

Speech Acts, the Handicap Principle and the Expression of Psychological States

MITCHELL S. GREEN

Abstract: One oft-cited feature of speech acts is their expressive character: Assertion expresses belief, apology regret, promise intention. Yet expression, or at least sincere expression, is as I argue a form of showing: A sincere expression shows whatever is the state that is the sincerity condition of the expressive act. How, then, can a speech act show a speaker's state of thought or feeling? To answer this question I consider three varieties of showing, and argue that only one of them is suited to help us answer our question. I also argue that concepts from the evolutionary biology of communication provide one source of insight into how speech acts enable one to show, and thereby express, a psychological state.

1. Introduction

In meta-ethics, the philosophy of language, aesthetics, and the philosophy of mind, the notion of expression is often invoked but not—or at least not helpfully—elucidated. When Rudolph Carnap turns his attention to it he writes:

The laughter does not assert the merry mood but *expresses* it. It is neither true nor false, because it does not assert anything, although it may be either genuine or deceptive (1935, pp. 28).

Carnap's remarks suggest that expression stands in contrast with assertion, but aside from the claim that expression can be genuine or deceptive, he tells us no more. Ayer allows that while some assertions can have an expressive dimension (so that the assertion that you have a certain emotion might also express that emotion), one can express an emotion without also asserting that one is experiencing it (1936, p. 108). He evidently sees no need to further explain the notion of expression thus invoked. Three decades later we find Wollheim characterizing a received view, which assumes a '... dichotomy between expression and what is indifferently called communication, description, assertion' (1968, p. 228). Wollheim does attempt to

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Address for correspondence: Department of Philosophy, 104 Cocks Hall, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 400780, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4780, USA.

Email: msg6m@virginia.edu

characterize the notion of expression, arguing that it is something that we do as opposed to something that befalls us; he also suggests a gloss of the notion in terms of ‘correspondence’, so that A expresses B only if A in some way corresponds to B. Obviously, in lieu of further elucidation this is not much help.¹

This pattern recurs when the notion of expression is invoked in discussion of speech acts. For instance, in *Speech Acts*, John Searle lists a number of general hypotheses concerning illocutionary acts, the first of which relates those acts to the phenomenon of expression:

Whenever there is a psychological state specified in the sincerity condition, the performance of the act counts as an *expression* of that psychological state (1969, p. 65, italics in original).²

Searle goes on to tell us that this is the case whether or not the speech act is sincere, so that even if I do not believe what I assert, that assertion is still an expression of belief. In his discussions in subsequent years, Searle, together with his collaborator Vanderveken, take the notion of expression as an unexplained explainer with respect to the properties of speech acts (Searle and Vanderveken 1985). By contrast, Bach and Harnish offer an account of how an utterance expresses something:

In uttering x, S expresses attitude A iff S utters x with the intention that an addressee H by means of recognizing this (entire) intention, take the utterance as reason to think that S has A (1979, p. 15).

This definition implies that one speaker-means whatever one expresses. In so doing it rules out the possibility of involuntary tears expressing joy, since those tears are not produced in an act of speaker meaning. Even behavior that I allow but do not produce with a communicative intention, can be expressive: Consider a scowl that is spontaneous, albeit one that I could prevent if I chose: The Bach/Harnish definition implies that it is not an expression of anger. These consequences suggest that if we are properly to elucidate the notion of expression it will be in other terms.

All explanations must end somewhere, and the notion of expression may be a primitive. However, this notion does raise questions that a deeper account of the

¹ For a detailed discussion of Wollheim’s position and its psychoanalytic commitments see Budd 2001.

² *Ibid.*, p. 65. A stronger claim occurs in *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*:

Whenever one performs an illocutionary act with a propositional content one expresses a certain psychological state with that same content. Thus when one makes a statement one expresses a belief, when one makes a promise one expresses an intention, when one issues a command one expresses a desire or want. The propositional content of the illocutionary act is in general identical with the propositional content of the expressed psychological state (1985, p. 18).

In section 6 below we shall see that this strong claim is untrue.

possibilities and limits of communication would hope to answer. One such question is as follows. Showing, as I argue in section 2, comes in at least three forms: Showing in such a way as to make an object perceptible, showing in such a way as to enable knowledge of a state of affairs, and showing in such a way as to enable knowledge of how an emotion, mood, or experience feels. Further, as I argue in section 3, expression of the sort germane to speech acts is a form of showing that enables knowledge of a speaker's psychological state. As a result, a sincere speech act shows the state that is its sincerity condition: A sincere assertion shows one's belief, a sincere promise shows one's intention, a sincere thanks shows one's gratitude. This form of showing is *showing that*, which is (not necessarily conclusive) demonstration. Yet this in turn raises the question how it is possible for a speech act to demonstrate what's within: It is, after all, difficult to see how a voluntarily produced utterance could show anything other than whatever was nomologically or logically necessary for its production. After introducing some concepts from the evolutionary biology of communication (section 4), I offer an account of how illocutionary force shows what's within that emphasizes how, in performing certain speech acts, we make ourselves vulnerable to a loss of credibility.

2. Three Forms of Showing

The commonsense notion of showing comes in three forms. First of all, I might show my courage by acting bravely. My brave behavior is good evidence of my courage. Or I might, by means of extensive calculations, show *that* there is a black hole in the center of the Milky Way. In these cases I don't make what I show perceptible; I certainly couldn't make the black hole perceptible, and it is not clear what it could mean to perceive courage. Rather, in these cases I provide compelling evidence for a conclusion that could be grasped even by someone with no capacity for vision or other sensation. A grammatical tag for this category is *showing-that*. Because my brave behavior (calculations, etc.) are good evidence of my courage (the existence of the black hole, etc.), an appropriately situated thinker aware of that evidence is in a position to know of my courage (of the black hole, etc.). Showing-that thus enables propositional knowledge.

Secondly, I might show something in such a way as to make it perceptible. I show my bruise, and thereby enable others to see that bruise. Although it is most natural to speak of showing in visual terms, showing is not limited to vision: One can show someone a rough texture (you'd need to feel the texture) or a coyote's howl (you'd have to hear it). What I show you in this sense depends on your perceptual capacities and your position in the environment. If you had electroreception like a hammerhead shark, I could show you the electrical activity in the body of a fish hiding under the sand. In that case you'd not only perceive the fish, you'd 'electroreceive' it. Likewise, even if there are a few mice in the field, and some light bounces from them onto your retina, I don't show you them from an airplane passing two hundred yards above. On the other hand, if you have

the visual acuity of a hawk I might well do so. Let us put this perceptual-knowledge enabling form of showing under the rubric of *showing- α* , where ' α ' is a singular term referring to a perceptible object or affair.

Finally, I might also *show how* something looks, feels, sounds, etc. Apply friction to a scratch-and-sniff picture of a skunk. You won't thereby smell any skunk, but if your nose is functioning properly, you will learn how skunks smell. By accurately painting Mary's profile you will show how Mary looks in profile—what she looks like from that angle—thereby enabling me to know how Mary's profile looks. I can then manifest this knowledge by reliably discriminating the Mary-like profiles from the rest. Similarly, the trepidation in my voice might enable you to know how my anxiety feels if you are sufficiently empathetic. If you are sufficiently empathetic, then hearing my voice may enable you to imagine feeling my trepidation. If you can reliably do that, then you know how I feel. Showing-how can provide qualitative knowledge for those with appropriate sensory capacities. It can also enable empathy for those with the capacity for empathy. The above three forms of showing—showing-that, showing- α , and showing-how—enable propositional knowledge, perceptual knowledge, and either experiential knowledge or empathy, respectively.

You can show me something without intending to do so, and you can show me something without my being aware that you have done so. You might, in blushing, show your embarrassment without having the slightest awareness of doing so. On the other side, you might show me your melanoma without my grasping the significance of what I see; as a result you might show it to me without my appreciating that I am seeing melanoma. Likewise I might amass evidence that taken as a whole implicates the football coach in the crime; the evidence might then show that the coach did it without my—or anyone else's—seeing its significance.³

3. Expression as Designed Showing

Consider the difference between my smiling and my coolly saying, 'I'm pleased'. The smile, at least if it is caused in the right way by a felt pleasure, shows my pleasure. It also expresses that pleasure. By contrast, the cool assertion, 'I'm pleased,' reports my pleasure, but it is not natural to describe a typical such case as either showing or expressing pleasure. Showing and expressing can be jointly instantiated,

³ This usage is to be distinguished from that of Miklósi, *et al.* (2000), who define showing as a communicative action comprising both a directional component related to an external target and an attention-getting component directing the attention of the perceiver to the informer or sender. Although I make no use of this notion here, we might call it *overt showing* to distinguish it from that used in the text. Also, this paper shares with Wharton (2003) a conviction of the importance of the notion of showing for certain aspects of communication; insofar, it shares with that work the conviction that much of so-called natural meaning deserves the attention of pragmaticists. A further elucidation of the notion of showing and its relation to expression is offered in Green 2007c.

and some speech acts might exemplify neither. However, I wish here to argue for a stronger claim, namely that all cases of expression are also cases of showing; indeed that they are cases of showing guided by design.

As the example of smiling suggests, expression differs from representation at least in that the former involves making a state of the self palpable. This is reinforced by the term's origin in the Latin 'exprimere,' meaning 'to press out'.⁴ It is also reinforced by some paradigm usages. Here is what Frederick Douglass writes as he recalls the songs he and his fellow slaves would sing while not working for their masters:

The mere recurrence to those songs, even now, afflicts me; and while I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek. To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery (*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 1845, p. 14).

The tear to which Douglass refers is an expression of feeling at least in part because it is a direct manifestation thereof. Similarly, in his *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, Charles Darwin speaks of expressive movements as revealing our thoughts and impressions more reliably and directly than do our words (Darwin, 1998, p. 359). This is supported by the fact that an expression of emotion or thought is more than an indication of that thought or emotion. Assuming indication is an evidential relation such that if A indicates B, A's presence increases the probability of B's occurrence, a construal of expression as indication would not be accurate. When I am gripped by fear, my respiration increases. As a result of this, my blood pressure increases as well. An increase in blood pressure is thus evidence—an indication in the present sense—of my fear. It is not, however, an expression of fear because its presence is compatible, even under normal circumstances, with many other etiologies. By contrast, in lieu of reasons to think that onions were being sliced near where Douglass was writing his memoirs, etc., the tear running down his cheek provides a good deal more evidence than mere indication.⁵

Again, to express my love I need to put the strength and depth of my feelings on the table—if it all possible in the form of a self-sacrificing act or pricey artifact. This, however, is just to say that to express a psychological state I must make that state knowable to an appropriate observer. Although the relation between expression and what is expressed is not always so straightforward as the relation between tears and grief, I suggest that one theme binding together different forms of expression is the ability of the expressive behavior or artifact to enable in an appropriate observer knowledge of what it expresses. Mere indication does not do as much. Nor does representation. Although some representations are produced by

⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edn., p. 934.

⁵ I offer more detailed arguments against a conception of expression as indication in Green, 2007e. Owens, (2006) also argues against such a conception.

sufficiently reliable causal chains to enable knowledge of what they represent, a representation of a state of affairs is not, *per se*, enough to enable knowledge of that state of affairs. An expression is.⁶

Expression makes something knowable to appropriate observers. Making something knowable to appropriate observers is, in turn, to show it to them. Given our tripartition of forms of showing above, this latter claim does not imply that making something knowable to an appropriate observer also makes it perceptible; it may only enable propositional knowledge. Let us keep in mind also that an association between showing and intending to show is not a logical implication. Consider, then, a proof of a proposition P I might carry out on a chalkboard. Here I have made P knowable, but that can only have been the case if, in so doing, I have shown you that P.⁷

Since expression makes something knowable to appropriate observers, and making something knowable to appropriate observers is, in turn, to show it, expression is a species of showing. As we saw in the last section, showing can occur whether or not anyone cottons on. The same goes for expression: Although I express my love, trepidation, regret, you might be too distracted, obtuse, or self-absorbed to get my drift.

Showing comes in three forms, and expression is a form of showing. Which form of showing do speech acts employ when they show a psychological state? The states that speech acts express, and thereby show, are in general not the sort that can be perceived: It is not clear how you could possibly perceive my belief, and even if it is possible—perhaps by means of some future fMRI-inspired technology—it is dubious that speech acts enable one to do this. Further, it is not plausible that there is any way that many of the states that are expressed in speech acts feel: unlike the taste of a lemon or the smell of sulfur, it is hard to believe that there is something that it is like

⁶ As we have seen, Searle says that an assertion, for instance, is an expression of belief even when the speaker lies. How we treat such a case is largely a matter of nomenclature: I prefer to say that in such a case the assertion is *expressive* of belief but does not express the speaker's belief (for he has none). (This is analogous to a usage in aesthetics in which a composer might write music that is expressive of grief without expressing her grief at all—she might be in the highest spirits.) In adopting this usage I am begging no questions against Searle, since there remains the substantial issue of how a sincere speech act shows what it expresses. Likewise, we could readily transpose the claim of the text to say that while representation does not, as such, enable knowledge of what is represented, expression of one's cognitive, affective or experiential state does enable knowledge of what is expressed. In the interests of brevity I'll refrain from such a transposition.

⁷ It might be pointed out in reply that in *telling* you something I may provide you with knowledge, and in so doing make something knowable; yet in such a case I need not have shown you anything (other than my utterance itself and anything that it logically or nomologically presupposed). Of course, many tellings provide no knowledge at all: If what I tell you is either untrue or unjustified, or I have a reputation for unreliability, I've transmitted no knowledge; at the very most I might have given you what you *take* to be knowledge. Let us then restrict ourselves to cases in which what I tell you is true, I am justified in what I say, and in which I am a reliable source of information. Remembering that showing something does not require making it available to the senses, it is, I suggest, plausible in such cases that in telling you what I do I also show you how things are. I can—at least if I am credible, correct, and justified in what I say—show you that it's raining *by* telling you that it is. What we do not yet possess, and what I hope to provide below, is an account of this fact. (My thanks to Louis deRossett for this objection.)

to believe that $2+2=4$ or that all whales are mammals. Similarly for intention, regret, contempt and other states that speech acts express: speech acts don't express how these states feel because there is no characteristic way they feel at all. As a result, the most plausible hypothesis is that speech acts express what they do by showing *that* the speaker harbors the state that they characteristically express.⁸

Adopting this hypothesis, we arrive at the view that in sincerely performing a speech act I express a psychological state by showing it in such a way as to enable propositional knowledge of it in appropriate observers. Yet expression requires more than showing-that: It must also be a product of design. Suppose a certain vein in my forehead bulges when and only when I am angry, and that its doing so is not under my direct voluntary control. Then the bulging of that vein shows my anger. It does not, however, express that anger. Likewise for an increase in skin conductivity under conditions of stress: That increase might show stress, but it doesn't express it. What, then, is the difference between my bulging vein and Douglass' tear? I suggest that the difference is that the latter, but not the former, is *designed* to show a state of the agent. The vein's tendency to bulge is not designed to convey information, but rather is designed to convey blood, and to convey extra blood in situations of stress. By contrast, it is a plausible empirical hypothesis that tears are designed to show grief, sadness and related emotions.⁹

⁸ Many cases of self-expression employ more than one of the above three ways of showing at once. Remember this passage from Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* in which Hester Prynne first emerges from prison?

Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped. It may be true, that, to a sensitive observer, there was something exquisitely painful in it. Her attire, which, indeed, she had wrought for the occasion, in prison, and had modeled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity (Hawthorne, 1990, p. 53).

Hawthorne construes the wild and picturesque peculiarity of Prynne's attire as expressing her desperate recklessness. It does not do so by making her recklessness perceptible. Instead, I suspect that it does so by a combination of showing-that and showing-how. Prynne's clothing shows her recklessness in part by being evidence of it: Given the gravity of the occasion of her emerging from prison, her dressing this way demonstrates her reckless mood. In addition, her attire enables others to know how her mood feels: They can see, and thereby feel, her desperate recklessness in that attire, and that is why the spectacle is exquisitely painful to the sensitive observer. Showing-that, showing- α , and showing-how, are often intermingled in complex ways, yet to understand the varieties of expressive behavior we do well to disentangle them.

⁹ I am suggesting that it is implicit in our commonsense view of the nature of tears that they have the job of showing emotion. That commonsense view might of course be false, and if it is our commonsense is incorrect in ascribing to tears an expressive role. Yet even if that is so, we will have an explanation of why there intuitively seems to be a difference between tears and the bulging vein. Also, I argue elsewhere (forthcoming) for a third condition on expression, namely that what is expressed must be an introspectible state. (This is why one can express fear but not, for instance, honesty, even though one can perform actions that show one's honesty, and that are designed to do so. It is also why one can report, but not express, psychological states one only knows by such third-personal means as psychotherapy—see Owens, 2006 for a fuller discussion of the latter sort of case.) The point, however, is not required for our inquiry here, and so I shall not defend it further.

The design lying back of expression might—as is most likely the case in Douglass’s scenario—be the product of natural selection. Instead it might be the product of artificial selection. Alternatively it may be the work of an intelligent, sentient agent. (Even if evolution by natural selection is an intelligent process, it is not a sentient process.) How precisely to conceptualize the contributions of culture according to this partition is an open question, but not one we need to settle here. What is clear is that culture does create expressive institutions. A gesture, for instance, could begin life in a one-off case of speaker meaning, and then grow into a conventional expression of contempt. Perhaps an extended middle finger is an icon of sexual violation, and its first use was intelligible as such in the absence of any convention governing it. Whether the gesture’s iconicity helps to account for its role in Western culture is a question for an anthropology of gestures; by now, however, culture has endowed that gesture with an expressive significance. That means, in our terms, that the extended middle finger shows, and has been designed to show, contempt. (I have not yet explained *how* it does this; I turn to that task in section 5.)

Speech acts, then, are designed to provide propositional-knowledge-enabling evidence of psychological states. When I make an assertion that it is raining, I don’t state that I believe that it’s raining. I do nevertheless express that belief so long as I am sincere. Given what we have suggested so far, this also means that assertion is a device we use to show our beliefs, and (so long as we are sincere) in fact show them by providing sufficient evidence for them. A speaker who is not sincere provides good evidence for a belief that she lacks, and thus only appears to show her belief.¹⁰

Two questions naturally arise here. First of all, the suggestion we have offered about the sort of tool that speech acts are seems in tension with a view of communication that has many adherents. According to that view, the role of such acts as assertion is not to convey information about speakers’ mental states; rather its role is to convey information about the world.¹¹ By contrast we have suggested that, for instance, assertion is a tool whose job is to show one’s belief. However, we need not take issue with the view of the relevant range of speech acts associated with Dummett and McDowell. Instead, ecumenicism is a better

¹⁰ We have not yet offered an answer to the question how speech acts such as assertion show what’s within; instead we are still merely elucidating the explanandum. Also, the text is not meant to imply that speakers make assertions with the, or an, intention of showing their belief, any more than does the fact that scowling is designed to show anger, imply that those who scowl intend to show their anger.

¹¹ ‘The primary point of asking questions is not to acquire beliefs about one’s interlocutor’s beliefs, but to find out how things are. Correspondingly, the primary point of making assertions is not to instil into others beliefs about one’s own beliefs, but to inform others—to let them know—about the subject matter of one’s assertions (which need not be, though of course it may be, the asserter’s beliefs)’ (McDowell, 1980, p. 38).

option since one view supports the other. The reason is that a speech act can be a device for showing a psychological state, which is in turn designed to convey information about the world. Speech acts are human artifacts, while psychological states are not, but our discussion of 'design' above construes that notion broadly enough to include both possibilities. With the suggested grafting in place, we may now say that speech acts are designed to provide propositional-knowledge-enabling evidence of psychological states, whose role is in turn to convey information about the world. Note also that this does not imply that when I perform a speech act I am aiming to show my state of mind. I *may* intend to do this, but need not. Rather, the characteristic consciously accessible purpose of a speech act such as assertion is to tell you how things are. The functions of the tools we use need not be fully reflected in our conscious purposes in using them.

A second question: It is now well established that children under a certain crucial age don't seem able to ascribe beliefs either to others or themselves. In spite of this, children under this age seem able to communicate fairly reliably, and they seem able to perform speech acts (Breheny, 2006). This may appear to contradict the idea that the job of a speech act is to show a psychological state, since the relevant group of children doesn't appear able to introspect on their own psychological states. However, requiring of a speech act that its job is to show a psychological state does not imply that for such an act to show such a state the speaker need introspect on anything. I give voice to many of my beliefs via assertion without introspection. What is crucial is that what is expressed be the *sort* of thing that can be known by introspection. Further, a young child can harbor a state upon which she cannot introspect without this fact preventing that state from being the sort of thing that can be known by introspection: Had she the requisite capacities, she would be able to introspect on her beliefs. By contrast, there are no capacities within the range of her normal cognitive development that would enable her to introspect upon, say, the iron content in her bloodstream.

It should also be stressed that acts of speech and acts of communication are not the same as speech acts. Acts of speech are acts in which words are uttered; acts of communication are acts in which information is conveyed from one system to another. Neither of these is a speech act. Speech acts are acts of the sort that can be performed by saying that one is doing so (Green, 2007b). Holding that in some cases a young child might perform an act of speech, or an act of communication, even in the utterance of an indicative sentence, does not therefore commit us to the stronger position that she has performed a speech act. Further, we may be on strong ground in denying that young children can perform the full range of speech acts while agreeing that they can perform acts of speech and acts of communication. Just what they can do is an open empirical question. However, the mere fact that a young child can utter an indicative sentence *p*, and thereby convey the information that *p*, as well as justify an ascription to her of a belief that *p*, do not imply that she has asserted that *p*.

4. Conventions, Norms and Handicaps

What we have established so far allows us to focus our central question: How can the use of an illocutionary force constitute strong enough evidence of a psychological state to enable knowledge in an appropriate observer—that is to express that state?¹² One answer comes pat. It is suggested by Searle's use of the 'counts as' locution in the quotation with which we began:

Whenever there is a psychological state specified in the sincerity condition, the performance of the act counts as an *expression* of that psychological state (1969, p. 65, italics in original).

In saying that the performance of an illocutionary act counts as the expression of a psychological state, Searle is being consistent with the *force conventionalism* that runs throughout *Speech Acts* and other works. According to a strong version of this view (further discussed in Green, 2007d), for every speech act that is performed, there is some convention that will have been invoked in order to make that speech act occur. This convention transcends those imbuing words with their literal meaning. Thus, force conventionalism implies that in order for use of 'I promise to meet you tomorrow at noon,' to constitute a promise, not only must the words used possess their standard conventional meanings, there must also exist an extra-semantic convention to the effect that the use, under the right conditions, of some such words as these constitutes a promise. Austin espoused this view¹³, and Searle follows him (1969, p. 37). Searle does, however, adopt a weaker form of force conventionalism than does Austin in leaving open the possibility that some speech acts can be performed without constitutive rules; Searle considers the case of a dog requesting to be let outside (*ibid.*, p. 39). Nevertheless Searle does contend that speech acts are characteristically performed by invoking constitutive rules.

In the above-quoted passage Searle seems to be claiming that it is also an aspect of the conventional nature of speech acts that they conventionally express what they do. Given our account of expression as a species of showing, that commits him to the view that speech acts conventionally show what they do.¹⁴ However,

¹² My focus is on the question how we show the modality (its being a belief, a desire, etc.) of an psychological state, not its content. Natural language is typically though not exclusively used to show the content of one's states, and it is no accident that we say that sentences *express* propositions. For an account of how language shows the content of one's psychological state emphasizing the relation between attitude ascription and measurement, see Green, 1999a.

¹³ For instance in his characterization of 'felicity conditions' for speech acts, Austin holds that for each speech act:

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 ... (1962, p. 14).

¹⁴ I assume that 'It is a convention that ...' is an extensional context: If it is a convention that Hesperus is venerated at midnight, then it is also a convention that Phosphorus is whether or not all parties to this convention are aware of this fact.

it's quite unclear how an entity could be conventionally imbued with the capacity to provide evidence for something distinct from itself. What implies what is a matter beyond our control, conventional or otherwise; as Geach (1976) once put it, no power in heaven or earth could make one proposition imply another if it does not already do so. I take the same point to carry over to the issue of what is evidence for what: Whether a proposition or state of affairs is evidence for another is not something we can decide, even by unanimous referendum.¹⁵ The wearing of a crucifix around one's neck is, no doubt, a conventional signal of one's religious affiliation. However, the donning of such a symbol couldn't show one's persuasion unless it were backed up by some norm—for instance a norm precluding the wearing of such symbols as mere fashion accessories. Similarly, if speech acts show the states they do with the aid of norms, we'll need a good deal more clarity on how those norms work than authors like Searle have offered. For help I'll consider some concepts from the evolutionary biology of communication.

A core issue in the evolutionary biology of communication concerns the conditions under which signaling systems are stable. Where signalers' interests are at least roughly coordinate, they have no incentive to deceive one another. Humans and honeyguide birds (*Indicator indicator*), for instance, depend on one another to find and destroy beehives, and neither has a motive for deception (Isack and Reyer, 1989). As a result, we may expect honeyguide signals directed toward humans to be reliable. In more agonistic situations, creatures derive an advantage from deceptive signaling. To escape predation some anurans bear bright colors even when they are neither poisonous nor noxious. Although in any given case a signal can misrepresent, the stability over time of any signaling system mandates that it be on the whole reliable. If the only thing that ever glowed deep under the sea were the lure of the anglerfish, he'd be out of business after a while: The fish that tend to pursue his deceptive lure would eventually be eaten and thus stop contributing genes to their species. Similarly, the proliferation of 'cheating' frogs, which bear bright colors without being noxious, would threaten, over time, to make frog coloration something predators can ignore. Natural selection thus tends to find ways of vouchsafing the veracity of signals among creatures whose interests are not coordinate.

To help articulate this last thought, here is some terminology inspired by the evolutionary biology of communication. A *cue* is any feature of an entity that conveys information (including misinformation). That information might pertain to how things were, how things are, how things will be, or how things ought to be.¹⁶

¹⁵ Perhaps influenced by Searle, Davis (2002, p. 527) holds that one who asserts that *p* conventionally implies that she believes that *p*. While, as I mention below, other aspects of Davis' discussion are salutary, in the sequel I make no use of the idea that an act could conventionally imply anything distinct from itself.

¹⁶ Strictly, whether something is a cue, and of what, is relative both to the receiving organism and its ecological niche: My preferred usage is *C cues information I relative to receiver R in niche N*. That is why paw prints are cues of a predator's presence for you or me but not for an aphid; it is also why pheromones are cues of an ant's presence for aphids but not for you or me. Nevertheless, to facilitate presentation I shall elide these details in the text below.

A *signal* is a cue that was designed for its ability to convey the information it does. The design in question may be the result of natural selection, artificial selection, or conscious intention.¹⁷

To illustrate these ideas, observe first of all that some ways of vouchsafing the veracity of signals are beautifully simple: A tiger reaches as high as it can on the bark of a tree to make scratches marking its territory (Thapar, 1986). The height of the scratch is thus a reliable indicator of its size. Its size is in turn a good indicator of its ability to defend its territory—also known as Resource Holding Potential (RHP). The height of the scratch marks, then, shows, and perhaps also signals, its ability to defend its territory. Consequently, the chances of a deceptive such signal are very small. Another example is funnel-web spiders, *Agelenopsis aperta*, who find themselves in contests over webs. Two spiders will vibrate on a disputed web. Reichert (1978, 1984) found that if two contesting spiders differ in weight by 10% or more, the lighter spider retreats 90% of the time rather than fighting. Furthermore, a losing spider can be made into a winner by placing a weight on its back. This strongly suggests that vibrating on a web is a spider's signal of its size. Further, in the absence of scientists placing weights on their backs, funnel-web spiders can't fake these signals. Signals that can only be faked with great difficulty as a result of physical limitations on the organism are *indices*.

Another way of ensuring the difficulty of faking a signal is by making it more costly than is required just to produce a signal of that type. Male peacocks have flamboyant trains making them less agile and easier for predators to spot; growing such feathers also costs extra calories (Zahavi and Zahavi, 1997). Such trains nevertheless give males an advantage in sexual selection (Petrie, Halliday and Sanders, 1991). An ostentatious display is like saying, 'Just think of how fit I must be if I can survive with this baggage!'¹⁸ Or consider the male stalk-eyed fly, *Cyrtodiopsis dalmanni*. In choosing mates, females prefer males with long eye-stalks (Wilkinson and Reillo, 1994; David *et al.*, 1998). This is in spite of the fact that these appendages make the male slower and easier to spot for predators, and are costly to produce. Observing that these appendages provide evidence of the male's viability—since he'd have to be unusually fit to survive with them—Maynard Smith and Harper (2004, pp. 33–4) hypothesize that the eye-stalks are also signals of the male's viability. Signals, such as these, that can only be faked with great

¹⁷ When the process of natural selection accounts for a trait as an adaptation, that shows it to be designed without justifying the inference that there must have been an intelligent designer. Also, this definition of a signal is close to the notion of communication found in Johnson-Laird 1990, and may be seen as a generalization of a notion offered in recent evolutionary biology. Maynard Smith and Harper offer the following definition: 'We define a "signal" as any act or structure which alters the behaviour of other organisms, which evolved because of that effect, and which is effective because the receiver's response has also evolved' (Maynard Smith and Harper, 2004, p. 3). I shall instead call this a *biological signal*, leaving room for a more general notion that applies to things other than organisms and to processes other than evolution.

¹⁸ We are not attributing any such thought to peahens, however. Ethologists instead merely take it that peahens act as if they harbor such thoughts by being selected for their ability to prefer flamboyant trains.

difficulty as a result of being costly to produce are *handicaps*. A signal's being costly to produce is thus one way of being difficult to fake because of limitations on an organism. A handicap is, accordingly, a special type of index.¹⁹

An index not only signals some property of the organism; it also shows that property: the height of the tiger's scratch marks shows its size, as does the extent of the spider's vibration. Further, it is its ability to show, rather than merely signal, this property that vouchsafes the stability of this signaling strategy. We may sum up the major conceptual connections in the diagram below.

The set of things that are shown only overlaps with, rather than containing, the sets of indices and handicaps. The reason is that these latter are difficult but not impossible to fake: We can readily imagine a tiger jumping from one tree, and while in midair making a scratch mark in another tree higher than it can reach

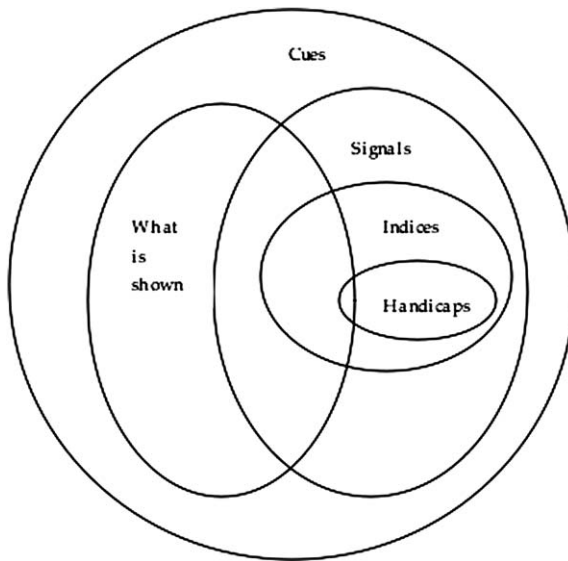


Figure 1 Relations among cues, signals, showing, indices, and handicaps.

¹⁹ Grafen (1990) proves an important result concerning handicaps. Put in terms of sexual selection, suppose that a male gives a perceptible 'advertisement' a , of his overall quality q . Then his phenotype is given not just by q , but also by the function $a=A(q)$. $A(x)$ is thus a function by which the male converts his quality q into an advertisement. The female has a rule for determining the quality of a male from his advertisement, $p=P(a)$, where p is the perceived quality of the male. The female's fitness is at a maximum when $p=q$, that is when her function accurately determines the male's quality. An evolutionary equilibrium is a pair of functions, $a=A^*(q)$, $p=P^*(a)$ such that if the male follows A^* , then the best the female can do in reply is follow P^* , and *vice versa*. Grafen proves that if a signaling equilibrium exists, it will be such that (i) a female can infer a male's quality from his advertisement, (ii) signals are costly to produce, and (iii) signals are more costly for males of low quality than for males of high quality.

from the ground; and so on. What matters is that indices and handicaps reliably, rather than infallibly, show what they signal.

The examples of handicaps I've given thus far are pretty rigid: The peacock's tail feathers, the magnitude of the spider's vibration, and the stalk-eyed fly's eye-stalks can't be modified, either intentionally or in response to environmental changes. Some handicaps can be produced in response to environmental stimuli. In African Elephants, for instance, musth is a condition that occurs in males only during the mating season (Poole, 1989), and it has been hypothesized to be an example of a handicap (Maynard Smith and Harper, 2004, p. 35). If that hypothesis is correct, musth is a handicap that is more flexible than either tail feathers or eye-stalks. Nevertheless it still seems a far cry from the signaling possibilities available to primates, to say nothing of our own species.²⁰

As a first step in bridging this gap let us notice that one kind of cost social mammals can incur is a loss of status. Primates, for instance, expend extraordinary effort maintaining social hierarchies. Baboons cultivate relationships that determine mating and grooming protocols. Who gets to groom whom, and when, are the foci of considerable attention and sometimes the subjects of lethal disputes (Cheney and Seyfarth, 2007). Indeed, one baboon can spend years acquiring the 'rights' to groom a high-ranking conspecific, and a false step in that process might prevent her passing on her genes (Barrett *et al.*, 1999). Analogously, I take it as uncontroversial that within our own species, one's status within the family, on the playground, in one's professional community, and elsewhere is also paramount. Although grooming rights may be slightly less crucial in our species than in other primates, other types of status loom large. These take many forms, but I shall focus on just one: *credibility*.²¹

Finding someone credible is a matter of believing what they say to be reliable; it is also a matter of believing them to be sincere if their utterance admits of sincerity. (As we shall see in section 6, not all utterances, not even all speech acts, admit of sincerity.) A credible assessor can be trusted to be right and sincere; a credible promisor can be depended upon both to intend to keep her promise and keep it; and so on. The more credible a person, the more likely we are to take their utterances at face value. Appreciating this permits a natural refinement of the

²⁰ While offering compelling suggestions about the possible evolutionary genesis of semantic representation, Brink and Gärdenfors mischaracterize the possibilities of animal communication, writing, 'Language, as opposed to animal signaling, is not bound by the actual' (2003, p. 485). The contention is that only symbolic representation enables creatures to communicate about states affairs other than those immediately available to perception. However, a creature's fitness (including resistance to disease, likely health of offspring, etc.) is not immediately available to perception, and yet it is precisely the point of the handicap principle to explain how animals communicate their fitness to one another, particularly, although not exclusively, in the context of sexual selection.

²¹ Desalles (1998) offers a more general discussion of the relation of status to communication comporting with the spirit of the present proposal. Also, Stalnaker (2006) explores the notion of credibility in relating game theory to communication.

well-known 'scorekeeping' model of conversational dynamics pioneered by Stalnaker (1972, 1973, 1984), Lewis (1979, 1980) and Thomason (1990). On that model, interlocutors perform speech acts whose content is accepted into 'common ground' so long as no one demurs from the proffered contribution. Conversational 'score' can be tracked by the contents of common ground (along, optionally, with other factors such as relations of salience, standards of precision, domain of discourse, and so on), which in turn determines what interlocutors may presuppose in subsequent speech acts; it can also determine the very content of those speech acts via the process of implicature (Bach, 1994). A natural refinement of this picture would keep tabs on which interlocutors are credible and to what extent, and that will in turn determine the *weight*—as one might call it—of their conversational contributions. An expert's pronouncements on her field of interest have more weight than do those of a dabbler, likewise for a *London Times* as compared with a supermarket-checkout magazine. It is, likewise, precisely the gravamen of *ad hominem* arguments to undermine the weight of a person's remarks.

One's credibility, then, determines the weight of one's pronouncements, and for this reason many of us jealously guard that credibility. A speaker whose remarks are, in our sense, weighty, enjoys a presumption in her favor: A proffered assertoric contribution to common ground puts the onus on one who would challenge her to give good reasons for that challenge. ('I know the expert consensus is that p, but I submit that a superior alternative explanation is the following ...'.) By contrast, one whose remarks are in the appropriate sense, light, creates no such burden, and may even be disallowed all contributions save those that are either self-evident or that can be substantiated by immediately available evidence.

Our credibility comes under threat every time we perform a speech act requiring adequate justification, or whose content could be incorrect, or that could be insincere. Friendships, marriages, careers, company stock values, even governments can be brought down through a loss of credibility, and I will suggest that it is the threat of such loss that enables us to discern a connection between speech acts and handicaps.²²

A signal S's being a handicap may appear incompatible with a signaler O's being able to choose whether or not to produce S. After all, O's having a choice in the matter seems precisely to show that S is not an index (save perhaps of S's choice),

²² A more developed treatment would acknowledge the fact that speakers are typically more credible on some topics than others, so that credibility should be relativized to topic. In the interests of brevity I'll dispense with that refinement here. Also, van Rooij (2003) suggests that polite linguistic behavior of the kind studied by Brown and Levinson may be seen as a handicap: According to this suggestion, one who make a polite request ('Could you possibly ...') incurs a loss of social status in the hopes of getting the addressee's interests to line up with her own. Unfortunately, it does not seem plausible in general that polite speakers incur a loss of status: They are, perhaps, not being as verbally aggressive as they might be, yet it is dubious that those of the highest status must also be the most aggressive. A CEO, dean, or general might be scrupulously polite without jeopardizing her status at all. Accordingly, while I applaud van Rooij's attempt to connect human communication with the handicap principle, his particular claims are not compelling.

and thus not a handicap. This, I suggest, is where norms come in. A norm can make a signal costly to produce not by exacting calories or territory, but rather by making an agent *subject to a loss of credibility*. For a norm might have the following schematic content:

One who produces S is to be in condition C; otherwise she is subject to a loss of credibility.

A loss of credibility will, as we have suggested, reduce the weight of a speaker's speech acts, thereby hobbling her ability to serve as a conversational 'player'. As the likelihood and severity of a loss of credibility increase, so does the exposure to risk for those who produce S without being in condition C. Exposure to risk does not, of course, guarantee harm: I could go all my life without a seatbelt or a scratch. However, even in such a case I have paid a price in the sense of having closed off a possibility. As Adams (2001) points out, a creature can 'burn its bridges' by performing an action that closes off options that would otherwise have been open. Transposed to the norm-schema displayed above, we may say that this norm guarantees that one who produces S forfeits the option of failing to be in condition C without exposure to censure. The more specific norms that we formulate below will conform to this pattern.

If, then, a norm conforming to the above schema is in force, and it is common knowledge that it is, a signal S of condition C will be difficult to fake precisely because of the cost involved. For this reason producing S will be an index of C by being a handicap. Further, when such a norm is in force the production of S will be a handicap even when producing S is subject to an agent's choice. In addition, the condition of which S is an index need not be the organism's overall quality as that term is used in note 20. Instead it could be any feature of the organism that it has reason to signal. For instance it could be something on which O can introspect if she is possessed of a capacity for introspection. As a result, if O can signal one of her introspectible states by incurring a handicap, then O may be able to express that state as well. Thus consider the one-word expression of gratitude, 'Thanks!'. Its use is governed by the norm:

One who utters and speaker-means 'Thanks!' is to be feeling gratitude toward her addressee; otherwise she is subject to a loss of credibility.²³

No test is, of course, going decisively to settle whether a speaker has respected this norm. However, we have many ways of justifying conclusions about a person's sincerity: My thanking a person and then sniggering behind their back; my failure

²³ It may be possible to speaker-mean one's thanks without uttering any words, perhaps with a gesture. One can also utter the expression without speaker-meaning it, for instance on stage. That is why neither of the two conditions is redundant.

to show any inclination to return the kindness for which I purport to show gratitude; my scoffing at others who show similar kindness, are all evidence that my ostensible gratitude is hollow.

The hypothesis that some such norm as the above governs the use of 'Thanks!' explains how one's sincere use of that word can express one's gratitude: It does so by enabling the speaker to incur the risk of a loss of credibility if she is not feeling gratitude. As such it justifies the thought, whether consciously entertained or not, in the addressee: She wouldn't say it if she didn't feel that way. (Compare: That fly must be awfully fit to sport those flamboyant eye-stalks!²⁴) The speaker thus expresses gratitude by performing an act that shows, and was designed to show this psychological state.

Our hypothesis does not imbue linguistic communities with the power conventionally to stipulate that one thing is evidence for another. What linguistic communities do is stipulate that one action-type (saying 'Thanks!' without feeling gratitude, etc.) is to merit an agent's censure through her loss of credibility. Such norms, when promulgated in such a way as to achieve the status of common knowledge, enable agents to show their psychological states.²⁵

5. Expressive Speech Acts as Handicaps

We now have an account that explains how in principle a speech act can show an agent's psychological state. That account also enables us to discern how a speech act can express such a state: We need only observe that psychological states are characteristically introspectible, and that it is among the functions of some speech acts to show such states. However, it may seem that in producing this account of how speech acts express what's within we have painted ourselves into a corner. For each indicative sentence, there are many psychological states that it can express—one for each speech whose content it is, and for which Moorean absurdity is possible.²⁶ Surely, however, we do not have as many distinct norms as this?

This question is also an apt one for some approaches to the evolution of language. Whereas Grassly *et al.* (2000) dismiss the possible relevance of the handicap

²⁴ Unlike the female stalk-eyed fly, conspecifics in my linguistic community might well entertain such a thought. It does not follow that when they do so it must be *consciously* entertained. An emerging consensus in experimental psychology now posits a great many cognitive processes that may but need not be conscious. Instead they are *automatic* in a sense elucidated by Bargh and Chartrand, 1999 and Wilson, 2003. Pragmatic processes are a likely candidate for inclusion in this group.

²⁵ Similar points apply to the single-digit salute we discussed in the last section: It is governed by the norm that one overtly extending this finger is to be feeling contempt toward the 'addressee'. Also, it should be clear that this norm and the one for thanking are not the only norms governing these acts. The latter, for instance, is to be used to *acknowledge* one's gratitude.

²⁶ Green (2007a) elucidates the notion of Moorean absurdity.

principle to human language, Lachmann *et al.* (2001) come closer to discerning its significance. Grassy *et al.*, had taken the unit of human communication to be the NP, and predictably failed to discern any significant signaling cost in production of an NP as required by the handicap principle. To their credit, Lachmann *et al.* by contrast take the unit of significance in human language to be the sentence. However, ignoring illocutionary force leads them into a proliferation of norms, as they admit:

To employ a Zahavian mechanism to stabilize reliable signaling, then, signal cost will somehow have to be associated not with the component phonemes or words, but instead with each sentence as a whole (Lachman *et al.*, 2001, p. 13193).

These authors concede, as they should, that they have no account of how such an association could be effected: Such a proposal evidently would require a transfinite number of norms—many for each sentence of every natural language. Yet no such proliferation is needed. The reason is that each type of illocutionary force for which Moorean absurdity is possible is characterized at least in part by a norm determining what psychological state the user of that force is to be in; in some cases, furthermore, the norm also mandates some feature of that state—as justified or not, for instance.

Here is a development of such a proposal blending features of the scorekeeping model of conversation with an elucidation of the norms characteristic of speech acts. Searle characterizes assertion of *p* as, ‘an undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs’ (1969). As Collins (1996) observes, such an undertaking puts the assertor in a position such that she is correct on the issue of *p* if *p*, and incorrect on that issue otherwise. But assertion does more than this: One who guesses that *p* is also correct or not depending on how things are with *p*. When a speaker asserts *p*, it is sometimes within the rights of an addressee to reply with the challenge, ‘How do you know?’; in other cases, as we have just seen, the onus is on the addressee to give reasons for challenging the claim. In either case, in response to a proper challenge the assertor should either offer reasons of her own, or defer to another’s authority; otherwise she should retract the challenged assertion.²⁷ A norm governing assertion might, accordingly, go somewhat as follows:

One who asserts *p* is to believe *p* with justification adequate for knowledge; otherwise she is subject to a loss of credibility.

²⁷ Williamson (1996) is, accordingly, incorrect to hold that in response to an assertion it is appropriate to reply with the challenge, ‘How do you know?’ This is inappropriate in response to an acknowledged authority; instead in such a case the challenger must give reasons for doubting the claim. Also, the present approach may be seen as, *inter alia*, an elaboration of Davis’ 2002 discussion of how we can gain knowledge from other conversational contributions besides testimony.

I hasten to add, however, that for present purposes we need not settle current controversies surrounding the alleged norms governing assertion. Perhaps Williamson (1996, 2000) is correct that one is only to assert what one knows; perhaps on the other hand weaker norms are more appropriate. What matters for our purposes is that assertion is governed by a norm of sincerity; that the sincerity condition be a belief, and that the belief be justified.

Compare assertion with conjecture: If I offer P as a conjecture, it is always inappropriate to reply with, 'How do you know that?' A legitimate challenge would instead involve showing that what I say is demonstrably wrong or very unlikely. Likewise, a conjecture should be backed with some justification or other; otherwise, put it forth as a guess. However, if you do put it forth as a conjecture, the required justification need not be as powerful as that for assertion (Green, 1999b).

Assertions, conjectures, suggestions, guesses, presumptions and the like are cousins sharing the property of commitment to a propositional content. They differ from one another in the norms by which they are governed, and thereby in the nature of that commitment. Consequently, a speaker incurs a distinctive vulnerability for each such speech act—including a liability to a loss of credibility and, in some cases, a mandate to defend what she has said if appropriately challenged. These liabilities to error, exposed insincerity, and injunctions to defend put the speaker at risk of losing conversational 'weight' in the community in which she has a reputation (Brandom, 1983; Green, 2000b, 2002). That is precisely what it is to stick out one's neck.

Assertions, conjectures, suggestions, presumptions, and the like thus carry a cost. Speakers pay it because the information they contribute to the group can help achieve its aims as well as enhancing their own status therein. Yet in the absence of some mechanism for vouchsafing honesty, these speech acts will be prone to abuse by those who take assertion and other speech acts lightly in the hopes of scoring epistemic points; after all, if you say enough you'll in all likelihood eventually get some things right. This temptation threatens to make assertors, conjecturers, etc., less worthy of our belief: Liars and those who say things on insufficient evidence threaten to undermine sincere speakers in the way that brightly colored but non-noxious frogs threaten the credibility of signals sent by those frogs who are both brightly colored and noxious.

Enter speech acts and the norms governing them. In performing a speech act I incur a liability—a handicap in our technical sense. The nature of that liability determines not just what psychological state is shown, but also in what light it is shown: Just as different pictures of one and the same sitter might show him as brave, as menacing, as a fop, etc., different speech acts can show a single psychological state in different lights. The liability that an assertor undertakes by incurring commitments characteristic of that speech act give strong (not conclusive) evidence that the assertion is both sincere and justified. That liability is less stringent for the case of conjecture, with the result that a conjecture does not show one's belief as justified in a way appropriate for knowledge; instead it merely shows

one's belief as having some justification or other. Standards are even less stringent for a so-called educated guess. Further, for a sheer guess these standards only put the speaker in danger of being wrong if her guess turns out to be incorrect. A diagram may help to clarify these points:

The second and third columns describe what felicitous speech acts show, and in what way they show it. While all six speech acts considered here involve commitment to a propositional content, only two require belief for their sincerity condition. Guesses, presumptions, and suppositions require only acceptance for their sincerity condition *sensu* Stalnaker, 1984; educated guesses can go either way.²⁸

Can the current proposal be generalized to other types of speech act for which Moorean absurdity is possible? I will try partially to justify the claim that it can by considering the case of promising. Assuming once again that a promise expresses an intention, it will follow that a promise shows, or purports to show, an intention to carry out the promised act. It does that precisely by virtue of the fact that one who promises incurs the liability of a loss of credibility if she fails to perform the promised act. (We tend to cut slack for those who fail to keep their promises for reasons beyond their control.) A promise is, accordingly, like earnest money put down in lieu of full payment for a car: Whereas the latter, if the sum is sufficiently large, shows your intention of coming back to purchase the vehicle, the former, because of the stringent norms to which promissors are held, shows your intention of fulfilling it. In contrast with assertion and its cousins, however, a promise does

| Speech act | Shows | As |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Assertion that p | Belief that p | Justified appropriate for knowledge |
| Conjecture that p | Belief that p | Justified |
| Educated guess that p | Acceptance or belief that p | Justified |
| Guess that p | Acceptance of p | n/a |
| Presumption of p | Acceptance of p | Justified for current conversational purposes |
| Supposition of p (for argument) | Acceptance of p | Aimed at the production of justification for some related content r |

Table 1 *Speech acts, what they show, and in what light they show it.*

²⁸ A more formal rendition of these ideas would prove that a *separating equilibrium* (a Nash equilibrium in which signalers of different condition are reliably distinguished from one another) exists in which credible speakers may be distinguished from the non-credible, and in which agents who receive signals from credible speakers tend on the whole to add the contents of those signals to common ground while also registering the epistemic state from which those contents flow. While, as mentioned above, the particular form of his proposal is not compelling, the game-theoretic tools van Rooij (2003) uses to make out his case for politeness as a handicap should give the flavor of how a mathematization of the present line of thought would go.

not appear to show the relevant intention as justified or not. Although our intentions are sometimes justified, and sometimes not, our linguistic institutions appear not to have developed ways of indicating the justificatory status of the intentions we show in promising.

In some situations talk seems cheap. Cases in which one is not likely to be called to account for what one says, as well as those in which familiarity breeds complacency, may seem of this kind. Asked for directions to the train station in a crowded place by someone I'm unlikely to encounter again, it may not seem that I am sticking my neck out in answering as I do. Am I here incurring a handicap in answering in whatever way I happen to? Again, am I really 'sticking my neck out' when I recount the day's banal events with a loved one over dinner? Yet while speech acts might seem to involve significant risk only in special areas of human life, that risk is pervasive. We become desensitized to that risk because it is so quotidian, in much the way that thinking hard about the constant risks of driving on a crowded road would make most of us unable to do so. Just imagine my loved one finding out that my account of my day was a sheer fabrication, or the hapless tourist later confronting me in another part of the city, still no nearer a train!

What, however, if I am *certain* of the veracity of my remarks and, of course, of my own sincerity in making them? This could apply to the case of the evening chat; or I might have a theorem that I am in a position to prove, and feel sure that I can prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt. It may seem questionable that here I am exposing myself to risk in uttering the theorem. If that is right, then the present approach might seem, counterintuitively, to imply that in asserting the theorem I am not expressing my belief. However, a reasonable speaker is aware not only of her own fallibility, but also that of her addressees. For all I know my audience might be unable, due to bias or viscosity, to follow my proof, and on that basis accuse me of dissimulating. Even asserting things I am sure of exposes me to risk.

Recall that Searle and Vanderveken had claimed that in every performance of a speech act one expresses a psychological state with that same content (1985, p. 18). This claim is dubious, and nothing in the hypothesis I have formulated above requires it. Consider appointing: If appropriately empowered, I can appoint someone to a certain administrative post by saying—more precisely by speaker-meaning—that I am doing so. The propositional content is that the addressee of the speech act is appointed to the post in question. However, it is doubtful that a psychological state is being expressed by a speech act such as this. Such a state would not be a belief: Even if I speaker-mean, 'I hereby appoint you, but don't believe that I am doing so,' I can be understood as expressing doubts about the ability of my words to effect an appointment. Such an utterance need not be absurd. An appointment also does not express an intention: Whereas the disavowal of an intention to perform a promised act may make a putative promise absurd ('I promise to meet you but have no intention of doing so'), what you intend seems irrelevant to the question whether the concurrent utterance of 'I hereby appoint you ...' succeeds as an appointment. Similarly for excommunicating, declaring open (closed,

etc.), demoting, resigning, vetoing: None of these speech acts commits the speaker to a future course of action (as do most promises), or even to a disposition to a future course of action (as do many assertions). Instead, appointing, excommunicating, declaring open, and the like are done once they are (feliculously) said. While many, and perhaps the most important, speech acts characteristically express psychological states, it is doubtful that all do, and we do not assume that here.

Why, finally, should some speech acts have an expressive dimension while others do not? While I cannot do justice to that large question here, I will offer a suggestion that applies to the 'assertive' family of speech acts that have been our focus—assertion, conjecture, supposition and the like. As contributors to inquiries it behooves us not only to offer up contents to common ground, but also to indicate the status of those contents—as known, as conjectured, as guessed, etc. Holding fixed what is said, expressive norms enable us to indicate how what is said is to be taken and what would count as an appropriate reply. Such norms enable us to do that by enabling us to show the psychological state (belief, acceptance, belief as justified, etc.) from which the conversational contribution flows. One could also report the psychological state from which the contribution flows ('I believe that p', etc.), but for most purposes such explicitness is otiose as compared to the stunning power of speech acts to telegraph our states of mind.

*Corcoran Department of Philosophy
University of Virginia*

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