

# First Conference Reflection

## 1 My Performance

### 1.1 During the Presentation

I was surprised at my performance during the presentation itself, and even more surprised at the professor's later evaluation of me as a "natural public speaker." I have certainly never considered myself good at speaking in front of others. It is something I prefer to avoid, if at all possible. Apparently, though, I needn't be so nervous. In any case: apart from outside feedback, I did feel that I presented the material reasonably well. I did not experience any serious fumbles, and did not (as had happened a few times while practicing) suddenly notice a gaping hole in my reasoning as I was speaking. Speed was an issue, however. When one gets into the flow of presenting it can be difficult to moderate the speed with which one moves through material, and personally I have a tendency to fling myself forward into the next thought any time there is a pause. Perhaps this is born of a subconscious notion that if I go fast enough, no one will notice my mistakes. Unfortunately any such ideas are ill-founded, because all my excessive speed accomplished was a reduction of the understanding of the audience.

### 1.2 During the Question Period

I was disappointed not to receive questions from every member of the class. Later, I came to the conclusion that there were three possible reasons for this:

1. They had understood nothing of my presentation and thus could not formulate any questions.
2. They had found the content so trivial as to be unquestionable.
3. They were struck dumb by my sheer brilliance.

The first possibility was at least part of truth. Several of the questions I did receive demonstrated confusion concerning parts of the presentation which I had intended to be simple. This indicates that the speed at which the presentation was delivered, which I discussed above, and the content itself contributed to a lack of understanding on the part of audience. My goal for my next presentation is to organize and present the material in a way that is easy to absorb, and also to present it at a speed which facilitates this.

## 2 Future Exploration

In this presentation, my primary goal was throw some light on the conversation between Bach and Searle concerning the directness of performatives. I think I succeeded in this, illuminating several problematic points in Searle's argumentation for both myself and (hopefully) my classmates. The two points which I found most interesting were Searle's claim that assertions commit the speaker to the truth of the propositional content, and his claim that performative verbs contain in their very meaning intentionality. Intentionality especially seems a fruitful path for future research and consideration.

As such, I intend to continue exploring theories of intentionality and how they relate to Searle's theory of non-assertive performatives. In the process I hope to uncover much more about the nature of performatives in general, and throw light upon the overall structure of the performative debate. As we read more and more, I find myself increasingly frustrated with authors using competing terminology and ignoring parts of the debate which they would do well to acknowledge. This leads to an overall debate which resembles a maze, or perhaps a snarl of wire. This cannot necessarily be blamed on the authors, who after all encounter the same mess when they begin to tackle the issue of performatives.

Of course, summarizing and explaining the *entire* performative debate is a goal radically beyond the scope of this course. I simply wish to contribute my small light to myriad of lights already exploring the darkness that is the nature of performative utterances. I will seek big-picture understanding through the route of intentionality.