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Sentence Meaning and Illocutionary Act Potential

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The idea that illocutionary-act-potential (IAP) is the key to linguistic meaning is still in a rather undeveloped state. Since I introduced the suggestion in the early sixties[1] it has not received much elaboration. To be sure, it is the conception of sentence-meaning put forward in John Searle's book Speech Acts,[2] but although Searle in that book has many interesting things to say on many topics, he does not measurably advance the development of an account of linguistic meaning in terms of illocutionary acts. (I also have many reservations about the details of his treatment.) I am currently engaged in writing a book in which I work out a detailed and systematic account of illocutionary acts, and show how sentence meaning (SM) can be identified with IAP. Since the meaning of morphemes, words, and phrases can be viewed as their capacity to make a distinctive contribution to the meanings of sentences in which they occur, this account of sentence meaning can serve as the basis of a general account of the nature of linguistic meaning. In this paper I will present some leading ideas of this account of sentence-meaning, and exhibit some of the relations of my account to other positions in the field. Needless to say, many details will have to be omitted.

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The IAP Thesis

Let's begin with an elucidation of the IAP thesis, which we may formulate as follows:

I. A sentence's having a given meaning consists in its having a certain illocutionary-act-potential.

Something needs to be said about three concepts, (a) sentence-meaning, (b) illocutionary act, and (c) potential.

(a) My inclination is to pin down preanalytically the relevant concept of meaning by a set of semantic "axioms" that give a partial implicit definition of the term. For present purposes I will rely on just one axiom:

II. Knowledge of the meaning of the sentence uttered is the linguistic knowledge a hearer needs in order to understand what is being said.

Consider a normal case of linguistic communication in which the speaker is using his sentential vehicle in a standard way and I understand what he says. My understanding of his utterance is based on my knowledge of the meaning(s) of his sentence. Usually I will need to supplement that with other information. If the sentence has more than one meaning, as in 'He got a good hand' I will have to determine in which of these the sentence was used. And after that we may still need to pin down references. If the sentence was 'I'm hungry,' I will have to know the identity of the speaker and the time of utterance in order to determine who it is that is said to be hungry when. But this additional information is not knowledge of the language. Knowing the meaning(s) of the sentence uttered is the only linguistic knowledge I need in order to determine what is being said. We may further note (though this is not contained in my "axiom") that what further information is

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required is itself determined by the meaning(s) of the sentence. It is because of what 'I'm hungry' means that we had to determine the identity of the speaker and time of utterance to determine fully what was being said.

This axiom may seem to conflict with the generally accepted view that I must know the <u>syntax</u> of the sentence in order to interpret the utterance; but in fact there is no conflict. I have to know the syntax, because that knowledge is (normally) used to "assign" meaning(s) to the sentence. If I <u>could</u> determine the latter in some other way, knowledge of syntax would be unnecessary for this purpose.

Thus the idea is that SM is, essentially, what we need to know to grasp what "message" or "content" is being carried by an utterance of the sentence. Or put conversely, an S's having a given M is what enables it to carry a certain "content."

I might add just a word about the place of sentence-meaning in the semantic description of a natural language. Such a description will <u>not</u> consist of the assignment of meanings to sentences, one-by-one. This is obvious, if for no other reason, from the fact that no limit can be placed on the number of meaningful sentences in a natural language. The description will, rather, be in the form of a lexicon in which meanings are assigned to some finite and manageable set of basic meaningful elements, together with principles of composition that exhibit the meanings of composites as a function of the meanings of elements. But although no sentence-meanings are mentioned, the basic function of the description is to generate meanings for any given sentence of the language. This is its primary employment and its success in doing this is the crucial test of its adequacy. Hence the concept of SM does play a crucial role in semantics, and it is correspondingly important to get clear about it.

(b) Now for the concept of IA. This term, originally introduced by John Austin[3], though widely used is seriously under-explained for an avowedly technical term. The general practice is to leave the reader to form an intuitive concept on the basis of examples. This may be fairly effective, but obviously some supplementary indications would be in order. For a preanalytic demarcation of IA concepts, I rely on the familiar indirect discourse form. We have, in ordinary language, a variety of locutions for making explicit <u>what</u> <u>someone</u> <u>said</u> (where this does not mean what sentence he uttered), what the "content" of his utterance is, what "message" it conveyed. Here is a small sample.

1. U asserted (admitted, replied, insisted...) that his garden gate was open.
2. U promised to meet Jones for lunch tomorrow.
3. U asked A for a match .
4. U predicted that the strike would soon be over.
5. U remarked that the weather was warming up.
6. U assured A that everything would be all right.
7. U congratulated A on his performance.
8. U exhorted A to finish by tomorrow.
9. U expressed considerable enthusiasm for A's proposal.
10. U expressed his intention to stay here all summer.
11. U declared the meeting adjourned.
12. U called the batter out.

It will be noted that each of these items involves an action verb 'promise', 'predict', 'advise', etc., followed by what we might call a "content-specifying" phrase. We may follow Searle[4] in saying that the verb specifies the "illocutionary force" (IF) of the utterance, while the ensuing phrase specifies the "propositional content" (PC).

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Although most of the examples yielded by my criterion would be recognized by other theorists, there are some differences. First, I am using a "third-person approach" based on the ways in which we report utterances; on this approach an "illocutionary verb" is not necessarily usable in the performative formula. 'Express', e.g., is not. I do not express admiration for your performance by saying 'I express admiration for your performance'. Second I do not share the tendency, exhibited inconsistently by Austin and more consistently by others, to individuate IA-types solely by what I have called IF. In my scheme predicting that Jones will come to the party is just as much a different IA-type from predicting that it will rain tomorrow as it is a different IA-type from asking whether Jones will come to the party; albeit the first difference is (only) in PC, while the second is (only) in IF.

(c) Now just a word about the 'P' in 'IAP'. First of all it is quite uncontroversial that sentences are usable to perform IA's. The idea behind I.is that a given S will be usable to perform some IA's rather than others just as it has some meanings rather than others and that we can identify its having a certain meaning with what makes it usable to perform IA's of a certain type, with the underlying basis of that disposition. Now it is clear that if I. is to have any chance of being acceptable we must restrict 'usable' to something like 'standardly usable', 'usable by virtue of the constitution of the language'. For if we consider private codes or special conventions for special sub-groups, it is clear that any sentence can be used to perform IA's of any type. (But by the same token, given the proper arrangements a given sentence can be used to mean anything.) So since we are interested in established meanings of S's, it is what makes an S standardly usable to perform IA's of certain types, that we will want to identify with that.

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The IAP Thesis and Other Forms of Communication Theory

The IAP theory belongs to a large family we may call "communication theories". What they all have in common is that they identify the meaning of a linguistic expression (LE) with what enables it to play its distinctive role in communication, with what we may term its "communicative potential". It is surely obvious that it is by virtue of its meaning that a word, phrase, or sentence, is fitted to do its distinctive jobs in communication. Communication theories take this fact as the key to the nature of meaning. If meaning is what gives a LE its capacity to play a distinctive communicative role, why not take meaning to be that capacity? This would seem to be an illuminating way of bringing out what having a certain meaning amounts to, what the cash value of possession of meaning is. Applied to sentence-meaning, this common principle of communication theory is simply a beefing up of what we stated earlier as the converse of our basic axiom of SM, viz., that an SM is, essentially, what enables the S to carry a certain "content" or "message" when used in communication.

It may be worthwhile to mention some theses that are often erroneously thought to follow from the claim that language is essentially a device for communication.

1. Communication is the only essential function of language.
2. Other functions of the language are derivative from the communicative function.
3. Every language is actually used in communication.
4. There cannot be a private language in the Wittgensteinian sense.

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Some or all of these theses may be correct, but none of them <u>follow</u> from the thesis that it is essential to language to be <u>usable</u> for communication. (This failure of logical derivation may be less obvious for 4. than for the others. The point here is that 4. does not follow so long as we allow <u>intrapersonal</u> communication.)

Communication theories differ as to the aspect of communication they single out as crucial for meaning i.e., the aspect usability for which is identified with meaning. The main emphasis has been on the attempt to produce psychological effects in addressees, (A's) particularly belief or knowledge. Thus Locke,[5] in a historically influential version of communication theory, held that communication is essentially a matter of trying to get someone else to realize what ideas one currently has in ones own mind. One does this by producing words that are signs of the presence of those ideas, words that have acquired this sign function by virtue of the fact that they have been regularly used as signs of those ideas, regularly used to convey to another person that those ideas were in the mind of the speaker ('U' for <u>utterer</u>). A currently influential update of Locke is found in the writings of H.P. Grice.[6] Grice ha no truck with a Lockean theory of ideas, but he does agree with Locke that what is crucial for the meaning of LE's is their regular use to reveal to A the cognitive states of U.

We also find stripped down versions of this kind of view; stated as they are in terms of the effects linguistic utterances actually have, or tend to have, without any mention of <u>intentions</u> of the speaker to produce such effects. In formulations inspired by S-R psychology, such as we find in Leonard Bloomfield,[7] Charles Morris,[8] C.C. Fries,[9] and Charles Osgood,[10] the idea is that utterances of x serve as stimuli for a certain kind of behavioral response, or for the production of dispositions to a certain kind of behavioral response,[11] and the communicative function of x is seen to lie in these casual regularities. A somewhat less stripped down view is found in Charles Stevenson,[12] who identifies the meaning of a LE with <u>its</u> disposition to produce psychological effects in hearers, the precise effect varying with attendant circumstances. These views fail by a wide mark to generate theories plausible enough to be worth considering in so abbreviated a survey. (And it would be self-defeating to attempt to document this charge!)

Borrowing another term from Austin,[13] we may term the Locke and Grice accounts <u>perlocutionary-act-potential</u> (PAP) theories. Following Austin we may say that a perlocutionary act (PA) concept is one the application of which to U entails that his utterance had an effect of a certain type. Here are a few examples:

1. U got A to believe (realize, suppose...) that U's garden gate was open.
2. U got A to give him a match.
3. U frightened A by what he said .
4. U planted the seeds of suspicion in A's mind.
5. U irritated A.

To avoid possible misunderstandings let me say that for the sake of convenience I am adopting the principle of act individuation advocated by A.I. Goldman,[14] according to which true attributions of different act predicates (concepts) always determine different act-tokens (particular acts). Thus if in one and the same breath one utters the sentence 'The gate is open', admits that a certain gate is open, and gets A to realize that one knows that a certain gate is open, we will say that one thereby performed three different acts. Whereas on the principles of act individuation advocated by, e.g., Donald Davidson,[15] one would say that we have here only one act that bears (at least three different descriptions). I am confident that I could

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equally well use either principle, but I find the Goldmanian idiom less cumbersome.

Now clearly the belief and knowledge productions on which Locke and Grice concentrate count as perlocutionary acts on this classification. So in holding that an LE's having a certain meaning consists in its being usable to produce belief in a certain proposition, they are taking a PAP position.[16] This is, then, a clear alternative to the IAP theory within the communication theory family.

Now I do not wish to deny that in communication we typically aim at affecting the cognitive state of our addressees. I am even willing to admit, for the sake of argument, that to each distinguishable SM there attaches a certain type of psychological state, such that normally when one utters an S with that M, one does so in order to produce a state of that type in ones addressee. For example, as Grice would hold, normally when one utters 'The gate is open' with its normal meaning one does so in order to get ones addressee to know or believe that oneself knows or believes, with respect to a certain gate, that it is open. If that is so, then we do have at least an extensional equivalence between a given SM and a corresponding PAP. It will be true that S means x iff S is usable (is a correct, appropriate, or effective vehicle to use) to produce in ones A psychological effect E. But even if this is so, I do not admit the PAP thesis to be a rival to the IAP thesis. For it will still be the case that an S has a distinctive PAP only by virtue of having a correlated IAP. A given SM determines a distinctive PAP through determining a distinctive IAP. Consider what makes the sentence 'The house is on fire' an effective vehicle for getting A to realize that a certain house is on fire (or to realize that U believes of a certain house that it is on fire). Why should we suppose that uttering that sentence is a good way of getting ones addressee to realize that? It is because the rules of the language and the conventions of communication are such that when U utters that sentence then, in the absence of indications to the contrary, A will take U to be performing the IA of asserting of the house in question that it is on fire. And, unless he has reason to doubt U's sincerity or reliability he will draw the conclusion that the house is on fire, or at least that U believes it to be. But this inference would never get started if A did not suppose U to be performing the IA of asserting that the house is on fire; and, in the normal case, he has no basis for this supposition other than his knowledge that the sentence uttered is "tagged" in the language for performing IA's of that type. Thus even if each SM does determine a correlated PAP, that relationship is derivative from the more basic determination of a correlated IAP. So that even if the PAP thesis passes the test of extensional equivalence that equivalence will be correctly viewed as a consequence of the IAP theory, rather than as the basis for a rival account of what meaning is. Prior to my paper "Meaning and Use" the IA aspect of communication was totally neglected by communication theorists–to their sorrow, since no existing version of communication theory that focuses on PA's has attained even extensional adequacy.

It may be thought that the IAP version purchases extensional equivalence only by remaining so close to the explanandum as to be unilluminating. According to IAP theory the S, 'The house is on fire's' meaning what it does consists in its being standardly usable to tell someone that a certain house is on fire. The reader may be inclined to respond that the concept of telling someone that a certain house is on fire is too close, conceptually, to the concept of the sentence's meaning that a certain house in on fire, to be the basis of an illuminating account of the latter. If that's all we have to say on the matter, we have made no significant step beyond the concept with which we started. Perhaps some more or less conscious sense of this difficulty has been partly responsible for the neglact of the IA category in the theory of meaning. And I would agree that so long as we leave the matter at that, so long

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as we take IA concepts in an unanalyzed form, the IAP theory is insufficiently ill-uminating. But this just means that in order to do its job the theory must incorpor-ate (a) an account of the nature of IA's (what it is to perform an IA of a certain type), and based on that, (b) an account of what it is for a S to be usable to per-form IA's of a certain type (what constitutes the basis of such a disposition). If we are successful in doing that we will have made a very significant conceptual advance beyond the unanalyzed semantic terms with which we started.

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Matching IAP's

Before providing a sketchy indication of how all this is to go, I must deal with some counter-examples to the unqualified identification of SM and IAP, counter-examples that will undoubtedly have occured long since to many of my readers. In order to deal with them we shall be forced to complicate the thesis.

SM can be unqualifiedly identified with IAP only if for each distinguishable SM there is exactly one IA-type for the performance of which the S is thereby fitted; and, vice versa, for each IA type there is exactly one SM that fits a S for being used to perform it. If this were true then whenever I used an S with a given meaning and thereby performed some IA it would always be the same IA; and whenever I per-formed an IA of a certain type by making a normal use of a S, I would always be uttering that S with the same meaning. But the world is not that simple. There are, first of all, in the sorts of cases used by Austin to originally introduce the concept of IF, those in which a sentence can be used with the same meaning to perform acts with different IF's. As Austin pointed out,[17] one can use the sentence 'It is going to charge' (without changing its meaning) to simply state or to warn that a certain bull is going to charge (and, we may add, to admit, to agree, to conclude, or to an-nounce, that it is going to charge). Again by saying 'Shoot her' (in its most common sense) I may be urging or advising or ordering someone to shoot her. Clearly the meaning of ones sentential vehicle cannot be depended on to fully determine the IF of ones IA. Austin took this to show that the IF of an utterance was something over and above _meaning_ "in the sense in which meaning is equivalent to sense and refer-ence". But it is important to note that insofar as it shows this, a parallel argument also shows that PC is not determined by meaning. For just as my sentential vehicle may not make completely explicit the IF of my utterance, so with the PC. By say-ing 'It will' I may be asserting that a certain bull is going to charge, that the interest rate will go down, that a certain ladder will hold steady, and so on. And, given the appropriate stage setting I can express any propositional content whatever by say-ing 'Yes', surely a limiting case of the underdetermination of IA by sentential meaning.

What is involved in all these cases is the familiar fact that if we have enough con-textual clues we need not use a sentence rich enough to carry all the details of the intended IA. And this point applies equally to the IF and PC aspects. But for any IA type it is possible (with an exception to be noted in a moment) to construct a sentence the (or a) meaning of which _does_ fully and unambiguously determine that type. Thus the Austinian IF ambiguities could be resolved by beefing up the sen-tence with a "performative" verb to make it 'I warn you it's going to charge' or 'I admit it's going to charge'. And my first PC ambiguity can be resolved by replacing 'It will' with 'The bull over there is going to charge' or 'The interest rate will go down'. The only aspect of IA's that seems not fully determinable by meaning is

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reference (meaning by 'meaning'--meaning--rather than Austin's "sense and reference"). Note that my beefed up sentences did not make explicit which bull or which interest rate, etc. But this is controversial and in any event our present concern is with determination in the opposite direction. For any SM there is an IA type that is fully determined by that meaning in the sense that if someone seriously and literally utters the S with that M, then, just by knowing that we can determine that he intends[18] to be performing an IA of that type. We do not need any supplementary contextual clues for that determination. This criterion gives us what we may call the "matching IA type" for a given SM. Here are the matching IA types for some of the above sentences and some others (assuming a familiar meaning for each sentence).

'It will'--Asserting of something that it will do something.

'It's going to charge'--Asserting of a certain animal that it is going to charge.

'I agree that it is going to charge'--Agreeing to the proposition concerning a certain animal that it is going to charge.

'The bull is going to charge'--Asserting of a certain bull that it is going to charge.

'Jones' prize bull is going to charge'--Asserting of a certain prize bull belonging to a person names 'Jones' that it is going to charge.

To construct a matching IA type we have to find just the degree of specificity that is explicitly embodied in the SM in question--with respect to the identity of referents, predicative aspects of the PC, and the IF. Note that an IA type can be too poor for the sentence meaning as well as, like all our initial examples, too rich. Thus while admitting that Jones' bull is going to charge is "too rich" for 'It is going to charge' asserting of something that it will do something is "too poor". Again, there are dimensions of mismatch other than specificity. The sentence, 'The Norwegian banners fan our people cold.' can be used metaphorically to assert that the Norwegian Army is making our people afraid; but that IA potentiality is not directly determined by any of its (established) meanings in the language. And second-order uses, like ironically using 'What a beautiful day' to remark that the weather is nasty, are not directly determined by meaning. But we cannot go any further into these details.

To sum up, although it is not unqualifiedly true that SM amounts to IAP, we can say that for any SM there is a (matching) IA type such that that SM can be identified with whatever renders a sentence usable to perform IA's of that type.

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The Structure of IA's

In the remainder of this paper I shall indicate in what I fear is all-too-sketchy a fashion how I propose to put some flesh on the skeleton of the IAP theory; I'll be giving you the skeleton of the flesh on the skeleton.

Now of course our ultimate concern is with IAP. But in order to develop an illuminating account of what it is that gives an S a certain IAP, we shall have to go into the question of what it is to perform an IA of a given type. Here as elsewhere the understanding of a potentiality presupposes an understanding of what its actual-

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ization would be. So long as we are using IA concepts in the raw, the most we could say about IAP is that, e.g., 'Please open the door' is usable to ask someone to open a certain door just by virtue of being governed by a permissive rule that could be formulated as follows.

'Please open the door' may be used to ask someone to open a certain door. But this account would be rightly felt to be unilluminating in the way specified above. And to advance beyond that we must go into the constitution of IA's.

Let's begin our account by noting that in any IA one is asserting, presupposing, or implying one or more propositions. This is obvious with respect to that special sub-class of IA's known as assertions. And here are some examples of what one is presupposing or implying[19] (I shall not explicitly distinguish these in this paper) in performing various kinds of nonassertive IA's.

1. U ordered A to open that door.
   A. That door is not now open.
   B. It is possible for A to open that door
   C. U is in a position of authority vis-a-vis A.

2. U Promised A to meet him for lunch tomorrow.
   A. It is possible for U to meet A for lunch tomorrow.
   B. A would prefer U's meeting him for lunch tomorrow to U's not doing so.
   C. U intends to meet A for lunch tomorrow.

3. U declared a certain meeting (M) adjourned.
   A. M is in session at the time of the utterance.
   B. U has the authority to terminate that meeting.
   C. Conditions are appropriate for the exercise of that authority.

So our first job is to bring out in an illuminating way what it is to assert, presuppose, or imply some proposition, p. Since assertion is more "out in the open", we may initially concentrate on that. But remember that we are looking for what assertion has in common with presupposition and implication. What is it to assert that my garden gate is open? What is added (or subtracted) when I move from using the sentence 'My garden gate is open' to practice pronunciation or to give an example, to using it to make that assertion?

It seems obvious that what is added must somehow involve the proposition that my garden gate is open. For otherwise how can it render my utterance an assertion of that proposition rather than of some other? But it does not enter in the most obvious ways. The truth (or falsity) of that proposition is obviously neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of my asserting it. More generally it would seem that the crucial condition cannot be something true of the proposition apart from the speaker. If some condition is going to turn my utterance of S into an assertion that p it must somehow connect me with p; it must be some kind of "attitude" or "stance" I am in vis-a-vis p. But here too the most obvious suggestions do not pan out. For example, my believing the proposition is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition. Not a necessary condition, for an assertion may be a lie; and if it were a sufficient condition I would continually be asserting everything I believe.

In fact there are two further reasons for rejecting U's belief that p as the crucial condition; and consideration of these reasons may help us move toward an adequate answer. (1) The crucial condition must be something within U's control, at

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least in the sense that, given a proposition I am capable of asserting and a sentence that is usable to assert it, it is wholly up to me whether, in uttering that sentence, I am asserting that p, rather than, e.g., practicing pronunciation. Given the appropriate background, I can realize this further condition at will. (2) The condition cannot be externally related to the utterance, so that its satisfaction would consist merely in the fact that U has the requisite attitude toward p at the moment of the utterance. For whatever the propositional attitude it seems clear that I might have that attitude toward p while using S to practice pronunciation rather than to assert that p. The condition must somehow essentially involve the utterance. It must be a matter of relating the utterance to p in a certain way, or thinking of the utterance as related to p in a certain way.

So what can U do at will to relate his utterance of a suitable sentence to p? For one thing, he can utter S in order to get A to believe that p (or in order to get A to adopt some more complicated propositional attitude toward p, e.g., believing that U believes that p). This is, as we have seen, the kind of fact that is used by Grice to elucidate SM; and it is used by Stephen R. Schiffer[20] to explain the nature of IA's. Schiffer does not explicitly discuss the concept of assertion as such, but applying his account of other IA types to assertion will give us something like the following. To assert that p in uttering S is to utter S with the intention of producing in ones audience the activated belief that p; where this intention must satisfy certain very complicated conditions into which I will not have time to go. For the present I shall merely indicate why I think that, no matter what the additional restrictions, the account will not be adequate. The trouble is that there are clear cases of asserting that p in which U does <u>not</u> intend to be activating in A a belief that p. For example, I may have absolutely no hope of your believing what I say, but nevertheless feel an obligation to tell the truth in answer to a direct question. Or I may remark that the weather is getting warmer, just to make conversation and without having the slightest interest in whether I produce or activate any belief in you. Cases of these and many other sorts reveal that asserting that p does not <u>necessarily</u> involve an aim at affecting the beliefs of ones auditor. That may be its most frequent or most basic perlocutionary use, but it is not its invariable accompaniment. Of course one could treat assertions aimed at producing or activating belief as assertions in a primary sense, and other cases as exhibiting a secondary sense of the term. But this seems counter-intuitive to me; and in any event it would be preferable to give an account that covers all assertions if that is possible.

Where shall we turn next? I suggest that we will find more fertile fields by reflecting on the following natural ways of bringing out what someone did in making a (flat) assertion that p.

1. He represented himself as knowing that p.
2. He purported (claimed) to know that p.
3. He committed himself to its being the case that p.
4. He vouched for its being the case that p.
5. He lent his authority to the belief that p.

Of these locutions, 'purport', 'claim', and 'represent' would appear too close to 'assert' and other IA terms to be of much help, though we shall shortly be exploiting the switch from asserting that p to represent oneself <u>as knowing</u> that p. But the other items look more promising. They all suggest that what is going on when one makes an assertion is that one changes ones "normative status" in a certain way, renders oneself liable or responsible in a new way; that one "sticks ones neck out"

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or "goes out on a limb". When I "vouch for" something or "lend my authority" to its being a certain way, I render myself liable to censure, reprimand, correction, or the like in case things are not as one has "vouched" for their being. One has put oneself into such a position that one can be "called to account", subjected to some appropriate negative sanction, provided things are not that way. What all this suggests is that the unsuccessful conditions surveyed earlier all fail just because they restrict themselves to "purely factual" features of U's attitudes and behavior whereas what is really crucial is the "normative stance" U takes up.

But this suggestion needs some shaping before it is ready to unveil. We have said that in asserting that p one, in uttering S, takes on a liability to negative sanction, or something like that, in case a certain condition is not satisfied. Two questions obtrude themselves. (1) Just what condition? (2) How can we reduce the indeterminacy of the "something like that"?

(1) An obvious answer to the first question would be--the condition that p. After all that is what we were speaking of U's vouching for. One asserts that p only if in uttering S one lays oneself open to negative sanction in case that not-p. But though this seems right as far as it goes it does not cover all the ways in which ones assertion makes one liable. For even if p is the case one may be called to account if one had no reason to suppose that p. ("You had no right to say that.") Likewise if one did not believe that p. 1. and 2. on the above list suggest a way of getting all these liabilities into the picture. If asserting that p involves representing oneself as knowing that p, then we should take the condition, absence of which renders U liable to censure, as U's knowing that p. If so then one is rightly called to account if not p, if one does not believe that p, or if one is not epistemically justified in believing that p. For all these are required for knowing that p.[21]

(2) I initially used a scatter-shot technique to give a feel for my proposal. If I am to advance beyond that to a precise formulation I must say what censure, reprimand, correction, calling to account, and negative sanction have in common. My suggestion is that they are all appropriate reactions to someone's doing something impermissable, something he was supposed not to have done, something that was in violation of a rule. There is a variety of such reactions because just what reaction is appropriate depends on further features of the context. In some circumstances the thing to do in response to a rule violation is simply to point this out to the violator. In other cases it is appropriate to express disapproval or other negative attitudes, or to engage in more formal disapprobative behavior--censure, reprimand, reproof, stricture. In other cases further penalties or negative sanctions are called for. And in still other cases the only justifiable course is to hold ones peace. The only thing that binds all these reactions together (including the last category--lack of any overt reaction) is the realization or "perception" on the part of the reactor that the first party has violated some rule, has done something he should not have done. And correspondingly the only way to get a common formula for U's (knowingly) laying himself open to such reactions (making such reactions appropriate or justifiable) is to say that U utters S as subject to a certain rule (one that would be violated in those circumstances). Thus the crucial condition for asserting that p will read:

III.   U uttered S as subject to a rule that implies that in circumstances like these U's knowing that p is a necessary condition of permissibly uttering S.

For concise reference, let's abbreviate III as

IV.   U R'd that p.

One may think of 'R's that p' as an abbreviation of 'represents himself as knowing that p', provided he does not pack anything into this phrase that is not included in our canonical formulation III .

Note that this version of the crucial condition satisfies all the requirements laid down earlier. It (a) brings in the proposition that p (b) by way of specifying a certain stance of S to that proposition; (c) it is a stance that is internally related to S's utterance of T rather than just one that is possessed at the same moment as that utterance. (For the stance is--uttering S as subject to a rule that————p————.); (d) it is a condition that U can satisfy at will (at least subject to certain constraints).[22] Furthermore, assuming that it is extensionally adequate, it is of the right sort to be illuminating. For it specifies what makes an utterance into an assertion by using a much more general set of concepts--rule, permission doing the right or wrong thing--that we have to use for many domains of extra linguistic behavior.

Before embarking on this examination of assertion I said that my quarry was really what is common to asserting, presupposing, and implying that p. Now I want to suggest that the above account applies equally to the p's that are presupposed or implied in non-assertive IA's. Thus part of what it is to order a subordinate, A, to open a certain door is to utter some appropriate S, R'ing that:

1.   That door is not now open.
2.   It is possible for A to open that door.
3.   U is in a position of authority vis-a-vis A.

And part of what it is to promise Jones to meet him for lunch tomorrow is that U utter some appropriate S, R'ing that:

1.   It is possible for U to meet Jones for lunch tomorrow.
2.   Jones would prefer U's meeting him for lunch tomorrow to U's not doing so.
3.   U intends to meet Jones for lunch tomorrow.

And part of what it is to declare a certain meeting adjourned is that U utters some appropriate S, R'ing that:

1.   That meeting is currently in session.
2.   U has the authority to terminate that meeting.
3.   Conditions are currently appropriate for the exercise of that authority.[23]

It is my view that R'ing is not only a part but the whole of what needs to be added to sentence-utterance to make an IA. In this paper I will not be able to explain how this works for various kinds of IA's, much less defend the position. But I will just indicate how it goes. The p's we have been citing for orders, promises, and the like have to do with what may generally be called pre-conditions of the IA in question, conditions of its appropriateness, reasonableness, pertinence, or what have you. But R'ing these conditions cannot be all of what constitutes one of these non-assertive acts. For that R'ing is just as centrally involved in asserting the conjunction of those conditions. Since that is common to promising to do D and to asserting the relevant pre-conditions, it can't be the whole of what makes up the former in contrast to the latter. To get at the distinctive feature of ordering, declaring a meeting adjourned, and other non-assertive IA's, we have to note that correlated with each such act is a type of "conventional effect" (CE), a way in which the social or con-

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ventional status of something is altered. The conventional effect (CE) is correlated with the IA in that it is the standard purpose of the IA to produce a CE of that sort. Thus orders are issued in order to obligate A to do what is ordered; promises are made in order to obligate U to do what he has promised to do; one declares a meeting adjourned in order to terminate it; one bequeaths ones possessions in order to transfer title of them; and so on. Now a simple way of distinguishing the order or the bequest from the assertion of preconditions would be to make the production of the CE a necessary condition of the former. For some time I was thinking about the matter along those lines. But more recently I have become convinced that what we may call "pure" IA concepts (those that simply make explicit what U said, the "content" of his utterance) do not entail that the CE is actually produced.

Contrast a case in which U produces the intended CE and one in which U purports to be doing so but something goes wrong. The former might be a proper ship christening and the latter an attempted christening directed to the wrong ship. It seems clear that what is said, the "content" or "message" communicated may be exactly the same in the two cases. So if the IA is constituted by that it can't require something that is present only in the more full blooded case. This means that the pure IA term for this case will not be 'christen the ship' but rather something like 'purport to give the ship a name'. Sometimes the pure IA is expressed by one verb. 'Order' is such a verb. To order A to do D is to perform an act that has as its standard purpose obligating A to do D; but the actual engendering of such an obligation is not a necessary condition for applying the IA term. Even if I fail to engender the obligation, from lack of authority or from improper use of that authority, it could still be true that I ordered you to shine my shoes.

So how are we to distinguish purporting to give a ship a name from the assertion of the relevant preconditions. My suggestion is that the former involves R'ing an extra p, viz., that in the present utterance one is bringing it about that the ship in question is named_____. The CE does figure in a necessary condition--not however its actual production, but rather U's R'ing that he is actually producing it. So if we can handle things in this way, it will still be true that the only thing involved in any IA, over and above a sentence-utterance is R'ing various p's.

We are still faced with the problem of how to distinguish asserting that p from presupposing or implying that p, since on this account they all equally involve R'ing that p. Let me just express my opinion that we cannot answer this question by specifying some further propositional attitude possessed by U. The distinction is based rather on the linguistic structure of ones sentential vehicle. When I utter 'My wife will be late' I do not assert, but rather presuppose that I am married. To assert this I must deploy some such sentence as 'I am married'. This kind of example suggests to me that a necessary condition of asserting that p, in contrast to presupposing or implying that p, is that U utters a sentence that "explicitly" expresses p, that is structurally isomorphic with that proposition. But this suggestion must remain undeveloped here.

The Basis of IAP

Now we are ready for the central question: what gives a sentence a certain IAP? By virtue of what is the sentence usable to perform IA's of a certain type? In what does that usability consist? With the above account of IA's plugged in, this question becomes: by virtue of what does a sentence possess the capacity to be uttered as subject to a certain rule?

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Humpty Dumpty would undoubtedly reply that any sentence can be uttered as subject to any rule; a speaker can just decide as he goes along which rule to pair with which sentence. Now I don't want to deny that speakers can make special ad hoc uses of sentences; in fact I've seen it done. But that is not the normal case on which our inquiry is focused. We are seeking to understand what gives sentences a standard usability to perform IA's of one type rather than another. We are seeking to understand the IA-usability that is inherent in the linguistic characteristics of the sentence--its "status" in the constitution of the language; a usability that can be exploited just by knowledge of the language without the necessity of making any special ad hoc arrangements. If that is the question it answers itself, given the above account of IA's. What makes a sentence standardly susceptible to being uttered as subject to a certain rule is that it is subject to that rule as part of the language. It is constitutive of its status in the language, its linguistic constitution (more specifically its semantic status or constitution) to be governed by that rule. IAP is being subject to certain rules. Thus the particular form our IAP theory of SM has taken is that for an S to have a certain M is for it to be governed, in the language, by one or more rules. Call such rules illocutionary-rules (I-rules).

This conclusion is hardly surprising or novel. On the contrary, the idea that linguistic meaning is a matter of rules or conventions is at least as deeply entrenched in traditional wisdom as the idea that linguistic meaning is a matter of communicative function. We have now reached the stage of the argument at which we can see the IAP theory as a confluence of these two lines of thought. Having identified communicative function with IAP and the latter with subjection to certain rules, we can see that the two basic ways of thinking about meaning have turned out to be two sides of the same coin. Thus the IAP theory will be supported by whatever considerations encourage us to think of linguistic meaning in either of these ways.

But though the proclamation that an S has a certain M by virtue of being governed by certain rules is scarcely news, it would be not only news but good news to set forth an adequate specification of what kind of rule(s) are constitutive of SM. Previous attempts have been conspicuously unsuccessful in carrying this through.[24] This task bristles with both difficulties and complications, and at the tail end of this paper I can do no more than indicate the general character of my proposals. In order to say anything within this compass I will have to drastically simplify the subject matter. Let's consider a language, or segment thereof, that is simpler than natural languages in the following respects. (1) Each meaningful LE has only one meaning. Thus on our account of SM each S will have only one matching IAP and be governed by only one set of I-rules. (2) Reference is tightly controlled by meaning. Every singular referring expression has exactly one referent determined by its meaning. This will restrict reference to Russellian or logically proper names, not necessarily all of which get this status in just the way Russell imagined his proper names to do so (by private ostension of momentary sense-data). With these simplifying assumptions we can give a simple recipe for determining the rules by which a given sentence gets a given IAP. For each p the R'ing of which is involved in performing IA's of the type in question, there will be a rule of the following form.

V.   S may be uttered by U only if U knows that p.

And the total IAP will be given by a rule that lays down knowledge of each of the p's as a necessary condition of permissible utterance, and the knowledge of all the p's as a sufficient condition. Thus consider the sentence 'Close D' (where 'D' is a logically proper name of a certain door), and where the sole meaning of the sentence is one the matching IA-type for which is ordering A to close D. Then the rule that constitutes the sentence's IAP can be formulated as:

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VI.   'Close D' may be uttered by U addressed to A, if and only if U knows that:

1.   D is not currently closed.
2.   It is possible for A to close D.
3.   U is in a position of authority with respect to A.
4.   Conditions are currently propitious for the exercise of this authority.
5.   By this utterance of 'Close D' U is obligating A t o close D.

Assertions constitute a case of limiting simplicity for this account. The corresponding rule for the declarative sentence 'D is closed' would be:

VII.   'D is closed' may be uttered by U if and only if U knows that:

1.   D is closed.

I trust that these simplified examples will give some idea of the kind of rules I take to be constitutive of SM. When we allow multivocal LE's, and allow singular referring expressions that can be used with one and the same meaning to refer to many different individuals ('the chair', 'I') things become enormously more complicated, but the basic feature of the above examples will remain.

There is, however, one complication that must be made explicit before even this idealized account is worthy of being presented to the world. We have already made reference to the fact that any given S may be used, with impunity, to do various things other than perform matching IA's. It may be used elliptically or metaphorically or ironically to perform various other IA's; it may be used in a derivative way to give examples or say things in dramatic productions; it may be used in a non-communicative way to practice pronunciation or test a microphone. In all these cases, even under our idealizing assumption of univocity, the sentence may be used in the absence of one or more of the conditions required by the associated I-rule. And no one would suppose that the speaker in such cases would be guilty of any rule violation. Such performances are clearly in order. What this means is that I-rules have a limited scope. They do not apply willy nilly to any utterance of S, the way traffic regulations apply willy nilly to any movements of the specified sorts. On the contrary they are limited, like rules of games, to certain spheres of activity. Just as the rule that forbids a quarterback to be beyond the line of scrimmage when he throws the ball forward, applies only when a game is in progress, not when one is just testing his arm; so VII. applies to utterances of 'D is closed' only when one means to be using that sentence to communicate and does not mean to be using it in a metaphorical, ironical, or elliptical way. Thus if our rules are to make a serious claim to laying down necessary conditions of permissible utterance they will have to be restricted to a certain sphere of activity. It is not clear exactly how to draw boundaries around the sphere, and it is probably impossible to do so without using some semantic terms. But just as an illustration, the rubric of our rules needs beefing up in something like the following way.

VIII.   S may be uttered by U in the communicative, literal, straightforward use of language if and only if U knows that:

An additional bonus of this new complication is that it enables us to understand how the satisfaction of our crucial condition can be under U's control. So long as the rule was in its initial unqualified form it would seem that utterances of S either

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are or are not governed by the rule, and the speaker has nothing to say about it. But this new complication makes clear the area of U's discretion. Though U cannot determine which I-rules are attached to S in the language, he can determine whether his current utterance of S is in the sphere of activity within which the rule applies. If he utters S in the communicative, literal, straightforward use of language, he has uttered S as subject to that rule. If he utters S in the context of some other kind of activity he has uttered S as not subject to that rule.

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I-rules and Truth Conditions

It may be useful to round off this presentation with an indication of how my account of SM is related to the currently fashionable idea that the meaning of an S is to be given by specifying its "truth conditions" (T-conditions). There are well known difficulties in the very concept of a sentences's possessing a truth value or having truth conditions. And even if we can give an intelligible sense to such talk there are also doubts as to whether we can explain that sense without recourse to IA concepts, more specifically to the notion of using the sentence to make a true or false assertion.[25] But let's waive all that for the present. Let's suppose that to each S, just by virtue of its meaning, is attached one or more sets of T-conditions, conditions under which it (or the assertion it would normally be used to make) is true. There will, in fact, be as many different sets of conditions as there are distinguishable assertions it can standardly be used to make. But given the present idealizing restrictions of univocity and reference by logically proper names, each S will be standardly (literally, straightforwardly, non-elliptically) usable to make no more than one assertion; and so we may ignore the plurality of T-conditions.

Given all this, the main difficulty with a T-condition's theory of SM is that it applies only to S's with an assertive potential. If to speak of S's being true is simply to speak of the truth of the assertion that would be made by a normal employment of S, then S's that are not normally used to make assertions have no truth value, and hence no T-conditions. Various suggestions are made by T-condition theorists to handle non-assertion making S's. David Lewis, e.g., in "General Semantics"[26] suggests that we first transform all such S's to explicit performatives, which are then interpreted as standardly used to assert that the IA in question is being performed. On this strategy 'Close D' would be regarded as an alternate form of 'I order you to close D',which is supposed to have the same T-conditions as 'He is ordering you to close D' (where these utterances of 'I' and 'he' refer to the same person). Other T-condition theorists make other suggestions. I won't have time to go into this, but I feel sure that none of these suggestions are successful. If I am right about that the T-condition approach suffers irremediably from being too parochial. In that case the IAP theory can be recommended as a more catholic application of the basic insight of the T-condition approach. For on the IAP theory what the I-rule for an assertion-making sentence lays down as necessary and sufficient conditions for permissible utterance is identical with what T-condition theory would regard as T-conditions for the sentence. With respect to this sub-set of S's the theories coincide. But, and this is the crucial difference, by conceptualising this overlap as conditions for permissible utterance, rather than as T-conditions, IAP theory is in a position to treat the rest of the language in just the same terms. For S's with other IAP's all have conditions of permissible utterance, though they lack T-conditions. Thus IAP theory, unlike T-condition theory, is in a position to bring out what is constitutive

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of the meaning of non-assertive S's the way T-conditions are constitutive of the meaning of assertive S's; and it is in a position to bring this out by the use of a formula that is univocally applicable across the board. One might put this by saying that although 'Close D' and 'I declare this meeting adjourned' are not used to make assertions, and so aren't used to say something that is itself true or false; still their IAP is wholly constituted by what U presupposes and implies in their utterance. And these presuppositions and implications have T-conditions as much as assertions do. The I-rule for these sentences bring out the T-conditions for those presuppositions and implications, and in this way reveal the way in which what constitutes their meaning is analogous to what constitutes the meaning of assertion-making sentences.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]"Meaning and Use", Phil. Quart. 13 (1963). Philosophy of Language; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, Ch. II.

[2]Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1969.

[3]How To Do Things With Words. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962. Lecture VIII.

[4]Op. Cit., p. 30

[5]Essay Concerning Human Understanding; Bk. III, Ch. 2.

[6]"Meaning", Phil. Rev., 66 (1957). "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions", Phil. Rev., 78 (1969) xx. "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning, and Word-Meaning", Found. Lang. 4 (1968).

[7]Language (London, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1935) 139.

[8]Signs, Language, and Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 19-46), Ch. 1.

[9]"Meaning and Linguistic Analysis", Language 30 (1951).

[10]Method and Theory in Experimental Psychology (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1953). Ch. 16.

[11]In some versions, e.g., Bloomfield (op. cit.), attention is also given to the stimuli to which the utterance of x is a response.

[12]Ethics and Language (New. Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), Ch. 3.

[13]Loc. Cit.

[14]A Theory of Human Action (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), Ch. 1.

[15]"The Logical Form of Action Sentences", in N. Rescher, ed., The Logic of Decision and Action (Pittsburgh, U. of Pittsburgh Press, 1967).

[16]This is my own quick version of what Locke and Grice come to. Both Locke, and Grice in the passage cited above, speak of LE's being regularly used to perform certain PA's, rather than of LE's being usable to perform those acts. But when we are dealing with S's and other semantically complex LE's, it is obvious that the LE can have a meaning without having ever been used to do anything. There is, in fact, an infinity of meaningful sentences in any natural language that have never been uttered. Hence I have modified our authors to take account of this point. In fairness to Grice it should be recognized that in the article from which I quoted he goes on to give an account that is designed to apply to sentences generally; but it is much too complicated to be discussed here.

[17]Loc. Cit.

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Footnotes Continued

[18]We have to put this in terms of U's IA <u>intentions,</u> rather than in terms of U's actual IA <u>performance,</u> for the following reason. For many matching IA types the standard use of a S with a certain M is not sufficient for actual IA performance; this is true, e.g., for the use of S's containing typical singular referring devices to perform IA that are "about" individuals. Thus when I use 'The gate is open' to assert of a certain gate that it is open, I will succeed in making that assertion only if I satisfy the contextual requirements for consummating a reference to some particular gate. Hence knowledge of the meaning with which I uttered the S is <u>not</u> sufficient for A to determine that I <u>performed</u> an IA of that type (asserting of a certain gate that it is open). A must also know that a reference was consummated to some particular gate. However it is still true that by knowing that I seriously and literally uttered that sentence in its basic meaning, A is able to assure himself that I <u>intended</u> to be asserting of a certain gate that it is open.

[19]I mean to be using 'imply' and 'presuppose' in a strong, or semantic sense, in which what one implies or presupposes is a function of <u>what one is saying,</u> rather than a weak or pragmatic sense, in which it is a function of various further intentions or assumptions of the speaker that can vary independently of the content of what he said. The examples that follow in the text will illustrate the strong senses. In the weaker sense one may be said, e.g., to have implied (suggested, insinuated) that Ford is not very bright by saying that he can't walk and chew gum at the same time; and one may be said to be presupposing that the Republicans have little chance to win the election when he says that Ford may as well take the chance of debating Jimmy Carter.

[20]<u>Meaning</u> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), Ch. IV.

[21]Obviously I am working with the widely accepted, but highly controversial, true-justified-belief conception of knowledge. However, I am only assuming that these three conditions are necessary for knowledge, not that they are by themselves sufficient.

[22](d) will be accomodated only if the rules are such that it is up to U (perhaps within certain constraints that do, however, leave him a certain freedom of movement) whether a given rule <u>applies</u> to his utterance, i.e., whether the necessary conditions of permissible utterance it lays down are necessary conditions for <u>that</u> utterance's being permissible. But if performing IA's is a matter of rule governance, then we must recognize that U does have <u>some</u> say as to what rule(s) are governing his utterance. For, as we have noted, he <u>does have</u> some choice as to when he is using S to make a certain assertion rather than, e.g., to test a microphone. In the next section we will explain how the appropriate rules do lend U some latitude.

[23]Let me emphasize, in case there is need to do so, that my 1., 2., 3.'s, are not themselves put forward as necessary conditions for the application of the corresponding IA term. What is put forward as a necessary condition, is that U utter S as subject to a rule that requires these conditions for <u>permissible</u> utterance. But of course the satisfaction of that larger condition (U's uttering S as subject...) is compatible with the non-satisfaction of 1., 2., 3.,... For S may be violating the rule. To perform an action as subject to a rule is not, in this sinful world, tantamount to <u>conforming</u> to the rule.

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FOOTNOTES

[24]See my "Semantic Rules", in M.K. Munitz & Peter K. Unger, eds., <u>Semantics and Philosophy</u> (N.Y.: New York U. Press, 1974).

[25]See P.F. Strawson, "Meaning and Truth", in <u>Logico-Linguistic Papers</u> (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1971).

[26]In <u>Semantics of Natural Language,</u> ed. D. Davidson & G. Harman (Boston: D. Rediel Pub. Co., 1972).

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