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SEARLE ON MEANING AND ACTION

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In the last three decades Searle developed an important philosophical work on Language, Mind and Social Reality which has exerted a considerable influence on human and cognitive sciences as well as on philosophy. Searle is now in the midst of theoretical debates on central issues such as the use and comprehension of language, the expression and communication of thoughts, meaning, sense, reference, truth, satisfaction and success, speech acts, conversation, the nature of mind and its place in nature, the structure of consciousness and intentionality, attitudes, perception and action, rationality and the nature of social reality and institutions.

Unlike most analytic philosophers Searle has never taken epistemology in general and skepticism in particular very seriously. According to Searle, it is a background presupposition that we have thoughts, know under which conditions they are satisfied, that we know at each moment what we are trying to do and that we are able to communicate about a publicly accessible reality and to coordinate our actions with others. Instead of questioning our possibility to know and do all this, he intends to study directly such phenomena. So Searle's approach is much more ontological (Aristotelian as he says) than epistemological (and Cartesian). Unlike many he does not wonder under which conditions we can attribute thoughts and actions to others. He rather wonders: What is the nature of the subjective thoughts and actions of which we have a proper experience. How do we succeed in thinking, meaning and acting? Here are a few critical remarks and comments on his ideas about meaning and action.

SPEECH ACT THEORY

Searle became famous in the philosophy of language after the publication of *Speech Acts* (Cambridge University Press, 1969) where he formulated the principles of a

¹ I wish to thank Scott R. Paine for helpful remarks on the style and content of this paper.

general theory of meaning and use in the trend of ordinary language philosophy. Searle was much influenced by his Oxford masters Austin, Grice and Strawson. According to his basic hypothesis, the primary units of meaning and communication in the use and comprehension of language are speech acts of the type called by Austin *illocutionary acts* such as assertions, promises and orders. Any meaningful utterance always consists of an attempt by the speaker to perform an illocutionary act at the moment of the utterance and that attempted performance is part of what that speaker means and intends to communicate to the hearer. Searle had the merit of discovering the proper nature of the rules that speakers follow in their performance of illocutionary acts: they are *constitutive* rather than regulative rules in his terminology. Searle also revised Austin's trilogy of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and replaced the notion of locutionary act by those of utterance and propositional acts. In possible contexts of use of any public language, speakers utter words: they pronounce sounds or write marks of certain types. They make *acts of utterance*. Moreover when their utterances are meaningful, speakers refer to objects under concepts and predicate of them attributes so as to determine truth conditions. In doing this they express propositions with illocutionary forces. According to Searle's analysis, elementary illocutionary acts are of the form F(P) : they are composed of an illocutionary force together with a propositional content. Thanks to this new analysis, Searle has made a bridge between speech act theory and the theory of sense and denotation of Frege, Church and others. It became possible to exploit in ordinary language philosophy the resources of the theory of truth developed in the logical trend of contemporary philosophy.

According to Searle's principle of expressibility of thought, speakers are always in principle able to say what they mean by the use of language. For every illocutionary act is an intrinsically intentional action. Speakers always attempt to perform their successful illocutionary acts. And they can in principle say what they attempt to do. Consequently every attempted illocutionary act is in principle literally expressible. And elementary sentences whose logical form is completely analyzed contain illocutionary force markers. Formally oriented contemporary philosophy of language had been confined to the semantic analysis of expressions such as proper names, definite descriptions, predicates,

truth and modal connectives and quantifiers whose meaning only serves to determine propositional contents of utterances. In developing speech act theory, Searle has enabled philosophical semantics to analyze other important kinds of expressions like verbal mood, sentential type and performative verbs whose meaning serves to determine the illocutionary forces of utterances.

Following Austin², Searle pointed out that every attempt of performance of an illocutionary act can be more or less felicitous. The speaker can succeed or fail to perform the attempted illocutionary act. He can perform it with or without defects. A successful illocutionary act is defective whenever the speaker is not sincere or makes false presuppositions. Moreover illocutionary acts are satisfied or not depending on what happens in the world. A successful assertion can be true or false, a successful promise kept or violated and a successful order obeyed or disobeyed. By trying to analyze rigorously the felicity conditions of illocutionary acts, Searle generated an irreversible theoretical move in the trend of ordinary language analysis of contemporary philosophy. So Searle challenged the anti-theoretical position of the second Wittgenstein according to whom there are uncountably many different kinds of language use. According to Searle's taxonomy of elementary illocutionary acts, there are only five *illocutionary points* that speakers can attempt to achieve in expressing a propositional content with an illocutionary force: these are the *assertive, commissive, directive, declaratory and expressive illocutionary points*. Each illocutionary act with a force has an illocutionary point which is internal to its being an act with that force. That illocutionary point determines a particular *direction of fit between words and things*. In attempting to perform an illocutionary act of the form F(P) speakers relate the propositional content P to the world with the intention of achieving a success of fit (or correspondence) between words and things. The illocutionary act is *satisfied* when the success of fit is achieved from the appropriate direction of fit. **Assertive illocutionary acts** like assertions, conjectures and hypotheses have **the words-to-things direction of fit**. They are satisfied when the propositional content corresponds to a fact which exists in the world. **Commissive illocutionary acts** like promises and vows and **directive illocutionary acts**

² J.L. Austin *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956

like requests and commands have **the things-to-words direction of fit**. They are satisfied when things are changed by a future action of the speaker (in the case of commissives) or of the hearer (in the case of directives) so as to correspond to the propositional content. **Declaratory illocutionary acts** like appointments, benedictions, and condemnations have **the double direction of fit**. They are satisfied when the speaker does things in the world at the moment of the utterance just by virtue of saying that he does them. Finally **expressive illocutionary acts** like thanks and apologies have **the null direction of fit**. Their only point is to express attitudes of the speaker about facts of the world. They are not properly speaking satisfied or unsatisfied but rather appropriate or not.

Searle's classification of illocutionary acts is more general and less language dependent than Austin's. It can be justified in terms of direction of fit. So it is a contribution to the **Universal Grammar** of meaning and use. According to Searle, in order to study how language relates to the world, philosophy must not only study how words and things can correspond to each other but also from which possible directions from speakers can attempt to achieve a success of fit between them in speech. The relation of correspondence is symmetrical. So a proposition is true in a context when that proposition corresponds to a fact which exists in that context no matter how that fact came to exist. However, in order that an illocutionary act of the form F(P) be satisfied, it is not enough that its propositional content be true and correspond to an existing fact. It must also be the case that the success of fit be achieved according to the characteristic direction of fit of its force F. For example, in order to grant a request a hearer must not only do what he has been requested to do. He must also do it in order to grant that request. If he does it for another reason, he does not grant that request. **Consequently satisfaction depends on both correspondence and direction of fit**. So the satisfaction conditions of elementary illocutionary acts cannot be reduced to the truth conditions of their propositional contents. An important contribution of Searle to the theory of meaning lies in **this analysis of satisfaction which extends the classical notion of truth conditions so as to cover all illocutionary forces**. Just an assertion is satisfied when it is true, a promise is satisfied when it is kept, an order when it is obeyed, a question when it is answered and so on.

There was a lot of criticism against Searle's classification of illocutionary points. But from a linguistic point of view that classification is confirmed by the fact that only the five illocutionary points are needed for an adequate lexical analysis of performative verbs and force markers of actual natural languages. One can regret that two different illocutionary points: the commissive and directive points determine the same things-to-words direction of fit. **But elementary illocutionary acts of the form F(P) are of the first level: they are performed at one moment by way of using words in a single context of utterance. Speaker and hearer play asymmetric roles in an isolated context of utterance: the first is active and the second passive.** So language distinguishes naturally a speaker-based and a hearer-based illocutionary point with the things-to-words direction of fit. In the case of commissives, the responsibility for changing the world rests with the speaker, and in the case of directives with the hearer. Of course, Searle's taxonomy would be more elegant if the commissive and directive points could be unified. But this is not possible. Real commitments are personal. So no speaker can commit someone else to an action by his own utterance. An attempt to get a hearer to act does not commit that hearer. Moreover a speaker who commits himself to an action does not necessarily try to influence himself.

Searle, I think, made an important discovery in pointing out that illocutionary acts with the world-to-words direction of fit have self referential conditions of satisfaction. They are satisfied if and only if their propositional content is true because of their successful performance. However, do we have to conclude as Searle does that such illocutionary acts have for that reason self referential propositional contents. If so, imperative sentences like "Please, help me tomorrow!" and corresponding declarative sentences such as "You will help me tomorrow" would not express the same propositional content in the same contexts, as Searle used to say in *Speech Acts*. In that case, an imperative sentence would rather express in each context the more complex proposition that the hearer will do something (e.g. help the speaker tomorrow) because of the request that it expresses. I think that this conclusion is not needed and is counter-intuitive. Moreover this new account complicates very much the formalization of the theory which turns out to contain a vicious circle. It is impredicative in Russell's sense.

According to Grice³ and Searle, every meaningful utterance is intrinsically intentional. So speaker meaning is primary and sentence meaning secondary. In *Speech Acts* Searle mainly studied the literal use of language where the speaker means what he says. Following Grice he analyzed *literal speaker meaning* along the following lines. In making a literal utterance, the speaker firstly intends to perform the illocutionary act expressed by the sentence that he utters in the context of utterance, secondly he intends that the hearer recognize his intention to perform that literal illocutionary act and thirdly he intends that this happens by virtue of his understanding of the meaning of the words that he has used in that context. In formal semantics one assumes as much as possible that speaker meaning is identical with sentence meaning. So all utterances are interpreted literally. Using Searle's ideas one can then say that the illocution that the speaker means to perform in each possible context of utterance according to a possible semantic interpretation is the literal illocutionary act expressed by the sentence that he uses in that context, whenever that act is performable.

In *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge University Press, 1985) Searle and I formulated the principles of a theory of success and satisfaction of illocutionary acts. Unlike Austin who took the notion of illocutionary force as a primitive notion, we have identified the various components of illocutionary forces: their illocutionary points, degree of strength, propositional content, preparatory and sincerity conditions and we have formulated a recursive definition of the set of all possible illocutionary forces. There are five primitive universal illocutionary forces which are the simplest possible forces with one basic illocutionary point: they have the basic degree of strength and no special mode of achievement, propositional content, preparatory or sincerity condition which is not determined by their point. These are the forces of assertion, of a commitment to a future action, of a directive, of a declaration and of expression of an attitude. All other forces are more complex: they are obtained from the primitives by increasing or decreasing the degree of strength, by imposing a new mode of achievement of illocutionary point or by adding special propositional, preparatory and sincerity conditions. We have defined the conditions of successful performance of elementary

³ P. Grice *Study in the Ways of Words* Harvard University Press, 1989

illocutionary acts in terms of the components of their force and their propositional content. According to *Foundations* a speaker *succeeds in performing an illocutionary act* of the form $F(P)$ in a context of utterance when firstly he achieves the illocutionary point of force F on propositional content P with the mode of achievement of F in that context, secondly the proposition P satisfies the propositional content conditions of F in that context, and thirdly he presupposes all the preparatory conditions of $F(P)$ and expresses with the degree of strength of F the attitudes that enter in the sincerity conditions of $F(P)$. Unlike Austin, we have distinguished between successful attempts which are defective like insincere illocutions and attempts which fail because the speaker does not even succeed in achieving the illocutionary point. So what Austin called felicitous illocutionary acts turn to be illocutions which are at the same time successful, non defective and satisfied. I suppose that Searle would agree with this definition.

Searle and I also have defined the success conditions of complex illocutionary acts whose form is irreducible to that of elementary illocutionary acts. Such are acts of illocutionary denegations, conditional illocutionary acts and conjunctions of illocutions. Illocutionary denegations are of the form $\neg A$: their aim is to make it explicit that the speaker does not perform an illocution A . A refusal, for example, is the illocutionary denegation of an acceptance. Conditional illocutionary acts are of the form $P \Rightarrow A$: their aim is to make it explicit that the speaker performs an illocution A not categorically but on the condition that a proposition P be true. An offer, for example, is a promise that is conditional on the hearer's acceptance. Conjunctions of illocutions are of the form $A \& B$: their aim is to perform simultaneously two illocutions. For example, a fire alert is the conjunction of an assertion and of a directive. I think that these complex illocutionary acts also have satisfaction conditions. Thus an illocutionary denegation of the form $\neg A$ is satisfied when illocution A is not performed and a conditional illocution of the form $P \Rightarrow A$ is satisfied if and only if illocution A is satisfied if P is true. Finally a conjunction of two illocutions is satisfied when both are satisfied.

As Searle and I pointed out in *Foundations*, speech act theory has to distinguish between the overt *performance of an illocutionary act* and a simple *illocutionary*

commitment to that act. In the use of language, the overt performance of an illocution often involves the speaker in a commitment to another illocution, even though that *commitment* does not involve an overt performance of that second illocution. For example, if I accept to be nice with everybody here whoever he or she is, I am weakly committed to accepting to be nice with you, even though I have not explicitly made that acceptance. The existence of this weak illocutionary commitment shows itself linguistically in the fact that it is paradoxical to say in the same context "I accept to be nice with everybody here whoever he or she is" and "I refuse to be nice with you". No speaker can perform simultaneously an illocutionary act and the denegation of an illocution to which that act weakly commits him. Searle and I have defined independently successful performance and weak illocutionary commitment in *Foundations*. However, I think that one can explicate as follows the notion of *weak illocutionary commitment* in the theory of success: a speaker is *weakly committed* to an illocutionary act in a context of utterance *c* when that act is performed in at least one possible context *c'* which is illocutionarily compatible with that context *c* and with all other contexts illocutionarily compatible with *c*. As Searle and I pointed out, possible contexts of utterance are related by a Brouwerian relation of compatibility. Two possible contexts of utterance are *illocutionarily compatible* when all illocutions performed in one could be performed in the other. That relation of compatibility is clearly reflexive and symmetrical. But it is not transitive.

Whenever an illocutionary act weakly commits the speaker to another speech act, it may be possible to perform the first act without *eo ipso* performing the second. But, as we have said, it is never possible to perform simultaneously with success the first illocutionary act and the illocutionary denegation of the second act. This impossibility as well as all the laws governing weak illocutionary commitment in *Foundations* are direct consequences of the new definition of weak illocutionary commitment. I think that the theory of successful performance is rich enough to explicate all the speaker's illocutionary commitments whether weak or strong. There is no need of a separate theory of weak illocutionary commitment as Searle and I first thought. Thus the single most important

objective of illocutionary logic is to elaborate a recursive theory of success and of satisfaction.

As Frege pointed out, truth is relatively independent from thought. Most propositions represent facts which exist or not in the world independently of any human thought. They are true when they represent how things are in the world, whether or not we think that they are true. On the contrary, success and thought are logically inseparable. Because illocutionary acts are intrinsically intentional, no speaker can perform an illocutionary act in a context of utterance unless he makes an attempt to perform that act in that context. For this reason, the theory of success is much more effective and constructible than the theory of truth and satisfaction. A speaker does not know (he does not even think of) all the propositions which are logically implied by the propositional content of his utterance. But each speaker knows exactly which illocutionary acts he attempts to perform in the context of a meaningful utterance. He knows all illocutionary acts that he would perform in that context if his utterance were successful. Unlike propositional strict implication, strong illocutionary commitment is well founded, cognitive, finite and decidable.

In *Foundations* Searle and I have attempted to characterize the logical form of illocutionary acts however these may be expressed and realized in particular actual natural languages. So we did not fully define the notion of an *attempt* to perform an illocutionary act. For speakers always attempt to perform an illocution in the context of use of a particular language by uttering expressions of that language in that context. However using Searle's analysis of literal speaker meaning, we can identify in formal semantics the illocutionary act (if any) that the speaker primarily attempts to perform in each possible context of use of a language. For semantics is a theory of linguistic meaning. So speaker meaning is identified as much as possible with sentence meaning in possible semantic interpretations. What the speaker *means* to perform in each possible context under consideration in a semantic interpretation is always *the literal illocutionary* act expressed by the sentence (if any) that he uses in that context, whenever that literal act is performable. Speakers who use *illocutionarily inconsistent sentences* like "Come and do not come!" know by virtue of competence that it is impossible to perform the literal

illocutionary act. So they do not mean what they say. They mean something else. In a purely semantic approach, their non literal meaning cannot be characterized.⁴

In standard semantic interpretations of illocutionary logic, the literal illocutionary act is then the primary illocutionary act that the speaker attempts to perform in the context of each meaningful utterance. All other attempts to perform illocutions in a meaningful utterance are generated by his basic attempt to perform that literal illocutionary act. Some actions *strongly commit* the agent to performing other actions; it is not possible to perform these actions without performing the other actions. Whenever an action strongly commits the agent to another action, any attempt to perform that action is also an attempt to perform the second. Thus in the contexts of meaningful utterances, the speaker also attempts to perform all illocutionary acts to which the literal illocutionary act strongly commits him. For example, if he literally says "Give me help , and protection, please" he also attempts to request help. Furthermore he can also attempt to perform other illocutionary acts. For example, a successful literal utterance of a declarative sentence in the past tense "He won the game yesterday" is both an assertion and a report. For the propositional content is past with respect to the moment of the utterance. However, the primary literal assertion does not strongly commit the speaker to the report. For the day before yesterday a token of the same assertion would be a prediction and not a report.

In a purely semantic approach only literal attempts of performance of illocutionary acts are then taken into consideration.⁵ And all attempts of illocutionary performance are made by way of expressing the literal illocutionary act. In the general case, the speaker utters several sentences. So the literal illocutionary act is a conjunction of various illocutionary acts. By making an utterance, the speaker expresses of course all the constituent illocutionary acts of the literal speech act, just as he expresses all the atomic propositions of the propositional contents of these illocutionary acts and of the

⁴ For the principles of a formal pragmatics of non literal utterances, see D. Vanderveken "Conversational Maxims and Non Literal speech Acts" in E. Lepore & E. Van Gulick[(eds) *John Searle and His Critics*, Blackwell, 1991 and "Formal Pragmatics of Non Literal Meaning" in *Linguistische Berichte*, Vol 51, 1997

⁵ Some (but few) attempts of performing illocutionary acts are made by thought alone without any public use of language. We can mentally make assertions, promises and recommendations to ourselves without making any oral or written utterance. Such inner acts of thought have the logical form of illocutionary acts. But given the principle of expressibility of thought we could not entertain them privately if we could not also, at least in principle, express them linguistically by a public utterance.

antecedent propositions of the expressed conditional illocutionary acts. For these acts and propositions are the building blocks of what he says. In short, the speaker expresses the illocutionary acts (and propositions) which are the semantic values in the context of utterance of all the subsentences (and subclauses) of the uttered sentence. For example, a speaker who means to perform the conjunction of two illocutionary acts expresses these illocutionary acts, just as a speaker who expresses a conjunction of two propositions expresses these propositions and all other truth functions of them. Similarly, a speaker who means to perform an elementary illocutionary act $F(P)$ expresses all the weaker elementary illocutionary acts of the form $F'(P')$ which consist of a force F' with less components and of a proposition P' with less atomic propositions. Furthermore, the expression of illocutionary acts (and propositions) is closed under certain logical operations such as the distributivity of negation with respect to implication and conjunction. A speaker who means to perform the illocutionary denegation of a conditional speech act $\neg(P \Rightarrow F(Q))$ also expresses (or at least has in mind) the corresponding conditional speech act of the form $P \Rightarrow \neg F(Q)$. Thus by saying "I do not offer you so much for your house" he can mean "If you accept to sell your house for so much, I do not promise to buy it!" even if he has not made such an utterance. Speaker can then express illocutionary acts which are not the semantic values of parts of its utterances. But all such expressed acts are well determined when the structure of the literal speech act is fully analyzed. So the set of illocutionary acts that a speaker literally expresses (or has in mind) in a context is finite and decidable.

Of course, in order to make an attempt to perform an illocutionary act the speaker must do more than just express (or have in mind) that illocutionary act. Speakers express illocutionary acts without having the least intention of performing them. For example, someone who means to perform the denegation of an illocutionary act expresses that illocutionary act but he does not at all intend to perform it. In my view a speaker *attempts to perform an illocutionary act* A that he expresses in a context c when he is weakly committed to that illocutionary act in that context of utterance. Any attempt of performance of an illocution can fail. But at least it weakly commits the speaker to that illocution. So, for example, any illocution that a speaker attempts to perform in a context

is performable in all possible contexts of utterance where the speaker succeeds in performing the literal illocutionary act of that context. As one can expect, speakers never attempt to perform unperformable illocutionary acts and the set of their attempts to perform illocutions is closed under strong illocutionary commitment. All this follows from my definition of an attempt of performance. I think that the whole theory of strong and weak illocutionary commitments to elementary and complex illocutionary acts can be adequately formalized thanks to the new definitions.⁶

As I said earlier, Searle was mainly concerned with the analysis of literal meaningful utterances in *Speech Acts*. However later in *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), Searle tried to generalize his theory of meaning and use so as to account for the performance and understanding of non literal utterances where the speaker means something other than what he says. How do we make and understand figures of speech like metaphors, irony, indirect speech acts and hyperboles in the course of conversation? According to Grice, hearers understand non literal utterances by making inferences from what the speaker has said and the hypothesis that he respects conversational maxims like “Speak the truth!”, “Be sincere!” in the context of utterance. Searle used Grice’s inferential approach in *Expression and Meaning*: In his view any speaker who means to perform non literal illocutionary acts intends that the hearer understand him by relying on various abilities and attitudes of that hearer. Thanks to his linguistic competence and knowledge of the conversational background, the hearer is in principle able to understand the meaning in context of the uttered sentence and the felicity conditions of the literal illocutionary act. Thanks to his ability to reason, the hearer is also able to conclude that the speaker means to perform non literally another illocutionary act if he respects the conversational maxims given the nature of his literal speech act and the facts assumed to be existent in the conversational background. On the basis of such ideas, Searle clarified the nature of three important figures of speech: metaphor, irony and indirect speech acts. One has much discussed his conception of indirect speech acts according to which speaker meaning is an extension of sentence meaning.

⁶ See my paper “Strong and Weak Illocutionary Commitment to Elementary and Complex Illocutionary Acts” forthcoming in the *Cahiers d’Épistémologie* of the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Unfortunately, Grice only gave an informal, heuristic and partial account of conversational maxims. And he stated them as if the only purpose of discourse were the exchange of information. So Grice's maxims only apply to assertive utterances in a special kind of conversation. Using illocutionary logic, I have tried to generalize and explicate⁷ results obtained by Searle and Grice in their analysis of non literal meaning and figures of speech. I wonder what Searle thinks of my explication and generalization of the conversational maxims of quality and quantity. On my view, an illocutionary act is of perfect quality when it is entirely successful, non defective and satisfied. Thus the *maxim of quality* turns out to be a very general principle of speech act theory: **Let the illocutionary act that you mean to perform be entirely felicitous in the context of your utterance!** That principle holds for all types of utterances and not just for assertive utterances. Thus there is the *sub-maxim of quality for promises* : Let your promise be a successful commitment to doing something! Let it be a promise that you intend and are able to keep and that is good for the hearer! Let it be a promise that you will eventually keep! Similarly, there is the following *sub-maxim of quality for assertions* : Let your assertion represent how things are in the world. Let it be an assertion for which you have reasons, that you believe and which is true! On this account, Grice's formulation of the maxim of quality is just the particular case for assertions. Notice that in order to respect the maxim of quality, speakers must select appropriately the force as well as the propositional content of attempted illocutionary acts. Suppose that you want to commit yourself to a future action. Do not make a promise if that action is not in the interest of the hearer. (Such a commissive force would be inappropriate. For your illocution would be defective.) Moreover, do not commit yourself to a future action that you will not carry out. (Your illocution would be unsatisfied.)

Each illocution is a natural kind of use of language which serves to achieve linguistic purposes in the course of conversations. From that point of view, an illocutionary act is of perfect quantity in the context of an utterance when it is *as strong as required* to achieve the current linguistic purposes of the speaker in that context. Given their logical forms, certain illocutions are *stronger* than others, in the sense that they have more felicity

⁷ See my papers « Non literal Speech Acts and Conversational Maxims » and « Formal Pragmatics of Non

conditions. Thus a promise to a hearer to serve him excellent camembert is stronger than a simple commitment to serving him cheese. Stronger illocutions serve to achieve stronger linguistic purposes. A speaker who would only like to commit himself to serving cheese would perform a speech act too strong to achieve his purpose if he were promising excellent camembert. So the *maxim of quantity* turns out to be: **Let your illocutionary act be as strong as required (i.e. neither too strong nor too weak) to achieve your current linguistic purposes in the context of each utterance!** The new principle holds for all types of meaningful utterances. Thus there is the special *sub-maxim of quantity for commissives*: "Let your commitment to a future action be as strong as required!" As one might expect, Grice's formulation of the maxim of quantity is just the special case for assertive utterances which aim to be informative. In order to respect the maxim of quantity speakers must also well select the force and the propositional content of attempted illocutionary acts. Suppose that you just want to commit yourself to doing something. Do not make a pledge when you do not want to commit yourself strongly. Your commissive force would be stronger than needed. And do not commit yourself to doing more than what you intend to do. On the other hand, your commissive should not be too weak. If you want to solemnly commit yourself to poverty, make a vow! The force of a simple commitment would be too weak. Furthermore, vow exactly what you want to commit yourself to doing.

The conversational maxims of quality and quantity concern the logical forms of illocutionary acts. They are not relative to a particular human culture. On the contrary, these two maxims are *pragmatic universals of language use*. They follow from the hypothesis that speakers are minimally rational. An illocutionary act is a means to achieving linguistic ends. Now just as rational agents should decide to use the best effective available means in each situation, rational speakers should attempt to perform in each context illocutions which can be felicitous. Moreover, rational agents should respect a principle of effective means. This is a principle of practical reason. So rational speakers should also attempt to perform in each context an illocution which serves fully and most effectively their linguistic purposes. A speaker who would attempt to perform a weaker or stronger illocution would not act most effectively to attain his ends. Consequently, it is reasonable to respect the two maxims of

quality and quantity. These are, I think, the fundamental conversational maxims according to speech act theory.

Neither Grice nor Searle did attempt to analyze the normal form of inferences that hearers make in order to understand what speakers mean. However, as I have shown, we can attempt to formalize the inferential approach within the framework of illocutionary logic. **In particular, we can characterize the two main ways in which a speaker can get the hearer to infer what he means on the basis of the assumption that he respects the conversational maxims. These two ways are what I have called the *exploitation* and *use of a maxim*.** My notion of exploitation of a maxim is more general than Grice's notion. In my view, a speaker *exploits a conversational* maxim when certain facts of the conversational background to which he wants the hearer to pay attention are such that he intends that the hearer recognize the following facts: (1) He (the speaker) would not respect the conversational maxim if the primary speech act were the literal speech act; but (2) he is able to respect the maxim without violating another maxim (there is no clash); moreover, (3) he wants to cooperate and contribute to the conversation, so (4) he intends to perform non literally another primary illocutionary act compatible with the respect of that maxim and finally, (5) he also intends that the hearer believes that they both have a mutual knowledge of all this.

Now, in the case of an *exploitation of the maxim of quality*, the speaker intends that the hearer recognize that there are in the background facts which are incompatible with felicity conditions of the literal speech act. Moreover the speaker also wants that the recognition of his intention be part of a mutual background knowledge. Whenever the hearer recognizes this, he understands that the speaker does not mean to perform primarily the literal illocutionary act but another act with felicity conditions different from those which are obviously violated in the conversational background. Furthermore, he identifies these other non literal conditions by drawing them from facts of the conversational background that the speaker intends for him to recognize. As I have explained, **irony is an extreme case of exploitation of the maxim of quality**. In making an ironic utterance, the speaker always exploits the maxim of quality by relying on facts of the background which prevent him to intend to perform the literal illocutionary act. In the case of irony, it is not

only part of background mutual knowledge that certain literal felicity conditions are violated, but also that the speaker intends to perform a non literal illocutionary act with opposite conditions. Many felicity conditions of illocutionary acts are logically related. So the speaker's irony is often directed to several components of the literal illocutionary force and to the propositional content. When it is mutually known that the literal propositional content is false, it is in general also mutually known that the speaker does not intend to achieve the literal illocutionary point on the literal propositional content and that he is not sincere. Suppose that a speaker ironically threatens the hearer by saying "I promise to help you" in a context where it is quite obvious that he does not at all intend to give him any help. The speaker's irony concerns both the literal propositional content and illocutionary force. First he wants to commit himself to refrain from helping the hearer (this is the contrary of the literal propositional content). Moreover, that future action is not good but bad for the hearer (this is the contrary of a literal preparatory condition). So the utterance has the force of a threat and not that of a promise.

In the case of *exploitation of the maxim of quantity*, the speaker intends that the hearer recognize that the literal speech act is too weak or too strong to achieve his current linguistic purposes in the context of the utterance. In my view, *litotes*, *meiosis* and *indirect speech acts* are exploitations of the maxim of quantity where the speaker means more than what he says. On the contrary, *hyperbole* is an exploitation of both the maxims of quantity and quality where the speaker means less than what he says. Thus a speaker who says "That man is not small!" exploits the maxim of quantity to make an *understatement* when it is part of background knowledge that he is obviously very impressed by the height of the man who is very tall. In such a context, the hearer concludes that the speaker means to make indirectly a stronger assertion than the literal one. On the contrary, a speaker who says "That man is a giant" exploits both the maxims of quality and quantity to make an *overstatement* when it is part of background knowledge that the man to whom he refers is not *that* tall. In such a context, the hearer concludes that the speaker means to make a weaker assertion than the literal one. Understatements are cases of indirect speech acts while overstatements are hyperboles.

In *Expression and Meaning* Searle began to emphasize the important role of our pre-intentional and non representative capacities and dispositions (what he called the *background*) in the use and comprehension of language in general and the determination of literal and non literal meaning in particular. Inspired by considerations of Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* Searle pointed out that we can only determine truth and satisfaction conditions of illocutions on the basis of the background. The importance of the background will increase progressively in Searle's work. Background is so fundamental that it enables mind and language to function in Searle's philosophy. Notice that Searle's conception of the background is much more than current holism about the network of our thoughts. It is the idea that most often we act and think simply without the benefits of any representation or theory. Such a conception has brought Searle closer to the second Wittgenstein up to the point where one can wonder whether he has not become anti-theoretical as regards intentionality in general and meaning in particular. Be that as it may, his conception of the background has established a new bridge between analytic philosophy of mind and continental philosophy which has also much emphasized the prominence of what is pre-predicative. I agree with Wittgenstein and Searle that to speak a language is to engage in various *forms of life*. Thus one cannot separate the speaker's meaning from the conversational background of utterances. Moreover when one tries to analyze conversational background, one is struck by the great variety of forms of facts which are relevant for the understanding of meaning in general and the felicity conditions of attempted illocutions in particular. Furthermore, most relevant facts of the background do not have a form which is semantically determined by what has been said and invariant aspects of contexts of utterance. And it is quite impossible to formulate an exhaustive theoretical description of the background. **There seems to be an open infinite series of facts in each conversational background.** On the basis of such considerations Wittgenstein and perhaps Searle (?) have tended to argue that pragmatic and even semantic theories of language are impossible.

Would it be the case that meaning is irreducibly under-determined and not theoretically constructible because of the background? In opposition to such anti-theoretic views **I am in favor of a more constructive approach in the analysis** of meaning. I

believe that we most often succeed in communicating and in understanding each other in the conduct of discourse. At least we have in principle such an effective capacity by virtue of our linguistic competence and that capacity should be accounted for in a recursive theory compatible with the collective determination of meaning. It might be difficult to characterize how the mind understands the satisfaction conditions of attempted illocutions on the basis of the background. However, neglecting the background, I have constructed in *Meaning and Speech Acts* (two Volumes, Cambridge University Press, 1990-91) a formal semantics of success, satisfaction and truth containing a unified illocutionary and intensional logic capable of interpreting via their translations into an ideographic object language all types of sentences (declarative or not) expressing illocutions with any possible force. In that formal semantics any sentence expresses in each possible context of utterance an illocution whose success and satisfaction conditions are defined inductively. Moreover one can account for all types of valid practical or theoretical inferences that speakers are able to make by virtue of linguistic competence.⁸ As regards formal pragmatics of non literal meaning, it is clear that only a finite number of facts of the conversational background are relevant for understanding attempted non literal illocutionary acts in each possible context of utterance given the inferential account of non literal meaning advocated by Grice and Searle. For these facts must enter in empiric premises of a derivation, and derivations are of finite length. Furthermore, these relevant facts are the contents of attitudes: the speaker always intends that the hearer recognize them. Consequently, they belong to the conceptual part of the background that Searle calls the *network*. So they can be represented by language. Finally, these relevant facts of the background must have something to do with the felicity conditions of the literal speech act when there is an exploitation of maxim. For they are necessary for the derivation of attempted non literal illocutions. Now, there may not be a theoretical mental level underlying the abilities that hearers have to recognize all the facts of the background on which speakers intend to draw their attention. However the number of these facts is finite and they are represented

⁸ See N. Cocchiarella's considerations on my formal semantics in the chapter "Formally Oriented Philosophy of Language" in J. Canfield (ed) *Philosophy of Meaning, Knowledge and Value in the 20th Century*, Volume 10 of the *Routledge History of Philosophy*, Routledge 1997

in the speaker's head. Moreover, once hearers have recognized these facts, their rationality and mastery of conversational maxims enable them to infer the attempted non literal illocutionary acts. So some theoretization can be achieved in formal pragmatics. As I will show in my next book on *Discourse*, there is a normal form of derivations of speaker meaning in the cases of figures of speech like irony, hyperbole and indirect speech acts. So formal pragmatics should be able to compute, the intended ironical, indirect or hyperbolic speech act from the literal speech act, the relevant facts of the conversational background and the respect of conversational maxims.

INTENTIONALITY

In preceding books, Searle had made a free and extensive use of intentionalistic notions. He had spoken of attitudes (beliefs, desires, intentions) that speakers express verbally, of their meaning intentions and illocutionary points and of the actions that they have to perform in order to come to success and satisfaction. In the 80's he realized that he had to complete and even to found his investigations on language by developing a philosophical theory of intentionality. Uttered sentences are syntactic entities (pure waves of sound or written marks); their capacity to represent and to express illocutionary acts with felicity conditions is not intrinsic. On the contrary, that capacity is derived, according to Searle, from a proper *biological capacity of the human mind* and brain by which our organism is directed to the world. So speaker meaning is primary and sentence meaning secondary. Of course, expressed illocutionary acts are *intentional*. They are directed towards objects and facts of the world which have to exist in order for them to be satisfied. However their intentionality is derived from the proper intentionality of the speaker mind who has determined their satisfaction conditions in meaning something. One of the primary objectives of his book *Intentionality* (Cambridge University Press, 1982) is to analyze the intentionality of the very act of meaning.

In *Intentionality* Searle began by analyzing the proper intentionality of attitudes, perception and intentional actions. He exploited for that purpose previous notions of his philosophy of language such as propositional content, satisfaction conditions and direction of fit this time between mind and world. An implicit philosophy of mind was

already at work in his philosophy of language. Searle had pointed out that in performing elementary illocutions speakers express attitudes with the same content. So he analyzed mental states like beliefs, desires, intentions as composed of a psychological mode and of a propositional content. He had also remarked that illocutionary acts and expressed attitudes have corresponding directions of fit and related conditions of satisfaction. Thus beliefs expressed in making assertive illocutions have the mind-to-things direction of fit. They are satisfied when things are as the mind believes them to be. On the contrary, desires have the things-to-mind direction of fit. They are satisfied when things come to be as the mind desires them to be. Like expressives (for example, apologies), certain attitudes (for example, regrets) have the null direction of fit. There does not seem to be any attitude with the double direction of fit between mind and reality. So Searle who dealt mainly with attitudes and very little with non verbal acts of conceptual thought does not speak at all of the double direction of fit between mind and things in his philosophical work. However, as Candida Jaci de Sousa Melo pointed out⁹, philosophy of mind has to consider mental acts of conceptual thought like judgements, attempts and commitments (verbal and non verbal) as well as mental states. Now it is quite clear that illocutionary acts are acts of conceptual thought whose content is the representation of a fact. Any speaker who performs an illocutionary act thinks. So declaratory illocutionary acts are actions with the double direction of fit between mind and things from the very point of view of the philosophy of mind underlying illocutionary logic. In making a declaration the speaker does what he thinks just by way of thinking that he does it. In the case of a verbal declaration the speaker makes a performative utterance: in that case he says which action he does with his words. However, the mind is creative: we also have the power to make some declarations only by thinking without having to say anything. We can enrich by declaration the mental language of our thought (for example, define concepts and give appellations to new objects) in soliloquy. In this case, the mind does things just by thinking that it does them. Candida Jaci calls such declarations *purely mental declarations*.

⁹ Candida Jaci de Sousa Melo « Possible Directions of Fit between Mind, Language and the World » in D. Vanderveken & S. Kubo (eds) *Essays in speech Act Theory*, Benjamins, 2000

Searle has developed his philosophy of mind in *Intentionality* by introducing a series of new important notions. He emphasized the holism of our attitudes and spoke of unconscious mental states (which are however always potentially conscious). Searle distinguishes different intentional components like the perceptual experience in perception and the intention in action and the experience of acting in action. He also characterizes the characteristic mode of presentation of the satisfaction conditions of perception and non verbal action. Instead of representing, intentional contents present their satisfaction conditions by senses in the case of perception and by the experience of acting in the case of non verbal intentional action. Furthermore Searle introduces the new notion of *intentional causation* whose role will be decisive in his philosophical analysis of intentional phenomena. Searle had already put into evidence the intentional causation at work in the satisfaction of illocutions and attitudes with the things-to-words direction of fit. A similar intentional causation exists also according to him in perception, memory and intentional (verbal or non verbal) action. In order that an agent have a visual perception of a state of affairs, that state must be the very cause of his visual experience. Otherwise, he has an hallucination. Similarly, in order that an agent succeed in making a body movement, his intention in action must be the cause of that movement. Intentional causation is very different from Hume's natural causation which prevails in natural sciences. Cause and effect are associated on the basis of a certain inductive evidence in natural science. On the contrary, cause and effect are logically related in intentional causation. For the cause is then a presentation or representation of the effect in the case of intentional action or the converse in the case of perception. On the basis of such considerations Searle has developed a sophisticated theory of mental phenomena whose satisfaction conditions require intentional causation. He has pointed out that their two directions of fit and of causation are always and for good reasons opposite. Thus intentional actions have the things-to-mind direction of fit and the mind-to-things direction of causation. He has also drawn consequences about the nature and state of human and social sciences which need to give causal intentional explications of actions in order to study human behavior.

Searle was mainly concerned with intentional actions that agents attempt to perform in *Intentionality* and other works. By definition, any intentional action contains a simultaneous intention in action. However our intentional actions have unintended effects in the world. Thus in shooting intentionally in a certain direction an agent might unintentionally kill someone. Someone who caused the death of someone else can be accused of killing him no matter whether he did it on purpose or not. So the philosophy of action has to consider unintentional as well as intentional actions and to explain their relations. How could we account for all kinds of action in the framework of Searle's philosophy of mind? I have formulated a logic of action¹⁰, where intentional actions are primary as in Searle's philosophy of action. The basic principles of that logic are the following: Firstly any action that an agent performs unintentionally could in principle be intentional. So the agent could have attempted to perform that action. Consequently, there is no logic of action without a logic of attempts. Moreover any unintentional action of an agent at a moment is an effect of intentional actions of that agent at that moment. It is always generated by a token of an intentional action of that agent. However, not all unintended effects of intentional actions are the contents of unintentional actions. Only those that are historically contingent and that the agent could have attempted to perform. So many events which happen to us in our life, are not really actions. We suffer them. For example, the mistakes that we make are not actions. For we cannot attempt to make them. Similarly no action can bring about a fact which is unpreventable.

As Belnap pointed out,¹¹ action, branching time and historic modalities are logically related. There is the liberty of voluntary action. Our intentional actions are not fully determined. Whenever we do something, we could have done otherwise. We could have tried to do something else. Moreover, our present actions could have many different incompatible effects. So it is preferable to work out a logic of action that is compatible with indeterminism. According to indeterminism, several incompatible moments of time might follow the same moment in the future of the world. So in branching time any moment of time can belong to several histories representing possible courses of the world

¹⁰ See my work *The Basic Logic of Action*, Cahier d'Épistémologie no 9907, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1999

¹¹ See N. Belnap & M. Perloff, "The Way of the Agent", *Studia Logica*, Vol 51, 1992

with the same past and present but different historic continuations of that moment. Following Belnap I have formulated my logic of action within the framework of branching time. Unfortunately Belnap does not take into account the intentionality of action in his logic. For that reason he does not succeed in formalizing adequately the laws governing the commitments of agents. On my account, any possible action is intentional or at least could have been attempted. So I have enriched the vocabulary of the logic of action by introducing a new logical constant for attempt and I have tried to formulate the laws that govern attempts. Unlike prior intentions which are mental states that agents have, attempts are *mental actions* that agents make. An attempt to do something contains an *intention in action*¹². For to make an attempt is to do something with the intention to do something else. For example, by moving the arm an agent can make an attempt to take something. From a philosophical point of view, both intentions and attempts have the same world-to-mind direction of fit. An intention is satisfied when it is carried out, an attempt when it is successful. Each attempt is directed at a aim and serves a certain *purpose*. It *succeeds* when that agent achieves his purpose. Otherwise it is a *failure*. This is why any logic of intentional actions (e.g. illocutionary logic) has to contain a *theory of their success conditions*.

As Searle pointed out, the successful performance of an intentional action requires more than the existence of the fact that the agent attempts to bring about. In order that an agent succeed to bring about a fact, it is not enough that he try. It is also necessary that his attempt causes that fact. The agent does not succeed to do something in case someone else did it. Along these lines, one can say in the logic of action that an agent *intentionally does that A* when firstly, that agent attempts to do that A and secondly, A is true because of that attempt. So it is not then necessary that A as medieval philosophers already pointed out.

No attempt is determined. There is freedom of will. From a philosophical point of view, attempts are a special kind of action. On the one hand, all attempts are *intentional actions*. An agent cannot make an attempt without intending to make that attempt. On the other hand, all attempts are *successful* actions: no agent can fail to make the attempt that

¹² The notion of intention in action is explained in *Intentionality*.

he is trying to make. For in trying to make an attempt the agent *eo ipso* makes that very attempt. An attempt is essentially a mental act. An agent who tries to take an object could fail. But he has at least mentally tried to take that object. So he has had the corresponding intention in action. From a philosophical point of view, important meaning postulates like the freedom of the will and the minimal rationality of agents govern the nature of attempts. Firstly, no agent can intend to bring about something that he knows to be necessary or impossible. So tautologies and contradictions cannot represent the purposes of our attempts. Secondly, each attempt is directed at a present or future purpose. No agent can attempt to do something in the past. So propositions which represent the purposes of our attempts are true at the moment of that attempt or at a later moment. And thirdly, the set of our purposes is not partially closed under strict but under strong implication.¹³ As I pointed out, knowledge is closed under strong implication. Whenever a proposition P strongly implies another proposition Q, an agent cannot have it in mind without knowing that if P then Q. For proposition P in that case is identical with the conjunction (P \wedge Q). So he cannot try to do what P represents without also trying to do what Q represents (when that is a possible purpose of an attempt).

Notice that the notions of success and failure are relative to intentional actions. By definition, no agent can succeed or fail without making an attempt. So it is wrong to say that unintentional actions are successful. An agent does not properly succeed in performing his unintentional actions. It just happens that he performs them. As philosophers of action pointed out, some of our actions, called *basic actions*, are by nature intentional. So are voluntary body movements, meaningful utterances and illocutionary acts. In order to perform a basic action an agent must make an attempt to perform it. Consequently, basic actions are always successful when they are performed. Some intentional actions are *more basic than* others. For example, successful illocutionary acts are performed by way of making utterances. Acts of communication are

¹³ A proposition P *strongly implies* another Q in my theory of truth whenever firstly, that proposition P has all the atomic propositions of Q and secondly, all possible truth conditions of atomic propositions which are compatible with its truth in any circumstance are also compatible with the truth of Q in that circumstance. For more information on the predicative propositional logic of illocutionary logic, see my paper "Success, Satisfaction and Truth in the Logic of Speech Acts and Formal Semantics" *Cahier d'Épistémologie* no 9909, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1999 forthcoming in S. Davis & B. Gillan (eds), *A Reader in Semantics*, Oxford University Press

made by way of performing illocutionary acts. Perlocutionary acts are effects of illocutionary acts. In my logic, an agent *basically does* something at a moment *m* when he performs at that moment all his intentional actions by way of doing that thing. In my theory, all individual actions that an agent performs at one moment are consequences of the unique action that he basically performs at that moment.

DISCOURSE

Could we enrich current speech act theory so as to formulate a more general but equally powerful theory of discourse, capable of analyzing the logical and dynamic structure of conversations as well as their conditions of success and satisfaction? Searle¹⁴ has expressed skepticism as regards the possibility of constructing such a theory of conversation. He has pointed out important difficulties. Searle admits that speakers must follow certain rules in order to pursue with success various types of discourse. “Just as a move in a game creates and restricts the range of appropriate countermoves, so each illocutionary act in a conversation constrains the range of appropriate illocutionary responses.” (*Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, p 11). However, he observed that conversational constraints are much less strong than one would expect. Moreover, unlike illocutionary forces which have an internal illocutionary point, many conversations do not have a purpose which is internal to them *qua* conversations. The relevance of an illocution at a moment of utterance is dependent on the particular purposes of the protagonists of the discourse at that moment. Such purposes can change arbitrarily in the course of conversation. So Grice’s requirement of relevance imposes few constraints on the proper structure of conversations. A speaker having a new purpose can attempt to change the conversation in course by making an utterance which has nothing to do with what has been said before. Irrelevant as well as non felicitous illocutionary acts do not prevent the discourse to continue. Furthermore, as we have seen, the forms of life into which speakers are engaged as well as their meanings and purposes in a conversation are always relative to a background that it is impossible to describe exhaustively. Finally, according to Searle, the intentionality common to the protagonists of a conversation is in principle a *collective intentionality* which is not reducible to the sum of their individual

¹⁴ See J. Searle, “Conversation” in Searle *et al* (eds) (*On*) *Searle on Conversation*, John Benjamins, 1992.

intentions and of their mutual knowledge. Conversations are language games that several speakers play by performing together a joint activity rather than several distinct individual actions. We need a more collective and less individualistic approach in the philosophy of mind in order to account for our ability to dialogue. Searle recognizes that his critical remarks do not prove the impossibility of a theory of discourse. Background and collective intentionality are also needed in the current semantics and pragmatics of elementary illocutions of the form F(P). But Searle does not question these established theories.

It is clear however that the future of speech act theory lies in the development of a general and rigorous theory of conversation. Such a theory is needed for progress in all the sciences dealing with language, action and thought. Searle's critical remarks about the difficulties of any theory of conversation leave us with a challenge as regards the possibility of developing such a theory. I have attempted to meet that challenge.¹⁵ I will finish this paper by making a few constructive considerations in favour of an extension of speech act theory towards a rigorous but restricted theory of conversation.

As Wittgenstein pointed out in his *Philosophical Investigations* (Blackwell, 1958), speakers in conversation most often collectively attempt to achieve *extra-linguistic* goals. They communicate to each other in order to coordinate intelligently non verbal actions such as constructing a house, preparing a dinner, making an instrument and going shopping. Wittgenstein and Searle are right to say that it is impossible to construct a theory of all possible kinds of language games. There are "countless kinds" of language games that we could play in exchanging words. "And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten" (paragraph 23)

In my view, the proper task of the theory of discourse is to analyze only the logical and dynamic structure of conversations whose type is provided with an internal discursive purpose. As I pointed out, there are only four possible discursive goals that speakers can

¹⁵ See D. Vanderveken, "La logique illocutoire et l'analyse du discours" in D. Luzzati *et al* (eds), *Le dialogique*, Peter Lang, 1997, "La structure logique des dialogues intelligents" in B. Moulin *et al* (eds) *Analyse et simulation de conversations*, L'Interdisciplinaire, 1999 and "Illocutionary Logic and Discourse Typology" in *Cahier d'Épistémologie* no 9912, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1999 forthcoming in the next issue on Searle of the *Revue internationale de philosophie*.

attempt to achieve by way of conversing: the *descriptive*, *deliberative*, *declarative* and *expressive goals* which correspond each to one of the four possible directions of fit between words and things. *Discourses with the words-to-things direction of fit have the descriptive goal*: they serve to describe what is happening in the world. Such are news, public statements, memoirs, forecasts, theoretical debates, confidences and interviews. *Discourses with the things-to-words direction of fit have the deliberative goal*: they serve to deliberate on which future actions speakers and hearers should commit themselves to in the world. Such are negotiations, bargaining sessions, peace talks, discussions aiming at a friendly settlement, contracts, bets, sermons and auctions. *Discourses with the double direction of fit have the declaratory purpose*: they serve to transform the world by way of doing what one says. Such are official declarations like inaugural addresses, licences, amnesties, testaments, discourses held in ceremonies of baptism and judgements at court. *Discourses with the empty direction of fit have the expressive point*: they serve to express common attitudes of their speakers. Such are the exchange of greetings, welcomes, eulogies, cheers and boos. Why are there exactly four discursive purposes while there are five illocutionary points? As I said earlier, the roles of speaker and hearer are very different in the contexts of single utterances: one is active and the other passive. So language distinguishes naturally a speaker-based and a hearer-based illocutionary point with the things-to-words direction of fit. However, the roles of speaker and hearer are in very different when they are protagonists of a conversation. For any hearer within a discourse is a potential speaker who can in principle contribute to the conversation. **So the protagonists of a discourse play the two complementary roles of speaker and hearer.** Thus any hearer who is given a directive at a moment can reply and commit himself personally later. Often, the commitment of a speaker is conditional upon a future commitment of the hearer who can accept, refuse or make a counter-offer. For that reason, there is the same number of discursive purposes and of possible directions of fit in the use of language. Discursive purposes and illocutionary points are logically related by their direction of fit. In order to achieve a discursive goal on a theme in a conversation, speakers must achieve illocutionary points with the same direction of fit on propositions about the objects under consideration.

We are all able to pursue conversations with the four discursive purposes by virtue of our linguistic competence. Furthermore, all kinds of language games (including conversations with extra-linguistic objectives) contain parts with a discursive purpose. In my view, these are collective illocutionary acts of a superior level which are performed during an interval of several successive moments of utterance. Unfortunately, analysts of conversation have neglected discursive purposes and they have not sufficiently taken into consideration the fact that conversations are collective actions with success conditions. Linguists have analyzed special conversations with a discursive purpose such as argumentations, linguistic exchanges in court, job interviews, newscasts and lessons at school. Philosophers of science have studied the structure of scientific discourse and logicians the nature of proofs. It remains to integrate these investigations within a more general theory of discourse that studies all types of conversations provided with a proper discursive purpose.

As I pointed out earlier, all forces having the same illocutionary point do not play the same role in language use. It is important to well select the illocutionary force of each attempted illocution. Similarly, many types of conversation having the same discursive purpose are to be conducted under different conditions. For example, a sermon is a rather peremptory deliberation which serves principally to influence the behavior of an audience. On the other hand, bargaining sessions are deliberations where speakers act in concert with the intention of buying and selling something. On the model of illocutionary logic, we can decompose each type of conversation with a discursive point into other components: its proper mode of achievement of discursive purpose, its thematic conditions, its background conditions as well as its sincerity conditions. These other conversation components play in the conduct of discourse a similar role to that of corresponding force components in the performance of elementary illocutionary acts. We can also define recursively the set of possible conversation types with a discursive purpose. The four primitive discourse types are the simplest types of conversation: they have one basic discursive purpose and no special mode of achievement, thematic, background or sincerity condition which is not determined by that purpose. These are the *description type*, the *deliberation type*, the *declaration type* and the *expression type*. All other discourse types are obtained by adding to simpler discourse types new components. Thus the type of negotiation has a polite mode

of achievement of the deliberative goal: negotiators must take counsel together as how to act. The type of peace talk has one more thematic condition than that of negotiation: the theme of a peace talk is to conclude a peace accord.

It is more difficult to define the successful conduct of a discourse than the successful performance of an auxiliary individual illocutionary act. For discourses are sequences of interventions which are themselves sequences of individual auxiliary illocutionary acts. The successful conduct of a discourse does not require that all its constitutive interventions are successful, just as the successful conduct of an intervention does not require the successful conditions of all its basic constitutive individual auxiliary illocutionary acts. From a logical point of view, all utterances do not have the same importance in a conversation. Some attempted collective or individual illocutions are superfluous. Others which I have called its *master speech acts* play a central role in its conduct. Only these master speech acts have to be relevant and successful. Consider a peace talk. When attempting to conclude peace, speakers who negotiate can make statements about the strength of parties at war, ask questions and express mental states. They can also from time to time make irrelevant utterances (for example jokes) which do not contribute at all to the process of negotiation. But they must necessarily perform directive and commissive illocutions such as offers, counter-offers, acceptances and refusals about ways to conclude peace. Otherwise, there were no peace talks. In illocutionary logic, each component of a force determines a particular success condition of illocutionary acts with that force. Similarly, in my theory of conversation, each discourse type determines a particular condition of success of conversations of that type. As I pointed out, such success conditions require both the successful performance of constituent master illocutions of certain forms as well as the existence of relations between these master acts. In a trial, for example, the judgement of the judge must take into consideration the verdict of the jury.

Notice that the form of relevant replies to a master speech act in a conversation is determined not only by its logical form but also by the discursive type of that conversation, the place and role of that act in that conversation and the background. When the hearer does not understand entirely the meaning of the speaker in an utterance, he can ask the speaker to be more explicit. Both can fix together the meaning of that utterance in a

posterior linguistic exchange. In considering utterances within the conversations where they are made, speech act theory gives a new collective perspective to the theory of meaning. Furthermore, the hearer should also react when certain felicity conditions of attempted illocutionary acts are violated in the conversational background. So speakers can be brought to change the background and revise their intentions and illocutions.