

# On the Intrinsically Intentional Nature of Illocutionary Acts

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# On the Intrinsically Intentional Nature of Illocutionary Acts

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## Abstract

Underlying Searle's theory of mind there is the general idea that the intentionality of human agents underlies their relation to the world. Following Brentano (1874) *intentionality* is, according to Searle (1993), the property by which our mental states, perceptions and actions are directed towards objects and facts of reality. There are two kinds of *conceptual thoughts* directed towards objects and facts of the world: *intentional states* like *propositional attitudes* such as beliefs, desires and intentions that we *have*, and *intentional acts* like *illocutionary acts* such as assertions, directives, promises, declarations and thanks that we *make* in the exercise of thought and the use of language. These two kinds of conceptual thoughts are logically linked. Indeed whoever succeeds in performing an *illocutionary act* (the most important kind of speech acts) must *intend* and *attempt* to perform that act in an appropriate context and express the attitudes determined by its sincerity conditions. Despite these logical links, Searle advocates that unlike propositional attitudes illocutionary acts are not intrinsically intentional, i. e. that their power to represent is not intrinsic to these acts themselves, but is rather derived from the intentionality of the mind. We will challenge his view by arguing on the basis of the fact that instances of illocutions are necessarily intentional actions. We will raise the questions: What about the intrinsic *intention-in-action* of their agents? What is their specific form of intentionality? Why are illocutionary acts different from other speech acts like utterance acts that are not always intentional? How is meaning related to intentionality and illocutionary acts? Our main goal here will be to explain why tokens of illocutions are intrinsically intentional actions.

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This work is composed of five parts : The introduction exposes the theme, subject and scope ; the second section explains the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker meaning ; the third section deals with the different kinds of speech acts ; the fourth section explains why the directions of fit between ideas and things underlie the directions of fit between words and things and the fifth section contains our final considerations about the intrinsic intentionality of meaning and illocutionary acts. The bibliographical references come at the end.

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary philosophy of mind, intentionality and consciousness are fundamental distinctive features of the human mind. Thanks to intentionality we are directed towards objects and facts of reality in two modes : by *sensorial perception*, and by *conceptual representation*. When we have conscious visual, oral, auditory, gustative and tactile perceptions, we have *sensorial presentations* of objects and facts. Of course, the subjective features of our conscious sensorial impressions are distinct from the features of perceived objects. However, in order to be real our perceptions and sensorial presentations of objects and facts must be caused by existing objects and facts of the world. Otherwise, our experience would not be a real perception, but a hallucination.

However, when we have propositional attitudes like beliefs, desires and intentions, when we make conceptual acts like judgements, decisions, approvals and choices, and perform elementary illocutionary acts like assertions, promises, requests and definitions, we refer to things under concepts and we predicate properties of things in expressing a whole propositional content which can be true or false. We will mainly be concerned here with propositional attitudes and elementary illocutions which are paradigmatic elementary conceptual thoughts.

*Propositional attitudes* are mental *states*, which have a *psychological mode*, while *elementary illocutions* are mental *acts*, which have an *illocutionary force*, in addition to a *propositional content*. As Frege (1918-23) pointed out, we always *indirectly* refer to objects and represent facts through senses in expressing *propositions*. So concepts that we conceive as well as properties and relations that we predicate of objects of reference are propositional constituents of our conceptual thoughts. Unlike the sensorial presentations of our real perceptions, the representations of our conceptual thoughts need not represent existing facts. We can refer to things under concepts which are deprived of denotation and we can predicate properties of things that they do not have. Our real *propositional attitudes* and *elementary illocutions* can have a false propositional content<sup>1)</sup>. They need not be satisfied and correspond to an existing fact of the world. The notion of *satisfaction* is a generalisation of the traditional notion of *truth* which applies to all psychological modes and illocutionary forces. Our beliefs are *satisfied* whenever they are *true*, our *desires* whenever they are *realized* and our intentions whenever they are *executed*. As Vanderveken (2006, 2008) pointed out, attitudes have logically related conditions of possession and of satisfaction. Whoever possesses a real propositional attitude must relate in a certain way its propositional content to the world with its psychological mode and think how things are or will be in the world if that attitude were satisfied. Our assertive illocutions are *satisfied* when they are *true*, our promises when they are *kept* and our directives when they are *followed*. As Searle and Vanderveken (1985) pointed out in *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, in order to perform at a given moment an elementary illocution at a moment, we have to make certain

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1) Sometimes we refer to things that are not even possible. So we can believe and assert necessarily false propositions and even desire and promise to carry out impossible actions. When we do that we just wrongly think that their propositional content is possible. As Vanderveken (2009, 2011) pointed out, human speakers are imperfectly rational and not omniscient.

constitutive mental acts in relating to the world its propositional content with its force (mainly to achieve the illocutionary point of its force on its propositional content) and think how things are or will be in the world if our illocution were satisfied. According to illocutionary logic, the felicity conditions of illocutionary acts are their conditions of success and of non defective performance in addition to their conditions of satisfaction.

Searle (1983) presents in *Intentionality* both a logical and an ontological analysis of intentionality. In his view intentionality is first of all a *biological property* of our mind which enables us to have a subjective access to the world thanks to our five senses, our conceptual representations, and our power to act. This is why we can perceive and represent things and facts and transform them thanks to our actions. Most of our attempts to move the body (for example of producing sounds) are not properly conceptual voluntary actions. There are presentations rather than representations of the attempted movement. However our attempts to perform illocutions are conceptual, because we need to express their propositional content in order to represent their satisfaction conditions. As Searle pointed out, the mind is more fundamental than language so that philosophy of language is a branch of philosophy of mind. The representational power of language comes from the intentionality of competent speakers. Searle (1983, 22) puts this point very clearly when he explains why his approach avoids the infinite regress problem raised by Dennett<sup>2)</sup> :

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2) See D. Dennett (1978, 122-124) to know his criticism of Searle's account of intentionality in terms of representation. In short, Dennett points out that Searle's analysis leads to the Hume's problem or what he calls an infinite regress of homunculi. About what is the problem concerned? Well, according to Dennett, the explanation of propositional attitudes as representation implies that must have an agent who uses them as a representation. The theory requires then the existence of a mysterious homunculus with its own intentionality in order that it can use an intentional state as representation. The problem is that each homunculus has to have further intentional states in order to use the original intentional states as representations and this leads to an infinite regress.

On my account, the Intentional content which determines the conditions of satisfaction is internal to the Intentional state: there is no way the agent can have a belief or a desire without having its conditions of satisfaction. (...) A belief is intrinsically a representation in this sense: it simply consists in an Intentional content and a psychological mode. The content determines its conditions of satisfaction, and that mode determines that those conditions of satisfaction are represented with a certain direction of fit. It does not require some outside Intentionality in order to become a representation, because if it is a belief it already intrinsically is a representation. Nor does it require some intentional entity, some formal or syntactical object, associated with the belief. The false premise in the argument in short is the one that says that in order for there to be a representation there must be some agent who *uses* some entity as a representation. This is true of pictures and sentence, i. e., of derived Intentionality, but not of Intentional states. We might wish to restrict the term “representation” to those cases as pictures and sentences where we can make a distinction between the entity and its representative content, but this is not a distinction we can make for beliefs and desires *qua* beliefs and desires because the representative content of the belief or the desire isn’t in that way separable from the belief or desire. To say that the agent is conscious of the conditions of satisfaction of his conscious beliefs and desires is not to say that he has to have second order Intentional states about his first order states of belief and desire. If it were, we should indeed get an infinite regress. Rather the consciousness of the conditions of satisfaction is part of the conscious belief or the desire, since the Intentional content is intern to the states in question.

Clearly sentences are syntactic entities (linguistic objects), which can represent facts and express illocutionary acts with satisfaction conditions, but their

representational and expressive character is not intrinsic to them. It depends on social conventions. However Searle goes farther because his distinction between propositional attitudes and illocutionary acts also concerns their form of intentionality : the way they represent. (1983, 27) :

There is an obvious disanalogy between Intentional states and speech acts, which is suggested by the very terminology we have been employing. Mental states are states, and speech acts are acts, i. e., *intentional performances*. And this difference has an important consequence for the way that the speech act is related to its physical realization. The actual performance in which the speech act is made will involve the production (or use or presentation) of some physical entity, such as noises made through the mouth or marks on paper. Beliefs, fears, hopes, and desires on the other hand are intrinsically Intentional. To characterize them as beliefs, fears, hopes, and desires is already to ascribe Intentionality to them. But speech acts have a physical level of realization, *qua* speech acts, that is not intrinsically Intentional. (...) An utterance can have Intentionality, just as a belief has Intentionality, but whereas the Intentionality of the belief is *intrinsic* the Intentionality of the utterance is *derived*. (Our italics).

One problem with Searle's approach is that he only considers *public* instances of illocutionary acts in a context of utterance. As Vanderveken (1990) pointed out<sup>3)</sup>, illocutionary acts are above all *acts of conceptual thoughts* that we often can perform alone in thinking without saying anything. We can make privately without

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3) Vanderveken (1990, 56) says bluntly : "Before being the primary units of meaning in the use of natural languages and other semiotic systems, illocutionary acts are also primary units of conceptual thoughts".

any public utterance elementary illocutionary acts like assertions, decisions and choices that are not essentially addressed to a hearer. Their successful performance just requires an exercise of thought in an appropriate context where the speaker can make all mental acts required by their success conditions. Of course, there is a valid *principle of expressibility* of illocutionary acts in speech act theory. Our successful private illocutionary acts are in principle expressible by language use because they have well determined felicity conditions. Otherwise we would not know what we mean. We would not be able to determine their felicity conditions. So we *can* always *express* our private elementary illocutionary acts by making public illocutions. Only illocutionary acts like promises and orders which are necessarily addressed to a hearer require a public performance when the hearer in question is different from the speaker. In that case one cannot *mean* and attempt to perform the illocutionary act without intending to *communicate* to that hearer our meaning intention. Thus in standard speech act theory in order to mean something and perform illocutionary acts we must before all think conceptually. But we need not always make a public utterance.

Searle (1969) has developed his theory of speech acts by using and revising the analysis of speech acts of his Oxford professors J. L. Austin (1961, 1962) and H. P. Grice (1989). Like Austin, Searle was much influenced by G. Frege (1884, 1892, 1918-23) and L. Wittgenstein (1953). Following Frege, Austin pointed out that the basic units of meaning and communication in the use and comprehension of language are *illocutionary acts*<sup>4)</sup> which have felicity conditions rather than propositions having truth conditions. Opposed to Wittgenstein's skepticism, Searle (1969) began in *Speech Acts* his theoretical analysis of felicity conditions of

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4) The term of illocutionary act was introduced by Austin but the very term of force and the idea that speakers try to perform speech acts with a force in meaningful utterances of different syntactic types of elementary sentences is already in Frege's work.



illocutionary acts. Later in (1979) Searle revised the traditional analysis of *satisfaction conditions* of illocutionary acts in terms of correspondence between words and objects by paying attention to the possible *directions of fit* of illocutions.

Against Wittgenstein's skeptical ideas, Searle (1979) defends that there are only five basic illocutionary points (the assertive, the commissive, the directive, the declaratory and the expressive illocutionary points) that speakers can attempt to achieve on a propositional content in a meaningful utterance because there are only four possible *directions of fit* or ways from which they can intend to establish a correspondence between words of language that they use and things of reality to which they refer. The *words-to-things direction of fit* is specific to *assertive* illocutionary acts which serve to represent how things are or will be in the world. The *things-to-words direction of fit* is specific to *commissive* and *directive* illocutionary acts which serve to commit the speaker (in the commissive case), and to try to get the hearer (in the directive case) to perform an action in the world in order to change represented things so that they come to correspond to uttered words. The *double direction of fit* is specific to declaratory illocutionary acts which serve to transform the world by bringing about at the moment of utterance the fact represented by the propositional content in virtue of the very utterance. The *empty direction of fit* is specific to expressive illocutionary acts, which just serve to express the speaker's propositional attitudes about the fact represented by the propositional content. Because the speaker presupposes the existence of the represented fact, he or she does not want to establish a correspondence in the expressive case.

Searle (1983) recognizes that his approach on language use and meaning was incomplete before. Indeed, a complete explanation of illocutionary acts requires a full account of how our mind relates our expressed ideas to represented things in the world. Before Searle had just analysed the relation between the language and the

world in terms of relations between uttered words (acoustic signs or sounds coming out of our mouths or graphic signs or marks on material objects) and represented things, events or facts of reality without considering that intentionality is constitutive of these relations. As Searle says, one of his objectives in *Intentionality* (1983, vii) is :

*(...) to provide a foundation for my two early books, Speech Acts (Cambridge University Press, 1969) and Expression and Meaning (Cambridge University Press, 1979), as well as for future investigations of these topics. A basic assumption behind my approach to problems of language is that the philosophy of language is a branch of the philosophy of mind. The capacity of speech acts to represent objects and states of affairs in the world is an extension of the more biologically fundamental capacities of the mind (or brain) to relate the organism to the world by way of such mental states as beliefs and desires, and specifically through action and perception. Since speech acts are a type of human action, and since the capacity of speech acts to represent objects and states of affairs is part of a more general capacity of the mind to relate the organism to the world, any complete account of speech and language requires an account of how the mind/brain relates the organism to reality.” (Our italics).*

One important consequence from this theoretical change is that Searle plans to explain the semantic character of language in intentional terms. So the directions of fit between language (words) and reality (things) are henceforth based on the directions of fit between our mind (our ideas and thoughts) and the world (things and facts). This is directly linked with the role that intentionality plays in meaning. For any accurate analysis of linguistic meaning must recognize that sentence

meaning is conventional and that speaker meaning in an utterance is an extension of meaning of the used sentence. Our mind by thinking about reality links the propositional content to represented things of the world with a psychological mode or illocutionary force.

In order to explain the nature of illocutionary acts one must take into account the fact that they are necessarily intentional actions. However Searle (1983) mainly deals with intentional or voluntary actions without defining their very nature. He also does not explain why we perform involuntary actions. We will now briefly outline Vanderveken (2005, 2011, 2014)'s general logic of action and attitudes<sup>5)</sup> which contains a theory of *successful performance* of intentional actions and explains the different forms of generation of actions, whether voluntary or not and how actions are related to attitudes. We now need to integrate illocutionary logic within a general logic of actions and attitudes<sup>6)</sup>. On Vanderveken's view, in order to be *intentional* or *voluntary* an instance of an action must be *attempted* by its agent. Agents who attempt to perform a certain action can of course *fail*. They only *succeed* in performing an intentional action whenever they make a good attempt in an appropriate context. We often perform involuntary actions which we do not attempt. We can involuntarily slip and fall while walking on the ice. However unlike many other actions, illocutionary acts are *intrinsically intentional* in the sense that they are personal and only can be performed intentionally. Speakers are engaged in social forms of life and activities governed by conventional rules. Sometimes, they make utterances which given established rules commit themselves socially to be agents of illocutionary acts that they did not at all want to perform. Thus, a sleepy teacher who raises his arm to scratch his head at the moment of a vote for a motion, in a departmental assembly, can involuntarily vote for that

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5) His new first level illocutionary logic contains that general logic of action and attitudes.

6) This is the objective of Vanderveken's next book *Speech Acts in Dialogue*.

motion. Even if he protests later, other protagonists of the departmental meeting can consider that his gesture counts as a positive vote, no matter that he was not then aware of the vote. In our view, speakers do not really personally perform such involuntary illocutionary acts. They are just socially committed to them given rules of forms of life.

According to Vanderveken (2005, 2008, 2014), at the basis of all human actions there are *attempts*, which are very special intentional actions. In his own words (2014, 332) :

(...) *attempts* are *actions* that agents *make* (rather than attitudes that they have). Attempts are *actions* of a very especial kind : personal, conscious, intentional, free and successful. Only the agent can make his or her individual attempts. No one else can make them. (...) Attempts are intrinsically intentional actions. There are no involuntarily attempts. When an agent makes an attempt, he or she makes that attempt in order to do something else. Attempts are *means* to achieve *ends*. (...) An attempt is essentially a mental act. Whoever attempts to raise the arm can fail because of an external force. But he or she has anyway mentally made that attempt in forming consciously his or her present intention to raise the arm. Among intentional actions, attempts have then particular success conditions. It is enough to try to make an attempt to make it *eo ipso*. Direct attempts by an agent to move parts of one's body are real basic actions. When an agent *forms* the present intention to make a direct movement, an attempt is caused by the very formation of that intention, no matter whether he or she is in a standard condition or not (Goldman, 1970, 65). In case the agent of an attempt fails to reach his or her objective, his or her attempt is then *unsatisfied*. In order to make a satisfied attempt, one must make a good attempt in a right circumstance. (...) When

agents attempt to perform illocutions, the satisfaction conditions of their attempted action are in that case the so called success conditions of their attempted illocutions. Agents often have an *experience of their attempt* when they fail (Searle 1982). Such an experience presents or represents the satisfaction conditions of that attempt.

In making intentional actions agents bring about facts in the world. But, as philosophers of action like A. Goldman, Searle (1983), D. Davidson (1980) and Bratman (1987) pointed out, in order to succeed to bring about a fact, it is not enough that we attempt and that the fact turns to be existent. It must also be the case that the fact happens because of our own attempt. Sometimes a fact of nature or another agent brought about the attempted fact. In that case our attempt was not satisfied and we did not really succeed in making our attempted action. In order to be satisfied our attempt must be at least one cause of the existence of the attempted fact. In case the attempted fact happens for other reasons and not just because of our own attempt there is causal over determination. In this case, the attempted fact would have happened even if we had not made our attempt. According to Vanderveken, the subjective intention in action of agents of illocutionary acts lies in their attempts to perform these acts.

Very often we intentionally perform an action in order to perform another. For example, we move our fingers in order to make graphic marks on paper and make a written utterance. Our voluntary actions are linked by the relation of *being means to achieve ends*. So we voluntarily make utterances in order to attempt to perform public illocutionary acts. Moreover, our intentional actions have unintended effects. We often perform involuntary actions that we did not attempt. By refusing an offer we can unwillingly upset the hearer and make an involuntary perlocutionary act. Some types of actions contain others. We cannot swim without moving and we

cannot reason without thinking. Furthermore, some *tokens* of actions *generate* others. Whoever asserts a proposition, which is past relative to the moment of utterance thus makes then a report.

In order to explain our theory of meaning and use we need to apply C. S. Peirce (1931-1935)'s distinction between *type* and *token* to actions and attitudes as well as to expressions, senses and denotations. Just as we must distinguish between a sentence of a language considered as an *abstract type* and its written or oral utterances which are its *tokens* in contexts of use of that language, we must also distinguish between the *abstract type of an action* or of *an attitude* and its possible particular tokens or instances in the world when agents come to perform that action or to have that attitude. Just as many different agents can make an utterance of the same sentence type at different moments of time, they can perform an instance of the same action type and have an instance of the same attitude type at different moments or periods of time.

Like D. Kaplan (1979) Vanderveken distinguishes the linguistic meaning of a sentence type from the particular meaning of that sentence in a context. Clearly sentences with demonstratives and indexical expressions express different propositional contents in different contexts. In their view, all sentences have a meaning in each context, no matter whether or not they are uttered by the speaker in that context. According to speech act theory, each complete *literal* (oral, written or gestural) *utterance* of a sentence in a context is, in principle, a particular attempt by the speaker to perform an instance of the illocutionary act expressed by that sentence in that context. In Vanderveken and Searle (1985)'s view, a literal utterance of a sentence token is *successful* if and only if the speaker succeeds in performing a token of the illocutionary act expressed by that sentence in the utterance context. In that case the success conditions of the type of that expressed illocution are fulfilled in the context. According to illocutionary logic, each

illocutionary force has six components which serve to determine felicity conditions of illocutions with that force. In order to perform a successful illocutionary act token of the form  $F(P)$  in a context the speaker must then 1) achieve the *illocutionary point* of force on the propositional content with the proper *mode of achievement* of  $F$ , 2) express a propositional content  $P$  which satisfies the *propositional content condition* of  $F$ , 3) presuppose that the *preparatory conditions* of  $F(P)$  obtain and express with required degree of strength of  $F$  all attitudes of the form  $M(P)$  that have a psychological mode  $M$  which enters in the *sincerity conditions* of  $F$ .

Following Descartes's *Traité des passions* (1649), both Searle and Vanderveken distinguish two kinds of propositional attitudes, *cognitive attitudes* like conviction, confidence, knowledge, certainty, presumption, surprise, prevision and expectation which are mainly beliefs and *volitive attitudes* like wish, will, intention, hope, pleasure, enjoyment, amusement, fear and sorrow which are mainly desires. In philosophy of mind, *beliefs* have the proper *ideas-to-things direction of fit*. Agents who possess a cognitive attitude represent how things are then according to them in the world. Their attitudes are satisfied when their ideas correspond then to the things as they are or they will be in the world. On the contrary, *desires* have the opposite *things-to-mind direction of fit*. So volitive attitudes are satisfied only if things in the world come to correspond to the ideas of their agent. Each direction of fit between the mind and the world determines which side is at fault in case of dissatisfaction. When a belief turns out to be false, the agent is at fault, not the world. He or she should have other ideas about things. In that case, the agent easily corrects the situation in changing his or her beliefs. On the contrary, when a desire turns out to be unrealized, it is not the agent but the world which is at fault. Objects should be different. The agent sometimes corrects the situation in changing or abandoning his or her desire. Otherwise he or she remains unsatisfied.

According to Vanderveken, psychological modes divide into other components than their basic Cartesian category of cognition or volition which determine other conditions of possession. Complex psychological modes can have a special way of believing or desiring, special conditions on their propositional content or special preparatory conditions. We feel our beliefs and desires in a lot of special cognitive and volitive ways. Thus, *knowledge* is a belief based on strong evidence that gives confidence to the agent and moreover guarantees truth. Whoever has an intention feels such a strong desire that he or she is disposed to act sooner or later in order to satisfy that desire. Like illocutionary forces, psychological modes also have special propositional content and preparatory conditions. Previsions like predictions are directed towards the real future. Intentions are desires to carry out a present or future action. Any agent of an attitude or of an illocution presupposes certain propositions. His or her attitude and illocution would be defective if these propositions were then false. Thus promises and intentions have the preparatory condition that their agent is then able to do the action represented by their propositional content. In order to possess a cognitive (or volitive) attitude of the form  $M(P)$  at a moment  $m$  an agent must then *believe* (or *desire*) the propositional content  $P$  and feels that belief (or desire) *in the cognitive or volitive way* proper to psychological mode  $M$ , the proposition  $P$  must then satisfy *propositional content conditions* of  $M$  and finally that agent must then *presuppose* and *believe* all propositions determined by *preparatory conditions* of mode  $M$  with respect to the content  $P$ . Thus an agent *intends*  $P$  at a moment when  $P$  then represents a present or future action of that agent, he or she desires so much that action that he or she is committed to carrying it out and moreover that agent then presupposes and believes to be able to carry it out.

Let's summarize our assumptions up to this point: 1) We, human beings, thanks to our intentionality, have states and make acts of conceptual thought. 2)



We possess under certain conditions propositional attitudes like beliefs, desires and intentions which are conceptual states. 3) Among our conceptual acts of thoughts we make private and public elementary illocutionary acts like judgments, decisions, and directives as well as attempts to perform speech acts. 4) Our utterance acts are not necessarily intentional. One can involuntarily utter words and sentences that we do not even understand. 5) One must distinguish between abstract types and tokens or instances of conceptual thoughts. 6) The intentionality of conceptual thoughts is not intrinsic to their abstract type but is derived from the mind of the agent who generates their tokens. 7) Instances of propositional attitudes are intrinsically intentional because their agents relate their propositional content to the world with a psychological mode in establishing a correspondence from a direction fit between their ideas and represented things. 8) So are instances of attempts to perform illocutionary acts because their agents *form their intention in action* to perform them. 9) Unlike attempts illocutionary acts have success conditions which need to be fulfilled in order to be successfully performed. We can either succeed or fail to perform our elementary illocutions at the moment of the attempt. 10) In order to perform illocutionary acts it is not enough to attempt and to represent their felicity conditions. 11) Their agent must make a good attempt in an appropriate context. 12) In order to possess a propositional attitude at a moment it is not enough to represent its conditions of satisfaction. We must personally relate its propositional content to the world with its psychological mode in the way required by all possession conditions of that attitude. There are impossible propositional attitudes that we can never have (for example desires whose propositional content is *a priori* necessarily true). There are also propositional attitudes that we can only have at certain moments (for example previsions whose content must be future at the moment of possession). However we can represent their satisfaction conditions.

## 2. On the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker meaning

Since Grice (1957) and Austin (1961, 1962) meaning and understanding are logically related to agents' intentionality. Clearly the words of any language do not have an intrinsic meaning. They are bearers of meaning in virtue of conventions adopted by the linguistic community of that language which require the intentionality of their competent agents<sup>7</sup>. Moreover the particular meaning of an utterance depends on the speaker's intentions, when he or she uses ambiguous words or variables<sup>8</sup>.

Austin (1962) relates the meaning and understanding of utterances of sentences to illocutionary acts. Austin was much influenced by Frege's (1892, 1918-1923) considerations on meaning<sup>9</sup>. In Frege's philosophy of language (Dummett : 1982), *forces*, *senses* and *denotations* are the three basic components of sentence and speaker meaning. According to Austin's original classification of speech acts, speakers who make a meaningful use of language perform three kinds of speech acts that he called *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* acts. They make *locutionary acts* which contain *phonetic acts* of producing sounds, *phatic acts* of uttering words and *rhetic acts* of using words in order to refer and predicate. But they mainly attempt to perform intentional *illocutionary acts* which have felicity conditions. They *mean* to perform illocutionary acts and by way of attempting them they produce effects on the hearers, which are *perlocutionary acts*. They can please and influence their audience. Unlike illocutionary acts perlocutionary acts can be voluntary or involuntary.

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7) We follow conventions that are adopted often because of previous declarations.

8) In order to understand such an utterance we need to know in which sense the speaker used the ambiguous word and which value he gave to that variable.

9) See by P. Geach & M. Black (1970).

In Grice's approach the meaning and understanding of utterances of sentences are *derived* from the speakers and hearer's attitudes and actions as well as from adopted linguistic conventions<sup>10)</sup>. In particular the meaning of an utterance is related to the speaker's intentions in the context. More specifically according to Grice the speaker's meaning in a context is a particular propositional attitude of that speaker, namely *his or her intention to produce certain perlocutionary effects on the hearer (s)*. Whoever makes an assertion intends to *convince* the hearer of the truth of the asserted proposition. Whoever gives an order intends to *influence* the hearer's behaviour by attempting to get him or her to carry out the ordered action. Whoever assures something intends to make the hearer sure of that thing. According to Grice, speakers who make meaningful utterances intend to perform perlocutionary acts which would change hearers' attitudes.

In our conception natural language has two essential functions: to give to speakers adequate means to express and to communicate their conceptual thoughts. In speech act theory in order to mean and communicate something speakers must attempt to perform public illocutionary acts. Thus, in order to fulfill its two functions, every language must be provided with a structure and lexicon which give means to speakers to perform illocutionary acts. Moreover competent speakers must be provided with reason<sup>11)</sup>.

Searle's (1969) theory of speech acts belongs to the trend of ordinary language use founded by G. E. Moore (1903) and L. Wittgenstein (1953) according to which meaning is related to use. Searle advocates in *Speech Acts* Frege and Austin's analysis of meaning. However Searle (1969) only analyzed the literal use of language. An agent who speaks literally means exactly what he or she says. He

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10) After Grice approaches, meaning crosses henceforth the fields of philosophy of mind, of action and language.

11) See Vanderveken (2002)'s considerations on universal grammar.

or she just attempts then to perform the illocutionary act expressed by the uttered sentence. Searle did not adopt the Gricean analysis of speaker meaning. Successful utterances only must achieve one perlocutionary effect on the hearer, namely that he or she understands the illocutionary act attempted by the speaker. So the agent of a successful assertion need not convince the hearer. Later Searle changed his analysis in separating the meaning from the communication intention. But in (1969) he did not explicitly explain meaning in terms of intentionality (even if he was embracing Grice's ideas on the matter). His analysis of speaker meaning is triply intentional. First, the agent tries to perform the illocutionary act expressed by the complete sentence that he or she uses in the context of utterance. Second, he or she tries to get the hearer to recognize his or her illocutionary intention. Third, he or she also tries to bring about this recognition through the hearer's comprehension of the meaning of the sentence used in the context.

In his second book *Expression and Meaning*, Searle (1979) expands his theory of meaning by analyzing non-literal speech acts such as ironies, metaphors or indirect illocutionary acts. He pays attention to the *conversational background* of meaningful utterances (the forms of life in which speakers and hearers are engaged, the linguistic and factual information that they mutually shared) and their *capacity to make inferences respecting conversational maxims* while conducting a conversation. In (1979) he takes into account Grice's (1969) approach of meaning and understanding in using Grice's *conversational maxims*. Grice used Kant's four categories of cooperation, *quality*, *quantity*, *manner* and *relation* in order to present his maxims. Searle adds to speech act theory Grice's maxims. According to Searle, the speaker tries to get the hearer to recognize his or her intention to perform a non-literal illocutionary act by relying on various capacities of the interlocutor. First the linguistic competence and the conversational background knowledge of the hearer enables him or her to understand the nature of the literal illocutionary act

expressed by the uttered sentence in the context and also to recognize that certain facts (mutually known or assumed) prevent the speaker to speak literally. Second his or her capacity to make inferences leads the hearer to conclude that given the conversational background the speaker must then want to perform primarily instead of the literal act another illocutionary act, which nature is perfectly compatible with the respect of conversational maxims in the context of utterance. On this basis, Searle analyzed in (1979) the nature of three style figures: irony, metaphor, and indirect illocutions.

In *Intentionality*, Searle (1983) made a decisive move, which improved his analysis of meaning. His new approach that follows Grice (1969) is shared by us. See Vanderveken (1990, 2005) and de Sousa Melo (2002, 2014)<sup>12)</sup>. We agree that speaker meaning is more important than sentence meaning. What matters is what we mean when we use words. We also agree that meaningful utterances serve to attempt to perform expressed illocutionary acts. But when we say that illocutions are intrinsically intentional, we want to insist that the very intentionality of illocutionary acts is intrinsic to and derived from the intentionality of the mind of the agents of their instances in the world. So illocutionary acts are the primary units of meaning and communication because their tokens are intentional actions of their agents in the world. Like instances of propositional attitudes, instances of illocutionary acts have an intrinsic intentionality because of the intentionality of their agents. Searle surprises here and he is not at all clear when he claims that the intentionality proper to illocutionary acts is not intrinsic to them. We will challenge his claim.

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12) See Vanderveken (1990, 2005) and de Sousa Melo (2002, 2014).

### 3. On the difference between illocutionary acts and other kinds of speech acts

Because they are the basic units of meaning and communication in natural languages, illocutionary acts are the most important kind of speech acts. Let us now present the classification of speech acts and explain how illocutionary acts are related to other speech acts like acts of utterance, of reference and of predication, acts to express propositions or attitudes, attempts to perform illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts.

In *Speech Acts*, Searle (1969) presents his first theory of meaning. Like Austin and Frege he relates meaning and understanding to speech acts of the kind called by (Austin, 1962) illocutionary act. He points out that in order to mean something and express or communicate our thoughts, speakers must try to perform illocutionary acts. So he claims that all elementary sentences contain an illocutionary force marker. Moreover Searle criticises Austin's classification of speech acts and especially the notion of locutionary act and proposes to consider instead other speech acts like acts of utterances and propositional acts. According to Searle (1969), in attempting to perform an illocutionary act, we intend to accomplish four distinct types of speech acts: (1) an act of utterance, (2) a propositional act, (3) an act of expressing attitudes and (4) an illocutionary act including the perlocutionary act of getting the hearer to understand our illocutionary attempt. An *utterance act* consists in the production of an oral, gestural or written token of a well-formed expression or sentence type, in general. A *propositional act* consists in expressing a propositional content by making acts of reference and of predication. In performing elementary illocutionary acts speakers also *express verbally attitudes*. In performing assertive, commissive and directive illocutions speakers express respectively beliefs, intentions and desires. They are *sincere* only

if they really possess expressed attitudes. So illocutionary acts have so-called *sincerity conditions*. The fact that speakers verbally express attitudes in performing an illocution is shown by Moore's paradox. Utterances like "I promise but I do not intend to come" are self-defeating because no one can simultaneously express an attitude and deny to possess it.

Searle's account of propositional acts is based on Frege's theory of senses. Like Strawson (1971) he claims that by uttering well-formed sentences, we refer to objects under concepts and predicate properties or relations to them. We make indirect *acts of reference* by using referential expressions such as proper names, pronouns and definite descriptions which have a sense. When we speak literally, the *reference act* consists in referring to the object that is the denotation of the referential expression that we use. The *act of predication* consists in attributing a property or a relation to objects of reference. A literal predication act is accomplished by predicating the attribute expressed by a used predicative expression such as "is free", "loves" to a used referential expression. Acts of reference and of predication are constitutive of propositional acts. However, as Searle says in (1969, 29): "The expression of a proposition is a propositional act, not an illocutionary act". Propositional acts are part of illocutionary acts. Moreover we cannot make a propositional act without attempting to perform an illocutionary act<sup>13)</sup>.

Searle has established a bridge between speech act theory and the theory of senses and denotations of Frege and his followers. Henceforth the natural language trend can exploit the resources of the truth theory developed in the logical trend of contemporary philosophy. In philosophy of natural language, especially in speech act theory, we assign to propositions a double role: they are both the senses of

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13) As Searle (1969, p.29) says explicitly: "When a proposition is expressed, it is always expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act".

clauses of sentences in contexts as well as the content of propositional attitudes and illocutionary acts. Searle also defends the principle that it is always possible for us to express literally what we mean by the means of language. Each attempted illocutionary act has well determined felicity conditions and hence is, in principle, expressible.

Searle's principle of expressibility of thoughts is a development of a fundamental thesis of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1922) : the limits of language impose limits to thoughts<sup>14</sup>. According to Searle, we human being must in principle be able to express clearly our conceptual thoughts if necessary by enriching the actual expressive powers of our language. Of course, private illocutionary acts can be performed only in thought without any public use of language. However, they have the same logical form of public illocutionary acts.

As we know, machines and computers which are deprived of reason can utter sentences and participate in intelligent dialogues with human agents. They can apparently answer questions, give information and even directives. Do they really perform illocutionary acts and possess expressed attitudes? According to Searle (1984) computers which are deprived of intentionality do not really think, they do not really refer and predicate and they do not really perform and understand illocutionary acts. They can only manipulate syntactic symbols and utter sentences in certain conditions following instructions of a program. They just can function as if they were performing and understanding illocutionary acts. Their behavior is not a real performance or understanding but a *simulation*, because "(...) there are no actions without intentions" Searle (1983, 82). According to Searle (1983), any

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14) See proposition § 4.116 of the *Tractatus* "Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be put into words can be put into words clearly." and my forthcoming paper with D. Vanderveken "On the limits of language, thought and experience"



experience of acting in an intentional action contains an intention in action. What is an *intention in action* à la Searle? As Vanderveken (2008) pointed out, the psychological mode of intention is a complex volitive mode. It has a special volitive way. Whoever has an intention feels such a strong desire that he or she is disposed to act sooner or later in order to realize his or her desire. Sometimes the agent intends to act the very moment of his or her intention. He or she has then a present intention that Searle calls an *intention in action*. The special propositional content condition of an intention of action is that its propositional content represents a present action of the agent at the moment of the intention. Sometimes the agent intends to act at a later moment. He or she has then a *prior intention*. In Vanderveken's view, one cannot have an intention in action without trying to execute it at that very moment. So an intention in action is both a mental state and a mental act. It is essentially an *attempt* to perform an action at the very moment of the attempt.

#### 4. On the directions of fit between mind and language and reality

As we have pointed out, from an ontological point of view, language is dependent on mind. Not only are natural languages are public institutions created by linguistic communities whose competent speakers are provided with a mind, but, without intentionality and conscience agents could not make meaningful utterances and would be unable to have and to make conceptual thoughts.

Consequently the directions of fit between the language and the world characteristic of elementary illocutionary acts are founded on similar directions of fit between the mind of their agents and the world. Agents of assertive illocutions express beliefs. Like cognitive attitudes *assertive illocutions* have the *ideas-to-things direction of fit*. Their agents mean to express ideas which correspond to the

way things are or will be in the world. Agents of commissive and directive utterances express volitive attitudes. Like volitive utterances *commissive and directive illocutions* have the *opposite things-to-ideas direction of fit*. Their agents mean that the objects of the world to which they refer are or will be as they represent them. Agents of elementary declarations both express and execute at the very moment of utterance their intention to make the action represented by their propositional content. As de Sousa Melo (2002) pointed out, *elementary declarations* have the *double direction of fit between ideas and things*<sup>15)</sup>. Their agents change referred things at the moment and in virtue of their utterance just by predicating of them a property. In that case things come to correspond to the agent's ideas because he or she expresses them. By making new definitions we can create new notions that were inexpressible before. *Expressive elementary illocutions* serve to express propositional attitudes. As we would expect, *expressive elementary illocutions* have the *empty direction of fit between ideas and things* because they presuppose the existence of the fact which inspired the expressed attitudes. However expressed propositional attitudes often have a direction of fit. Most cognitive attitudes which contain a belief have the *ideas-to-things direction of fit*. Most volitive attitudes which contain a desire have the *things-to-ideas direction of fit*. But there are propositional attitudes like *pleasure, satisfaction, joy, gladness* and *pride* which have *empty direction of fit between ideas and things*. Agents who are pleased, satisfied and proud of a fact do not establish a correspondence between their ideas and things in the world. They just presuppose and believe that the desired fact exists. Such attitudes have the special preparatory condition that their propositional content is then true. Attitudes with such special *preparatory conditions* have the *empty direction of fit*. They do not have real *satisfaction-*

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15) Searle only speaks of the double direction of fit between words and things. He does not consider the double direction of fit between words and things.

*conditions*. They are just *appropriate* or *inappropriate*. They are appropriate when their preparatory condition of actual truth or falsehood is fulfilled and when their proper psychological mode suits the represented fact. No agent should be proud of an action that he has not made.

In *Intentionality*, Searle introduces a new notion of *intentional causation*, which is distinct from the traditional notion of physical causation in philosophy of science. According to Searle, in both perception and intentional action, agents *experience* a causal relationship which is not inferred from regularity but is inherent in their sensorial sensation or experience of acting. When we consciously perceive and act, we have a *direct experience* of perceiving or acting and that “(...) experience of perceiving or acting is precisely an experience of causation.” (Searle : 1983, 123-5). As D. Hume (1738, 1748) pointed out, physical causation is inferred from observed regularity. Physical causes are events which cause other events because of the laws of nature. Their effects are in general future events in the history of the world. Unlike physical causality, intentional causation is not inductively inferred. There is indeed a logical relation between cause and effect in the cases of intentional causation which explains why it is directly experienced. “... for example, in the case of prior intention and intention in action, the cause contains a representation or presentation of the effect in its condition of satisfaction and in perception and memory the effect contains a representation or presentation of the cause in its condition of satisfaction.” (Searle : 1983, 126).

Searle's account of intentional causation is opposed to the traditional account of causation based on Hume's considerations : 1) In perceiving or acting we *experience* the causal relationship. “It is not in the *observation* of actions that we become aware of causation, it is in the *performance* of actions, for part of the intentional content of the experience of acting when I perform intentional actions is that this experience causes the bodily movement.” (1983, 124). Causation is then

observable contrary to what Hume says<sup>16</sup>. 2) To change things and to bring about facts is the very essence of causation. 3) The causal relation in perception and in action is logical contrary to what Hume says. Moreover in that case the cause and the effect are simultaneous. "...I am not simply saying that the description of the cause is internally related to the description of the effect, but rather that the causes and effects themselves are in this way internally related, since the one is a presentation or representation of the other. (1983, 126).

As Searle pointed out, the directions of fit and of causality between the mind and the world of our perceptions and conceptual thoughts are asymmetric. That asymmetry is of course not accidental but necessary. It is related to the nature of their intentional component. On one hand, our successful actions have the world-to-mind direction of fit and the mind-to-world direction of causation. When we change things in order to be as we want them, our attempt must be a cause of that change. On the other hand, our perceptions have the mind-to-world direction of fit but the world-to-mind direction of causation. When we see things as they are, our visual sensation must be caused by a real fact.

## 5. Conclusions

Let us draw our main conclusions about the intentionality of states and acts of conceptual thoughts on the basis of previous considerations. We followed Searle's approach according to which philosophy of language is inseparable from philosophy of mind and of action. We agree with Searle that linguistic meaning is dependent on the mind of competent speakers who are provided with intentionality and

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16) Hume claims that we never can observe a causal link between events, but only regular chains of events. So in formulating laws of nature we make inductive inferences and presume that the future will be like the past.

consciousness<sup>17)</sup>. Clearly only intentional agents can have propositional attitudes and make successful voluntary actions and illocutions. However we disagree with Searle's claim that unlike propositional attitudes illocutionary acts are not intrinsically intentional. In order to clarify our analysis we have distinguished between the abstract types and the tokens of our attitudes and actions. In our view, the very intentionality of our propositional attitudes, voluntary actions and elementary illocutionary acts is intrinsic to the mind of the agents of their tokens at a moment of utterance. Abstract types of attitudes, actions and illocutions are of course deprived of intentionality.

We agree with Searle that each instance of a propositional attitudes is intrinsically intentional because the agent relates its propositional content to the world with its psychological mode in establishing a correspondence from a direction fit between his or her ideas and represented things. However we do not think like Searle that in order to possess a propositional attitude at a given moment it is enough to represent under which conditions that attitude is then satisfied. As we pointed out, propositional attitudes have a few possession conditions which are well determined by the few components of their modes. In order to possess a propositional attitude at a moment an agent must personally relate its propositional content to the world with its psychological mode in such a way that all possession conditions of that attitude are then fulfilled. We can represent the satisfaction conditions of many impossible propositional attitudes but we could never possess them. For example, because of our minimal rationality, we cannot believe in the truth of an analytically false proposition (for example that it is now raining and not raining) which is *a priori* false. Similarly because desires are preferences, we can

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17) Unlike successful intentional actions, which are always conscious, human agents have unconscious attitudes. Because they can always in principle express their unconscious thoughts, intentionality and consciousness are inseparable.

never possess a desire whose propositional content is *a priori* necessarily true (for example to be or not to be).<sup>18)</sup> There are also propositional attitudes that we cannot have at certain moments. For example, we cannot now intend to have done something yesterday. But we can represent how one could execute that impossible intention.

As we have already said, *instances of attempts* are *intrinsically intentional* because their agents necessarily *form their intention in action* in making them. Moreover attempts are very special intentional actions which are personal, voluntary, free and necessarily successful. Only the agent can personally make his or her own attempt; no one else can make it. Nobody can make an involuntary attempt. Whoever attempts to do something could have not made that attempt. Whoever attempts to make an attempt succeeds in making it. Now our analysis of speaker's meaning is different from that of Searle because we relate speaker meaning to attempted illocutions rather than to successful illocutions. Searle did not pay any attention to the important speech act which consists in attempting to perform an illocution in a context of utterance. According to us, that speech act is constitutive of speaker's meaning. In our view a speaker *means* something at a moment of utterance if and only if he or she attempts then to perform an illocution, no matter whether he or she succeeds or fails. In order to mean something we just need to attempt to perform an expressed illocution. For that purpose it is sufficient to form the intention to make that attempt. It is not necessary to succeed in performing

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18) Volitive attitudes require a *preference*. Whoever desires something distinguishes *eo ipso* two different ways in which represented objects could be in the world. In the preferred ways, objects are in the world as the agent desires, in the other ways, they are not. The agent's desire is realized in the first case, it is unrealized in the second case. Thus in order that an agent *desires the fact represented by a proposition P* at a moment *m*, it is not enough that he or she has then in mind all attributes and concepts of *P* and that the proposition *P* is true at that moment in all worlds compatible with realization of his or her desire at that moment. That proposition must moreover be false in at least one circumstance according to that agent. Otherwise that agent would not prefer the existence of the represented fact.

that attempted illocution. Whoever says that he gives you something makes a meaningful utterance even when he has no right to give that thing to you. We mean to perform a public illocutionary act when we attempt to use words in order to perform it. Incidentally, unlike illocutions which can in general be performed by several agents, our acts of meaning are private, in the sense that only an agent himself can mean what he means in making an utterance. Other speakers could attempt to perform the same illocution in different contexts but they would make their attempts by making different voluntary movements of their body.

*Instances of intentional actions are intrinsically intentional* because they are attempted by their agents who necessarily form an intention in action of making them at the moment of their performance. Unlike attempts, we can fail to perform many intentional actions and most illocutionary acts. However we could not make an intentional action without making an intrinsically intentional attempt to make it. In order to succeed at a moment, we just must make a good attempt and use appropriate means in order to achieve our objective at that moment. In that case we do not just form the intention of action to make that action, but we make a good attempt which causes in the world the existence of facts required by its conditions of satisfaction.

Because they are *intentional actions, instances of elementary illocutionary acts are intrinsically intentional*. Their agents necessarily attempt to perform them at the moment of their action. As we pointed out, most illocutionary acts have success conditions which need to be fulfilled in order to be successfully performed. In order to succeed an instance of illocutionary act of the form  $F(P)$  at a moment an agent must use appropriate words in the right context. In particular he or she must succeed in making all mental acts required by its success conditions at the moment of utterance. For example he or she must succeed to achieve the illocutionary point of force  $F$  on the propositional content  $P$  with the mode of

achievement of their force  $F$  and proposition  $P$  must satisfy the propositional content conditions of  $F$  in the context of utterance.

Our final conclusion is opposed to Searle's claim, instances of both illocutionary acts and propositional attitudes are intrinsically intentional.

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