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ABSTRACT: The paper highlights a certain kind of self-falsifying utterance, which I shall call *antiperformative assertions*, not noted in speech-act theory thus far. By taking such assertions into account, the old question whether explicit performatives have a truth-value can be resolved. I shall show that explicit performatives are in fact self-verifyingly true, but they are not related to propositions the way ordinary assertions are; antiperformatives have the same unusual relation to propositions, but are self-falsifyingly false. Explicit performatives are speech acts performed in situations where it is important that the speaker is self-reflectively aware of what he is doing in the speech act. Antiperformatives, on the other hand, are speech acts performed in situations where lack of direct self-reflectiveness is required. In order to situate performatives and antiperformatives, the analysis is embedded within a more general discussion of self-falsifying and self-verifying assertions.

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PERFORMATIVES AND ANTIPERFORMATIVES

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights a certain kind of self-falsifying utterance, what I call *antiperformative assertion*, that has not been noted in speech-act theory thus far. By taking such assertions into account, it becomes easier to resolve the old question whether explicit performatives – for example ‘I promise to pay’ – have a truth-value. In order to situate antiperformatives and performatives, a more general discussion of self-falsifying and self-verifying assertions is needed, too. Three species of each such genus will be commented upon:

Self-falsifying assertions

Logical contradictions

Performative contradictions

Antiperformatives

Self-verifying assertions

Logical tautologies

Performative tautologies

Performatives

2. CONTRADICTIONS, TAUTOLOGIES, AND BASIC TERMINOLOGY

A logically self-contradictory utterance of a sentence such as ‘The cat is on the mat and the cat is not on the mat’ is not only false; it cannot possibly be true. It is false in virtue of its own semantic-syntactic structure. A tautological utterance, on the other hand, says something true, but it supplies no new information about the world. It is made true by its own semantic-syntactic structure. Logically contradictory assertions are self-falsifying in the sense that they are their own falsitymakers; tautological utterances are self-verifying in the sense that they are their own truthmakers. But there are also self-falsifying and self-verifying assertions that have another structure. Restricting the term *assertion* to sincere utterances and written sentences that contain a well-formed and meaningful sentence of indicative form, I will use the terms *self-falsifying assertion* and *self-verifying assertion* in conformity with the following definitions:

- An utterance is a *self-falsifying assertion* iff it is false and has a sentence meaning that cannot possibly be used (in general or by a certain kind of speaker) to say something true.
- An utterance is a *self-verifying assertion* iff it is true and has a sentence meaning that cannot possibly be used (in general or by a certain kind of speaker) to say something false.

What, then, do I mean by *sentence meaning*? Normally, from the speaker’s and the addressee’s points of view, sentence meaning can be focussed on only retrospectively. In order to grasp it, one has to abstract from where and when the sentence is uttered, as well as to whom the personal pronouns refer. A sentence meaning is something other than *utterer* or

speaker meaning; for the latter includes even non-standard meanings awarded to expressions by specific speakers as well as the particular referents of indexical expressions like ‘I’, ‘here’, and ‘now’. Utterer’s meaning in this sense will not be discussed in this paper.

Sentence meaning must not be conflated with what in speech-act theory has been called locutionary act (Austin 1962), propositional content (Searle 1969), descriptive meaning (Recanati 1987), or locutionary content (Lycan 1999).¹ There is, though, a relationship. Many sentence meanings can be analysed as containing two main aspects which, following W.G. Lycan (1999), I will call *illocutionary content* and *locutionary content*, respectively.² In my terminology neither sentence meanings nor locutionary contents can as a matter of definition be ascribed a truth-value. Only *used* sentence meanings that express a proposition can have a truth-value. A used sentence meaning comes into being either through an utterance (i.e., a spoken sentence) or through a written sentence.³ (Throughout the paper, examples of utterances will be written thus: ‘...’, and examples of propositions thus: “...”.)

¹ Looking outside the speech-act theoretical tradition, one may note similarities between my use of sentence meaning and that of David Lewis (1970, sections III and V). In my view, only *used* sentence meanings can have a truth-value; in Lewis’s view and terminology, only sentence meanings *at an index* can have a truth-value.

² Like, for instance, François Recanati (1987, §§ 5 and 23), S.L. Tsohatzidis (1994, pp. 1-2), and W.G. Lycan (1999, p. 181), I am convinced that words that mark illocutionarity have meaning in the same way as locutionary expressions have. This means, among other things, that I will use the term *illocutionary content* in much the same way as some philosophers (e.g. Recanati) use *pragmatic meaning*. Austin’s concept of locutionary *act*, it should be noted, is meant to involve both sense and reference.

³ The following four utterances or written sentences, taken from John Searle (1969, p. 22), have one and the same locutionary content, but they have different illocutionary contents and, consequently, different sentence meanings: ‘Sam smokes habitually’, ‘Does Sam smoke habitually?’, ‘Sam, smoke habitually!’, and ‘Would that Sam smoked habitually’. All four have a sentence meaning, but only the first contains a proposition and has a

The sentence meanings of ordinary empirical assertive utterances like ‘The cat is on the mat’ can be used to make both true and false assertions as well as merely to consider or entertain a proposition. In themselves, such sentence meanings express no propositions, but in their *use* they do. Sentence meanings that have a purely non-assertive illocutionary content, e.g., ‘Go away from here!’, cannot without further ado be ascribed a truth-value even when used. The sentence meanings of logical tautologies deviate from those of empirical assertions in another way. Although, given the definition of sentence meaning, not even such sentence meanings can express a proposition, they will always yield a true assertion when they are in fact used. Therefore, in relation to tautologies, the distinction between a used sentence meaning and a sentence meaning *simpliciter* is not of much importance.⁴ A similar point can of course be made in relation to logical contradictions. All performative utterances have a sentence meaning, but this fact by no means prejudices the question whether or not they are assertions that express (or contain) a proposition and have a truth-value.

In the Frege-Russell tradition in the philosophy of language, one says that *sentences* express propositions, and in speech-act theory one sometimes says that *utterances* express propositions. In my terminology it makes good sense to say that *used sentence meanings* express propositions. Henceforth, however, I will say that certain types of utterances and written sentences *contain* an instance of a proposition. For various reasons I need to stress the fact that an assertion is a whole with many parts and properties, and that its proposition

truth-value. The locutionary content can be said to be located basically in the meanings of the words ‘Sam [a person]’, ‘smoke’, and ‘habitually’. Note that although Austin’s concept of locutionary *act* is meant to involve both sense and reference, my concept of locutionary *content* is not concerned with reference at all. Therefore, the purely proper name Sam can have no such content, and, consequently, I have to locate a corresponding locutionary content in *Sam [a person]*. I look upon locutionary content as only a kind of theoretical construct.

⁴ Compare Lewis (1970, p. 34).

instance is merely one of its parts. The way I am going to use some central terms can, I hope, be grasped from the following four assertions:

- (a) Normally, when a sentence meaning with an assertive illocutionary content *is used*, an assertion is made.
- (b) Normally, an assertion *contains* at least one instance of a proposition.
- (c) Necessarily, every instance of a proposition *contains* an instance of a sentence meaning; out of every proposition a sentence meaning can be abstracted.
- (d) Necessarily, an utterance has a truth-value only if it is an assertion, and an assertion is true or false depending upon whether its central proposition is true or false.⁵

Now, having explained the concept of sentence meaning, I can begin to use the definitions introduced. Logically contradictory utterances are self-falsifying assertions since their sentence meanings cannot possibly be used to say something true, and tautological utterances are self-verifying assertions since their sentence meanings cannot possibly be used to say something false. Utterances with a sentence meaning that can be used to make both true and false assertions, e.g., ‘The cat is on the mat’, are of course neither self-falsifying nor self-verifying.⁶

⁵ A concept like “central proposition” is needed because even in a simple disjunction ‘p or q’ one has to distinguish between the propositions contained in ‘p’ and ‘q’ and the proposition contained in the whole utterance, i.e., the central one.

⁶ There are striking similarities between self-falsifying assertions and some curious assertions whose contents are discussed in doxastic and epistemic logic; the latter assertions may be called *indefensible belief assertions*. They are akin to but distinct from self-falsifying assertions, and they will not be discussed in this paper. An indefensible belief assertion can be true even if the belief described is indefensible. There are at least four kinds of such beliefs. Their logical forms are (i) $B(p \wedge \neg p)$, (ii) $Bp \wedge B\neg p$, (iii) $B(p \wedge B\neg p)$, and (iv) $p \wedge B\neg p$; and they can be exemplified by utterances such as (i) ‘I believe both that it is raining and that it is not’, (ii) ‘I

3. PERFORMATIVE CONTRADICTIONS AND PERFORMATIVE TAUTOLOGIES

Utterances like

‘I do not exist’

‘I cannot talk’

are in some sense necessarily false assertions, and their sentence meanings cannot, when the speaker is an ordinary person, possibly be used to describe an obtaining state of affairs. These *performative contradictions*⁷ contain first-person sentences. If we insert ‘He’ instead of ‘I’, then both these utterances become assertions that are contingently true or false depending

believe that it is raining and I believe that it is not raining’, (iii) ‘I believe both that it is raining and that I do not believe it’, and (iv) ‘It is raining, but I do not believe it’. In particular, such sentence forms have been discussed by Jaakko Hintikka (1962: chapter 4) and Roy Sorensen (1988: chapter 1). Sorensen calls (i) patently inconsistent beliefs and (ii) directly inconsistent beliefs; Hintikka calls (iii) indefensible (*simpliciter*) beliefs and (iv) doxastically indefensible beliefs. A fitting umbrella term for what happens in self-falsifying assertions and indefensible belief assertions is *illocutionary suicide*; the term comes from Zeno Vendler (1976).

⁷ Hintikka once presented a distinction between two kinds of statements, which he called *existentially inconsistent statements* and *existentially self-verifying statements*, respectively (Hintikka 1974 [1962], chapter 5). He introduced the distinction in order to analyse Descartes’s *cogito, ergo sum*, claiming (rightly, in my opinion) that this statement is an existentially self-verifying statement. However, in relation to these terms, I have made a terminological change. Hintikka also called existentially inconsistent statements *performatory* or *performative contradictions*, and I have chosen to use the last expression. Then, for reasons of terminological symmetry, I have chosen to call self-verifying statements *performative tautologies*. My decisions are influenced by K-O. Apel and Jürgen Habermas. Thanks to them, the concept of performative contradiction has won wide acceptance. Apel (1987, in particular pp. 278-279, and 1998), taking the concept from Hintikka, has used it in his attempt to create a new first philosophy, a transcendental pragmatics. Habermas, taking the concept from Apel, has used it in his criticism of poststructuralism. In Habermas’s opinion (and I agree) poststructuralism is impregnated with performative contradictions (see 1987, pp. 185-190, 279-282; 1990, pp. 78-82; 1992, p. 135).

upon what states of affairs there are in the world. The necessary falsity of a performative contradiction does not arise from some logical self-contradiction, but from the fact that the used sentence meaning is in some way contradicted by one of the pragmatic presuppositions of the very same utterance; in the examples used, the presuppositions are that the speaker exists and that the speaker can talk, respectively.

The *necessary* falsity now spoken of is, I want to stress, a property of utterances (assertions) not of propositions.⁸ Assume that I am the speaker, then the propositions “Ingvar does not exist” and “Ingvar cannot talk” are false, but they are not as propositions necessarily false. In contradistinction to utterances, propositions have no specific pragmatic presuppositions.

Note that the term ‘utterance’ suffers from a certain process-product or act(ion)-product ambiguity. Recanati makes explicit what is mostly implicit in the writings of other speech-act theorists:

The same word “utterance” will be used in this book both in the sense of *utteratio* and in the sense of *utteratum*, as Austin says. I leave it to the reader to determine contextually which sense is intended (Recanati 1987, p. 31).

Since this distinction is very important for some of my views,⁹ I will not, in contradistinction to much of the speech-act tradition, leave this ambiguity to the reader. In fact, Austin wrote in a footnote as follows: “I use ‘utterance’ only as equivalent to *utteratum*: for ‘*utteratio*’ I use ‘the issuing of an utterance’” (Austin 1962, p. 92); and I will do almost the same. Unless I say

⁸ Compare L.J. Cohen (1950).

⁹ I am here following the steps of Twardowski; see his paper from 1912 ‘Actions and Products’ (in Twardowski 1999, pp. 103-132), in particular §§ 21-22.

otherwise, 'utterance' will refer only to the product. Mostly, this product is only a theoretical abstraction, but sometimes it exists as an entity that is also in real life dissociated from the speaker.¹⁰ Such a dissociation has occurred when one hears an utterance without seeing the speaker; the tape recorder is the dissociator par excellence. However, in relation to a written sentence and the writing of it, it is the other way round. Normally, written sentences exist in dissociation from their writers. When I use the phrase 'the issuing of an utterance', it contains, whatever Austin may have intended, no connotations to the effect that what was issued existed even before it was issued. For instance, mostly in everyday conversation the propositions contained in our utterances had no worldly existence (not even in our minds) before they came into being in the process of uttering.

Utterances and written sentences are events or states of affairs in the world, and as such they can function as so-called *natural signs* or natural indicators. In the same way as in ordinary parlance one says that dark clouds are a sign of future rain and that smoke is a sign of a past or present fire, an utterance is a sign of the existence of a speaker, and a written sentence is a sign of the existence of a writer. As dark clouds can show or indicate future rain, utterances and written sentences can show or indicate various things. Natural indication must not be conflated with the indication that is involved in conversational implicature, conventional implicature, or semantic presupposition.

A natural sign has a natural meaning in the sense explicated and contrasted with non-natural meaning by H.P. Grice (1989, pp. 213-5, 290-7, 349-50). In my view, let me add, even natural signs can be signs only in relation to observers. Dark clouds are not in themselves natural signs. Mostly, in modern linguistics, semiology, and philosophy of language, natural signs are

¹⁰ Twardowski (1999) distinguishes between non-enduring products and enduring products.

not dealt with at all, but in this paper they are. In relation to Grice, I claim that ordinary utterances should be regarded as having both non-natural and natural meaning.

In ordinary face-to-face conversations one perceives the speaker, the uttering, and the utterance as a structured whole, and though the utterance is itself a natural sign of the speaker there is no reason to talk of this. Similarly, when one perceives both a fire and its smoke, there is no reason to talk of the smoke as a natural sign of the fire. However, if for philosophical and analytical purposes one starts from an abstracted utterance as a self-contained unit, as is often done in analyses of performatives, then one has to say that every such utterance shows and is a natural sign of the fact that it is itself being issued. Therefore, the utterance 'The cat is on the mat' has not only a relation to the contained proposition "The cat is on the mat," but also to a speaker and an uttering as well. When, however, the concept of natural sign is stretched in this way, one has to distinguish between ordinary indication and secure indication; the latter I will call *showing*. Written sentences and tape recorder utterances *indicate* the existence of a speaker and the issuing of itself. But assertions as abstracted from face-to-face conversations *show* the existence of a speaker and the issuing of itself. According to common sense epistemology, showing or secure indication, but not ordinary indication, entails the existence of what is indicated.

Where the utterance 'The cat is on the mat' contains a proposition that has no interesting relation to what the utterance shows, the opposite is true in the case of 'I do not exist'. It *contains* the proposition "Ingvar does not exist" but it *shows* that I exist. The assertion 'I do not exist' is self-falsifying since it is made false by a state of affairs that is shown by the assertion itself. Note that the utterance 'I do not exist' does not in itself falsify itself; there is no absolute circularity. The falsitybearer of the assertion (i.e., its proposition) is part of the assertion, and the assertion (i.e., the utterance as product) comes into existence as part of the

falsitymaker (i.e. the concrete issuing of the utterance). In short, the falsitybearer and the falsitymaker are not identical.

When a tape recorder (re)produces the utterance ‘I do not exist’ with its proposition “Ingvar does not exist,” no self-falsifying utterance is produced. Such a tape recorder utterance need not even be false. If the speaker has died since he issued the utterance, the proposition contained in the utterance is true.¹¹ The same remark can of course be made in relation to the corresponding written sentence.

In a performative contradiction what is asserted *in* the utterance (‘I do not exist’ or ‘I cannot talk’) is made false by what is shown *by* the utterance (that I exist and that I can talk, respectively). Therefore, a performative contradiction may be described *as if* it contains a logical contradiction between the contained proposition (“Ingvar does not exist” or “Ingvar cannot talk”) and a description of a pragmatic presupposition that is shown (“Ingvar, the speaker, exists” or “Ingvar, the speaker, can talk,” respectively). In spite of this fact, performative contradictions are distinct from logical contradictions. A logical contradiction exists wholly within the asserted proposition while a performative contradiction does not.

The utterances ‘I do not exist’ and ‘I cannot talk’ are performative contradictions and self-falsifying assertions. They have an indicative form, and they cannot possibly be true. Their sentence meanings convey a false proposition every time I use them.

In the performative tautologies ‘I exist’ and ‘I can talk’, on the other hand, I say something in which the used sentence meanings are true. However, these assertions are not only true, they are necessarily true, since what is asserted as obtaining is at the same time shown. For instance, the assertion ‘I exist’ gets its truth-value from the contained true proposition “Ingvar exists,” but the proposition is made true by (among a lot of other things) the state of affairs made up of

¹¹ Compare Cohen (1950, p. 86).

me and my asserting, and that state of affairs is shown by the assertion as a product. The truthbearer of the assertion (the proposition) is part of the assertion, but the assertion comes into existence as part of the truthmaker (i.e., the concrete issuing of the assertion). The utterance ‘I exist’ is a self-verifying assertion; and the same goes for the utterance ‘I can talk’. However, note that there is no circularity. These two utterances make true their propositions by way of what they show.

Performative tautologies show what they assert. The used sentence meaning describes a pragmatic presupposition for its own use, and the assertion shows it. The assertion is made true by what it shows; if p is asserted then p is shown. If I assert that I exist then I show that I exist, and if I assert that I can talk then I show that I can talk. Because of this, performative tautologies may be described *as if* they contain logical tautologies of the form ‘if p then p’.¹²

Hintikka’s ‘*Cogito, Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance*’ (1974 [1962]) can in our terms be said to have shown that Descartes’s reasoning around his *cogito ergo sum* should be understood as a claim to the effect that ‘I exist’ is a certain kind of self-verifying assertion, a performative tautology. The utterance ‘I exist’ has an indicative form, and it cannot possibly be false. Its sentence meaning creates a true proposition every time I use it. This means that its indubitability is of another character than was often assumed. No formal-logical inference is involved. Hintikka wrote:

¹² What I have just said comes very close to views first put forward by E.J. Lemmon (1962). He said that a sentence like ‘I am speaking’ does not itself express an analytic proposition, but that if someone “says he is [speaking] he is, and *this* is analytic. Let us call this as yet ill-defined property of sentences that of being *verifiable by their use*” (Lemmon 1962, p. 88). Here Lemmon suggests a distinction between analytic utterances and analytic sentences which I have sought to make explicit.

The function of the word *cogito* in Descartes's dictum is to refer to the thought-act through which the existential self-verifiability of 'I exist' manifests itself. Hence the indubitability of this sentence is not strictly speaking perceived *by means* of thinking (in the way the indubitability of a demonstrable truth may be said to be); rather, it is indubitable *because* and *in so far as* it is actively thought of. In Descartes's argument the relation of *cogito ergo sum* is not that of a premiss to a conclusion. ...

But did I not say that the performance through which an existentially self-verifying sentence verifies itself may also be an act of uttering it? Is this not incompatible with Descartes's use of the word *cogito*? There is no incompatibility, for Descartes says exactly the same. In his second meditation on first philosophy he says in so many words that the sentence 'I exist' is necessarily true "whenever I utter it or conceive it in my mind" (Hintikka 1974, pp. 108-109).

What then about my other example, 'I can talk'? Of course, there is a difference between 'I exist' and 'I can talk' that is relevant in relation to Descartes's reflections. I have so far spoken only of ordinary utterances, but now I have to say some words about thinking, or talking to oneself in one's head, too. In such cases one might be said to make "silent utterances." A silent utterance of 'I exist' is as much a performative tautology as is the corresponding ordinary utterance, but a silent utterance of 'I can talk' is not. Nor is a silent utterance of 'I cannot talk' a performative contradiction. If I have lost my voice I can say to myself, truly, that 'I cannot talk'. However, if the term 'talk' is taken in such a wide sense that it connotes "talking to oneself," too, then even silent utterances of 'I can talk' and 'I cannot talk' become performative tautologies and performative contradictions, respectively.

Two other examples of performative tautology-contradiction pairs are (i) 'I am at the moment speaking English' - 'I am not at the moment speaking English' and (ii) 'In hexameter trochaic am I talking' - 'I am talking in trochaic hexameter'.¹³ Every utterance has to be

¹³ The second example comes from Lewis (1970, p. 60).

uttered in some language and with some rhythm. In the cases at hand, the specific (i) language and (ii) rhythm used are both shown by the utterances and talked about in the propositions.

The special kind of truth contained in performative tautologies, as well as the falsity of performative contradictions, can be explained in a philosophy of language which in the way described takes into account the fact that utterances as events in the world can function as natural signs. In the next two sections, other things that some utterances can show or indicate become important.

4. ANTIPERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES

In Christian communities pious people are expected to be very humble. If, in such a community, a non-pious and non-humble man says 'I am always very humble', then of course he makes an ordinary false assertion. Curiously, however, 'I am always very humble' becomes false even when a man who is regarded as very pious and humble asserts it. It may at first seem as if such a man, let us call him Paul, is just giving a true description of himself. Yet even though others can truly say 'Paul is always very humble', Paul himself cannot do the same because this very assertion would be interpreted as a kind of insolent pride. If a humble man makes such an utterance he will thereby become less humble; humbleness admits degrees. In the kind of communities referred to, it is wholly impossible to say truly '*I* am always very humble'. If a pious and humble man affirms what others have truly said of him, then, by this affirmation, he falsifies both their assertions and his own. His affirmation is self-falsifying. It performs the opposite of what was intended, and it can, adequately, be called an *antiperformative assertion*.

The remark now made about the utterance ‘I am always very humble’ can also be applied to certain other utterances:

- (i) In Victorian England a perfect gentleman was not himself expected to lay claim to being a perfect gentleman even if everybody else regarded him as one.
- (ii) Although it may truly be said about someone that ‘she sacrifices everything for the happiness of her son, but he is never pleased’, she cannot herself truly say ‘I sacrifice everything for the happiness of my son, but he is never pleased’. For if she were to do so, then she would produce an assertion that would decrease the happiness of her son if he were to hear about it.
- (iii) In cultures where sophistication ranks high, a man who is regarded as extremely sophisticated cannot himself say ‘I am always extremely sophisticated’ without thereby losing some of his status. For such a direct statement would be interpreted as wanting in sophistication.
- (iv) The same pattern exists in the utterance ‘I insinuate that you are such and such’. For a statement to the effect that one is insinuating something itself makes the insinuation impossible.¹⁴

How, now are antiperformative assertions like these to be explained? Let us take a close look at the case ‘I am always very humble’.

The first thing needed is a distinction between living unreflectively and living reflectively in a certain respect. The distinction is most easily seen in relation to children. A child may be nice or nasty, self-confident or shy, etc.; but independently of what type of person she is, a child can be wholly unaware of the fact that she is a certain type of person. She has consciousness but lacks self-consciousness. All normal adults have self-consciousness. Nonetheless, it is possible

¹⁴ Compare Vendler (1976, pp. 137 and 141) and Carl Ginet (1979, p. 254).

for adults to lack self-consciousness in some specific respect. A completely normal and sane person can, so to speak, live some of his character traits unreflectively. In the kind of Christian community envisaged, a perfectly pious and humble man is assumed to be always *unreflectively humble*. That is the basic reason why he himself cannot truly say, or even think, ‘I am always very humble’.

Non-linguistic actions are often understood as indicating, or even showing, what kind of person the agent is. Someone who often smiles and laughs is cheerful; someone who easily gets angry is irascible, and so on. In everyday life, just as dark clouds and smoke often are regarded as natural signs, so too are human actions, gestures and the like – they are natural signs of character traits. From Austin and onwards, speech-act theorists have argued that speech acts are, in a number of respects, on a par with non-linguistic actions. Nonetheless, they have not done justice to the point that speech acts can function as natural signs. In order to understand antiperformatives, this deficit has to be rectified.

The interesting thing with the utterance ‘I am always very humble’ is that it shows the opposite of what it asserts. What is asserted by the utterance ‘I am always very humble’ is made false by what is shown by the same utterance.¹⁵ Antiperformative affirmations can be described *as if* they contain a logical contradiction between the proposition contained in the assertion (i.e., “Paul is humble”) and a description of what the assertion shows (i.e., “Paul is not humble”). In this respect they behave just like performative contradictions.

When a non-humble man says that he is always very humble, he says something that is simply false, and when a humble man says that he is always very humble, his utterance becomes self-falsifying. This means that the sentence meaning of the utterance ‘I am always very

¹⁵ I can write ‘shown’ (i.e., securely indicated) instead of just ‘indicated’, because I am talking about a man who is *always* very humble.

humble' cannot possibly be used to say something true, and that it conforms to the definition of a self-falsifying assertion.

What, then, about the contrary utterance, i.e., 'I am never very humble'? If Paul when asked about his assumed piousness says 'No, I am never very humble', then of course he says something false. But there is more to the utterance than a contingent falsity. In opposition to what is asserted (in the context at hand where people regard Paul as pious and humble), the utterance indicates what Paul truly is. A humble man *should* deny his humbleness. What the utterance asserts is false, but what it indicates is true. Therefore, the utterance can be described *as if* it contains a logical contradiction between its contained proposition ("Paul is not humble") and a description of what the utterance indicates ("Paul is humble"). Such utterances will be called antiperformative denials. Just like antiperformative affirmations, antiperformative denials conform to the definition of self-falsifying assertions; they contain indicative sentences that cannot possibly, when used by a certain kind of speaker, be true.

There are antiperformative denials in relation to the other examples as well. A perfect gentleman ought to deny that he is the perfect gentleman. Self-sacrificing parents are expected to describe themselves as not being self-sacrificing. In a situation where everybody knows that the speaker is extremely sophisticated, to say 'I am never sophisticated' can be a sophisticated way of saying 'I am sophisticated'. Similarly, it is possible to insinuate by saying 'I am not at all insinuating that you are such and such'. Even children may perform antiperformative denials. If one child pays another the compliment 'You are nice', the latter may in some cultures very well answer 'No, I'm not', as if the compliment would become false if it were not denied.¹⁶

¹⁶ Berit Brogaard told the story to me when she commented upon an earlier version of this paper; she has worked in a kindergarten.

What relationships are there between assertions and propositions? For the discussion in this paper, two connection rules have to be made explicit. I will call them the weak and the strong rule, respectively. They can be stated as follows:

- *The weak assertion-proposition rule (Weak APR):* If there is an assertion, then there is at least one proposition.
- *The strong assertion-proposition rule (Strong APR):* If there is an assertion that contains a true (false) proposition, then if counterfactually an assertion with a contrary proposition¹⁷ were made, the last assertion would be false (true).

The weak rule needs no explanation, but what does the strong rule mean? If I say truly ‘The cat is on the mat’, then if I had said ‘The cat is not on the mat’, I would have said something false. Ordinary empirical, logical, and mathematical assertions comply with this rule, and so even do performative tautologies and performative contradictions. However, which is the most noteworthy, antiperformatives do not. Paul will say something that is false both if he asserts that he is always very humble and if he makes the contrary assertion.

Both an antiperformative affirmation and its contrary, the corresponding antiperformative denial, are self-falsifying assertions. The utterance ‘I am always very humble’ has as its falsitybearer the contained proposition “Paul is always very humble,” and this proposition is made false by the state of affairs shown, namely that Paul is not always very humble. The

¹⁷ The contraries of ‘Always: p obtains’, ‘Every S is P’, and ‘This S is P’ are ‘Never: p obtains’, ‘No S is P’, and ‘This S is not P’, respectively. The corresponding contradictories are ‘Sometimes: p does not obtain’, ‘Some S is not P’, and ‘It is not the case that this S is P’, respectively; the last assertion is true even when ‘this S’ does not have a referent.

falsitybearer and the falsitymaker are different entities. And the same goes for ‘I am never very humble’.

As now shown, both the affirmative utterance ‘Yes, I am always very humble’ and the denial ‘No, I am never very humble’ can be called antiperformative assertions, and both of them are self-falsifying assertions. However, they differ in a certain respect. The utterance ‘I am always very humble’ cannot possibly be true, and this quite independently of the speaker. If the speaker is not humble the assertion is false in the ordinary way, and if the speaker is always very humble the assertion becomes self-falsifying. The utterance ‘I am never very humble’, on the other hand, is false only if the speaker is humble. If he is not, the utterance may be empirically true. My definition of self-falsifying assertions says, I repeat, that an utterance is self-falsifying if and only if it is false and has a sentence meaning which cannot possibly be used (in general or by *a certain kind of speaker*) to say something true. The qualification “by a certain kind of speaker” is analogous to the traditional qualification in speech act theory that only a priest or another collectively accepted official can truly make the performative utterance ‘I hereby baptize you ...’.

It may at first seem odd that a person like Paul should not be able to describe himself as being humble. But, more closely seen, that is how things should be. Since a perfectly pious and humble man is unaware of his humbleness, he is of course not able to describe this humbleness. Therefore, when Paul says that he is not humble, probably no one will accuse him of being a liar. In my stories, I have so to speak forced a humble man to give a straightforward answer to the question whether he is humble or not.¹⁸

¹⁸ Although there is, in the kind of communities referred to, no taboo on speaking about humbleness in general, there seems to be a weak taboo on asking assumed humble persons whether, in fact, they are humble. If this taboo is broken, a humble person would probably either pretend that he had not heard the question or say something like ‘I try to be humble! Whether I succeed is for God to judge’.

Some sociologists claim with good reason that Western societies make their citizens very self-reflective. There are in our societies many processes that make every individual aware of what kind of person he or she is. Perhaps it will soon in fact be impossible to live unself-reflectively. Even pious communities would then have to allow humble people to characterise themselves as being humble. But that would be humbleness in a new sense; a sense in which the utterance 'I am always very humble' is not at all self-falsifying. In fact, I think that in many communities such a transformation has already taken place.¹⁹ In these communities humble people are expected to describe themselves as humble. This state of affairs, however, does not cancel the philosophical distinction between living self-reflectively and living unself-reflectively. Nor does it cancel the possibility that some future communities may become, like some older ones, less self-reflective cultures, containing antiperformative affirmations and antiperformative denials of the humbleness-kind.

Highly self-reflective cultures, on the other hand, may give rise to another kind of antiperformative. Let us take a quick look at the utterance 'I am always extremely sophisticated'.

An extremely sophisticated man should never describe himself straightforwardly. If such a man directly claims that he is extremely sophisticated, he thereby becomes less sophisticated. His utterance is self-falsifying. Such a man, just like a humble man, cannot describe himself directly, but of course he is, unlike the pious man, allowed to describe himself in some subtle, indirect way. Whereas the self-falsifiability of 'I am always very humble' is connected to the phenomenon of unself-reflectiveness, the self-falsifiability of 'I am always extremely sophisticated' is connected to a phenomenon that might be called hyper-reflectiveness. Neither

¹⁹ Surely, it has taken place in some team sports like football and handball (at least in Sweden), where many coaches claim that they have a humble attitude towards their work, which means that they are aware of the fact that winning depends on many factors and that they cannot take too much pride in winning.

kind of antiperformative allows direct self-reflectiveness.²⁰

5. PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES

When Austin first made his discovery of the performatives,²¹ he contrasted them with “constatives.” Later he embedded his discovery in a sketch of a general theory of

²⁰ The self-falsifiability of antiperformative assertions should be kept distinct from a phenomenon that Hintikka has labelled *antiperformative effect*. The utterance ‘*p* but he does not know that *p*’ is an ordinary assertion. If true, it describes an obtaining epistemic state of affairs (the lack of knowledge on behalf of ‘he’) as well as the obtaining state of affairs that is said not to be known (*p*). However, a mere change of pronoun creates a curious utterance. To say ‘*p* but *you* do not know that *p*’ is odd. Why? Hintikka answers as follows: “If you know that I am well informed and if I address the words [‘*p* but you do not know that *p*’] to you, these words have a curious effect which may perhaps be called antiperformative. You may come to know that what I say *was* true, but saying it in so many words has the effect of making what is being said false. In a way, this is exactly opposite to what happens with some typical utterances called performatory. In appropriate circumstances, uttering the words “I promise” is to make a promise, that is to bring about a state of affairs in which it is true to say that I promised. In contrast, uttering [‘*p* but you do not know that *p*’] in circumstances where the speaker is known to be well informed has the opposite effect of making what is said false” (Hintikka 1962, pp. 90-91). The antiperformative phenomenon spotted and baptized by Hintikka is, to use an Austinian term, a special kind of *perlocutionary* effect. It is about what happens in the addressee over and above his mere understanding of the utterance in question, but my concept of antiperformative *assertion* is meant to apply only to utterances in themselves, i.e., to what they say, what they show, and what they imply in themselves, not to their psychological effects on the addressee.

²¹ It should be noted, though, that there were speech act-theorists before Austin; in particular Adolf Reinach. See the papers by Kevin Mulligan (‘Promisings and other Social Acts: Their Constituents and Structure’), K. Hoffmann (‘Reinach and Searle on Promising – A Comparison’), and J-L. Gardies (‘Adolf Reinach and the

illocutionarity and speech acts where both performatives and constatives are ascribed illocutionarity (Austin 1961, 1962). However, at both stages he claimed that explicit performative utterances lack a truth-value in the straightforward sense that assertions have it.²² His view was immediately contested, and it was argued that explicit performatives are statements with a truth-value, although they are special because they are self-verifying.²³ It is astonishing that trained philosophers can have such radically different views about surface properties of ordinary language. Even more astonishing, the debate has continued over the decades.²⁴ In a rather recent overview and introduction to philosophy of language, Lycan says that he regards the issue as quite open at the moment (1999, chapter 12).

I claim that explicit performatives can be analysed in about the same way as, in the previous section, I analysed antiperformatives, and that this throws an entirely new light on the positions embraced by both camps in the mentioned conflict. Austin's "illocutionarity turn" will be taken for granted, i.e., I will ascribe illocutionarity to both performative utterances and assertions that are not made in the first person. My discussion is centred on the performatives 'I (hereby)

Analytic Foundations of Social Acts') in Mulligan (ed.) 1987; a brief overview is to be found in Barry Smith (1990, pp. 29-61).

²² This notwithstanding, Austin stressed that there is a truth/falsehood dimension even in performatives; see Austin (1962, chapter IX) and comments by Mulligan (1987, pp. 45-49). For instance, according to Austin, a warning like 'I warn you that the bull is going to charge' can be appraised with respect to whether it is true or false that the bull really will charge.

²³ See E.J. Lemmon (1962) and Ingemar Hedenius (1963).

²⁴ See e.g. Searle (1969, 1979, 1989), (Lewis 1970), Furberg (1971), Bach (1975, 1995), Bach and Harnish (1979, 1992), Ginet (1979), Recanati (1987), Sinnott-Armstrong (1994), and Reimer (1995).

promise to pay' and 'I (hereby) order you to leave'; the generalisation to other explicit performatives is left to the reader.²⁵

In part, my view is that explicit performatives, just like performative tautologies, are true and self-verifying assertions that show what they describe. When arguing for this view, I will compare performatives with assertions, implicit performatives, and, third, something I will call proto-performatives. In these comparisons, the concept of sentence meaning introduced in section two becomes important. I will approach explicit performatives from two sides. The first movement will start with ordinary assertions and imperatives, and it will lead via implicit performatives to explicit performatives; the second movement will start with proto-performatives but then take the same route. Since both movements yield the same result they support each other.

5.1 *Assertions and Imperatives*

When the distinction between an utterance (or written sentence) and its issuing is taken into account, quite clearly, it is the issuing that literally is the speech act. The speech acts of order-givings and promisings are to be found in the issuings of the corresponding utterances; similarly, the real asserting of an assertion exists in the saying (or the writing) of the assertion.

²⁵ I also leave to the reader the job of taking into account what Austin called "misfires" and "abuses" (Austin 1962, lectures II-IV). If a military officer gives a command that he is not entitled to give, then his command misfires; if I give a promise that I do not intend to keep, then my promise is an abuse. Nor will I discuss the fact, stressed by, e.g., Searle (1979, pp. 4-5, 12-20), that different performatives express different psychological states: promises express intentions, orders express desires, and assertions express beliefs. Similarly, the question to what extent performatives are conventional will not be dealt with here.

When orders, promises, and assertions are looked upon as being contained in utterances, the latter are regarded as products of speech acts. As such products, be they tape recorder utterances, written sentences, or theoretical abstractions, they have to be regarded, in the way explained in sections three and four, as signs of their issuing. As soon as the distinction between an utterance and its issuing is made explicit, even the speech-act- theoretical concept of utterance has to be regarded as a theoretical abstraction.

Let us compare the assertion ‘Paul is leaving’ with the imperative ‘Paul, leave!’ These two utterances have the same locutionary content but different kinds of illocutionary contents. With respect to illocutionary contents, I will use Searle’s five-fold classification of illocutionary *acts* transformed into a classification of illocutionary contents.²⁶ In Searle’s words:

we tell people how things are (Assertives), we try to get them to do things (Directives), we commit ourselves to doing things (Commissives), we express our feelings and attitudes (Expressives) and we bring about changes in the world through our utterances, so that the world is changed to match the propositional content of the utterance (Declarations) (Searle 1996, p. 9).

The utterance ‘Paul is leaving’ has then an assertive illocutionary content, and the utterance ‘Paul, leave!’ has a directive illocutionary content (the utterance ‘I promise to pay’ has a commissive illocutionary content). In the two utterances now under discussion, the locutionary

²⁶ With respect to classification of illocutionary acts or contents, there have been several attempts to improve on Austin’s original species: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, expositives (Austin 1962, p. 151). Searle’s taxonomy was merely one of the first proposals (Searle 1979, chapter 1). Kent Bach and R.M. Harnish (1979, chapter 3) criticise Searle and distinguish between constatives, commissives, directives, and acknowledgements. Habermas has criticised Searle, too, and Habermas’s basic species are imperatives, constatives, regulatives, expressives, communicatives, and operatives (Habermas 1991a, pp. 325-326). For my analysis in this paper, it is of minor importance which classification is most to the point.

content can be regarded as located in the meaning of the words ‘Paul [a person]’ and ‘leave’; and the two illocutionary contents can be regarded as located in the different grammatical structures of the respective utterances. We have here, I will say, *illocutionarity by means of surface grammar*.

Mostly, when a sentence meaning with an assertive illocutionary content is used, only an assertion is produced. But that is not always the case. Such sentence meanings can give rise to implicit performatives as well. An implicit performative is an utterance that primarily functions as a performative utterance in spite of the fact that its sentence meaning lacks a performative verb.²⁷ The utterance ‘I will pay tomorrow’ can be uttered in such a way that both speaker and addressees will act on it as if it were an ordinary assertion, but it can also be uttered in such a way that speaker and addressees will act on it as if it were a promise. In both cases, it should be noted, the sentence meaning is the same and has an assertive illocutionary content. Similarly, the utterance ‘If I were you, I would leave’ has an assertive illocutionary content both when it is an ordinary assertion and when it is an implicit order.²⁸ The illocutionarity of implicit performatives cannot, by definition, be found in the grammar of their sentence meanings; it must come into existence by means of some other device. Often, it is to be found in a paralinguistic feature like the intonation of the utterance, and I will confine my remarks on

²⁷ Although this concept of implicit performative is used now and then in speech-act theory, it is not identical with Austin’s concept of a *primary* performative; see Austin (1962, pp. 32-33, 69-73). Nor is the concept identical with what, from the perspective of Searle’s article ‘Indirect speech acts’ (Searle 1979), might be called *indirect* performatives.

²⁸ There are also implicit assertions, although they are seldom discussed in connection with implicit performatives. Implicit assertions may be defined as assertive utterances whose sentence meaning has a non-assertive illocutionary content. Rhetorical questions are often implicit assertions. The sentence meaning of ‘Are

implicit performatives to such cases. In implicit performatives we often have what I will call *illocutionarity by means of intonation*. For both speaker and addressees this kind of illocutionarity is just as direct as illocutionarity by means of grammar.²⁹

Explicit performatives, in contradistinction to assertions, imperatives, and implicit performatives, contain a verb in the first person singular present indicative active that seems to make the performativity in question visible. However, as Austin recognised, something similar can be said about many non-performative utterances as well. The form ‘I hereby v that p’, where ‘v’ is a variable for verbs in the first person singular present indicative active, fits assertive utterances like ‘I hereby assert that p’, ‘I hereby state that p’, and ‘I hereby affirm that p’. In such assertions, an assertive illocutionarity seems to be reflected in the sentence meaning itself by means of a specific word, and I will call such utterances *reflective assertions*. Both explicit performatives and reflective assertions contain a verb that in some way is connected with an illocutionary content contained in the utterances themselves. Austin’s concept of illocutionarity is, it should be noted, wider than his concept of performativity. Using Searle’s taxonomy, Austin would have had to regard all the performatives on his original list as being either directives, commissives, expressives or declarations; none of them has (like the “constatives”) an assertive illocutionarity.

In the sense of ‘reflective’ just introduced, an assertion like ‘The cat is on the mat’ is a non-reflective assertion. Analogously, implicit promises can be called non-reflective commissive utterances, and directives like ‘If I were you, I would leave’ and ‘Paul, leave!’ can be called non-reflective directive utterances. This means that both illocutionarity by means of intonation

you leaving?’ does not have an assertive illocutionary content, but it can be pronounced in such a way that it means “I think you are staying.”

²⁹ I stress this because Searle, for one, thinks that implicit performatives convey their performativity only indirectly, and that, therefore, they should not be regarded as performatives at all (1989, p. 536).

and illocutionarity by means of surface grammar are species of a genus that I will call *non-reflective illocutionarity*. Explicit performatives have *reflective illocutionarity*.

5.2 *Assertions and Reflective Assertions*

With the concepts now at my disposal, I will compare the non-reflective assertion ‘Paul is leaving’ with the corresponding reflective assertion ‘I assert that Paul is leaving’. The sentence meaning of the non-reflective assertion is easy to analyse. Its locutionary content can be regarded as located in the meanings of the words ‘Paul [a person]’ and ‘leave’, and its assertive illocutionary content can be regarded as displayed by its grammar. As an utterance, just like all face-to-face utterances, it shows (i.e., secure indication; see section three) the real asserting, i.e., the issuing of itself; if it were a written sentence it would only in the ordinary sense indicate this. Similarly, the reflective assertion shows the asserting that is part and parcel of its coming into being. The locutionary content of the reflective assertion can be regarded as located basically in the meanings of the words ‘I [a person]’, ‘assert’, ‘Paul’, and ‘leave’. But what about its assertive illocutionary content? Is this displayed by the illocutionary marker ‘assert’ or the grammar of the sentence? Look at the following column of utterances (where the subscript ‘a’ is shorthand for *assertive illocutionarity*):

(a _a) ‘Paul is leaving. (silence) That was an assertion.’	A(k) and A(l)
(b _a) ‘Paul is leaving. That is an assertion.’	A(k) and A(l)
(c _a) ‘Paul is leaving, and that’s an assertion.’	A(k) and A(l)
(d _a) ‘Paul is leaving, I assert that.’	A(k) and A(l)
(e _a) ‘I assert that Paul is leaving.’	A(l, A(k))

Here ‘A’ means assertive illocutionary content, and ‘k’ and ‘l’ are variables for locutionary contents, i.e., in a_a (k) = (‘Paul [a person]’, ‘leave’), and (l) = (‘entity-referred-to’, ‘assertion’). In one sense, all these five rows convey the same message, but, this notwithstanding, there are interesting differences.

In both a_a and b_a there are two non-reflective assertions; each with its own proposition. The difference between them relates to their tense. This change depends on another. Since there is in b_a no pause between the utterances, the first assertion appears as in some way still existing when the second assertion is made; and, therefore, it is referred to in the present tense. The temporal contraction is mirrored by a grammatical change. Nonetheless, the states of affairs described in each row are one and the same.

The difference between b_a and c_a is that whereas the first row contains two simple utterances and assertions, the second row contains one utterance with two assertions. I individuate utterances the way they are normally individuated when put on paper.³⁰

The most obvious difference between c_a and d_a is to be found in the second conjunct. However, the difference between ‘I assert that’ in d_a and ‘that’s an assertion’ in c_a reflects back

³⁰ From a logical point of view, one might say that c_a is an explicit conjunction and that a_a and b_a are implicit conjunctions; the implicit ‘and’ being marked first by a longer and then by a shorter pause.

on the first conjunct as well. We meet again the act-product distinction. The second conjunct in c_a describes ‘Paul is leaving’ as an utterance product, whereas in d_a ‘Paul is leaving’ is described as an utterance act. The speaker is in d_a no longer only shown by the utterance, he is explicitly referred to as well. It is no longer the case that $(l) = (\text{‘entity-referred-to’}, \text{‘assertion’})$; instead $(l) = (\text{‘I [a person]’}, \text{‘assert’})$. Nonetheless, the utterance d_a can be regarded as having the same form as the earlier rows, and it can be regarded as an implicit conjunction. The move from assertion-as-product in c_a to assertion-as-act in d_a marks a kind of increased temporal contraction that is sustained by the grammatical change from ‘assertion’ to ‘assert’.

How, then, should the last assertion, e_a , be judged? Here the mere grammatical reversal gives rise to another sort of change. Whereas in the earlier rows one will get a complete assertion (i.e., ‘Paul is leaving’) even if the second conjunct is deleted, this is not the case in the last assertion. When ‘I assert that’ is referring forward in time, it creates no assertion if it is not completed by a that-clause. The reversal of order of the clauses turns ‘I assert that’ into a mere assertion operator, i.e., into something that is merely part of an assertion; and it makes ‘Paul is leaving’ become at one and the same time both an assertion in its own right and material to which this operator can be applied. As such material, ‘Paul is leaving’ is merely a temporal part of a larger whole.³¹ In each utterance a_a to d_a , there are two temporally separated

³¹ This means that the view I am advocating must not be conflated with the view of Donald Davidson (see ‘On Saying That’ in Davidson 1984 [1968]) that utterances (sentences) that contain indirect discourse consist of two clearly distinct utterances (sentences). Davidson claims that ‘that’ is a “demonstrative referring to an utterance” (1984, p. 106) even in utterances like e_a , whereas I think this is the case only in a_a to d_a . If I were to relate my views positively to some general semantic theory about indirect discourse, I would probably opt for Recanati’s (2000); in particular, see his remarks on Davidson in §3.1. Davidson has, by the way, never paid much attention to performatives, but some of the things he says in the paper referred to and in the paper

assertions, but in e_a one of these assertions has become also a temporal part of the other. Again, we find that an increased temporal compression of the conjuncts is reflected in a grammatical change.

In the sentence meaning of e_a , having the form “A(‘I [a person]’, ‘assert’, A(‘Paul [a person]’, ‘leave’)),” assertiveness appears three times. It appears as an illocutionary content in the two ‘A’s, and it appears as a locutionary content in ‘assert’. When this sentence meaning is used, the corresponding utterance will show the real assertings that are connected with both the ‘A’s, i.e., it will show the asserting of both the whole assertion and the nested assertion. This means that in the utterance as a whole assertiveness crops up no less than five times. The assertive illocutionary contents of both (i) the whole and (ii) the nested assertion are displayed by grammar, and the corresponding real assertings (iii and iv) that the speaker unfolds in his issuing of the utterance are shown by the utterance. The whole assertion does not describe either the issuing of itself or of a wholly other assertion; it (v) describes the asserting of the nested assertion. However, as one cannot describe the building of a house without indirectly describing the house as well, one cannot describe the issuing of an assertion without indirectly describing the assertion as well. If a process brings about a product, then a description of the process will contain an indirect description of the product. Therefore one might, also, say that the reflective assertion describes its nested non-reflective assertion.

According to this analysis, reflective assertions contain two assertions and propositions. Utterances of the form ‘I assert that p’ have two truth-values. One of the truth-values belongs to the proposition contained in ‘p’, and the other belongs to the proposition contained in ‘I assert that p’. My analysis conforms to the so-called “two-truth-value hypothesis” for

‘Moods and Performances’ (in Davidson 1984 [1979]) seem to be close to some of the views that I will argue for.

utterances of this kind. For some other good arguments in favour of this view, see Lycan (1999, pp. 178-184).

Furthermore, the analysis creates space for a peaceful coexistence between the concept of illocutionary content (as defined in section two) and an Austinian concept of illocutionary *force*. To be an illocutionary content is to be a property of a sentence meaning contained in an utterance as a product, but to be an illocutionary force is to be a property of an act in which an utterance comes into being. Of course, there is a close relationship between these illocutionarities. In utterances as products, the illocutionary forces that correspond to the illocutionary contents are normally *shown*, and in the corresponding written sentences they are *indicated*. Conversely, when an utterance is issued with a certain kind of illocutionary force, the resulting utterance will mostly contain the same kind of illocutionary content. However, this is not the case in implicit performatives.

I can now summarise some of my views on reflective assertions. If the proposition (p) contained in the nested clause is an ordinary empirical proposition, it is true or false depending upon what the world looks like, and if it is a mathematical proposition it is necessarily true or necessarily false. However, the proposition contained in the reflective assertion as a whole is always trivially and necessarily true. The proposition “I assert that p” describes the illocutionary force in the issuing of p, but this act with its illocutionarity is also shown by the utterance. Therefore, every assertion ‘I assert that p’ shows what it describes. It shows the truthmaker of its own proposition, which makes it self-verifying. Because of this, mostly, it is the proposition contained in the nested assertion that is the central proposition.

5.3 Orders and Reflective Orders

Let us now compare a non-reflective order, an imperative, with a corresponding reflective order and explicit performative; let us compare ‘Paul, leave!’ with ‘I order that Paul should leave’. The non-reflective utterance ‘Paul, leave!’ displays its directive illocutionary content by grammar; its locutionary content is to be found basically in the meanings of the words ‘Paul [a person]’ and ‘leave’. Also, the utterance shows the order-giving that took place in issuing it; i.e., it is a natural sign of a directive illocutionary *force*.

Once again we shall look at a column of utterances, but now the first row contains an order and an assertion. In the column below, just as in the former one, ‘A’ means assertive illocutionary content, and ‘k’ and ‘l’ are variables for locutionary contents; ‘D’ means directive illocutionary content. In a_d it is the case that $(k) = (\text{‘Paul [a person]’, ‘leave’})$ and $(l) = (\text{‘entity-referred-to’, ‘order’})$. The subscript ‘d’ is meant to be shorthand for *directive illocutionarity*.

(a_d) ‘Paul, leave! (silence) That was an order.’	D(k) and A(l)
(b_d) ‘Paul, leave! That is an order.’	D(k) and A(l)
(c_d) ‘Paul, leave, and that’s an order!’	D(k) and A(l)
(d_d) ‘Paul, leave, I order that!’	D(k) and A(l)
(e_d) ‘I order that (you) Paul should leave.’	A(l, D(k))

Since the similarities with the already investigated column are obvious, I can be brief. All the five rows convey the same message, but, going downwards, there is in every step an increased compression of the conjunction of the order and the assertion. This compression, however, does not anywhere alter the fact that is obvious in the first row, namely that there is both an order and an assertion. To start with, the order and the assertion are temporally

external to each other, but in the last utterance, e_d , the original order has become also a temporal part of an assertion. A reflective order is an assertion that has an order as a nested part.

If the sentence meaning of e_d is given the form “A(‘I [a person]’, ‘order’, D(‘Paul [a person]’, ‘leave’)),” one can easily note that directiveness appears two times but assertiveness only once. Directiveness appears as an illocutionary content in ‘D’ and as a locutionary content in ‘order’; assertiveness appears only as an illocutionary content in ‘A’. When this sentence meaning is used, the corresponding utterance will show both the asserting that is connected with ‘A’ and the order-giving that is connected with ‘D’. In other words, the utterance will show both the asserting of the utterance as a whole and the order-giving connected with the nested imperative. Both the assertive illocutionary content of the whole utterance and the directive illocutionary content of the nested imperative are displayed by grammar;³² the corresponding real asserting and order-giving that the speaker unfolds in his issuing of the utterance are shown by the utterance. The utterance as a whole describes the order-giving of the nested imperative. A reflective order is an assertion that describes a non-reflective order that is a nested part of it.

Reflective orders contain one assertion and one order; and the assertion describes the order. There is only one truth-value, but there is nonetheless something similar to the “two-truth-value hypothesis” for reflective assertions. This hypothesis can be regarded as merely a special case of a general hypothesis that applies to reflective assertions, reflective orders, and some other reflective utterances as well. Borrowing Searle’s term ‘conditions of satisfaction’ (1983, pp. 10-13), I will call it the “two-conditions-of-satisfaction hypothesis.” As an assertion can be satisfied or unsatisfied by being true or false, respectively, an order can be satisfied or

³² Note that I am not claiming that this nested clause will *always* get an illocutionary content from its grammar alone. In some contexts, this basic feature is overruled.

unsatisfied by being obeyed or disobeyed, respectively. This being so, reflective orders have, just like reflective assertions, two conditions of satisfaction. In reflective assertions both relate to the same kind of illocutionary content, but in reflective orders they relate to different kinds of such content.

Independently of whether a nested order is obeyed (satisfied) or not, the proposition contained in the whole assertion is trivially true (satisfied). The proposition “I order that Paul should leave!” describes the illocutionary force of the issuing of ‘Paul should leave’, but this force is shown by the utterance, too. Therefore, the utterance shows what it describes; it shows the truthmaker of the proposition that it contains. Reflective orders are self-verifying assertions that contain a non-reflective order, but reflective assertions are self-verifying assertions that contain a non-reflective assertion.

5.4 *Promises and Reflective Promises*

What now about reflective promises? Again, I start with a number of different utterances (where both ‘c’ and ‘C’ means commissive illocutionarity):

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| (a _c) ‘I will pay. (silence) That was a promise.’ | C(k) and A(l) |
| (b _c) ‘I will pay. That is a promise.’ | C(k) and A(l) |
| (c _c) ‘I will pay, and that’s a promise.’ | C(k) and A(l) |
| (d _c) ‘I will pay, I promise that.’ | C(k) and A(l) |
| (e _c) ‘I promise that I will pay.’ | A(l, C(k)) |

In order to see that even these utterances fit the structure of the preceding analyses of reflective assertions and orders note that the illocutionary content of non-reflective (implicit) promises is not displayed by grammar. For some reason languages seem not to possess a specific grammatical device that displays a commissive illocutionary content. However, as claimed earlier in this section, intonation can mark illocutionarity, too. The utterance ‘I will pay’, when in the list above, should be regarded as an implicit performative whose commissive illocutionary content is displayed by intonation. When this is noted, as in the right-side column, the left-side column can be seen to have the same pattern as the list of directives a_d to e_d . When going from a_c to e_c there is an increased compression of the promise and the assertion involved. In the last utterance, the original promise has become nested in the assertion. A reflective promise is an assertion that describes a non-reflective promise that is a nested part of it.

The sentence meaning plus the intonation of e_c can be represented by “A(‘I [a person]’, ‘promise’, C(‘I [a person]’, ‘will pay’)).” Here, commissiveness appears two times but assertiveness only once. Commissiveness appears as an illocutionary content in ‘C’ and as a locutionary content in ‘promise’; assertiveness appears only as an illocutionary content in ‘A’. When this sentence meaning is used with a certain intonation, the corresponding utterance will show both the asserting that is connected with ‘A’ and the promise-making that is connected with ‘C’. The utterance will show both the asserting of the utterance as a whole and the promise-making of the nested clause. The assertive illocutionary content of the whole utterance is displayed by grammar, and the directive illocutionary content of the nested clause is displayed by intonation; the corresponding real asserting and promise-making that the speaker unfolds in his issuing of the utterance are shown by the utterance in its function as a natural sign. The whole utterance describes the promise-making of the nested clause. A reflective promise is an assertion that describes a non-reflective promise that is a nested part of it.

As an order can be satisfied or unsatisfied by being obeyed or disobeyed, so a promise can be satisfied or unsatisfied by being kept or broken. What I have called the “two-conditions-of-satisfaction hypothesis” is as true in relation to reflective promises as it is in relation to reflective assertions and reflective orders.³³

Independently of whether the nested promise is kept or not, the proposition contained in the whole assertion is trivially true. The proposition “I promise that I will pay” describes the illocutionary force of the issuing of ‘I will pay’, but this force is shown by the utterance, too. Therefore, the utterance shows what it describes; it shows the truthmaker of the proposition that it contains. Reflective promises are self-verifying assertions that contain a non-reflective promise.

So far so good. But what about orders and promises where there is no that-clause?:

(f_d) ‘I order you (Paul) to leave’

(f_c) ‘I promise to pay’

In these utterances, in contradistinction to e_d and e_c, there is no nested clause. There is no part of f_d that can be regarded as being in itself a non-reflective order, and there is no part of f_c that can be regarded as being in itself a non-reflective promise. Nonetheless, if e_d contains both an assertion and an order, then there seems to be no good reason for believing that f_d does not do so also. Similarly, if e_c contains both an assertion and a promise, then surely this should hold, too, of f_c? The difference between these f-utterances and the corresponding e-utterances

³³ Assertions, directives (orders), and commissives (promises) have, to use Searle’s terminology, exactly one “direction of fit.” Since I agree with Searle that this is not the case for expressives (which have no direction of fit), I think it is impossible to apply my “two-conditions-of-satisfaction hypothesis” to expressives. With respect to declarations (which have two directions of fit), I am not sure what to say.

seems to be yet another step in the direction of an increased temporal compression correlated with a grammatical change. The order and the promise have now become even more intimately connected with the assertion in question. They no longer stand in a temporal part-whole relation to the assertion. In order to understand the relation of nestedness, one has to remember that utterances are necessarily stretched out in time just as written sentences are stretched out in space. In f_d , the assertion and the order, and in f_c the assertion and the promise, have become two aspects of one and the same temporal whole, the utterance in question. And as written sentences, correspondingly, they have become aspects of the same spatial whole. Since in both cases both the aspects are perceived as being stretched out along the whole utterance, all these aspects are part of the surface structure.

By what means then are the two kinds of illocutionary content in each f -utterance displayed? With respect to the assertive illocutionary content there is no problem. It is in both utterances displayed by grammar. But what about the directive (f_d) and the commissive (f_c) illocutionary contents? Both these contents are displayed by a more specific grammatical-like structure. The 'I' in the nominal phrase and the form of the verb in the verb phrase, taken together, make it clear that the utterance is about the speaker at the time of uttering; and the fact that the verb is a performative verb makes it clear that the utterance is about the uttering, too. This more specific structure makes the self-reflectiveness clear, and it displays directly that there has to be a non-assertive illocutionarity beside the assertive one.

Several philosophers who have argued that performatives are assertions have said that performative utterances "comprise two simultaneous illocutionary acts" (Bach 1975, p. 229) or "perform more than one speech act" (Sinnott-Armstrong 1994, p. 100). Of course, my view is similar. According to my analysis, however, the performative and the assertive acts are both equally visible. Neither in relation to an utterance 'I order you to leave' (f_d), nor in relation to

an utterance 'I promise to pay' (f_c), has an addressee to derive the performative act from the assertive, or vice versa.

Like all utterances, f_d and f_c show the illocutionary force at work in their being issued. The order-giving and the promise-making are not only described; they are shown as well. What is described by the assertion aspect of the utterances is shown by the directive and commissive aspect, respectively. Therefore, since these utterances show what they describe, it is correct to say that the *utterances* are self-verifying but, strictly speaking, wrong to say that the contained *assertions* (or assertion aspects) are self-verifying. The propositions contained in the utterances f_d and f_c (via the assertion aspect) are made true by what is shown by the order and the promise aspect, respectively. Since the assertion aspect *shows* only the issuing of itself, it does not show what it describes; i.e., it is not self-verifying.

Like the utterances e_d and e_c , the utterances f_d and f_c have two conditions of satisfaction, one which is self-satisfying (the truth of the assertion) and one which is not (the obeying of the order and the keeping of the promise, respectively).

The utterance 'I order you to leave' has two different sentence meanings in spite of the fact that there is only one locutionary content; i.e., there are two illocutionary contents that form the same locutionary content. Since the utterance is at one and the same time an assertion and an order, it simultaneously shows both the asserting and the order-giving that was part and parcel of its issuing. Exactly the same structure exists in and around the performative 'I promise to pay'. It has two different sentence meanings and two illocutionary contents in spite of the fact that there is only one locutionary content. This explicit performative is at one and the same time an assertion and a promise. It shows both the assertive force and the commissive (promising) force of its uttering, but only one of these, the commissive illocutionary force, is described by the utterance.

With these comments I end the journey from non-reflective assertions via reflective assertions and implicit performatives (orders and promises) to explicit ones. Now I shall approach the same explicit performatives by using proto-performatives as starting blocks.

5.5 Proto-Performatives and Implicit Performatives

By a proto-performative I mean a kind of wholly non-linguistic sign that can function in the same way as a performative can. A frightening face, threatening behaviour or body posture on *A*'s part may make *B* leave the room. Such a behaviour or posture I call a proto-order. In fact, such a body sign may function much better than the corresponding verbal imperative. From an observer's perspective, the proto-performative is a natural sign that indicates that *A* wants and tries to get *B* to leave, but from *B*'s own perspective the proto-performative is an important feature of a situation (a "stimulus") that requires some kind of action (a "response"); *B* has to leave, or fight in some way. If *B* stays and fights, then his face-and-body expression will function as a new natural sign in relation to an observer and as a "stimulus" in relation to *A*. The story can easily be continued and made very elaborate. We then have what G.H. Mead called a "conversation of gestures" (1934, chapters 7-9). In such "conversations" there is no self-conscious deliberation, and what takes place may equally well be called conversations by means of natural signs. Note that a natural sign as dark clouds may function both as an action neutral sign and as a stimulus to seek shelter.

Whereas explicit orders are linguistic signs only, proto-orders are non-linguistic signs only. Even though the proto-order just described presumably relies on species-specific signs, I see no reason to claim that being non-linguistic amounts to being non-conventional. For instance, I think that intonations, in the sense that I am speaking of them, are partly conventional. My

point is that orders that become (implicit) orders by means of intonation can be regarded as lying in-between proto-orders and explicit orders. Such orders combine intonation with purely linguistic devices. The implicit order ‘If I were you, I would leave’ has some features in common with the explicit order ‘I order you to leave’ and some features in common with pure face-and-body language. Since the intonation of an utterance is external to its sentence meaning, and an implicit order is an utterance that functions as an order in spite of the fact that its sentence meaning lacks a performative verb, it must be the case that intonation can have an illocutionary force that overrules the assertive illocutionary content of the sentence meaning. The speaker can intonate the utterance ‘If I were you, I would leave now’ in such a way that the utterance becomes an order.³⁴

Let us now take a look at the difference between proto-promises and implicit promises. It might be doubted that proto-promises are possible, but I think they are. In some societies, it seems to have been the case that the mere acceptance of a gift amounted to a promise to give something back.³⁵ Oaths are a kind of promise, too, and I think that they can come into existence by wholly non-linguistic rituals. Handshaking may very well, once upon a time, have been a promise to be friendly for a while. Therefore, in analogy with implicit orders, I think that the implicit promise ‘I will pay tomorrow’ has some features in common with the explicit promise ‘I promise to pay’ and some features in common with the kind of pure face-and-body

³⁴ Note that as soon as the “performative intonation” of a certain sentence has become as established as the non-performative pronunciations are, then there is no longer any illocutionarity by means only of surface grammar or only of intonation. Then these devices interact. Intonation can also work the opposite way and create assertions out of non-assertive sentence meanings. For instance, the interrogative utterance ‘Are you serious?’ can be pronounced in such a way that it means “I believe that you are joking.”

³⁵ I am primarily thinking of Marcel Mauss’s anthropological classic *The Gift* (1954), even though there is here a possible problem with respect to the distinction between promises and obligations in general.

language that can be operative in rituals like handshaking. An issuing of the utterance ‘I will pay’ made with an “assertive intonation” but combined with a steady handshaking can create an implicit promise just as easily as an utterance with a “commissive intonation” can. In the implicit promise ‘I will pay’, the locutionary content is located basically in the words ‘I [a person]’ and ‘will pay’, and the commissive illocutionary content can be displayed both by intonation and by handshaking. However, it is only when the illocutionarity is displayed by intonation that one can say that *the utterance* shows the promise-making.

In relation to implicit performatives, the questions ‘What is he saying?’ and ‘What is he doing?’ have different answers. With respect to my two examples the saying-question should be answered by ‘He says that if he were you, he would leave now’ and ‘He says that he will pay’, respectively; and the doing-question should be answered by ‘He orders you to leave’ and ‘He promises to pay’, respectively. What is said is contained in the sentence meanings used, but what is done is shown by the utterances.

5.6 *Implicit Performatives and Explicit Performatives*

When non-linguistic actions function as signs of character traits or emotions, the agent himself can very well be unaware of this indication. Very often, irritated persons do not notice that they are irritated; they just notice that they meet a lot of seemingly irritating people who behave in an irritating way. This kind of unreflectiveness does not appear only in relation to non-linguistic actions; it exists in relation to speech acts, too. Most imperatives are, I think, unplanned, and when saying ‘If I were you, I would leave now’ a person need not realise that he is saying it in such a way that it is an order. Often, immediately after such a speech act has been completed, the speaker realises that he has been giving an order. But even if he does not,

he can very well later rebuke the other for not having left. This is the way much communication functions; there is awareness but not self-reflective awareness. This means that if there is uncertainty about whether the utterance in question really was an order or not, the speaker can afterwards remove it by describing the utterance as an order; for instance in the ways that are done in the examples a_d and b_d above. By so doing, the speaker makes the character of the speech clear by showing that he is reflectively aware of what he was doing. Explicit orders remove from the start this kind of uncertainty. That is their communicative advantage. Exactly the same point can just as easily be made in relation to the difference between implicit and explicit promises, too.

The kind of uncertainty spoken of that can befall implicit performatives must not be conflated with ambiguity of sentence meaning. In the order example discussed, the problem is not what is said but what is done. There is no uncertainty around the illocutionary content of what was merely said, but there is uncertainty around what kind of illocutionary force the uttering as a whole had. Such uncertainty can be removed in three different ways to be explained in the next subsection.

5.7 Self-Reflectiveness and Speech-Act Theory

Part of my analysis of performatives relies on a philosophical-anthropological fact never discussed in speech-act theory. A fully developed human consciousness, whatever it is, has a structure such that human beings can perform conscious actions with unreflective awareness and can even live some of their character traits unreflectively. It seems to me as if both Austin and later speech-act theorists have regarded philosophy of language as too much of a self-contained enterprise. That applies even to those who have argued that performatives are self-

verifying assertions. One essential difference between explicit performatives and implicit performatives is that the explicit ones tell the addressees that the speaker definitely has reflective awareness of what he is doing. In self-descriptions of non-linguistic actions, e.g., ‘I am on my way home’, the speaker describes an action that is both distinct from the utterance and not normally immediately recognisable for the addressee. Explicit performatives are self-descriptions of actions, too, but the actions now described are not distinct from the utterance and are immediately shown to the addressees. Nonetheless, explicit performatives are not superfluous. They tell the listeners that the speaker is reflectively aware of what he is doing.³⁶

Today, no philosopher seems to defend Austin *tout court*. Rather, modern Austinians are of the opinion that performative utterances do have an assertive aspect, but they claim that this aspect is logically secondary in relation to a direct performativity. Searle, for instance, claims that the performativity of an utterance is direct, but that a performative utterance constitutes “by derivation, an assertion” (1989, p. 553). He does not want to call implicit performatives performatives at all (1989, p. 536). Modern non-Austinians, on the other hand, do not rest content with merely claiming that performatives have a truth-value. For instance, according to Bach and Harnish (1992) both implicit performatives and explicit performatives are directly statements and indirectly, by means of conversational implicatures, performatives. In their view: “Performatives are but a special case of indirect speech acts, in which the audience identifies one communicative intention by way of identifying another” (1992, p. 103). On my account, both the classical and the modern views on both sides of the dispute are wrong. In explicit performative utterances there is both an assertion and a performative that are displayed with equal directness. From my point of view, it is not an accidental fact that Searle has good

³⁶ Let it be said that nothing in this analysis denies the obvious fact that there *can* be reflective awareness in connection with implicit promises, too. The speaker then *silently to himself describes* what kind of speech act he is performing. However, in such a case the existence of the reflective awareness is not communicated.

arguments against Bach and Harnish and that the latter have good arguments against Searle. Both sides are wrong, and neither has done justice to self-reflectiveness.

Austin once remarked that some implicit performatives lack a corresponding explicit performative (1962, pp. 30-31, 65-66, 68). There are, he said, insulting utterances, but the presumably performative marker 'I hereby insult you' does very seldom function as such a marker.³⁷ Why? I think my analysis hints at a good and general answer. Austin himself just made some brief comments and then left the problem. If the analysis put forward is correct, then explicit performatives should be especially important when the speaker knows that the addressee wants to be sure that the speaker is reflectively aware of what he is doing. And this is very important in relation to some commissives. Think of 'I promise', 'I contract', 'I guarantee', 'I swear', 'I consent', etc. Reflective awareness is not, I think, equally important in relation to directives. However, let us look at insults. Very often, I am convinced, the insulting person wants to leave a certain amount of uncertainty to whether or not he was really making an insult. If, afterwards, things turn out badly for him, he can then try to argue that he did not mean to insult at all. He will in such a case probably use the dissociation between doing and saying that exists in implicit performatives, i.e., he will assert 'But I merely *said* that ...'. This is the reason why 'I insult you' has not been turned into a real explicit performative but merely into an ironical comment. Just as in some situations people really want and need to make an explicit performative, there are situations where people want to avoid them. Often, however, the choice between an explicit and an implicit performative is of no importance at all. Similar remarks apply to ordinary assertions as well. We do seldom in everyday life assert that we

³⁷ Note that he did not say that it *could not* function as a performative. On the contrary, in a footnote he wrote that he had been told "that in the hey-day of student duelling in Germany it was the custom for members of one club to march past members of a rival club ... and ... to say to his chosen opponent as he passed, quite politely, 'Beleidigung', which means 'I insult you'" (Austin 1962, p. 52).

assert. The reason, I think, is that very often the asserted content is, in contradistinction to the case of promises, of interest independently of who the speaker is, and that, therefore, there is no need to be informed about the speaker's reflective awareness of what he is saying.

5.8 *Explicit Performatives are Similar to Performative Tautologies*

It follows from the above analysis that the proposition contained in the utterance 'I promise to pay' (i.e., "Ingvar is promising to pay") is exactly the same proposition as that which is contained in the utterance 'He, Ingvar, is promising to pay'. Both the utterances truly describe one aspect of my issuing of my utterance. This aspect of the issuing is the real speech act of promising. In order to see the structure at work, one has to keep the tripartite distinction between the proposition, the utterance (the sentence), and the uttering (the use of the sentence) in mind. If one looks at a written promise, the structure is the same but more easily visible. If someone receives a letter from me that says 'I promise to pay', then this written assertion functions as a sign that indicates the real promising that took place when I wrote and posted the letter, but in everyday conversation one perceives the speaker, the uttering, and the utterance as a single unified whole. It is only when, for philosophical and analytical purposes, one starts from the utterance as a self-contained unit, that one has to say that a performative utterance is a natural sign that shows the issuing of itself. Normally, a performative utterance shows that it is true, whereas a written performative merely indicates that it is true.

As I have said before, if an act or an action brings about a product, then of course a description of the process contains a description of the product. It is by no means mysterious that a description of an issuing of an utterance can contain a description of the utterance itself. Therefore, an explicit performative can be described *as if* it were a logical tautology of the form 'if p then p'. If I assert that I promise to pay then my utterance shows that I promise to pay, and if I assert that I order you to leave then my utterance shows that I order you to leave.

Just like performative tautologies, performatives are self-verifying utterances; what is asserted in the utterance is shown by the utterance, and vice versa.

The fact that some kinds of utterances can contain an important interplay between what is asserted and what is shown is most easily seen when what is asserted and what is shown are in conflict, as they are in performative contradictions and in antiperformatives. In performative tautologies and in ordinary performatives, on the other hand, there is no such conflict, but the interplay between what is asserted and what is shown is just as important.

5.9 *Omissive Performatives*

All assertions have a possible opposite assertion. Since the assertion ‘I promise to pay’ contains the proposition “Ingvar promises to pay,” the contrary assertion should contain the proposition “Ingvar does not (now) promise to pay.” As far as I can see, the assertion searched for must be the grammatically correct but somewhat unnatural utterance ‘I do not (hereby) promise to pay’. Let us take a closer look at it.

An utterance ‘I do not (hereby) promise to pay’ is not a real performative. It relates to a promise as an act of omission (e.g., not helping a certain person) relates to the corresponding action (helping the person). I will call this and other similar utterances, e.g., ‘I do not (hereby) order you to leave’, *omissive performatives*. I am discussing them only in situations where nobody expects the speaker to give a promise, to give an order, and so on.

The omissive performative ‘I do not (hereby) promise to pay’ contains the proposition “Ingvar does not (now) promise to pay,” and that proposition is made true by what the utterance shows. However, the abstract proposition could have been made true in another way as well. Mere silence on my part is an equally good truthmaker. If I do not say anything at all,

then other things being equal I am not promising anything. Therefore, the assertion ‘I do not (hereby) promise to pay’ is from a pure truthmaking perspective equivalent to silence. Omissive performatives make up a special kind of omissive action, and like all such actions they are non-actions. As the opposite of helping can be not-doing-anything-at-all, the opposite of promising and ordering can be not-saying-anything-at-all.

The kind of *truthmaking equivalence* noted that exists between an omissive performative and mere silence explains why the utterance ‘I do not (now) promise to pay’ does not look natural. In situations where nobody expects one to give a promise, silence is the normal way of not giving the promise; and in situations where everybody really expects one to give a promise, the normal way of refusing to live up to these expectations is to say things like ‘I promise nothing’. The latter assertion is not equivalent with silence. It means that one is not even in the near future prepared to give the expected promise.

5.10 *Explicit Performatives are Different from Performative Tautologies*

Everyone agrees that *if* real explicit performatives are assertions, then they are self-verifying. I have argued that they are assertions and therefore self-verifying. I can now, with respect to omissive performatives, rest content with saying that I find it obvious that they are self-verifying assertions, too. If I say ‘I do not (hereby) promise’, then I am not at that very moment promising. Just like performative tautologies, both real performatives and omissive performatives fulfil the conditions for being self-verifying assertions. They have an indicative form, and they cannot possibly be false. However, note now that although the two *propositions* “Ingvar promises to pay” and “Ingvar does not promise to pay” cannot be true simultaneously, the one that becomes part of my *assertion* will become true. The conclusion is

clear: Real performatives and omissive performatives do not, in contradistinction to performative tautologies, comply with *the strong assertion-proposition rule*. This rule says: If there is an assertion that contains a true (false) proposition, then if counterfactually an assertion with a contrary proposition were made, the last assertion would be false (true). Performatives do not comply with the rule because both a performative and its contrary are self-verifying, but performative tautologies comply with it because the opposite of any true and self-verifying performative tautology is a self-falsifying performative contradiction.

6. THE ESSENCE OF PERFORMATIVES AND ANTI PERFORMATIVES

Here comes a quotation from another paper that defends the view that explicit performatives both do assert and are true. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong is considering the counterargument that if something cannot be false it is not a candidate for truth either. He points out that:

When this argument is spelled out, its premise is clearly false. The problem is not only with necessary truths like '2+2=4'. Consider also 'I am speaking'. This cannot be false when I say it, but that does not show that it is not true. It is true. In a similar way, explicit performatives can also be true even though they cannot be false (Sinnott-Armstrong 1994, p. 102).

As should be very clear, I have no complaints against Sinnott-Armstrong's reasoning. The similarities he points out between '2+2=4', 'I am speaking', and 'I promise' exist. They are what make it possible to subsume logical tautologies, performative tautologies and performatives under the term 'self-verifying utterances'. However, the differences are just as important. Both the differences and the similarities must be identified and spelled out before

one can claim, as I do, that the assertive aspect of performative utterances has to be understood in the light of the peculiarly human phenomenon of direct reflective awareness.

Here are the similarities and differences that have been brought to light in this paper:

1a) Logically contradictory assertions, performative contradictions and antiperformatives are similar in that they are false and that their sentence meaning cannot possibly be used (in general or by a certain kind of speaker) to say something true. They are self-falsifying and necessarily false assertions.

1b) Logically tautological assertions, performative tautologies and performatives are similar in that they are true and that their sentence meaning cannot possibly be used (in general or by a certain kind of speaker) to say something false. They are self-verifying and necessarily true utterances.

2) Performative contradictions, performative tautologies, antiperformatives, and performatives get a necessary truth-value because of an interplay between what is asserted and what is shown by the utterances in question. Nothing like this is to be found in purely logical and mathematical assertions.

3) Performative contradictions and performative tautologies get their truth-value from an interplay between their semantics and some general pragmatic presuppositions. They comply with the strong assertion-proposition rule.

4) Antiperformatives and performatives get their truth-value from an interplay between their semantics and requirements on direct self-reflectiveness. They do not comply with the strong assertion-proposition rule.

Now, I can supply an Aristotelian definition of performative utterances, i.e., a definition *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*: A performative utterance is a self-verifying assertion whose proposition is made true by what the utterance shows, but such that it does not comply with the strong assertion-proposition rule.³⁸ Consequently, an antiperformative utterance is a self-falsifying assertion whose proposition is made false by what the utterance shows, but such that it does not comply with the strong assertion-proposition rule.

7. PERFORMATIVES AND SELF-REFERENTIALITY

In the way explained in section five, performatives are self-verifying, but, of course, self-verification implies some kind self-referentiality. Speech-act theorists only occasionally talk of this self-reference.³⁹ Mentioning self-reference brings the liar paradox to mind, but I will argue that neither the self-verification nor the self-falsification spoken of so far contains the same kind of self-reference as the liar paradox does.

When the liar paradox is given the old form ‘All Cretans are liars’ said by the Cretan Epimenides, it looks very similar to the utterance ‘I am always very humble’ made by the pious Paul (as analysed in section four). Both these utterances are necessarily false because the speaker is of a certain kind, but nonetheless they differ. Epimenides’s assertion is self-falsifying without being an antiperformative since its contrary, ‘No Cretans are liars’, is not self-

³⁸ Since I have explicitly avoided all problems connected with the possibility of “misfires” (see footnote 25), I can allow myself to speak in a context-independent way about what an utterance shows.

³⁹ See e.g., Bach (1975, p. 233), Searle (1989, pp. 544, 551), and Recanati (1987, pp. 172-5).

falsifying. Nor is Epimenides's assertion a performative contradiction since its contrary can very well be empirically true. It has a structure of its own.

In modern discussions, the liar paradox is often given a form that is wholly speaker and context independent. Consider 'This proposition is false'. It contains a well-formed sentence of indicative form that has a sentence meaning. But it cannot be a self-falsifying or a self-verifying assertion. For if it is false it is true, and if it is true it is false. Like Epimenides's original assertion, it does not fit any of the classificatory slots for assertions that I have hitherto used.

The contrary assertion, 'This proposition is true', contains a well-formed sentence of indicative form that has a sentence meaning, too. Can then this assertion be a self-verifying or a self-falsifying assertion? If it is self-verifying, it should of course be true. However, there is no truthmaker that allows us to say that the proposition is in fact true. There is only the proposition itself. On the other hand, if it is self-falsifying, it should not possibly be true. But there is nothing that explains why it cannot. In short, since there is nothing that makes the assertion 'This proposition is true' in fact true, and nothing that makes such a truth impossible, the assertion is, like its contrary, neither self-verifying nor self-falsifying.

Sinnott-Armstrong has claimed that performatives are not self-referential in the same way that paradoxical sentences are (1994, p. 103), but without trying to specify the difference. My analysis of the self-verifiability of performatives implies that performatives are not strictly self-verifying, i.e., the proposition of a performative utterance is not verified by the proposition itself; and that, in turn, implies that performatives are not self-referential in an absolute way. The liar paradox, however, in (at least) the way it has been formulated above, is absolutely self-referential. The proposition contained in the utterance 'This proposition is false' is "This proposition is false." Truth-value bearer and truth-value maker are strictly identical. And the same can be said of the assertion 'This proposition is true'. If true, its proposition is made true by itself exactly. In contradistinction to the self-referentiality of performatives and

antiperformatives, the self-referentiality of the assertions ‘This proposition is false’ and ‘This proposition is true’ is absolute. This must be one part of the difference noted by Sinnott-Armstrong, but perhaps there is more to it. Let me pursue the liar paradox just a little bit further.

According to Russellian type theory, assertions like ‘This sentence/proposition is false’ and ‘This sentence/proposition is true’ cannot contain a proposition when they are used self-referentially, because when so used they are meaningless. It should be noted that he claimed explicitly only that the phrase ‘all propositions’ must be a meaningless phrase (Russell 1967 [1908], p. 154), but I think that since, in the context referred to, Russell also discusses the sentence ‘He is lying’, Russell meant that a sentence like ‘This proposition is false’ is meaningless, too. By the phrase ‘meaningless phrase’ he meant, or at least later came to mean (Russell 1967 [1910], pp. 41-43), a phrase that in a logically correct language is syntactically misconstrued. And, of course, formulas and sentences that are syntactically misconstrued do not express propositions. This notwithstanding, I think that Russell accepted that in ordinary language such logically misconstrued sentences contain some kind of meaning. Obviously, the assertions ‘This proposition is false’ and ‘This proposition is true’ are not wholly without meaning. In my terminology, they contain a *sentence meaning* and are, in this sense, meaningful. From a Russellian point of view, I think they can be regarded as assertions that lack a proposition. I have earlier claimed that performatives and antiperformatives do not comply with *the strong assertion-proposition rule*. Now I conjecture that the liar paradox and its opposite, in the formulations given, do not even comply with *the weak assertion-proposition rule*. This means that although their sentence meanings (which by definition do not refer) seem to contain a possibility of absolute self-reference, this seeming possibility can never become an actuality.

It might be of interest to note that although Austin liked neither the term proposition⁴⁰ nor the introduction of any type-theoretical hierarchies into the analysis of ordinary language,⁴¹ he nonetheless shared Russell's view that absolute self-reference is an impossibility. Austin wrote in a brief comment on paradoxes that "No statement can state what it itself refers to" and, also, that "A statement to the effect that it is itself true is every bit as absurd as one to the effect that it is itself false" (1962, p. 129, footnotes).

In the huge discussion of the liar paradox there is an "anti-Russell camp" made famous by a paper by Saul Kripke (1975).⁴² Kripke claims, contrary to Russell, that the sentence 'This sentence is false' can be self-referring; when it is, however, it lacks a truth-value. Happily enough, I need not take issue with Kripke, because he makes it quite clear, if only in passing,⁴³

⁴⁰ In his paper 'Truth' (1961, chapter 5), Austin sometimes identifies the philosophical use of 'proposition' with "meaning or sense of a sentence or family of sentences" in such a way that a proposition cannot possibly be a truthbearer (1961, p. 119), but he also says that one may speak of propositions as corresponding to facts (1961, p. 132). In *How To Do Things With Words* he merely says "that in order to explain what can go wrong with statements we cannot just concentrate on the proposition involved (whatever that is) as has been done traditionally. We must consider the total situation in which the utterance is issued" (1962, p. 52).

⁴¹ See (Austin 1962, p. 129, footnote).

⁴² See for instance the anthologies (Martin 1970, 1984) and (Barwise and Etchcemetery 1987).

⁴³ He writes within parentheses in the text: "(Note that I am speaking of self-referential sentences, not self-referential propositions.)"⁵ (1975, p. 693). Footnote 5 then reads: "It is not obviously possible to obtain 'directly' self-referential propositions." In another footnote, number 13, he says that "some writers still seem to think that some kind of general ban on self-reference is helpful in treating the semantic paradoxes. In the case of self-referential *sentences* [italics added], such a position seems to me to be hopeless."

that his discussion of sentences need not necessarily extend to propositions. I, on the contrary, have only commented upon ‘This *proposition* is false/true’.⁴⁴

If the assertions ‘This proposition is false’ and ‘This proposition is true’ are neither true nor false because they lack a proposition, one might say that they annul themselves.⁴⁵ They can be called *self-annulling assertions*.⁴⁶ Performatives and antiperformatives are self-(truth-value)-determining assertions, not self-(truth-value)-annulling assertions.

8. CONCLUSION

I am now in a position to put forward a taxonomy of well-formed and meaningful sentences of indicative form (Figure 1). Here, all assertions that determine their own truth-value are called *self-determining assertions*. In this taxonomy, the two assertion-proposition rules introduced in section four are used as classificatory criteria. When this is done performatives and antiperformatives can be put in the same category. Both performatives and antiperformatives comply with the weak assertion-proposition rule (Weak APR) but not with the strong

⁴⁴ In principle, it should be noted, Kripke seems to have no objections to the view that some sentences can be used in such a way that they do not comply with the weak assertion-proposition rule. About a certain ordinary sentence called ‘(1)’, he writes that: “A sentence such as (1) is always *meaningful*, but under various circumstances it may not “make a statement” or “express a proposition”” (1975, pp. 699-700).

⁴⁵ This means, among other things, that I regard the problems with the assertions at hand as not being due to either semantic presuppositions (van Fraassen 1970) or vagueness of the predicates ‘true’ and ‘false’ (Kearns 1970).

⁴⁶ Note that I have made no attempt to subsume Epimenides’s assertion and the utterance ‘This *sentence* is false’ under any of the labels used in this paper.

assertion-proposition rule (Strong APR), and both of them determine their own truth-value because of their semantic-anthropological structure.

Figure 1 should be seen in the light of the four claims below:

(a) In order to analyse the self-verifiability of logically tautological utterances and the self-falsifiability of logically contradictory utterances, one need only consider the propositions that are contained in such assertions. Such assertions comply both with the weak and with the strong assertion-proposition rule.

(b) In order to analyse the self-verifiability of performative tautologies and the self-falsifiability of performative contradictions, one has to consider the interplay between the uttering, the utterance, and the proposition. Such assertions comply both with the weak and with the strong assertion-proposition rule.

(c) In order to analyse the self-annullibility of the utterances ‘This proposition is true’ and ‘This proposition is false’, one has to consider the utterance and the presumed proposition, but not the uttering. Such assertions comply neither with the weak assertion-proposition rule, nor, by implication, with the strong assertion-proposition rule.

(d) In order to analyse the self-verifiability of performatives and the self-falsifiability of antiperformatives, one has to consider the interplay between the uttering, the utterance, and the proposition. Such utterances comply with the weak assertion-proposition rule given above, but they do not comply with the strong assertion-proposition rule.

Put without humility but also without sophistication: I claim that speech-act theory needs the introduction of assertion-proposition rules.

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