

PROPER FUNCTION AND CONVENTION IN SPEECH ACTS

(2nd edition)¹

' 1. Introduction

Strawson's "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts" (1964) introduced into speech act theory two of its most characteristic contemporary themes. Strawson applied Grice's theory of communication to speech act theory (Grice 1967). With the use of this tool, he then drew a distinction between two kinds of illocutionary act. I will prosaically call these two "K-I (kind I) speech acts" and "K-II (kind II) speech acts". Strawson claimed that contrary to Austin's views, only K-II acts are "essentially conventional." Elsewhere I have complained against the first of Strawson's innovations, indeed, against the whole of the Gricean theory of communication (Millikan 1984 chapter 3).² But it is not necessary to embrace the details of Grice's theory to appreciate the main shift of view from Austin to Strawson on K-I acts.

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

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² For a good discussion of this issue, see also Recanati 1987.

reference to conventional roles of any sort, but by reference to the purpose of the speaker in speaking. Other philosophers soon took sides with Austin or Strawson. For example, Schiffer (1972), Bach & Harnish (1979) and Recanati (1987) agreed with Strawson that K-I acts are defined according to certain kinds of Gricean intentions expressed by speakers, while Warnock (1973) and Searle (1989) sided with Austin, claiming that the difference between K-I and K-II acts is only that the former invoke merely linguistic conventions while the latter invoke wider social conventions. All seem to agree, however, that despite some borderline cases, there is a fundamental difference between the kinds.

In this paper I will explore certain relations between purpose and convention, intention being, of course a kind of purpose. I will describe three aspects of speech acts that are characteristically tightly interlocked:

- (1) the speaker's purpose in speaking
- (2) the purpose (function) of the public-language expression used
- (3) the conventional extra-linguistic move made, if any, classified by its conventional outcome, which typically accords with its conventional purpose.

I will argue that Austin's and Strawson's (and Grice's and Searle's, etc.) analyses all suffer from failure to recognize the very existence of purposes of the second sort --the independent functions of public language expressions --and failure to discuss purposes of the third sort. As a result they fail to recognize that the main elements defining illocutionary acts are the purposes behind them. In the case of many of the speech acts that Austin had centrally in mind when he coined the term "illocutionary act," more than

one of these kinds of purposes is present, these typically coinciding in content, but there are also cases in which these multiple purposes diverge. The names and descriptions offered by Austin as designating specific "illocutionary acts" cover various of these kinds of purposes. Strawson's description of K-I and K-II categories roughly corresponds to the difference between purposes of kind (1) and/or kind (2) versus purposes of kind (3). Where Strawson argued for a two way distinction despite some borderline cases, I will argue for a continuum from (1) through (3), depending on how well the contents of these three kinds of purposes overlap or fail to overlap.

To make this argument, I will need to call in a model of purposiveness under which purposes can be univocally attributed to linguistic expressions, to conventions, and to speakers. I will also need to call in a different model of the conventionality of language than has generally been employed. The model of purpose that I will use is developed in detail under the label "proper function" in my (1984, ch. 1-2; 2002, ch 1-2). The theory of convention is detailed in this volume, chapter one. Here I will sketch these models only with very broad strokes.

'2. Strawson's distinction

Strawson's original suggestion was this. K-I illocutionary acts are completed when the hearer recognizes that the speaker has a certain kind of intention in speaking. This intention is to secure a certain response from the hearer, such as an action (paradigm imperatives) or the forming of a belief (paradigm indicatives). Further, in Gricean fashion, the speaker's, S's, intention is to procure this response by means of the hearer's, H's, recognizing that S intends or wishes to procure it, and by H's recognizing

that S intends H to recognize this latter intention, and so forth. For example (I am interpolating here; the examples are not Strawson's) differences among the illocutionary acts of reminding, informing, asking, and warning lie in the responses or effects the speaker intends to produce in the hearer. In the case of reminding the intended effect might be getting H to recall, for informing getting H to believe, for answering getting H to impart certain information to S, and for warning bracing H against dangers that S describes. Various K-I acts that involve intending identical hearer responses are then further differentiated in accordance with more exact mechanisms by which the speaker intends or expects to procure the intended response. For example, in the case of requests versus entreaties (these are Strawson's examples), S intends H to understand how he holds the intention that H comply, whether "passionately or lightly, confidently or desperately" (1964 p. 610), and S intends that this knowledge should motivate H to comply; in the case of orders, S intends that H understand that the context of utterance taken together with certain social conventions implies that certain consequences may follow if H does not comply, intends that this knowledge should motivate H, and so forth.

K-I acts, Strawson says, are not "essentially conventional". It is not true that acts of warning, acts of entreaty, acts of requesting and so forth "can be performed only as conforming to ...conventions...to suppose that there is always and necessarily a convention conformed to would be like supposing that there could be no love affairs which did not proceed on lines laid down in the Roman de la Rose or that every dispute between men must follow the pattern specified in Touchstone's speech about the countercheck quarrelsome and the lie direct" (p.603). Nor, when a speaker disagrees

with someone, is there, in general, some "convention that constitutes" his act as an act of raising objections. So far so good. This may allow us to understand how various illocutionary acts can be performed without using "explicit performatives" such as "I insist" or "I warn you" or "I promise."

On the other hand, Strawson tells us, the speaker may explicitly avow his illocutionary intention, thus conveying the force of his utterance conventionally, saying, for example, "I warn you that..." or "I entreat you to..." or "I object to...". In the case of these "explicit performatives," the "conventional meaning" of the expression used may "completely exhaust the illocutionary force" of the utterance.

As examples of K-II illocutionary acts, Strawson lists "an umpire giving a batsman out, a jury bringing in a verdict of guilty, a judge pronouncing sentence, a player redoubling at bridge, a priest or civil officer pronouncing a couple man and wife" (p.611).

Here, Strawson says, the intention of the speaker is not to secure a particular response from the audience. Such acts are performed according to the rules of certain conventional procedures (for example, the marriage ceremony) as acts "required or permitted by those rules...done as falling under the rules...the speaker's utterance is not only intended to further, or affect the course of, the practice in question in a certain conventional way; in the absence of any breach of the conventional conditions for furthering the procedure in this way, it cannot fail to do so" (p.612).

Unlike K-I acts, K-II acts do not, as such, have as ingredients speaker intentions whose fulfillment is dependent on hearer cooperation. Reciprocally, unlike K-II acts, "the wholly overt intention which lies at the core of ...[K-I acts]...may, without any breach of

rules or conventions, be frustrated" (p.613, italics Strawson's). What is common to the two kinds of illocutionary act is that the speaker's intention is "wholly overt," that is, intended to be recognized by the audience; what is different is that in one case the intention is to produce a certain audience response, in the other, to "further a certain [conventional] practice" (p.612).

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

'3. The disunity of K-I categories

Despite some ambiguity in the passage just quoted, it is clear that Strawson intends the K-I/K-II distinction to apply not to instances but to categories of acts, designated, for example, by performative verbs such as "inform," "instruct," "advise," "entreat" and so forth. Consider, in this light, those explicit performative K-I instances (such as instances containing "I warn you...", "I advise you to...") about which he says that the "conventional meaning" "exhausts the illocutionary force." What is the relation supposed to be here between convention and force?

Strawson cannot mean here that these explicit instances are conventional in the sense that their having the force they do is constituted by convention, that there are conventions that make them into acts, say, of advising, warning, entreating, objecting and so forth. A class of speech acts grouped together and named according to the particular

audience response intended by the speaker can not be, as such, a class that an instance gets into by convention. That a speaker has a given intention can not be a mere matter of convention. There can not be a convention that turns something else into a speaker intention. There might of course be a convention always to treat certain kinds of actions, for certain purposes, as though they embodied certain intentions--to "count them as" embodying these intentions, that is, as legally or morally or socially equivalent to actions actually embodying these intentions--but this would not make them into embodiments of intentions.

Rather than the use of an explicit performative turning a K-I act into an act constituted by convention, perhaps Strawson means that explicit K-I acts are natural acts of expressing one's intentions that happen to be performed in a conventional manner. For example, one can perform the natural act of holding one's fork in a conventional manner, say, tines up, in the right hand, with the thumb on top. One expresses one's intention to warn by saying "I warn you" or expresses one's intention to advise by saying "I advise you." But of course, saying one has a certain intention does not make it so. Perhaps this is why Strawson cautions that he is considering in his essay only "normal and serious" uses of language (p.599), which might mean here, that we are to consider explicit performatives only when backed by the intentions these conventionally express. Thus "I warn you that she is exceedingly charming" probably would not express a speaker's intention to brace the hearer against a danger, but neither would it be "normally and seriously" used. This would make it possible to argue, as Strawson does, that by the use of explicit performatives of the K-I kind, nothing is accomplished that

could not in principle have been accomplished in a world without conventions. It is merely that something natural has been done in a conventional way. It is not really the speaking of certain words, then, but merely the expressing of a certain audience directed intention that makes an utterance of, say, "I entreat you ..." into an entreaty, and so forth.

The trouble with this suggestion is that besides uses of explicit K-I performatives that are not literal or serious and not intended to be understood as literal or serious there are also K-I acts such as warning, requesting and entreating that are performed with the intention that they should be taken seriously yet without the speaker actually intending the outcome that seems to define these acts. Compare: A lie is not just a nonliteral usage. For example, it is perfectly possible for a person to use an explicit performative in order to request, entreat, order or demand a thing that she does not intend the hearer to accomplish, intending only to distract the hearer, or to embarrass the hearer, or to trick the hearer into failure, or into starting into the designated action. Nor can we patch this suggestion by requiring for a K-I illocutionary act only that S intend H to think that S intends H to act or believe. Strawson himself gave us the contrary example: "A speaker... may...be overtly indifferent as to whether or not his information is accepted, his instructions followed, or his advice taken." Faced with this sort of difficulty, some authors (Schiffer 1972, Bach and Harnish 1979, Recanati 1987) have proposed another epicycle: the K-I act requires only that S intends that H recognize S's intention to "provide H with reason to believe" that S intends H to act or believe. The difficulty of understanding this claim, and the fear of provoking yet more epicycles, discourages discussion. Still, a less baroque solution seems preferable.

I will propose that K-I acts are defined quite straightforwardly by their purposes, and that the difficulties with regard to them stem from the fact that there are two different kinds of purposes that may be involved. Besides the purposes or intentions of the individuals who use various conventional language forms there are the purposes of these very forms themselves. Because conventional language forms have their own purposes --their own functions-- their instances can fall into K-I categories directly, without accompanying speaker intentions. Difficulties in classification of certain speech act instances arise because these two kinds of purposes sometimes conflict.

To explain this I will first need to explain what conventions are in the broad sense of convention that covers linguistic conventions. Then I will talk about purposes and how conventions acquire them. This will reveal how a conventional illocutionary act can have its own purpose, additional to the purpose of the speaker. Last I will discuss a still broader sense of "convention" which covers the conventionality of K-II illocutionary acts and I will discuss their purposes.

'4. Conventions

It is the conventionality of acts and activities and patterns of activity that will concern us--as a compromise, often I will just say "activities". In the sense of "conventional" that we need to examine first, conventional activities are "reproduced" items. Instances of conventional activities are modeled on prior instances of that activity, previously performed, typically, by other people. More formally, the concrete form--I am going to say "shape"--of the natural activity embodying an instance of a conventional activity is determined according to the shape of certain historically prior natural activities

such that, had the shape of these prior activities been different along certain dimensions, this instance would have differed accordingly. This may be because the activity is directly copied or imitated. Alternatively, the process of reproduction may be indirect, as when one person instructs or trains another to act in accordance with a convention.³

Second, when they have functions, as they often do, conventional acts, activities and patterns of activity are characterized by a certain arbitrariness in relation to function.

Thus patterns of skill, though they may be handed down by copying and instruction, are not, in general, conventional patterns. A conventional activity is one whose conventional shape is not wholly dictated by its function. A reproduced activity or pattern that exemplifies a skill is conventional only if it might have differed or been replaced by differently shaped activities or patterns which, assuming similar proliferation in the culture, would then have produced the same result. This does not give us a sharp boundary for the conventional. A borderline case might be, for example, certain "conventional" techniques handed down in different schools of violin playing. These techniques are not totally interchangeable. They have subtly different musical effects. But the conventions of each school taken in toto accomplish pretty much the same.

An instance of conventional activity is such in part because it has been reproduced. That is, certain aspects of its shape have been reproduced. Other aspects of the instance will not have been reproduced, of course --details of how it is performed,

³ For a more formal discussion of "reproduction" as that term is meant here, see my (1984) chapter 1.

where, by whom and so forth. The instance is conventional then under a description of its conventional shape, pattern or place. Wearing black to a funeral describes the shape of a certain convention; shaking hands with the right hand describes the shape of another. But wearing black to a funeral and shaking hands with the right hand are not names of shapes that are conventional merely as such. Instances falling under these descriptions are conventional only when done as following convention, that is, when reproduced rather than accidentally instantiated. Thus

(1) It is conventional to wear black to a funeral

and

(2) Susan wore black to a funeral

when conjoined, do not imply

(3) Susan performed a conventional act.

Compatibly, there is nothing to prevent the same shape from being used in more than one convention. Raising ones hand is conventional in order to vote. It is also conventional in order to request to speak. Which if either of these conventions is instanced when a particular hand is raised depends on which if any previous instances of hand raisings are the causes and models for this one, instances used for voting, or instances used for requesting to speak.

Some conventional patterns of activity are very complex. The conventional pattern that is reconstructed when a group of children plays ring a ring a roses is rather complex.

More complex are the conventional patterns that are reproduced when parliamentary

procedure is followed during a meeting, or when one plays chess. These latter patterns are not only complex but "relational". It is not absolute shapes (forms) that are reproduced but relationships between shapes. One can follow parliamentary procedure in any language while discussing issues of any content, and chess can be played with any shaped pieces, for example, with bottles on a sand beach. Such patterns are most easily described by giving "rules" for their construction, often rules involving conditionals. These are rules that have to be followed insofar --and only insofar -- as one's purpose is to follow the particular convention. For example, you must follow the rules of chess if you wish to play a conventional game of chess; otherwise you can do what you like with the pieces.

Many of the patterns of activity that define, within a given society, the institutions of marriage, property holding and transfer, use and transfer of conventional powers, and so forth are complex, relational conventional patterns. Many may also be written into law or other sanctioned regulations. Others are only written into law or other regulations. They are never or almost never merely reproduced from previous examples of the same pattern. Then they are not conventional in the sense I am now discussing (but see section VI below).

Reproductively established conventional patterns are often reinforced with sanctions of one kind or another. This has no bearing on their conventionality. Some cultures frown on every failure to conform to convention. But it is neither the threat of these frowns nor the degree of conformity to a convention that makes it into a convention. A substantial literature to the contrary, conventions are not, as such, either

shapes that everybody in some group conforms to, or shapes to which everybody in some group thinks you are supposed to conform. Think, for example, of wearing white for tennis, which in many circles is conventional even though nobody much cares whether you do or you don't. And think about moves in chess. After any given move in chess one could always quit and start playing dolls with the pieces. If that is not allowed, it is rules of etiquette or tournament rules, not chess rules, that prohibit it. The rules of chess don't tell you that you can't quit, but only what would constitute going on.

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

One particularly interesting kind of piece of a conventional pattern deserves a name of its own. This is an optional piece of a conventional pattern, the shape of which piece puts constraints on the shape of ensuing pieces. That is, if the conventional pattern is to continue to unfold, the rest must be conformed to this piece, so as to bear the right relation to it. Thus a conventional move during a chess game and a conventional Protestant marriage ceremony each constrain what can follow while according with relevant conventions. Such acts are interesting because convention does not say when

to perform them, yet they effect changes in the situation that must subsequently be taken into account if events are to unfold under the covering conventions. They are "free" actions under the convention that have predictable effects under the convention or that put constraints on what can happen later under the convention. Thus they put constraints on actual effects in so far as the convention is actually followed. We can call such actions "conventional moves" and speak of them as having "conventional outcomes."

Contrary to the flavor of recent discussions, probably I should explicitly mention that the situation with conventional moves is NOT this: that having instanced a certain action shape under certain (difficult-to-pin-down) conditions automatically "counts as" x-ing, irrevocably, inexorably, no matter how much you kick and scream. In particular, there can be no such thing as a conventional "rule of the form 'X counts as Y in context C' " (Searle 1969 p. 52) where "X" is the description merely of an activity's shape. First, instancing an action shape is never, just as such, instancing a conventional move. The shape must be a reproduction; it must nonaccidentally follow a conventional pattern. Second, simply as such, making a conventional move is merely putting in place a piece of a reproduced pattern which others (or oneself) may or may not then be motivated to complete. The pattern allows or requires a decision to be made at the location of the conventional move. In most cases participants will not be interested in following through to the conventional outcome of an apparent move if they think it was not made intentionally.

On the other hand, especially in cases where abiding by the convention happens to have sanctions attached, and especially where there might be reason for a person

sometimes to be dishonest about whether a move was intended, then, as Strawson put it, "the play is strict" and either some wider convention or some law or regulation may override the need for a consonant intention behind a conventional shape introduced at a decision location. In such circumstances one may also expect that the wider convention, law or regulation is quite strict about the exact shapes to be used for the moves. Sloppy reproductions will not be allowed. But this rigidity is not in the nature of conventions themselves but in the nature of the more encompassing conventions or sanctioned regulations that may sometimes apply to them. And, of course, the same is true of any more encompassing conventions involved as well. For example, the convention that any piece of your own that you touch while playing chess you then must move whether the touch was intentional or not, does not enforce itself. When enforced it is enforced by tournament regulations or by ordinary social sanctions.

Some labels group activities together merely by shape, for example *wearing black*, *wearing black to a funeral*. But there is also a way of describing conventional activities, moves and outcomes that exploits the fact that different shapes occurring in different conventions, in different traditions, may hold corresponding places in their respective conventional patterns, hence may be classed together. "Getting married," "giving a (conventional) greeting" and "observing table manners" are such labels.⁴ Each

⁴ Moves such as castling in chess are a little different. For although pieces of any shape can be used for chess, indeed, chess can be played even without a board (for example, games can be played by post card), games of chess all fall in the same tradition. The

of these role-described classes of conventional moves, activities or patterns can take any of numerous shapes.

There may be a certain ambiguity in some of these abstract labels. For example, does one who wears black to a funeral without knowing of the convention "wear funeral attire"? Does the cat that bats my queen next to your king "put your king in check"? Let's just decide in the negative and speak of activities falling into in "role described" categories only when done following convention. Thus role-described acts are acts that could not be performed were there not covering conventions. Similarly, if I speak of doing something "in a conventional manner" or of "making a conventional move" I will imply that it is done not accidentally but following a convention. Dressing in a conventional manner is a role-described act which takes different shapes in different cultures; the conventional move that is getting married is another role-described act which takes different shapes in different cultures.

So far as I can make out, terms naming role-described categories of conventional moves always classify these moves by conventional outcome. For example, making a

game of chess is an abstract pattern of singular origin that is sometimes reproduced in highly imaginative ways. (Wilfrid Sellars once suggested using Cadillacs for kings and Volkswagens for pawns, etc., and moving them from one Texas county to another.)

bid, getting married, performing a naming ceremony, adjourning a meeting, putting a king in check, making a goal in sports are each role-described moves classified according to their conventional outcomes. Now apparently Austin thought that names for K-I acts such as "warning," "entreating," "ordering," "objecting," and so forth were like names for moves in a game, in which case their instances would be classified by conventional outcomes --by what the conventional results would be. Strawson on the other hand claimed that these labels classify primarily by speaker intention. These positions are obviously incompatible: A speaker intention is not the same thing as a conventional move. My suggestion will be that K-I illocutionary acts are actually classified by purpose, the conventional outcomes of utterances of K-I explicit performatives being equivalent to the purposes of these *as public language forms* --equivalent, that is, to their linguistic functions. Classification by purpose is another way, other than classification by conventional outcome, to classify acts more abstractly than by shape. For example, what constitutes hunting is a matter of purpose hence quite differently shaped activities can constitute "hunting mice" as a hawk does it, as a cat does it, and as I once did it thumbing through the yellow pages in preparation for a mouse-loving daughter's Christmas. Since speaker intentions are also purposes, Austin and Strawson were both right, each in his own way.

But I have been getting ahead of my story. First I must clarify and defend the claim that uses of public language forms are indeed conventional moves having conventional outcomes. Then I must clarify and defend the claim that these outcomes correspond to functions or purposes of the language forms themselves.

'5. Speaking as making conventional moves

It is not, of course, a matter of convention whether a speaker has communicated his intention. Nor is it always a matter of following convention that a hearer should respond as a speaker wishes her to. But a hearer does follow convention when she does what a speaker explicitly says to do, or believes what a speaker explicitly says is true, and does so, in the normal way, because of what the speaker has said. In each such case the hearer completes the reproduction of a conventional pattern of movement from speaker words into hearer reactions. Correlatively, in each of these cases the speaker makes a conventional move having a conventional outcome. He lays down the beginning of a conventional pattern in a way that constrains what can follow in accord with the convention. To see that this is so it is important to keep in mind (1) that to follow a convention is not mandatory as such, for example, no sanctions need constrain the hearer to respond in a conventional way and (2) that following conventions is not always following conscious rules. The speaker's production of the expression and the hearer's cooperative response to it constitute a reproduced pattern whose form is arbitrary relative to its coordinating function. That is all that is needed for convention. Contrast the conventional syntactic and tonal patterns that embody tellings to and tellings that with conventional exclamations ("Hurrah!", "Ouch!") which are merely conventional means of expression, calling conventionally for no particular determinate response from the hearer.

In the case of conventional directive uses of language such as paradigm uses of the imperative mood, the pattern that is conventionally reproduced begins with an intention or desire of S's that H should act in a certain way. It is completed when H has

acted that way as a result of guidance, in accord with conventional rules for guidance, from conventional signs made by S. That the pattern is not completed until H has acted as directed is clear, for new instances of the pattern would not be initiated by speakers were it not that hearers sometimes complete such patterns. The first part of the pattern is conventional, is reproduced, only because both parts are sometimes reproduced.

Thus when you ask or tell me to do something in a conventional way, using some appropriate shape from some public language to do so, it is conventional for me to comply: this outcome is the completion of a conventional pattern. The full recipe for the convention tells what the hearer has to do on hearing such and such words.

Similarly, when S tells H that something is the case in a conventional way, it is conventional for H to believe it. That the pattern is not completed until H has been guided into belief in accordance with the conventional rules is clear because new instances of the pattern would not continue to be initiated by speakers were it not that hearers sometimes believe what they are told. Had earlier hearers responded in accordance with different patterns of interpretation and belief this would have affected the behavior of speakers, with the result that H would have learned to exhibit different patterns as well.

These patterns of belief formation do not result from voluntarily following a rule, of course, any more than standing at the right social distance is a result of voluntarily following a rule. Whether or not I believe what I hear is not under voluntary control. But believing what I hear results, in part, from a process of reproduction enabled by learning.

I believe as I do in response to what I hear in part because others who speak the same language have followed similar patterns in moving from what they have heard to what

they believed, thus reinforcing speaker uses of these language forms. I come to believe what I hear as conforming to a convention.

Consider now what the speaker-hearer patterns will be like that characterize the uses of explicit performatives mentioning K-I acts. Suppose that Strawson is right: For S to convey certain intentions as to H's response can be a way (if not, I shall soon argue, the only way) of performing a K-I act such as requesting, warning, informing and so forth. If the full pattern that is conventional when S tells H that something is the case is as described above, then S's explicitly telling H that S is performing a certain K-I act has as a conventional outcome that H believes S is performing that act. That is, the conventional outcome will be that H believes that S has the intention associated with that K-I act. And in so far as Hs are sometimes obliging, they will sometimes fulfill the speaker's K-I act intentions. (If Hs were never obliging, speakers would soon stop having K-I intentions.) A repeated pattern will thus emerge that begins with a speaker's K-I intentions about a hearer's responses, moves through explicit mention of a corresponding K-I act ("I warn you that...", "I entreat you to..."), and ends with the hearer fulfilling the speaker's intentions. This successful pattern will begin to be reproduced, these uses of explicit performative K-I expressions will soon becoming fully conventionalized. Thus the use of an explicit K-I performative will acquire the accomplishment of the K-I act it designates as a conventional outcome. But then Strawson was wrong on one point. He was wrong that when explicit performatives are used to perform K-I acts, "the wholly overt intention which lies at the core of ...[K-I acts]...may, without any breach of rules or conventions, be frustrated" (p. 613, italics Strawson's) --assuming, that is, that the speaker's intention

accords with the performative verb she uses

We have seen that speaking consists in large part of making conventional moves. In particular, purposefully to use an explicit K-I performative verb in the first person is to perform a conventional move. The move made --a move classified, as usual, according to its conventional outcome-- is named by the performative verb that is used. The speaker who, following the standard convention, says "I warn you that..." performs an act of warning whether or not the particular hearer follows through conventionally by heeding the warning, and the speaker who, following the standard convention, says "I entreat you to..." performs an act of entreating whether or not the particular hearer follows through conventionally by complying. Just as certain forms intentionally having been gone through entails that you are married, or have been christened, or that the meeting is adjourned --these are descriptions of conventional moves classified by conventional outcome-- so it is that certain verbal forms having been reproduced intentionally make it the case that you have been warned or entreated or informed and so forth.

Thus it may appear that Austin was right about the conventional nature of illocutionary acts using explicit K-I performative verbs while Strawson was right about those K-I acts that are not performed by explicitly naming themselves, acts where the hearer is expected to gather in some other way what the speaker's fine-grained illocutionary intentions are. On the other hand, surely the typical use of an explicit performative K-I verb will be by a speaker who intends its conventional outcome. So both Austin's analysis and Strawson's seem to fit these common cases. Strawson's analysis might be considered the more general analysis, failing only in cases of insincerity

or, as he himself suggests, in those peculiar cases where a speaker merely goes through the correct form of using an explicit performative verb of warning, informing or whatever while being "overtly indifferent as to whether or not his information is accepted, his instructions followed, or his advice taken." Still, the existence of these cases make it look as though K-I acts are not really all of one kind. There seems not to be anything common to them all. How does the mere fact, in these latter peculiar cases, that a certain conventional move has been made get into the same category as the fact, on other occasions, that a speaker has a certain intention in speaking?

This issue can be resolved by a look at the purposes (functions) of public language forms. If the conventional outcome of use of an explicit performative can be shown to be the same as its purpose *qua* conventional language form, then K-I illocutionary acts are all classified in the same way after all --classified by their purposes. The exceptions will merely be cases in which although the language form itself has the relevant purpose, the speaker does not.

'6 K-I Acts are defined by their cooperative proper functions

We say of cats and dogs that they "ask to come in" or "beg to go for a walk." It is quipped that a difference between dogs and cats is that "dogs request while cats demand." There are interesting studies said to be about animals' "greetings to conspecifics," "invitations to play," "warning cries" and so forth. Assuming that animals do not indulge in embedded Gricean intentions, these uses of illocutionary verbs do not fit Strawson's account of K-I acts any better than those cases of informing, warning and so forth mentioned above that are performed despite the speaker's insincerity or overt

indifference about the hearer's response. I wish to propose a simpler account than Strawson's according to which each of these descriptions is literally correct. K-I acts are grouped under their appropriate labels by, in a suitably broad sense, their purposes--more precisely, in an idiom which I will explain in a moment, by their "cooperative proper functions".

Here I can offer only a quick review, lacking defense, of the notion "proper function"--just enough to give the flavor.⁵ Items have proper functions as belonging to families of items reproduced one from another, where the continued reproducing depends or has depended on some function these items serve. The biological functions of body organs and the functions of mechanisms that produce tropistic behaviors are prime examples of proper functions. The functions of behaviors learned by trial and error are also examples, as are the functions of customs (when customs have functions) and the functions of words and syntactic forms. An item also has a proper function if it is the product of a prior device designed to vary or adapt its productions depending on circumstance so as to perform certain functions in those circumstances. These adapted productions then have "derived proper functions". Using a well worn example (well worn by me), the mechanisms in worker honey bees that produce bee dances are supposed to vary their dances depending on where nectar is located so that the dances can guide

⁵ The notion "proper function" is defined in my (1984) chapters 1 and 2. It is further explicated and applied in my (1993), for example, chapters 1,2, and 11, and in my (1994; 2002).

fellow bees accordingly. The different dances that result have different derived proper functions: each is supposed to send watching bees off in a different direction. I have argued that behaviors produced in a normal way by the behavior-producing mechanisms in humans and other higher animals also have derived proper functions, though usually derived in a far more complex way, and that these functions coincide with what we would usually identify as the purposes of these behaviors or of the individuals exhibiting them. Human intentions, understood as goal representations harbored within, have as derived proper functions to help produce their own fulfillments.⁶ And human artifacts have as proper functions the purposes for which they were designed.

Now consider the syntactic forms for indicative, imperative and interrogative moods in the various natural languages.⁷ These are reproduced from one speaker to another; children copy them from adults. These forms continue to be differentially

⁶ See, especially, my (1984) chapter 6, (1993) chapter 8 section 6 and (2004) chapters 1, 5 and 6.

⁷ For more details, see my (1984) Introduction and chapters 1-4, and chapter 3 this volume.

reproduced because they are serving differentiated functions. And they serve differentiated functions because hearers respond to them differentially. What stabilizes these functions?

The evolutionary mechanism at work here is parallel to that which tailors the species-specific song of a bird and the built in response of its conspecifics to fit one another, or tailors the nipple of the mother and the mouth of her infant to fit one another, but with learning standing in for natural selection. Speakers (collectively) learn how to speak and hearers learn how to respond in ways that serve purposes for them, each leaning on the settled dispositions of the others. This kind of co-tailoring requires there to be functions served at least some of the time through cooperation between the partners--enough of the time to keep their cognitive systems tuned to one another. So there must be purposes that are sometimes served for hearers as well as for speakers, served by hearers' responding in a cooperative way to what speakers say. For example, often enough there are rewards to motivate hearers who satisfy imperatives. Simply pleasing the speaker may be enough reward, but various kinds of sanctions may also apply. And speakers often enough speak the truth, so that there are often rewards for hearers who believe indicatives. Indeed, if speakers failed to speak the truth too much of the time, there would be no way for hearers to learn a language.⁸ Thus a proper function of the imperative mood is to induce the action described, and a proper function of the

⁸ Compare chapter 10, this volume.

indicative mood is to induce belief in the proposition expressed.⁹

⁹ See my (1984) chapter 3. It is important that these proper functions are not derived merely by averaging over speaker intentions or hearer reactions.

It seems then that the proper functions of the grammatical moods accord with the conventional outcomes of the conventional moves made in using them. Turning to the functions of explicit K-I performatives, the same principle seems to hold. For example, the survival value of the expression "I warn you that p" would seem to be that it sometimes causes hearers to be braced against dangers connected with p and the survival value of "I order you to A" would seem to be that it sometimes causes hearers to A so as to avoid negative sanctions, and so forth. A proper function of an explicit K-I performative is to induce the hearer response that is the conventional outcome of the conventional move made in uttering it.¹⁰

So we have come full circle. Austin was right that using an explicit K-I performative is making a conventional move; conventional moves are classified by their conventional outcomes; and a proper function or linguistic purpose of a K-I performative language form is to produce its conventional outcome. Strawson was right that K-I acts performed without the use of explicit performative are classified by speaker intention, by the purpose of the speaker in speaking. It follows that all K-I acts, performed with or without the use of explicit performative verbs, are classified by their purposes. Some are K-I acts because of the speaker's purpose, some because of the purpose of the language

¹⁰Not every conventional move has a proper function. Conventional patterns may sometimes be imitated for no particular reason rather than due to some function they are performing. Functional convention blurs into the pointlessly convention-bound and into mere habit.

form used, and most, perhaps, for both reasons, since these two purposes are likely to match.

This result can be generalized. If a K-I act is defined primarily by its purpose, then the dog asking to go out at the door does indeed perform a K-I act of requesting, as does the person gesturing in a non-conventional but polite manner for you to open the door, the person who says "Please open the door," and the person who says "I request that you open the door." All are behaving in ways that have as their purpose to get you to open the door (and without special sanctions attached). Also, in each of these cases the proper function of the act is, more specifically, a "cooperative proper function." If fulfilled in the normal way¹¹ it will be fulfilled through a cooperating response, that is, a response that has as part of its own proper function to complete the initiating act's proper function. Note the close analogy here to the reciprocal structure of Gricean intentions. According to Grice, the hearer is to do as the speaker intends in part because the speaker intends it.

The proposal then is that K-I acts are defined by their cooperative proper functions. Because the various grammatical moods have cooperative proper functions, their use in and of itself is enough to constitute a broad kind of speech act--at least, for

¹¹ If fulfilled, that is, in accordance with a "Normal explanation." See my (1984) chapters 1 and 2.

example, a telling that or a telling to or an asking whether. More specific K-I speech acts not employing explicit performatives are then differentiated according to additional or more fine grained speaker (rather than expression) purposes--more exact mechanisms by which the speaker intends or expects to procure the intended response--just as Strawson said. In the case of the explicit performatives, K-I acts are differentiated by naming themselves. Thus they become "self verifying". As instances of the original informative conventional pattern from which they were derived (' 5 above) and which they also exemplify (they remain in the indicative mood), their more recent conventional purposes (linguistic functions) accord also with what they say is the purpose of the saying. For example, "I warn you that p" has both the function of informing you that it is a warning and also the function of warning you, whether or not you follow through with the conventional responses to this form, hence whether or not its conventional purpose is fulfilled.

It remains to discuss cases in which the intention of the speaker does not accord with the proper function of the language form used. Strawson gave us examples in which the speaker is overtly indifferent about whether his speech act actually performs its proper function, but perhaps cases of actual conflict are more interesting. For example, the person who says "Open the door" may be sarcastic or joking or acting in a skit; she may intend only that you trigger a booby trap placed over the door; she may misunderstand the public-language function of the words she uses. If she actually intends something other than your opening the door, then her saying "Open the door" has two conflicting proper functions at once. The first is derived from the history of the

language forms she reproduces (the imperative mood and the words she arranges into this mood). This is the proper function of the expression she uses. The second is derived from the her intention in speaking.

In the case of insincere uses (the booby trap case) the proper function derived from the speaker's intention is not a cooperative proper function, so it does not affect the question what sort of K-I act is being performed. Suppose that Strawson is right that K-I acts are defined by their cooperative functions, not merely by the speaker's intention in use, rather as Grice proposed for properly communicative uses of language. In insincere cases then the only speech act performed is the act defined by the purpose of the language form itself. If she says "Open the door!" intending only that you try to open it and thus trigger the booby trap overhead, she directs or tells you to open the door even though that is not at all what she intends you to accomplish.

But there are also cases where a speech act has conflicting functions both of which are cooperative. For example, if I jokingly ask you to leave I do not intend you to leave but I also do not intend you to react as if I were really asking you to leave. I intend you to understand that I am only pretending to ask you to leave; my purpose is cooperative. Or consider these cases: the armed robber smiles and says "I entreat you to hand over your money"; Anytus threatens Socrates, "I advise you to be careful"; Mom orders "I am asking you for the last time whether you are going to take out the garbage!"; the friend who has matched Jim with a blind date says "I warn you that she is exceedingly charming"; Father warns "If you aren't back by twelve I promise that you will regret it." The proper functions of these expressions do not match the cooperative

intentions of the speakers. Has the designated act been performed? These may be uses that Strawson intended to rule out as not "literal and serious" uses. Certainly these are not paradigm cases of asking, advising, entreating, warning or promising. It does seem natural to say, however, that the act performed is the one according with the cooperative speaker intention rather than with the purpose of the linguistic form used. Anytus has threatened Socrates; Father has given a warning, and so forth. These are acts in which the speaker intends the hearer to understand his actual intentions despite the ironical language used. Here, in attributing a speech act, the "wholly overt intention" of the speaker to do something other than what he explicitly says he is doing seems to override the purpose of the language form he uses.

Yet things are not quite that simple, for it is possible to question Strawson's claim that a "wholly overt intention ...lies at the core" of all K-I acts even in certain cases that cannot be explained away by pointing instead to the purpose of the language forms used. Sperber and Wilson have questioned whether, as a general rule, speech acts "have to be communicated and identified as such in order to be performed" (1986 p. 244). They suggest that, for example, predicting, asserting, hypothesizing, suggesting, claiming, denying, entreating, demanding, warning and threatening do not (p. 245). If this is right, then some of the differentia separating K-I acts performed without the use of explicitly differentiating performative verbs may not correspond to cooperative purposes of the speaker. For example, perhaps I can successfully warn you by making you alert to a danger without your understanding that as the purpose of my remarks. And if this is the case speech acts such as boasting should also count as illocutionary acts even though no

such form as "I boast that..." is possible --this for the obvious reason that the hearer is not going to cooperate in being impressed because he knows the speaker intends it. Suppose that a mountain climber says, "I admit that it was absolutely excruciating there towards the end," his intention being not to own up to a weakness but rather to inspire admiration for his fortitude. Despite the explicit "I admit" this does not seem to be an admission; it seems to be a boast. Boasting is not a cooperative act, and yet the purpose of the speaker seems to override the purpose of the language form he uses in determining what speech act is considered to have been performed. Perhaps this is because the act of boasting normally occurs without the speaker intending cooperation, but only a certain hearer reaction.

' 7. K-II Acts

Not all conventional moves made in speaking are conventional moves in the sense defined in ' 4 above. Some are moves in patterns that are not reproduced from prior instances but dictated by law or other explicit regulation. The pattern of moves required to make a foreign born person into a U.S. citizen, including the necessary taking of oaths and so forth, is an example of such a pattern. Also, many conventional moves are of intermediate status. The patterns in which they are embedded are at least partly copied but they or portions of them are also written into codes or laws. Marriage ceremonies, including the act of signing certain documents, are an example of this. There is no sharp line, then, between moves that are conventional in the sense defined in ' 4 and moves that are conventional because they fall under explicit regulation. In speaking of moves at or close to the explicitly regulated end of the spectrum we can speak of "regulated

conventions," of "regulated moves," and of "regulated outcomes." The regulated outcome of a move may also have a proper function in a sense that falls quite strictly under the definition of that term given in my (1984). This purpose will be derived from the intentions of the person or group responsible for defining the move and its outcome--those responsible for initiating the regulations. Thus, "in some cases, [the speaker] may be seen as the mouthpiece, merely, of another agency..." (Strawson, p.614).¹²

Regulated moves, like conventional moves, are classed, as such, by their conventional outcomes. I have argued that K-I illocutionary verbs classify by purposes and that these purposes accord with the conventional outcomes of the moves made by these expressions when used performatively. K-II verbs often classify acts by conventional outcome alone. Thus these designate conventional moves as such. These are moves whose outcomes, for any of a number of reasons, could not reasonably be intended by speakers in the absence of extra-linguistic social conventions concerning them and, indeed, whose outcomes may routinely fail to be strongly intended by speakers. Consider, for example, paradigm K-II acts such as pronouncing a couple man and wife or formally granting someone a degree. These have conventional outcomes that

¹² Once again, however, we should not assume that behind the conventional outcome of every regulated move there lies a clear purpose.

involve the coordination of multiple persons, many of whom may not be present at the ceremony, in behaviors forming a complex interwoven pattern, difficult even to specify. It is difficult to sum up, for example, exactly what all you must do in order for you to behave in the conventional way as one who is married and what others must do in order that you be treated by them and by the law in that way. On the other hand, all or many of the conventional outcome behaviors that define K-II acts may be heavily sanctioned as falling under the covering regulations or conventions, so that they are strongly motivated. For this reason, the speaker is likely to expect follow through even if he does not positively intend it.

It is generally true that the shape of a K-II move includes not just some words spoken but also the position or office of the speaker and the context of the speaking. You can't make the conventional move of bidding two no trump if it's not bridge or if it's not your turn to play, or adjourn the meeting if you are not in a meeting or not chair of it. Such requirements were labeled "felicity conditions" by Austin, but lacking them is in fact lacking part of the move's very shape. What is reproduced or regulated as part of a pattern is not words but words-in-a-context. Hence of course the speaker cannot hope to effect the conventional outcome of the pattern out of context merely by conveying his intentions to effect it. Unlike a K-I act the K-II act can only be performed conventionally. On the other hand, it may be considered, on occasion, that the very shape of a move is, just, the conveying of the intention to perform the move by the right person at the right time. For example, at the right time in an informal bridge game one can pass with an understandable gesture, and I once witnessed a marriage ceremony performed by a

severely handicapped minister who administered the vows and blessings without words. In both cases, however, the conventional setting is or was essential.

It is true that a K-II act speaker is likely merely to expect, rather than strongly to intend, much of the conventional outcome of his K-II act--as a chess player expects, rather than strongly intending, that his opponent's future moves will be constrained by his own move in accordance with the rules. Indeed, the K-II speaker may have no personal interest whatever in the outcome of his move, which he merely performs in line with custom or duty. The minister may merely be doing what he is asked to do in performing the marriage ceremony; the provost is obliged formally to grant the degrees that the trustees have formally approved. On the other hand, there are also speech acts that fall between Strawson's K-I and K-II extremes. The chair says "the meeting is adjourned." His intention is to cause the members of the meeting to stop introducing motions and debating them. If nobody pays any attention, debate goes on, and three more motions are passed, his intentions will surely be frustrated. Equally clearly, his act is intended to "further a certain [conventional] practice". It is intended to play the conventional role of adjourning a meeting under sanctions of law or custom.

Strawson is right, of course, that there is a sense in which, for example, the chair's saying, at an appropriate time, that the meeting is adjourned "cannot fail to do so" (Strawson p.612), that is, cannot fail to adjourn the meeting. No matter what the members go on to do, there is a sense in which "the meeting has been adjourned" once the chair has spoken, just as after the minister pronounces a pair man and wife they are married, even if they don't act married, and even if everyone else, including those

responsible for enforcing the law, fails to treat them as married. "The meeting is adjourned," said by the right person at the right time, cannot fail to adjourn the meeting for the simple reason that for the meeting to be adjourned simply IS for a conventional move to have been made the conventional outcome of which would be that no more debate occurs, no more motions are considered and so forth. After the minister or Justice of the Peace has said, at the appropriate time in the appropriate context, "I now pronounce you man and wife," the couple addressed cannot fail to be married for the unmagical reason that to be married simply IS for conventional moves to have been made the conventional outcome of which would be that they behaved in certain manners toward one another, were treated by the law in a certain manner and so forth. But, contra Strawson, the case with K-I acts is exactly parallel. After Mom has said "Now take out the garbage!" Johnny is under instructions to take out the garbage, whether or not he does so. And after Jane says to John "Please pass the salt," a request has been made whether or not John complies with it. In these cases too a conventional move has been made. The differences between K-I and K-II illocutionary acts are not quite as sharp as Strawson supposed.

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