave they do not appreciate being called to work and I know that getting a person out of bed when they are on leave can make them angry and resentful (background information).

Step 7: Therefore, Y is probably not happy with my intruding on his leave (inference from Step 6).

Step 8: The acceptance of an apology must consist of conditions that have to do with Y being not that angry (theory of speech acts?)

Step 9: Therefore, I know that he has said something that has the consequence that he probably cannot consistently accept the apology (inference from Steps 1, 7 and 8).

Step 10: Therefore, his primary illocutionary point is probably to reject the apology (inference from Steps 5 and 9).

The inference process presented does not take into account all the relevant facts about the conversation, although these can be included in Step 1:

Step 1': I, the boss of Y, have made an apology for pulling him out of bed so early in the morning and, in response, he made a statement to the effect that he was on leave, a fact I am familiar with (facts about the conversation).

The speaker of U2 must have a reason to state that; he must have thought that this information has a new salience for the particular speech situation. There are several things that the speaker could (even simultaneously) mean to convey:

- You should not be apologizing for getting me out of bed, but for ruining my leave.
- I resent the fact that I am made to work when I should be on leave.
- I expect to be properly compensated for being made to work when I am on leave.
- I do not think that your apology is sincere.
- You should be thankful I showed up at all.

The motivation for the act could be a larger concern with face (Goffman 1969). The speaker of U2 has to decide what is appropriate to say explicitly to the boss and what is not. The decision he makes is quite transparent. He does not think it appropriate to correct the boss, to blame him for the ruined leave, to express resentment about the job, to bargain for compensation, to reject his apology, or to accuse him of insincerity. But if these acts are not performed explicitly, according to the indirect speech act doctrine they are performed in an implicit way. According to the assumption (A), the indirect acts take effect in the same way direct acts do. That is, a rejection of the apology, either direct or indirect, should be taken up by the hearer in the same way. Hence, the acts deemed inappropriate to be explicitly performed are still performed by the speaker. The politeness explanation seems to be undermined if we consider the following: politeness concerns the choice of words that are uttered in the conversation according to the conversational aims and in such a way as not to be harmful to the interlocutor's face. Deliberately breaching the demand for relevance (the statement in response to the apology) may be harmful to the interlocutor's face; furthermore, an act deliberately breaching the demand for relevance used to perform a rejection of the apology (or one of the other candidate acts described above) may also be harmful to the interlocutor's face. Perhaps the indirect act has the advantage of offering the interlocutor a

possibility to opt out of taking up on the act or to make as if he opted out. How much is the cost to face in such situations is open to investigation.

Recall one of the definitions of illocutionary act that I reconstructed from Searle's exposition:

Illocutionary act I (definition I): to perform an illocutionary act is to utter a meaningful sentence, which is the realization of underlying constitutive rules for the type of act being performed. The illocutionary effect is the hearer's understanding of the sentence uttered.

This definition is derived from several assumptions that underlie Searle's conception of illocutionary acts, among which the Meaning Claim and the IFID Axiom are prominent. These assumptions seem to be satisfied for the secondary or literal act¹⁹¹, but not for the primary or indirect act. In order to be able to claim that the primary act is indeed an illocutionary act, we need to let go of the assumption that illocutionary distinctions are semantic distinctions mirrored in syntactical distinctions. This assumption, however, lies at the core of the entire conception of Searle of language meaning and illocutionary acts. It would then turn out that the primary act does not satisfy the definition for the illocutionary act: granted, the act appears to be performed in the uttering of a meaningful sentence, but that sentence is not a realization of the underlying constitutive rules for the act performed.

Step 10 of the inference process proposes a probabilistic conclusion as to the primary illocutionary act the speaker intends to perform. It is intuitively plausible to conceive of the intended act in probabilistic terms. Speakers often use vague language, the actual speaker meaning is subject to negotiations, and misunderstanding is possible. Methodologically speaking, if the primary act does not satisfy the definition of illocutionary act provided above, the primary act may not be an illocutionary act at all, for it is neither performed according to the predictions of the theory, nor taken up according to the theoretical postulates. Let me lay it all down: the speaker intends to perform A and she performs act A in performing act B. The hearer takes up on act B, and, relying on mutually shared background information, general rationality and inference, *establishes that the illocutionary point of act A departs from the literal illocutionary point of act B*, and then proceeds to establish what the illocutionary point of act A probably is. The conclusion reached may not be right, or may not account exhaustively for the intended meaning of the speaker. If act A is intended by the speaker, then failure to take up on it translates as failure of communication. According to speech act theory,

¹⁹¹ If we leave aside the overall implausibility of the doctrine, which I argued for in Part I.

the illocutionary act is performed when the speaker intends to produce in the hearer the knowledge that the utterance is to count as a performance of act A by means of recognition of that intention. If the hearer does not take up on this intention, he cannot count the utterance to be the performance of A. In fact, the hearer cannot hold the speaker to be committed to any intention whatsoever, for the probabilistic conclusion can only provide a vague hint as to the communicative intentions of the speaker. So, the primary illocutionary act does not correspond to the (outline of a) description of illocutionary act provided in Searle's exposition.

The actual illocutionary force or the primary illocutionary act is not realized in the literal meaning of the sentence uttered, nor does it give rise to syntactical distinctions. Actually, the only thing the inference process allows the hearer to calculate is the probable illocutionary point of the primary illocutionary act. The illocutionary point of the act is but one component of illocutionary force and cannot operate enough restrictions to be of any practical use in inferences, or theoretical use in methodological investigations. The term "illocutionary point" is not defined in Searle's exposition other than saying it is the most important defining and distinguishing feature of illocutions. Recall that the point of assertives is to commit the speaker to something's being the case. Now, in order to distinguish between different acts in the class of assertives, we need other features. A suggestion differs from assertion in the degree of strength of the illocutionary point. But questions and requests are both members of the class of directives, so by definition they have the same illocutionary point. If it is the illocutionary point that the inference process helps to recover, it would not be very interesting for the analyst, for the secondary literal act and the primary act in the utterance of "Could you pass the salt" have the same illocutionary point. Either Searle himself used loose language or he actually meant more by the term than he led us to believe.

The inference process is triggered by a discrepancy between the expectations of the participants in the conversation and the actual input: the speech act does not seem to fit the predictions of the theory. According to Searle's inference process, primary illocutionary acts seem to be quite like implicatures: they are calculable, cancellable and not detachable. The explanation Searle provides is the following: when the interlocutor, in response to the offer "Let's go to the movies", answers

(43) "I have to study for an exam",

the conclusion we reach following the inference process must be probabilistic, because the interlocutor may go on to say

(44) “But let’s go to the movies anyhow”.

But even if we assume this is correct, the probabilistic conclusion does not allow us to calculate the primary act of the utterance of “I have to study for an exam” in the second case. What is the speaker’s motivation to mention the exam at all? This utterance still does not accept or reject the offer, so it must still be indirect, for nothing in the speech situation warrants merely providing information on the scholarly obligations of the speaker. The way the utterance is constructed, the speaker assumes that the second act (“let’s go to the movies anyhow”) somehow contrasts the first (“I have to study for an exam”). It could be so assumed if the first act was (also) expressing doubt as to the advisability of wasting time at the movies when there is studying to be done. But in this case we take the primary act to be determined by both context and co-text (including other acts performed by the speaker), but the act itself is assumed to be taken up by the audience with the relevant commitments of the speaker. I believe that in such a case there is no need to lay down the requirement for the probabilistic conclusion. With regard to this example, there are two possibilities of inference: 1) the hearer infers that the speaker means to reject the offer after hearing “I have to study for an exam”; the second sentence of the speaker makes the hearer to correct the inference he made before. 2) If the hearer was to wait for the utterance to be complete (that is, he hears “I have to study for an exam, but let’s go to the movies anyhow”), the inference he is bound to make is that the speaker had some doubts about accepting the offer because she has to study for an exam, but accepted it anyway. That is, the inference concerning the first part of the utterance will differ depending on what information (available from the overall conversational setting, some background information about people, movies, studying for exams etc) is taken into account by the hearer. Also, nothing in Searle’s explanations allows us to pinpoint when the inference process takes place: every time after an illocutionary act is performed or every time an utterance is uttered. Unfortunately, our guess is intuitive even concerning the boundaries of a ‘literal’ (or direct) illocutionary act.

Suppose the speaker in the exam example uttered (45) instead of (43) or (44):

(45) I have to study for an exam, so sure, let’s go!

Which of the inference process steps would be different: these concerning the shared ground, or the information about the speaker? For the particular speaker in (45) the fact that there is some studying to be done is the very reason for accepting the invitation, maybe driven by the desire to postpone an unpleasant occupation.

There is a methodological discrepancy here: primary indirect acts must take effect as full illocutionary acts and at the same time be cancellable. The feature of cancellability is to be understood in two different ways: first, indirect acts are contextually cancelled; that is, the speaker may use the same literal sentence to perform just the literal act, and second, indirect acts may be explicitly cancelled (Vanderveken 1997:327). The former reading tends to suggest that there is one (or more) particular indirect act attached to the performance of a particular literal act. Although such a view could be defended with regard to the idiomatic speech acts, it is difficult to be defended in the case of free indirections – no particular indirect act can be associated with the literal act of “I was on leave” displayed in (42). The latter reading was already disputed above.

Indirect (or non literal, to use Vanderveken’s term) acts are also not detachable: if the speaker were to utter another sentence expressing the same literal act, he would also have meant to perform the indirect act attached to it. There is nothing in the literal act that guarantees the performance of the indirect act, for no restrictions can be placed on the type of literal act that can be used to perform the particular indirect act. If we take the example under (1), the primary act of rejecting the apology can be performed by a whole range of literal acts that are neither synonymous, nor belonging to the same illocutionary act type: “Getting out of bed was not the problem”, “Do you always call people that early?”, “I love getting up that early, especially when I am on leave” (ironically).

Let me consider another example:

(46) (Mary hesitates at the hatch of the spaceship.) “It’s dark in there,” she quavered.

(U1)

“It’s perfectly safe,” (U2) the second young man said. “We’ve been taking sightseers through all day. Come on, lady.” (R. Heinlein, *The Puppet Masters*)

In the case of this exchange, the indirect illocutionary act candidate is not preceded by a speech act, so speech act theory predictions cannot get us past step 3, because nothing in speech act theory prevents Mary from making a statement about the inside of the spaceship. It is certainly not an irrelevant contribution at the stage at which it occurs (as she is preparing to go inside, she comments on one aspect of the spaceship which strikes her as unusual/ disturbing/ scary or what not). The inference process is blocked at the beginning and the hearer cannot even figure out whether or not the act is indirect.

Step 1: Y made a statement to the effect that it was dark in there (facts about the conversation).

Step 2: I assume Y is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore her remark is intended to be relevant (principles of conversational cooperation).

Step 3: A relevant response must be one of ... (speech act theory)

It is the entire situation that provides clues to the linguistic behavior. On the other hand, her interlocutor's remark constitutes a relevant answer to an act of expressing fear or uncertainty in the security of the ship; that is, the interlocutor has taken up more than was actually said. This reaction is prompted by the remark itself, but also by Mary's behavior at the hatch. If we take the utterance marked by (U2), it will turn out that the interlocutor took up Mary's statement to be about her doubts about the safety of the spaceship. It would not be the illocutionary point of the act which would be different, but Searlean propositional content. The inference process would have to be adapted to work with utterances which display the literal expression of a secondary act's content so that the primary act's content could be calculated, and all this assuming that we figure out a way to get past step 3 in the inference process. The predictions of Searlean theory of speech acts cannot allow us to calculate which differences in propositional content are significant enough for us to look for a primary act with a different content. Mary from our example above could just be commenting on the darkness of the spaceship in a purely innocent manner, meaning to say exactly what she did and no more. It may be that the young guide inferred the hesitation and the fear from the combined fact that, say, Mary is a frail-looking woman and the manner of her delivering the utterance.

The fact that the inference process is supposed to be about calculating the illocutionary point of the primary act is the reason why it fails to be a sound theoretical construct. The literal question and the intended request performed in uttering "Can you pass the salt" have at least the same propositional content of "you + passing the salt", not to mention the same illocutionary point. Differentiating between the different directives is not something that Searle tackles in the course of his explanations. Mary's literal statement that it is dark inside the spaceship and her intended statement that it might not be safe inside differ in the propositional content, but the literal statement with its literally expressed propositional content is neither irrelevant, nor breaching any expectations that speech acts theory may predict for the interlocutors. In short, there is nothing in Mary's utterance at the point at which it occurs that could set off the need for the inferential process in the first place. But if we take

Mary's utterance to be the performance of the literal statement that it is dark inside, then the utterance of the young guide would appear to be slightly missing the point and could be perceived as being a little off.

There seem to be several problems with the notion of indirect illocutionary acts. First, they seem to breach the requirements of Searle's own theory in that they do not conform to his understanding of illocutionary acts (especially definition 1 quoted above) and they do not seem to adhere to the core principles. They do not conform to the later notion either (definition 2): they do not seem to conform to a realization of an intention to represent a particular intentional state with a particular propositional content, for that would also require the ability of the speaker to form a meaningful sentence¹⁹². It may be objected that indirect illocutionary acts form a separate group of illocutions which do not rely on IFIDs to express the constitutive rules that will have semantic and syntactical realizations, but rely instead on recognition of the illocutionary point that is calculated following a discrepancy in the speech act sequence predicted by the theory. In fact, that these acts can be performed in the utterance of a sentence that does not have that meaning is precisely why they are so interesting. Part of the pre-theoretical explanation of Searle consists in observing that acts of the conventionalized kind do not have the directive force as part of their meaning (Searle 1979:39)¹⁹³. Another assumption stems out of the objection, namely that speech act theory is capable of predicting speech act sequences. Apart some pairs of acts, there seems to be no evidence whatsoever that any theory of speech acts can do such a thing. Generally, we expect a question to be followed by an answer, an apology - by acceptance or rejection of it, a greeting is expected to follow another greeting. But once those pairs of acts are performed, the theory is unable to predict what kind of illocutionary act may follow. In fact, this is precisely why I doubt that even those general expectations can be credited to be speech act theory predictions. Differences in the speech situation, the aims of the participants in the exchange, etc. can create different expectations on the kind of speech act that might follow in the sequence. Neither the speech situation (in other words, context), nor the aims of the participants in the exchange are part of the considerations of Searle's theory.

Second, the inference process seems to be more about calculating speaker meaning since it fails to provide enough for us to calculate an indirect act A which has the same force as the literal act B but a different propositional content. Indeed, illocutionary acts can be thought to be a part of the speaker meaning (the speaker does mean them, in the sense that she

¹⁹² Both definitions and their explication can be found in chapter 3.

¹⁹³ Incidentally, this is contrary to both the Meaning Claim and Axiom 1.

means to perform them/ she does so deliberately). Illocutionary acts are not part of the utterance meaning (or the meaning of the sentence that is uttered in their performance). Leaving aside the problem that the way the literal force is understood is nowhere to be found in the theory suggested by Searle, the crucial step of the inferential process seems to rely on the assumption that speakers and hearers possess theoretical knowledge about illocutionary points and have inferential strategies of “finding out when primary illocutionary points differ from literal illocutionary points” (Searle 1979:34), because without such strategies, they would have no way of understanding indirect illocutionary acts. One additional idea seems to stem from the inference process, namely that no more than two illocutionary acts – one literal and one indirect – can be performed in the utterance of a sentence, because the inference process only allows us to calculate one primary illocutionary point. The result of such a restriction could be a misrepresentation of what actually happens in the conversational exchange. Let me illustrate that point by the following example:

(47)-a “Sir, the temperature is dropping too rapidly.”

(47)-b “Yes and my friend is out in it.” (*Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*)

The exchange is between Han Solo (utterance (47)-b), who is getting ready to go outside to look for Luke Skywalker, and an officer of the rebel army (utterance (47)-a). According to Searle’s explanation, the literal (conventional) force of (47)-a is a statement about the weather conditions. The inference process could help account for the act of informing the hearer of a state of affairs. The fact that this exchange takes place on a snow-covered arctic-type planet that requires special protective gear makes the inferred act to be unsatisfactory as to the purpose of the exchange. A warning would be a more satisfactory explanation, and/ or advice not to go out. Han Solo’s reply only makes sense if he took the previous act to be all of those things: he acknowledged the piece of information as valuable, but reaffirmed his intention to go out and look for Luke because of that very information. Plausible reports on the act of the officer could range from “He informed Solo that the weather conditions were not suitable for a search”, through “He warned Solo that the weather conditions were life-threatening” and “He suggested that Solo postpone the search”.

If we take the judge – defendant example from chapter 4, it is even more difficult to decide which illocutionary act is literally performed and how we are supposed to calculate the other acts via that inference process: is the testimony literal (but what would be our warrant to claim that, since IFIDs only point to a representative, or assertion), is the accusation literal, is

the defense literal, is the answer literal (assuming that answer qualifies to be an illocutionary act)?

Third, two aspects are usually kept separate in dealings with speech acts: the production and the perception of illocutionary acts. In Searle's explication of illocutionary acts, the main focus is on the production end: using IFIDs in the appropriate circumstances, uttering sentences that are the syntactic realizations of the semantic differences that are operated upon by the different illocutionary acts. The perception end, or the way the hearer grasps the performance of the illocutionary act is limited to the recognition of a Gricean type reflexive communicative intention usually by knowing the rules for the distribution of the IFIDs. The inference process devised for the recognition of the indirect acts focuses on the perception end of the performance of illocutionary acts, which is not in keeping with the previous discussion of illocutionary acts. My guess for the emphasis on the hearer's reasoning and understanding of the illocutionary acts performed is that indirections seem to breach the original illocutionary act generation mechanism. There are no IFIDs to speak of and the production end seems more problematic, especially for the group of free indirect acts. The only indication we are provided with (and this commenting on idiomatic expressions such as "Can you pass the salt") is that the speaker intends to perform the indirect act and intends to produce the knowledge in the hearer that the act is performed by getting him to recognize his intention to produce it (Searle 1969:30). This is referred to in passing in Searle 1975:60. The property of non-detachability can be construed as being one way out of this discrepancy. Postulating the property of non-detachability helps avoid the problem of explaining why the IFIDs play no role in the performance of the indirect acts. This is why it is so important that the inference process be explained. Unfortunately, speech act theory is not capable of predicting future speech acts that the interlocutor may be performing and in the absence of an integrated notion of context in Searle's theory this capability is even smaller, as I showed by the example (46). The linguistic utterances that can be used to perform indirections of the second group (free indirections) are virtually unlimited in the way they can be understood or interpreted in a speech situation. Whereas in conventionalized indirections there may be a certain pattern of generating indirections, such as enquiring about the abilities of the hearer to do A can accomplish a request for A, in free indirections there is seldom a recognizable or repeatable pattern. We may tend to substitute reasons for acts or consequences for warnings, or explanations for reports in real life exchanges, but such an observation can hardly be used as an indication of a pattern. This shift in the explanation provided by Searle's theory for the performance of the literal acts on the one hand and the indirect acts on the other is evidence in

favor of the fact that the theory is incapable of providing a unified account of illocutionary acts.

Fourth, the notional apparatus built up around the theory of speech acts with regard to indirect speech acts contains a highly questionable notion of literal force. It is not a notion that appears for the needs of the analysis of indirect speech acts. Literal force is something Searle subscribes to in the early stages of theorizing speech acts. Illocutionary acts are a special kind of meaning which is realized conventionally in the semantics of the language. So illocutionary acts depend on conventional realizations of the underlying rules - illocutionary force indicating devices. Understanding that an illocutionary act is performed consists in understanding the sentence issued. Therefore, literal force is conventionally contained in the literal meaning of the sentence issued. This is the paradigm for illocutionary act performance and the core of Searle's analysis of linguistic meaning. As was indicated, indirect acts do not conform to it, so Searle's theory is faced with two possibilities: either the initial analysis of illocutionary acts needs to be entirely revised or indirect acts are a separate phenomenon. Since the discussion of indirect acts does not seem to trigger any reconsideration of the initial analysis of illocutionary acts, the conclusion seems to be self-evident. Since Searle persists in calling those acts indirect illocutionary acts, the only achievement of that discussion was in blurring the theoretical tenets even more.

11.2. Austin's perspective

One thing seems to be in keeping with Searle's brand of theory and that would be the speaker's supremacy over the performed illocutionary acts, both literal and intended. The hearer is once more a passive observer whose role is to grasp intentions and to infer indirect acts, which are necessarily probabilistic precisely because the hearer is the one who should be adjusting to the speaker and it seems that the responsibility for this adjustment is the hearer's only, so that the conclusion about the indirect act can be modified if need be. The way the probabilistic conclusion is resolved did not get to be a part of the exposition on indirection. The idea of the speaker securing uptake on the act she attempts to perform is completely lost in the indirection inference mechanism. Since for Searle it is enough for the speaker to utter the sentence with the appropriate intentions to have performed the illocutionary acts semantically conditioned by the IFIDs, the only explanatory burden left for the theory is the grasping of the indirect act. The entire theoretical construction of Searle's for indirections cannot work for the conception of illocutionary acts I reconstructed from Austin's writings.

The hearer and the speaker play an equally important role in the performance of the illocutionary act, as it is a matter of conjointly coming to an agreement on the kind of social contract that will operate a non-natural change on their interpersonal and/or social relations. The idea of a literal force is not compatible with the notion of illocutionary act I adopt: the essence of the illocutionary force is in the social contract operating conventional effects and ‘literal’ is not a qualification that can easily apply to that. Being a social contract, the illocutionary act is not contained in the linguistic utterance, nor does it underlie the semantic construction of the utterance. Meanings of expressions or utterances can be literal, but social contracts cannot be literal. The locutionary act may be literal, but the illocutionary act that is performed in the performance of the locutionary act cannot be described as being literal. There is nothing that can alert the hearer to look for an indirect illocutionary act since the speech act theory cannot predict the sequence of social contracts the speaker may intend to attempt and since the locutionary act does not and cannot determine (absolutely and unequivocally) the illocutionary act that can be performed in uttering it.

According to the notion of illocutionary acts I adopt, there is no such thing as an indirect act, so no indirect assertion to speak of. The two groups that can be distinguished based on superficial characteristics do not make any sense in the framework I am advocating. Each individual illocutionary act (or a cluster of acts) that is performed in any particular speech situation defined by the social interlocutors involved and the particular understanding of the procedures attached to the performance of the act and the goal that is being pursued is being taken up by the hearer in the same way regardless of the means that are used to secure the uptake. If misunderstanding occurs, it is a joined failure of the speaker and hearer because the speaker may not have done everything to secure the uptake and the hearer may not have tried very hard. The means used to perform the act are certainly important but they cannot give sufficient ground to separate the acts into two different groups of acts, direct and indirect. The fact that multiple illocutionary acts can be performed (taken up by the hearer) in the performance of one and the same locutionary act makes it pointless to even begin to distinguish between direct and indirect acts. If more than two acts are performed and taken up, then how should we account for the third act? Is the inference process going to be of much use in calculating an additional illocutionary point? Recall the judge – defendant exchange from chapter 4. The defendant’s saying “James stole that money, that’s what I have to say” is an answer, a defense, an accusation and testimony all at the same time. The acts are all taken up by the judge in that the conventional effects that are associated with them are all implemented and the defendant is certainly liable to all kinds of sanctions. For example, if the

judge did not take the contribution to be a proper or felicitous answer to the question, she could direct the defendant to rephrase or to warn him he would be punished for not following the court proceedings. If she did not take up the testimony, the defendant would not be liable to punishment for perjury; idem for the accusation, which calls for substantiation, and the defense which calls for facts that point to the impossibility of the defendant to have committed the crime. Political speech also provides ample information as to cases in which a lot more was taken up by the audience that was not even expected by the politician at the time of the illocution; that additional illocutionary acts were taken up by the audience can be seen by the fact that an explanation/ retraction/ even apology is required to set the record straight¹⁹⁴.

Explaining how illocutionary acts are perceived and produced is not part of the preoccupations of this study. I think it is safe to assume that the lack of an explicit and direct relation between the illocutionary act and the locutionary act in the performance of a speech act amounts to the claim that the number and the kind of illocutionary acts that can be performed in the utterance of a locutionary act is theoretically undetermined.

If we look at the examples from the view-point of Austin's notion of illocutionary act, we do not need to posit a different mechanism of recovering the intended force of an act that comes into existence by relying on completely different set of principles than the original description of the phenomenon would lead us to believe. The illocutionary acts come to be performed by relying on the same set of conditions of felicity as were suggested earlier: the speaker's performance is an illocutionary act of a particular type if it succeeds to evoke a (hearer-based notion of) conventional procedure conforming to that type and implements a conventional effect upon securing uptake. In the case of example (42), the speaker of U1 evokes a procedure for apologizing, which is taken up by the hearer in a certain way. The contextual features that will help the hearer of U1 grasp that it is an apology that the speaker is performing provide the hearer with enough reason to doubt that the speaker indeed possesses the required feelings, beliefs and intentions for the happy performance of the apology and thus is deemed to be an abuse (following Austin's doctrine of infelicities). Abuses are valid illocutionary acts, so the act is validated. The speaker of U2 chooses to answer "shortly", so that the most pertinent element gets emphasized: resentment about his ruined leave. The question whether or not the apology is accepted is not relevant for either of

¹⁹⁴ It might be objected that those are acts that the politician did not intend to perform; but that need not be the case. The politician may have intended (or meant, in the large sense) the very act that he will later retract for whatever reasons. Intentions are quite difficult to prove.

the two participants. It suffices to both interlocutors that there is no indication that the act of apology was not followed by a demand for clarification (which would indicate failure of uptake). In a curious way, if the act is not challenged in any way, then it can be assumed that the act was taken up. The fact that Sam did not formally accept the apology can give the hearer clues to understanding the act he is performing. Apologizing consists in acknowledging the responsibility of the apologizer for the offense committed and trying to make amends. Accepting the apology is closely linked with the notion of forgiving, that is, officially lifting the burden of responsibility for the offense from the apologizer, or making as if the forgiver will no more consider the apologizer to be responsible. Rejecting or not accepting the apology formally will have the effect of not releasing the apologizer from the burden of the responsibility. There is one more reason for Sam's focus on the ruined leave: as the apology was phrased, it only indicated the boss' willingness to acknowledge the early call as being the offense committed. The offense was somewhat different from the point of view of Sam: it was not the early call that got him upset and resentful, but the ruined leave. Is it still OK to regard the boss' apology as taken up by Sam, and so performed? It really does not matter. Boss may think he is responsible for the offense of pulling Sam out of bed early, which is not rejected by Sam: nothing in the way he answers to his boss can indicate that he does not still take the boss to be responsible for the early call which took him out of bed. The correction on the offense that Sam puts forth is deflected by the boss (recall he answers "you still are"). Multiple complementary readings are compatible with Austin's notion of illocutionary act. The importance of the type of illocutionary act which is taken up to be performed lies within the conventional effect it operates on the overall speech situation and how that effect will affect the participants. I see two clear advantages of Austin's notion of illocutionary acts: first, it provides a unified account of illocutionary acts, and second, it provides a more realistic account (if not exhaustive) of what is going on in conversations.

We can still talk about indirect means of performing an illocutionary act, just as we sometimes speak of conventional means of performing them, or verbal means of performing them, or yet non-verbal means of performing them. Such a qualification does not have anything to do with the way we conceive of illocutionary acts and it can only make sense if there is an explicit reference to another illocutionary act that we happen to perform in the utterance of that particular sentence. The only way this is possible is if we use an explicit performative utterance to perform act A and by the same drill we perform act B.

11.3. Indirect assertion

Austin's conception of illocutionary acts would make the notion of indirect assertion void, too: since there are no indirect acts, there is no indirect assertion. Still, in Searle's terms, an indirect assertion would be undistinguishable from conversational implicature: both the indirect assertion and the implicature are cancellable, calculable, and non-detachable. This confusion was a potential source of great embarrassment for Searle's theory: his assertion involved undertaking to the effect that *p* represented a true state of affairs, so the indirect assertion (once properly inferred and understood) should also be about committing to the truth of *p*. Grice's notion of implicature contrasted with assertion precisely because the speaker does not want to be held committed to the proposition that *p*. So what we had was the possibility that what seems to be the same empirical phenomenon having the same characteristics to be instances of two different theoretical constructs. I guess the crux of the problem should be whether asserting should involve the uttering of *p*. The question deserves a closer scrutiny for the following reason: it will help distinguish assertion in the illocutionary use of the term from pragmatically implicated content, namely conversational implicature. I will suggest a tentative way out of this problem in what remains of this chapter.

Before I propose my comments, I will consider another example:

(48) Janice: 'A little bird told me you hated me.'

Joey: 'I did not say 'hate', I was very careful about that.'

Janice: 'That you wanted to rip off your arm so that you have something to throw at me.'

Joey: 'And you got hate from that?!' (*Friends*)

It is quite clear that even avoiding an explicit reference to an idea/ a person/ a thing or what not does not always succeed in letting the speaker "off the hook". The idea of the second speaker's hating the first speaker (or disliking very intensely) is inferred from the words that he actually utters. The original hearer took up on that idea of intense disliking and so the speaker is taken to be responsible for the act as it was taken up.

I already argued for the impossibility of relating the performance of one locutionary act to the performance of one illocutionary act. The locutionary act is (ideally) constructed by the speaker in such a way as to secure the uptake of the hearer in the best possible way. It does not make sense for Austin's theory of illocutionary acts to postulate the uttering of a proposition as a necessary condition of asserting: since the locutionary act is only there to

account for instances of verbal performances. In one use, the term “assertion” can be taken to refer to the act-product; that is, to the overall speech act performed by a particular person on a particular occasion and properly taken up by the audience after which that person is bound by the conventional effects of the said act. It is not merely a string of information that is referred to. In another use, the term “assertion” can refer to the act of asserting, which in turn picks out that non-material non-physical action we do that will bind us to a particular conventional effect. Neither of these necessarily involves the uttering of *p*. The object of the assertion – or what the assertion is about – may be implied or otherwise arrived at by the hearer. Since the illocutionary act is really about the social contract undertaken by the speaker, the inferred content can give enough ground to the hearer to take the speaker as performing an assertion to that effect. Not every case of implicated content can give rise to illocutionary uptake, as the felicity conditions come into play to allow the hearer to come to entertain the idea that the speaker is attempting to perform that illocutionary act. What sets the illocutionary act of assertion apart from pragmatically implicated content is precisely that Gricean implicature is about meaning (a special kind of speaker-meaning), which is not conventional in any way, whereas illocutionary act of assertion is about a special kind of social contract, which is conventional. Illocutionary acts are not about information, but about (non-natural) conventional effects.

Chapter 12: Explicit performatives

One final issue will be the focus of this chapter: that of explicit performatives. Sometimes illocutionary acts are performed in the uttering of sentences like those in (49), (50) and (51):

(49) I order you to leave.

(50) I bet you 5 dollars that Polly-go-lightly will win the race.

(51) I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*.

We can use those sentences to perform the illocutionary acts of ordering, betting and christening a ship respectively. After Austin's failed attempts to discover a grammatical criterion to set these sentences apart, many a philosopher tried to explain what those sentences were and how they worked. Explaining how performatives work became such an important step in decoding what people do with words that it came to be considered as a litmus as to the explicative capacity of any theory of speech acts. It seems curious that philosophers should focus on how explicit performatives work since they contain a verb that explicitly names the kind of act the speaker is engaged in, and not, say, on how implicit performatives work, which do not contain an explicit indication of the act performed. Non-verbal acts present an even greater puzzle, since no linguistic sign is available for the hearer to guide her in her interpretative effort. It seems to me that the more explicit one's communication is, the more effort the speaker seems to be putting in the task of securing the uptake of the hearer. That is, the speaker will opt for the explicit performative when there is need to minimize the misunderstanding margin for the hearer. Needless to say, the choice of the speaker to use an explicit performative utterance does not automatically guarantee the felicitous performance of the act.

Actually, if we adopt Austin's notion of illocutionary act, the puzzle of how explicit performatives work becomes so ridiculously superfluous, that it is even a wonder why it came to be considered a puzzle in the first place. I will explain: since illocutionary acts are conventional acts in that they invoke a conventional procedure and produce a conventional effect upon uptake, an explicit reference to the type of illocutionary act is generally enough secure the uptake of the hearer, provided that all the (hearer-dependent) felicity conditions are deemed to be satisfied from the hearer's view-point. That is, my uttering the explicit performative of "I order you to go and fetch the umbrella" will succeed in performing the

illocutionary act of ordering you to fetch the umbrella if you consider (as I seem to) that I am in the position to issue orders to you. My uttering of the performative “I swear to serve the Master of the Precious” will be taken to be a promise if you consider it to be in keeping with your understanding of pledges and promises. The lack of a grammatical criterion to set these sentences apart together with a rejection of the notion of literal force makes the question of how explicit performatives work unnecessary. Still, it may be useful to emphasize some relevant characteristics of explicit performatives which are emblematic for the overall conception of illocutionary action.

Performative utterances or sentences were initially supposed to form a separate class of utterances or sentences, in which explicit performatives were the most explicit form. They have two very important characteristics:

- A. Explicit performatives are those sentences that are not used to describe anything or state anything; as such, they are not true or false but felicitous or infelicitous.
- B. The uttering of a performative sentence is (part of) the doing of the action. (Austin 1962:5)

The action which is done in the utterance of a performative sentence is later called an illocutionary act: a special kind of conventional act bound by a conventional effect implemented upon uptake of the hearer. The explicit performative contains a “highly significant and unambiguous expression such as ‘I bet’, ‘I promise’, ‘I bequeath’ – an expression very commonly naming the act” (Austin 1962:32) performed in making the utterance.

I will present two alternative accounts of how explicit performatives work: Bach and Harnish’s account and the one proposed by Searle (1989), which has been dubbed the declaratory analysis (Vanderveken and Kubo 2002:7). I believe these accounts fail because of their reliance on a different notion of illocutionary act – from Austin’s and from each other – and a residual reliance on surface properties of sentences.

12.1. Performatives are statements, too

The basic thesis defended by Bach (1975, and later by Bach and Harnish 1979) is that Austin’s idea that performative utterances do not describe or state anything is wrong. The position can be summarized like this: performative utterances are “both doings and statings” (Bach 1975:229).

Uttering a performative sentence is to do what one is stating one is doing; indeed, that is what makes the statement true. (Bach 1975:229)

The peculiar thing about the introduction of the thesis is that no arguments are offered to explain why the explicit performative is also a statement, other than the fact that it happens to have the declarative grammatical form. Further, explicit performatives are a kind of self-verifying statements, that is, they are true in virtue of being made. I will call such a stance a descriptivist analysis. There are two issues that I find particularly pertinent in regards to the analysis suggested by Bach and Harnish: first, taking explicit performatives to be both statements and some other act named by the verb in that special form yields a very peculiar conception of statements based solely on the surface properties of the sentence. It would follow that either two different conceptions of statement (assertion) exist in the plethora of illocutionary acts, or, if we support a unified account of assertion that the illocutionary act of assertion is an illocutionary non-entity. Second, it seems counter-intuitive to consider explicit performatives to be standardized indirections. Such a position is just as misleading about the nature of illocutionary acts and the way they are enacted as saying that it is the meaning of the sentence that makes the performative an order, a bet, etc. In their understanding, it is the recognition of the communicative intention which is made manifest in the explicit performative utterance that makes the explicit performative what it is. To be even more accurate, it is the recognition of the intention to perform the act named by the verb that is at the heart of the illocutionary act success. The discrepancy between the recognition of the communicative intention to state “I order you to leave” and the intention to order is not even discussed by the authors. Apparently, the intention to state is recognized by virtue of the declarative form of the sentence that is uttered. I presume that if we had the implicit performative “Go!” to analyze, it would contain recognition of the intention to order in virtue of the form of the sentence, having the imperative syntax.

Bach's notion of a performative utterance is quite different from Austin's. In uttering a performative, the speaker does two things: she orders (promises, asks etc) and asserts that she orders (promises, asks). The speaker succeeds in giving the order (in promising, in asking) because of the assertion she makes. The performative then does not have a truth value being an order (a promise etc), but it is true being an assertion and is verified by its utterance.

In uttering (49) the speaker makes a literal assertion that she orders, a necessarily true assertion, for it is verified by its use, and she succeeds in ordering because the assertion that she orders is true. The utterance then is governed by the assertive force, which guarantees that

the utterance contains an illocutionary force explicitly signified. The act of ordering is then indirect. This conclusion seems counterintuitive for it implies that performatives are standardized formulae that accomplish indirectly the act denoted by the performative verb. Bach and Harnish (1979:206) reject the idea that the performative verb is an illocutionary force indicator, so there must be another element in performative utterances that makes it possible for certain verbs to be used performatively. This element is not identified by Bach and Harnish, though in their explanation there are many allusions to this mysterious element¹⁹⁵:

We have not yet explained why an utterance like "I order you to leave" is a performative. To do this is (...) to show what has to be the case for such an utterance *to count as an order*. (1979:208, my emphasis)

Their inference process is an artificial explanation subject to *petitio principii*.

1. He is saying "I order you to leave".
2. He is stating that he is ordering me to leave.
3. If his statement is true, then he must be ordering me to leave.
4. If he is ordering me to leave, it must be his utterance that constitutes the order (what else could it be?)
5. Presumably, he is speaking the truth.
6. Therefore, in stating that he is ordering me to leave, he is ordering me to leave.

First, note that if we were to substitute the verb "state" in the inference process with the verb "say" or "speak", the explanative value of the inference process remains the same: logical incoherence notwithstanding, the process puts forth a very general idea of the hearer's awareness that the speaker is engaged in communicating something to her. Second, the inference does not deal with acts in the illocutionary act perspective, at least not in the way Austin understands the term. As it is, the inference process depicts a very loose description of how the hearer construes the meaning of the sentence she hears. Neither the order nor the statement is in any way significant as being 'doings' of the speaker. Interestingly enough, the order is essentially a communicative act in Bach and Harnish's understanding, that is no extra-linguistic institutions are necessary for the order to come into existence, but all that is required is that the speaker succeeds in communicating to the hearer his intention to order.

¹⁹⁵ It cannot be convention, for the authors deny its applicability to communicative acts such as ordering, for instance.

Following Grice, they maintain that the communicative intention is fulfilled by being recognized, so not only does the speaker intend to do the act, but he also intends that his intention to do the act is recognized. While this is valuable insight into the way communication comes into being, it is not nearly enough to account for the way illocutionary acts are produced. If we apply Austin's notion of illocutionary acts to the inference process proposed it would appear that the inference process does not succeed to explain the performance of the illocutionary act: there is no mention whatsoever of the compliance to the conventional procedure for ordering. Expressing an attitude is not enough to do the act. Step 2 is utter nonsense from the point of view of Austin's theory.

Third, the argument is constructed on the assumption that the utterance "I order you to leave" is a statement. Without this postulate, the hearer cannot infer 2 from 1. Logically speaking, inference 2 can be made only if the initial utterance was "I state that I order you to leave"¹⁹⁶. In fact, if the hearer understands the utterance of "I order you to leave" as an assertion that the speaker orders him to leave, the hearer most likely does not understand what assertion is and is probably unaware what an order is either. Waving aside the fact that it would be difficult to construct a situation in which the hearer would be interpreting the statement of "I order you to leave" to infer the order (however one may wish to postulate the short-circuited standardized indirection mechanism of calculating the actual force), the act of asserting that one orders would only communicate the intention to state (or assert) that one is. The truth of the assertion does not make the act true since the assertion can only be evaluated against an externally existing state of affairs. The statement of "I order you to leave" would not be illustrative of something performed at the same time in the way "I now beat two eggs" would be illustrative of the action of beating two eggs at the time of the utterance. The order being enacted by the very utterance, postulating that the order is constituted by the truth of the statement that one is ordering constitutes a vicious circularity. Further, even the statement that is supposedly performed in the utterance of "I order you to leave" does not quite satisfy the description of that act provided by Bach and Harnish in their theory of 1979. The propositional attitude expressed is that of a belief that *p*; a belief that *p* does not carry the presumption of truthfulness, as seems to be required for the assertion that one orders to ensure that the order is understood. So, unless the authors introduce a different kind of assertion, according to their own treatment of assertions, the analysis goes like this:

¹⁹⁶ Strictly speaking, inference 2 should contain the reported form of the initial utterance "He is stating that he orders me to leave". If a performative is somewhat confusing, then a constative sentence clears up the point: the utterance of "I run" is reported by "He is stating that he runs" and not by "He is stating that he is running" (F. Nicoloff, personal communication).

S is saying that $\vdash$ (he orders me to leave)

if S is speaking literally, S is expressing the belief that he orders me to leave.

One cannot assume that the speaker is telling the truth because he asserts something. Assertion implies the speaker's belief that p is true, not the truth of p . For the analysis Bach and Harnish propose it is essential to have a guarantee for the truth of the assertion.

What is more, Bach and Harnish adhere to the idea that the full force of explicit performatives cannot be made explicit. By using a performative one expresses but a part of the force.

If the utterance is both an order and a statement, then its full force is not made explicit by "I order". But that it is an order is made explicit, and that, of course, is the point of using the performative formula. (Bach and Harnish, 1979:206)

This conception amounts to saying that explicit performatives are indirect. If a performative is an order and an assertion, "primarily the first, secondarily the second", how does the hearer work that out? The utterance of "I order you to leave" expresses explicitly an indirect and hidden act, while constitutes a direct assertion that cannot be fully expressed. The contradiction in the conception is evident.

In a footnote Bach indicates another means to derive the assertive force of performatives: if utterances that Austin formerly qualified as constatives are performatives in the sense that they perform illocutionary acts, and if performatives prefixed with "I state" have truth value, then explicit performatives all have truth value. I seriously doubt that Austin would have endorsed such a view. The idea that performative utterances are not true or false is preserved for statements and assertions in the sense that those utterances would be the operative element in the process of asserting (stating) or in the doing of the action. Once an action is completed, its product (or the result) can be assessed as being true or false (and this does not include the performative prefix "I state" or "I assert"). Not once in his lectures does Austin mention that performatives that are used to state or assert something are truth-evaluable. That note made by Bach succeeds in creating an additional difficulty for his own analysis of performatives, much like the one faced by the performative hypothesis¹⁹⁷. Consider (52):

(52) I state that the earth is flat.

¹⁹⁷ Also, see Levinson 1983:251-252.

It is an explicit assertion that earth is flat. (52) has a truth value because the proposition denotes a state of affairs that can be evaluated in terms of truth value. Following the analysis above, this performative does not make the force of the utterance fully explicit: granted, there is an assertion made by the speaker in virtue of the declarative form of the sentence and there is another assertion, namely that the earth is flat, which is explicitly referred to in the first assertion. I will try to run the inference process as Bach did for ordering:

1. He is saying “I state that the earth is flat”.
2. He is stating that he is stating that the earth is flat.
3. If his statement is true, then he must be stating that the earth is flat.
4. If he is stating that the earth is flat, it must be his utterance that constitutes the statement (what else could it be?)
5. Presumably, he is speaking the truth.
6. Therefore, in stating that he is stating that the earth is flat, he is stating that the earth is flat.

The inference process presented does not seem to have any explanative power whatsoever. In a nutshell, what this inferential process seems to tell us is that the speaker succeeds in making a false assertion by making a true assertion. It is clear, though, that the assumption that explicit performatives are statements first and then something else involves a notion of asserting (or stating) which is not illocutionary in any way.

Bach and Harnish maintain that illocutionary acts come in two varieties – communicative acts (such as the assertion and the order already described) and conventional acts. Conventional acts are those acts that require an extra-linguistic institution in order to come into existence. Let me run the inferential process for a typical conventional act, that of pronouncing a couple married:

1. He is saying “I now pronounce you husband and wife”.
2. He is stating that he is pronouncing us husband and wife.
3. If his statement is true, then he must be pronouncing us husband and wife.
4. If he is pronouncing us to be husband and wife, it must be his utterance that constitutes the pronouncing (what else could it be?)
5. Presumably, he is speaking the truth.
6. Therefore, in stating that he is pronouncing us husband and wife, he is pronouncing us husband and wife.

It is not evident from the way both inferential processes, of marrying and of ordering, are phrased that they require fundamentally different realities in order to come into being. It is not evident why marrying is taken to refer to an extra-linguistic institution, namely the institution of marriage, but ordering does not refer to an institution of ordering. It is certainly not a linguistic matter that one person can be entitled to give orders, whereas other persons are not. If I ask myself which people can successfully order to me to do A, the answer is not going to be “whatever person utters “I order you to do A”. Thus, authority, or entitlement, to perform a particular action is not conditioned by language and cannot only be sustained by reflexive communicative intentions. A random person saying “I order you to do A” to me can at most succeed to communicate that she takes herself to be entitled, empowered or authorized to issue orders to me. She will not, however, succeed in ordering. Likewise, asserting is much more than communicating beliefs – communicating beliefs would not count as an illocutionary act in Austin’s understanding of the term.

Taking explicit performatives to be standardized indirections makes the claim that illocutionary forces are encoded in the syntactical type by means of encoding propositional attitudes. The statement thus understood indirectly gives rise to the order.

12.2. Declaratory analysis

Searle came to be interested in explicit performative utterances in asking the following question: why people can order by saying “I order you to leave the room” and promise by saying “I promise to come and see you”, but people cannot fry an egg by saying “I fry an egg” and fix the roof by saying “I fix the roof”.

The notion of performative takes a makeover in Searle’s approach to it: even though it is a term taken from Austin’s tradition, Searle expresses the claim that both distinctions that Austin was toying with in his lectures, the performative-constative distinction and the distinction between implicit and explicit performatives, did not work. The former distinction collapses because admitting assertions and statements to be illocutionary acts was admitting that performatives can be statements and assertions; Austin would then be forced to conclude that every sentence was a performative, which in Searle’s mind would make the notion of performative useless. I do not think this claim is plausible. Austin clearly perceived that his initial distinction between performatives and constatives was in danger of collapsing, but it was not because of the performatives. In fact, constatives seemed to exhibit some of the features that were thought to belong to the realm of performatives. The bulk of the features

isolated in the first place by Austin for performatives were not rejected nor doubted in any way, namely that the essence of the performative is to be doing an illocutionary act (Austin 1962:131). The distinction was finally reassessed in the terms that the phenomenon we are interested in talking about performatives is that of illocutionary act; constatives, on the other hand, picks out the locutionary act involved.

The latter distinction (implicit versus explicit performatives) is not sound according to Searle because in order to preserve the notion of performatives and escape the unhappy conclusion presented in the former distinction, there is need to redefine the notion of performative. In the sense that Searle understands performatives, an utterance of “I order you to leave” is a performative because it explicitly names the act that is thereby performed, but an utterance of “Leave!” is not a performative, even though it is a performance. Remember that an utterance of “Leave!” was described by Austin to be an implicit performative. So a performative sentence is a “sentence whose literal utterance in appropriate circumstances constitutes the performance of an illocutionary act named by an expression in that very sentence in virtue of the occurrence of that expression” (Searle 1989:540). The performative utterance would be an utterance of a performative sentence token. Needless to say, the fact that the dichotomy between implicit (or primary) and explicit performatives survives the “sea-change” as Austin phrases it (1962:149) is indication enough to the main feature of performativity – that a special kind of act is thereby performed.

The discussion Searle conducts in his paper “How performatives work” attempts to answer several questions that make up the performative puzzle and I will quote them here:

1. Performative utterances are performances of the act named by the main verb (or other performative expression) in the sentence.
2. Performative utterances are self-guaranteeing in the sense that the speaker cannot be lying, insincere, or mistaken about the type of act being performed (even though he or she can be lying, insincere, or mistaken about the propositional content of the speech act and he or she can fail to perform the act if certain other conditions fail to obtain.)
3. Performative utterances achieve features (1) and (2) in virtue of the literal meaning of the sentence uttered.
4. They characteristically take “hereby” as in “I hereby promise that I will come and see you.”

5. The verbs in question are not ambiguous between a performative and a non-performative sense, even though the verbs have both performative and non-performative literal occurrences.
6. Performative utterances are not indirect speech acts, in the sense in which an utterance of “Can you pass the salt?” can be an indirect speech act of requesting the hearer to pass the salt.
7. Performative utterances in virtue of their literal meaning are statements with truth values.
8. Performative sentences typically use an unusual tense in English, the so called “dramatic present.”

According to Searle, it is because of the second condition that accounts of performatives as assertions fails. The explanation he offers as an argument against Bach and Harnish’s account would be that the performance of the assertion cannot guarantee its own truth (however we conceive of that truth). In a reconciliatory move, Searle makes the attempt to combine what he calls “two apparently absolutely inconsistent” ideas, namely Austin’s insistence that performatives are not statements on the one hand, and all (explicit) performatives are statements on the other. The fact that it is even possible to consider any kind of reconciliation of these two claims is highly significant for the different conceptions not only of performatives, but also of illocutionary acts. First, the redefinition of the notion of performatives entails that every performative is an illocutionary act, but not every illocutionary act is a performative. What prompted Austin to claim that performatives are not statements was the very fact that an illocutionary act is performed in the utterance of a performative, which basically establishes that performatives are actions of a particular kind, namely of the illocutionary kind and as such they are not statements. It is important to emphasize in this regard that in this sense the performance of an assertion is also an action – an illocutionary act. So it is not the performance that can be called a truth-evaluable statement, but its result (or object, or product). In this sense, the realization that stating and asserting are also illocutionary acts did not undermine the content of the notion of the performative. It just made it pertinent to distinguish between stating (asserting and so on) as the act and statement (assertion and so on) as the result.

Searle proposes to analyze performatives as declarations. This is the mechanism that allows the literal utterance of the performative sentence to count as an illocutionary act of the type named by the performative verb. Being a declaration, the utterance of (53) creates a state

of affairs:

(53) I hereby pronounce you man and wife.

The extra-linguistic institution guarantees the success of this performative utterance. Analogously, Searle's explanation for (49) is that it creates a linguistic fact: an order. This is possible because of the linguistic institution and the particularity of our world. Two kinds of declarations are distinguished by Searle: extra-linguistic declarations and linguistic declarations, which are both speech acts and "in that sense they are both linguistic" (1989:549). Generally, declarations in Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts are acts whose successful performance brings about the fit between words and world, to make the propositional content true. Extra-linguistic declarations require four special features: an extra-linguistic institution, a special position of the speaker (and sometimes the hearer) within the institution, a special convention that certain literal sentences count as performances of certain declarations and the intention by the speaker that his utterance has the declarational status. Linguistic declarations do not require an extra-linguistic institution to be performed as language is itself an institution which is sufficient to empower speakers to perform those kinds of declarations. Evidently, the linguistic institution alone defines acts such as promising, ordering, asserting, etc., by laying down requirements for any extra-linguistic facts that need to obtain for their successful performance. Thus, I successfully order only by relying on the institution of language, which requires that I be in the position to issue orders to be an extra-linguistic fact that needs to obtain.

So, (49) is an order because it is a declaration that an order is performed. The same conventional mechanism that allows us to perform baptisms and marriages is applied to accomplish the order in (49). The derivation is performed thus:

1. S uttered the sentence "I hereby order you to leave"
2. The literal meaning of the utterance is such that by that very utterance the speaker intends to make it the case that he orders me to leave.
3. Therefore, in making the utterance S manifested the intention to make it the case by that utterance that he ordered me to leave.
4. Therefore, in making the utterance S manifested an intention to order me to leave by that very utterance.
5. Orders are a class of actions where the manifestation of the intention to perform an action is sufficient for its performance, given that certain other conditions are satisfied.

6. We assume those other conditions are satisfied.
7. S ordered me to leave by that utterance.
8. S both said that he ordered me to leave and made it the case that he ordered me to leave. Therefore he made a true statement. (Searle 1989:553)

The speaker has the intention of making a declaration through which he manifests his intention of making an order. He succeeds in making an order because he performs a declaration and he makes a true assertion because the successful performance of the declaration makes the propositional content true. To summarize, the speaker, by his words, performs a declaration that guarantees the accomplishment of an illocutionary act (denoted by the performative verb) and the accomplishment of an assertion true because of the declaration. If one had a tiny question about what guarantees the successful performance of the declaration, it is quickly stifled by considerations of the way the world is. We speakers, not possessing supernatural powers, can only make limited changes in the world by our speech (as opposed to God, Who can do light by saying “Let there be light”).

There is nothing linguistically wrong with the utterance "I hereby make it the case that all swans are purple." The limitation, to repeat, is not in the semantics, it is in the world.

(...) What we find instead (of special semantic properties of performativity – M.C.) are human conventions, rules and institutions that enable certain utterances to function to create the state of affairs represented in the propositional content of the utterance. (Searle 1989:555)

Such a stance takes a smiting blow on the notion of illocutionary acts, making them into linguistic acts enabled by limitations in the world. Evidently conventions and rules only play a role as far as they enable certain utterances to create states of affairs (the extra-linguistic declarations). Frying an egg by uttering “I hereby fry an egg” could be a performative utterance of God if we take performative in the way Searle does. I doubt that it would be a performative in Austin’s sense, for in Austin’s sense it would imply that in a peculiar way frying an egg by God is a reference to a socially accepted conventional procedure that once taken up by the audience creates a conventional effect. Clearly it is not the case. God or a wizard like Gandalf or Harry Potter can make things happen because of a certain magical power which can be described as being the mental equivalent of physical power. Performing illocutionary acts in Austin’s sense is not merely produce some facts (that I ordered or that I fired you or what not, bearing in mind that the facts are not material or physical facts in the sense of the reality they refer to) – the facts themselves are only half of the story. That my

order places an obligation on you, or that my firing places certain obligations on me and you, or that my verdict redefines your social role – those are the important things that performing illocutionary acts does and they are called in Austin's theory conventional effects. The literal meaning of any sentence does not have any constitutive role in the fact that people can give orders, divorce, make statements, issue verdicts, adjourn meetings, apologize, or give advice and warnings.

The declaratory analysis blurs a little Searle's conception of IFIDs. Being a declaration, the performative cannot contain illocutionary force indicating devices of the act we perform in the utterance of the performative sentence. We are left with a concept of illocutionary force indicating device that can no longer indicate the illocutionary force, a virtually destroyed taxonomy of illocutionary acts and a weakened notion of assertion. I will explain. The following utterances are performatives in Searle's reading:

I promise to come.

I apologize for my behavior.

I warn you to pay attention.

I advise you to stay there.

I assert that the earth is flat.

Their illocutionary structure is respectively:

I declare [I promise (to come)]

I declare [I apologize (for my behavior)]

I declare [I warn (you to pay attention)]

I declare [I advise (you to stay here)]

I declare [I assert (that the earth is flat)]

The propositional content of each declaration is the totality of the act which is literally referred to by the performative verb (in the square brackets); the success of the declaration makes that propositional content true. The truth of the propositional content of the declaration is then sufficient to make it the case that the speaker succeeds in performing the act referred to by the propositional content of the declaration. What is more, once "made to be" it also becomes an illocutionary act with its own propositional content (in the round brackets).

However, the order (promise, apology, etc.) is carried out by making manifest an intention to order (to promise, to apologize, etc.). Then, by taking into account the manifested

intention to produce a particular illocutionary act in the utterance of a performative, we have to categorize (49) as both a declaration and an order, or as a directive declaration. I need not go on.

Let me repeat the last step of the reasoning here:

S both said that he ordered me to leave and made it the case that he ordered me to leave. Therefore he made a true statement.

Evidently it follows logically from the fact the one both says that one orders and makes it the case that he orders that one makes a true statement. This entailed statement is certainly not enacted in the same way other illocutionary acts (in Searle's sense) are: the speaker does not manifest the intention to make a statement in the utterance of "I order you to leave". It makes no sense for his being committed to the truth of the proposition that he orders me to leave: just imagine claiming that in performing an intentional action of, say, grading papers I am committed to the true belief that I am indeed grading papers. In a way it is the wrong thing to point out: as a rational being I certainly believe that when I am performing an action, I am indeed performing it. My awareness of the action I am performing is in no way an assertion of the action. It seems that the reason for deriving the statement is simply that declarations "by definition, make their propositional content true" (1989:553); in other words, we conclude that the speaker made a true statement that he orders because the declaration of the order yields by definition that the order comes true. Assertion (or statement) in this case is acknowledging a state of affairs with no intention whatsoever. The truth of the statement derives from the declaration; the statement itself – from the form of the utterance, as can be seen from the following remark:

In this connection we would like to preserve the intuition that performative sentences are ordinary sentences in the indicative and that as such they are used to make statements that have truth values, even when uttered performatively. (Searle 1989:539)

The declaratory analysis fails even in providing a unified analysis of which part of the performative sentence refers to the state of affairs created by the utterance of that sentence. Consider these declarations (of the kind Searle called extra-linguistic):

Declaration	Created fact
I pronounce you man and wife	→ you are man and wife
I appoint you chairman	→ you are chairman

The declaration does not create the fact that I pronounce you man and wife, but that you are now man and wife. The declaration that I appoint you chairman does not create the fact that I appoint you chairman, but that you are chairman. By analogy, “I order you to leave” should create the fact that you leave, but it is not the case¹⁹⁸.

Explicit assertions, those performed by the utterance of performative, yield a surprising result. The utterance of “I assert that the earth is flat” would be a declaration that makes its propositional content [I assert that the earth is flat] true, which makes the manifested intention to commit to the truth of the proposition that the earth is flat and effectively makes it the case that I am in fact asserting that content. Therefore, I made a true statement. So in uttering “I assert that the earth is flat” I perform a declaration, one successful false assertion and one successful true assertion all at once. Both assertions are different in that one of them was made possible because I manifested the intention to perform it, the other one was made possible because the sentence I uttered was a sentence in the indicative mood whose semantic content was made true by the performance of the declaration that it happens to be the propositional content of. I will say no more.

12.3. Summary

How the debate between Searle and Bach and Harnish on the way performatives work unfolded is not in any way salient for my investigation. The fact that those researchers sought a mechanism of working tells quite plainly that their understanding of illocutionary acts does not involve the property of being an act. In Bach and Harnish, the focus is on communicative success and conveying and recognizing communicative intentions. In Searle, it is an explanation of meaning, both sentence and speaker meaning and manifesting intentions. Talking about orders, assertions, apologies, etc. as about acts of communication can be done quite successfully, provided we do not mention the term illocutionary acts, for illocutionary acts are not (merely) acts of communication. Acts of communication succeed if the intention is recognized; illocutionary acts succeed if a whole set of felicity conditions are fulfilled and are deemed fulfilled by the hearer who validates the said performance as an act of that type. Illocutionary acts take effect in implementing a special conventional effect. In that sense it is unreasonable to expect that a theory of illocutionary acts can provide an exhaustive account of what happens in communication; it can only provide an account of which socially conditioned

¹⁹⁸ It could be objected that it does create the fact that you leave, but the relation is too oblique to really work as a valid objection since you leave because I do so order.

acts were thereby performed. It is equally unreasonable to expect that a theory of illocutionary acts can provide an account of the behavior of linguistic expressions and/ or the meaning of those expressions as used by a particular speaker. While one can point to some regularities in the use of some linguistic expressions in the performance of some illocutionary acts (explicit performatives are one case to the point), the theory of illocutionary acts is not conditioned by language, nor is the possibility to perform specific illocutionary acts encoded in the linguistic expressions. That performatives work simply because they are performances of illocutionary acts was nowhere near the explanations given. Explicit performatives are simply fully explicit references to the kind of illocutionary act the speaker is engaged in performing. It should not be construed to mean that explicit performatives are the most effective way of communicating something to one's interlocutor in the situation in which it occurs. As it became apparent in the discussion I conducted in this Part III, there is a difference between communicating something and performing an illocutionary act. The performance of illocutionary acts is connected to redefining social environment and as such may or may not communicate something to the interlocutor. I may succeed in communicating something to my interlocutor even if the illocutionary act I attempted to perform was defective or void, or even in the absence of any attempt at performing an illocutionary act altogether. The use of explicit performatives does not in any case guarantee the successful performance of the act; it merely indicates the speaker's effort in securing uptake¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁹ Nicoloff has another way of explaining the performative prefix: it performs an act of social interaction. "Ce signe a pour valeur sémantique une valeur pragmatique, la valeur d'un signal d'un coup dans un rituel-jeu. Son sens est donc strictement son utilisation, laquelle utilisation est interactive et socio-institutionnelle". (Nicoloff, 1986:734) /This sign's semantic value is in its pragmatic function; it functions as a signal of a move in a ritual game. Its sense is its use which is interactive and socio-cultural/ (the translation is mine).

Conclusions

Assertion: criteria and conditions. Extending the analysis

This investigation proceeded in the pursuit of several questions, most of which acquired their precise formulation in the course of the discussion. I offer a list of those questions (largely left unanswered by the existing accounts of assertion) below:

1. How do we approach illocutionary acts altogether?
2. What is the nature of illocutionary acts? Are they conventional? How do we define uptake with regard to assertion? Does that mean that an assertion must be social and in what way? Is assertion an illocutionary non-entity?
3. Does assertion in sense 3 necessarily include assertion in sense 1, “asserting of a proposition” (in sense 1) as an act of subscribing to the truth of a proposition, even if it is false?
4. Is there a relation between the sentence content (utterance content) and the act content? How exactly are we to understand the notion of act content? This is linked with the more general question of what counts as a completed act or where the act stops. How does the public meaning of the words used in making the assertion relate to the content of the belief expressed?
5. Further, is there a relation between the felicity conditions of the act and the meaning/truth conditions of the proposition contained in the utterance that is used to perform the act in question?
6. How far can the responsibility of the speaker be stretched? Is responsibility applicable to the content of the assertion or the content of the belief?
7. “Doesn’t it make perfect sense that one who believes something should wish to assert it, whether or not they have any further purpose in mind?” (Owens 2006)
8. What should be defined under the heading of “content of the information”? The assumption that the information is restricted to the content of the utterance is an oversimplification that dangerously undermines the possibility to isolate assertion as an illocutionary act.
9. What is done in making the assertion that there are blue swans: do I convey that the content of the assertion, namely /that there are blue swans/ is true or that I hold the true belief that /there are blue swans/, or else that I hold the belief that the content of my assertion is true? Or, what does an assertion do?

10. How can we get a valid definition of an act based on an idealized case that may or may not be empirically instantiated in available data?
11. To what extent can we actually assume that illocutionary force is reflected in the syntactic structure of the utterance?

Most of these questions are answered (however tentatively or partially it may be) in the course of the investigation I conducted. In a way, the answers I provided raise further questions, some of which I will formulate at the end of this section. I summarize the findings of the study below.

The tentative observation that started the investigation was that despite the fact that linguists use the term “illocutionary act”, what they mean by this term can vary considerably. This observation followed quite naturally from the vast array of accounts of the act of assertion I overviewed in the Introduction. The only way one can get such a large plethora of accounts is if one is applying quite a different notion of illocutionary act in one’s investigation. Whether one needs to utter a sentence containing a proposition, express literally the content of what one wishes to assert in one’s utterance or aim to speak the truth involve a different understanding of what illocutionary acts are. Speaking the truth or expressing propositions have little to do with regarding illocutionary act performance as acting on one’s environment. Expressing propositions is not acting. Conducting a discussion on assertion by holding on to categories like truth or belief carries the risk of misleading the researcher into following the path to the Descriptive fallacy. Any normative account of assertion that sets a norm to be followed much like a move in a game is implausible since it is supposed to provide a formulation of the rule to be followed (but no explication of what would be a violation of that rule), but instead it only provides either a criterion that appeals to the good will of the speaker, or an assessment category for the assertion-product for the hearer. Intention accounts, convention accounts and context accounts were introduced separately as alternatives, with Searle’s theory of illocutionary acts being a hybrid account in that it contains elements of both intention and convention accounts with a notion of context that is built in the felicity conditions for acts as already obtaining backdrop for the acts. I took Searle’s theory to scrutiny in my effort to find out which account of assertion works best precisely due to the peculiar nature of the said theory.

I found that first, in the years of developing the theory, Searle’s description of the act of asserting changed rather drastically from undertaking to the effect that *p* represents a true state of affairs (1969) to the point where the description pictured an act that no longer did

anything, depicting the speaker as only taking a certain stance towards the propositional content (1985). One way out of this situation was to take the definition of illocutionary act Searle outlines and figure out which description should be retained for the act of assertion based on examples of acts that we would intuitively describe as assertions. Second, it turned out that there is no definition of the notion of illocutionary act in Searle's writings if we do not count the recursive definition provided in 1985, where illocutionary force is defined by its components. In its development, the theory yields different conceptions of illocutionary acts that are not consistent with each other and which yield unsatisfactory accounts of the act of assertion. I endeavored to trace the salient accounts in great detail (chapters 2 and 3). I argued that the accounts I reconstructed from Searle's writings were not only theoretically unsound, but also practically inapplicable (the former was made clear in my discussion of the taxonomy of illocutionary acts in chapter 4, the latter was detailed in chapter 5 by mapping the theoretical constructs onto the corpus of examples). I found that the notion of illocutionary act in Searle's theory did not quite correspond to any idea of action one may have, shifting the focus towards the meaning of linguistic items and their correct use. The theoretical assumptions that underlie Searle's doctrine are as follows (I distinguish between those assumptions that are not argued for, or axioms, and those that exemplify the very thesis he pursues):

Axiom 1: The conditions of success for the performance of the act are – except for the general conditions on any kind of linguistic communication – a function of the meaning of the sentence.

IFID Axiom: Every sentence contains an IFID.

Meaning claim (follows from Axiom 1 and IFID Axiom): Sentence meaning determines both utterance meaning and speaker meaning.

Axiom 2: Speech acts are minimal units of linguistic communication.

Principle of Expressibility: Whatever can be meant can be said.

Thesis: Speaking a language is a rule-governed behavior.

According to these theoretical tenets, performing illocutionary acts is an activity governed by (semantic) rules, built in the semantic structure of sentences. In other words, the meaning of the sentence made the utterance to count as a particular illocutionary act which is realized if the intention to produce that particular illocutionary act is recognized by the hearer. In a later development, the very possibility of illocutionary acts is said to be conventionally realized in the meaning of the sentences and the intention-recognition by a hearer is only

needed if the speaker intends to communicate, reducing illocutionary acts to linguistic meaning conditioned by IFIDs. Neither could the notion of illocutionary act be clarified using Searle's doctrine, nor could the act of assertion be accounted for. The Searlean take on meaning realized in a communication setting is an elegant way to account for the communication process, but it provides us with no valuable insight about actions, illocutionary or perlocutionary.

I needed a fresh start, to echo Austin. The lack of a definition of illocutionary act in other linguists' work made it absolutely necessary to turn back to the founding father of the theory of illocutionary acts. Although Austin does not provide an explicit definition of the term, there are enough indications in his lectures to be able to get an idea about what kind of phenomenon he fancied illocutionary acts to be. The definition I reconstructed from the lectures accounts for the action component and it is in tune with the pre-theoretical ideas about the phenomenon under scrutiny that I suggested. In absolute terms, the gist of the illocutionary act doctrine is in providing a practical description of how people can act upon their environment by engaging in social contracts that change the world as well as their interrelations. Due to the complexity of the way we conceptualize the world, language is a natural means to use for the purpose of acting upon the environment. Because those acts involve language, linguists and philosophers of language have thought they may be special in some fundamental way. In a way they are special: they are non-material, non-natural (*qua* Grice) occurrences, bound by convention and they involve equally non-natural conventional effects. The neo-Austinian definition of illocutionary act that I advocate is the following:

An act is an illocutionary act iff:

- 3) It is a conventional act in the sense that it requires conformity to an accepted conventional procedure and has a conventional effect, and**
- 4) It requires the securing of uptake in order to take effect.**

First, according to this definition, illocutionary acts are conventional in the sense that they constitute social contracts with conventional effects (in the sense that they are necessarily attached to the felicitous performance of illocutionary acts), which in turn accounts for the action component Austin was interested in. Second, it accounts for the role of the hearer as an active participant validating the performance of the speaker, thus fitting in with the insight of real life conversations being negotiations, adjustments and joint effort in any socially conditioned changes initiated by any of the participants.

I conducted a detailed discussion of the notions of procedure, effect and uptake, involved in the description of illocutionary acts. Since a description of the procedure cannot be unequivocally produced for many illocutionary acts due to the necessarily vague nature of it, I argued that any illocutionary act is sufficiently described by the conventional effect it produces. The mere fact that a conventional effect exists which is associated with that illocutionary act is enough to argue that a conventional procedure is recognized within that particular society for the performance of that particular illocutionary act. The account of the illocutionary act of assertion will then consist in the description of the conventional effect that is associated with it. I suggested the following description:

Conventional effect: An illocutionary act of assertion has the effect of engaging the responsibility of the speaker and committing the speaker to:

- d) Justifying the assertion-product;**
- e) Authorizing further assertions of the original assertion-product;**
- f) Retracting the assertion-product if it is no longer endorsed by the speaker.**

The special contract of endorsing the commitment for the judgment expressed by the speaker must then be taken up by the hearer. I call assertion-product the judgment to which the speaker is committed after the uptake of the hearer and which the hearer can submit to evaluation for truth, plausibility etc. I contrast that with the locutionary act, which in my interpretation constitutes the manifestation of the illocutionary act in that it may help the hearer take up on the act, along with context and the hearer-based understanding of the procedure. In my discussion I particularly strongly emphasized the need to distinguish between the product of the act and the linguistic content of the locutionary act for the following reasons: first, it enables us to escape the declarative fallacy committed by Searle's division between force and content, which assumes a notion of propositional content tying up assertion to the expression of a proposition; and second, it allows us to discard the notion of literal illocutionary force, according to which semantic rules underlie the illocutionary act performance. This distinction also allows us to treat all illocutionary acts following the same principles and it renders void the notion of indirect illocutionary acts, which is also fraught with contradictions. My question 4 finds a partial solution in this distinction. To postulate a one-to-one correspondence between the words that one utters and the act that one wishes to perform in the utterance of those words amounts to trying to establish a correspondence between entities that cannot be compared. The act of the speaker consists in the socially conditioned procedure and the conventional effect that the speaker moves to undertake; the

idea that either the procedure or the effect associated with it can in any way be encased in the meaning of the utterance that manifests the performance of the act is ludicrous. The most the utterance – or the locutionary act - can do is help the hearer in figuring out which act might be attempted by the speaker; but the act's success does not depend on the hearer's understanding of the meaning of the utterance. The uptake of the hearer can be secured by a careful choice of the words the speaker puts in her locutionary act. In that sense only can we claim any relation whatsoever between the locutionary acts and the illocutionary act: the speaker cannot hope to secure uptake without giving any indication whatsoever on the act she attempts to perform. The indication is given in the locutionary act, which can be the manifestation of the illocutionary act. Further, being a necessary condition of illocutionary act performance, uptake captures the idea that without a target, any discussion of illocutionary acts is unfounded.

A sound supplement to any theory of illocutionary acts should be a consideration of context, which in Austin's discussion is captured by the term felicity conditions. It is also encoded in the very idea that illocutionary acts operate a change on the social environment in which they occur. Providing a definition of context and the precise way of incorporating that definition into the theory of illocutionary acts is far beyond the scope of this investigation. Nonetheless, I suggested that the entitlement felicity condition on asserting is context-dependent in that it varies with different speakers and hearers. In a way, entitlement is part of the procedure for asserting, even if the entire procedure cannot be described. A major difficulty that I detected in my discussion of context is not the elusiveness of the notion of context itself (although this is definitely an important issue), but rather the contamination with information transfer involved in the communicative process. It certainly mirrors an important mechanism, but adding strings of information to one's information massive is only marginally interesting for illocutionary act performance. The focus in illocutionary act performance is on the social contract initiated and taken up, together with its conventional effect. The hearer picks out contextually dependent elements to help her in her interpretative effort, but context itself does not make an illocutionary act what it is.

A theory of illocutionary acts should not be equated with a theory of communication. It could at best be considered a part of a larger theory of communication with some necessary limitations. First, merely assigning illocutionary act labels to an utterance does not really advance the analysis of what happens in communication: A asserted a, then B asserted b, then A asserted c does not bring illumination on either the usage of linguistic items or the mechanism of the communicative process itself. Understanding which effects are

implemented following the successful performance of acts is still not enough, for then the analyst would need to look for clues as to which act the hearer took up on. The hearer-based understanding of the correct procedure may not correspond with the procedure that the analyst would take up as being executed completely and in an acceptable manner. Second, a study would be needed of the way the attempted illocutionary act influences the choice of the locutionary act the speaker performs if the doctrine of illocutionary acts is to be applied in a consistent manner to communication analysis. Also, to supplement that, we need a way to account for the attempted acts that have been rejected by the hearer, or those acts that were not successful due to a breach of the felicity conditions. Although in our discussions of methodology and theoretical constructions we speak of misfired acts and infelicitous performances, we never see actual examples that illustrate those cases, nor do we see a way to name these cases in the analysis. Perlocutionary effects are also to be submitted to scrutiny as they are largely present in actual act production (we are often alarmed, scared or moved), but they present an even bigger challenge by their elusiveness. They can be produced by the locutionary and illocutionary acts and are qualitatively different from the contractual and ritualistic nature of the conventional acts that are illocutionary acts.

In Part III of the study I turned to some collateral issues that have to do with the application of the definition of illocutionary act I advocate. The reassessed role of the hearer allows us to account for situations involving multiple participants, account for usual communicative behavior patterns and explain rejection of illocutionary acts. I already mentioned the novel way to deal with the so-called indirect speech acts, a notion that does not exist from the view-point of the neo-Austinian definition of illocutionary acts. The advantage for the category of free indirections lies in the fact that we do not need to postulate literal illocutionary force (a notion that is utterly nonsensical from the point of view of Austin's idea of illocutionary acts) and no mechanism for calculating the primary act is needed. As for the category of conventionalized indirections, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness combined with Austin's doctrine of illocutionary acts will be quite enough to account for the regularity of associating a particular locutionary act to the performance of a particular illocutionary act, without resorting to any inferential strategies. The magic of explicit performatives is explained away by resorting to the distinction between act and its manifestation, that is the locutionary act being the manifestation of the illocutionary act, making the explicit performative an utterance that involves an explicit reference to the illocutionary act thereby attempted. The uptake of the hearer is secured by the speaker's using

the very name of the procedure she is invoking and, assuming that all the other (hearer-based) conditions are complied with, the act comes into existence.

The corpus data that I used to map the theoretical constructs on support another generalization on the act of assertion according to the neo-Austinian definition of illocutionary act. It seems that assertion can no longer be the default interpretation of what is done in the utterance of declarative sentences: being very deliberate and ostensible, it should not be confused with reports or informing, which can rely on someone else's authority. Academic discourse (the bulk of the corpus texts were academic articles from different domains of science) and political discourse (the secondary corpus) use assertion very cautiously and the claims that are made therein are largely argued for. Assertion engages the responsibility of the asserter seemingly for the claim put forth, but also (and more importantly) for the public self of the asserter. This can potentially raise another question of the domain of applicability of any theory of illocutionary acts. I already mentioned the difficulties of applying the theory to analyzing communication: if language use is at the core of the investigation, illocutionary acts can provide little insight into the mechanism of meaning generation. On the other hand, if the acts are at the core of the investigation, it can reveal a larger picture of interpersonal and social relations and how these are redefined in communication. It would then turn out that a theory of illocutionary acts would fit better in the larger field of anthropology or phenomenology, even semiotics rather than discourse analysis and linguistics, with a careful redefinition of what the task of such a theory would be.

Appendix: List of articles and abstracts used for the main corpus

ANTHRO100: Who Owns the Past? Cultural Policy, Cultural Property and the Law. Kate Fitz Gibbon, ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005. 335 pp. (Co-published with the American Council for Cultural Policy.) Reviewed by Christina Kreps (2007) for Museum Anthropology Review

ANTHRO200: Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade. Neil Brodie, Morag M. Kersel, Christina Luke, and Kathryn Walkter Tubb (eds.), Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. 368 pp. Reviewed by Helaine Silverman for Museum Anthropology Review

ANTHRO300: Jessica Maloney (1994) Tattoos as American Material Culture Submitted: Sat, 18 Jun 1994 14:12:59

ANTHRO400: Henry J. Chaya (1994) Analysis of Alaskan Archeological Obsidian Artifacts, Presented at the Archaeometry Research Graduate Group Annual Symposium February 1994, University at Buffalo Anthropology Department

ASTRO100: Communicating astronomy with the public journal The Credibility of Science Communication, Lars Holm Nielsen, Nanna Torpe Jørgensen, Kim Jantzen, Lars Lindberg Christensen

ASTRO200: The Top Ten Astronomical ‘breakthroughs’ of the 20th century, David W. Hughes, Richard de Grijs

BIO100: Lutz Jäncke (2008) Music, memory and emotion, Journal of Biology, 7:21 doi:10.1186/jbiol82 (abstract)

BIO200: Wentao Zhao, Kwadwo Agyepong, Erchin Serpedin, and Edward R. Dougherty, Detecting Periodic Genes from Irregularly Sampled Gene Expressions: A Comparison Study

BIO300: John Dougherty, Ioan Tabus, and Jaakko Astola (2008) Inference of Gene Regulatory Networks Based on a Universal Minimum Description Length, Journal on Bioinformatics and Systems Biology, doi:10.1155/2008/482090

COMSCI100: Milad Niqui (2008) Logical methods in computer science Coinductive Formal Reasoning in Exact Real Arithmetic, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 4:3

COMSCI200: Vineet Gupta, Radha Jagadeesan, Depaul Prakash Panangaden (2006) Approximate reasoning for real-time probabilistic processes, McGill Univ, vol. 2: 4 (abstract)

COMSCI300: Alan S. A. Jeffrey, Julian Rathke (2005) Contextual equivalence for higher-order pi-calculus revisited, University of Sussex Vol. 1:1 (abstract)

HIS100: Pritchard, Sara B. (2004) Reconstructing the Rhône: The Cultural Politics of Nature and Nation in Contemporary France, 1945-1997, French Historical Studies Vol. 27:4 (abstract)

HIS200: Brown, Gregory S. (1999) After the Fall: The Chute of a Play, Droits d'Auteur, and Literary Property in the Old Regime, Vol. 22:4 (abstract)

HIS300: Christofferson, Michael Scott. An Antitotalitarian History of the French Revolution: François Furet's *Penser la Révolution française* in the Intellectual Politics of the Late 1970s (abstract)

HIS400: Katarina Ilic Gladiator Fact vs. Gladiator Fiction, Journal of Historical studies University of Toronto

HIS500: Burnam W. Reynolds (2008) The Prehistory of the Crusades: Toward a Developmental Taxonomy, Asbury College, DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00525.x (abstract)

HIS600: Tamara Sonn (2008) Middle & Near East Islamic Fundamentalism and Political Islam, College of William and Mary (abstract)

HIS700: Justin Jackson, The Attempt to Hijack History at the 9/11 Service Nation Forum

HIS800: Rachel Bellerby (2008) The Importance of Medieval Religious Relics The Trade in Real and Fake Christian Souvenirs in the Middle Ages, in Medieval history

HUM100: Failed Prophet and Falling Stock: Why Ralph Ellison Was Never Avant-Garde
Houston A. Baker, Jr.

HUM200: Faiz Khan (2002) Spirituality, Religious Wisdom, and the Care of the Patient Faith and Care of the Patient: An Islamic Perspective on Critical Illness, The Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine

HUM300: Daniel A. Kelin (2005) Vitalizing culture in youth, Micronesian Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. 4:1

LIN100: Anna Ewa Wieczorek (2008) Proximation, Common Ground, and Assertion-Based Patterns for Legitimation in Political Discourse, Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines Vol 2 (1): 31 – 48, ISSN: 1752-3079

PHY100: R. Twarock, Structural Description of Viral Particles Based on Affine Extensions of Non Crystallographic Coxeter Groups (abstract)

PHY200: G. J. Milburn (2000) Quantum Measurement and Stochastic Processes in Mesoscopic Conductors, Australian Journal of Physics Vol. 53

PHY300: V. V. Flambaum (2000) Time Dynamics in Chaotic Many-body Systems: Can Chaos Destroy a Quantum Computer? Australian Journal of Physics Vol. 53

PHY400: D. Neilson, A J. S. Thakur A and E. Tosatti (2000) Characterising the Metal–Insulator Transition in Two Dimensions, Australian Journal of Physics Vol. 53 (abstract)

PRA100: Alec McHoul, Mark Rapley, Charles Antaki (2008) You gotta light? On the luxury of context for understanding talk in interaction, Journal of Pragmatics 40, 42–54

PRA200: Claudia M. Bubel (2008) Film audiences as overhearers, Journal of Pragmatics 40, 55–71

PRA300: François Cooren (2008) Between semiotics and pragmatics: Opening language studies to textual agency, Journal of Pragmatics 40, 1–16

PRA400: Emma Dafouz-Milne (2008) The pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion: A cross-linguistic study of newspaper discourse, Journal of Pragmatics 40, 95–113

PRA500: Joel Katzav, Chris Reed (2008) Modelling argument recognition and reconstruction, Journal of Pragmatics 40, 155–172

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