

PROPER FUNCTION AND CONVENTION IN SPEECH ACTS

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Strawson's "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts" (1964) introduced into speech act theory two of its most characteristic contemporary themes. Strawson applied Grice's theory of communication to speech act theory (Grice 1967). With the use of this tool, he then drew a distinction between two kinds of illocutionary act. I will prosaically call these two "K-I (kind I) speech acts" and "K-II (kind II) speech acts". Strawson claimed that contrary to Austin's views, only K-II acts are "essentially conventional." Elsewhere I have complained against the first of Strawson's innovations, indeed, against the whole of the Gricean theory of communication (Millikan 1984 chapter 3).¹ But it is not necessary to embrace the details of Grice's theory to appreciate the main shift of view from Austin to Strawson on K-I acts.

Austin had taken all illocutionary acts to be differentiated and defined according to conventional roles they are playing: in the absence of conventions to determine these roles, performances of these acts would be strictly impossible. Strawson claims that there is a large class of illocutionary acts, the K-I acts, that are differentiated not by reference to conventional roles of any sort, but by reference

¹ *For a good discussion of this issue, see also Recanati 1987.*

to the purpose of the speaker in speaking. Other philosophers soon took sides with Austin or Strawson. For example, Schiffer (1972), Bach & Harnish (1979) and Recanati (1987) agree with Strawson that K-I acts are defined according to certain kinds of Gricean intentions expressed by speakers, while Warnock (1973) and Searle (1989) side with Austin, claiming that the difference between K-I and K-II acts is only that the former invoke merely linguistic conventions while the latter invoke wider social conventions.

All seem to agree, however, that despite some borderline cases, there is a fundamental difference between the kinds.

In this paper I will explore certain relations between purpose and convention, intention being, of course a kind of purpose. I will describe a series of speech act aspects which are characteristically (and for good reason) tightly interlocked: (1) speaker intention, (2) (conventional) purpose or function of the expression used or as used in the context, and (3) conventional move made as classified by conventional outcome. In the case of many of the speech acts that Austin had centrally in mind when he coined the term "illocutionary act," these three aspects are all present and tend to coincide in content, but there are also cases in which these aspects come apart. The names and descriptions offered by Austin as designating specific "illocutionary acts" sometimes emphasize one end or the other of this series, either the purpose end or the conventional outcome end. Strawson's description of K-I and K-II categories roughly corresponds to this difference. But where Strawson argued for a distinction despite some borderline cases, I will argue for a strong continuum, with many cases falling in the center.

To make this argument, I will need to call in a model of

purposiveness under which purposes can be univocally attributed to linguistic expressions and forms, to conventions, and to persons. And I will need to call in a different model of conventionality than has generally been employed. The model of purpose that I will use is developed in detail under the label "proper function" in (Millikan 1984); the theory of convention is detailed in (Millikan forthcoming).

Here space will permit sketching these models only with very broad strokes.

I. Strawson's distinction

Strawson's original suggestion was this. K-I illocutionary acts are completed when the hearer recognizes that the speaker has a certain kind of intention in speaking. This intention is to secure a certain response from the hearer, such as an action (typical imperatives) or the forming of a belief (typical indicatives). Further, in Gricean fashion, the speaker's, S's, intention is to procure this response by means of the hearer's, H's, recognizing that S intends or wishes to procure it, and recognizing that S also intends H to recognize this latter intention, and so forth. For example (I am interpolating here; the examples are not Strawson's) differences among the illocutionary acts of reminding, informing, asking, and warning lie in the responses or effects the speaker intends to produce in the hearer. In the case of reminding the intended effect might be getting H to recall, for informing getting H to believe, for answering getting H to impart certain information to S, and for warning bracing H against dangers that S describes. Various K-I acts that involve intending identical hearer responses are then further differentiated in accordance with more exact mechanisms by which the speaker intends or expects to procure the intended response. For example, in the case of requests versus

entreaties (these are Strawson's examples), S intends H to understand how he holds the intention that H comply, whether "passionately or lightly, confidently or desperately" (1964 p. 610), and S intends that this knowledge should motivate H to comply; in the case of orders, S intends that H understand that the context of utterance taken together with certain social conventions implies that certain consequences may follow if H does not comply, intends that this knowledge should motivate H, and so forth.

K-I acts, Strawson says, are not "essentially conventional". It is not true that acts of warning, acts of entreaty, acts of requesting and so forth "can be performed only as conforming to ...conventions...to suppose that there is always and necessarily a convention conformed to would be like supposing that there could be no love affairs which did not proceed on lines laid down in the Roman de la Rose or that every dispute between men must follow the pattern specified in Touchstone's speech about the countercheck quarrelsome and the lie direct" (p.603). Nor, when a speaker disagrees with someone, is there, in general, some "convention that constitutes" his act as an act of raising objections. On the other hand, the speaker may explicitly avow his illocutionary intention, thus conveying the force of his utterance conventionally, saying, for example, "I warn you that..." or "I entreat you to..." or "I object to...". In the case of these "explicit performatives," the "conventional meaning" of the expression used may "completely exhaust the illocutionary force" of the utterance.

As examples of K-II illocutionary acts, Strawson lists "an umpire giving a batsman out, a jury bringing in a verdict of guilty, a judge pronouncing sentence, a player redoubling at bridge, a priest or civil officer pronouncing a couple man and

wife" (p.611). Here, Strawson says, the intention of the speaker is not to secure a particular response from the audience. Such acts are performed according to the rules of certain conventional procedures (for example, the marriage ceremony) as acts "required or permitted by those rules...done as falling under the rules...the speaker's utterance is not only intended to further, or affect the course of, the practice in question in a certain conventional way; in the absence of any breach of the conventional conditions for furthering the procedure in this way, it cannot fail to do so" (p.612). Unlike K-I acts, K-II acts do not have ingredient in them, as such, speaker intentions whose fulfillment is dependent on hearer cooperation. Reciprocally, unlike K-II acts, "the wholly overt intention which lies at the core of ...[K-I acts]...may, without any breach of rules or conventions, be frustrated" (p.613, italics Strawson's). What is common to the two kinds of illocutionary act is that the speaker's intention is "wholly overt," that is, intended to be recognized by the audience; what is different is that in one case the intention is to produce a certain audience response, in the other, to "further a certain [conventional] practice" (p.612).

Strawson concludes with the caution, "it would certainly be wrong to suppose that all cases fall clearly and neatly into one or another of these two classes...[for example a] speaker whose job it is to do so may offer information, instructions, or even advice, and yet be overtly indifferent as to whether or not his information is accepted, his instructions followed, or his advice taken" (p. 614).

II. A problem about the univocity of K-I categories

Despite some ambiguity in the passage just quoted, it is clear that Strawson intends the K-I/K-II distinction to apply not to act tokens but to illocutionary acts kinds, for example,

to kinds designated by various performative verbs such as "inform," "instruct," "advise," "entreat" and so forth. Consider then those explicit performative K-I tokens about which he says that the "conventional meaning" "exhausts the illocutionary force". Are these tokens conventional in the sense that their having the force they do is "constituted by convention"? Are there conventions that make them into acts, say, of advising, warning, entreating, raising objections and so forth? If so, a problem arises about the univocity of these various K-I act categories. A class of speech acts grouped together and named according to the particular audience response intended by the speaker can not be, as such, a class that an act token gets into by convention. That a speaker has a given intention can not be a mere matter of convention. There can not be a convention that turns something else into a speaker intention. There might of course be a convention always to treat certain kinds of actions, for certain purposes, as though they embodied certain intentions--to "count them as" embodying these intentions, that is, as legally or morally or socially equivalent to actions actually embodying these intentions--but this would not make them into embodiments of intentions.

Conversely, it is not reasonable to suppose that having a certain intention in speaking might "count as" performing a certain conventional act. What "counts as" performing a convention-constituted act has to be something relatively arbitrary, something for which another thing might have been conventionally substituted. One's intentions in speaking cannot be supposed to play that sort of pawnlike role. Nor should we be confused by the fact that having a certain kind of intention may be something that has social consequences. Intending to embarrass, intending to deceive, intending to

help, intending to kill--all these have social consequences that tie in with rules of ethics, rules of etiquette, the law, and so forth. This does not mean that these intentions "count as" anything in accordance with conventions. The intention to kill may be said to make the act of killing "count" as a more serious crime, punishable perhaps by death. But we really should speak more clearly. Killing intentionally is considered to be a serious crime. This is not a matter of convention but of conviction. Intentional killing is in some places punishable by death. This is not a matter of convention but of law. Cultures may of course differ in what they consider to be a crime, in what they consider to be polite, in what they codify into law, and so forth. That does not make these matters "conventional". Not all cultural variation results from differences in conventions.

To avoid this difficulty about the univocity of K-I acts, we might try denying that the use of an explicit performative turns a K-I act into an act "constituted by convention." Perhaps explicit K-I acts are just natural acts of expressing one's intentions that happen to be performed in a conventional manner--as one can perform the natural act of holding one's fork in a conventional manner, say, tines up, in the right hand, with the thumb on top. This would be consonant with Strawson's caution that he is considering in his essay only "normal and serious" uses of language (p.599), which might mean here, that we are to consider explicit performatives only when backed by the intentions these conventionally express. Then one might argue that by the use of such performatives, nothing has been accomplished that could not in principle have been accomplished in a world without conventions. It is merely that something natural has been done in a conventional way.

It is not the speaking of certain words, then, but merely the expressing of a certain audience directed intention that makes an utterance of, say, "I entreat you ..." into an entreaty, and so forth.

Still, this cannot be the solution, because in fact it is perfectly possible for a person to request, entreat, order or demand a thing that she none the less expects the hearer will fail to accomplish, intending only to distract the hearer, or to trick the hearer into failure, or into starting into the designated action. Nor can we patch our theory by requiring for a K-I illocutionary act only that S intend H to think that S intends H to act or believe. Strawson himself gave us the contrary example: "A speaker... may...be overtly indifferent as to whether or not his information is accepted, his instructions followed, or his advice taken."

Faced with this sort of difficulty, some authors (Schiffer 1972, Bach and Harnish 1979, Recanati 1987) have proposed another epicycle: the K-I act requires only that S intends that H recognize S's intention to "provide H with reason to believe" that S intends H to act or believe. The difficulty of understanding this claim, and the fear of provoking yet more epicycles, discourages attack. Still, a less baroque solution seems preferable. I will propose that K-I acts are defined quite straightforwardly by their purposes, and that conventional acts often have purposes as such. For this reason, conventional acts fall into K-I categories directly. To explain this, I will first explain what conventions are. Then I will talk about purposes and how conventions acquire them. This will reveal how a conventional illocutionary act can have its own purpose, additional to the purpose of the speaker. Last I will discuss the conventionality and purposes of K-II illocutionary acts.

III. Conventions

It is the conventionality of acts and activities and patterns of activity that will concern us--often I will just say "acts". In the sense that we need to examine first, "conventional" acts are "reproduced" items.² Conventional act tokens are modeled on prior act tokens, previously performed, typically, by other people. More formally, the concrete form--I am going to say "shape"--of the natural act embodying a conventional act token is determined according to the shape of certain historically prior natural acts such that, had the shape of these prior acts been different along certain dimensions, the token would have differed accordingly. This may be because the act is directly copied or imitated. Alternatively, the process of reproduction may be indirect, as when one person instructs or trains another to act in accordance with a convention. Second, when they have functions, as they often do, conventional acts, activities and patterns of activity are characterized by a certain arbitrariness in relation to function. Thus patterns of skill, though they may be handed down by copying and instruction, are not as such conventional patterns. The shape of a conventional act or pattern is not dictated by function alone. A reproduced act or pattern that has a function is conventional only if it might have differed or been replaced by differently shaped acts or patterns which, assuming similar proliferation in the culture, would then have

² For a more formal discussion of "reproduction" as that term is

meant here, see (Millikan 1984) chapter 1.

served the same function. This does not give us a sharp boundary for the conventional. A borderline case might be, for example, certain "conventional" techniques handed down in different schools of violin playing. These techniques are not totally interchangeable. They have subtly different musical effects. But the conventions of each school taken in toto accomplish pretty much the same.

A conventional act token is such in part because it has been reproduced. That is, some aspect of its shape or pattern or place in a pattern has been reproduced. It is conventional then under a description or label--one that designates this shape, pattern or place. Tokens of wearing black to a funeral may be conventional under that description, as may tokens of shaking hands with the right hand. But "wearing black to a funeral" and "shaking hands with the right hand" are not names of act types that are, as such, conventional. Tokens falling under these types are not conventional per se, but only when done as following convention, that is, when reproduced rather than accidentally instantiated. Thus, It is conventional to wear black to a funeral and Susan wore black to a funeral, when conjoined, do not necessarily imply Susan performed a conventional act. Similarly, there is nothing to prevent the same shape from being used in more than one convention. Raising ones hand is conventional in order to vote. It is also conventional in order to request to speak. Which if either of these conventions is instanced when a particular hand is raised depends upon which if any previous instances of hand raisings are the causes and models for this one, instances used for voting, or instances used for requesting to speak.

Some conventional patterns (that means, being very careful, some patterns that get conventionally reproduced or

tokened) are very complex. The conventional pattern that is reconstructed when a group of children plays ring a ring a roses is rather complex. More complex are the conventional patterns that are reproduced when parliamentary procedure is followed during a meeting, or when one plays chess with a conventional board and pieces. These patterns are not only complex but "relational". It is not absolute shapes (forms) that are reproduced but relationships between shapes. Such patterns are most easily described by giving rules for their construction, often rules involving conditionals. These are rules that have to be followed insofar (and only insofar) as one's purpose is to follow the particular convention. Many of the patterns of activity that define within a given society the institutions of marriage, property holding and transfer, use and transfer of conventional powers, and so forth are complex, relational conventional patterns. Some may also be written into law or other sanctioned regulations. Others are only written into law or other regulations. They are never or almost never merely reproduced from previous examples of the same pattern. Then they are not conventional in the sense I am now discussing (but see §VI below).

Conventional patterns are often reinforced with sanctions of one kind or another. This has no bearing on their conventionality. Some cultures frown on every failure to conform to convention. But it is neither the threat of these frowns nor the degree of conformity to a convention that makes it into a convention. A substantial literature to the contrary, conventions are not, as such, either things that everybody in some group follows, or things that everybody in some group thinks you are supposed to follow. Think, for example, of wearing white for tennis, which in many circles is

conventional even though nobody cares whether you do or you don't. And think about moves in chess. After any given move in chess one could always quit and start playing dolls with the pieces. If that is not allowed, it is rules of etiquette or tournament rules, not chess rules, that prohibit it. The rules of chess don't tell you that you can't quit, but only what would constitute going on.

Nor should we suppose that conventions are instantiated only by people knowingly following them. Witness the conventions for correct social distance when conversing. These distances vary from culture to culture, and are unconsciously reproduced by being learned as a skill. If you are at the wrong social distance, the one to whom you are speaking will move, so that to avoid slow circling about as you talk, you learn to stay at the conventional distance. Similarly, a person, even everyone, might unconsciously learn to conform to the convention of driving on a given side of the road solely as a skill--as a means of avoiding oncoming traffic.

One particularly interesting kind of conventional act token deserves a name of its own. This kind is an optional piece of a conventional pattern, the shape of which piece puts constraints on the shape of ensuing pieces. That is, if the conventional pattern is to continue to unfold, the rest must be conformed to this piece, so as to bear the right relation to it. Thus a move on a conventional chess board and a conventional protestant marriage ceremony each constrain what can follow while according with relevant conventions. Such acts are interesting because convention does not say when to perform them, yet they effect changes in the situation that must subsequently be taken into account if events are to unfold under the covering convention. They

are "free" acts under the convention that have predictable effects or that put constraints on effects under the convention. Thus they put constraints on actual effects in so far as the convention is actually followed. We can call such act tokens "conventional move tokens" and speak of them as having "conventional outcomes."

Contrary to the flavor of recent discussions, probably we should explicitly note that the situation with conventional moves is not this: that having instanced a certain shape under certain (difficult-to-pin-down) conditions automatically "counts as" x-ing, irrevocably, inexorably, no matter how much you kick and scream. Simply as such, making a conventional move is merely putting in place a piece of a reproduced pattern which others (or oneself) may or may not then be motivated to complete. The pattern allows or requires a decision to be made at the location of the conventional move. In most cases participants will not be interested in following through to the conventional outcome of an apparent move if they think it was not made intentionally. But, especially in cases where abiding by the convention happens to have sanctions attached, and especially where there might be reason for a person sometimes to be dishonest about whether a move was intended, then, as Strawson put it, "the play is strict" and either the convention or some law or regulation may override the need for a consonant intention behind a conventional shape introduced at a decision location. In such circumstances one may also expect that the law or regulation is quite strict about the exact shapes to be used for the moves. Sloppy reproductions will not be allowed.

Some labels group natural acts together by "shape" (e.g., "wearing black," "wearing black to a funeral"). Others

group conventional acts together by conventional role ("wearing traditional attire" "wearing funeral attire to a funeral"). Different shapes occurring in different conventions, in different traditions, are discerned as holding corresponding places in their respective patterns, hence they are classed together. "Getting married," "giving a (conventional) greeting" and "observing table manners" are such labels.³ Each of these role-described conventional acts or patterns can take any of numerous "shapes". There is a certain ambiguity in some of these abstract labels. For example, does one who wears black to a funeral without knowing of the convention "wear funeral attire"? We might

³ *Something like castling in chess is a little different. For although pieces of any shape can be used for chess, indeed, chess can be played even without a board (for example, games can be played by post card), games of chess all fall in the same tradition. The game of chess is an extremely abstract pattern, not a concrete one--one that is sometimes reproduced in highly imaginative ways. (Wilfrid Sellars once suggested using Cadillacs and Volkswagens, etc., and moving them from one Texas county to another.)*

say, it depends on whether you read that opaquely or transparently. I will say that a role-described act that is done following convention is "role-constituted." Thus role-constituted acts are acts that could not be performed were there not covering conventions.

To perform a natural act, x, in a conventional manner involves performing a role-constituted act under the description "doing x conventionally". For example, dressing in a conventional manner is a role-constituted act which takes different shapes in different cultures. More important for our purposes, a "conventional move" (read opaquely) is a role-constituted act classed under a description of the move's conventional outcome. For example, making a bid, getting married, and performing a naming ceremony are each, as such, role-constituted moves. Notice that they are indeed classed according to their conventional outcomes.

Apparently Austin thought that names for K-I acts such as "warning," "entreaty," "order," "objection," and so forth, designate conventional moves, that is, acts classified by conventional outcome. Strawson suggested that these labels classify primarily by speaker intention. My suggestion will be that they classify by purpose. Classification by intention or purpose are other ways to classify acts more abstractly than by "shape." For example, quite differently shaped activities constitute "hunting mice" as a hawk does it, as a cat does it, and as I once did it thumbing through the yellow pages in preparation for a mouse-loving daughter's Christmas. But I am getting ahead of my story.

IV. Speaking as making conventional moves

It is not, of course, a matter of convention that a speaker has communicated his intention. Nor is it, in general, a

matter of following convention that a hearer should respond as a speaker intends her to. But a hearer does follow convention when she does what a speaker explicitly says to do, or believes what a speaker explicitly says is true. In each such case the hearer completes the reproduction of a conventional pattern of movement from speaker words into hearer reactions. Correlatively, in each of these cases the speaker makes a conventional move having a conventional outcome. He lays down the beginning of a conventional pattern in a way that constrains what can follow in accord with the convention. To see that this is so it is important to keep in mind (1) that to follow a convention is not mandatory as such, hence that no sanctions need constrain the hearer to respond in a conventional way and (2) that following conventions is not always following conscious rules. The speaker's production of the expression and the hearer's cooperative response to it constitute a reproduced pattern whose form is arbitrary relative to its function. That is all that is needed for convention. Contrast the conventional syntactic and tonal patterns that embody tellings to and tellings that with conventional exclamations ("Hurrah!," "Ouch!") which are merely conventional means of expression, calling conventionally for no particular determinate response from the hearer.

In the case of conventional directive uses of language, the pattern that is conventionally reproduced begins with an intention or desire of S's that H should act in a certain way. It is completed when H has acted that way as a result of guidance, in accord with conventional rules for guidance, from conventional signs made by S. That the pattern is not completed until H has acted as directed is clear, for new instances of the pattern would not be initiated by Ss were it

not that Hs sometimes complete such patterns. The first part of the pattern is conventional, is reproduced, only because both parts are sometimes reproduced. Thus when you ask or tell me to do something in a conventional way, using some appropriate shape from some public language to do so, it is conventional for me to comply: this outcome is the completion of a conventional pattern. The full recipe for the convention tells what H has to do upon hearing such and such words.

Similarly, when S tells H that something is the case in a conventional way, it is conventional for H to believe it. That the pattern is not completed until H has been guided into belief in accordance with the conventional rules is clear because new instances of the pattern would not continue to be initiated by Ss were it not that Hs sometimes believe what they are told. Had earlier Hs responded in accordance with different patterns of interpretation and belief this would have affected the behavior of Ss with the result that H too would have learned to exhibit different patterns. These patterns of belief formation do not result from voluntarily following a rule, any more than standing at the right social distance is a result of voluntarily following a rule. Whether or not I believe what I hear is not under voluntary control. But it results from a process of reproduction which in turn has resulted from learning. I believe as I do in part because others who speak the same language have followed similar patterns in moving from what they hear to what they believe. I come to believe what I hear as conforming to a convention.

Note the disagreement with Strawson here, who holds that "the wholly overt intention which lies at the core of ...[K-I acts]...may, without any breach of rules or conventions, be frustrated" (p.613, italics Strawson's).

Suppose that Strawson is right that for S to convey certain intentions as to H's response can be a way (if not, I shall soon argue, the only way) of performing a K-I act. It will then naturally come about that use of an explicit K-I performative has the accomplishment of the designated K-I act as a conventional outcome. How? S's explicitly saying that S is performing a certain K-I act has as its conventional outcome that H believe S is performing it. Suppose now--the worst case--that my (forthcoming) claim proves correct that K-I acts can also be performed by the tokening of conventional moves with corresponding purposes, these corresponding to their conventional outcomes. In the absence of a conventional device for performing the designated K-I act, having made the conventional response of believing that S is indeed performing this act, H must conclude that S's intention accords with the act. In so far as Hs are sometimes obliging, then, a repeated pattern will emerge which begins with speaker intentions about hearer responses, moves through the use of explicit K-I performatives, and ends with hearers fulfilling these speaker intentions. Any such repeated pattern will soon be not just repeated, each speaker and hearer pair inventing it anew, but reproduced. Speakers will imitate, intentionally initiating the full pattern as such, and hearer's will imitate, following through directly with the new pattern of response. Like a dead metaphor, this use of explicit performative expressions will soon have become fully conventionalized.

Speaking consists in large part of making conventional moves. Hence, just as certain forms intentionally having

been gone through entails that you are married, or have been christened, or that the meeting is adjourned, so it seems reasonable that certain verbal forms intentionally having been gone through might entail that you have been informed, or told that, or told to, or asked whether, and so forth. Yet this only exacerbates the difficulty concerning the univocity of K-I categories (§2). How does the fact that a certain conventional move has been made get in the same category as the fact that a speaker has a certain intention? I will now try to resolve this tension.

V. K-I Acts are defined by their cooperative proper functions

Concerning those cases of informing, warning and so forth that are performed despite the speaker's overt indifference about the hearer's response, Strawson suggests, "in some cases, [the speaker] may be seen as the mouthpiece, merely, of another agency to which may be attributed at least general intentions of the kind that can scarcely be attributed, in the particular case, to him" (p.614). That is, I take it, there are analogical uses of "informs," "instructs," "advises," and so forth. Similarly, we say that dogs and cats "ask to go out," that the difference between dogs and cats that "dogs request things while cats demand them," there are interesting studies ostensibly about animals' "greetings to conspecifics," and so forth. Assuming that animals do not indulge in embedded Gricean intentions, on Strawson's account of K-I acts these descriptions must also be analogical. I will now argue for an account perhaps simpler than Strawson's, on which all of these descriptions are literal. K-I acts are grouped under their appropriate labels by, in a suitably broad sense, their purposes--more precisely, their "cooperative proper functions".

I can offer here only the quickest review, without any

defence, of the notion "proper function"--just enough to give the flavor. Items have proper functions as belonging to families of items reproduced one from another, where the continued reproducing depends or has depended on some function these items serve. The biological functions of body organs and the functions of mechanisms that produce tropistic behaviors are prime examples of proper functions. The functions of behaviors learned by trial and error are also examples, as are the functions of customs and of words and syntactic forms. An item also has a proper function if it is the product of a prior device designed to vary or adapt its productions depending on circumstance so as to perform certain functions in those circumstances. These adapted productions then have "derived proper functions". Using a worn example, the mechanisms in worker honey bees that produce bee dances are supposed to vary their dance-producing activities depending upon where nectar is located so that the dances can guide fellow bees to it. The different dances that result have different derived proper functions: each is supposed to send watching bees off in a different direction. I have argued that behaviors produced in a normal way by the behavior-producing mechanisms in humans and other higher animals also have derived proper functions, though derived in a far more complex way, and that these functions coincide with what we would usually identify as the purposes of these behaviors or of the individuals exhibiting them. Human intentions, understood

The notion "proper function" is defined in (Millikan 1984) chapters 1 and 2. It is further explicated and applied in (Millikan 1993), for example, chapters 1,2, and 11, and in (Millikan 1994)

as goal representations harbored within, have as derived proper functions to help effect their own fulfillments. And human artifacts have as proper functions the purposes for which they were designed.

Now consider the syntactic forms that embody indicative, imperative and interrogative moods in the various natural languages. These are reproduced from one speaker to another; children copy them from adults. These forms continue to be differentially reproduced because they are serving differentiated functions. And they serve differentiated functions because hearers respond to them differentially. What stabilizes these functions?

The evolutionary mechanism at work here is parallel to that which tailors the species-specific song of a bird and the built in response of its conspecifics to fit one another, or tailors the nipple of the mother and the mouth of her infant to fit one another, but with learning standing in for natural selection. Speakers (collectively) learn how to speak and hearers learn how to respond in ways that serve purposes for them, each leaning on the settled dispositions of the other. This kind of co-tailoring requires there to be functions served at least some of the time by cooperation some of the time between the paired cooperating devices--(just) enough of the time to keep them tuned to one another. So there must be purposes that are sometimes served for hearers as well as speakers, served at least often enough, by hearers'

See, especially, (Millikan 1984) chapter 6 and (Millikan 1993) chapter 8 section 6.

For more details, see (Millikan 1984) Introduction and chapters 1-4.

responding in the right way to speakers' utterances of the various language forms. For example, often enough there are rewards to motivate hearers who satisfy imperatives. Indeed, simply pleasing the speaker is usually enough reward. And speakers often enough speak the truth, so that there are often rewards for hearers who believe indicatives. A proper function of the imperative mood is to induce the action designated, and a proper function of the indicative mood is to induce belief in the proposition expressed.

Similarly, a proper function of the explicit K-I-performatives, taken not just type by type but as embodying a certain common reproduced form of expression ("I [performative verb] you (that)(to)..."), is to produce their associated hearer responses. In the case both of the grammatical moods and of the explicit K-I performatives, the conventional outcome of the speech act employing the expression accords with a proper function of the expression.

(Caution: I do not mean to extrapolate from these examples that every conventional move has a proper function. Many conventional patterns or parts of patterns may be imitated blindly, not due to any particular function they are performing. Functional convention blurs into mere habit and the pointlessly convention-bound on one side and into pageantry on the other.)

Thus it is that the dog asking to go out at the door, the person gesturing in a non-conventional manner for you to open the door, the person who says "Open the door," and the person who says "I demand that you open the door" are

See (Millikan 1984) chapter 3. It is important that these proper functions are not derived by averaging over speaker intentions.

behaving, as such, in ways that have "a purpose in common" in a univocal, not merely an analogical, sense. These behaviors have a proper function in common: to get you to open the door. In each of these cases the proper function of the act is, more specifically, a "cooperative proper function". If fulfilled in the normal way it will be fulfilled via a cooperating response--one having as one of its proper functions the completion of the initiating act's proper function as such. Note the close analogy here to the reciprocal structure of Gricean intentions.

The proposal I offer then is that K-I acts are defined by their cooperative proper functions. Because the various grammatical moods have cooperative proper functions, their use in and of itself is enough to constitute a broad kind of speech act--at least, say, a telling that or a telling to or an asking whether. More specific K-I speech acts are then differentiated according to additional or more fine grained speaker (rather than expression) purposes--more exact mechanisms by which the speaker intends or expects to procure the intended response--just as Strawson said.. Or,

If fulfilled, that is, in accordance with a "Normal explanation." See Millikan (1984) chapters 1 and 2.

Sperber and Wilson have questioned whether, as a general rule, speech acts "have to be communicated and identified as such in order to be performed" (1986 p. 244). They suggest that, for example, predicting, asserting, hypothesizing, suggesting, claiming, denying, entreating, demanding, warning and threatening do not (p. 245). If this is right, then some of the differentia defining K-I acts that fall under the basic categories of tellings to, tellings that and askings whether may not correspond to purposes of

in the case of the explicit performatives, they are differentiated by naming themselves. Thus they become "self verifying". Qua instances of the original informative conventional pattern from which they were derived (§ IV above) and which they also exemplify (they still are ultimately reproductions of it) their more recent conventional purposes automatically accord with what they say is the purpose of the saying.

A perhaps surprising result of this analysis is that the person who says "Open the door" may be acting in a way that has conflicting purposes or proper functions. Suppose that she is joking or acting in a skit, or that she misunderstands the public-language function of the words she uses, or that she wants only that you trigger a boobytrap placed over the door. If she doesn't actually intend you to open the door, then her saying "Open the door" has two opposing proper functions at once. The first is derived from the history of the language forms she reproduces (the imperative mood and, independently, the words she arranges into this mood). This is the proper function of the expression she uses. The second is derived from the speaker's intention in speaking, which in turn is derived from the functions of the cognitive-conative mechanisms in the speaker that produced the intention. (In the sorts of cases that account for the survival and proliferation of the English imperative mood, of course, these two kinds of purposes do

these acts, or they may correspond to purposes that need not be cooperative. For example, perhaps I can successfully warn you by making you alert to a danger without your grasping that as being the point of my remarks.

not conflict).

In the case of insincere uses (the boobytrap case) the proper function derived from the speaker's intention is not a cooperative proper function, so it does not affect the question what sort of K-I act is being performed. But there are also cases where the speech act does have conflicting cooperative functions. For example, is jokingly asking you to leave really asking you to leave? Perhaps it is really asking you to leave but not seriously--as I might really slap you in the face in a skit but not seriously? Is unintentionally asking you to leave (suppose I don't understand the words I use) really asking you to leave? Or consider these cases: the armed robber smiles and says "I entreat you to hand over your money"; Anytus threatens Socrates, "I advise you to be careful"; the mountain climber boasts, "I admit that it was terribly hard going there toward the last"; Mom orders "I am asking you for the last time whether you are going to take out the garbage!". The cooperative proper functions of these expressions do not match the cooperative intentions of the speakers. Has the designated act been performed? I think you can say what you like, so long as you don't mislead in the context. Certainly these are not paradigm cases of asking, entreaty, and so forth.

⁴ On the other hand, there would seem also to be clear cases in which the cooperative proper function of an expression is overridden by a speaker intention which turns it not to a conflicting use but to a cooperative derivative or parasitical use. For example, saying sarcastically that it is thrilling is not at all telling you that it is thrilling. Perhaps this results because sarcasm itself is a conventional device, riding on and at the same time overriding the normal proper function of its vehicle.

VI. K-II Acts

Not all conventional moves made in speaking are conventional moves in the sense I defined. Some are moves in patterns that are not reproduced from prior instances but dictated by law or other explicit regulation. The pattern of moves required to make a foreign born person into a U.S. citizen, including the necessary taking of oaths, is an example of such a pattern. Also, many acts are of intermediate status. The patterns in which they are embedded are mainly copied, but they or portions of them are also written into codes or laws. Marriage ceremonies, including the act of signing certain documents, are an example of this. There is no sharp line, then, between moves that are conventional in the sense I earlier defined, and moves that are conventional because they fall under explicit regulation. In speaking of moves at or close to the explicitly regulated end of the spectrum I will speak of "regulated conventions," of "regulated moves," and of "regulated outcomes." The regulated outcome of a move may also have a "proper function," in a sense that falls quite strictly under the definition given in (Millikan 1984). This will be derived from the intentions of the person or group responsible for defining the move and its outcome--those responsible for initiating the regulations. Thus, "in some cases, [the speaker] may be seen as the mouthpiece, merely, of another agency..." (Strawson, p.614). (Once again, however, we should not hastily conclude that behind the conventional outcome of every regulated move there necessarily lies a clear purpose.)

Conventional and regulated moves are classed, as such, by their conventional outcomes. K-I illocutionary verbs classify by purposes that accord with the conventional

outcomes of the moves made when these expressions are used performatively. At the opposite end of a continuum are performative verbs and other descriptions which apparently classify by conventional outcome alone. These appear to designate conventional moves as such: Strawson's K-II illocutionary acts. These are moves whose outcomes, for a number of good reasons, could not reasonably be intended by speakers in the absence of conventions to determine them. Also, these outcomes may routinely fail to be strongly intended by speakers.

First, paradigm K-II acts (think of marrying a couple or formally granting someone a degree) have outcomes that involve the coordination of many persons, many or some of whom may not be present, in behaviors forming a complex interwoven pattern, difficult even to specify, let alone amenable to being communicated by improvisation. I can improvise with a gesture a request that you open the door, but not that you turn the oven to 350 degrees fahrenheit at 5pm, scrub 6 medium sized potatoes, grease them and put them on the top rack inside--nor that you should behave as one who is married and get treated by the law and by others that way.

Second, all or many of the outcome behaviors of K-II acts may be heavily sanctioned but only as falling under the covering regulations or conventions, or they are likely to be motivated only as falling under the convention, so that a speaker expects followthrough accordingly. Because one cannot seriously intend what one has no hope of achieving, no reasonable person could intend such an outcome apart from the organizing force of convention.

It is generally true too that the shape of a K-II move includes not just some words spoken but also the position of

the speaker and the context of the speaking. You can't make the conventional move of bidding two no trump if it's not bridge or if it's not your turn to play, nor adjourn the meeting if you are not in a meeting or not chair of it. Such requirements were labeled "felicity conditions" by Austin, but lacking them is in fact lacking part of the move's very shape. What is reproduced or regulated as part of a pattern is not words but words-in-a-context. In these cases, if motivation for following through to the traditional or regulated outcome is observance of the convention (perhaps under sanctions), of course the speaker cannot hope to effect this outcome out of context merely by conveying his intentions to effect it. Thus it is that the K-II act can be performed only conventionally. (On the other hand, it may be considered, on occasion, that the very shape of a move is, just, the conveying of the right intentions by the right person at the right time. For example, at the right time in an informal bridge game one can pass with an understandable gesture, and I once witnessed a marriage ceremony performed by a severely handicapped minister who administered the vows and blessings without words. But in both cases, the conventional setting is/was essential.)

Lastly, a K-II act speaker is likely merely to expect, rather than strongly to intend, much of the conventional outcome of his K-II act--as a chess player expects, rather than strongly intending, that his opponent's future moves will be constrained by his own move in accordance with the rules. Indeed, the K-I speaker may have no personal interest whatever in the outcome of his move, which he performs in line, primarily, with custom or duty. The minister may merely be doing what he is asked to do in performing the marriage ceremony; the provost is obliged formally to grant

the degrees that the trustees have formally approved.

But there are also many speech acts that fall between Strawson's K-I and K-II extremes. The chair says "the meeting is adjourned." His intention is to cause the members of the meeting to stop introducing motions and debating them. If nobody pays any attention, debate goes on, and three more motions are passed, his intentions will surely be frustrated. Equally clearly, his act is intended to "further a certain [conventional] practice". It is intended to play the conventional role of adjourning a meeting under sanctions of law or custom. And there is a sense in which the chair's saying that the meeting is adjourned "cannot fail to do so" (Strawson p.612). No matter what the members go on to do, "when the play is strict" there is a sense in which "the meeting has been adjourned" once the chair has spoken--just as after the minister pronounces a pair man and wife they are married, even if they don't act married, and even if everyone else, including those responsible for upholding the law, refuses to treat them as married. Similarly too, after Mom says "take out the garbage," Johnny is under instructions to take out the garbage, whether or not he does so. But Mom surely intends him to take it out too. There is a wide strip of middle ground then between paradigm K-I and paradigm K-II illocutionary acts.

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