Speech Acts, Actions, and Events

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1. Introduction

The study of speech acts began with Austin and was prefigured by Wittgenstein.[2] While Frege and Russell focussed primarily on the semantics of the expressions of the artificial, formal languages used in logic and mathematics (to articulate truth-apt statements and theories),[3] Wittgenstein (in his later work) drew our attention to the variety of uses to which the expressions of ordinary, naturally occurring languages are put. One technique that he employed for doing so was to describe a number of different 'language games' – i.e. 'ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language' (1969: 17). In these 'primitive languages' (1969: 17)[4] the differences between the various uses we make of linguistic expressions appear more starkly, precisely because of their simplicity; and yet the lessons learned can be applied when the more complex linguistic activities involved in the full range of normal human (communicative) interactions are at issue. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein was not entirely clear what he meant by the 'use' of an expression,[5] and if he drew a distinction between, on the one hand, the differences between various 'parts of speech' (1969: 83), and on the other the differences between 'orders, questions, … and so on' (1969: 82), he did not emphasize it. This distinction, however, was integral to the speech act theory developed by Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*.[6]

Austin began that work by drawing (or at least attempting to draw) a two-way distinction between 'constative' and 'performative' utterances: 'to issue a constative utterance,' he said, 'is to make a statement' (1975: 6, note 2); whereas in the case of performatives, 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action' (1975: 6) – and, moreover, one which is 'not normally thought of as just [that of] saying something' (1975: 7). These latter performative utterances, moreover, were observed to have a sort of self-fulfilling character: saying that one is performing a certain sort of action, Austin noted, is often, in the right kind of context, sufficient for performing that action; for instance, saying 'I do' (take this person to be my lawfully wedded spouse), or 'with this ring I thee wed', at the right moment in a marriage ceremony, is (arguably) enough to marry the person in question (the addressee in the second case). Promising, betting, bequeathing – all were initially taken to be performatives.

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[2] Grice was another influential early theorist in this area. Some of his views will be touched on below (in section 4). But Austin's description (nb: not his theoretical account) of the phenomena will be used to shape the discussion that follows.
[3] Frege did consider e.g. questions, and the empty names used in ordinary language – but he was interested first and foremost in the features a language must have if it were to serve the purposes of science.
[4] Wittgenstein also speaks of language games as 'primitive forms of language' (1969: 17). If we draw the distinction between language (a phenomenon involving a certain sort of communicative interaction) and languages (i.e. systems of signs employed in such interactions), this alternative characterization of language games – or at least the examples thereof that are actually described by Wittgenstein - seems more apt. This point is perhaps related to the complaint I levy below about the unclarity surrounding the notion of use.
[5] See e.g. Fogelin (1987: 121-122). Perhaps Wittgenstein would say that the word 'use' is itself used in a variety of ways with regards to expressions, and resist the attempt to impose any unifying systematicity.
[6] Was Austin influenced by Wittgenstein in his theorizing about language? Harris and Unnsteinsson (2018) argue, convincingly in my view, that he was.

However, in the course of trying to characterize the constative-performative distinction more fully, Austin came to repudiate it: for as he noted, we can make a statement using the words 'I state that…'; and in doing so we issue a performative utterance. Thus, the distinction is not exclusive, as it was intended to be. Austin accordingly proposed, about halfway through the book, 'to make a fresh start on the problem' (1975: 91). The result was the (enormously influential) three-way distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts – which are, roughly, the act *of* saying something, the act one performs *in* saying something, and the act one performs *by* saying something.[7] I will discuss these three acts in turn, in sections 3-5 of the current paper, where my aim will be to give an opinionated introduction to speech act theory, while exploring some of the subtle metaphysical issues that arise in connection with the various acts it recognizes, and performances of them. But first, I turn to more general issues about events and the individuation of actions.

2. Actions and Events

The performance of an act is an action (Goulder and Hornsby, 2011: section 1). Actions (so understood) are widely (though not universally[8]) taken to be events - that is, particular occurrences such as the Great Fire of London of 1666 or the US Presidential election of 2016 (and not repeatable kinds thereof, such as fires and Presidential elections). But how are they to be individuated? Suppose, for instance, that I raise my arm in a meeting, thereby voting in favour of the proposal currently under discussion. How many actions have I performed? Advocates of the coarse-grained individuation of actions (Anscombe, 1958; Davidson, 1963) argue that there is just one action in this case: the raising of the arm is (identical to) the voting; thus, a single action is described in two different ways. But some, following Goldman (1970), prefer to individuate actions more finely, recognizing two distinct actions here; and Goldman himself suggests (1970: 8) that Austin takes such a view. Without wishing to suggest it provides the only possible interpretation of Austin,[9] I will explore this fine-grained approach in what follows, in the hope that it may illuminate the theory of speech acts.[10]

According to Goldman, the class of actions can be specified recursively: first, there is the class of *basic* actions – these are all intentional bodily movements (such as my raising my arm); then, there is the class of actions (such as my voting) that are *generated* from these in some way. Actions in this latter class may or may not be intentionally performed. Goldman specifies that two actions (of the same agent[11]) are related by generation only if they temporally overlap, yet neither is a temporal part of the other, nor are they independent of one another. That is, neither action is subsequent to the other – the agent doesn't perform one 'and then' the other; instead, the actions must occur during the same temporal interval, without one being a temporal part of the other (as, say, my playing a given musical

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[7] It is the distinction between the first two of these which Wittgenstein did not highlight: in uttering an imperative sentence, for example, one might issue a command or a request, and so perform different illocutionary acts; whereas the differences in the uses of words for number, colour, or shape show up already at the level of the locutionary act.

[8] Bach (1980) rejects this view, holding instead that actions are instances of a relation of bringing about which relates an agent and an event. And Fine (1982) maintains that the items in question, which he calls 'acts', are events qua intentional, which are not to be identified with the bare events which constitute them.

[9] Goldman devotes just one paragraph to Austin's views. As evidence that Austin individuates actions more finely than do Anscombe and Davidson, he says: 'In a given bit of speech, Austin distinguishes a phonetic act, a phatic act, a rhetic act, a locutionary act, an illocutionary act, and a perlocutionary act.' (1970: 8) Yet if the acts in question are what Goldman calls 'act-types' – a species of property that an individual can instantiate – it doesn't immediately follow that the performances of these various acts (our actions, and Goldman's act-tokens) are distinct. Indeed, if Bach's view of actions is correct, they are not even entities, and so are not subject to identity.

[10] I offer considerations that tell against the coarse-grained approach below.

[11] The actions of different agents are never related by generation on Goldman's view.

note is a proper part of my playing a scale); and yet the agent does not perform the one 'while also' performing the other (as I might walk and chew gum) – the actions are not merely co-temporal.

There are four species of generation on Goldman's view. One action *causally* generates another just in case the first causes an effect and the second consists in the agent's causing that effect. Thus, for instance, if I pull the trigger of a loaded gun, and this causes a person to die, my doing so causally generates my action of killing the victim. An action is said to *conventionally* generate another just in case there is a rule, and some (possibly null) circumstances, such that the agent's performing the first, together with the rule and the circumstances, entails that the agent performs the second. It is in this way that my raising my arm during the meeting when I do generates my voting for the proposal under discussion: for there is a rule that says that raising one's arm at an appropriate time during a meeting counts as voting. Simple generation is much like conventional generation - except that it does not require any rules. Thus, a first action *simply* generates a second if, and only if, together with the circumstances in which it is performed, the first entails that the second is performed. Given that Stefka has jumped 2.09m, if anyone jumps higher than 2.09m, this action will simply generate her having outjumped Stefka. Finally, one action may generate another by *augmentation*. In this case, the performance of the generated act entails the performance of the generating act: for instance, one's running generates one's running quickly, by augmentation; and, of course, one's running quickly entails one's running. In each of these kinds of case, one arrives at the generated act from the generating act by adding something (which we might loosely describe as an effect, a rule, a circumstance, or a specification).

Goldman is somewhat equivocal about how seriously he is committed to this taxonomy. He does claim that the above categories are exhaustive. They are not to be regarded as mutually exclusive, however, since logically, generation is said to be irreflexive, asymmetric, and transitive: the last of these features in particular ensures that there will be cases in which the species of generation are mixed. Moreover, he suggests that there may be borderline cases - and it might be desirable to introduce further categories. For instance, Goldman takes simple generation to occur in cases in which the circumstances accompanying the performance of an action are mental: the agent has a certain belief or desire; and it is 'out of' this belief or desire that the generating action is performed. He notes that this class of cases might be thought to be sufficiently distinctive to merit its own category.[12]

Finally, it may be worth noting that the actions which are related by generation appear to have different modal profiles. For instance, in a possible world in which a different set of conventions are operative in my meeting, my raising my arm might still occur, though my voting does not; and in a world in which Stefka jumped a little higher, someone's jumping 2.10m might occur, though her outjumping Stefka does not. This lends credibility to the claim that the actions in question are distinct, just as Goldman maintains.[13] Indeed, on his view, an action is 'the exemplifying of a property by an agent' (1970: 10), so that actions 'are identical if and only if they involve the same agent, the same property, and the same time' (1970: 10). This in turn is precisely what is predicted by the hypothesis that actions are events, if Kim's (1966) individuation of the latter is accepted.[14] And if causation is a relation between events, Goldman must accept this hypothesis, since he holds that some actions are

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[12] Given the concerns raised below about the application of Goldman's approach to locutionary actions, one might even conjecture that it ought to to constitute the class of basic actions in a revised version of his theory.

[13] As a strict extensionalist, Davidson would not have found the considerations adduced here compelling; but most contemporary philosophers are not sceptical of modal notions (as he was).

[14] Events are exemplifications of properties, on Kim's view, and are identical just in case they involve the same individual exemplifying the same property at the same time.

causes (and so causally generate others). Thus, the above approach to action individuation forms a neat package.[15]

3. The Locutionary Act

According to Austin's mature theory of speech acts, to say something is to do something. In particular, whenever we say anything at all, we perform the phonetic act of 'uttering certain noises' (1975: 92), the phatic act of 'uttering certain… words… in a certain construction' (1975: 92), and the rhetic act of using the resulting expression 'with a certain more or less definite 'sense' and a more or less definite 'reference' (which together are equivalent to 'meaning')' (1975: 92). Performing these acts 'together add[s] up to 'saying' something, in the full normal sense' (1975: 92) – i.e. that of performing a locutionary act (1975: 94).

There are things one might quibble with here. For instance, one might think that what one utters when one performs a phonetic act is not 'certain noises' but rather certain phonemes; and that in doing so, one produces certain noises conforming to and as conforming to a certain system of phonological rules, just as Austin thinks one utters words 'conforming to and as conforming to a certain grammar' (1975: 92) in performing a phatic act. If so, then Austin's monkey who 'makes a noise indistinguishable from 'go'' (1975: 96) will not (likely) be performing a phonetic act any more than (s)he is performing a phatic one. Relatedly, one might be concerned that Austin confounds the objects and the products of the various acts: for instance, what one utters when performing a phatic act is an expression type; yet Austin says that in this case one utters 'noises of certain types belonging to and as belonging to a certain vocabulary' (1975: 92). Such noises are clearly tokens of the types in question, and are the results of the speech action that occurs on a given occasion. Similarly, when one performs a rhetic act, what one uses with a certain sense or reference is an expression type, not the token which is produced when one does so.

Searle (1968), however, argues for the much more severely critical conclusion that the notion of a locutionary act should be jettisoned as 'unhelpful' (1968: 405) - and that of a rhetic act along with it. He has two arguments in favour of this move. First, he says (1968: 406) that the distinction between the locutionary and the illocutionary act is introduced (by Austin) as that between uttering a sentence with a certain meaning (i.e. sense and reference) versus with a certain force (e.g. as a conjecture or an assertion): yet some sentences (the explicit performatives, such as those beginning 'I promise…') are such that their meanings determine the forces with which they are used; and so, in these cases, the performance of the locutionary act of using the sentences with the meanings they have is the performance of an illocutionary act (e.g. that of promising). Second, he notes that Austin reports the locutionary act sometimes using direct, and sometimes using indirect, quotation: but when the former is used, this in fact captures the phatic act (1968: 411); whereas when the latter is used, the reports employ illocutionary verbs (albeit very general ones), and so report a broad genus of illocutionary act (admitting of several different species). This second point applies to all sentences (not just the performatives): accordingly, Searle concludes, 'no sentence is completely force-neutral' (1968: 412); and he goes on to suggest (1968: 420) that we should employ the notion of a propositional act – that of expressing a proposition – which *is* force-neutral, rather than that of a locutionary act (which, he has argued, isn't).

These arguments are not compelling. In the case of the first, Searle ignores the fact that even an explicit performative verb can be used with its ordinary meaning, but without any illocutionary force whatsoever: for instance, an actor in a play might utter 'I promise…' and yet not issue a promise;

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[15] This is not to say that it is entirely unproblematic – see below.

moreover, we can embed such a sentence e.g. in the antecedent of a conditional without changing its meaning (cf. Geach, 1965) – yet in uttering the sentence in this linguistic context we do not issue a promise.[16] Thus, Austin himself makes a mistake when he says, 'To perform a locutionary act is in general… also and *eo ipso* to perform an *illocutionary* act' (1975: 98): there are cases in which one performs one without the other; and even in those paradigmatic cases in which one performs both, performing the illocutionary act involves something beyond merely performing the locutionary act.[17] As for Searle's second argument, Moltmann (2017) contends that rhetic acts are reported by 'say' in ordinary language (using both direct and indirect discourse). She argues, for instance, that what she calls 'words-NPs' – expressions like 'a few words' or 'the words, 'I love you'' – stand for structured pluralities of meaningful expressions, and can serve as complements of 'say' (and related verbs) used in the relevant sense. If that's right, then what one 'says' when one performs a rhetic act is such a structured plurality (some words, with some specific meanings, conforming to, and as conforming to, a grammar), much as Austin suggested. And yet the acts so reported, according to Moltmann, are not Searle's propositional acts, since the meanings of the various words in the structured plurality do not (yet) enter into (semantic) composition: what is said, on her view, is not a unity, like a proposition; it remains a (type of) plurality.

Indeed, the locutionary act can, in my view, be distinguished not only from the illocutionary act, but also from the rhetic act. In particular, even if performing a rhetic act suffices for performing a locutionary act, the acts performed are not, simply for that reason, the same.[18] Austin recognizes that some speech actions are what he (somewhat unfortunately[19]) calls 'rhetically equivalent' (98): this will be the case when (the same or) different linguistic expressions are used 'with the same sense and reference' (98); which might happen if, for instance, two speakers employ different languages to say the same thing. If we take a locutionary act type to correspond to a class of (possible) actions that are equivalent in this way, then on the individuation of actions adopted above (in section 2), the rhetic and locutionary actions taking place on a given occasion will be distinct: the properties instantiated when the rhetic and locutionary acts are performed are different; and so the actions that are their instantiations will be distinct.

This is, of course, consistent with taking the locutionary act to be Searle's propositional act (contra Moltmann). But this identification should not be made in general, for two reasons. First, there is nothing to suggest that a locutionary act, so understood, must be performed with a complete sentence: two different sub-sentential expressions might be used in ways that are equivalent in the above sense; if so, then on the view espoused here, the same locutionary act, but no propositional act, will have been performed. Second, two acts in which complete sentences are uttered might be equivalent in the manner indicated though (again) neither involves expressing a proposition: this will happen if, for instance, two speakers use interrogative sentences; for linguists have taken the questions expressed by such sentences to be, not individual propositions, but sets thereof (intuitively, those which answer the question). Thus, while there may be different verbs used to report locutionary acts involving propositions from those involving questions (for example), the acts picked out by those

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[16] Indeed, someone might reason: if I promise to do such-and-such, I'd better do it; yet I'd prefer not to do it; so I'd better not promise. Such reasoning is not self-defeating!

[17] Whether that something is a rule, or an intention – or maybe both – is something I will not pursue here. Obviously, though, it has consequences for whether the illocutionary act is generated from the locutionary act by conventional, or rule-based, generation, by simple generation (given a mental state as circumstance), or in some other way. See below for some pertinent further discussion.

[18] It might not be – and indeed in my view is not – necessary.

[19] As Austin acknowledges (p.98), when different words are used, different 'rhemes' are involved. I avoid his terminology in what follows.

verbs need not fail to be force-neutral.[20] Rather, they may pick out different kinds of locution, individuated by the kinds of objects involved.[21]

I should stress that I am advocating this approach, not on the basis of ordinary language considerations, nor as the best interpretation of Austin: rather, I think we need the notion of a locutionary act as understood here, for theoretical purposes,[22] whether or not it is reflected in natural language usage, and regardless of whether it is this act which Austin had in mind. Nonetheless, it does push Goldman's theory of actions to - and perhaps beyond - its limits. To see this, note that one's moving one's diaphragm, lungs, and vocal tract in a certain way is a basic action: this causes a certain noise to be produced; and if it is accompanied by certain mental states and/or rules, in certain circumstances, this will yield phonetic, phatic, and rhetic actions. But the locutionary act type, as understood here, is distinct from that of the rhetic act type: for instance, saying (force-neutrally) that p is different from using the sentence s to say (force-neutrally) that p (though both are properties one has if and only if one performs an action); and so, the locutionary action is not itself generated in these ways on Goldman's account. Thus, it seems one of Goldman's three central commitments must be abandoned if the locutionary act is understood as here: either not all properties the having of which is or involves the performance of an action are act types (so that there is no locutionary action); or the criterion of identity for actions given above (in section 2) is mistaken (so that it is not distinct from the rhetic action); or not all actions are generated from basic actions in the ways Goldman lists. I will not pursue this issue here except to note that the locutionary action performed on a given occasion (if there is one) appears to be an abstract and inseparable part of the rhetic action performed on that occasion.[23] In that sense, it seems one arrives at the former by way of subtraction from the latter, rather than adding to the former to get the latter. This is perhaps not unlike certain cases of augmentation generation: surely, given the circumstances, the motion of my body generates my running quickly; how, then, can I arrive at the more general action of my running, on this occasion, except by subtraction? And indeed, some (e.g. Ginet, 1990) have found this kind of generation to be problematic, preferring instead to identify the acts Goldman claims are related in this way. As noted, this would (at least begin to) resolve the tension drawn out above in connection with the locutionary act – but it is not the only way of doing so.

4. The Illocutionary Act

The illocutionary act is the act of saying something, not only with a certain meaning, but also with a certain (illocutionary) force. 'It makes a great difference,' says Austin, 'whether [when we used a certain sentence] we were advising, or merely suggesting, or actually ordering, whether we were strictly promising, or only announcing a vague intention, and so forth' (1975: 99). In each of these cases, the differences in question are differences in illocutionary force. Similarly, if one makes an assertion one puts forward a proposition as true, but with a different force than if one merely conjectures that that proposition is true.

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[20] In particular, when theorizing about these acts we can adhere to what Hanks (2015: 9) calls the 'constitutive' version of the content-force distinction.

[21] We will consider this suggestion in more detail below (in section 4).

[22] Note that the object of the rhetic act is an interpreted expression, whereas the object of the locutionary act is something which can interpret an expression. We need a means of linking speech act theory with such entities (roughly, meanings) – and the locutionary act provides it.

[23] Compare: this thing's being coloured is an abstract and inseparable part of its being red; nothing can be barely coloured (i.e. coloured, but not in any particular way). Similarly, no one can say (force-neutrally) that p without doing so in some particular way (e.g. by uttering a sentence s that means that p in the context of utterance).

Austin held that one performs an illocutionary act *in* saying something; whereas one performs a perlocutionary act (see section 5 below) *by* saying something. It is not entirely clear what this amounts to:[24] but we might take it to mean that a given illocutionary action is generated from the corresponding rhetic and/or locutionary action either by simple generation, due to the presence of certain accompanying mental states, or by conventional generation, due to the existence of certain rules (or both[25]); whereas, by contrast, a perlocutionary action will be generated causally, through the production of a certain effect in the hearer (more on which below in section 5). And indeed, there have been broadly two camps in theorizing about illocutionary acts: some (e.g. Grice, 1989) appeal to speaker intentions (and so, arguably, simple generation) in explaining the differences between such acts; while others (Austin, 1975; Searle, 1969; Williamson, 2000) appeal to rules (and, perhaps, conventional generation).

It is important, however, to be clear about what kind of rules are at issue when considering the rule-based theories. According to Austin, for instance, 'the illocutionary act is a conventional act: an act done as conforming to a convention' (1975: 105); and this suggests that the rules in question are conventional. But Searle says that 'speaking a language is a matter of performing speech acts according to a system of constitutive rules' (1969: 38) – and as Williamson says:

> *Constitutive rules are not conventions. If it is a convention that one must φ, then it is contingent that one must φ; conventions are arbitrary and can be replaced by alternative conventions. In contrast, if it is a constitutive rule that one must φ, then it is necessary that one must φ. (2000: 239)*

Searle's view is compatible with Austin's, however: indeed, Searle himself held that 'there must be some way of invoking the underlying [constitutive] rules' (1969: 40) and so 'some conventions or other… in order that one can perform illocutionary acts' (1969: 38). Yet this compatibilist view is not forced upon us either: mightn't the underlying rules be invoked by the (recognizable) intention to do so, whether or not in accordance with a convention?

It will help to get more concrete. To that end, consider the case of assertion. Williamson maintains that assertion is governed, and indeed individuated (2000: 241), by the constitutive rule that one must assert p only if one knows p (2000: 243).[26] There might, in addition, be some convention in force in a population of language users to the effect that one must utter the sentence s – or utter it in some particular way – only if one knows p. If so, then this convention would implement the underlying constitutive rule in the language spoken by the population in question, and the illocutionary action performed on a given occasion would be conventionally generated from the phatic, or rhetic action performed on that occasion. But it is hard to see how we could specify the manner in which a sentence must be spoken in order to be governed by the conventional rule that one must utter that sentence in that manner only if one knows p. If the manner in question is given in superficial terms (e.g. with a certain intonation), then it would seem that an actor might legitimately use the sentence in that way in the absence of the relevant knowledge without thereby violating any rule (conventional or otherwise); but if it is specified in terms of deeper characteristics (e.g. seriously), then it is hard to avoid the suspicion that this must ultimately be cashed out in terms of assertion itself (e.g. with the

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[24] Though see Austin (1975: 113-115 and chapter X) for his attempts to clarify.

[25] For instance, perhaps what is required the presence of an intention to invoke a certain rule.

[26] We might speculate that conjecture is governed by the rule that one must conjecture that p only if p is sufficiently likely on one's evidence.

intention to assert), so that the resulting rule ends up constitutive, rather than conventional, after all.[27]

In any case, Williamson's (constitutive rule) view of assertion can be contrasted with that of the Gricean intentionalist, who holds that to assert that p is (roughly) to say that p intending thereby to induce in one's hearer the belief that p, in part in virtue of their recognition of this very intention;[28] or, in other words, to produce an utterance meaning that p and as meaning that p, with the intention to induce the belief that p (in part) by virtue of the recognition of that same intention. Nevertheless, I have elsewhere argued (e.g. in Ball, 2014) that Williamson's rule-based approach can be reconciled with that of the Gricean intentionalist in a certain way. In particular, I argued that assertion is governed by the knowledge rule precisely because, in those cases of assertion which explain the existence and perpetuation of the practice, speakers conform to the rule, asserting only what they know – and that this gives speakers a defeasible reason, in all cases, to conform. More specifically still, I argued that the speech act of assertion persists because of cases in which it is mutually beneficial to speaker and hearer: that in those cases, the speaker intends the hearer to believe that p in part by virtue of their recognition of this intention, just as the Gricean claims; that, moreover, the hearer believes the speaker in these cases, and indeed acquires knowledge of the proposition asserted – but that this is possible only if the speaker herself knows that p in those cases, as required by Williamson's rule.

Might my proposed hybrid account be simplified? Expressionists hold that 'performing a speech act is fundamentally a matter of expressing a state of mind, and that different kinds of illocutionary acts express states of different kinds (Harris et al., 2018: 9).[29] Suppose, then, that knowledge is a mental state (cf. Williamson, 2000). Perhaps, in the cases of assertion described above which are mutually beneficial to speaker and hearer, and which therefore perpetuate the practice, the assertions produced are expressions of knowledge in a way that is analogous to that in which e.g. wincing is an expression of pain.[30] If so, then by the same reasoning as before, assertion will be constitutively governed by the knowledge rule: in all cases, there will be a defeasible reason for speakers to assert only what they know. Similarly, some (e.g. Millikan, 1984; Skyrms, 2010) appeal to evolution and/or game theory to show that signals, which may be identified by their formal properties, have certain communicative functions; and it might be thought that if the function of assertion is the production, or activation, of hearer knowledge, a version of the above argument will go through, establishing that one must assert that p only if one knows that p. I will not pursue these suggestions further here –

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[27] If so, this may be another place at which Goldman's theory of actions breaks down. But perhaps it can be salvaged if we liberalize the notion of conventional generation so that any rule, whether conventional or not, may be appealed to.

[28] By contrast to conjecture that p might be to say that p intending thereby only to induce in one's hearer consideration of p as probable, in part in virtue of their recognition of this very intention.

[29] Harris et al. cite Green (2007) and Bar-On (2013) as advocates of this view, and suggest that expressionism is 'less intellectually demanding' (2018: 9) than Gricean intentionalism, since it does not require other-directed, self-referential intentions; they do not, however, advocate this view themselves.

[30] Turri (2011) takes (epistemically) proper assertions to be expressions of knowledge. He says, 'If asked for an analysis of this concept [i.e. expression], I would provisionally say that your assertion expresses mental state M just in case M non-deviantly causes your assertion. Expression here is a special way for concrete token mental states to manifest themselves. So in the relevant sense, to express a belief or knowledge requires that you be in the relevant token mental state.' (2011: 42) Thus, while Harris et al. describe Turri as an expressionist, this is not his view: for he thinks that some assertions are not proper, precisely because they are not expressions of knowledge; so the illocutionary speech act is not individuated by the mental state it expresses on his view. That said, the account of expression Turri offers would serve the purposes of the proposed hybrid expressionist-cum-constitutive-rule view presently under consideration.

though I note that the second approach will only be successful if assertion can be explained as invoking a convention; yet we have seen reasons already to doubt this.

How many varieties of illocutionary act are there? Austin (1970: 234) helpfully warns us against the idea that there are infinitely many uses of language, but at the same time suggests that there might be considerably many more than e.g. seventeen[31] - perhaps ten thousand or so. Of course, not all of these different uses need be different illocutionary acts. Nevertheless, it would be nice if a theory of speech acts offered some taxonomy of the various illocutionary acts that can be performed. Roberts (2018) argues, in effect, that there are three broad kinds of such act that are essential to human speech, [32] and that they are distinguished by the natures of their objects. In particular, amongst the objects of such acts, there are propositions, questions, and properties: and since there are different things one can do with each of these, there are accordingly three corresponding kinds of illocutionary speech acts; moreover, since these three (logical, or semantic) types of objects are the meanings (in context) of declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses, which are present in all human languages, each corresponding genus of illocutionary speech act is likewise linguistically universal. Roberts concedes that there are further varieties of illocutionary acts – an example might be greeting (which one can perform in English by saying, 'Hello!')[33] – but she contends that these are not present in all languages; and in that sense it might be said that they are not essential to human speech.

On this kind of picture, the difference between a conjecture and an assertion might be taken to be a difference of species within the broad genus of expressing a proposition with some force or other; and similarly, orders and suggestions might be different varieties of acts one can perform whose objects are properties.[34] It is not obvious whether this proposal, or one like it, will prove to be true:[35] but if it does, it will offer a welcome theoretical unification of the great variety of illocutionary acts.[36]

5. The Perlocutionary Act

Austin describes the perlocutionary act as '*the achieving of* certain *effects* by saying something' (1975: 121, italics original). The effects in question are plausibly taken to be causal (see below), so that (as already suggested) the perlocutionary action performed is causally generated from the illocutionary action.[37] Austin's emphasis on achievement might suggest that the effects must also be intended[38] - which would suggest an element of simple generation as well; but this is not consistent with how we in fact use (at least some of) the verbs which he suggests express perlocutionary acts. For instance, Austin (1975: 103-104) contrasts 'argue', which he regards as illocutionary, with 'convince', which he takes to be perlocutionary: yet there is nothing wrong with saying that someone argued for one thing, but their arguments were so poor that they inadvertently convinced their audience of the opposite. It

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[31] Harris and Unnsteinsson (2018: 386) suggest this is a criticism of Wittgenstein.

[32] She contrasts her proposal with that of Searle (1975), on which there are five classes of illocutionary act.

[33] See Searle (1969: 49). Roberts' own example is that of 'exclamatives: *What a lovely day it is!, How odd that was!*. But,' she says, ''so far as I know this clause-type is not universally realized across languages.' (2018: 329)

[34] Intuitively, the idea is that if I order my child to brush her teeth, what I order her to do is (have) the property of brushing her teeth; and similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, if I merely suggest this to her.

[35] For one thing, it is far from settled that the meanings of imperatives *are* properties: Portner (2007) argues that they are; but as Roberts acknowledges, some take 'an imperative clause to denote a proposition with a built-in modal component instead' (2018: 330).

[36] See Garcia-Carpintero (this volume) for relevant discussion - and a slightly different perspective.

[37] Assuming the illocutionary action can itself be generated from basic actions. The most natural way of explaining the illocutionary act is as the addition of force to the locutionary act – but of course we have already seen difficulties surrounding that latter notion in relation to Goldman's theory.

[38] See Austin (1975: 101) where the notion of a perlocutionary act is introduced. Austin there specifies even more explicitly that the effects must be intended.

seems, then, that perlocutionary acts are more like homicide (which includes manslaughter) than murder (which does not), in that they can be performed unintentionally.[39]

What is the extent of the class of perlocutionary acts? This is a difficult question. Roberts, for instance, describes performatives as 'a special class of speech acts which are self-verifying, in the sense that their very performance accomplishes a conventionally associated perlocutionary act' (2018: 349). Let's consider instead the related proposal that the performance of an illocutionary act of this kind yields a certain result that is associated with it by a rule: this allows us to gloss over the question whether the rule in question is a convention. Against this background, Roberts argues that if someone (seriously) utters 'I hereby promise…' they perform an assertion, but that that assertion is self-verifying: it is rendered true by virtue of its being made; the reason being that (there is a rule to the effect that) 'the act of asserting that one promises just *is what a promise is*' (2018: 351, italics original) – and so, the speaker does thereby issue a promise. As I read her, then, Roberts thinks that in producing the performative utterance in question, one makes an assertion, and this accomplishes the issuing of a promise, which is a perlocutionary act.[40] Searle (1969), by contrast, as we have seen, takes promising to be an illocutionary act.

Though I am sympathetic to her approach here, I am not convinced that Roberts has described this case in exactly the right way. To promise is not in general to assert that one promises: for one can promise without making such an assertion; one can, for instance, firmly assert (only) that one will perform the act in question (and not that one promises to do so). Thus, we should say instead that to promise is to overtly or publicly commit to doing something and that asserting that one promises to do that thing is (but) one way of overtly incurring such a commitment. This is nevertheless consonant with Roberts' general approach. At the same time, though, Austin stresses that perlocutionary actions involve what he calls 'certain consequential effects [of the illocutionary action performed] upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons' (1975: 101): yet if the upshot of issuing a promise is that one is committed to acting in a certain way, this result is neither a 'consequential [i.e. casual] effect' nor a matter of the feelings, thoughts, or – bearing in mind that promises can be insincere – even the actions of any of the parties involved; rather, it is a change in one's normative status - and the issuing of the promise, and the incurring of the commitment, is constituted, not caused, by the issuing of the assertion. Promising is not a perlocutionary act.

Nevertheless, it does seem to me important to distinguish between (illocutionary) speech acts on the one hand and at least some of the things one can do (performatively) with words on the other.[41] Take Austin's paradigm case of a performative: saying 'I do' in the course of a wedding ceremony is not *merely* 'reporting on a marriage' (Austin, 1975: 6); it is *also* 'indulging in it' (Austin, 1975: 6). Still, getting married is not itself (exhausted by) the performance of a speech act – it is not (just) a matter of engaging in an act of communication. Rather, it involves a change in one's social and legal status, and it therefore must involve some further institution(s) beyond those of language. Similar remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* to e.g. (a jury or an umpire) rendering a verdict or entering into a contract.

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[39] That said, maybe the linguistic evidence is not *so* clear. Can one inadvertently *insult* someone? It is natural to say that in pertinent cases the speaker *offends* the hearer – but perhaps not that she insulted him. Certainly, she didn't *try* to do so. In any case, nothing turns on this in what follows.

[40] There is a little more to Roberts' account: she also thinks that the content of the assertion is accepted by the conversational participants because it is obviously true, and not (say) because it is asserted. (Consider, by analogy, the acceptance of the proposition that there is a goat in the room when one conspicuously enters – cf. Stalnaker, 1999.)

[41] That some such distinction should be drawn is suggested by Strawson (1964) and discussed by Millikan (2005: chapter 8).

More generally, it seems to me that from the point of view of theorizing about language a simple taxonomy of speech acts is desirable - though more nuance may be required for further applications of the theory outside the narrow confines of this subject matter. For instance, while lying, or even slandering someone, are things (i.e. acts) one may do (i.e. perform) with words, they are not, on the view espoused here, taken to be moves in a language game (i.e. illocutionary speech acts).[42] In this respect, they need not be theorized in order to arrive at an understanding of language itself;[43] though of course they have broader social significance which is worthy of investigation using the tools of speech act theory.

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[42] The former, for instance, might be understood in terms of simple generation from assertion - see Goldman (1970: 27), and e.g. Fallis (2009).

[43] Harris (this volume) contends that Wittgenstein (1967) uses the notion of a language game in two ways: first, in the sense indicated at the outset of the present work; and second, to speak of a 'form of life' in which language is used. My point in the previous paragraph can be expressed in these terms by saying that not all performatives are moves in a language game in the first sense (getting married, for instance, is not); and that this is so even if they are moves in a language game in the second sense (that is, even if they involve changes within a social or institutional setting that are made using language). My present point is that many of these forms of life are not properly called 'language games' at all – we should reserve this term for the first of Wittgenstein's two notions.

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