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SPEAKER MEANING AND ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS

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One trend in current discussions of speech acts is to follow Strawson in viewing a Gricean analysis of speaker meaning as central to an analysis of illocutionary acts.[1] It is reasonable to suppose that a speaker performed an illocutionary act only if he meant something, and the conditional in the other direction, while perhaps not so apparent, is certainly plausible enought to merit investigation. Efforts in this general direction have not, however, met with much success. Searle, despite his proclaimed goals, never provides more than the conditions for several particular act types, and then only when the speaker is using an explicit performative sentence.[2] Strawson admits that the list of conditions he provides is probably neither necessary nor sufficient.[3] In *Meaning*[4] Schiffer has produced what is certainly the most thorough and sophisticated of attempts to carry out Strawson's program. Although this effort is the high-water mark of such attempts, the range of counter examples to Schiffer's analyses suggests that serious revision is in order.

In what follows I will show why Schiffer's emendation fails to provide an adequate basis for a speaker meaning theory of illocutionary acts, and then indicate the only direction I believe a modification of the analysis can take if it is to avoid these difficulties. Schiffer is the point of departure because of the complexity and subtlety of his analysis. He has conquered many of the kinds of difficulties which confronted Grice's analysis of speaker meaning, and should Strawson's speaker-meaning program succeed, Schiffer's account would appear to have the best chance among current options of instantiating that vision. Should his analysis of speaker meaning fail to provide an adequate core for an analysis of illocutionary acts so should other current entrants.

Schiffer is able to overcome problems which beset Grice because of the modifications he effected in Grice's analysis of speaker meaning – the central task of his work. He divides cases of speaker meaning into two classes; the speaker, S, either meant that P (intended that the audience, A, was to believe something) or meant that A was to Ψ (that A was to do something.) This is

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the definition for the assertive class. The imperative class is defined analogously. The *r* is the reason provided the audience for Ψ-ing.

S meant that *A* was to Ψ by (or in) uttering *x* iff *S* uttered *x* intending thereby to realize a certain state of affairs *E* which is (intended by *S* to be) such that the obtainment of *E* is sufficient for *S* and *A* mutually knowing* (or believing) that *E* obtains and that *E* is conclusive (very good or good) evidence that *S* uttered *x* with the primary intention

(1) that there be some *r* such that *S*'s utterance of *x* causes *A* to Ψ/r and intending

(2) satisfaction of (1) to be achieved, at least in part, by virtue of *A*'s belief that *x* is related in a certain way *R* to (the act-type) Ψ-ing.[5]

For Schiffer, then, as well as for Grice, meaning something is essentially a matter of intending in a certain way to produce a certain psychological state in the audience, either a belief or the intention to do something. Chapters II and III of *Meaning* provide an ingenious defense of the resultant complexity.

Illocutionary acts are likewise divided into two classes depending on whether *S* meant that *P* or meant that someone was to Ψ. Now, although it is sufficient to have meant something for *S* to have performed some illocutionary act, knowing what was meant is not always sufficient for determining which kind of illocutionary act was performed. For Schiffer identifying kinds of illocutionary acts requires being able to identify either what was meant, what type of reasons *A* was to have for believing that *P* or Ψ-ing, or an some cases both what was meant and what kinds of reasons *S* intended *A* to have.

That reasons might serve in this way to help individuate illocutionary acts is not unmotivated. For example, ordering and begging may have the same intended effect, *A*'s Ψ-ing – say, leaving the room. They differ in the kinds of reasons given for Ψ-ing. It is, perhaps, in the one case sympathy and in the other *S*'s (institutional?) authority. (These reasons are, of course, just examples.)

So, if *S* performed an assertive act, that act is identifiable either by the form of the characterization of *P*, hereafter (*F*)*P*; the form of the characterization of the reasons which were intended, in part, to cause *A*'s belief, hereafter (*F*)*r*; or by both. The imperative class would be described in an analogous manner although Schiffer believes that for the imperative cases the class identifiable just by what was meant is empty.

Such an account of the individuation of illocutionary acts is not implausible. If the use of language is partly a matter of getting people to do or believe certain things, it is reasonable to suppose that some uses would divide along the lines distinguishing different things to be believed or done, and different reasons for believing or doing them.

Reasonableness is not, however, enough. It is not necessary, as Schiffer's account requires, that S intend to cause A to do or believe something or to have a particular reason for believing or doing.

Assertive Cases: Objecting is an $(F)P$-identifiable act, called P-identifiable by Schiffer. Estimating is an $(F)P$ and $(F)r$-identifiable act, called P and $r(t)$-identifiable by Schiffer.

In uttering x S was objecting to A's claim that q (and objecting that P) if and only if S meant by uttering x that the fact that P constitutes a good reason for thinking A's claim that q is false.

In uttering x S was estimating that the value of so-and-so was such-and-such if and only if by uttering x S meant that the value of so-and-so was such-and-such and S intended it to be mutual knowledge* between him and A that he intended part of A's reason for believing the value of so-and-so was approximately such-and-such to be that S uttered x intending A to think that, as a result of having examined so-and-so and of having applied to his findings certain general knowledge ... S believed (he knew) the value of so-and-so was approximately such-and such.[6]

Suppose S objects that he was out of town, and so innocent of some crime. The act is identifiable not just by the content of the objection, that S was out of town. If S objected he did not just mean that he was out of town, but that he was out of town, and that this is a reason to think another claim – that's he's guilty of the crime – is false. The complexity of Schiffer's analysis obscures the fact that he is allowing different things as substituents for P, namely the content that is objected or reported or promised and the more complex form of beliefs that includes this content. The use of '$(F)P$' should clarify that the more complex form of beliefs is what identifies the act types as, for example, an objection rather than some other act type. In some cases, such as stating, they may be identical.

But, there are readily available counter examples to Schiffer's analysis. The counter examples are the result of a widely held restriction on intending to do something.[7] Generally, one cannot intend to cause something to happen as a result of performing some action unless one believes the outcome is more than just a possible outcome of the action. The restriction, in addition to having independent motivation, is one way of avoiding the result that a person could say anything, and mean, thereby, anything.

The police believe that S was near the scene of a crime. S is certain the police won't believe his claims of innocence, in particular his claims that he was somewhere else when the crime was taking place. Assuming that Schiffer's definition is roughly correct, then once the analysis of speaker meaning is

inserted into the definition provided for objecting, then if S objects he was somewhere else he must intend to cause them to believe he was somewhere else. Even though S is certain he will not be believe he could still object that he was in Washington reading a paper at the APA meeting that day. There seems to be no reason to maintain that he was not objecting that he was in Washington and, so, not at the scene of the crime.

A similar attack can also be mounted on the role given the reason A is intended to have for his belief. If S estimated it is not necessary that he intended A's reason for believing the value of so-and-so be such-and-such that (he believed) S uttered x intending A to think that S as a result of certain general knowledge he calculated the value to be this. I don't wish to challenge the view that if someone estimated an examination of the data is in some way involved in reaching the conclusion. This is possibly what separates estimating from guessing. The objection is to the status the reason has in Schiffer's analysis. The requirement placed on belief also infects the reasons clause.

S and A have a bet where each is to estimate the number of beans in a jar. A always enters these kinds of contests, usually wins them, and S knows this about A. S is quite bad at it, and S knows A knows this about him. Now A would not take S's estimate as a reason for believing that the number of beans is such-and-such, and S would know this. It would follow that S could not estimate the number of beans in the jar to A for he could not intend that he provide A with the following reason for believing that there were approximately that many beans in the jar. Using general knowledge and having looked at the available evidence S estimated there were approximately that many beans in the jar. But clearly, S can estimate to A the number of beans in the jar. Similar points can be made about other acts that are entirely, or in part, identifiable by the reasons, $(F)r$, A is to have. S need not intend that A believe anything or intend that he actually have a reason for believing to perform an illocutionary act.

Imperative Cases: The imperative acts appear better able to resist the kinds of criticisms directed against the assertive cases. Advising, ordering, recommending do seem to involve attempting to get people to do things. But this is just appearance. His analyses here fare no better.

Ordering and Advising are $(F)r$-identifiable acts.

In uttering x S was ordering A to ψ if and only if by uttering x S meant that A was to ψ and S intended it to be mutually known* between him and A that he intended part of A's reason for ψ-ing ... .

In uttering x S was ordering A to ψ if and only if bu uttering x S meant that A was to (should) ψ and S intended it to be mutually known* between him and A that he intended part of A's reason for ψ-ing be that it was in A's interest to ψ.[8]

S is said to intend to cause A to do or form the intention to do something. Suppose S is an employer with a beligerent employee he wishes to fire. He knows the employee will refuse to do certain kinds of tasks, and S orders him to perform one of these hoping that A won't comply so that he will have a reason to fire him. S's strategy depends on A not doing something, and S is certain he has a task A will not perform. He would not, then, be intending to cause A to do it or form the intention to do it. This would make his strategy self defeating which it clearly isn't. But there is no reason to deny that A was ordered by his employer to do the task. S can order with the primary intention of carrying out what he believes his duty or because he was, himself, ordered by a third party to give the order. An intention with respect to or even an interest in the hearer's response, and *a fortiori* his responding for a given reason, is not important. Indeed, there is no oddity, as there should be if the general view is correct, in saying that a person disregarded our order or disregarded our advice as we knew he would.

In performing an illocutionary act it is not necessary that the speaker intend to create a belief or intention in the audience. A person can state without any intention of being believed; he can predict just to go on record so he can say, 'I told you so.' Predicting to be able to say you told them so to a group of sceptics would be done in just those cases where the speaker did not intend to get them to believe. He could still predict.

Schiffer has considered criticisms of his definition of speaker meaning which maintain that S need not intend to create a belief or intention in order to have meant something. Although his argument is intended to be about speaker meaning it could be redirected to the counter examples of his analyses of various illocutionary acts like those given above.

Schiffer's potential response to the counter examples arises in his consideration of the lingerie example.[9]

Customer: Where is lingerie?

Clerk: Lingerie is on the fifth floor.

This case presents a problem because it is not clear in such a case that there need be any intention on the clerk's part to get the customer to believe that lingerie is on the fifth floor, yet it seems clear that he meant that it was on the fifth floor. In the discussion which accompanies this example Schiffer

claims the case is analogous to the case of the President who slips at a press conference and reveals something which he did not intend to reveal. He says the President here had a momentary intention to get someone to believe something. So, in the lingerie case it is suggested that the clerk had a momentary intention to induce a belief in the customer. If this line of reasoning can be applied to cases of ordering or advising where the speaker doesn't care whether the person complies, then in these the speaker might be said to have a momentary intention to get someone to do something. For example, when an officer routinely orders the company to attention at morning inspection he has a momentary intention.

Two objections can be made to the application of momentary intentions in these cases. First, in those cases where S knows A won't comply at the time he produces the utterance the presence of momentary intentions would mean that at the same time the speaker intended to get the person to do something (momentarily) he also did not intend to get him to do something for surely his beliefs about the possible efficacy of his utterance don't disappear as he begins the utterance and then reappear on its completion. If such conflicts regarding what we intend are possible with illocutionary acts, it certainly divorces them from the rest of our intentional actions. I don't pull the trigger intending thereby both to kill someone and not intending to kill him. If the concept of intention is to be of some help in explicating various of the phenomena of communication, then it should share some of the central features of that concept as it applies to other human action. At a minimum we're entitled to some explanation of the difference.

Secondly, there is no reason to believe that other cases have the features which lead to the description of the verbal slip case as a case where a momentary intention was present. Admitting, which seems likely, that he has correctly described the situation in the verbal slip case, the question is whether there is any reason to suppose this explanation could be extended to the lingerie example or even further to the ordering example. There is not in either of these latter situations someone saying something he did not intend or wish to say. The clerk was not wishing before and after his utterance not to reveal information about the location of lingerie. He certainly intended at least to reveal its location. We need further reasons to suppose these cases are in some way like the verbal slip case. The factors which incline us toward Schiffer's explanation of the one are missing from the other.

What is required is some modification of the intended effect to avoid these

kinds of cases. Harman has suggested that Grice's final intended effect, A believing that S believes that P rather than A believes that P is a more promising candidate for the intended effect in an analysis of speaker meaning.[10] However, this is not sufficient to avoid the kinds of counter examples which undermine Schiffer's account.

Holmes believes that Moriarty is guilty of a crime, and Moriarty knows Holmes will not believe his claims of innocence even though in this instance they are sincere. So, Holmes believes Moriarty believes himself not to be innocent, and Moriarty knows this. Moriarty could still object or state or protest his innocence even though he does not intend Holmes to believe that he, Moriarty, believes himself to be innocent.

It appears that an individual can perform an illocutionary act for any of a wide variety of reasons which don't require intending either to create beliefs or intentions in the audience. If the view that to perform an illocutionary act is to mean something is correct, then what it is that a speaker does when he means something is something he does even when he does not intend to induce a belief or intention in his audience. Independently of the speaker meaning-illocutionary act tie, there are reasons for thinking an analysis of speaker meaning should reflect this. In none of the cases provided above are there grounds for a reluctance to claim that the speaker meant such-and-such.

I suggest that what is necessary, if the speaker-meaning strategy is to have any chance of success, is a significant weakening of the intended effect.[11] That S intend to create a belief or intention in the audience is simply too strong, and merely changing the content of the intended belief will not be enough. Further, it will not do just to weaken the required psychological state to something like wanting or hoping or prefering that $(F)P$ or that A Ψ. S can order without any pro feelings about compliance. Nor need the speaker intend to create pro or can attitudes in the speaker when he performs some illocutionary act. The proposal that follows seems to me the strongest possible psychological state that could function as the intended effect.

S is merely intending to bring a certain content – that $(F)P$ or that A Ψ – to A's attention. The intended effect of an illocutionary act qua illocutionary act is quite minimal. S could then report out of, say, duty that Henry is drinking, and not because he expects or intends anyone to believe that Henry is drinking. But S does intend – how could he not – that A entertain the thought that it is true that Henry is drinking. Note that 'entertain' is used in the very restricted sense of having a certain content before one's mind.

It appears that anything stronger is too strong. Even actively considering the possibility is too strong. S might make a statement knowing that the position or the speaker himself is thought so little of the audience won't even consider whether it is true or false. But S could still state or report or object, perhaps out of a sense of duty, that it was so. But he would not be intending that anyone consider the possibility that what he says is true. So, the proposed intended effect is extremely weak. It is hard to imagine a weaker active psychological state. But anything stronger is too strong. Arguably, the success of the speaker-meaning strategy turns on the success of this particular modification of the analysis.

Now, in those cases where S intends A actually to believe what has been reported, that S so intends does not follow from the fact that S reported, but from further facts about S. In such a case the act of reporting would be closely tied to the act of creating a belief because it was the means used to induce a belief. Still, there is nothing in the act of reporting itself that involves the attempt to create a belief.

It might be charged that entertaining a thought or having a certain content before one's mind is a rather more opaque notion than a belief or intention. But we do, I think, have a fairly firm pre-theoretic grasp on having a certain content which we might believe or consider or try to realize. The analysis of the concept may be unclear, but the analyses of belief or intention are not all that obvious either.

Intending that A have the thought that $(F)P$ is not sufficient for performing an illocutionary act. There is a reasons clause in the definitions of the acts and the definition of speaker meaning that must be satisfied. It does seem that for many acts knowing the character of the reasons is necessary for identifying the act that was performed. And, the change in the intended effect will not be without effects in the reasons clause of the analysis. If the reasons clause in the definition of speaker meaning is not changed, the analysis would say that S intends A to have the reason $(F)r$ for having the thought that P is true or the thought that $A \not\Vdash$. Schiffer claims that the reason A is to have for believing P when S reports that P is something to the effect that A believe S has evidence for P. If the intended effect is changed and the rest of the analysis is left intact, then S intends part of A's reason for having the thought that P be that A believes S has evidence for P. But clearly nothing of this sort is intended to cause A to have a certain thought. The connection between hearing x and entertaining the thougth that P is not mediated by reasons

in the same way the connection between hearing x and believing that P is. People don't need reasons for being conscious of something in the same way they need reasons for believing it. A will entertain the thought provided he hears x even though he fails to recognize the form of reasons he is intended to have.

Still, it has been argued that for a great many illocutionary acts act-type identification requires reference to the character of the reason. Supposing that Schiffer is roughly correct, and that reports are in some way tied to S intending that part of A's reason for believing that P be that A believes S has evidence for P what form will this take in the new analysis? As one possibility I will offer this as a first attempt at a reasons clause in a schema for illocutionary acts with the weakened intended effect. What S has done is to provide A with a reason, that S has evidence, for believing P. A might not believe S, and, so, does not actually have a reason. S may not intend that A believe what was said, in which case he wouldn't intend to produce in A a reason for believing that P. But if reports are standardly based on evidence and people are often sincere, then a reason has been provided. It is, though, provided only conditionally. If S expects actually to play a role via his utterance in providing a belief for A, then he expects the fact that A believes S has evidence to play some role. I would like to cash out the feature of conditionally providing or making a reason for having a belief available as follows: S intends that if A actually believe P then (some particular) $(F)r$ be part of his reason for believing that P. Even though S may not intend A believe that P, when he performs the illocutionary act he intends there is some reason which fits the above conditional description. The conditional is within the scope of S's intention so there is no problem of the reasons clause being satisfied just in case S does not intend to induce a belief. The virtue of this is that reasons remain where they belong; reasons are essentially reason for believing or doing.

Then, if we utilize Schiffer-like machinery, the schema for (assertive) illocutionary acts would be roughly as follows. In uttering x S was ϕ-ing that P if and only if S meant that $(F)P$, where the intended effect in meaning that $(F)P$ is that it be mutually known* that S intended by uttering x for A to entertain the thought that $(F)P$ is true (in our weakened sense of 'entertain' – roughly, 'bring to consciousness'), and S intended (it be mutually known* that he intended) that if A believe that P then part of his reason be $(F)r$. The change from belief to entertaining the thought in the analysis

Schiffer provides of speaker meaning would not be unduly complex to carry out more precisely.

The modified intended effect does not determine the form an analysis of speaker meaning will take. A Schiffer-like analysis with its recourse to mutual knowledge* has a number of advantages. It gets all of the speaker's intentions in the open, and the overt character of the intentions does seem to separate linguistic from other ways of achieving the same ends. Part of the difference between telling something to someone and using, say, subliminal means is that if S is telling A then he must intend A to know he is being told. Further, as a consequence of this feature it escapes the counter examples directed at Grice's account. It has the disadvantage of requiring that people have an infinite amount of knowledge; it is not obvious that they do. Hence, some of Grice's formulations of speaker meaning, when supplemented with the new intended effect, might provide a more satisfactory core.

This kind of change may not save the program of identifying illocutionary acts with instances of speaker meaning. But, without it the analysis of speaker meaning is too strong.

The modifications of the analysis of speaker meaning offered here have the advantage, then, of avoiding a large class of counter examples without deserting Strawson's suggestion that to perform an illocutionary act is to mean something – a suggestion with considerable merit, and certainly worth the study it has received. It also allows room for the observation that there are wide variety of reasons a speaker might have for performing an illocutionary act – a rather pedestrian observation, but one that outpaces a number of high-powered theories.

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NOTES

[1] P. F. Strawson, 'Intention and Convention in Speech Acts,' in John Searle (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford, London, 1971).

[2] John Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge, Cambridge, 1969). On p. 54 he says, "The ground has now been laid for a full dress analysis of the illocutionary act." It is not forthcoming. That he needs performative sentences is revealed by his conditions 8 and 9, pp. 60–61. 'I'll do it,' is *not* correctly uttered iff S is undertaking an obligation as S might be predicting. Yet it can be used to promise.

[3] Strawson, p. 35.

[4] Stephen R. Schiffer, *Meaning* (Oxford, London, 1972).

[5] Schiffer, p. 63.
[6] Schiffer, pp. 99–102.
[7] H. P. Grice, 'Meaning', *The Philosophical Review* **66** (1957), pp. 377–388 offers some defense of the restriction.
[8] Schiffer, pp. 102–103.
[9] Schiffer, pp. 68–69.
[10] Gilbert Harman, 'Stephen R. Schiffer: *Meaning', The Journal of Philosophy* **71** (1974), 224–229.
[11] The suggestion that follows emerged from a series of discussions with R. M. Harnish.