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Assertion and its Social Significance: An Introduction

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Abstract This paper offers a brief survey of the philosophical literature on assertion, presenting each contribution to this special issue within the context of the contemporary debate in which it intervenes. The discussion is organised into three thematic sections. The first one concerns the nature of assertion and its relation with assertoric commitment – the distinctive responsibility that the speaker undertakes in virtue of making a statement. The second section considers the epistemic significance of assertion, exploring the role that assertion plays in the transmission of knowledge, the epistemic constraints that regulate it, and its relation with truth. The third section deals with communicative content that goes beyond what is literally asserted: implicatures, metaphors and expressive meaning.

0. Introduction
This special issue of RIFL investigates the speech act of assertion, with a focus on its role(s) and effects in our discursive practices and social relationships. Assertion is arguably the most studied speech act in philosophy of language and linguistics. It is the standard linguistic tool to share information and make claims about how things are. It is thus unsurprising that philosophers of language, together with epistemologists and scholars from other fields of research, put so much emphasis on it. To date, there is still much controversy about the nature of assertion (including its normative status, and how it differs from other illocutionary acts). Furthermore, scholars are becoming increasingly interested in the various ways in which assertions can convey truth-conditional content, such as implicatures and presuppositions, as well as evaluative and expressive meaning.

In what follows, we will offer a brief introduction to some philosophical issues concerning assertion, presenting each contribution to the special issue within the context of the contemporary debate in which it intervenes. The present discussion is organised into three thematic sections. The first one focuses on the nature of assertion

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and the distinctive responsibilities it engenders. The second section considers the epistemic significance of assertion, exploring the role that assertion plays in the transmission of knowledge, the epistemic constraints that regulate it, and its relation with truth. The third section deals with communicative content that goes beyond what is literally asserted: implicatures, metaphors and expressive meaning.

1. Assertion and Commitment

What is assertion? According to a relatively standard view, to assert is to undertake a specific set of responsibilities, to 'commit' yourself to the truth of a proposition. Being committed to the truth of a proposition, in turn, typically involves being criticisable if that proposition is false, and/or being responsible to defend your claim in response to legitimate challenges. This view has been defended by scholars from different traditions[1] and represents one of the most influential ways to model the illocutionary import of asserting a proposition.

While there is relatively wide consensus that undertaking this sort of responsibilities is *necessary* for asserting a proposition (but see Hiller 2013), there are some known objections to the idea that becoming committed to a proposition p is sufficient for asserting that p. To articulate, philosophers have identified two objections to the sufficiency of this analysis. First, there is the risk of conflating assertion with more indirect acts (Marsili 2015). Unlike implicatures, presuppositions and indirect speech acts, assertions are typically regarded as explicit, direct illocutions (Alston 2000: 116; Stainton 2016, but cf. also Garcìa-Carpintero 2019, Viebahn 2019). Defining assertion in terms of commitment will not make justice to this intuition, because there are ways to become committed to a proposition indirectly, by merely conveying it. Consider:

  (1) My sister is a trapeze artist

In uttering (1), I commit myself (in the relevant sense) to the proposition that 'my sister is a trapeze artist', and to the proposition that 'I have a sister'. However, while I have asserted that my sister is a trapeze artist, I have merely presupposed that I have a sister. This problem can be solved by amending the definition so that you assert if and only if you are committed to the truth of a proposition by saying or expressing it (Searle 1969). But this pushes the problem only a little further, as we now need a criterion to determine which content counts as expressed and which does not.

A second objection to the sufficiency of commitment-based analyses was raised by Pagin (2004, 2009), who argues that these definitions entail that it should be possible to assert that p by uttering a sentence of the following form:

  (2) I hereby commit myself to the following proposition: (p) salad is healthy

Assuming that the required felicity conditions for committing oneself to a proposition (whichever they are) are satisfied, in uttering (2) one will become committed to the proposition that salad is healthy (p) – so that definitions based on commitment would count this utterance as an assertion that p. Since (2) is clearly not an assertion of p,

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[1] Peirce (CP 2.315, 5.29-31,543-547, MS 280.25-26, 517.42-44, 36.104-5); Toulmin (1958); Searle (1969, 1975); Hamblin (1970, 1971); Brandom (1983, 1994); Searle and Vanderveken (1985); Watson (1996), Green (1999, 2000, 2007, 2017); Alston (2000); MacFarlane (2003, 2005, 2011), Rescorla (2009), Krifka (2014), Marsili (2015), Shapiro (2018), Labinaz (2018); For a broader overview, see Brabanter and Dandale 2008.

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Pagin's argument goes, undertaking commitment to a proposition is not sufficient for asserting it.

In *When Alston met Brandom: Defining Assertion*, Matthew Cull offers a novel solution to deal with both objections. Cull defends the following definition of assertion:

> *U asserted that p in uttering S iff both:*
> *(i) S explicitly presents the proposition that p, or S is a prosentence anaphorically referring to a sentence that explicitly presents p.*
> *(ii) U endorses that p, offering license to make inferences from p*
> *(iii) U commits to p, undertaking a justificatory responsibility for p.*

This proposal incorporates insights from the work of William Alston and Robert Brandom, both of whom have advanced commitment-based accounts of assertion. Condition (i) draws on Alston's proposal, and requires that the proposition is either presented explicitly or anaphorically. This condition deals with the first problem, and provides a fine-grained criterion to determine which content is explicit enough to count as asserted – excluding presuppositions (as they are neither explicit nor anaphorical) and implied content more generally. But while Alston maintains that assertoric content can include elliptic content, Cull convincingly argues that including *any* kind of ellipsis would let in too much, allowing for some presuppositions and implicatures to be incorrectly classified as asserted. To prevent this, Cull narrows this criterion down to a specific kind of ellipsis, namely anaphoric ellipsis.

Condition (ii) and (iii) are rather inspired by Brandom's work, and spell out what it means for a speaker to assert that *p*. Articulating the notion of commitment in this way addresses Pagin's worry, because if one substitutes the word 'commitment' with (ii) and (iii) in (2), the resulting performative expression is indeed (Cull argues) intuitively an assertion that *p*. The proposed definition is thus able to address all the objections to the sufficiency of commitment-based accounts, offering a novel solution to some known challenges to commitment-based definitions of assertion.

Different authors have written on the notion of commitment, for a variety of purposes. One of the most influential analyses of the distinctive responsibilities engendered by assertoric speech acts is the one advanced by Robert Brandom in his 1994 volume *Making it Explicit.* According to Brandom (1994: 174-175), to assert is not only to commit oneself to respond to appropriate challenges (undertaking justificatory responsibility), but also to provide a license to reassert what one says. When a speaker is treated as making a successful assertion (that is, when her assertion is either unchallenged[2] or appropriately justified in response to a challenge), the audience inherits her entitlement, which licenses them to reassert the original claim (and its immediate consequences). When they rely on this license and so reassert that claim (or its immediate consequences), they can defer the justificatory responsibility back to the speaker, a responsibility which would otherwise be undertaken by them.

In *Asserzione, riasserzione e responsabilità discorsiva* [Assertion, reassertion and discursive responsibility], Vaccargiu argues that this account of the deference mechanism associated with assertion is defective, because it holds that the audience inherits the same entitlement as the speaker who has made the original claim, irrespective of whether they have reasons to doubt the speaker's reliability. Since the audience inherits the very same entitlement as the speaker, it would be natural to expect them to

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[2] According to Brandom (1994: 177-178), when an assertion is unchallenged, the speaker is acknowledged as having entitlement to it (at least, until the hearer has some reason for thinking otherwise).

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undertake the same task-responsibility. According to Brandom, though, the task-responsibilities of speakers and reasserting audiences are different: while the speaker must provide further claims in support of her assertion, it is enough for the audience to defer to the speaker's authority.

Vaccargiu argues that, since speakers and reasserting audiences are undertaking different task-responsibilities, they should be taken to be performing two different kinds of speech acts. He accounts for this difference by referring to what Kukla and Lance have called the 'normative positions' that a speaker and her audience occupy when they are involved in a discursive practice (see Kukla and Lance 2009: 155-163). In making an assertion, the speaker puts forward a claim as true and so commits herself to defending the claim if appropriately challenged. Those reasserting this claim only endorse the speaker's commitment; that is, they acknowledge that what the speaker has asserted is true, without undertaking any specific task-responsibility. Vaccargiu adds that under certain conditions a reassertion can count as a genuine assertion. This happens when those reasserting the original claim are able to vindicate the inherited entitlement to it by making other claims that are inferentially related to it. But when the original assertion is left unchallenged and the audience has no reasons in support of it, there is no alternative for the audience but to reassert the original claim by deferring to the speaker's authority. These reassertions are not genuine assertions, because those reasserting that claim only endorse the commitment expressed by the original assertion, without undertaking a genuine task-responsibility.

2. Assertion and Epistemology

Assertoric responsibility comes in different varieties. We have seen that the notion of 'assertoric commitment' captures the responsibilities that a speaker has *as a consequence* of making an assertion. But this is only one side of the coin: linguists and philosophers agree that there are also normative constraints that apply 'upstream' (MacFarlane 2011), *before* making an assertion, regulating which assertions are appropriate to make and which are not. To give a simple example, we expect other speakers not to lie: the norms governing linguistic interaction forbid assertions that are insincere.

But warranted assertion seems to require something more than mere sincerity. For instance, a speaker can be criticised for asserting something sincerely, if she is aware that her belief is based on a wild guess, wishful thinking, mere gut feeling, or held despite knowing that there is solid evidence to the contrary. This suggests that saying what you believe is not sufficient for making a proper assertion. To offer a systematic theory of warranted assertability is to answer the following question: given our mutual conversational and epistemic expectations, under which conditions is a given proposition assertable?

In his 1996 paper *Assertion and Knowledge*, Timothy Williamson introduced the hypothesis that a proposition's assertability may be modelled around the satisfaction of a simple rule: one must: assert that p only if p has C, where C is some epistemic property (Williamson 1996: 492). This hypothesis has triggered a lively debate as to which property exactly C is – that is, as to which property makes a proposition assertable. The most influential proposals identify C with the property of being true (Weiner 2005; Whiting 2012), known by the speaker (Williamson 1996; Derose 2002; Hawthorne 2004), or reasonably believed by her (Douven 2006; Lackey 2007; Kvanvig 2009).

Between all the available views, the most influential is the one that takes that *knowledge* to be the norm of assertion. This in spite of the fact that the knowledge account is

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known to be subject to a wide array of unaddressed objections and counterexamples[3], in particular when compared with competing views like the justification rule. One prominent counterexample levelled against the knowledge norm of assertion is represented by 'selfless assertions'. Lackey defines them as follows:

> *An assertion that p is selfless if and only if:*
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> 1. *a subject, for purely non-epistemic reasons, does not believe that p;*
> 2. *despite this lack of belief, the subject is aware that p is very well supported by all of the available evidence; and*
> 3. *because of this, the subject asserts that p without believing that p* (Lackey 2007: 599).

Lackey's most commonly cited example of selfless assertion involves a creationist teacher, Stella, who is aware that evolutionary theory is supported by the best available evidence, but firmly believes that creationism (that denies evolutionary theory) is true, on the basis of her religious faith. Most philosophers agree that if she were to tell her students that (3), her assertion would be appropriate, despite the fact that she believes it to be false.

> (3) *Homo Sapiens* evolved from *Homo Erectus.*

This is a problem for the knowledge account of assertion, since on this view an assertion is proper only if the speaker knows it to be true, and therefore only if the speaker believes it. Several strategies have since been developed (Engel 2008, Montminy 2013, Turri 2014, Milić 2017) to attempt to reconcile these cases with the knowledge norm of assertion.
Grzegorz Gaszczyk's *Are Selfless Assertions Hedged?* contends that these strategies are unsuccessful. He focuses on an influential response by Ivan Milić, according to which selfless assertions can be interpreted as being under the scope of a covert evidential. Milić's view is that, in some conversational contexts (more specifically, those in which selfless assertions are proper), making an assertion that *p* actually amounts to making a hedged assertion of the form '*According to evidence E, p*'. This would explain why Stella's utterance is proper: in her context, she is merely asserting that *Homo Sapiens* evolved from Homo Erectus *according to the evidence accepted by the scientific community*, so that she is not actually asserting something she believes to be false.
Gaszczyk shows that this account of selfless assertions is wanting in a number of ways: it does not offer general criteria to determine in which contexts selfless assertion are so hedged, nor it specifies which specific hedging is supposed to be in place in any given context. Furthermore, this reading is shown to be sometimes inconsistent with the way in which we actually interpret and assess these utterances. If one wants to show that selfless assertions pose no challenge to the knowledge norm, Gaszczyk argues, postulating covert hedges will not do the job.

We have seen that making an assertion that is fully cooperative requires meeting some epistemic standard. But sometimes speakers wishfully ignore this sort of assertoric norms, and exploit our mutual trust to manipulate and deceive their interlocutors. Especially in the last twenty years, a lively academic debate has emerged that aims to

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[3] See Douven (2006), Lackey (2007), Pelling (2012), Hill and Schetcher (2007), Brown (2010), Levin, Gerken (2011), Carter (2017), Pagin (2016), Marsili (2018), Kel and Simion (2018); for empirical objections, see also Reuter and Brossell (2018), Kneer (2018), Marsili and Wiegmann (in preparation).

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offer a systematic analysis of dishonest communication. A lot of attention has been devoted to drawing conceptual distinctions: much recent work attempts to determine under which conditions an utterance is a lie (Fallis 2009; Carson 2010; Fallis 2013; Stokke 2018; Fallis 2012), an assertion insincere (Marsili 2014, 2016, 2018; Dynel 2016; Wiegmann *et al.* 2016; Krauss 2017; Benton 2018; Pepp 2018), and whether lying necessarily involves an intention to deceive (Carson 1988; Carson, Wokutch and Murrmann 1982; Lackey 2013; Fallis 2015, 2018; Krstić 2018). Another important debate concerns the ethics of lying, addressing longstanding questions such as what makes lying morally wrong (Korsgaard 1988; Bok 1978; FaulkneR 2007), and whether other forms of deception, like merely misleading (Adler 1997; Saul 2012; Pepp 2018), are preferable to lying.

In *The responsibility of misled people*, Franca D'Agostini intervenes in the latter debate. Here the concept of deceptive lying is opposed to the concept of misleading: while lies deceive 'directly' (by literally saying something they believe to be false), misleading statements only deceive 'indirectly' (by saying something that is literally true, but that implies or conveys something that you believe to be false). There is wide consensus that these two terms individuate two different concepts (but cf. Meibauer, 2011, 2014), but authors disagree as to whether deceiving by lying is preferable to deceiving by misleading[4].

D'Agostini critically reviews some arguments in support of the thesis that misleading is morally preferable to deceptive lying, to focus on one in particular: the idea that if you get deceived by misleading statement (as opposed to a lie) you are partially responsible for being deceived. The idea is that successful misleading (but not lying) requires the hearer to draw inferences to reconstruct what the speaker means beyond what is literally said, and in venturing into believing these inferred propositions (rather than sticking to what is literally said) the hearer actively participates in her own deception. D'Agostini dubs this argumentative strategy a 'victim blaming' (VB) strategy, since part of the responsibility for deception is blamed on the victim.

To test this putative asymmetry between lying and misleading, D'Agostini proposes a methodic approach that she names 'responsibility calculus'. For any given utterance in a context, this method allows one to quantify the extent to which the intended audience is responsible for believing each of the propositions that the speaker conveys in making a statement. As it is construed, responsibility calculus shows that lying and misleading are not asymmetrical in terms of hearer responsibility. Since there is no substantial asymmetry, VB arguments about misleading (that accept responsibility asymmetry as a premise) fail.

There is a close relation between the notions of assertion and truth. Some philosophers of language have appealed to their interconnection when defining assertion (e.g., Frege 1982; Wright 1992), and indeed, many would agree that when making an assertion one presents its content as true. Although we can make assertions about anything we want, telling the truth can be risky, especially when our (public) assertions run counter to the claims made by those in power. Michel Foucault has worked on this issue, and attempted to weigh up the consequences of speaking truth to the powerful. He describes the specific kind of speech (or verbal) activity performed in this situation as "parrhesia" (borrowing the term from Greek literature).

In *Asserire il vero. L'atto parresiastico nell'analisi foucaultiana dei discorsi* [Asserting the truth. Parrhesiastic acts in Foucault's discourse analysis], Deborah De Rosa deals with this

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[4] Three main positions are available in the debate: that misleading is defeasibly *better* (Strudler 2009; Webber 2013), *equivalent* (Adler 1997; Williams 2002; Saul 2012), or *worse* (Rees 2014) than lying.

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Foucauldian concept. She first considers how Foucault characterizes the parrhesiastic act and then looks at its function within his discourse analysis, particularly with reference to its role in the dynamics of power and subjectivation. Foucault (1985: 19) conceives of parrhesia as «a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself)». Simply telling the truth does not constitute a parrhesiastic act *per se:* there are certain conditions which need to be satisfied for it to be considered as such. Firstly, a parrhesiastic act requires that the speaker authentically believes that what she is asserting is genuinely true. Secondly, a parrhesiastic act must question the present state of affairs and therefore be potentially undesirable (either to oneself or to others). Thirdly, since the parrhesiastes considers telling the truth to be a duty, parrhesia requires having the courage to tell the truth despite the danger involved. Indeed, the parrhesiastic act always takes place when the speaker is in a position of inferiority with respect to its audience. This also means that a parrhesiastes cannot act in her own interest.

De Rosa points out that what makes the parrhesiastic act different from any other kind of speech activity is that it momentarily blocks those mechanisms of censorship that, according to Foucault, every society implements, at all times and in all places. Accordingly, the parrhesiastes is someone who (for a moment, the time of the act being made) steals, from those who hold it, the privileged or exclusive right to speak about topics belonging to "regions of speech" that are inaccessible those who are not in power. De Rosa describes the parrhesiastic act as a 'change of position', a leap of the parrhesiastes that takes her where she is not supposed to be. And this act determines some important changes concerning the parrhesiastes' relation with what she believes to be true, with her own life (in light of the danger she runs), and with others (because of the threat that her assertion constitutes). De Rosa concludes that in every historical context, speaking freely to those who hold political power can set off unpredictable chains of events, and bring about radical changes into how society is structured and power relations are organised.

Assertion occupies a central place in epistemology because of its role in the transmission of information between epistemic agents. Most epistemologists take assertion to be the central vehicle of testimonial knowledge transmission (Adler 2006, Hawley 2010). They are interested in whether it is rational to believe someone else's assertions, and under which circumstances taking someone's word for it can be a source of knowledge (if ever).

Roughly, epistemological theories of testimony can be divided into two factions: reductionist theories and non-reductionist ones. Reductionists[5] argue that testimony is not a distinctive source of knowledge (like *perception* or *introspection*). If we gain knowledge from a bit of testimony, it is always because we have some non-testimonial reasons (typically inductive) for accepting that bit of testimony, so that what grounds our testimonial knowledge are ultimately these reasons: testimonial warrant is, on this view, *reducible* to them. Non-reductionists[6] take this picture to be inaccurate, and argue that we have a *pro tanto* reason to believe what we are told, so that testimony constitutes a distinctive source of epistemic warrant, that cannot simply be reduced to memory, perception or induction.

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[5] Like Hume (1748); Fricker (1994, 1995); Van Cleve (2006).

[6] See Reid (1785), Coady (1992), Burge (1993), Audi (1997), Goldman (1999), Goldberg (2010), Foley (2001).

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In *Epistemic Internalism and the Challenge from Testimony*, Felix Bräuer argues that non-reductionism in the epistemology of testimony is difficult to square with epistemic internalism, the popular view according to which you are epistemically justified in believing a proposition only if you have reflective access to your reasons for believing that proposition (cf. Pappas 2017). Between the accounts of testimonial justification available on the market, Bräuer identifies assurance theory (as championed by Moran 2005; Hinchman 2005; Faulkner 2011; McMyler 2011) as the only one able to meet this challenge. But Bräuer argues that this view rests on some controversial assumptions – amongst them, the idea that testimonial warrant can only ever be transmitted to the *intended recipient* of an assertion. Following the steps of Goldberg (2011, 2015) and Pelling (2013), he puts forward an alternative account, the 'assertion view', that grounds testimonial justification in the norm of assertion. Simply put, once one accepts the norm of assertion hypothesis (the idea that speakers should only make assertions they are in a sufficiently good epistemic position to do), it follows that hearers have a *prima facie* reason to believe what they are told – since they know that speakers are expected to meet the epistemic standard set by the norm of assertion. The resulting account provides the basis for a reconciliation between epistemic internalism and non-reductionism about testimony, that avoids some of the unpalatable commitments of the assurance view. More generally, Bräuer brings home the important point that one can be internalist about epistemic justification without thereby being committed to either reductionism or anti-reductionism, either by accepting some version of assurance theory, or by endorsing his own 'assertion view'.

3. Beyond Assertion

Traditionally, the study of assertion has focused on its illocutionary force and its literal, truth-conditional meaning. But in making an assertion, a speaker is often able to communicate more than what is literally asserted: implicatures, metaphoric and ironic meaning, expressive and evaluative content. The third section of this special issue investigates communication that goes beyond what is literally asserted.

In *Assertion, Implicature, and Speaker Meaning*, Mitchell Green proposes a novel treatment of certain alleged implicatures in terms of more primitive forms of communication than speaker-meaning. Green focuses on the alleged quantity implicatures generated by cases like the South of France scenario (SF):

A. Where does C live?
B. Somewhere in the south of France.

In SF, B is less informative than he is expected to be, thus not only does he say that C lives somewhere in Southern France, but he also gets across the information that he is not in a position to say where C lives exactly.

Green challenges the Gricean framework [7] by arguing that many cases of communication that are typically treated as norm violations (giving rise to quantity implicatures) are not instances of *overt* norm violations (and therefore do not give rise to implicatures at all). For Green, in SF B does not *intend* A to believe that he is not in a position to know where C lives, so he does not speaker-mean it; rather, he is willing to *allow* A to think so. Since B lacks the required reflexive communicative intention, B is not implicating that he does not know where C lives.

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[7] Grice (1989); see Neale (1992: 524 FF), Petrus (2010: 4-12), Bianchi (2013: 110), and Bach (2012: 54).

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In addition to criticizing the Gricean analysis of SF and other cases of alleged implicatures, Green offers a novel analysis of the intermediate space between natural and non-natural meaning. Relying on insights from evolutionary studies on communication, he develops a new analysis that parsimoniously does without intentions to communicate and reflexive communicative intentions. Contents that so far have been treated as quantity implicatures should be seen either as manifestations, cues, signals, or expressions of the speaker's epistemic state, which do contribute to the conversation, for instance by contributing to update the Stalnakerian common ground. Drawing a parallelism with more primitive forms of communication, Green also reconstructs the journey from these simpler signalling systems to the current practice of assertion.

Like implicated propositional content, metaphoric meaning is typically taken to go beyond what is literally asserted. From a pragmatic perspective, when we speak metaphorically we say something that is literally false (e.g. 'Life is a rollercoaster'), thereby overtly violating Grice's first maxim of Quality («Do not say what you believe to be false», Grice 1989: 27), to communicate another proposition (in the example, something like 'Life involves plenty of ups and downs and twists and turns'). Many theories have been proposed over the years to account for how metaphors work (see, e.g., Black 1954; Davidson 1978; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Moran 1989; Searle 1979; Sperber and Wilson 2006).
In *An Inferential Articulation of Metaphorical Assertions*, Richmond Kwesi deals with the controversial issue of the relationship between metaphor and assertion. Some scholars indeed hold that a metaphorical statement cannot count as an assertion, since it is a non-descriptive use of language. According to this view, despite being expressed in the indicative form, metaphorical statements cannot be properly assessed as either true or false, nor do they have a propositional content (Davidson 1979; Lepore and Stone 2010). Lamarque and Olsen (1994), for example, hold that what is constitutive of metaphors is not that they state that something is the case, but rather that they invite the hearer to see things differently.
Against this family of theories, Kwesi argues that metaphorical statements can indeed be genuinely assertoric. He proposes an inferentialist account of metaphors, according to which they can be classified as assertions, and hence as moves within discursive practices, in a Brandomian sense (see Brandom 1994: 167-168). Within this framework, we can see that a speaker using a metaphor is doing more than simply inviting the hearer to see things differently. Kwesi convincingly shows that in resorting to metaphorical claims a speaker is recognized as undertaking certain commitments, and her interlocutors regard themselves as entitled to draw certain inferences from those claims. It follows that asserting and inferring are not peculiar to literal uses of language, but can also occur when language is used metaphorically.
Since metaphorical claims are literally false, however, it is unclear how they can play an appropriate role as premises and conclusions in reasoning. In order to account for their acceptability, Kwesi resorts to the notion of presupposition accommodation. Metaphors can be conceived as presuppositional markers, whose function is to suggest how an assertion is to be understood and interpreted. It is thus the process of accommodation that determines how metaphorical claims are involved in inferential practices and the properties of their involvement. Kwesi concludes that his account offers a suitable avenue for understanding metaphorical claims as having propositional content and so as being truth-assessable, in virtue of the fact they are involved in inferential practices where they can be appropriately used both as premises and as conclusions of arguments.

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Language does not just describe state of affairs, but it is also capable of expressing attitudes. Linguistic items that are especially apt to do so are called 'expressives' (Kaplan 1999, Potts 2005). The research on expressives flourished impressively in the past couple of decades, with a particular focus on discriminatory language, especially slurs and kindred locutions (Schlenker 2007, Hom 2008, Jeshion 2013, Bolinger 2017, Nunberg 2018). Slurs are derogatory terms which convey a disparaging content towards a target group (a class of individuals). Most of the research on expressives – including the new works we present in this special issue – has been conducted on theoretical grounds; note, however, that a few works started investigating the expressive dimension of meaning on empirical grounds (see i.a. Cepollaro *et al.* 2019 and Sulpizio *et al.* 2019) Giuliano Torrengo's paper, *La teoria dell'indeterminatezza semantica degli slur* [The semantic indeterminacy theory of slurs] proposes a novel analysis of slurs in terms of semantic indeterminacy. Torrengo first categorizes the existing accounts of slurs into three families: (i) strict content (à la Hom 2008), (ii) broad content (à la Potts 2005, Schlenker 2007, Cepollaro 2015) and (iii) no content theories (à la Anderson and Lepore 2013). He then proceeds to present a novel way to understand the relation between epithets and their associated evaluative meaning. His main claim is that the linguistic conventions underlying the derogatory power of slurs leave it *underdetermined* whether the derogatory content of epithets belongs to the truth-conditional content or whether it amounts to some non-truth-conditional content that signals the speaker's attitude towards the target class. Torrengo argues that the fact that slurs are often associated with derogation does not guarantee that the corresponding linguistic conventions are fully determined, nor does it conclusively establish whether and how epithets convey derogation. Indeterminacy is not the same thing as ambiguity: slurs are neither fully descriptive nor fully expressive, but this does not make them ambiguous expressions. Their indeterminacy resembles more the vagueness of certain predicates, such as 'bald', in that there is not one single admissible precisification that exactly corresponds to their meaning. Torrengo concludes with some remarks on how the association between slurs and derogatory contents must have evolved.

Clearly, slurs do not cover the entire domain of expressive language. Just consider what Saka (2007) calls 'particularistic insults', like 'jerk' or 'asshole', or terms which can be used as insults but are not per se (e.g. 'fascist'). In *Pejoratives: a classification of the connoted terms*, Frigerio and Tenchini explore the evaluative and expressive domains of meaning, by considering pejoratives and connoted locutions in general. The authors propose a new taxonomy of connoted terms, which also includes slurs, while situating them in a broader framework. For Frigerio and Tenchini, the relation between descriptive and non-descriptive meaning should be represented as a continuum with the descriptive and the connotative dimensions at its poles. Moreover, they identify four criteria or parameters which allow us to distinguish between different types of connoted terms: (i) polarity (positive, neutral or negative), (ii) kind of attitude (despise, mockery, condescendence, etc.), (iii) conveyed level of emotion (higher or lower), and finally (iv) vulgarity (harder to pin down, this category has to do with referring to taboo topics such as sex/defecation/other physiological functions).

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These three thematic sections investigate crucial aspects of assertion. Several questions are left unanswered and many more are raised, but we hope that this special issue can offer a valuable contribution to this lively debate.

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When Alston Met Brandom: Defining Assertion

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Abstract: In this paper I give a definition of assertion that develops William P. Alston's account. Alston's account of assertion combines a responsibility condition R, which captures the appropriate socio-normative status that one undertakes in asserting something, with an explicit presentation condition, such that the speech act in some way presents the content of what is being asserted. I develop Alston's account of explicit presentation and add a Brandomian responsibility condition. I then argue that this produces an attractive position on the nature of assertion.

0.   Introduction[1]
In this paper I give a definition of assertion in the *Alstonian* tradition. William P. Alston's definition of assertion combines a responsibility condition R, which captures the appropriate socio-normative status that one undertakes in asserting something, with a presentation condition, such that the speech act in some way presents the content of what is being asserted. In this way, Alstonian theories avoid the problems of individuation faced by *purely* social definitions of assertion, which rely only on a responsibility condition R[2]. Exploring the account given by William P. Alston, I will suggest that, given appropriate changes, an Alstionian account gives a very attractive definition of assertion. Not only does an Alstonian account with a Brandomian responsibility condition appropriately individuate assertion, I suggest that the account is suitably complex to deal with the challenge put forward by Peter Pagin (2004, 2009) for social accounts of assertion.

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[1] I would like to thank David Bakhurst, Michael Vossen, Agnes Tam, Lesley Jamieson, Brennan Harwood, Jared Housten, Harshita Jaiprakash, Aaron Morgulis, Christine Sypnowich, Josh Mozersky and Sergio Sissimondo for all of their discussion and helpful comments on various versions of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge that much of the time that went into thinking about and starting this paper took place on traditional *Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory.*

[2] The roots of purely social accounts of assertion can be found in Peirce, who claims that «to assert a proposition is to make oneself responsible for its truth» (Pierce, quoted in Macfarlane, 2011: 90). Whilst positions of this type have been held by many, including John Searle (1969), I shall only engage with a recent version of the position here, given by Robert Brandom.

1. Alston's Account

William P. Alston gives two questions that any satisfactory theory of assertion must be able to answer if it is to individuate assertion. First, what is it that distinguishes the expression of a psychological attitude from the assertion that one has that attitude? Second, what is the distinction between what is asserted and what is presupposed? (Alston, 2000: 115). To this, he adds a third question for theories of assertion that rely on a notion of commitment or responsibility — if assertion is simply the commitment to (the truth of) some proposition, then why is it that in other speech acts, such as promising and ordering, I am not asserting the content and necessary preconditions of those speech acts? To see why this might be a problem, take the following order, uttered by the Major: "Polish your boots, Private!" Here the Major is committed to the following:

> That the private will polish her boots.
> That it is possible for the private to polish her boots.
> That the private has boots.
> That there is a private.
> That the private will be placed under an obligation by the utterance of this
> order.
> And so on...[3]

Thus, if assertion is understood as mere commitment, the Major is asserting all of the above. Thus the problem for any sufficient account of assertion is telling us why the above commitments are not asserted when orders, promises, or other non-assertoric speech acts are performed.

1.1 Explicit Presentation

These problems, and a frustration with contemporary accounts of assertion lead Alston to his fundamental insight:

> we assert that p when we "come right out and say that p *in so many words*", when "we *explicitly* say that p". This suggests that the difference between asserting that p and R'ing that p without asserting it lies in the verbal means employed in the utterance, rather than in the psychological attitudes or in any other inner factor. Furthermore it suggests that the crucial feature of the sentential vehicle is the "explicitness" with which it "presents" the p in question. Where the p R'd is "explicitly presented", it is asserted; where not, not (Alston, 2000: 117).

Alston spells out this notion of 'explicit presentation' in terms of semantic isomorphism. That is, a sentence S explicitly presents a proposition p iff S and p are semantically isomorphic. S and p are semantically isomorphic iff for each semantic element of S there is a corresponding element of p (and vice-versa) and the elements of

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[3] It is fairly obvious that a good answer to Alston's second question will eliminate all but the first commitment on this list as a problem. The first commitment on this list is the propositional content of the order, and seems to be explicitly presented by the order. I am certainly less worried than Alston about saying that in making an order or promise one also asserts the content of the order or promise (see, for a defence of this position, Marsili: 2016). Consider Gary Watson's example: «Consider also giving directions to the library solely by a series of imperatives: "Go to the next corner, turn right, and continue on to the northeast corner of the first intersection with a traffic light. "I take it that one has told [asserted to] one's interlocutor that the library is on the corner of that intersection» (Watson, 2004: 74). Thus despite using this problem to show (in part) why Alston is motivated to take his position, I will take it that an appropriate response to Alston's second question dissolves Alston's third question.

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S and *p* are each combined in corresponding ways. Thus the proposition that the door is open is semantically isomorphic to the following sentences: "the door is open", "that door is open", "it's open". In each of the above sentences, there are semantic elements corresponding to each semantic element of the above proposition — a referring expression for the door ('the door', 'that door', and 'it') which refers to the door in question, a predicative term describing that something is open, and the relation of predication between the referring expression and the predicative term (Alston, 2000: 117).

Thus in addition to a responsibility condition R (the details of which will be spelled out shortly), Alston gives an explicit presentation condition that must be met if one is to count as asserting that *p*. Thus: «U asserted that *p* in uttering *S* iff both: R: U R'd that p. EP: *S* explicitly presents the proposition that *p*.» (Alston, 2000: 120-121).

Alston rightly suggests that this deals with his three questions quite nicely. When I say "Wow!" or "Eww!" I do not explicitly present the proposition that I am excited or the proposition that I am disgusted, thus Alston's account correctly categorises such expressions of emotion as not being assertions. Further, when one asserts "The cat is on the mat", the proposition that there exists a cat is not explicitly presented by the sentence and thus this and other presuppositions of assertions do not count as assertions. Finally, when one orders another thus: "Close the door!" (despite one R'ing that there exists a door and R'ing that one has the authority to order another in such a way) neither the proposition that there exists a door nor the proposition that one has the authority to order another in such a way are explicitly presented by the utterance. Thus *prima facie* all three problems are solved by the introduction of the explicit presentation condition.

However, the explicit presentation condition cannot be as simple as I have presented it here. There are cases where we assert that *p* in uttering *S*, where *S* is not semantically isomorphic to *p*. Take the following case suggested by Alston: «Alice: "What did you have for lunch?". Bobby: "Soup."» (2000: 120). Here Bobby seems to be asserting that they had soup for lunch, but the utterance "Soup" is certainly not semantically isomorphic to the proposition that Bobby had soup for lunch, as it lacks both the semantic elements designating Bobby and lunch, along with the predicate 'had for lunch' and the appropriate tripartite predication relation between had for lunch and the three subjects Bobby, soup and lunch. To deal with cases such as these, Alston introduces ellipsis, arguing that the utterance need not explicitly present the proposition that *p*, but need only be elliptical for a sentence that does. Therefore Bobby's utterance does count as an assertion, as "Soup" is elliptical for "I had soup for lunch" which explicitly presents the proposition that Bobby had soup for lunch. Thus Alston's modified analysis of assertion is as follows:

> U asserted that *p* in uttering *S* iff both:
> R: U R'd that *p*
> EP$_e$: *S* explicitly presents the proposition that *p*, or *S* is uttered as elliptical for a sentence that explicitly presents the proposition that *p*.

However EP$_e$ causes more trouble for Alston than it prevents. Take the following utterance: «Clara: "Joanna batted well today"». Clara's utterance here is correctly analyzed by Alston's account as an assertion that Joanna batted well today. However, we might worry that Clara's utterance is elliptical for the sentence "Joanna batted well and played cricket today" and even simply "Joanna played cricket today". Thus Clara is, according to Alston, asserting that Joanna batted well and played cricket today, and asserting that Joanna played cricket today, alongside innumerable other propositions

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which are explicitly presented by sentences that the original utterance is elliptical for. Given that these propositions are, intuitively, not asserted by Clara, then the introduction of the EP$_e$ means that Alston's second problem, of distinguishing assertions from their presuppositions, rears its ugly head once more. In attempting to account for assertions like "Soup", Alston has fallen victim to the very problem he posed for other accounts of assertion[4].

It seems then, that adding ellipsis is too clumsy a move — it lets too much into the category of assertion. I propose however, that Alston was on the right track with this move — it is merely that we need to specify the right *kind* of ellipsis. Anaphoric dependence, I claim, specifies the right *kind* of ellipsis to individuate assertion. Anaphoric dependence is a linguistic phenomenon whereby the content of one token utterance is passed on to another token utterance. Take the example given by Brandom: «Have I read *the book*? I haven't even taught *it* yet» (Brandom, 2005: 239). Here, 'it' anaphorically refers to 'the book' and thus the content of 'it' is determined by the content of its referent — 'the book'. 'It' is of course a pronoun, but there are also 'prosentences', expressions whose anaphoric reference can be an entire declarative sentence. Take, for example 'yes', which Brentano first described as a prosentence in 1904: «Danny: "Does Tim like the library?". Emma: "Yes."» (Grover et al., 1975: 87-88). Here, Emma's utterance anaphorically refers to the sentence "Tim likes the library" (which can be derived from the context — Danny's utterance) and derives its content thereof. Thus in this context the sentence "Yes" anaphorically refers to the sentence "Tim likes the library". Note that that Tim likes the library is precisely the proposition that we take Emma to be asserting when she utters "Yes". We can thus use the notion of a prosentence anaphorically referring to another sentence in our definition of assertion:

> U asserted that *p* in uttering *S* iff both:
> R: U R'd that *p*
> EP$_a$: *S* explicitly presents the proposition that *p*, or *S* is a prosentence anaphorically referring to a sentence that explicitly presents *p*.

To understand how this definition solves the problems faced by Alston's account, let us return to the 'soup' example. Bobby's utterance of "Soup" as a response to the Alice's question "What did you have for lunch today" is a prosentence that anaphorically refers to the sentence "I had soup for lunch". We derive this from the context – Alice's utterance. Remember the Brentano case: just as Danny's utterance of "Does Tim like the library?" gives us the anaphoric referent "Tim likes the library", which Emma then refers to in her utterance of "Yes", Alice's utterance of "What did you have for lunch" tells us that the anaphoric referent of Bobby's utterance is the sentence "I had soup for lunch". "I had soup for lunch" explicitly presents the proposition that I had soup for lunch. "Soup" is thus correctly categorised as an assertion. The cricket counterexample is also dispatched, as Clara's utterance of "Joanna batted well today" does not anaphorically refer to any sentence. There is no relevant context and thus no anaphoric reference. Thus the only proposition that is asserted by Clara is that which her utterance explicitly presents: that Joanna batted well today.

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[4] We might think that the ellipsis condition also means that Alston no longer has a satisfactory response to his first problem. Take the utterance "Wow". It is an expression of enthusiasm, but we might read it as elliptical for the sentence "I am enthusiastic", which explicitly presents the proposition that I am enthusiastic. "Wow", according to EP$_e$, thus becomes an assertion. EP$_e$ would thus mean that Alston falls victim to his own first problem.

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One might worry that a more challenging example comes when there is an anaphoric context providing a sentence to which the utterance refers in addition to a proposition explicitly presented by the sentence uttered: «Florence: "Did Joanna DJ today?". Gareth: "Joanna spun records well today"». Here it seems that Gareth's utterance anaphorically refers to the sentence "Joanna did DJ today and spun records well today" or "Yes she did, and Joanna spun records well today" or simply "Joanna did DJ today" and therefore Gareth counts as asserting that Joanna did DJ today. Yet given the context of Gareth's utterance, it seems less than clear to me that this is not the correct result. Analogous to the soup example, intuitively Gareth is asserting that Joanna did DJ today in this context[5]. EP_a thus provides the appropriate ellipsis relation for Alston's account to correctly include assertions and rule out presuppositions.

1.2 Alstonian Responsibility

One might think that an account of assertion could be given just in terms of an explicit presentation condition. However, such an account would fail to individuate assertion from supposition and conjecture. In conjecturing "The rain today will be especially hard" the speaker explicitly presents the proposition that the rain today will be especially hard, and would, on this naïve account, wrongly count as asserting. Thus any such account would do well to be supplemented by a clause that accounts for the distinctive force of assertion — that in asserting that p one is somehow responsible for p's being the case, in a way that one is not if one merely conjectures that p, or supposes that p for the sake of argument. We therefore need a responsibility condition R. For Alston: «R_A: U R's that p in uttering S iff: In uttering S, U subjects their utterance to a rule that, in application to this case, implies that it is permissible for U to utter S only if p» (Alston, 2000: 60). Where this rule is a social norm concerning what it is acceptable to say in a given language game, and lays the speaker open to criticism if they break that rule. Alston points out that this responsibility condition implies that if one asserts "The cat is on the mat" one R's not only the propositional content of the assertion, but all of the presuppositions of the assertion, such as the presupposition that there is a cat (Alston, 2002: 114-115). After all, it would be impermissible for one to utter "The cat is on the mat" if there was not a cat. Thus alone this condition would not individuate assertion from presupposition – it needs to be combined with an explicit presentation condition. The condition does, however, allow individuation of assertion from conjecture and supposition, acts which meet the explicit presentation condition, but not Alston's requirement that one only perform them if one subjects one's utterance to the rule that one may make that utterance only if the content of that utterance is the case.

It might appear that Alston's R'ing condition is simply a constitutive norm of assertion, as endorsed by a tradition coming out of the work of Timothy Williamson[6]. However, we should not be quite so hasty to characterise Alston as a member of that tradition. For one, Williamsonian and other similar accounts only require that assertions be governed by some rule, whilst Alston requires that not only does assertion need to be governed by some rule, but that the rule governance must also be instituted by the speaker. Second, given that the R'ing condition is combined with an explicit presentation condition in Alston's final account, complaints that the definition of assertion is not rich enough (see Macfarlane 2011 on 'Boogling') will have a tougher time gaining traction. Nevertheless, Alston does take the norm that the R'ing condition

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[5] Does my EP_a version of Alston's position fall victim to Alston's first worry? Plausibly not. It seems hard to see how "Wow" or "Eww" could anaphorically refer to sentences such as "I am disgusted".

[6] See, for instance, Williamson (1996) and (2000), Jennifer Lackey (2007), Martin Montminy (2013), Matthew Weiner (2005), Keith DeRose (2002), and Igor Douven (2006).

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describes, along with his explicit presentation condition, to be constitutive of assertion (Alston, 2000: 253).

If the Alstonian R'ing condition is (with these caveats in place) a norm of assertion, where do we place it in the taxonomy of those accounts? At first glance, it might be tempting to characterise it *simply* as a truth-norm of assertion (henceforth the T-rule). After all, if one may only assert that p only if p, and as is generally accepted, the T-schema holds, then one may assert that p only if 'p' is true. However, whilst Alston does take his rule to be the T-rule, he also thinks that his rule entails two other formulations of the R'ing condition, whilst maintaining that R_A (the T-rule) "is the most fundamental formulation": «R_{AP}: U R's that p in uttering S — In uttering S, U purports to know that p. R_{AR}: U R's that p in uttering S — In uttering S, U represents p as being the case.» (Alston, 2000: 63).

Alston argues that R_A entails R_{AP}, as one subjects oneself to that rule that one may assert that p only if p – and thus one cannot purport to follow the rule without thereby purporting to know that one does so. Alston argues that R_{AR} follows from R_A, as when one subjects something to a rule that requires that p, one represents p as being the case (Alston, 2000: 63).

Given that Alston regards R_A as entailing R_{AP} and R_{AR}, if we can find counterexamples to these conditions, then by *modus tollens*, Alston ought to reject R_A. As it happens, there are cases where we do not purport to know that p in uttering S, and yet still assert that p. Think of cases of openly insincere assertions, as used by Macfarlane to argue against Bach and Harnish's account of assertion (see Macfarlane, 2011: 82), in such examples, it is common knowledge between myself and my interlocutor that I do not believe p, and yet I still assert that p. Think of a hopelessly lost position in a football game. Both myself and my team know that I know we will lose — we are 4-0 down with five minutes to play. Here, I might assert "We're still in this — we have a chance to win here"[7]. Further, even if Alston were to change his mind and reject the inference from R_A to R_{AP}, R_A itself is vulnerable to the objections Williamson has made against the truth norm of assertion[8]. It seems, then, that if we are to have an account of assertion of this sort, we had better have a different responsibility condition.

2. Brandom's Account

For such a responsibility condition, we might turn to Robert Brandom's account of assertion, which is given solely in terms of a responsibility condition. I will suggest that, alone, Brandom's account fails, as it cannot individuate assertion from presupposition. However, I will suggest that precisely because this is a problem that is nicely solved by Alston's explicit presentation condition, using Brandom's account to provide the responsibility condition R for Alston's account gives us a very attractive position on the nature of assertion. Brandom's account of assertion attempts to frame assertion in terms of the social statuses we undertake or acknowledge when making an assertion. Such social statuses are normative, and constituted by members of a conversation treating the speaker as so committed. Borrowing the notion of a conversational score from David Lewis (1979), Brandom thinks that members of a conversation keep score of the deontic statuses undertaken by themselves and other members of the conversation,

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[7] For further discussion of such examples, see Michaelson, 2018.

[8] See Williamson 2000. Certainly, the T-norm has a much harder time making sense of things like "How do you know that" responses to assertions and Moorean 'paradoxes'. See also the objections to factive accounts of assertion given by Dodd 1999, Lackey 2007, McKinnon 2013, Marsili 2018 and Kneer 2018.

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attributing to themselves and others the appropriate commitments and entitlements[9]. For Brandom, asserting some claim is to undertake or acknowledge two such statuses. It is to endorse the claim, enabling others to use it as a premise in inference, and to commit[10]. oneself to the claim, undertaking a conditional task-responsibility to justify it if challenged (Brandom, 1994: 170-173, 1983: 640-641).

Endorsement is a deontic status that one can undertake. In so doing (perhaps via an utterance) one states that one has the authority to make some claim, and that others may, on the basis of that authority, use that claim as a premise in further inference. In the context of an assertion, if the assertion goes unchallenged, or is justified appropriately in response to challenges, an assertion has the effect of the speaker endorsing that which the assertion claims[11]. In this technical Brandomian sense of endorsement, the assertion (via the deontic status undertaken by the speaker) authorises further assertions, including the re-assertion of the original claim and those claims which are entailed (logically or materially) by the original claim. The audience of the assertion are thus offered what we might call an 'inference ticket', licensing further assertions. The ticket metaphor is a useful one. Suppose I offer you a ticket to attend a performance of *Twelfth Night* by the Royal Shakespeare Company. In doing so I am offering you a socially significant license to perform further social acts, specifically those to do with sitting and watching a play. In the same way, my asserting to you "Shakespeare was a better playwright than Marlowe" offers you a license to perform social acts, including asserting that "Shakespeare was a better playwright than Marlowe"[12]. In this way, assertions have a role in what Brandom calls 'the game of giving and asking for reasons' — asserting something gives a reason for further assertions, and can serve as a response when one is asked for a reason.

However, assertion involves not only endorsement, but commitment:

> In asserting a claim one not only authorizes further assertions, but commits oneself to vindicate the original claim, showing that one is entitled to make it. Failure to defend one's entitlement to an assertion voids its social significance as inferential warrant for further assertions. It is only assertions one is entitled to make can that serve to entitle others to its inferential consequences. Endorsement is empty unless the commitment can be defended (Brandom, 1983: 641).

In asserting, «one undertakes the conditional task responsibility to justify the claim if challenged» (Brandom, 1983: 641-642). Where a 'task-responsibility' is defined as a

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[9] As an anonymous reviewer has helpfully noted, there is a difference between Brandom's and Lewis's notions of the conversational score. Whilst Lewis and his followers generally take the scorekeeper to be an objective asserter, Brandom takes the scorekeepers to be the participants of the conversation themselves. Importantly, this allows for A and B's scorecards to differ, and, so Brandom suggests, A and B's recognition of this fact grounds intentionality and representation.

[10] Brandom unhelpfully uses commitment in two senses. The first sense is a broad commonsense notion of any normative status that demands some action, the latter sense a technical term referring to a specific normative commitment detailed below. Hereafter I shall refer to the former as commitment, the latter as commitment$_b$.

[11] This is because, according to Brandom, entitlement has a «default and challenge structure» (Brandom, 1994: 243).

[12] The metaphor goes further. Suppose the ticket I gave you to attend the theatre with was a bad one (I used a photocopier to produce a forgery). Upon seeing the ticket, you can challenge me about the goodness of the ticket, or if you decide to attempt to use it anyway, the guard at the door of the theatre will challenge you about the legitimacy of the ticket. So too for licenses to assert (see Brandom, 1994: 161).

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responsibility which requires the fulfillment of a task (in this case, the task of justifying the claim) in order to be fulfilled. Thus, one commits$_b$ oneself to some claim if one is willing to justify it in some way if challenged. There are three ways in which this justificatory task can be fulfilled. First, there is the appeal to the authority of another, who has also asserted the claim, and upon whose authority one bases one's own assertion. Second, one can make further assertions, justifying the content of the first assertion. Third, one can invoke one's own authority as a reliable reporter of non-inferential information (as one does in cases of reporting how one feels, or in cases where one is the only person who has observed some phenomena) (Brandom, 1994: 174). Note that in each of these ways of fulfilling the justificatory task, one is passing the justificatory buck, whether to another speaker, other assertions, or one's own reliability as an observer. These authorities for one's assertion can themselves be challenged and defended in the same ways as the original assertion. Of course, this leads to a potentially endless chain of further justifications, but this need not be problematic, given that the justifications are only required *when the asserter is challenged to provide them* – the task responsibility is, after all, a *conditional* task responsibility. This commitment$_b$ aspect of assertion captures a second distinctive aspect of assertion, its force – that when we assert something, we are somehow responsible for what we have asserted.

Challenging obviously plays a central role in this definition of assertion, but Brandom is a little unclear on what exactly it consists in. Thankfully Jeremy Wanderer has provided a set of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions that are implicit in Brandom's *Making it Explicit*:

> The first (C1) is that the successful act of challenging must provide the condition requiring the challenged asserter to undertake the task of demonstrating entitlement to the challenged claim. The second (C2) is that the effect of a successful challenge, according to a scorekeeper, is to remove the default entitlement associated with a claim, suspending entitlement to the claim pending successful defence. The third (C3) is that the challenge must be an act that can be performed appropriately or inappropriately; it must be susceptible to being challenged itself, so that successfully challenging the challenge is one way of restoring the entitlement to a claim (Wanderer, 2010: 100).

Whilst Wanderer and Brandom (see Brandom, 2010) take this definition to imply that all challenges are assertions of incompatible propositions, I fail to see how this follows. Indeed, what I take to be nice about the above definition, put in terms of the effects of a speech act, is that it allows for challenges to take a plurality of forms. The challenge need not be a question, but could be an assertion, or even a promise or order.

Suppose Johann utters "The moon is made of cheese". All the following responses to that utterance, count as challenges on Wanderer's account, and I take it that it is intuitive that we would ordinarily count them as such:

> Jamelia: "Are you sure?"
> Josephine: "The moon isn't made of cheese."
> James: "I promise you, you're wrong."
> Jackie: "You are going to have to show me where it says that on the NASA website before I accept that."
> Jennifer: "Prove it!"

Accounting for the variety of utterances that can count as challenges, and having given fairly rigorous conditions for which acts count as assertions, I think that Brandom and his followers should be happy to rely on Wanderer's definition.

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3. Individuating Assertion: A Problem for Brandom's Account

Despite capturing two important aspects of assertion, Brandom's account is not without its difficulties. I suggest that, just like the 'commitment-only' account of assertion put forward by Alston prior to adding his explicit presentation condition, Brandom's fails to distinguish assertion from presupposition[13]. Brandom's account gives a simple answer to the question of how to individuate assertion from conjecture or supposition. In the case of conjecture or supposition, the responsibility condition is not met, whilst in the case of assertion, it is. When one makes a supposition, whilst one does enable others to use the content as a premise in inference (albeit conditionally) one is only suggesting the content of the speech act. Thus one does not undertake an obligation to justify it if challenged – thus one is not committed$_b$ to the content. I take it that the same is true of conjecture.

However, Brandom's account struggles to distinguish that which is asserted from that which is presupposed. *Ceteris paribus* if I say "The cat is on the mat" I presuppose that there is a cat, yet in doing so I both endorse and commit$_b$ myself to the claim that there is a cat and so according to Brandom I assert that there is a cat. I endorse the claim, as after I have said "The cat is on the mat", others are entitled to use the claim that there is a cat as a premise in inference. Meanwhile, I am committed$_b$ to the claim that there is a cat, as in uttering "The cat is on the mat", I undertake an obligation to justify the claim that there is a cat[14]. Thus Brandom's account treats many presuppositions as assertions and is thus insufficient for a definition of assertion, as it fails to properly individuate assertion from presuppositions.

Brandom might respond *contra the above* that assertions are unique (and therefore individuated) as according to him, only they both perform the role of being that which reasons are asked for, and that which giving a reason consists in. Thus whilst one can ask what the reason for (the justification of) an action was, one cannot offer an action as a reason for anything[15]. Meanwhile, whilst one can offer the reliability of an observer as a reason for believing that observer, one cannot ask for the reason for (in the sense of a justification of) the reliability of the observer. My assertion of some claim, however, can both provide a reason and stand in need of reasons to justify it (Brandom, 1994: 167). However, presuppositions also stand in this dual relation to a reason. If I assert "My job application's rejection letter came through today", which presupposes that I sent off a job application, not only would an interlocutor be quite within their rights to demand justification for (reasons for) accepting the claim that I sent off a job application, but they would also be acting legitimately were they to take the claim that I sent off a job application itself as a reason[16]. Assertion, then, cannot be individuated by reference to

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[13] See Alston 2000 and Marsili 2015 for further discussion.

[14] After all, it would be fine for someone to use my utterance as justification for not letting someone with a cat allergy come near us, and it would be fine for someone to challenge me on my utterance by saying, "What? What do you mean there's a cat?", or "There's no cat!"

[15] It is unclear whether this is in fact the case. Ordinary language suggests that actions can play the role of reasons in this sense – we can quite easily imagine a bartender who, when asked why they threw a punter from their bar would reply "They punched another customer!", or show a CCTV video of the punch, or mimic the act of punching. Whether this is surface 'grammar' misleading us as to the underlying metaphysical nature of reasons notwithstanding, contemporary debates in the metaphysics of reasons are inconclusive, and we should not be quick in accepting Brandom's claim here.

[16] Suppose, for example, that I utter "The library will close in an hour". Here I assert that the library will close in an hour, and presuppose that the library is currently open. My interlocutor could quite reasonably take this presupposition as a reason for action, for instance, immediately leaving to return some books to the library.

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the unique relation that assertions have to the notion of a reason, as presuppositions also incur these sorts of commitments[17].

This said, Brandom's account captures something important about assertion, that is, the normative force that assertions carry. In the next section, I will outline Alston's position, before showing how combining it with the Brandomian picture both answers the individuation question and retains this nice account of assertoric force.

4. The Alstonian-Brandomian Account

I therefore suggest that we incorporate Brandom's responsibility condition into Alston's account, along with the changes I proposed to the explicit presentation condition, in order to adequately deal with cases of ellipsis. In outlining the account, I will (perhaps somewhat unfaithfully to Brandom) give his R conditions a representationalist framing, but given that Alstonian account are committed to a form of representationalism, I take it that this is no major issue.

> U asserted that p in uttering S iff both:
> EP_a: S explicitly presents the proposition that p, or S is a prosentence anaphorically referring to a sentence that explicitly presents p.
> R: U R'd that p
> Where U R's that p in uttering S iff both:
> R_{B1}: U endorses that p, offering license to make inferences from p,
> R_{B2}: U commits$_b$ to p, undertaking a justificatory responsibility for p.

I take this to be the correct account of assertion. In what follows I shall show that it adequately individuates assertion, and explains a number of linguistic data that are often canvassed in favour of rival accounts. Finally I shall show that it adequately responds to a couple of putative objections.

4.1 Individuating Assertion

My Alstonian account of assertion individuates assertion from conjecture and supposition on the one hand, and presupposition on the other, by incorporating the best aspects of Brandom and Alston's accounts. The following indicates how the conditions individuate assertion:

	EP_a	R_{B1}	R_{B2}
Assertion	✓	✓	✓
Presupposition	X	Sometimes	Sometimes
Conjecture/Supposition	✓	✓	X
Expression of Emotion	X	?	?
Speech Act Commitments	X	Sometimes	Sometimes

In asserting that p, all three conditions are met. Meanwhile, when one presupposes that p, one does not explicitly present the proposition that p. Take my utterance "Cal is stuck

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[17] An anonymous reviewer has suggested that Brandom and his followers might be able to produce machinery that allows them to distinguish between assertion and presupposition. If so, then this objection can be read as an invitation to provide such machinery. As the reviewer who pushed me on this has pointed out, it minimally looks like this would take a great deal of work, and I myself am unclear on how it might be achieved. In any case, a full development of such a dialogue between the Brandomite and their sceptical opposition goes beyond the scope of this paper, which is largely interested in harvesting the Brandomian account for parts to improve the Alstonian account.

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in the well." Here, I presuppose (amongst other things) that there is a well which one can get stuck down – yet my utterance does not explicitly present that proposition, nor does my sentence anaphorically refer to a sentence that explicitly presents the proposition that there is a well to get stuck down. Thus EP_a is not met. Further, in some cases, one does not R the presuppositions of one's utterances[18]. In conjecturing that p, or supposing that p, as in "For the purposes of argument, metaphysical zombies exist," one explicitly presents the proposition that metaphysical zombies exist, and thus one's conjecture meets EP_a. One also endorses that p – indeed, one of the main functions of supposition is as the putting forward of some claim as a premise for further inference. However, one is not committed$_b$ to the utterance, and is under no obligation to justify that claim, thus conjecture does not meet R_{B2}[19].

As to the expression of emotion, which gave rise to Alston's first question, it is quite clear that Tess does not explicitly present the proposition that she is elated at her victory when she shouts "Yes!" It also seems difficult to see how such an utterance could anaphorically refer to the sentence "I am elated at my victory". Finally, to Alston's third question, the addition of the EP_a condition rules out the commitments of other speech acts counting as assertions[20]. The Major's order, "Polish your boots Private!" does not explicitly present the proposition that the private will be placed under an obligation by the utterance of the order, nor does the order anaphorically refer to a sentence which explicitly presents that proposition.

4.2 Pagin's Objection

In *Is Assertion Social?* Peter Pagin provides an objection to theories that rely on what he calls *social significance* to define assertion. One type of social significance condition that Pagin considers is what I have been calling responsibility conditions for assertion, and he regards theories based on such conditions as extensionally inadequate, including utterances that we would not ordinarily count as assertions in the category of assertions. Pagin considers what I take to be a Moorean (see Moore, 1962) responsibility condition: «To assert that p is to commit oneself to the truth of p» (Pagin, 2004: 838). He points out that if assertion is defined according to this definition, then the utterance of any of the following would count as an assertion that p: «P1: "I hereby commit myself to the truth of p". P2: "I guarantee that p". P3: "I promise that p"» (*ivi*: 838-839)[21].

According to Pagin, none of these seem to be assertions of p, but all would be counted as assertions of p by a definition of assertion that relied solely on a Moorean responsibility condition. More pertinently to my project, Pagin presents a similar counterexample to Brandom's definition of assertion. He neatly puts Brandom's definition as: «To assert that p is to authorize the audience to claim whatever follows from p and to undertake the responsibility of justifying p» (*ivi*: 839). Which, he claims, wrongly categorises the following as an assertion of p: «P4: "I hereby authorize you to

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[18] For example, I take it that a child does not endorse or commit$_b$ to the axioms of mathematics when they utter "1+1=2".

[19] An anonymous reviewer has suggested there are other options open to the Alstonian here. They might, for instance, suggest that R_{B1} requires completely *unconditional, unqualified* endorsement of p. As such, in cases of conjecture or supposition, where some p is put forward in a qualified or conditional sense, R_{B1}, in addition to R_{B2} is not met. Full discussion of the interesting question of conjecture and supposition goes beyond the scope of this paper, but see however Labinaz 2018.

[20] Subject to my earlier reservations regarding the propositional content of the speech act itself intuitively counting as an assertion.

[21] I am unsure as to whether or not we would ordinarily characterise P2 and P3 as assertions of p (see footnote 2). Nonetheless, P1 is enough to underline Pagin's point here.

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claim whatever follows from *p* and undertake the responsibility of justifying *p*."» (*ivi*: 840).

Pagin thus produces a mechanism for producing counterexamples to theories defined in terms of an R'ing condition — any utterance of the form "I hereby x", where x is the definition of assertion, will be counted as an assertion of some *p* by the theory, but will be unlikely to be intuitively thought to be an assertion of that *p*.

Yet whilst this is a counterexample to Brandom's theory[22], as Philip Pegan points out, Pagin's counterexamples will only do as a response to theories of assertion that are expressed wholly in such terms (the R'ing condition being necessary *and* sufficient for assertion) and not those theories that claim that social effects are merely necessary for assertion (Pegan, 2009: 2557-2558). Thus my Alstonian theory of assertion is untroubled, as it would not count P4 as an assertion, because P4 does not meet EP_a. Pegan does, however, offer a potential counterexample generator to theories that rely on something like an explicit presentation condition:

> P5: "In making the following utterance I intend to undertake a commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence I utter: The Red Sox won."
> P6: "In uttering the sentence I next utter, I intend to undertake a commitment to the truth of the proposition it expresses: The Red Sox won" (*ivi*: 2561).

Applying this counterexample generator to my Alstonian theory, we get a putative counterexample: «P7: "In making the following utterance, I hereby authorize you to claim whatever follows from it and undertake the responsibility of justifying it: The Red Sox won."».

Yet it is less than clear to me that P7 (and for that matter P5 and P6) are not what we would ordinarily characterise as assertions. It is simply that in each case the implications of the last clause (the assertion proper) are made explicit in the earlier clauses. Indeed, I take it that P7 is mostly an exercise in redundancy, wherein one asserts that the Red Sox won after having made explicit what it means to assert that the Red Sox won. Both Pegan (2009: 2561) and Pagin (2009: 2565-2566) believe that there are non-assertoric readings of the 'the Red Sox won' clause. Pegan does not take the non-assertoric reading of 'the Red Sox won' to be a counterexample to Alstonian theories, whilst Pagin does. I, for one, simply cannot see what a non-assertoric reading of such an utterance amounts to *when embedded in such a sentence* – and given that such examples are designed with the aim of contradicting our intuitions with regards to what counts as an assertion, I do not feel the force of Pagin's objection here.

It might be further objected that the real issue is that the utterance P7 can be correct, or accurate, even if the Red Sox do not win (thank you to the editors for pushing me on this point). Thus, we might think, the account of assertion offered here is odd, in that it allows an assertion of p to be correct or accurate, even if p fails to be the case. Certainly, it might look like a desideratum of a theory of assertion that it should not allow a case in which *p* is asserted correctly or accurately when *p* is not the case. However, in defence of the Alstonian account, we can say a few things. The first is that accepting this desideratum flies in the face of the ordinary intuition that uttering 'I hereby assert that *p*' counts as an assertion of *p* (see Macfarlane, 2011: 93). Second, even if we accept this desideratum, we must note that the Alstonian account only allows such problematic cases when those cases have a very specific form, that is, the form given by P7 – and as such, these problematic cases turn out to be extremely fringe cases. Third, even in those fringe cases, it is not as if nothing is 'going wrong' so to speak, even if the assertion is

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[22] I will not discuss potential Brandomian responses for want of space.

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accurate or correct. In cases with the specific form of P7 where 'the red sox won' or another equivalent *p* is not the case, we can say that the utterer has R'd something that is not the case, and is therefore criticisable[23].

5. Conclusion

I take it that if the reader finds the above convincing, they ought to at least take the account of assertion I have offered seriously. Whilst it goes beyond the scope of this paper to argue for the inadequacy of rival accounts, should the reader already have their misgivings regarding such alternatives, the Alstonian-Brandomian account becomes a rather attractive account of assertion.

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[23] The editors have further suggested that Pagin points out a further issue: his 'inferential integration test' suggests that supposed assertions of the type we have been considering fail to allow us to draw the kinds of standard inferences that we should like to draw (Pagin, 2004: 851). However, note that there are good reasons to think that Pagin's argument here is not a knockdown one – see Jary (2010: 58-59) and Macfarlane (2011: 92-93) for compelling arguments to this point.

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Asserzione, riasserzione e responsabilità discorsiva

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Abstract Within Brandom's theory of language, *asserting* is conceived as the basic move that speakers can make in the language game which describes our discursive practices: the game of giving and asking for reasons. In order to defend this theoretical commitment, Brandom provides a detailed account of assertions, moving from the pragmatist question "what is it that we are doing when we assert something?", and stressing the social significance of asserting in our common discursive practices. His account sets out the notions of "discursive commitment", "epistemic authority" and "justificatory responsibility" as crucial to understand assertion and its social significance. The goal of this paper is to find out Brandom's proposal on the speech act of assertion, by retracing in detail his model and stressing its theoretical problems. According to my reading, Brandom's account is defective in considering the perspectival distinction between the two acts of *asserting* and *reasserting* in relation with the notion of responsibility he uses. My hypothesis is that this problem (that I call "the problem of derived responsibility") can be solved by emphasizing the *performative* significance of assertion as first-person undertaking of commitment and discursive responsibility.

Keywords: Robert Brandom, Kukla e Lance, asserting, discursive commitment, justificatory responsibility

0. Introduzione

All'interno della sua teoria delle pratiche discorsive, Robert Brandom congiunge le risorse espressive dell'inferenzialismo e l'approccio normativo alla pragmatica al fine di tracciare un'analisi coerente sulla rilevanza sociale degli atti di asserzione. Egli identifica l'asserzione come un'assunzione di impegno e di responsabilità discorsiva che il parlante deve riscattare nell'arena comunicativa. Da questa prospettiva, l'effetto sociale dell'asserzione è duplice: alterare il "punteggio" discorsivo conferito a ogni parlante, e autorizzare gli altri parlanti a riasserirne il contenuto e le conseguenze inferenziali. L'obbiettivo dell'articolo è quello di fornire un'analisi critica della proposta di Brandom al fine di valutarne l'adeguatezza generale, con un interesse specifico alla distinzione prospettica tra asserzione e riasserzione in relazione al tema della responsabilità.

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1. La mossa cruciale nel gioco linguistico normativo

Brandom descrive idealmente le pratiche discorsive tra i parlanti attraverso il gioco normativo implicito del *dare e chiedere ragioni*. Tale pratica consiste in un intreccio di atti linguistici tra i parlanti che, mediante l'asserzione, si assumono degli *impegni* a favore di ciò che proferiscono e delle conseguenze inferenziali delle proprie asserzioni. Tali impegni sono valutati in base alla presenza o alla mancanza di specifiche *autorizzazioni*[1] a loro sostegno. In questa prospettiva i parlanti sono rappresentati come *scorekeepers* che "tengono traccia" delle autorizzazioni agli impegni assunti, e assegnano al proprio interlocutore un punteggio deontico sulla base delle buone o cattive ragioni epistemiche a sostegno dei loro asserti.

Wanderer (2008: 51-52) individua la peculiarità dello *scorekeeping* nel riconoscimento implicito, da parte dello *scorekeeper*, di un certo tipo di *performance* fondamentale nel gioco normativo. Essa viene descritta attraverso le seguenti condizioni:

- è l'assunzione di un *impegno* e di altri impegni inferenzialmente correlati a esso;
- è qualcosa che *autorizza* un parlante e altri parlanti a quell'impegno e ad altri a esso correlati;
- è l'assunzione della *responsabilità* di fornire, mediante altre *performances* di questo tipo, l'autorizzazione all'impegno sottoscritto (nel caso in cui venga "sfidato" a farlo).

Tale *performance*, secondo Brandom, è l'asserzione: essa è l'atto linguistico fondamentale, la "mossa cruciale" nel gioco del dare e chiedere ragioni. Questo assunto conduce Brandom (1994: 172-173) a focalizzarsi esclusivamente sull'atto di asserzione, analizzando ciò che facciamo producendo asserzioni e trascurando l'esame degli altri atti linguistici[2].

Riassumiamo brevemente due aspetti rilevanti finora emersi. Il primo riguarda il ruolo fondante della comunità linguistica e delle pratiche discorsive tra i parlanti. Ciò che rende l'asserzione una "mossa cruciale" nel dare e chiedere ragioni è la comunità che risponde a essa, e che considera tale *performance* come avente una certa "forza" pragmatica esplicitata dalle tre condizioni sopraccitate (Brandom, 1983: 644). Il secondo aspetto – consequenziale al primo – riguarda invece la risposta preliminare alla domanda "cosa facciamo producendo asserzioni?". La risposta, come illustrato, è triplice: ci assumiamo un impegno assertorio, autorizziamo ulteriori asserzioni (e riasserzioni) e impegni, e ci assumiamo la responsabilità di difendere le autorizzazioni agli impegni contratti.

In ciò che segue si approfondirà l'analisi brandomiana di questa triplice risposta.

2. Le tre dimensioni delle pratiche assertive

MacFarlane (2011) descrive l'analisi di Brandom come una teoria sulla *forza pragmatica* dell'asserzione, poiché essa viene definita nei termini dei suoi effetti essenziali nella pratica discorsiva: l'alterazione degli stati deontici (impegni e autorizzazioni) del parlante e l'autorizzazione a riasserirne il contenuto da parte degli ascoltatori.

Il modello che descrive la forza pragmatica delle asserzioni si articola in tre dimensioni che coinvolgono gli stati deontici e che interagiscono all'interno delle pratiche assertive. Esaminiamole nello specifico.

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[1] Si è scelto di adottare la terminologia proposta in Salis (2016), che traduce *entitlement* come "autorizzazione", piuttosto che in forma letterale come "titolo" o "diritto".

[2] Questo aspetto, come emergerà più avanti, è un limite decisivo della sua teoria.

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2.1 Razionalità discorsiva

La peculiarità dell'impegno espresso mediante l'asserzione risiede in un doppio ruolo specifico: essere "giustificatore" (come premessa di un'inferenza) ed essere "soggetto a giustificazione" (come conclusione della stessa)[3]. In questo senso, per usare le parole di Brandom (1994: 178) le asserzioni possono essere concepite come «foraggio per le inferenze», poiché rendono gli enunciati fruibili come premesse e conclusioni delle stesse. La prima dimensione descrive quindi tre classi di relazioni inferenziali che consentono il mantenimento e l'ereditabilità degli stati deontici dalla premessa alla conclusione di un'inferenza (Brandom, 1994:168-169; 2000: 43-44, 194-196).

La prima classe è quella delle inferenze *commissive* che consentono il mantenimento dell'impegno deontico dalle premesse alla conclusione. Il corrispettivo classico di questa classe sono le inferenze deduttive che istanziano lo schema logico del *modus ponens* e le inferenze "materialmente" buone in virtù dei contenuti concettuali in esse veicolati[4].

La seconda è la classe delle inferenze *permissive*, in cui le premesse autorizzano (ma non costringono) il parlante a impegnarsi – in assenza di prove contrastanti – a favore della conclusione. Tale relazione inferenziale preserva l'autorizzazione all'impegno dalle premesse alla conclusione, e il suo corrispettivo sono le inferenze induttive.

La terza classe è invece quella delle inferenze *materialmente incompatibili*, esemplificata attraverso le due promesse incompatibili, in quanto il mantenimento dell'una ("ti prometto che sarai il vicedirettore dell'azienda") preclude quello dell'altra ("ti prometto che avrai un posto che ridurrà le tue responsabilità"). Allo stesso modo, l'impegno ad asserire "questo drappo è rosso" preclude l'autorizzazione verso "questo drappo è verde" o "questo drappo è incolore", mentre è compatibile con l'autorizzazione a "questo drappo è vermiglio". Questa classe di inferenze non ha un corrispettivo classico (Brandom, 2000: 44), sebbene la nozione di *mondi possibili* corrisponda all'insieme massimo di proposizioni materialmente compatibili (Brandom, 1994: 169).

I tre "assi inferenziali" che costituiscono quella che Brandom (2000: 43) chiama la "struttura fine della razionalità discorsiva" hanno un'importanza cruciale in ambito pragmatico, poiché istituiscono dei vincoli inferenziali alle asserzioni lecite nell'arena delle ragioni e possono essere utilizzati dagli *scorekeepers* come strumenti per calcolare il punteggio deontico. L'utilizzo corretto di questi vincoli da parte dei parlanti va compreso in relazione al concetto di *autorità discorsiva*.

2.2 Autorità discorsiva

La seconda dimensione è quella dell'autorità discorsiva e si basa sulla distinzione tra due generi di autorità: *content-based* e *person-based*.

L'autorità *content-based* è relativa al meccanismo giustificatore che il parlante utilizza per motivare la sua autorizzazione all'impegno assunto. Essa si fonda sul principio per cui ogni impegno è "concomitante" con un altro impegno, e la natura di tale concomitanza è esplicitata nelle tre relazioni inferenziali che compongono il sopraccitato quadro della razionalità discorsiva (Brandom, 1994: 169). Detto in altri termini, il parlante può giustificare il contenuto di un'asserzione in tre modi: attraverso un'inferenza materiale o istanziando un *modus ponens* in cui l'asserto di partenza figura come conclusione, attraverso un'inferenza induttiva che autorizza l'asserto di partenza, e stando attendo a non impegnarsi verso nessun'altra affermazione materialmente incompatibile con esso[5].

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[3] Cfr. Brandom 1994:167-168.

[4] Sellars (1953) è il principale proponente di questa classe di inferenze e della loro irriducibilità a inferenze formali.

[5] La prudenza del parlante nel non incappare in relazioni di incompatibilità tra asserti, a ben vedere, risulta insufficiente dal punto di vista giustificativo. Essa dovrebbe essere coadiuvata da ragioni esplicitate, e

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L'autorità *person-based* si può comprendere invece sullo sfondo della funzione sociale-comunicativa dell'asserzione, che permette agli interlocutori di *riasserire* quanto proferito dal parlante nello scambio discorsivo. La rilevanza sociale dell'asserzione come "assunzione di impegno" è quella di rendere fruibile tale impegno ai partecipanti alla conversazione, a patto che l'asserzione corrispondente sia considerata "di successo" dal punto di vista comunicativo (Brandom, 1983: 642). Per dirla con Brandom: «proporre un'affermazione *come* vera equivale a proporla come qualcosa che per gli altri è appropriato *prendere per* vero, ovvero approvare» (Brandom, 1994: 170, trad. mia). A loro volta, gli interlocutori che approvano (*endorse*) l'asserto proferito dal parlante sono autorizzati a utilizzarlo per "foraggiare" ulteriori inferenze, o a *riasserirlo* e motivare la propria autorizzazione all'impegno corrispondente deferendo alla (supposta) autorità del parlante originario.

La dimensione dell'autorità discorsiva ci consente di cogliere due modi distinti di ereditare gli stati deontici[6]: il primo (*content-based*), *intra*personale e *inter*contenuto, in cui l'autorizzazione a un asserto deriva da altri enunciati da cui esso può essere appropriatamente inferito; il secondo (*person-based*), *inter*personale e *intra*contenuto, in cui l'autorizzazione a un asserto (riasserito) deriva indirettamente dall'autorità di un altro parlante. Ma da cosa dipende l'autorità del parlante a cui si deferisce? Questo aspetto va compreso relazionando il concetto di autorità con quello di *responsabilità*.

2.3 Responsabilità discorsiva

La terza dimensione è quella della responsabilità discorsiva[7]. Asserendo, il parlante contrae un impegno assertorio, ovvero si assume la "responsabilità giustificativa" di difendere il contenuto della sua asserzione nell'arena comunicativa, pena la compromissione della sua autorità discorsiva. L'analisi della responsabilità discorsiva viene condotta da Brandom in analogia con la nozione di *task-responsibility* di Baier (1966), ovvero come qualcosa che richiede l'adempimento di un certo "compito" per essere soddisfatta. Il compito in questione, com'è già emerso, consiste nel produrre altre asserzioni i cui contenuti siano inferenzialmente correlati all'asserto originale (Brandom, 1983: 641-643).

In ambito comunicativo, la nozione di responsabilità consente di far luce sul funzionamento dei processi di deferenza invocati nell'appello all'autorità *person-based*. Nella teoria di Brandom (1983: 642) il parlante *S* che riasserisce *p*, precedentemente asserita dal parlante *G*, adempie alla sua responsabilità giustificativa semplicemente invocando l'autorità di *G*. L'onere della giustificazione viene "passato" a *G*, che deve produrre asserzioni ulteriori che forniscano ragioni a favore di *p*. Se *G* fallisce nel giustificare *p* la conseguenza è duplice: l'autorità di *G* viene compromessa, e *p* perde l'autorizzazione che consentiva a *S* di riasserirla invocando la responsabilità di *G*. Da qui in avanti, se *S* vuole sostenere *p* deve accollarsi la responsabilità di giustificare da sé il suo contenuto.

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quindi da altre affermazioni che fungono da premesse all'asserto di partenza istanziando delle relazioni inferenziali commissive e permissive. Detto con un esempio, l'asserzione "il mio stipendio mensile è basso" non è giustificata dal parlante che si astiene dall'asserire "con lo stipendio di Giugno mi comprerò un Rolex".

[6] Brandom individua anche un "terzo modo": invocare la propria autorità come reporter non-inferenziale affidabile (Brandom, 1994:174; 206-208). Si è scelto di omettere l'analisi di questo aspetto che avrebbe travalicato l'ambito assertorio. Per una critica dei report osservativi in termini di "asserzioni" si veda Kukla, Lance, 2009.

[7] Le radici teoriche del concetto di responsabilità discorsiva sono tratte dalla singolare rilettura di Brandom (2002: 21) di alcuni passi della prima *Critica* kantiana.

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Quest'analisi presenta alcuni problemi. Come già ricordato, la funzione sociale dell'asserzione come impegno è quella di permettere la riasserzione del suo contenuto agli altri parlanti *a patto che* essa sia considerata "di successo" (*successful*) dal punto di vista comunicativo. Ciò significa che la deferenza di S alla responsabilità discorsiva di G deve quanto meno essere preceduta dalla comprensione, da parte di S, delle condizioni che rendono "di successo" tale asserzione[8]. Di conseguenza, il semplice rimando all'autorità di G risulta un candidato insoddisfacente per caratterizzare il *task* specifico al cui soddisfacimento dovrebbe essere vincolata la responsabilità implicita agli atti di asserzione e di riasserzione. L'adempimento di tale responsabilità *derivata* nello "spazio delle ragioni" di Brandom dovrebbe essere coadiuvato dalla padronanza, da parte di S, di alcuni aspetti procedurali che giustificano la sua riasserzione di p: esso non può basarsi solo su un appello *person-based* all'autorità dell'assertore originario. La necessità di alcune risorse ausiliarie nel modello di Brandom si mostra ancora più impellente nella misura in cui l'approvazione (*endorsement*) di un asserto che precede la sua riasserzione viene definita, come fa Brandom, nei termini del *prendere per vero*.

Denominiamo questo problema come "problema della responsabilità derivata", su cui mi permetto di rinviare la discussione di qualche paragrafo.

Un'ulteriore difficoltà riguarda la potenziale minaccia del "regresso" nel rivendicare l'autorizzazione a un impegno. Sia che essa avvenga sulla base di altre asserzioni, sia che si fondi sull'appello all'autorità di un altro interlocutore, il pericolo è che si formi una serie infinita di rimandi giustificativi. La soluzione di Brandom - per richiamare un *topos* familiare agli addetti ai lavori – è una soluzione scettica, e si basa sulla struttura dell'autorizzazione *default and challenge*.

3. Struttura *default and challenge*

Il problema del regresso è una diretta conseguenza dell'atteggiamento deontico di attribuzione di autorizzazione a un impegno assertorio nel dare e chiedere ragioni. Come abbiamo visto, il ruolo degli *scorekeepers* è di "tener traccia" delle autorizzazioni chiedendo ai parlanti di addurre buone ragioni a loro sostegno, ma di fatto non esiste un punto prestabilito in cui tale richiesta debba cessare: essa può protrarsi potenzialmente all'infinito.

Brandom (1994: 177) è scettico in merito a questo problema, e lo liquida esplicitamente come "fondazionalista" e quindi incompatibile coi suoi presupposti metodologici[9]. Tale problema si basa sull'assunto per cui lo stato deontico dell'autorizzazione non viene mai attribuito a patto che non sia stato precedentemente giustificato dal parlante. Brandom

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[8] Nonostante non sia specificato, le condizioni di successo di Brandom corrispondono in linea di massima alle condizioni di felicità di Austin (1975: trad. it.: 15-23). Tra queste, le condizioni A.1 e A.2 possono essere ricondotte alle circostanze opportune per l'emissione dell'enunciato, la condizione Γ.1 al principio per cui si asserisce ciò che si ritiene vero, e la condizione Γ.2 al fatto che, in sede giustificativa, l'asserto di partenza non può esser seguito da proferimenti materialmente incompatibili con esso. La differenza sostanziale è che per Austin le condizioni Γ possono non essere soddisfatte affinché l'atto sia considerato di successo (incappando tuttavia in un "abuso"), mentre per Brandom il loro soddisfacimento è necessario. Un parallelo analogo può essere tracciato anche con le condizioni di felicità di Searle (1969: tr. it. 85-106). Tra queste, le condizioni preparatorie comprendono sia le circostanze opportune che le conseguenze lecite per l'emissione di un enunciato, in quanto tali condizioni prevedono che il parlante abbia delle ragioni implicite (ma esplicitabili) per asserirlo. Un'analogia più marcata è quella tra l'asserzione come impegno in Brandom e la condizione essenziale dell'asserzione come «impegno che p rappresenta un effettivo stato di cose» (Searle 1969, tr. it. 104). La riformulazione brandomiana della condizione essenziale coinciderebbe con la tripartizione illustrata in § 1.

[9] Sull'antifondazionalismo di Brandom e i suoi legami col pragmatismo si veda Brandom (2013).

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rifiuta questo assunto, poiché i suoi presupposti "pragmatisti" prevedono che gli stati deontici siano elementi impliciti delle pratiche discorsive. L'autorizzazione a un impegno viene conferita al parlante *automaticamente*, e la sua asserzione, per dirla in parole semplici, viene considerata "innocente" fino a provata colpevolezza.

A questo proposito acquista rilevanza esplicativa l'accezione "condizionale" della nozione di *task-responsibility* di Brandom (1983: 642; 1994: 178). Tale responsabilità va difesa esplicitamente *solo a condizione che* essa venga "sfidata" da un altro parlante che la mette in dubbio con un asserto materialmente incompatibile con quello originario. L'asserto di sfida, tuttavia, non gode di uno statuto privilegiato e l'autorizzazione ad esso va giustificata alla pari dell'asserto sfidato. Questa dinamica è esplicitata da Brandom (1994: 177-178) nella struttura *default and challenge*, che schematizziamo in questo modo:

- **Mossa di *default*:** quando si attribuisce un impegno al parlante *S* (solitamente) gli si attribuisce l'autorizzazione all'asserto *p*:
  - Clausola della non permanenza: lo *status* di "impegno autorizzato" non è permanente, l'autorizzazione di *S può* essere sfidata;
  - Clausola condizionale: se il parlante *G* è autorizzato a sfidarla con l'asserto *q* l'autorizzazione *può* essere sfidata.
- **Mossa di sfida:** l'autorizzazione a *p* viene sfidata da *G* tramite *q*:
  - Se *S* fallisce nel rivendicare la sua responsabilità discorsiva, l'esito della sfida è *positivo*: l'autorizzazione a *p* e l'autorità *content-based* di *S* vengono invalidate;
  - Se *S* rivendica con successo la sua responsabilità discorsiva, l'esito della sfida è *negativo*: l'autorizzazione a *p* e l'autorità *content-based* di *S* vengono convalidate; l'autorizzazione a *q* di *G* viene invalidata;
  - Tale dinamica *può* essere rimessa in moto tornando alla clausola condizionale con un nuovo asserto *t*.

In quanto soluzione scettica, la struttura *default and challenge* non risolve *in toto* il problema del regresso. Brandom presuppone che la richiesta di ragioni possa "prima o poi" fermarsi nei vari stadi conversazionali, ma non indica cosa possa portarla a conclusione[10]. Oltretutto, l'asserto di sfida e quello sfidato sono «pesati allo stesso modo» (Brandom, 1994: 179); nessuno dei due gode di uno *status* privilegiato, per cui non sembra legittimo conferire a *p* un'autorizzazione di *default* che viene invece negata a *q* per il semplice fatto che occorre come mossa di sfida.

4. Asserzioni come rivendicazioni di conoscenza

Un ulteriore assunto teorico sottoscritto da Brandom (1994: 201-204) è che le asserzioni siano delle rivendicazioni di conoscenza implicite. La sua argomentazione muove dal paradigma classico di conoscenza come "credenza vera e giustificata" a cui vengono applicati gli strumenti "pragmatisti" tipici del suo generale approccio metodologico: da una parte, egli si chiede cosa fanno i parlanti quando attribuiscono conoscenza, dall'altra, "riscrive" tale paradigma attraverso le nozioni di stati e atteggiamenti deontici[11].

Nel vocabolario brandomiano la nozione di "credenza" è sostituita da quella di "impegno doxastico-assertorio", di conseguenza, avere una "credenza giustificata"

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[10] Tuttavia, Brandom sostiene che la "sfida" non autorizzata sia una violazione delle norme implicite (ovvero una *improriety*) su cui si fonda il gioco cooperativo conversazionale. Per ragioni di spazio si è scelto di non affrontare nello specifico il tema della normatività.

[11] Tale approccio metodologico è analizzato in Wanderer (2008: 73-75).

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equiva a essere autorizzati a tale impegno[12]. Un parlante che attribuisce una credenza giustificata, da questa prospettiva, attribuisce un'autorizzazione all'impegno assertorio[13]. Per quanto concerne la condizione di verità, Brandom aderisce a una forma di deflazionismo che comprende il predicato "è vero" come un operatore *espressivo*, che implica nient'altro che l'assunzione dell'impegno in prima persona da parte del parlante[14].

L'attribuzione di una "credenza vera e giustificata" viene riformulata nel modello brandomiano enfatizzando la differenza prospettica tra gli atteggiamenti di "attribuzione" e "approvazione" (*endorsement*) di un impegno assertorio. In questo senso, l'attribuzione di conoscenza va concepita come un "atteggiamento deontico ibrido" che coinvolge tre componenti distinte:

1) L'attribuzione di un impegno (o di una *credenza*)[15];
2) L'attribuzione di un'autorizzazione all'impegno (l'essere tale credenza *giustificata*);
3) L'approvazione dell'impegno e della rispettiva autorizzazione (l'essere tale credenza *presa per vera*).

Se un asserto soddisfa le tre condizioni, secondo Brandom, va considerato "di successo" dal punto di vista comunicativo. Questo aspetto, come abbiamo già visto, permette la sua riasserzione da parte di altri parlanti, che possono "scaricare" l'onere giustificativo sull'assertore originario invocando il genere di autorità *person-based*. Questo ci riporta al problema della "responsabilità derivata" che abbiamo introdotto nelle pagine precedenti.

5. Il problema della responsabilità derivata

Il modello di responsabilità discorsiva adottato da Brandom è quello della *task-responsability*, il cui soddisfacimento, come abbiamo visto, richiede l'adempimento di un determinato "compito". Il problema della responsabilità derivata nasce poiché Brandom pone sullo stesso piano il compito dell'assertore che utilizza le sue risorse epistemiche (inferenziali) per giustificare l'impegno assunto, e quello dell'ascoltatore che deferisce all'assertore godendo temporaneamente – fino a una nuova "sfida" - di una responsabilità derivata che, potenzialmente, potrebbe non essere sostenuta da buone ragioni. Di fatto, i processi comportamentali di deferenza non prevedono necessariamente che *colui che* deferisce (*G*) possieda le stesse risorse epistemiche di *colui a cui* si deferisce (*S*): se così fosse la deferenza sarebbe superflua. Alternativamente, *G* potrebbe riasserire *p* e adempiere alla sua responsabilità discorsiva deferendo a *S*, e, in aggiunta, riportando alcune giustificazioni che delimitano un sotto-insieme ristretto delle risorse epistemiche di *S*. In questo caso, l'appello all'autorità *person-based* sarebbe coadiuvato da una provata (seppur limitata) autorità *content-based*, il che garantirebbe una ragione più che sufficiente per caratterizzare la riasserzione di *G* come una genuina assunzione di responsabilità discorsiva. Tuttavia, Brandom non sembra contemplare questa alternativa. Il limite della sua prospettiva risiede nella tacita convinzione per cui

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[12] Sui "riaggiustamenti" di Brandom al vocabolario filosofico classico si veda Penco (1999).

[13] Si noti che l'impegno autorizzato non deve necessariamente essere giustificato: l'autorizzazione viene data anche per *default*.

[14] Le radici teoriche del deflazionismo di Brandom vanno cercate nella sua rilettura del "principio pragmatico" nei primi scritti di Frege, per cui chi asserisce qualcosa s'impegna alla sua verità e si mostra disposto a sottoscriverne il contenuto. Per un approfondimento si veda Brandom (1983: 638; 2000: 11-12). Per una sintesi sul deflazionismo di Brandom si veda Salis (2016: 123-143).

[15] L'asserzione come impegno e il "principio pragmatico" di Frege conducono Brandom a identificare indebitamente l'impegno, ovvero uno stato sociale riconosciuto dall'interlocutore, con la credenza, ovvero uno stato psicologico del parlante.

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l'asserzione e la riasserzione siano entrambe, in pari misura, delle assunzioni di responsabilità.

In ciò che segue si proverà a risolvere il problema della responsabilità derivata assumendo alcune istanze teoriche generali proposte da Kukla e Lance (2009) nel loro studio sulla pragmatica dello spazio delle ragioni[16]. L'obbiettivo è quello di distinguere gli atti di asserzione e di riasserzione facendo perno sulla nozione di responsabilità discorsiva. Un ulteriore ausilio nel delineare le caratteristiche distintive di questi due atti linguistici, come vedremo, arriverà dal confronto con la classificazione austiniana degli atti illocutori (Austin 1975, trad. it.).

5.1 Asserzione e riasserzione

Kukla e Lance enfatizzano il carattere performativo degli atti di asserzione, e sottolineano i limiti del modello brandomiano nello spiegare come ogni parlante occupi una posizione specifica nello spazio normativo, e quindi possieda una specifica titolarità verso gli stati deontici da esso assunti (cfr. Kukla, Lance 2009: 154-157).

Come già ricordato, la funzione sociale dell'asserzione offerta nello spazio delle ragioni è di autorizzare gli altri parlanti all'impegno espresso in essa. Nel modello di Brandom tale autorizzazione, per dirla con Kukla e Lance (2009: 157-160), è *agent-neutral*: essa viene offerta in maniera *impersonale* nello spazio pubblico. Questa caratterizzazione mal si addice alla nozione brandomiana di asserzione come assunzione di impegno[17]. Essa è un'assunzione *in prima persona* di responsabilità discorsiva che il parlante indirizza verso un agente specifico. L'asserzione permette quindi di instaurare una relazione normativa tra due *loci* distinti nello spazio delle ragioni: l'uno occupato dall'assertore, che ha una specifica titolarità sui suoi stati deontici, l'altro occupato dall'agente che si riconosce come il destinatario dell'atto assertivo[18].

Nonostante non affrontino nello specifico la dicotomia asserzione-riasserzione in relazione alla nozione di *task responsibility*, Kukla e Lance offrono delle preziose risorse teoriche per affrontare il problema della responsabilità derivata.

Partendo dal concetto di *locus* nella topografia dello spazio delle ragioni, focalizziamoci sulla differenza prospettica tra "assunzione" (*undertaking*) e "approvazione" (*endorsement*) di un impegno assertorio.

Nel vocabolario di Brandom il primo di questi atteggiamenti deontici corrisponde al "fare rivendicazioni di conoscenza", mentre il secondo all'"attribuire conoscenza". Com'è evidente, c'è una chiara differenza prospettica tra chi rivendica e chi attribuisce conoscenza: il primo (*S*) afferma qualcosa che reputa "vera", il secondo (*G*) "prende per vera" l'affermazione del primo. Approvando (e quindi "prendendo per vera") l'asserzione di *S*, *G* è autorizzato a riasserirne il contenuto e inferire da essa ulteriori conseguenze. Ciò a cui *G* non è autorizzato – buona pace di Brandom - è credere che la sua semplice riasserzione valga come un'assunzione di responsabilità alla pari dell'asserzione di *S*. Questo è ancora più evidente nei casi in cui l'autorizzazione di *S*, seguendo Brandom, viene conferita per *default*.

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[16] Cfr. Kukla, Lance (2009: 34-38; 134-178).

[17] Questa critica è riportata anche in Wanderer (2010: 105-106).

[18] In questa sede si aderisce all'analisi dell'asserzione come atto linguistico *second-personal* proposta in Wanderer (2010). Questa prospettiva - accolta anche in Brandom (2010) - descrive l'asserzione come un atto indirizzato (*addressed*) a chiunque "entri in contatto" con esso. L'elemento essenziale è il riconoscimento, da parte del destinatario, di essere colui al quale è indirizzato l'atto linguistico, e di esser chiamato a rispondere a esso in maniera adeguata. Per Wanderer quest'analisi è pienamente compatibile col modello di socialità 'I-Thou' difeso da Brandom.

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Sulla base di questa distinzione prospettica, può essere utile "prendere in prestito" e re-interpretare la classificazione austiniana degli atti illocutori per distinguere l'assunzione di impegno come un atteggiamento *commissivo*, e l'approvazione come un *comportativo*, in quanto atteggiamento deontico di reazione a un precedente atto assertivo[19]. Questa distinzione ci permette di collocare *S* e *G* in due *loci* differenti nello spazio delle ragioni, e di descrivere l'asserzione (di *S*) e la riasserzione (di *G*) come due atti linguistici prospetticamente distinti. Non solo: il confronto con la nozione brandomiana di responsabilità, ci permetterà anche di distinguere due sottocategorie degli atti di riasserzione. Vediamo come.

Immaginiamo un consulente finanziario (*S*) che rivolge al presidente dell'azienda (*G*) l'asserzione *p* "il bilancio dell'azienda è a rischio". Quest'asserzione è un'*assunzione* in prima persona di impegno e di responsabilità discorsiva, che può essere difesa (se sfidata) dal consulente esplicitando le risorse epistemiche che le forniscono un'autorizzazione deontica post-*challenge*. Il consulente – in caso di sfida – può difendere *p* proferendo "le uscite di questo trimestre superano del 40% le entrate dell'azienda", oppure "l'andamento del mercato non garantisce una ripresa dalle perdite dello scorso trimestre".

L'asserzione del consulente può essere descritta mediante le categorie austiniane come un atto linguistico *verdettivo*, in quanto è un giudizio di *S* basato su evidenze o prove, e *commissivo*, in quanto impegna *S* a difendere la sua autorizzazione deontica in caso di sfida (cfr. Sbisà 2019).

Il conferimento di tale autorizzazione deontica, seguendo Brandom, può avvenire anche per *default*. In entrambi i casi (post-*challenge* e pre-*challenge*) l'asserzione consente a *G* (il presidente, ovvero colui al quale è indirizzato l'atto assertivo) di *ereditare* l'autorizzazione a riasserire il contenuto di *p*.

Poniamo che *G* riasserisca "il bilancio dell'azienda è a rischio". Questa riasserzione è primariamente un'*approvazione* dell'impegno di *S*, in quanto il presidente "prende per vera" l'asserzione di *S*. Tale riasserzione può essere incasellata sotto la categoria degli atti linguistici *comportativi*, in quanto atto di reazione al precedente atto linguistico verdettivo-commissivo (ovvero, l'asserzione originaria) di *S*[20].

Riepiloghiamo quanto ottenuto fin qui. Partendo dalla distinzione prospettica tra gli atteggiamenti di assunzione e approvazione, abbiamo descritto l'atto di asserzione come *verdettivo-commissivo*, e la riasserzione come un atto con caratteristiche *comportative*. Tuttavia, per risolvere il problema della responsabilità derivata dobbiamo ancora distinguere l'asserzione e la riasserzione in relazione al concetto di responsabilità discorsiva. La classificazione di Austin, in questo caso, non sembra esser d'aiuto, poiché

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[19] Cfr. Austin (1975: trad. it.: 115-118). È opportuno precisare il carattere idiosincratico della re-interpretazione proposta: Austin non fa mai accenno ad atteggiamenti "commissivi" o "comportativi", poiché sono i singoli atti illocutori ad essere caratterizzati in questi termini. Nel mio utilizzo della classificazione austiniana si useranno i termini "commissivo" e "comportativo" *anche* per indicare gli atteggiamenti deontici associati agli atti illocutori che ne conseguono. Inoltre, sebbene Austin descriva l'atto di approvazione come "commissivo", nella mia analisi integrativa esso figurerà primariamente come un atto con caratteristiche comportative, in quanto i casi di autorizzazione per *default* non consentono di descrivere la riasserzione del parlante *G* come un'assunzione di responsabilità alla pari dell'asserzione del parlante *S*. Questo aspetto viene argomentato ed esemplificato in § 5.2.

[20] Nel testo austiniano, gli atti prototipici mediante cui è descritta la classe dei comportativi sono le richieste di scusa, i ringraziamenti o le espressioni di risentimento (cfr. Austin 1975: trad. it.: 117). Tuttavia, la sua classificazione non è rigida, e le classi individuate – sebbene descritte mediante esempi prototipici – presentano confini sfumati e reciprocamente sovrapponibili. La mia proposta integrativa fa perno proprio sulla non rigidità delle classi austiniane. Oltretutto, si noti che anche Austin (*ivi*: 118) sembra riconoscere la componente comportativa degli atti di approvazione (o *espousals*).

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gli atti d'approvazione anticipati dall'indicatore '*I endorse*' vengono riuniti in una sottocategoria di commissivi chiamata *espousals*[21]*,* e quindi figurano anch'essi come delle assunzioni di impegno implicite, anche nei casi critici in cui colui che riasserisce fa affidamento esclusivo al genere d'autorità *person-based*. Concentriamoci quindi sul singolo atto di riasserzione.

5.2 Due sottocategorie della riasserzione

All'interno dell'atto di riasserzione è possibile distinguere due sottocategorie, in base alla sua occorrenza in condizioni post-*challenge* e pre-*challenge*.

La riasserzione post-*challenge* (successiva all'esplicitazione delle ragioni epistemiche di S) *può* diventare una genuina *assunzione* di impegno e responsabilità discorsiva. Nel nostro esempio, il presidente dell'azienda può difenderla (se sfidato) e "farla sua" coadiuvando l'appello all'autorità epistemica del consulente mediante le giustificazioni da esso avanzate nello stadio precedente della sfida[22]. In questo caso, la riasserzione "il bilancio dell'azienda è a rischio" di G può essere inquadrata come un atto linguistico con caratteristiche comportative-verdettive e *commissive*, in quanto il contenuto di p riasserito può essere difeso mediante ragioni da G, e il suo atto può figurare come una genuina assunzione di responsabilità.

La riasserzione pre-*challenge* (nel caso in cui l'autorizzazione di S viene data per *defalut*) lascia spazio a due scenari:

1. Se G è in grado di difendere da sé il contenuto di p (autorità *content-based*), la sua riasserzione può contare come una genuina *assunzione* di impegno e di responsabilità discorsiva;

2. Se le risorse giustificative di G fanno affidamento esclusivo all'autorità *person-based*, la sua riasserzione permane in uno status di *approvazione* e non può contare come un'assunzione di impegno e di responsabilità discorsiva.

Nello scenario 1 il presidente proverebbe a difendere il contenuto della sua riasserzione proferendo "l'intero mercato traballa" oppure "il pareggio del bilancio non è tra gli obbiettivi dell'azienda". Questo permetterebbe di caratterizzare la sua riasserzione come una genuina assunzione di impegno, e quindi come atto con caratteristiche comportative-verdettive e *commissive*[23].

Nello scenario 2 il presidente non riuscirebbe a difendere la sua riasserzione, se non affidandosi completamente all'autorità di S proferendo frasi come "mi fido ciecamente del mio consulente" o "l'ha detto lui!". In questo caso la sua riasserzione non conterebbe come una piena assunzione di responsabilità, e in quanto approvazione resterebbe un atto linguistico *non* commissivo con caratteristiche comportative.

La seguente tabella schematizza i casi appena esaminati.

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[21] Cfr. *Ivi*: trad. it.: 116. Per una distinzione alternativa tra asserzione e riasserzione - compatibile con la caratterizzazione "commissiva" degli *espousals* – si veda la nota 25.

[22] Il presidente potrebbe anche avanzare delle ragioni alternative a difesa della riasserzione, come "non intendo badare a spese per il rinnovamento dell'azienda" o "i finanziamenti esterni sono calati".

[23] Si noti che il primo scenario pre-*challenge* non differisce dalla variante post-*challenge* descritta alla nota 22.

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ASSERZIONE "Il bilancio dell'azienda è a rischio"	RIASSERZIONE "Il bilancio dell'azienda è a rischio"		
Atto verdettivo-commissivo	Atto con aspetti comportativi		
	Post-*challenge*	Pre-*challenge*	
	Atto con aspetti comportativi-verdettivi e *commissivi*	Scenario 1 "L'intero mercato traballa"	Scenario 2 "Mi fido ciecamente del mio consulente"
		Atto con aspetti comportativi-verdettivi e *commissivi*	Atto con aspetti comportativi

6. Conclusioni

Mediante la suddetta analisi integrativa è possibile arricchire il quadro teorico di Brandom localizzando i parlanti in punti specifici dello spazio delle ragioni.

L'asserzione del consulente (parlante S) è una *performance* compiuta da un agente che si assume in prima persona degli stati deontici specifici, e li riconosce come *suoi*. Egli occupa ciò che possiamo chiamare il *first-person locus* nello spazio normativo, e la sua asserzione vale come un'assunzione di responsabilità discorsiva. Tale asserzione non viene offerta impersonalmente nello spazio normativo. Nel nostro esempio, essa ha un indirizzo specifico: il presidente dell'azienda (parlante G). Seguendo Kukla e Lance, l'asserzione va quindi concepita come un atto *second-personal*, poiché esorta G a riconoscerla come un atto *indirizzato* (*addressed*) che permette di instaurare una relazione normativa tra S e G. Questa relazione, a sua volta, permette a G di *ereditare* l'autorizzazione al contenuto dell'asserzione di S[24].

La riasserzione di G consegue invece dalla sua *approvazione* dell'asserzione di S, ma essa non conta a priori come un'assunzione di responsabilità. G va quindi a occupare il *second-person locus* dello spazio normativo: egli si riconosce come il destinatario dell'atto assertivo di S, approva il contenuto dell'asserzione e lo riasserisce.

Se G decide di accollarsi parzialmente l'onere giustificativo, l'atteggiamento di *approvazione* può diventare una genuina *assunzione* di responsabilità. In questi casi, il parlante G va ad occupare il *first-person locus* di una nuova relazione normativa con un altro agente (il parlante C, ad esempio il vicedirettore) a cui è diretto il suo atto di riasserzione.

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[24] Kukla e Lance (2009: 153-178) imbastiscono un'efficace argomentazione che mostra come tutti gli atti linguistici (compresi i dichiarativi) contengano una "chiamata vocativa trascendentale" che li permette di adempiere alla loro funzione normativa. A questo proposito, gli autori analizzano la trasmissione delle autorizzazioni deontiche nei dichiarativi come veicolate dai *tellings* (cfr. Kukla e Lance 2009: 165-169). Il pregio di quest'analisi è che, al contrario delle asserzioni impersonali di Brandom, i *tellings* possono essere sia *agent-neutral* che *agent-relative*, e consentono di integrare al loro interno la chiamata vocativa. Il riconoscimento della dimensione vocativa *second-personal* è quindi necessario per comprendere il "moto" e il mutamento degli stati deontici nelle pratiche discorsive.

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L'analisi proposta evidenzia i limiti espressivi della teoria pragmatica di Brandom nel render conto di atti linguistici che non sono strettamente asserzioni. Essa ci permette inoltre di risolvere il problema della responsabilità derivata e di distinguere l'asserzione e la riasserzione come atti linguistici prospetticamente distinti, in quanto espressione verbale di due atteggiamenti deontici (commissivo e comportativo) altrettanto distinti: l'assunzione di un impegno assertorio, e l'approvazione dello stesso[25].

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[25] Una soluzione alternativa è quella di classificare l'asserzione come un atto *verdettivo-commissivo*, e la riasserzione (in linea con l'analisi austiniana degli *espousals*) come un atto *commissivo*, in quanto presuppone la coerenza dei comportamenti di *G* (ovvero, la condizione Γ.2 in Austin) con il contenuto riasserito. In base a quest'analisi, nella riasserzione viene meno la componente *verdettiva*, che presuppone che il parlante sia in grado di difendere il suo giudizio in base a prove o evidenze. Per comprendere meglio questa prospettiva è necessario distinguere due diversi tipi di autorizzazione deontica: l'autorizzazione *epistemica*, ovvero quella del parlante *S* che si trova in una posizione epistemica appropriata (il *first-person locus*) per compiere l'asserzione, e l'autorizzazione *sociale* "ereditata" dal riassertore *G* che (dal *second-person locus*) riconosce l'appropriatezza della posizione epistemica di *S*. L'autorizzazione sociale *può* coincidere con quella epistemica (si vedano i casi post-*challenge* e lo Scen. 1 pre-*challenge*), ma questa non è una condizione necessaria (si veda lo Scen. 2 pre-*challenge*). Tuttavia, quest'ipotesi non permette di distinguere asserzione e riasserzione in relazione al concetto di responsabilità discorsiva, e quindi non risolve il problema della responsabilità derivata. Per adempiere a tale responsabilità il parlante *S* (in caso di sfida) dovrebbe difendere la sua autorizzazione *epistemica*, mentre il parlante *G* potrebbe limitarsi a difendere la sua autorizzazione *sociale* a riasserire: questo, come ho dimostrato, non conta come un'assunzione di responsabilità. Oltretutto, in Brandom non viene argomentata alcuna distinzione tra autorizzazione *epistemica* e *sociale*. Ringrazio i *guest editors* per avermi stimolato a rafforzare l'argomentazione a tal proposito.

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Are Selfless Assertions Hedged?

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Abstract I argue against Milić's (2017) proposal of analyzing "selfless assertions" (Lackey 2007) as proper, i.e., as assertions which satisfy the norm of assertion. In his view, selfless assertions are hedged assertions governed by the knowledge norm. In my critique, I show that Milić does not make a case that selfless assertions constitute such a special class of assertions. Moreover, he does not deliver a clear criterion for differentiating between flat-out assertions and hedged ones. What is more, his proposal leaves some cases of selfless assertions unexplained. The outcome is that we are still left without a satisfactory account of selfless assertions as proper assertions.

1. Introduction

One performs a selfless assertion (SA) when one states something that one does not believe, despite possessing well-supported evidence to the contrary of one's belief. SA scenarios, originally introduced by Lackey (1999), are used as arguments in various debates in epistemology and philosophy of language. In epistemology, they serve as an example that a hearer may acquire knowledge by testimony from someone who does not know the proposition they assert. In the philosophy of language, they are used to show that a speaker does not need to believe that p to make a proper assertion.

Focusing on the latter debate, the most common way of explicating assertability is in terms of compliance with a norm of assertion. According to this account, assertion is governed by a particular norm constitutive for this speech act. Most commonly, it is argued that assertion is governed by the knowledge rule (KR):[1]

> (KR) one should assert that p only if one knows that p.

Many researchers have proposed various norms of assertion.[2] According to this framework, a proper or correct assertion is a speech act which satisfies the norm of

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[1] See e.g. Williamson (1996), DeRose (2002), Hawthorne (2004). I use the notions of norm and rule interchangeably.

[2] To give some examples: a justification norm (Douven 2006, Lackey 2007), the truth norm (Weiner 2005), a certainty norm (Stanley 2008), and more.

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assertion. Since KR is the most popular candidate for the norm of assertion, in my paper I assume that KR is the norm in question. However, nothing hinges on this assumption. Consider lies: they are improper assertions since they are insincere, i.e., the speaker does not believe in what she says. Most of the available norms of assertion assume belief as a requirement for making a correct assertion. Because we can criticize lies for violating the norm of assertion, they are assertions. Guesses, on the other hand, are not assertions since they are not subject to the norm of assertion, but rather to an arguably weaker norm. Thus, by making a guess that p I cannot be criticized for violating the norm of assertion.

The standard view states that SAs are genuine assertions. However, there is a disagreement whether we should treat SAs as proper or improper assertions. More precisely, the first option, i.e., treating SAs as proper assertions, is to propose a norm of assertion which explains the propriety both ordinary assertions and SAs.[3] The second option is to treat SAs as improper assertions. What is worth observing here is that SAs satisfy all conditions of being a lie according to most of the recent definitions of lying.[4] The basic problem with these strategies is that researchers are categorizing SAs as proper or improper assertions without closely pondering what exactly is going on in those cases.

Here I want to focus on the first option in which we can find two ways of dealing with SAs. On the first approach, authors reformulate SA scenarios in order to make them comply with KR. For instance, Engel (2008) proposes that SAs are simulated assertions, Montminy (2013) argues that SAs are epistemically improper and so unwarranted, Turri (2014) proposes various options: that a selfless asserter believes in what she says, that SAs are impermissible and made on behalf of the community, and that they should not be asserted.[5] I think that Milić (2017) did a good job of criticizing these proposals. On the second approach, by staying faithful to Lackey's original scenarios, authors propose a suitable interpretation of KR which tries to capture SAs. I criticize the most recent proposal, namely, Milić's (2017) treatment of SAs.

2. Characteristics of selfless assertions

I start by introducing one of Lackey's original examples of SAs.[6]

> CREATIONIST TEACHER: Stella is a devoutly Christian fourth-grade teacher, and her religious beliefs are grounded in a deep faith that she has had since she was a very young child. Part of this faith includes a belief in the truth of creationism and, accordingly, a belief in the falsity of evolutionary theory. Despite this, Stella

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[3] Among others, the supportive reasons norm of assertion (McKinnon 2013, 2015), various versions of the safety account (Pelling 2013a, Pritchard 2014), the knowledge provision account (Pelling 2013b), robustly epistemic norm of assertion (Goldberg 2015), the function first account (Kelp 2018), or the knowledge account in general (Montminy 2013, Turri 2014, Milić 2017).

[4] I can list here especially so-called non-deceptionist definitions, according to which, intention to deceive is not necessary to lie, see e.g. Sorensen (2007), Fallis (2009), Carson (2010), Stokke (2018); see e.g. Lackey (2013) for a defence of a definition of lying comprising a notion of deception.

[5] Along the lines of these proposals, Turri (2015) reports experimental findings which are supposed to indicate that SAs are governed by KR. For a critique see Gaszczyk (2019).

[6] Lackey gives more examples, but for my purposes Stella's case is sufficient. I am interested in SAs as such, so I do not treat Stella's case in any special way. Consider another example of SA (see 2007: 598-599): Sebastian is a doctor who due to personal trauma abandons his scientific beliefs regarding vaccines. Nevertheless, he says to his patients that "There is no connection between vaccines and autism" despite not believing that this is true.

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fully recognizes that there is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence against both of these beliefs. Indeed, she readily admits that she is not basing her own commitment to creationism on evidence at all but, rather, on the personal faith that she has in an all-powerful Creator. Because of this, Stella does not think that religion is something that she should impose on those around her, and this is especially true with respect to her fourth-grade students. Instead, she regards her duty as a teacher to include presenting material that is best supported by the available evidence, which clearly includes the truth of evolutionary theory. As a result, while presenting her biology lesson today, Stella asserts to her students, "Modern day *Homo sapiens* evolved from *Homo erectus*," though she herself neither believes nor knows this proposition (2007: 599).

The SA which Stella makes is:

(1) Modern day *Homo sapiens* evolved from *Homo erectus*.

Lackey argues that there are three necessary conditions to perform an act of SA:

(NON-BELIEF) a subject, for purely non-epistemic reasons, does not believe (and hence does not know) that *p*;
(EVIDENCE) despite this lack of belief, the subject is aware that *p* is very well supported by all of the available evidence; and,
(ASSERTION) because of this, the subject asserts that *p* without believing and, hence, without knowing that *p*. (2007, 599)

I consider these conditions not as a definition of SAs, but rather as the common properties of SAs.
There are many intuitions regarding cases of SAs. In short, they are seen as both commendable and insincere. Lackey (2007: 599) argues that SAs are proper assertions. For her, SAs are subject to praise and are «not subject to criticism in any relevant sense». This implies that asserting something that one believes to be false can be proper. This conclusion is highly controversial. In the next section, I review Milić's (2017) attempt at circumventing this problem.

3. Selfless assertions as hedged assertions
Milić (2017) proposes to treat SAs as hedged assertions.[7] According to Milić (2017: 2287), by uttering (1) in a classroom, Stella commits herself to defending (2):

(2) According to the best available evidence, modern day *Homo sapiens* evolved from *Homo erectus*.

What is asserted is only a hedged content, namely, (2).[8] Further, by arguing that Stella asserts (2), we can say that she believes and knows the content of (2). As Milić argues,

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[7] In his paper, Milić presents also the second strategy, according to which, SAs are distinct illocutionary acts from assertions, namely, presentations. I focus only on the first one.

[8] Some could complain that the formula «according to the best available evidence» does not amount to hedging. It is generally accepted that a hedged statement is one that contains a hedging expression or construction. Moreover, the formula proposed by Milić is very general and could be used with respect to every scientific statement. With this in mind, I follow Milić and assume that «according to the best available evidence» can be treated as a hedging construction. It is worth pointing out that the proposed hedging in (2) is incorrect for Stella since she does not recognize the theory of evolution as providing «the

«Stella's assertion is neither selfless nor unwarranted: Stella firstly believes the content of (2) and secondly knows it» (2017: 2287). This seems to be coherent with KR. Moreover, because (2) is something Stella could agree with, it does not violate her religious beliefs. According to this proposal, SAs are not selfless since, by making them, one expresses one's own belief. SAs, thus, are proper assertions. The difference between assertions and SAs is that the content of the latter is always hedged in some way.

Milić's proposal generates the following question: how can we determine whether a speaker performs a flat-out assertion or a hedged statement? He argues that «certain contextual parameters pertaining to the act of teaching […] contribute to one conveying weaker content than we may think simply by looking at the sentences uttered» (2017: 2287). Such contextual parameters are in force when a teacher performs her duties. Furthermore, Milić proposes that in order to answer the question whether one makes a flat-out assertion or a hedged one, we should ask ourselves which content the speaker is committed to defending.[9] An important disclaimer: in the quoted passage, Milić focuses on contextual parameters in the case of teachers, but SAs are performed in various contexts, institutional or not. Thus, his considerations in principle should apply to all instances of SAs.

My aim is to show that Milić's explanation of SAs is not satisfactory. I undermine his criterion for distinguishing when we assert a flat-out assertion from a hedged one. Further, I argue that the proposed hypothesis regarding hedging is unmotivated. I also show that his argument does not explain all instances of SAs. Finally, Milić leaves unexplained impropriety of SAs.

Let us start with an example which Milić can easily explain. When I ask a colleague "What is the weather outside?" and she responds that "It is raining" I do not wonder whether this is a flat-out assertion or a hedged statement. If KR is satisfied, then I acquire knowledge that it is raining. Moreover, by saying that it is raining, my colleague expresses certain mental state. In case of an assertion, it is usually a belief. If she would like to make a hedged assertion, she should use an appropriate hedging explicitly (or indicate it in a proper way), for instance, "In my opinion, *p*", "As far as I'm aware, *p*", or "According to the best available evidence, *p*". Only then would I know that she does not know that it is raining. It is rather natural to argue that in such a context my friend commits herself to defending the flat-out assertion and that no contextual parameters are in force. In such a case Milić could simply state that because we do not find any relevant contextual parameters, the speaker makes a flat-out assertion.

An insignificant alteration in the story could yield to different intuitions regarding the question whether my colleague's answer is hedged or not. Imagine that my friend is a meteorologist and her claims about the weather are always based on scientific data. When she says "It is raining", her friends know that she means something like "According to the best available evidence, it is raining". One could argue that even though she makes the flat-out assertion, she commits to the hedged one. But how can

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best available evidence». Rather, she presents something like «the best evidence which is considered as scientific or relevant in the context of the classroom». One could argue that my complaint here is at odds with Lackey's original scenario. Lackey states that «Stella fully recognizes that there is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence against both of these beliefs» (2007: 599), i.e., the truth of creationism and falsity of evolutionary theory. I do not think that my critique of Milić's hedging and proposed alteration go against Lackey's scenario. Lackey emphasizes that Stella recognizes scientific evidence against her unscientific beliefs. But Lackey does not say that Stella recognizes the scientific evidence as "the best available", as Milić proposes. Thus, I think that Milić's hedging misrepresents what Stella has in mind when performing her duties as a teacher: what she does is presenting the best scientific (according to school or state standards) evidence. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.

[9] See also MacFarlane (2011: 92).

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we determine to which content she commits? Moreover, if she would make her claim in public, she could be heard by people who do not know that she was committing herself just to the hedged claim. Such a simple example blurs intuitions concerning the question of what contextual parameters and under which conditions could justify the claim that a speaker can say one thing and assert something else. Milić could argue here that if she commits herself to the hedged content, then this is what she asserts. However, such a conclusion is counterintuitive: everyone except her good friends would say that she simply asserted p. The general audience cannot know to what content the speaker is committing to in such cases. My point here is very general: it is not clear how to determine whether we are in a context where certain contextual parameters are in force. This is especially so when a context seems to be 'normal', just as in the described case. As a default option, the audience typically assumes that the speaker is committed to the content which is stated, and not to a weaker content. So in Milić's proposal, the criterion for assessing when we perform flat-out assertions and hedged ones turns out to be underdetermined.

Moreover, such a proposal has an additional problem. Even if we were able to establish that a speaker said that p but asserted a hedged content, we could not know what kind of hedging it is. Proposing, as Milić does, that we should ask what a speaker commits herself to does not provide an answer to this question. Consider the above example: granting that one asserted a hedged content, we must still establish what kind of hedging she had in mind. In the case of Stella, Milić does not argue why it should be strong evidential hedging "According to the best available evidence, p", and not something weaker (like "In my opinion, p", "As far as I'm aware, p", etc.). Asserting a hedged proposition implicates that a speaker does not know that p. Thus, if a speaker does not want to mislead her audience, it should be clear what kind of content is she asserting. Moreover, a hedging could elicit such questions as "What do *you* think?" or "What makes you say that?" Such challenges indicate that speaker's commitment is weaker than in case of a flat-out assertion. But these challenges can arise only when it is clear for the audience that the speaker makes a hedged assertion. If she wants to make a hedged assertion but does not express it explicitly or indicate it in some way, then her assertion is not performed properly. However, according to Milić's proposal, such an assertion – at least in some contexts – should be proper since by saying p we can assert a hedged p. Thus, Milić's proposal neither provides a clear criterion of deciding when a speaker makes a flat-out assertion or a hedged one nor gives any indication what kind of hedging we should choose.

What is more, even if this proposal were valid, it would not explain all instances of SAs. For simplicity, in my paper, I focus on Stella's case, but Lackey proposes also a non-institutional case of SA, namely, "Racist Juror" (2007, 598). In this example, Martin, raised as racist, was chosen to serve on the jury in a case against a black man on trial concerning raping a white woman. Although Martin sees that there is no evidence against this man, he still thinks that the man did it. However, because he recognizes that his beliefs against this man are rooted in his racism, after leaving the courthouse, asked by his friend whether the guy did it, he says "No, the guy did not rape her".

Milić's proposal has the following problem with Martin's case: even if we would agree that Martin's statement to his friend is somehow hedged, it is problematic to say what kind of contextual parameters are in force in the context where Martin is not obliged to say whether the defendant is guilty or not. Furthermore, asking whether Martin is committed to defending his assertion or a hedged one does not work in favour of Milić: nothing stops Martin from asserting what he himself thinks about this case, so the most natural explanation of this case is that what he asserts is his own opinion. Thus, Martin

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makes his assertion in an ordinary context, so it does not make sense to propose that he somehow hedges his claim. Thus, Milić's account does not capture all SAs.

As a consequence, Milić's proposal – even if only in some cases – weakens our standard understanding of *what is asserted*. In ordinary contexts, when we assert that *p*, we should know (or at least think we know) that *p* and we commit to the truth of *p*, rather than to a hedged proposition. If we were to follow Milić and allow for this sort of hedging to occur in ordinary contexts, then our commitment to what is asserted would often be to the hedged proposition. This is clearly not the case. Apart from few non-standard cases, our assertion that *p* is read by our audience as our commitment to the truth of *p*.

Finally, just as other proposals that analyze SAs as proper assertions, Milić leaves unexplained the impropriety of SAs. Let us focus on Stella's SA. One of the consequences of Milić's proposal is that we cannot assume that teachers ever believe in what they say in a classroom. It is easy to imagine that children, especially the young ones, would feel cheated, or at least misguided, after discovering that their teachers do not present them what they themselves believe. Milić's treatment cannot explain this fact since he argues that SAs are correct assertions, i.e., they satisfy KR. This is why I do not agree with Milić when he claims that «…it would not be pragmatically odd for any teacher to add that personally they prefer an alternative to [(1)]» (2017: 2287). Milić assumes that this is appropriate because, as he argues, Stella asserts (2). However, consider that saying something like "Modern day *Homo sapiens* evolved from *Homo erectus*. But I personally think that this is wrong, and prefer a different theory.", would be highly confusing for children. Additionally, following Milić's proposal, for any challenge of her claim, Stella could say something like "Well, I only meant according to the source *X*, *p*". This would also be confusing for her pupils and Milić's view does not explain why.

4. Conclusions

My goal was to show that Milić's proposal to analyze SAs as proper, hedged assertions is unsatisfactory. First, Milić does not provide a clear criterion for distinguishing in which contexts speakers make flat-out assertions as opposed to hedged ones, that is, his notion of contextual parameters is underspecified. Second, he does not specify how to determine what type of hedging is appropriate to attribute to a speaker in a given context. Third, only when it is known by both parties that one says *p* but asserts something else (namely the hedged claim), we could agree with Milić that the speaker asserts a hedged proposition, but Milić does not make a case that SAs necessarily satisfy this requirement. Furthermore, his proposal does not capture all SAs. In the end, we are still left without a satisfactory account of SAs treated as proper assertions.

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The responsibility of misled people

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Abstract A basic argument for preferring misleading (deceiving someone by telling the truth) to successful lying (deceiving by believed false assertion) is that misled people are relatively *free* to select the true content of what is said. So if they do not, they are at least partially responsible for deceit. The article focuses on possible unfair implications of the idea, and presents the principles that may guide a correct assessment of victims' responsibility in deceptions by language.

Keywords: Lying and Misleading, Doxastic responsibility, Victim-blaming

Invited Paper.

1. Introduction

Victim blaming (VB) is the argumentative strategy whereby the victim of a crime or some injustice is held to be the responsible, or the main responsible, for what she is victim[1]. VB arguments are often classified as fallacies, but they are a special, and specifically resistant, kind of fallacy. First, they are generally grounded on a *frame* (or a common ground[2]) that justifies the semi-paradoxical defense of 'strong people': a well recognizable line of thought whose tradition goes from Callicles to Nietzsche onward, and is sometimes endorsed by right-wing sympathizers. So to reveal the full import of the fallacy one has to confront with this complex view. Second, what is especially problematic in this kind of arguments is that there might be some truth in them. My wallet gets stolen, and you say «you should have been more careful»; maybe you are right, at least partially right. Arguably, it is this partial truth that makes VB arguments recurrent, and either subliminally or openly accepted, on occasion, by reasonable people. More generally, victim's responsibility is an important judicial factor, whose impact may

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[1] The theme is a specific concern of «victimology», and as such it has been treated by Ryan (1971), and later variously developed (Viano 1990). Govier (2015) gives an account in the perspective of the argumentation theory, distinguishing four attitudes towards victims: silence, deference, reproach and blame. VB especially regards the last two, but some sort of dominant VB is implicit in the entire range of possible attitudes towards victims. See also Tietjens Meyers (2016) whose approach is grounded on victim's testimony, but the main focus is on the relationships between victims and their defenders. Some attention to the role of truth is given by Becker (2016). VB is also a crucial concern of feminist philosophy, especially with reference to rape (see Whisnant 2017: 19).

[2] Classically, Stalnaker (2002) locates presuppositions in a «common ground» between speakers; a similar idea for political argumentation is the notion of «frame» suggested by Lakoff (2004).

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modify moral and legal judgements. The first concern in analyzing VB is thus to explore the veridical aspects of the reproaches to victims: how can we do justice to this partial truth without doubling the offense, combining victim's damage with the impossibility of compensation?

In this paper, I try to capture VB arguments in what is probably their clearest and apparently justified application: the case of deceptive communications, when a speaker makes someone believe some falsity. In these cases, victims' responsibility is quite evident, at least if one assumes – following Kant (1785, engl. ed.: 347) – that people are *free* to believe what they want to believe[3]. More specifically, the aim of the article is to suggest some guidelines for assessing the *doxastic responsibility* of speakers and hearers in successfully deceiving assertions. I especially consider the case in which a person is *misled* by someone who tells some truth conveying false conversational implicature[4]. You say that *p*, which is true, and I am led by your utterance to believe some false proposition *q*; in case you intended to deceive me, I would be partially responsible for deceit. But 'how much' responsible am I? How relevant is my contribution to the deceptive process? The question is especially interesting because misleading generally seems preferable to lying: if you are in the need of deceiving someone, telling a deceiving truth is considered morally better than telling a lie. And one of the classic arguments for this moral asymmetry is that the deceived person is *free* to believe the right implication of what is said. Here the risk of VB arises: the idea of preferring misleading to successful lying encourages reproaching victims and discharging deceivers (§ 2.5). The risk mainly affects the third person who evaluates the deceit, and tries to state the relative responsibility of speakers and hearers: how can she avoid the risk of fallacious VB in case of M?

In section 2, I focus on three basic reasons why misleading may be held preferable to lying, with special attention to the role of victims' cooperation. In section 3, I present the theoretical premises of what I call a 'responsibility calculus', exploring the various doxastic constraints that assertions exert on the audience. In the last section, I suggest some preliminaries for a fair assessment of victims' contribution in case of misleading assertions. The result of the analysis is that, when it comes to verbal deception, the partial truth in VB arguments turns out to be simple falsity: the contribution of victims is irrelevant.

2. Is misleading better than lying?

Lying (L) and misleading (M) are intended here as two basic ways of deceiving by making an assertion: L by believed falsity, M by believed truth. More specifically:

> L =$_{df}$ 'p' is a lie iff (i) a speaker S asserts that p; (ii) S does not believe that p; (iii) S intends to deceive someone by saying that p[5].

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[3] In the current conditions of public debate the problem has assumed a special relevance. In democracy, electors who vote a candidate believing his false or misleading assertions (because they are not well informed or ground their judgement on inaccurate evaluations) can be considered responsible for the political consequences of their choice. Similar considerations have inspired some recent proposals to substitute democracy with «epistocracy», in which citizens have the right to vote only if they have attended a course and passed an exam (Brennan 2017)

[4] The analogy between VB in case of rape and misleading is also suggested by Jennifer Saul (2012a: 84): I will come back to this later on (§ 2.4).

[5] NB: '*p*' is the truthbearer, *p* is the truthmaker.

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       M $=_{df}$ 'p' is a misleading assertion iff (i) S asserts that p; (ii) S believes that p;
       (iii) S intends to deceive someone by saying that p.

2.1. Asserting and making believe

The current definitions of L and M are different from these and usually more complex[6]. In case of L, the third clause is frequently omitted, as there might be 'lies' without the intention to deceive. In fact, we are interested here in liars as *deceivers*, so we can accept the more traditional view of liars as deceivers by asserting some believed falsity[7]. Besides that, 'M' is a success term, so in usual definitions there is no reference to speaker's intention, and M is generally contrasted with «successful» L, as liars may fail in their deceptive aim (say, because what is believed false is true). Our concern here is the *intentional* deceiver, so the two definitions are in order, and the difference is only in the clause (ii): misleaders believe that what they are saying is true; liars do not.

In both cases it is assumed that M and L are *assertive* speech acts, which is not always given in other definitions[8]. It is assumed that one may lie by other speech acts, say by promising to do what one intend to do (Marsili, 2016); and one may mislead (or «lying by falsely implicating») in a variety of ways (Meibauer 2005, 2011, 2014). I think that for the needs of the present analysis the definitional choice I am proposing is preferable. What we are interested in is the respective responsibility of speakers and hearers, in making believe and in believing falsity, so we must presuppose a *public* attempt to transmit beliefs, via an open use of language, which can be judged by observers. And the notion of assertion seems to satisfy these needs. More specifically, I favour a belief-oriented account of assertion, whereby

       Ass1 $=_{df}$ 'p' is an assertion iff (i) 'p' is a truthbearer, (ii) a speaker S says that
       p, and (iii) by saying 'p' S wants to make some audience believe something[9].

In virtue of (i) an assertion involves alethic language, i.e. language susceptible of truth-ascription: '*p*' is a truthbearer, so a piece of language that might be considered true or false or untrue, and believed true, or false or untrue by S and by the audience[10]. In virtue

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[6] Mahon, 2016. Saul (2012a: ch. 1) gives a detailed and exhaustive discussion of different proposed definitions.

[7] A version of the proposed definition is given by Augustine's De Mendacio (*Liber unus*, 3.3); a similar account is also endorsed by Williams (2002: 96) «an assertion, the content of which the speaker believes to be false, which is made with the intention to deceive the hearer». Lackey (2013) argues in favour of the traditional definition. One may claim that deceptive lies are a subset of lies (Fallis, 2015), so are not definitionally relevant. This may imply that the traditional (deceit-oriented) definition is simply wrong, as the condition (iii) is not necessary. I am not sure that one should accept a similar solution. I tend to believe that a 'lie', properly called, is an attempt to deceive by assertive language, while lies that do not satisfy the definition are rather to be called 'fibs', or with some other popular name. In Italian and in other languages the distinction is clearer than in English: a *menzogna* is intentionally deceiving, a *bugia* might be non-deceiving.

[8] Saul (2012a) avoids both the intention to deceive, and the reference to 'assertion' rather introducing the idea of liars as «warranting the truth» of what they say.

[9] One may postulate other definitions and characterizations (see Brown and Cappelen 2011, first part, in particular MacFarlane 2011; about the problems and controversies in defining 'assertion' see Pagin 2016). But I think other definitions are hardly adaptable to the problem I am dealing with.

[10] This is in the line of the theory whereby an assertion is a constative act, so has a «word-world direction of fit». See Marsili (2018) for recent discussions about the alethic import of assertives in the perspective of truth as rule or aim of the speech act.

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of (iii) an assertive act is an attempted conveyance of beliefs by use of language[11], but S intends to make people believe «something», so what S intends to convey by saying that *p* might be different from '*p*' (the asserted content). S wants someone to believe something, and might try to obtain this by a variety of (linguistic) means: by literality, implication, impliciture, implicature, allusion, possible completions, etc. So both liars and intentional misleaders are asserters as they intend to make people believe '*p*' and/or other propositions related to '*p*'; but misleaders intend to make people believe some other propositions more or less directly related to '*p*': the focus of their deceit is not '*p*'. However, the act is performed by saying that *p*. Thus, if we move to the *public* character of assertions, we ought to concede that:

> Ass2: if S asserts that *p*, then S is *ritually* assumed to believe that p^{12}.

This does not mean that L-deceiving assertions are fake-assertions, so are not assertions, eventually[13]. Simply, S «represents herself», in case of L, as believing what in fact she does not believe[14]; while in case of M, S says that *p* and she believes what she says: what she 'represents' is true[15].
Ass2 specifies a *ritual* or purely *formal* feature of assertives[16]. Speakers may lie, or the audience may have doubts about they really believe what they say. But assertive contexts are situations or states in which speakers are to be formally considered in this way. In this sense, in virtue of Ass1 we can assume that any assertion that *p* formally *conveys* a conjunction of *de re* and *de se* contents: "p' & I believe that p"[17]. This perspective is especially useful, as I will show, for clarifying the distinction between M and L, and the elements that a believer (or a third person) has in evaluating deceiving assertions.

2.2 Is M preferable?
There might be three reasons why M ought to be considered morally better than L:

> (a) *absence of believed falsity*: the speaker does not violate the maxim of truthfulness (say what you believe is true), which is the basic rule of any informational interaction;

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[11] There could be a variety of characterizations of 'making believe'. For instance, applying Stalnaker's account (2002), it can be interpreted as a proposal to add the asserted proposition to the «common ground», the set of presuppositions that speakers and hearers share in the context. But there is no need to specify for now. Later I will give some more details: suggesting that S's intention of belief-making can be pictured as the intention to convey a propositional content: a Fregean «thought» (§ 3).

[12] Ass2 could be seen as a specification of (ii) in Ass1.

[13] Pagin (2011) notes: «an assertion is not disqualified as an assertion because the speaker lies or because the hearer believes she is lying. A reasonable account of assertion must be robust with respect to these alternatives» (Pagin, 2011: 124). I think Ass1 (with Ass2) is robust enough, in this respect.

[14] Such an aspect has been specifically stressed by Black (1952), and later variously proposed (Pagin, 2016: 28-29). I will discuss possible counter-examples later (§ 2.2).

[15] I thus postulate sincerity as *de se* truth, in a way that is fairly similar to Marsili (2016).

[16] In Green's account S's intended belief is «an expressive convention» of the assertion that p, whereby the speaker «can be represented as bearing the belief-relation to p» (Green, 2007: 160). See below § 2.2 for the discussion of exceptions and problems. Note for now that being formally represented as believing that *p* is different from 'manifesting' or 'expressing' the belief that *p*.

[17] See Lewis (1979) for *de se* truths. Lewis believed they are not propositional; I concede that when conveyed by an assertive act, an attitude becomes a Fregean thought, i.e. a proposition de se.

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(b) *freedom of inference*: the speaker leaves the hearer free to decide which one, among the beliefs conveyed by the utterance, is the true one.

(c) *social damage*: M is preferable, because when the misleader is caught misleading, the discovery does not completely destroy the deceiver's reliability.

Our major concern here is (b), but something should be said of the other two, because, as I will now explain, (b) seems to be the main criterion.

2.3 Deceiving assertions and social damage
A version of (c) has been suggested by Webber (2013), following Strudler (2010). In Webber's definition, M differs from L because

> «The liar deceives by false assertion, the misleader by false conversational implicature», where 'implicature' is «meaning conveyed that is neither asserted nor logically entailed by what is asserted» (Webber 2013: 653).

If I misled you, and you discover this, I suffer a *credibility deficit*[18], and this will regard my credibility *in implicatures*: from now on, you will not be so confident that I will avoid implying false propositions; but you will not think that in other occurrences I would say some falsity, so I do not suffer any credibility deficit *in assertions*. Webber (2013) stresses that there is «asymmetry»: credibility deficit in implicatures does not imply any credibility deficit in assertions, while the converse holds. The damage occurring in L is so greater, because the caught liar suffers a double credibility deficit: in assertions and in implicatures. Asymmetry also explains the reason why if a person asks specification for a misleading utterance does not provoke the «collapse of truth» engendered by questioning someone's assertion. And this is why, according to Webber, L is more damaging «for society».
The credibility deficit suffered by the deceiver is an interesting aspect of the analysis of deceptive processes, but Webber's criterion can be overturned. In fact, one could note that the misleader displaces the deceit from what she explicitly says to what she implies; in so doing, she withdraws evident, checkable, elements of proof, and makes the detection of her crime harder. So M-strategy modifies the same conditions of the deceiver's credibility, as it reduces the possibility of discovering deceit. In this sense, that M can save the consummate deceiver from having her credibility in assertions destroyed could be seen a social damage, in itself: because (if Webber's principle works) the M-deceiver would be able to enjoy her credibility qua assertor to keep engaging in deceptive behaviour. Consider the paradigm example of despicable M which is Iago's language in Shakespeare's *Othello*[19]. Iago does not always say lies, strictly speaking. Most of his deception is by misleading: he asserts a series of partial truths and allusive conjectures; in virtue of his M-statements Othello is led to believe falsity, and in virtue of false premises he ends up killing his own wife. What makes of Iago an archetypical malign deceiver is the fact that his deception is «sneaky», subtle, and not easily captured.

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[18] The notion has been launched in social epistemology by Fricker (2007), and later developed by many authors (see especially Anderson 2012).

[19] See O'Brien (2007), for a different account of Iago's case.

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2.4. Truth?

As to (a), it says that *ceteris paribus* we do not like L because it involves falsity, while M does not. The basic idea is that *truthfulness* is a fundamental principle of human cooperation[20]; any violation directly undermines the bases of associated life. In this respect, (a) seems to be the most fundamental criterion. And yet, it is possibly the weakest of the three criteria. Because there are good reasons to challenge the idea that there is no believed falsity in M.

Consider the case suggested by Saul (2012a and 2012b). Frieda suffers from a serious peanut allergy, and George knows it. He invites her to dinner, and offers her a fry prepared with peanut oil. Frieda asks 'are there peanuts in the meal?' and George denies. Frieda eats the fry, and dies. This is another extreme case: face to the serious harm produced, the fact that George did not utter any false statement seems irrelevant. But are we sure that George did not violate the maxim of truthfulness? Was George's assertion really *truthful?*

In virtue of Ass2, an assertion that p formally conveys the self-ascription: 'I believe that p'[21]. This provides a clear and simple distinction between L and M. In L-deceptions speakers do not believe what they assert, so in asserting that p they convey 'p and I believe that p'[22], and both conjuncts are false for them. One may say that liars lie twice: *de re* (about what they believe are the truthmakers of what they say) and *de se* (about their beliefs). By contrast, in M-deceits the speaker says that p and believes that p, both conjuncts are true for her, so apparently the *de re* and the *de se* contents of the assertion are said truthfully. Accordingly, George is meant to convey: 'there are no peanuts in the meal and I believe that there are no peanuts', and both conjuncts are believed true by him. But *this is only part of the story.*

In informative interactions (especially when the asserted content is presented as the answer to a question), the speaker who asserts 'p' is implicitly conveying another *de se* proposition:

> I want to cooperate in saying that p

or also:

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[20] Besides the seminal approach of Grice's maxims (see Grice 1975), other classical sources potentiates the social role of alethic behaviours. Lewis (1968) shows that the requirement of truthfulness is constitutive for the same creation of linguistic convention; the same holds for Williams (2002), though in a totally different («non-descriptivist») perspective.

[21] As mentioned, the belief-oriented account has been criticized, in various ways. Pagin (2016: 28-29) notes that in asserting that p one «does not also *claim* that she believes that p» (emphasis mine), which is true, but what I am referring here is not what the speaker *claims* but what he *conveys* (more about this in section 3). The B-conveyance is ritual, as stated, the speaker «represents herself» as a believer, independently from her actually being so, and hearers take her to representing this, even if they do not believe she believes. Pagin also contends (2016: 29) that an actor on stage may assert 'I am in the biology department' without believing and without being believed to believe, so 'representing' must be intended in more robust sense. I would object first that the actor is represented as believing this *in the fiction*, as the 'asserter' in that case is not the actor, but the fictional character: and the public believes he believes it, in the fiction. Second, there is no effective difference between real and fictional assertives, as any speech act as a social action is a representational act, eventually. Another benefit of the B-account of assertion, intended in this way, is that it offers a way to incorporate the alethic accounts: because if S believes (or is intended to believe) that p, then she believes that 'p' is true (this is the case); which allows to dodge the complex question of truth as *aim* or *rule* of assertives (see Marsili 2018).

[22] About the idea of the conveyances of what is said, see § 3.

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> I want to give you the information you need'[23].

These clauses are not *said* or *claimed* by the speaker (see § 3.2), but are necessarily involved in the conversational setting, as they express the principle of cooperation ruling any (supposedly) informative exchange. Now we can see the exact location of falsity in M speech acts: it is neither located in what is said (the locutionary act 'p'), nor in what is ritually implied by the assertion as such (p & I believe that p), but in a third clause that is formally postulated by the context: 'I want to cooperate'. So George's assertion should be intended in this way: [24]

> There are no peanuts in the meal & I believe that there are no peanuts & I want to give you the information you need

The first two conjuncts are true, the third is false, and believed false by George[25]. Ultimately, we can say that M is lying *de se*: the speaker misrepresents herself. Is lying about oneself better than lying about things? If we concede that the liar may fail in her program of transmitting falsity, because what she says is in fact true, we would say that what counts is always and only de se falsity, which is the vehicle of the intention to deceive: how people perform would be totally irrelevant.

2.5. Misleading and victim blaming
If we accept all this, we might be tempted to conclude that the effective distinction between M and L is only given by contexts. In fact, there is still a difference, and I think it is entirely due to (b): the idea that in M-communications people can select the true conveyance of what is said. This freedom of interpretation seems a fundamental principle for preferring M over L, more fundamental than (a) and (c).
First, we can see that (a) is grounded on (b). In communicative interactions in which truth is concerned (especially informative transmittance of beliefs, or testimony), what counts is not truth as such (the honest asserter might say what is false but believed true), but the audience's *possibility* of acquiring knowledge (so selecting the true conveyance) upon hearing the assertion. If the victim of M-deceit can really choose among different interpretations, one of which is simply true, then she is still in the condition of knowing the truth. We see thus that M is better than L not simply because the speaker tells (or rather seems to tell) the believed truth, but because the victim of M-deceit is supposedly free to reject the false conveyance, and to accept the true one; the range of epistemic opportunities is at disposal, open in front of her.

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[23] In some accounts, any assertive is somehow informative, so «an utterance u is an assertion iff u is prima facie informative» (Pagin 2011: 102). I do not think I have to endorse this view, as one can speak of 'assertion' also in case of discussion (not informing but presenting opinions), or consolation (not informing but helping someone), etc. But one may say that intentional deceits usually occur in information-oriented speech acts.

[24] I will show that the 'conveyances' of an assertion are specifically important for the evaluation of doxastic responsibility. I will clarify the notion (§ 3), for now consider that by 'conveyances' I mean all the possible contents (Fregean thoughts) released by an assertion in context. Which means that some conveyances are intentional, others are not, some are formal, others are informal, but they all intervene (and may be taken into account) in the evaluation of deceit. The commitment to cooperation is to be formally postulated, which does not mean it must be respected (by speakers) and/or taken as respected (by hearers).

[25] I admit that de se ascriptions ('I want to do this', or 'I believe that p') are true or false: this is a relevant point (conceded by Lewis 1979), but cannot be treated here.

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Second, the appeal to (b) may also justify (c). The asymmetry between credibility in assertions and in implicatures stressed by Webber is basically due to the fact that when I ask for more specification of an utterance '*p*', by asking, say: 'do you mean that *q*?' where '*q*' is one possible implicature of '*p*', I want to mean that the misunderstanding might be due to my incomprehension, or to the ambiguity, vagueness or incompleteness of language. So I implicitly admit that the speaker might not be the real 'culprit' of my possible mistake.

Here is thus the strongest reason why M is better than L, I suppose: that *M leaves open the game of communication*, giving the hearer the possibility of selecting the true content and of asking for more specification without expressing epistemic mistrust.

All that stated, it is important to acknowledge that the criterion (b) is extremely arguable, when intended in its *degenerated version*, that from victims' relative freedom infers victims' responsibility, so paving the way to VB. Calculated misleading appears definitely unfair and reproachable, just because it tends to promote some VB attitude. In Iago's case, the culprit of the tragedy is, unquestionably, Othello, but this displacement of responsibility ought to work as an *aggravating* factor, in judging Iago's strategy. Iago's lying *de se* relies on a threefold calculus: one aimed at producing Othello's defeat (direct effect: the crime), another one aimed at warrant Othello's confidence (which potentiates the deceit, as he conveys the false self-ascription 'I am loyal and reliable'); and a third one, aimed at saving himself from punishment, burdening Othello with the entire responsibility of the tragedy. What about the elegant liberality and openness of M, in virtue of (b)? Iago's case is extreme, but it makes us see that what we do not like in M is basically the *diversion of responsibility* onto the victim.

As Saul (2012a: 84) claims, «the partial causal responsibility of a victim does not in any way affects the wrongness of what is done to them». But how can we justify this claim? She writes:

> I do not know why it is that natural to suppose that – *in some cases* – a victim's causal partial responsibility for their fate means that what has been done to them is less wrong. But this apparently natural view seems to me to be one that we should firmly reject. Once we reject this view, we have no reason to suppose that different levels of responsibility for inferences in case of lying and misleading might render misleading more preferable to lying (*ibidem*).

I have suggested (§ 1) that this «naturalness» is to be related first to a «common ground» of resistant presuppositions that are socially and politically relevant; and second, that it relies on certain pieces of evidence that make the idea of victim's responsibility in some sense *true*. Ultimately, Frieda *should* have been more careful, and seek for more information. And Othello *was* irrationally jealous. This partial truth is the specific concern of this paper. I take Saul's claim as an invitation to «reframing», i.e. «changing the way in which the public [philosophers as well as non-philosophers] see the world» (Lakoff 2004: xv). An accurate revision of the plausibility of (b) can be seen as a part of the reframing enterprise. We ought to explain why we are right in thinking that similar arguments are wrong, despite their being grounded on partially true premises.

3. What is said and what is conveyed by saying

When we evaluate assertions in moral or juridical perspective, we do not only focus on what is said but on what is conveyed by saying (WIC). There is a variety of accounts and diagnoses about said and unsaid contents. Saul's theory of the difference between L and M is based on an accurate consideration of all the different positions (2012a: 21-68).

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The idea of 'conveyance' I am proposing is not rival to other accounts, rather, it is intended to embrace the variety of 'unsaid' but contextually active contents of an assertion that are relevant for judging the doxastic responsibility of speakers and hearers.

I will assume thus that WIC is not reducible to the semantic content of the uttered sentence, or to what the speaker wants to convey either, or to what the hearer in the context given may infer, but variously involves all this. We can see WIC as the global amount of all doxastic effects of language (including semantic as well as pragmatic and contextual features[26]). More specifically, it can be conceived as an *indeterminate range of propositions* (see Saul 2012a: 21-68), some of which are the intended focus of the deceit (if the speaker has deceptive programs), while others are due to the audience's background information, or to other contextual factors, or to a combination of all this.[27]

3.1. What believers believe

The propositional account is implicit in our moral analyses of language. Consider this version of *the paradox of blackmail* (Clark 1994):

I - Frieda tells George

(1) 'I know that you killed your wife'

then after a while she adds

(2) 'I need money'.

Is this blackmail? *Per se*, Frieda has not said anything really reproachable. You don't do anything wrong in informing someone that you are acquainted with her crime; and there's nothing bad in saying that you need money. Yet, the two assertions typically convey:

(3) If you do not give me money, I will report you.

If George accepted the blackmail, then he would behave as if Frieda had 'said' something like that. We evaluate Frieda's speech act, and George's possible reactions, considering the unspoken proposition (3), inferred by George, not from (1) and (2), but from the contextually close occurring of (1) and (2). And (3) has no semantic connection with (1) and (2), but is given by Frieda's saying (2) shortly after (1).

We are able to grasp Frieda's move as blackmail, and not as an innocent transmission of information, only by considering (3). There is no moral (and legal) judgement of the

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[26] In this sense, belief-conveyances are the objective products of the utterance in itself, so are quite similar to Fregean thoughts, in Michael Dummett's characterization: «the thought expressed [in the «event» of the utterance] is thus a feature of the utterance: accruing it in consequence of a variety of facts: the sentence of which the utterance is a token; the content of the utterance; and the language considered as a conventional practice» (Dummett 1991: 261).

[27] The main advantage of such an account is that it preserves the resources of a semantic (truth-oriented) analysis, though saving sensitivity to the variety of contexts and their pragmatic aspects. Saul's proposal (see 2012a), in this respect, is not far from mine. It is based on an «Indeterminate Completion view» of what is said, able to capture what we mean when we say that a person 'has lied' in cases in which she has 'said' some definitely deceiving true sentence. To the effect that one may call 'L' also cases in which all acceptable completions of an uttered sentence (that are needed to assess its truth) are false. For other proposals of combined semantic + pragmatic approaches, see Penco - Domaneschi 2013: part 1.

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case without the involvement of (3) or some similar proposition. George's inference of (3) from (1) and (2) can be later discussed by Frieda, by saying: 'I did not mean to blackmail you'. And our moral evaluation depends on the importance we ascribe to (3): was (3) really implied in what was said? Maybe Frieda did not really want to blackmail George, and if George gives her money, hoping she will not report him, we may say that he has been misled by his own misinterpretation.

It is thus reasonable to assume that any asserted 'p' conveys an indeterminate variety of (true or false or untrue) propositions – more or less related to the semantic content of 'p', and that can be more or less rationally inferred from 'p'. The speaker's intention may be that the hearer believes one or more of them, though all this is attempted (or achieved) by saying only that p[28]. When we judge the moral import of the assertion, we consider all this.

3.2. The relevant conveyances

The propositional account is useful for stating a distinction between M and L that could be sensitive to cases in which in fact there is no substantial difference. A criterion proposed by Saul is that if all the «reasonable completions» of a statement are false, then there is no difference between M and L, and we can peacefully speak of L. For instance (see Saul 2012a: 63):

II - I want to deceive Iggy, and I tell him

(4) Helga is not ready

which may be true, because, say: Helga is not ready to believe that God exists, or to take part in the world athletic championship. But she *is* ready, actually: ready to see Iggy, or ready for the party, and I want to deceive Iggy about this.

The salient completions of what is said might be:

(4') Helga is not ready for the party

or:

(4'') Helga is not ready to see Iggy

They are definitely more reasonable, in the given context, than any other completion, and are both false.

This is a very simple case, my assertion (4) cannot be understood without integration, and the range of plausible integrations is clearly given by the context. Other cases are more insidious.

III - Jones wants to get a loan from Brown, who is a bank manager: he meets Brown at a party, and he says to him and to other people

(5) 'I bought a Ferrari'

which is true, because Jones used all his money to buy an old second-hand Ferrari.

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[28] Such perspective does not diminish the role of speakers' statements in informational exchanges. What Lackey (2008) has called the *Statement View of Testimony* (statements and not the speaker's beliefs are causally related to what is believed) can be accepted, in its basic postulate.

What Jones wanted Brown to believe is that he was rich. The deceiving content is instantiated by the false unspoken conveyance:

(6) Jones is rich

Which Brown may infer from (5) in virtue of the counterfactual principle:

(7) If a person were not well off, she would not be able to buy a Ferrari.

We can understand Jones' strategy, because we take (6) into consideration, and we know that (6) is related to (5) in virtue of (7), so (6) is for us a part of the situation and it plays an important role in our judgement. But we cannot say that Jones has *asserted* or *claimed* (6). The «thought» he wants to convey is this, but the relation between what he says and what he wants to convey is not clearly detectable on the basis of his saying. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the audience is indeterminate. Jones wants to mislead Brown but he does not speak *to* Brown. In this sense, Jones' act cannot even be judged 'misleading' in itself. And yet we know that Jones has the intention to deceive Brown.

How do we select the deceit-relevant conveyances, provided that they may have no relation to the asserted content? As Saul (2012a: 65) claims, to explore the whole range of completions (and more generally all the rationally inferable contents of an uttered '*p*') might be «a formidable task». But I think that in the perspective I am proposing there are resources for providing a first exploration.

3.3. Varieties of doxastic constraint
The first step of the strategy here advanced is thus to focus on WIC, i.e. what the act of asserting *p* (more or less intentionally) conveys in a context, for a hearer. The second step is to express the conveyed contents by propositions, that is, items that can be judged true, false, untrue. Now the hypothesis is that we can establish (if not 'calculate') the degree of doxastic responsibility of speakers and their audience by focusing on the inferential force of (intentionally) deceptive conveyances. The basic idea is that the various contents conveyed in human communications exert distinctive *constraints* on beliefs, and we are in the condition of evaluating these differences.

Consider two classical examples of M that are quite similar, because they both involve the same given: the classical *freedom of inference from negation*. The first is of Josiah Royce, and has been variously mentioned by other authors (see Posner 1980, Meibauer 2005: 1380).

> IV – The captain of a ship is worried because the second officer is always drunk, so he writes every day in the logbook the true sentence 'today the second officer is drunk'; the second officer reads the logbook, and writes, only one time: 'today the captain is not drunk'.

The other example is St. Athanasius' story, reported by Cardinal Newman (see Williams 2002, Strudler 2010):

> V – Questioned by his persecutors who did not know him and ask 'where is Athanasius?' the holy man misled them by saying: 'he is not far from here'.

The sentences are true, but uttered with a «sneaky» intent, as both the second officer and Athanasius want to convey a false proposition: that today the captain is not drunk

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but every other day is; that Athanasius is not far from here but he is not here. But a reader who is not endowed with specific hermeneutical suspect may simply select that the captain is not drunk; and Athanasius' persecutors may well suspect that their prey is in fact the speaker (or very close to him).

If we compare the two cases, it is reasonable to say that Athanasius' responsibility for deceit is greater than the second officer's. Actually,

> (8) Athanasius is not far from here

is intended to convey:

> (8') Athanasius is not here

Which is false (and believed false by the speaker), and:

> (8") Athanasius is here

Which is true. But (8") is less rationally connected to (8) than (8'), first because (8) violates the first person rule, and second because 'not far from here' is clearly redundant for 'here'. So we assume that the doxastic constraint of (8') is greater than the one conveyed by (8"). The persuasive force of the deceit is due to this spread between the two plausible conveyances, because, simply: the false conveyance is more compelling than the true one.

Instead,

> (9) today the captain is not drunk

conveys:

> (9') today the captain is not drunk

Which is true, and:

> (9") every other day the captain is drunk

Which is false. Note that (9') is the literal content of (9), while selecting (9") requires more inferential work, e.g. to assume the exceptive use of 'today', so applying the general principle that (for any value of P and x) if x is not P *today*, then it must be P every other day. Which is simply false, and has no close relation to the manifest meaning.

Evaluations might diverge, but it is not difficult to admit different degrees of responsibility, related to different degrees of inferential constraint: the logbook reader seems to be more responsible for deceit than Athanasius' persecutors; and correlatively, Athanasius is more responsible for deceit than the second officer. The constraint that leads George to infer 'this is blackmail' from Frieda's assertions, is different from the constraint that leads Brown, the logbook reader, Athanasius persecutors, Iggy, Othello and Frieda (in the killing peanuts case) to believe what they eventually believe.

To make this point clearer, consider that normally (see Webber's definition of M, quoted in § 2.2), the 'strong' aspects of an inference from what is said are held to be literality and logic: if you say that p, I am not in principle entitled to infer that you mean something different from p, unless the different content is logically implied by p. But

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logic in itself does not have autonomous power on beliefs. An example mentioned by Smullyan (1992) regards a logical constraint that affects deceiving speakers and not their potential victims.

> VI – In the famous country of knights and knaves, knights always tell the truth and knaves always lie. If you want to know whether p (say: 'the king's castle lies to the North'), you ask any inhabitant: 'are you the kind of person who would say that p?'. Suppose the questioned person is a knight: if he says yes, you will know that 'p' is true; if he says no, you know that it is false. If the questioned is a knave, you get the same result: if he says yes, you know that 'p' is true; if he says no, you know it is false. So knaves are forced to give you the information you need.[29]

Combining Excluded Middle and background information you are in the condition of knowing something that has no relation to what knaves or knights say (and to what you ask). And knaves are *forced* to give you the information you need. Smullyan (1992 and 1994) speaks of «coercive logic» in this regard, but the scenario is not purely 'logical'.
Suppose that knaves discover your trap, so they understand that in lying about themselves they give you true information about what you really want to know. Suppose also that they still intend to deceive you (so they are not simply compulsive liars): in this case, they would tell you a true *de se* sentence, conveying false *de re* belief. They would say 'yes, I am that kind of person' if 'p' is false, and 'no' if 'p' is true. They would become misleaders, and now you will be 'forced' to believe that p, if 'p' is false and not p if 'p' is true. But suppose instead that before you had the opportunity of asking, you met someone who told you: 'pay attention, because in this country there are some misleading knaves'. Is he a knave or a knight? If you do not know, there is no inference: lacking of any directions, you would not have any method for knowing what you need to know. The subsistence of a logical constraint is submitted to the contextual combination of informative givens: and the force of logic (and other doxastic elements) varies accordingly.
What these examples show is that we appreciate the variety of cases, because (or to the extent that) we take into account the various factors interfering in rational inferences from what is said. The logical aspects of the inference variously interact with presuppositions and previous information of hearers concerning the content, the context, and the speaker. Some conveyed contents of an assertion seem more constraining on the hearer's beliefs than others. For instance, if Frieda is the character described in the blackmail paradox, then she ought not to be so confident that George's assertion means that the food is safe for her, and her eating George's fry without further investigation would be really inconsiderate.

4. The responsibility of mislead people
In virtue of what we have seen so far, an assertive situation is a case in which S says that p and wants the hearers (or addressees) H to believe that q, where q stands for one of the possible conveyances of what is said (including literal meaning). In other terms:

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[29] Evidently, it is postulated that all inhabitants in the country know the king's castle location: so there cannot be the case of unfortunate knaves, who believe it is false what in fact is true. (The subsistence of this case would neutralize the trap).

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> S wants H to select a certain *q* within the range of possible conveyances of *p*
> and to accept it.

If *p* = *q*, then we have literal speakers, who do not expect any digressive interpretation of their saying. If *p* ≠ *q*, we may have a variety of non-literal speakers, among which misleaders, i.e. people who want H to select a certain false *q*.

Moving to what is actually conveyed by *p*, in case of *p* ≠ *q*, one may have that *p* entails *q*, or *q* is a completion or extension of *p*, or is presupposed or implied by *p*, or also: is given by contextual features that may make *p* true, or make S's intention understandable, or make H believe or disbelieve what S says (or all of this). The contextual possibilities are indeterminate, in number and properties. With the help of the usual lexicon, one may say that the range of *q* includes: explicitly asserted contents, entailments, implicatures, presuppositions, implicitures (completions – extensions, in Saul's terms). The contents of these kinds of conveyances may be postulated (by S), or effective: and the two sets differ, even if there could be intersections. Besides that, background beliefs (biases, prejudices, more or less forming a «common ground») positively provide presupposed contents variously interacting with possible inferred contents. They form what in the hermeneutical tradition has been called *pre-comprehension*[30], which may include beliefs about language (Brown thinks that a Ferrari is not a car but a kind of smartphone); about the topic (Brown does not know so much about luxury cars); about contextual ritualities or conventions (Brown does not believe that people in parties tell the truth); about the speaker (Brown considers Jones unreliable); about historical conditions (Brown's bank is going to go bankrupt).

There is no possibility of stating *ex ante* that, say, what is logically entailed is more rationally constraining than what is presupposed, or to asses that in any case, say, completions are more constraining on beliefs than extensions. But our (correct) judgement about victims' and deceivers' responsibility relies on a sort of 'calculus' that positively takes into account all the possibilities.

So stated, the implicit principles ruling our moral judgement when we evaluate deceptions accomplished by language can be summarized in terms of the following conventions.

> *1* - *Any uttered 'p' conveys some ps that are more or less related to the meaning of 'p', and may be or not rationally connected with 'p' in other ways; each of these conveyances may be true, or false, or untrue, and may exert a certain constraint on the hearer's beliefs, making her believe truth, or falsity.*

The conveyances of an uttered '*p*' are here expressed with an inference proximity number, from 0 to 1: given a certain assertion '*p*', we will have *p0, p0.1 ... p0.9, p1*. Hence, it is assumed that:

> *2* - *Each conveyed p is intended to have an inferential index between 1 and 0 (included); different indices are meant to capture the different degrees of rational proximity of the inferred pn to p in the context, whereby degrees of proximity are minimally equivalent to the degrees of constraint exerted on the hearer's acceptance of one or another conveyance. In case of p0.9 the rational constraint is high, in p0.3 is low, and p1 expresses analyticity (entailment), or literality (or, in some cases, unquestionable completions or salient extensions), while p0 expresses no reasonable relation to p*[31].

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[30] AA good introduction to this concept is given by Hoy (1992).

[31] In the system I'm adopting, there are degrees of inferential legitimacy corresponding to degrees of rationality: p ⊢ p1 is logical, and p ⊢ p0 is mere irrationality; while p ⊢ p0.8, p ⊢ p0.5, etc. express

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It should be stressed that *p0.9*, *p0.5*, etc., are intended to be *classes of doxastic force*. For instance, to mention the case suggested by Saul (II), '*p*' = 'Helga is not ready' is true, because Helga is not ready to believe that God exists, or to take part in the world athletic championship, but she is ready to see Iggy, or for the party. If Iggy infers that Helga is not ready to believe in God, or to take part in the world athletic championship, his inferred beliefs both belong, say, to the class *p0.1*, while 'Helga is not ready for the party' or 'she is not ready to see Iggy', are of the class *p0.9*.

In a first approximation, we may state the responsibility degrees in this way:

> **3** - *A deceived believer who has accepted an inferred conveyance whose doxastic proximity to what is said is low is more responsible for deceit than a believer whose selected conveyance is more connected to the intended meaning of the utterance (reasonable completions or extensions included). In case of inferences of the class p0.5, the responsibility of the deceived person is greater than in case of inference of the class p0.8.*

In practice, as suggested, Athanasius' persecutors are less responsible than the logbook reader: the inference from (8) to (8') was definitely of the class *p0.9*, while we can judge that the inference from (9) to (9') was of the class *p0.7*.

However, victim's responsibility is to be established in accordance with contextual conditions. Let's so assume acceptability *standard* AS, that states the acceptability of a certain *pn* of S's assertion '*p*' in a given context:

> **4** - *The conveyance pn of the assertion 'p' in a given context C is acceptable iff n is ≥ AS.*
> *Also: A(pn | 'p' in C) ↔ n ≥ AS.*

AS is meant to synthesize various contextual features, including hearers' mental conditions, background information, absolute or relative reliability of the speaker, special relation between speakers and hearers, etc. so it may vary in different situations, with reference to different subjects and agents.

All this given, we can consider the responsibility of speakers and hearers, admitting that:

> **5** - *When n satisfies AS, the speaker's responsibility (Rs) is 1 and victim's responsibility (Rv) in inferring pn is 0. When a hearer accepts some pn with n < AS, she is partially responsible for deceit.*

Yet, we cannot say that the victim is simply 'n-responsible' for accepting what she shouldn't accept, without indicating any comparative element. So it is rational to conclude that:

> **6** - *When a certain pn with n < AS is selected, victim's responsibility is given by the difference between AS and n, so Rv = (AS − n). Accordingly, the speaker's responsibility will be given by the complement of Rv, so Rs = (1 − Rv). And the final Rv will be given by the difference between Rs and Rv.*

For instance we may suppose that (all things being equal) the inference 'the food is safe for me' from 'there are no peanuts' uttered by George, is of the kind *0.6*; this means that if Frieda accepts it without asking for specification, with AS = 0.8, she only diverges 0.2,

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different rationality degrees. One may suppose that under 0.6 there is non-rational inference, but these are context-sensitive values. It should be reminded that these values do not express degrees of belief or certainty, but the degrees of epistemic coercion exerted by informational speech acts.

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then she has a low responsibility in deceit, which is in no way equivalent to George's responsibility, as this will be 0.8. Contextual conditions may variously interfere in degree assignments, making some conveyances more binding,, independently from the proximity to literality, or deductive cogency or other potentiating factors. Suppose that Frieda does not imagine that George might want to kill her: the inference 'the food is safe' would belong to the class *p0.9* or *p0.8*. But the standard would be quite low. Suppose instead that she could guess George's criminal intention (because she's the character of *the blackmail paradox*): accepting *p* as intending 'the food is safe' would be inconsiderate, as said, so her inference would belong to the class *p0.2*.

Different conveyances, with different levels of proximity, may confirm each other, so there might be mutual reinforcement of inferential strength. It may happen that a certain *p* of the class *pn* is reasonably preferable, even if *n* is quite low, because there are other *ps* that are greater, or are similarly close to p, that confirm it. In St. Athanasius' case, as suggested, 'Athanasius is not far from here' conveys 'Athanasius is here' (true), with a quite low proximity, say 0.1, and 'Athanasius is not here' (false), that will have (for complementation) value 0.9. But the utterance also conveys the false self-ascription 'I am not Athanasius', whose value would be 0.9 or so, in virtue of the rule 'speakers do not refer to themselves in the third person'. So Athanasius' persecutors receive two false conveyances with value 0.9, and only one true, with value 0.1[32]. Their responsibility is null. Not only that: we see that in Athanasius' utterance falsity exerts a high degree of coercion on the hearer's beliefs, so his deceit is not properly 'by misleading', but is rather close to that sort of L by completion exemplified by 'Helga is not ready'. Note also that to fix AS, a basic reliability of the speaker should be presupposed; but the speaker may *act* on her own reliability, deceptively increasing it, in various ways. This is typically Iago's case, as his deceit relies on pretending to be a loyal friend of Othello, so most of the possible implicatures of what he says are supposed to be true and/or believed true by Othello. When deceit is accompanied or prepared by deceiving moves concerning the speaker's reliability, the deceiver's responsibility may deserve value 1 even if the proximity level of the inferred *p* is not so high.

These are only some of the possible contextual features that may be mentioned. They do not really modify the basic principles of the calculus. Suppose that the reasonable value of the implicature 'the food is safe for me' from 'there are no peanuts' uttered by George is of the kind 0.7. If Frieda is unaware of George's criminal intention, her responsibility in not asking for specification (do you mean the food is safe?) is to be established on the basis of the fact that Frieda's unawareness makes the standard quite low, say 0.8. As suggested, if really George hadn't known anything about Frieda's allergy, in normal condition (without criminal intent) he would have add something like 'why are you asking me this?'. But he did not, and this is an attenuating factor for Frieda's responsibility. The fact that George would have said this is not strictly implied by the context, so the contextual conveyance 'George knows that Frieda suffers from peanut allergy' is of the class 0.6 or so. Now the failed question, joined to Frieda's ignoring George's murderous intent, acts as a strengthening factor for Frieda's inferring 'the food is safe'. We have thus two conveyances confirming that the food is safe; one of the class 0.6 and the other of the class 0.7. Choosing the value that is more favourable for George, we would have $Rv^* = (0.8 - 0.6) = 0.2$, and so George's responsibility will be 0.8. Given the seriousness of the harm produced, we decide that Frieda's responsibility is irrelevant, and whoever mentions it, is simply combining unfairness with falsity.

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[32] In probability calculus, a conjunction does not strengthen, but weakens truth. But values 1, 0.9, etc. here do not express probability, rather the rational proximity to what is said.

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5. Conclusions

Largely 'quantifying' approaches to concepts[33] do not provide exact results. They simply help to make what we generally do with language clearer, from a logical and epistemological perspective. In this sense, the idea of a 'responsibility calculus' has basically two aims. First it wants to illustrate the way in which we adapt our judgements about the deceiving effects of language to the variety of cases. Some inferences from what is asserted seem more rational than others, the epistemic docility of a hearer may be judged more or less justified, and we generally are in the condition of stating the import of speakers' and hearers' responsibility in making believe and believing, respectively. What we need is to be aware of the principles that rule our usual strategy. A second intended aim of the inquiry is to show that on the basis of this calculus we can see the unfairness of arguments that emphasize victims' responsibility in case of deceit. And we can do this by relating unfairness to falsity. If we want to confirm the idea that VB arguments are fallacious, the calculus shows that this is because, in most cases, they are unsound, the premises are false[34].

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[33] For conceptual engineering as «metrological analysis»: Scharp, 2013. See also the «epistemetric» analysis proposed by Rescher (2006).

[34] A different version of this article has been published in Italian, in Rivista di Filosofia: vol. CVII, 2016, pp. 193-217.

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Asserire il vero. L'atto parresiastico nell'analisi foucaultiana dei discorsi

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Abstract Asserting something believed true requires courage in view of the risks it poses. Foucault studies this kind of statement as *parresia* during his courses in the Eighties, seizing its twine with the issues of discourse, power and subjet. This paper aims to outline the function of *parresia* within the foucauldian discourse analysis and its role in power and subjectivation dynamics.

> Dico il vero, e penso sul serio che sia vero, e penso veramente di dire il vero nel momento in cui lo dico. L'aspetto indispensabile dell'atto parresiastico è questo sdoppiamento – o raddoppiamento – dell'enunciato di verità.
>
> (Foucault 2008, trad. it. 2009: 69)

> Colui che usa la *parresia* è riconosciuto per tale, e merita considerazione come *parresiastes*, solo se il fatto di dire la verità comporta per lui un rischio o un pericolo.
>
> (Foucault 1985, trad. it. 1996: 6)

0. Introduzione

Nel giugno 2017 il Presidente Donald Trump annuncia l'uscita degli Stati Uniti d'America dagli accordi di Parigi sul clima. Il compito di trasmettere la comunicazione ufficiale alla Cina, paese che invece aveva confermato il proprio impegno a tener fede al patto, è affidato all'ambasciatore David H. Rank che sceglie di non portare a termine la missione. Il diplomatico comunica alla Casa Bianca il proprio diniego, rifiuta di farsi portavoce di una simile decisione e pertanto offre spontaneamente le proprie dimissioni, probabilmente immaginando che a seguito di un simile annuncio non avrebbe più avuto posto in ambasciata (cfr. Osnos 2017). Dopo alcuni giorni Rank esplicita pubblicamente la propria scelta, affidando un comunicato al *Washington Post*: in quella sede egli ribadisce la propria volontà di non «essere coinvolto in alcun modo, per quanto limitato, con la realizzazione di quella decisione» (Rank 2017). L'ambasciatore, ormai dimesso ma

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ancora nell'occhio del ciclone, esprime la propria preoccupazione per le sorti dell'ambiente e della democrazia americana, confermando il proprio dissenso verso una posizione governativa che, poco responsabilmente, aveva preferito «mettere il bavaglio» alla scienza (*ibidem*).

L'asserzione di ciò che si ritiene vero, nel suo necessitare di coraggio in quanto anticamera del rischio, è oggetto di studio approfondito da parte di Michel Foucault nei suoi ultimi anni di vita. Si tratta di una modalità specifica di atto enunciativo che il filosofo francese esplora e colloca, nella fase finale del suo insegnamento, nell'intreccio tra discorso, potere e soggetto che aveva caratterizzato l'intera sua produzione teorica. Il presente contributo ha lo scopo di tratteggiare la funzione dell'atto parresiastico nell'ambito dell'analisi foucaultiana del discorso e il suo ruolo nelle dinamiche di potere e di soggettivazione.

1. Il rovescio del performativo

Durante la fase conclusiva del suo lavoro intellettuale, Foucault dedica numerose energie e lezioni a un lavoro di riattualizzazione del lascito culturale ed etico della Grecia antica, di cui si avvale per i suoi studi sulla "cura di sé" e sulle pratiche di soggettivazione e di libertà. In diverse occasioni[1] il filosofo prende le mosse dal concetto di *parresia*, termine il cui etimo egli ricostruisce come combinazione di «"pan" (tutto) e "rhema" (ciò che viene detto)» e sintetizza con il significato di «dire tutto» (Foucault 1985, trad. it: 4). L'atto parresiastico consiste in uno specifico modo di asserire ciò che si ritiene vero: esso ha luogo a condizione che il parlante nutra una salda convinzione in quanto afferma, e che il contenuto dell'asserzione goda di potenziale "sovversivo" nei confronti degli equilibri di potere. Occorre precisare che non si tratta di un evento enunciativo correttamente e completamente inquadrabile secondo i parametri contemporanei del diritto alla libertà di parola. Il parresiasta non è semplicemente colui che esercita il diritto di dire ciò che pensa ma, in modo specifico, un «dicitore di verità» che si rivolge a chi detiene il potere esponendosi a un rischio la cui entità non gli è dato di prevedere fino in fondo. Tramite la *parresia*, il parlante instaura una «specifica relazione con se stesso», nel costituirsi «come soggetto di un discorso critico e libero» (cfr. Luce 2009: 177), e con l'altro, in quanto destinatario di un messaggio scomodo e inatteso. Pertanto, una dimensione determinante di questo tipo di atto enunciativo è da cercarsi nell'«effetto di ritorno che il dire-il-vero può produrre sul locutore a partire dall'effetto che egli produce sull'interlocutore» (Foucault 2008, trad. it: 63). Si tratta di un evento che acquista gran parte del suo valore in ragione degli esiti che potrà produrre sui fatti e sui soggetti; per questo motivo, considerato come fatto linguistico, esso appare collocabile «nel campo del perlocutorio» (Lorenzini 2017: 12) in quanto atto che «include sempre delle conseguenze» (Austin 1975, trad. it: 80).

Foucault sceglie di definire l'atto parresiastico per contrasto con il «performativo», nota denominazione attribuita da John Langshaw Austin a quegli atti linguistici per i quali è possibile constatare che «il proferimento dell'enunciato costituisce l'esecuzione di una azione» (*ivi*: 10-11). Il breve riferimento ad Austin che segue, pertanto, non vuole costituire una fedele esposizione delle teorie del linguista inglese, ma provare a restituire l'interpretazione che Foucault ne offre e la lettura che ne opera. Lo scopo del presente contributo, come esposto nell'*Introduzione*, non coincide con la tematizzazione di un confronto tra le posizioni di Foucault e Austin circa l'asserzione, ma con un'indagine sull'atto parresiastico, forma assertiva discussa dal filosofo francese, finalizzata a individuarne la funzione nel più ampio discorso foucaultiano sui poteri e sui soggetti.

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[1] Tra cui ricordiamo principalmente Foucault (1985; 2001; 2008; 2009).

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Ripercorriamo, dunque, di seguito i passi in cui il filosofo francese cita Austin, a proposito della *sua* scelta di definire l'atto parresiastico *anche* tramite il confronto con il performativo – e non con l'atto di asserire e la sua specifica procedura[2].

Quali esempi di enunciato performativo è possibile citare espressioni quali "vi dichiaro marito e moglie", "mi scuso" o "la seduta è aperta": si tratta di enunciati che consentono di *fare* con il solo *dire* – a patto che sussistano determinate condizioni, legate alla procedura socialmente riconosciuta collegata all'atto che si intende compiere. Anche il performativo, come l'atto parresiastico, riversa gran parte della propria funzione nella sfera degli effetti; tuttavia tra i due si danno importanti differenze, tali da motivare la definizione foucaultiana di performativo come «forma di enunciazione rovesciata» (Foucault 2008, trad. it.: 66) rispetto alla *parresia*.

In primo luogo, i due tipi di enunciato richiedono premesse di partenza diversamente codificate: in modo rigido e determinato per il performativo, in modo elastico e indeterminato per la *parresia*. Il primo, infatti, deve la propria riuscita all'attuazione di una precisa serie di «condizioni di felicità» (cfr. Austin 1975, trad. it.: 17), chiaramente da considerarsi necessarie ma non sufficienti: enunciati come "ti battezzo" o "la proclamo Dottore" possono entrare nella sfera dell'azione solo a patto che chi li pronuncia si trovi in una situazione regolamentata o in un ruolo preciso – per il nostro esempio, se si tratta di un prete di fronte a una persona che non ha ancora ricevuto il battesimo o di qualcuno che è in procinto di laurearsi. Inoltre, il performativo avvia un effetto unico, stabilito e convenzionale: dire "ti proclamo" produrrà precisamente e univocamente le prerogative legali del titolo, così come il prete che pronuncia l'enunciato "ti battezzo" determinerà le conseguenze previste dal diritto canonico per quel sacramento.

La *parresia*, invece, investe chiunque eserciti «la propria libertà di individuo che parla» (Foucault 2008, trad. it.: 69): questo tipo di asserzione non necessita di uno statuto dettagliatamente definito per essere pronunciato, se non quello, ricopribile da una varietà di soggetti, di trovarsi di fronte a chi detiene il potere e di non esserlo in prima persona. Per di più, ciò che accade a seguito di un atto parresiastico non è determinabile con certezza sulla base della situazione; l'unico aspetto che è dato di cogliere prima dell'atto riguarda la sua apertura al rischio, che in certe società e condizioni potrebbe arrivare persino al pericolo della propria vita. Foucault precisa che la realizzazione della *parresia* avviene a partire dal

> fatto che l'introduzione, l'irruzione del discorso vero determina una situazione aperta, o piuttosto apre la situazione e rende possibile un certo numero di effetti che non sono propriamente conosciuti. La *parresia* non produce un effetto codificato. Essa apre la possibilità di un rischio indeterminato. E tale rischio indeterminato è evidentemente funzione degli elementi della situazione (*ivi*: 67).

Vi è, inoltre, un ulteriore fattore di distanza tra atto performativo e parresiastico: il compimento del primo non richiede una particolare disposizione interiore del soggetto verso l'asserzione, mentre il secondo non può avere luogo senza una profonda convinzione del parlante. La fede nella verità – e nell'opportunità – dell'enunciato garantisce che questo sia proferito con l'audacia necessaria ad affrontare il rischio che si profila.

È opportuno specificare che né il primo né il secondo tipo di enunciati si presta a una valutazione sensata in merito al valore logico di verità, poiché si tratta in entrambi i casi di asserti non definibili propriamente veri né falsi sul piano formale. La verità che è in

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[2] Per un'idea complessiva della procedura collegata all'atto di asserire, che esula dagli scopi del presente contributo, si rimanda a Sbisà (2019).

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gioco è quella che è creduta tale dal parlante, e che vale la pena di esporre, anche a fronte di gravi minacce della propria condizione. Il rapporto che la *parresia* intrattiene con il "vero" si gioca sul piano, intimo, della convinzione del parlante che deve essere certo della "verità" di quanto afferma. Come il filosofo a più riprese evidenzia, «nel cuore della *parresia* si trova non lo statuto sociale e istituzionale del soggetto, ma il suo coraggio» (*ivi*: 71).

2. Pragmatica e drammatica del discorso

L'"analisi dei discorsi" rappresenta uno dei principali oggetti d'indagine per Foucault, sin dai tempi di *Storia della follia nell'età classica*, sua tesi di dottorato. Per il filosofo, la raccolta degli enunciati è sempre stata una fonte preziosa, ordinaria e tuttavia impagabile, per la "diagnosi" delle epoche. La pratica archeologica si avvale degli enunciati, rintracciando regolarità e correlazioni «tra gli oggetti, i tipi di enunciazione, i concetti, le scelte tematiche» per ricostruire e studiare le «formazioni discorsive» (Foucault 1969, trad. it.: 59).

Già ne *L'archeologia del sapere* è possibile cogliere un certo interesse del pensatore francese verso la prospettiva tramite cui la filosofia analitica guardava alla questione del linguaggio (*ivi*: 107, 110-111, 143; per approfondimenti in merito, si veda Paltrinieri 2015: 358-360). È interessante, ai nostri fini, notare che questo studio troverà esito in una sorta di "nota programmatica" esposta nel 1978 a Tokyo durante una conferenza intitolata *La filosofia analitica della politica* (1978). In quest'occasione, il filosofo propone di applicare all'indagine sul potere quella ricerca degli equilibri mutevoli nel gioco tra i singoli elementi che aveva avuto modo di apprezzare negli studi, in ambito analitico, rivolti all'«uso quotidiano della lingua nei diversi tipi di discorso» (*ivi*: 104; sulle contaminazioni analitiche in Foucault rimandiamo a De Rosa 2014).

Ancora nel 1983 troviamo importanti tracce dell'urgenza foucaultiana d'indagine sugli enunciati, tramite un'attenta distinzione tra «analisi della lingua e dei fatti linguistici» e «analisi dei discorsi» (Foucault 2008, trad. it.: 72) come campi d'indagine separati in cui far ricadere rispettivamente il performativo e l'atto parresiastico. Il primo tipo di analisi, che Foucault chiama anche «pragmatica di un discorso», si occupa «di ciò che nella situazione reale di chi parla influenza e modifica il senso e il valore dell'enunciato» (*ibidem*); esso concerne lo studio dei fattori contestuali capaci di condizionare il senso di quanto detto. Un simile modo interpretativo risulterebbe adatto, dunque, a rinvenire le «condizioni di felicità» dei performativi in quanto orientato all'interazione tra le circostanze e il significato dell'asserzione.

La peculiare modalità enunciativa ripresa dai Greci necessiterebbe, invece, per essere compresa di una prospettiva inversa, che il filosofo definisce come «speculare» a quella "pragmatica". Si tratterebbe dell'analisi di un'influenza che non procede dal contesto e dall'enunciatore all'enunciato ma, viceversa, dall'enunciato verso l'enunciatore e il contesto. È in gioco una «retroazione, grazie alla quale l'evento enunciativo influenza il modo di essere del soggetto» (*ivi*: 73), che «si costituisce come colui che dice il vero» e «si riconosce», subito dopo, «come colui che ha detto il vero» (*ibidem*). Pertanto uno studio "pragmatico" risulterebbe volto a sondare la portata delle circostanze sul valore dell'asserzione, mentre un esame "drammatico" guarderebbe, a ritroso e a posteriori, alle conseguenze apportate dall'evento enunciativo al locutore e, insieme, al contesto.

Il parresiasta affronta due volte gli effetti del suo dire: durante e in seguito, prima "costituendosi" come tale e successivamente "riconoscendosi" nella nuova veste, forgiata dal coraggio che ha permesso l'asserzione. Foucault propone di attribuire a questo tipo di analisi il nome di «"drammatica" del discorso», e si premura di prevenire

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eventuali fraintendimenti raccomandando di privare il termine di «tutto quel che vi può essere di patetico» (*ibidem*).

Uno studio che tenga conto di questi aspetti s'inscrive a pieno titolo nella prospettiva foucaultiana sui discorsi, in quanto capace di gettare luce sui legami tra le forze in atto in un caso specifico di formazione discorsiva – la pratica parresiastica – e gli effetti in termini di meccanismi di soggettivazione e di «costituzione di sé come "soggetto morale"» (Foucault 1984, trad. it.: 33). Fonte e approdo del proprio dire, «il soggetto è contemporaneamente mittente e destinatario del suo stesso messaggio» (La Rocca 2018: 152) e ne risulta modificato, trasformandosi in una figura chiave nello spostamento degli equilibri di forze e delle configurazioni di potere. Tramite la sua asserzione, egli «può far saltare il momento puramente formale e istituzionale», destabilizzando «qualsiasi ordine enunciativo […] per affermare il proprio punto di vista, la propria prospettiva, la propria verità» (Luce 2009: 219), con tutte le potenzialità sovversive, e anche i pericoli, che un simile evento può comportare.

3. La verità del proprio tempo

Oggetto di un contendere la cui provenienza si perde nei secoli, il discorso è, per Foucault, «il potere di cui si cerca di impadronirsi» (Foucault 1971, trad. it.: 10): fine e mezzo allo stesso tempo, ciò per cui e attraverso cui si lotta. Il parresiasta è tra i protagonisti di questo scontro: per riuscire a "dire la verità al potere" egli necessita di una facoltà di parola di cui, dal proprio *status* usuale, non disporrebbe. La minaccia adombrata dall'asserzione parresiastica sembra rivelare un legame con la «volontà di verità» e con la misura in cui gli attori sociali se ne appropriano.

Secondo Foucault, il discorso che si impone come vero protegge la propria posizione attraverso una serie di procedure di controllo interno ed esterno a sé, in modo da scongiurare l'alea ed «esercitare sugli altri discorsi […] una sorta di pressione e quasi un potere di costrizione» (*ivi*: 16). Sofisticati meccanismi d'interdizione e di «rarefazione […] dei soggetti parlanti» (*ivi*: 29) costruiscono l'articolazione dei "permessi" di parola, che risulterebbero strettamente codificati anche nelle società apparentemente più democratiche. La *parresia*, allora, si inscrive tra le forze «in grado di introdurre una rottura rispetto alle regole e alle norme», rovesciando «almeno parzialmente o temporaneamente» le «condizioni istituzionali e sociali del contesto di enunciazione» (Lorenzini 2017: 12-14).

Per lasciare «apparire il contratto stabilito con se stesso dal soggetto parlante nell'atto di dire-il-vero» occorre riconoscere in questo tipo di asserzione «una delle forme della drammatica del discorso vero» (Foucault 2008, trad. it.: 73), in quanto la dimensione di azzardo che la caratterizza risulterebbe incomprensibile tramite un'indagine pragmatica. Il rischio che la descrive si estende in una doppia direzione: da un lato esso coinvolge la vita del parlante, dall'altro incrina la posizione del discorso dominante, in entrambi i casi in una quantità che non è possibile prevedere a priori.

Ma se l'asserzione parresiastica ha luogo nel turbare un ordine costituito, restando nell'ottica foucaultiana occorre ricordare che gli ordini delle cose variano in base alle epoche: è evidente che non tutti gli enunciati risultati parresiastici in un certo momento storico possano conservare tale caratteristica in altri contesti epistemici.

La vicenda di Galileo Galilei, che Foucault cita come rara «prova di *parresia* in un testo dimostrativo» (*ivi*: 59) – illustra in modo chiaro quanto l'atto enunciativo di nostro interesse trovi in una specifica *episteme* una delle proprie condizioni di possibilità; infatti, nei secoli a venire le asserzioni galileiane avrebbero perso la propria connotazione eretica e, con essa, anche il carattere parresiastico. Ne *L'ordine del discorso*, Foucault inquadra l'accusa di eresia tra le procedure di controllo tipiche delle «dottrine (religiose,

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politiche, filosofiche)» (Foucault 1971, trad. it. 1972: 33), volte a «scongiurare gli accidenti della […] apparizione» (*ivi*: 29) di nuovi enunciati tramite «procedure d'esclusione e […] meccanismi di rigetto che subentrano quando un soggetto parlante ha formulato uno o più enunciati inassimilabili» (*ivi*: 34). La drammatica vicenda di Galileo si consuma in un'epoca in cui la Chiesa manteneva una posizione di potere assoluto sul discorso scientifico, modellando a propria immagine i saperi intorno alla natura e alla vita; il pericolo per lo scienziato pisano di finire sul rogo derivò evidentemente dalla minaccia che il *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo* rappresentava per la posizione dominante della "verità" ecclesiastica nell'epoca. Precisiamo che abbiamo proposto questo esempio poiché citato da Foucault; tuttavia, considerando la complessità della vicenda galileiana, ci limitiamo a suggerire che probabilmente il caso di Giordano Bruno costituirebbe un esempio parresiastico ancora più efficace.

Sembra, pertanto, di poter rilevare che la possibilità dell'atto parresiastico si fondi su un arresto momentaneo dei meccanismi di interdizione alla parola che, per Foucault, ogni società mette in atto. Il parresiasta è colui che per un attimo – il tempo dell'enunciato – ruba, a chi lo detiene, il «diritto privilegiato o esclusivo» (*ivi*: 10) non solo di parlare, ma di farlo circa un certo argomento posto in una di quelle «regioni del discorso […] saldamente difese» (*ivi*: 29) che ogni epoca variamente si premunisce di trincerare. Si tratta di una sorta di repentino "cambio di posizione", un salto del soggetto – come una pedina che contravvenga a una regola di un gioco da tavolo – su una casella da cui gli sia possibile parlare in modo franco, ma sapendo di occupare una posizione che secondo le regole del gioco non gli sarebbe spettata.

Come Foucault precisa, «d'intenzione che comporta la *parresia* è legata a una certa situazione sociale, a una differenza di status tra il parlante e il suo uditorio» (Foucault 1985, trad. it.: 5); possiamo osservare che tale diagnosi della società conserva, in fondo, i legami con alcune concezioni ritenute "strutturaliste" dei suoi lavori precedenti in cui, per dirla con Deleuze, «i posti prevalgono su ciò che li occupa» (Deleuze 1973, trad. it.: 21). Ricordando la mutevolezza estrema della posizione espressa dal filosofo di Poitiers in merito allo strutturalismo,[3] non sembra improbabile ritrovare anche in queste ultime riflessioni una traccia della categoria «locale o di posizione», attraverso cui interpretare l'agire degli uomini nelle società secondo un sistema di «posti», «posizioni» o «ruoli» (*ivi*: 19-20). In effetti, ancora nelle lezioni a Berkeley Foucault definisce il suo scopo, in questa ricerca, nei termini di un'indagine sul «dire la verità come un'attività specifica, come un ruolo» (Foucault 1985, trad. it.: 111), probabilmente uno tra i più fugaci e transitori, nonché rivoluzionari, occupabili da un soggetto. La posizione del parresiasta si guadagna attraverso un'asserzione, capace di riconfigurare molteplici rapporti: quello del parlante con ciò che ritiene verità, con la propria vita a partire dal pericolo che corre, con gli altri per via della minaccia che il proprio enunciato costituisce. In ogni epoca, la presa di parola di fronte a quanti detengono il potere dà il via a una catena di effetti imprevedibile, ma mantiene la funzione di "crepa" nel sistema organizzato di distribuzione delle forze e delle autorità: come ricorda Remo Bodei, «non si dà, in effetti, né potere che non incontri resistenza, né libertà che non si opponga a qualche potere» (Bodei 1996: XI).

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[3] Cfr. in merito De Rosa (2016: 90-100).

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Epistemic Internalism and the Challenge from Testimony

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Abstract In this paper, I spell out a new challenge for epistemic internalism that emerges out of the current debate on testimonial justification. Based on recent developments within this debate, one might argue as follows: Epistemic internalism can't account for the justification of our testimony-based beliefs, because (1) we should conceive of testimonial justification along anti-reductionist lines and (2) anti-reductionism is incompatible with epistemic internalism. In response to this challenge, I show that, despite initial appearances, epistemic internalism and anti-reductionism are compatible after all. Therefore, being an anti-reductionist with regard to testimonial justification doesn't force one to reject epistemic internalism. In order to argue for this result, I will make use of resources provided by speech act theory.

0. Introduction

According to epistemic internalism (henceforth: internalism) the following holds: «(In) A person X is justified to believe a proposition p at time t, iff at t X has reflective access to sufficiently strong reasons for believing that p is true[1]».

In contrast to this, epistemic externalism (henceforth: externalism) claims that: «(Ex) A person X can be justified to believe a proposition p at time t, even if at t X doesn't have reflective access to sufficiently strong reasons for believing that p is true».

According to reliabilism, arguably the most popular form of externalism, X is justified to believe that p at t, iff p is the output of a reliable belief-forming process (or processes). Reliability is in turn defined by the amount of true beliefs that a given process produces. Plausible candidates for reliable belief-forming processes are perception, memory or introspection. However, according to reliabilism, it is not necessary that a person has reflective access to the reasons speaking in favor of the truth of her beliefs. Reliabilists only demand that a person is not aware of defeating counter-evidence speaking against the truth of her beliefs (cf. Goldman 1979).

The aim of this paper is to draw attention to, and to ultimately repudiate, a new challenge for internalism that emerges from the debate concerning the justification of

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[1] Following this definition, I am going to understand internalism as *access internalism* in this paper (cf. e.g. BonJour 1985: 2003). According to this definition, it is crucial that one has reflective access to the reasons speaking in favor of one's beliefs.

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our testimony-based beliefs (TBBs)[2]. Based on current developments within this debate, one might argue as follows:

1. Any plausible theory of justification has to be able to account for the justification of our TBBs;
2. Internalism can't account for the justification of our TBBs;
3. Therefore, internalism isn't a plausible theory of justification.

Premise (1) seems plausible to me. After all, a great many of our beliefs originate in the words of others. To deny that we can get justified beliefs and knowledge from testimony would therefore amount to claiming that we have far less justified beliefs and far less knowledge than we commonly take ourselves to have. This seems deeply unattractive.

Therefore, I am going to focus on premise (2) for the rest of this paper. First, I am going to give an overview over the main positions within the testimony debate – reductionism and anti-reductionism. And I am going to use this overview as a backdrop for spelling out the challenge from testimony in more detail (section 1). Then I am going to show that a view often called "the assurance view" in the literature is both anti-reductionist and internalist in nature. Hence, the assurance view allows the internalist to respond to the challenge from testimony (section 2). However, it is also pointed out that this response relies on some rather controversial assumptions. Therefore, a somewhat less controversial alternative to the assurance view – called "the assertion view" – is presented (section 3) and defended against its most pressing objections (section 4). While the assurance view and the assertion view are quite different, they both put the speech act by which information is conveyed center-stage. Finally, things are wrapped up with a brief conclusion (section 5).

1. Internalism and the Testimony Debate

One of the main questions in the contemporary testimony debate is: under which conditions are we epistemically justified to believe that what other people tell us is true? Traditionally, the answer has either been reductionist or anti-reductionist. Either our justification reduces to non-testimonial reasons, or we have a presumptive, though defeasible, right to believe what we are told. In this section, I'll look at how both reductionism and anti-reductionism relate to the internalism/externalism-debate. This will allow me to spell out the challenge from testimony the internalist has to face.

According to reductionism, testimony is epistemically neutral. That is, the fact that someone claimed that p is, in and of itself, no reason to believe that p is true. Therefore, the justification for our TBBs has to be ultimately reducible to other epistemic sources – such as perception, memory and inference. Non-testimonial reasons are necessary for the justification of out TBBs. Let's assume I ask a stranger for the time. Upon hearing her words, I remember that people have proven trustworthy with regard to this kind of information in the past. This in turn justifies me to believe my interlocutor now, provided I don't have stronger reasons to doubt her sincerity or competence[3].

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[2] For a different challenge for internalism that emerges out of the testimony debate see Wright (2016). Wright invites us to imagine two hearers, A and B, who both have identical internally accessible reasons for believing their interlocutors. However, A's interlocutor is in fact reliable while B's is not. According to Wright, this leads to an intuitive difference with regard to the justification of A's and B's TBBs – a difference that can't be captured by internalism. In response to Wright, Madison (2016) argues that the difference between A and B should be spelled out in terms of knowledge rather than in terms of justification.

[3] For defenders of different versions of reductionism cf. e.g. Hume (1748/1999), Fricker (1994, 1995), Van Cleve (2006).

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Reductionism lends itself quite naturally to internalism. After all, reductionism holds that one needs to have some reflective access to the reasons that speak in favour of the truth of one's TBBs.[4] As long as we understand testimonial justification along reductionist lines, testimony doesn't pose a problem for internalism.

However, it has to be stressed that reductionist theories of testimonial justification have been severely criticized in the recent debate[5]. This has led more and more philosophers to abandon reductionism in favour of anti-reductionism. As Jennifer Lackey puts it: «Non-reductionism is the most widely accepted view of testimonial knowledge (justification/warrant) in the current literature» (Lackey 2008: 155).

In contrast to reductionism, anti-reductionism holds that testimony is not epistemically neutral. Rather, testimony has its own distinct epistemic force. Here, it is on par with memory, perception and introspection. Hence, we are prima facie justified to believe what we are told. Non-testimonial reasons are not necessary for the justification of our TBBs[6]. Again, the time-example can be used for the purpose of illustration: Let's assume I ask a stranger for the time. According to anti-reductionism, I am justified to believe what I am told, as long as I am not faced with defeating counterevidence – e.g. I notice that my interlocutor doesn't wear a watch or that the time told is incompatible with the position of the sun[7].

Unlike reductionism, anti-reductionism is typically linked to externalism. Duncan Pritchard goes so far as to claim: «[I]t is often just taken for granted that a credulist thesis [anti-reductionism] is tied, whether explicitly or implicitly, to an externalist epistemology» (Pritchard 2004: 340)[8]. This outline of the dialectical situation puts me in a position to spell out the challenge for internalism that emerges out of the current testimony debate. More precisely, it allows me to state why philosophers might hold premise (2) of the initial argument. Again: «Internalism cannot account for the justification of our TBBs».

As pointed out in this section, anti-reductionism is the most popular theory of testimonial justification. And anti-reductionism is typically linked to an externalist understanding of justification. From this we get the following sub-argument for premise (2):

(i)   We need an anti-reductionist account of testimonial justification.
(ii)   Anti-reductionism is incompatible with internalism.
(iii)   Therefore, premise (2) holds.

In order to defend internalism against this challenge from testimony, one needs to show that (i) or (ii) is false. If one could convincingly show that we should understand testimonial justification along reductionist lines, this would be happy news for the internalist. However, such a defense of reductionism is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I am going to use the next section to argue that, despite initial appearances,

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[4] Cf. Faulkner (2011: 10).

[5] It is common in the literature to differentiate between "global reductionism" – traditionally traced back to David Hume – and "local reductionism" – introduced by Elisabeth Fricker (1994, 1995). For criticisms of global reductionism see, for example, Coady (1992), Stevenson (1993), Fricker (1995) and Lackey (2008). And for criticisms of local reductionism see, for example, Insole (2000), Weiner (2003) and Gelfert (2009, 2014).

[6] For different versions of anti-reductionism cf. e.g. Reid (1785/2002), Coady (1992), Burge (1993) and Foley (2001).

[7] Anti-reductionists typically don't hold that one needs to actively look for defeaters. Rather, one just needs to be counterfactually sensitive to their presence (cf. Goldberg and Henderson, 2006).

[8] For different versions of anti-reductionism that naturally lend themselves to externalism cf. Coady (1992), Burge (1993), Goldman (1999) and Goldberg (2010a).

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internalism and anti-reductionism are compatible after all. This in turn will rob premise (2) of its motivation.

2. Internalism and Anti-Reductionism I: The Assurance View

So far, I have looked at standard versions of both reductionism and anti-reductionism. One criticism that has been levelled against both approaches is that it misses what is distinctive about gaining justified beliefs (and knowledge) through testimony. That is, in the case of testimony we receive information from a fellow human being who tries to establish a certain relationship with us in virtue of her speech act. We have to turn our eye to this speech act, and the relationship the speaker seeks to establish in virtue of it, in order to understand how we can get justified beliefs and knowledge from someone else's say-so[9].

What I want to suggest here is that this view allows for a way of squaring anti-reductionism and internalism. In order to see how this is possible, we need to take a closer look at the speech act that is used by the speaker to convey information to her addressee. According to Edward Hinchman, information is paradigmatically conveyed by the speech act of "telling". In telling the hearer something, the speaker invites the hearer to trust her with regard to the truth of the content of her utterance (cf. Hinchman 2005: 582)[10]. In analysing this invitation further, Hinchman says: «S tells A that p (sincerely) iff A recognizes that S, in asserting that p» intends:

(i)   that A gain access to a prima facie entitlement to believe that p;
(ii)   that A recognize S's (i)-intention;
(iii)   that A gain access to the entitlement to believe that p as a direct result of
        A's recognition of S's (i)- intention. (Hinchman, 2005: 587).

The speaker tells the hearer something with the intention of giving the hearer a reason to believe what he has been told. Moreover, the speaker intends that her first intention is recognized by the hearer. And finally, the speaker intends that it is the hearer's understanding of the speaker's first intention that prompts the hearer to believe what he has been told.

Similar considerations with regard to the speech act of telling[11] are presented by Richard Moran:

> The speaker intends not just that the recognition of his intention play a role in producing the belief that P, but that the particular role this recognition should play is that of showing the speaker to be *assuming responsibility* for the status of his utterance as a reason to believe that P (Moran 2005: 16, italics mine).

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[9] Cf. Welbourne (1981), Ross (1986), Hinchman (2005, 2013, 2014), Moran (2005, 2013, 2018), Faulkner (2007, 2011), McMyler (2007, 2011, 2013).

[10] To avoid confusion, I will use "she" to refer to the speaker and "he" to refer to the hearer.

[11] Both Hinchman and Moran contrast the speech act of "telling" with the speech act of "asserting". What is distinctive about telling, according to Hinchman and Moran, is that the speaker addresses her speech act to the hearer. In doing so, she wants to make available a reason to believe the content of her speech act to said hearer. In contrast to this, Hinchman and Moran take asserting to be a speech act in virtue of which the speaker expresses her belief that things are a certain way in the presence of some hearer. However, the speaker does not necessarily address the hearer with her speech act. And she doesn't necessarily intend to make a reason to believe the content of her speech act available to the hearer (cf. Hinchman 2005: 563, Moran 2005: 8 – also cf. Moran 2013, 2018).

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Here, Moran specifies what the speaker does in telling the hearer something: She intends to give the hearer a reason to believe what he is told. And, in intending to give the hearer a reason to believe what he is told, the speaker assumes responsibility for the truth of her words towards the hearer. Moran calls this assumption of responsibility undertaken in the act of telling "assurance"[12]. Picking up on Moran's terminology, I will call the view outlined here "the assurance view of testimony" – or "the assurance view" for short[13].

In what follows, I am going to argue that the assurance view is both anti-reductionist and internalist in nature. Let's look at one conjunct at a time. To see why the assurance view is anti-reductionist in nature, it is helpful to look at the speaker's side of the equation. According to the view presented here, the speaker assumes responsibility for the truth of the content of her utterance towards the hearer. And the speaker intends for the hearer to recognize that she does this and to believe her on this basis. This, in and of itself, shall be enough to make it prima facie epistemically reasonable for the hearer to believe what he has been told. No further, reductive, that is non-testimonial, reasons are necessary. Hence, we have an anti-reductionist account of testimonial justification[14].

To see why the assurance view is internalist in nature, it is helpful to look at the hearer's side of the equation. As stressed in the last paragraph, the speaker intends to make a reason available to the hearer. The hearer in turn acquires this reason if he understands the speaker's intention correctly and, moreover, takes her up on her offer. As the hearer acquires this reason in virtue of understanding the speaker, this reason is, by definition, *reflectively accessible* to the hearer. Hence, the hearer is justified to believe what he is told in an internalist sense[15].

Let us briefly take stock: It has been shown that the assurance view is both anti-reductionist and internalist in nature. Therefore, despite initial appearances, anti-reductionism and internalism are compatible. This means that premise (ii) of the sub-argument is false. And as premise (ii) is necessary for the sub-argument to function as a basis for premise (2) of the main argument, we have found a response to the challenge that testimonial justification poses for internalism.

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[12] For the purpose of illustration Moran writes: «[W]hen someone tells me it's cold out, I don't simply gain an awareness of his beliefs; I am also given his assurance that it's cold. […]. When someone gives me his assurance that it's cold he explicitly assumes a certain responsibility for what I believe» (Moran 2005: 6).

[13] In using this terminology, I follow e.g. Moran (2005) and Schmitt (2010). Lackey (2008: cp. 8) speaks of "the interpersonal view of testimony".

[14] Cf. Hinchman (2005: 562) and McMyler (2007: 511). However, it has to be pointed out that Moran (2005) and Faulkner (2007) present their versions of what is called "the assurance view" in this paper as an alternative to both reductionism and anti-reductionism. Their reason for doing so is that they take anti-reductionist positions to explain the hearer's justification by reference to some general principle (cf. e.g. Coady 1992, Burge 1993) and not by reference to the relationship between speaker and hearer that is established by the speech act of telling. I follow Hinchman and McMyler, rather than Moran and Faulkner, because I take anti-reductionism to hold that (i) testimony has its distinct epistemic force and that therefore (ii) no non-testimonial reasons are necessary for one to be prima facie justified in one's TBBs (cf. section 1). As pointed out above, the assurance view fulfils both (i) and (ii).

[15] Moran's view contains both internalist and externalist elements (although he doesn't explicitly reference the internalism/externalism-debate). In order to be in the position to properly invite the hearer's trust, according to Moran, the speaker must fulfil certain "background conditions" – e.g. possess knowledge, be trustworthy, be reliable (cf. Moran 2005: 16). However, the inclusion of such background conditions on the speaker is potentially problematic for Moran's view. Lackey (2008: 232 ff.) points out that it is unclear whether it is the speaker inviting the hearer's trust, or the speaker in fact fulfilling certain background conditions, that explains how the hearer can get a justified TBB.

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Yet, it has to be pointed out, that this response to the challenge from testimony relies on a rather controversial theory of testimonial justification. As emphasized above, the speaker invites the hearer's trust in the very act of telling. And she wants to be believed because the hearer accepts this invitation. This means that the speaker doesn't want her act of telling that p to be taken as some observable behavior from which the (likely) truth of p can be inferred. She doesn't want her utterance to be taken as evidence: «One who tells offers an invitation to trust, not an invitation to consider evidence of her worthiness of trust» (Hinchman 2005: 582).
However, proponents of the assurance view still want to allow that this non-evidential trust-based reason can be defeated by evidence:

> Trust is a source of epistemic warrant just when it is epistemically reasonable. Trust is epistemically reasonable when the thing trusted is worthy of the trust – as long as there is no evidence available that it is untrustworthy (*ivi*: 578).

This is to avoid the charge of gullibility[16]. Surely, we are not justified to trust just anyone, no matter what.
This of course raises the question of how it is possible to weigh our evidential reasons against our trust-based reasons. How is it possible to compare reasons that are different in kind[17]? If this turns out to be impossible, then the assurance view wouldn't be able to coherently incorporate a no-undefeated-defeater-condition into its framework. This in turn would mean that it isn't a viable option in the epistemology of testimony.
Moreover, the assurance view holds that the speaker only makes the trust-based reason available to the hearer who is addressed by her. Only he gets told something and is thereby invited to trust her. Therefore, only he can take her up on this invitation. Mere eaves-droppers might also be justified to believe the speaker[18]. They might, for example, be justified to believe her because they possess relevant background information about her reliability on the question at issue. But they can't be justified to believe the speaker in virtue of her assurance[19].
Following this distinction, the assurance view has to show that there is a real, epistemically significant, difference between addressees and mere eaves-droppers. Here is a list of suggestions[20]:

- Only the addressee, but not a mere eaves-dropper, has the right to complain towards the speaker should she say something false (cf. Moran 2005: 22);
- Only the addressee, but not a mere eaves-dropper, has the right to challenge the speaker and to demand reasons from her (cf. Hinchman 2005: 586);
- Only the addressee, but not a mere eaves-dropper, has the right to refer to his original informant when passing on the information to a third party (cf. Hinchman 2005: 586, McMyler 2013: 1064 ff.).

However, in each case, it has been argued that the alleged difference between addressee and eaves-dropper doesn't exist or, if it does, isn't epistemically significant. Jennifer Lackey (2008: cp. 8) has argued that addressees and eaves-droppers alike can have the

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[16] Cf. Fricker (1994).

[17] Cf. Lackey (2008: 225 f.).

[18] I am using the term "eaves-dropper" in a broad sense. It is meant to cover both accidental listeners as well as people who are secretly listening in on a conversation.

[19] Cf. e.g. Hinchman (2005), Moran (2005), McMyler (2007, 2011, 2013).

[20] For a similar list see Nickel (2012: 312).

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right to complain towards the speaker. Miranda Fricker (2012) has responded that addressee and eaves-dropper are different in so far as they are entitled to different sorts of complaints. However, she concedes that this difference is moral, rather than epistemic, in kind. Additionally, Lackey (2008: cp. 8) has argued that eaves-droppers can also have the right to challenge the speaker and to demand reasons from her. And Sanford Goldberg (2011) and Philip Nickel (2013) have both argued that eaves-droppers can also have the right to defer to their original source of information when passing on the information they received to a third party. Therefore, it is controversial that there is a relevant epistemic difference between addressees and eaves-droppers.

My aim here wasn't to show that the assurance view isn't a viable candidate in the epistemology of testimony. Rather, I just wanted to stress that it relies on controversial assumptions. This in turn means that a response to the challenge from testimony that draws on the assurance view, is bound to be controversial as well. Therefore, I am going to use the next section to present what I take to be a less controversial response. That is, an internalist version of anti-reductionism that doesn't rely on non-evidential reasons and that doesn't posit an epistemic difference between addressees and eves-droppers. While the resulting view will be quite different from the assurance view, it will also put the speech act by which information is conveyed center-stage.

3. Internalism and Reductionism II: The Assertion View

In order to work out the account hinted at above it will be helpful to return to Richard Moran. In developing his version of the assurance view, Moran does not only look at the speech act of "telling". He also looks at the speech act of "assertion" [21]: «Determining his utterance as an assertion is what gets the speaker's words in the realm of epistemic assessment in the first place» (Moran 2005: 16). Only after determining that the speaker's words where in fact intended as an assertion does it make sense to assess these words from an epistemic perspective. That is, to ask questions like "Is it true?" or "Does she know what she is talking about?". Such inquiries would be beside the point when dealing with questions, orders or expletives.

In what follows, I am going to argue that a closer look at the speech act of assertion will give us what we need for an account of testimonial justification that is both internalist and anti-reductionist in nature. We can take our first cue from John Searle: «[T]he proposition is presented as representing an actual state of affairs» (Searle 1969: 64). In asserting something, the speaker makes a claim about how things are – e.g. "It is raining outside", "There is beer in the fridge", "*Richard III* is a play by Shakespeare". This is why the question "Is it true?" is appropriate here.

But this is not all. The speaker doesn't just make a claim about how things are. In doing so, she also commits herself to having proper backing for her claim. That is, she commits herself to fulfilling an epistemic norm. In its most general form, this norm can be spelled out as follows: «(EN) Only assert that p when you are in the epistemic position to assert that p[22]».

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[21] On the difference between "telling" and "asserting", according to Hinchman and Moran, cf. fn. 11.

[22] To my knowledge, the current debate about an epistemic norm of assertion originates in Williamson (1996, 2000) (Williamson defends a knowledge norm of assertion – see below). Following Williamson, it is widely accepted in the literature that asserting properly is tied to the fulfilment of an epistemic norm. However, philosophers disagree about what this norm requires. Arguably, the most popular candidates for what it means to be in the epistemic position to properly assert that p are the knowledge norm: Only assert that p when you know p to be true (see e.g. Williamson 1996, 2000; DeRose 2002; Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005; Hawthorne and Stanley 2008). And the evidence norm: Only assert that p when you

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This is why the question "Does she know what she is talking about?" is appropriate in connection with assertions.

These two factors – representing the content of one's utterance as true and, in doing so, undertaking an epistemic commitment – are characteristic for the speech act of assertion. And these two factors, I am going to argue, allow us to develop an account of testimonial justification that is both anti-reductionist and internalist in nature. As in the last section, let's look at one conjunct at a time.

Again, I am going to start by considering the speaker's side of the coin. In making an assertion, the speaker claims that the content of her utterance is true. And she further represents herself as being in the epistemic position to make such a claim. Otherwise she wouldn't make a straight-out assertion. Rather, she would qualify her words with expressions like "I guess", "I am not sure", "Maybe" or "You should really ask someone else". Therefore, the fact that she is willing to make an assertion, in and of itself, gives the hearer a prima facie reason for his TBB. This reason is anti-reductionist as it is provided by the speaker in virtue of her assertion. No additional non-testimonial reasons above and beyond are necessary[23].

To see why the account presented here is internalist in nature, it is again helpful to turn to the hearer's side of the coin. The hearer acquires the reason provided to him by the speaker in virtue of correctly understanding the assertion qua assertion. He understands that the speaker represents the content of her utterance as true and that, in doing so, she undertakes an epistemic commitment. And acquiring this reason in virtue of understanding the speaker's utterance correctly means, by definition, that this reason is reflectively accessible to him.

That we do in fact have an, at least rough[24], understanding of these factors, characteristic of assertoric speech, is backed by empirical studies. A study by Rakoczy and Tomasello (2009) shows that children as young as three understand that assertions, as opposed to imperatives, aim at truth. In the case of assertions, they criticize the speaker if she says something wrong. In the case of imperatives, however, they criticise the hearer if he fails to do as he is told[25]. And a further study by Markus Kneer (2018) shows that adults judge that a speaker doesn't have the right to make an assertion if she merely believes what she asserts, without possessing sufficient epistemic reasons to back up said belief.

Like the assurance view, the assertion view is both anti-reductionist and internalist in nature. Therefore, the assertion view, like the assurance view, is able to respond to the challenge from testimony that anti-reductionism poses for internalist theories of justification. But in how far might the assertion view be less controversial than the assurance view?

In order to answer this question, I will now revisit the two features of the assurance view that made it controversial to begin with. Firstly, the assurance view proved

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have strong evidence that p is true (see e.g. Pritchard 2005; Douven 2006; Lackey 2007, 2008; Lawlor 2013). I won't take sides on this issue.

[23] I'll defend this proposal against objections in the next section. For now, I am concerned with presenting the broad outline of the assertion view.

[24] What I mean here is that the hearer doesn't necessarily need to consciously entertain propositions like «In making an assertion the speaker commits herself to honouring such and such epistemic standards». Rather, he has an implicit understanding of what the speaker does in making an assertion – an understanding that might become more explicit upon reflection or due to Socratic questioning (cf. Goldberg 2011: 184 fn. 16).

[25] Rakoczy and Tomasello (2009) talk of young children understanding the "direction of fit" of different speech acts.

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controversial because it claimed that the reasons provided by testimony were non-evidential in nature. This made it difficult to see how it could coherently incorporate a no-undefeated-defeater-condition into its framework. In contrast to this, the assertion view makes no claims about testimonial reasons being non-evidential. Rather, the assertion view suggests conceiving of testimony as evidence. As the speaker represents the contents of her utterance as true and, in doing so, undertakes an epistemic commitment, the fact that she is willing to assert that p indicates that p is true – just like smoke indicates fire. And as the assertion view conceives of testimony as evidence, it can incorporate a no-undefeated-defeater-condition into its framework without problem.

Secondly, the assurance view claimed that there is an epistemically significant difference between addressees and mere eaves-droppers. However, it proved difficult to find a suitable candidate for spelling out this difference. Here, it has to be emphasised that the assertion view makes no claims about an epistemic difference between addressees and eaves-droppers. To the contrary, as pointed out before, the epistemic force of assertoric speech is explained by reference to it aiming at truth and the speaker undertaking an epistemic commitment. These are perfectly general features of assertion. They don't depend on whether one is addressed directly or whether one is a mere eaves-dropper. Therefore, they provide the same reasons to any hearer independent from his relationship to the speaker[26]. Consequently, the challenge of spelling out an epistemically significant difference between an addressee and an eaves-dropper doesn't arise for the assertion view[27].

In this section, I have done three things: (1) In presenting the assertion view, I have provided an alternative to the assurance view. (2) I have argued that the assertion view is both anti-reductionist and internalist in nature. Hence, I have given a response to the challenge from testimony. And (3) I have given two reasons for why the assertion view might be less controversial than the assurance view. This, however, doesn't mean that

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[26] Of course, the assertion view allows for there being circumstantial differences between addressees and eaves-droppers. It might be prudential for an eaves-dropper not to challenge the speaker so as not to reveal his presence. However, circumstantial considerations might also prevent an addressee from issuing challenges – e.g. he doesn't want to offend. The important point to stress here is that circumstantial considerations can affect addressees as well as eaves-droppers. Therefore, they are independent from the relation one has to the speaker qua speaker – cf. Nickel (2013).

[27] Views similar to what I'm calling "the assertion view" have been presented in the literature, though not in the context of resolving a tension between internalism and anti-reductionism. Ross (1986) also holds that one is prima facie justified to believe what one is told in virtue of understanding the speaker's assertion as an assertion. But, unlike me, Ross holds that this justficatory reason is non-evidential in nature. And Hinchman writes that the aim of someone asserting that p is «to inform possible interlocutors that p, thereby enabling them to know that p» (2013: 617). However, in a later paper he claims that «only an addressee, and not any overhearer, can be reasonable in *simply* relying – that is, relying simply and solely – on the speaker's closure-conductive reliability» (Hinchman 2014: 39). A plausible way to interpret this passage is for it to claim that only someone directly addressed by the speaker can be prima facie justified to believe that p simply in virtue of the speaker's say-so. Overhearers would need additional reasons – maybe background information about the speaker's reliability – for them to be prima facie justified to believe that p. In contrast to this, the assertion view holds that the speaker's assertion, in and of itself, provides addressees and overhearers alike with an equally good prima facie justification to believe that p. Moreover, Goldberg (2011) and Pelling (2013) also stress the epistemic significance EN possesses for recipients of testimony. Yet, unlike the view presented above, they both remain neutral on the question whether referring to EN (and the hearer's rough understanding of EN) is sufficient to explain how a hearer can get a prima facie justified TBB, or whether reductive reasons are a necessary part of such an explanation. (For more on the epistemic significance of assertoric speech also cf. Goldberg 2015a, 2015b).

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the assertion view is free of problems. Therefore, I shall use the next section to address what I take to be the two most pressing objections against the assertion view.

4. Objections against the Assertion View

In this section I am going to address the following worries: (1) The assertion view is not a version of anti-reductionism. Rather, it is a version of reductionism in disguise. (2) Even if the assertion view is genuinely anti-reductionist in nature, it can't explain how we can acquire prima facie justified beliefs from the words of others. If objection (1) or (2) turns out to be unsurmountable for the assertion view, then it wouldn't be able to respond to the challenge for internalism that stems from the contemporary debate on testimonial justification.

So, why might one think that the assertion view is a version of reductionism in disguise? Well, according to the assertion view, the hearer is prima facie justified to believe what he is told because he understands that, in making an assertion, the speaker represents the content of her utterance as true and, in doing so, commits herself to upholding an epistemic norm. The hearer understands that the speaker represents herself as being in the epistemic position to back up her claim. But the hearer has this understanding in virtue of empirical background knowledge he possesses about the practice of making assertions. While growing up, he has learned that, in his language community, speakers have to meet certain epistemic requirements to assert properly. Thus, according to the assertion view, the hearer is justified to believe what he is told in virtue of reductionist reasons. Hence, that assertion view is really a version of reductionism.

I think that this objection conflates two things: (a) The hearer is justified to believe what he is told in virtue of reasons. (b) The hearer is justified to believe what he is told in virtue of reductive, that is non-testimonial, reasons. In what follows I am going to argue that, according to the assertion view, the hearer is justified to believe what he is told in virtue of reasons he possesses. However, these reasons are not reductive reasons. Therefore, the assertion view doesn't collapse into a version of reductionism[28].

In order to spell out this difference, it is helpful to return to the characterization of reductionism that was given at the beginning of section 1. There it was said that the reductionist regards testimony as epistemically neutral. That is, the fact that someone claimed that p is, in and of itself, no reason to believe that p is true. Therefore, non-testimonial reasons are always necessary for the justification of our TBBs. This characterization was then illustrated by means of a someone asking a pedestrian for the time. While he listens to the pedestrian, he remembers that people have proven trustworthy with regard to this kind of information in the past. This in turn justifies him to believe the pedestrian now, when she tells him the time.

The reasons alluded to in the time-case are clearly reductive in nature. That is, they have nothing to do with the pedestrian telling him the time right now. Rather, he has them due to his past experiences. Whenever he was able to check the time for himself, he found his own observations to be in agreement with the information he had been given. The pedestrian's words might be his source of information. But the fact that the pedestrian told him something plays no role in justifying the resultant belief. Moreover,

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[28] Cf.: «Consider the possibility of an inferentialist anti-reductionism, according to which a testimonial belief is doxastically justified only if one forms one's beliefs on the basis of a defensible inference, but where the inference in question does not cite positive reasons for regarding the testimony as credible» (Goldberg 2010b: 141). However, Goldberg merely mentions a logical possibility here. He doesn't spell out what such an account would look like.

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the reasons have to be reductive in the sense just outlined, because testimony itself it taken to be epistemically neutral.

In contrast, the reasons one possesses according to the assertion view are quite different. Following the latter, one possesses a reason for believing what one was told in virtue of correctly understanding the speaker's assertion. That is, one understands that, in making an assertion, the speaker commits herself to meeting certain epistemic standards. Put slightly differently, one's reason is *derived directly* from the fact that one understands that something was asserted. No reference to past experience, that has nothing to do with the testimony at issue, is cited to explain how the hearer can get a justified belief out of the exchange. Therefore, the reason under consideration here is non-reductive in nature. Consequently, the assertion view doesn't collapse into a version of reductionism.

Still, one might want to resist this conclusion. After all, in order to possess this reason, the hearer must – at some time in his life – have learned that asserting properly is tied to the fulfilment of an epistemic norm. Hence, the reason cited here is part of the hearer's body of empirical knowledge. Due to this, this reason is principally no different from the hearer's empirically founded belief concerning the reliability of people when it comes to time-telling.

I agree that we learn, and know, empirically that asserting properly is tied to the fulfilment of an epistemic norm. But it doesn't follow that this knowledge is not importantly different from knowing that people are generally reliable when they tell us the time. In the first case, we learn something about what an assertion is – a speech act in virtue of which the speaker commits herself to being in a certain epistemic position. If we come to (fully) understand what "assertion" means within our language community, then this will entail understanding that an assertion is tied to fulfilling an epistemic norm[29]. In the second case, however, the knowledge cited refers to a contingent fact. As it happens, our experience has taught us that people are generally reliable when they tell us the time. But it is conceivable that our experiences concerning the reliability of time-tellers would have been different. We can easily imagine people who have, by and large, made negative experiences when asking people for the time[30].

Hence, the reason in the first case, unlike the second case, is not a reason extrinsic to the assertion by which testimony was given. Therefore, it not a reductive reason. Rather, it remains a reason provided by the testimony itself – a non-reductive reason. It's just that we need to learn empirically that this non-reductive reason is provided by the assertion.

Still, even if we agree that the assertion view is genuinely anti-reductionist, we might still wonder whether it can account for the justification of our TBBs. After all, it might seem problematic to simply assume that any given individual will comply with the epistemic norm of assertion. Philip Nickel says that: «From an epistemic point of view it might seem stupid to rely on presumed compliance with an epistemic norm or rule as a free-standing basis for forming a belief» (2013: 211). And Casey Johnson claims that: «[T]he constitutive norm of assertion neither guarantees nor makes it more likely that asserters stand in the appropriate epistemic relation to the content they assert» (2015: 360). As there is always the possibility that we will encounter a speaker who violates the norm of assertion, such a norm can't explain why we should be justified to believe any given speaker. What we need is additional reasons to believe that our interlocutor does in fact

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[29] This is comparable to learning that water is H2O (cf. Putnam 1975; Kripke 1980; Michaelian 2008).

[30] I mean this to be independent from whether we could have made the experience that testimony as a whole is, by and large, unreliable. On the latter point see Coady (1992).

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act according to this norm. And such a requirement would lead to the assertion view collapsing into a version of reductionism.

However, I believe this objection misses the function that norms play in our everyday life. Think about norms of politeness – e.g. letting the other person finish her sentence before it's your turn to speak, not cutting in line at the cash-register, respecting someone's personal space. In each case, we don't need concrete reasons for believing that the other will act in accordance with those norms. It is our default to expect them to be upheld. This explains the surprise and the indignation we feel when someone violates these norms – "Wow, that was rude". Similarly, one should be able to assume that one's interlocutors act in accordance with the epistemic norm of assertion.

One might respond at this point that the epistemic norm of assertion is a special animal. While we are entitled to expect that the norms of politeness are upheld, we can't expect this in the case of assertions. In discussing testimonial justification, Paul Faulkner calls our attention to what he calls "The Cooperation Problem" (henceforth: CP). A hearer who asks for information has an interest in being told the truth. However, it would be best for the speaker «to receive an audience's trust and yet have the liberty to tell the truth or not given the shape of the speaker's interests on the occasion» (Faulkner, 2011, 6). And as this conflict of interest is a perfectly general feature of any testimonial exchange «[t]he acceptance of testimony must be backed by reasons for it to be reasonable» (Faulkner 2011: 6). It isn't enough to simply assume that the speaker will comply with the epistemic norm of assertion.

While I agree that the hearer's and the speaker's interests can clash, I don't believe that this is sufficient to establish the conclusion that one always needs additional reasons to believe that one's interlocutor will behave in a cooperative way. It seems frankly paranoid to always have to consider whether one's interlocutor might have a hidden agenda. Why, for example, should I need to wonder whether it is in my interlocutor's interest to deceive me, when I ask her for the time? The following seems more appropriate: One only needs further reasons to believe that one's interlocutor is following the norm of assertion if one has concrete reasons to believe that she has a motive to deceive. As Alvin Plantinga puts it: «I believe you when you tell me about your summer vacation, but not when you tout on television the marvellous virtues of the deodorant you have been hired to sell» (Plantinga 1993: 79).

This diagnosis is also applicable to the example Faulkner uses to motivate CP in the first place. Faulkner invites us to imagine a customer wanting to buy a used car. She wants to buy a reliable vehicle and would rather leave the lot empty-handed than to buy a defective car. In contrast to this, the used-car salesman has an interest in getting rid of a defective, and hence hard to sell, model. The customer knows this and therefore needs positive reasons to believe that the car on offer is in fact reliable[31]. Here, the hearer has concrete reasons for believing that the speaker might have an interest to deceive. And this explains why, intuitively, the hearer needs positive reasons for believing the speaker in this case. This, however, doesn't mean that the hearer also needs such reasons when the speaker has no apparent motive for deception.

This result is compatible with anti-reductionism. After all, according to anti-reductionism, one is only *prima facie* justified to believe what one is told. As pointed out in section 1, this justification can be defeated. The latter is the case when one has concrete reasons to believe that it might be in one's interlocutor's interest to speak deceptively. Here, one has defeating counterevidence. In order to restore justification, such a defeater calls for additional reasons that act as defeater-defeaters. In Plantinga's

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[31] Cf. Faulkner (2011: 5).

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advertising-case one would need additional reasons to believe that the actor wouldn't endorse a product she doesn't believe in. And in Faulkner's used-car-case one would need additional reasons to believe that the used-car salesman wouldn't try to sell a defective car.

Similar considerations apply to the norms of politeness as well. We are also only prima facie justified to believe that a given individual will comply with them. If, for example, we made the experience that Fred is frequently rude, then we will need additional reasons to believe that he won't act rudely on this occasion. We might know that it's the first time he is meeting his girlfriend's parents and he wants to make a good impression.

The assertion-case, as well as the politeness-case, point to a general feature of the way that norms affect our everyday lives. Such norms afford us with a background of common expectations in front of which our social interactions can flourish. They are there precisely so that we don't always have to ask ourselves how the others will behave. If one always needed reasons for believing that a given norm is upheld, then this norm would be superfluous. We only have to enter into a more reflexive mode of assessment once we have concrete reasons to doubt that a certain norm is upheld in a given situation[32]. Consequently, we have no reason to assume that the reference to an epistemic norm of assertion should be insufficient to explain why we are prima facie justified to believe what we are told[33].

In this section, I have responded to what I take to be the most pressing objections against the assertion view. I have argued that the assertion view isn't a version of reductionism in disguise. And I have argued that the norm of assertion is sufficient to explain why we should be prima facie justified to believe what we are told. Hence, I take the assertion view to be a viable response to the challenge from testimony for the internalist.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented a new challenge for epistemic internalism that emerges out of the current debate on testimonial justification. If one follows the trend of conceiving of testimonial justification along anti-reductionist lines, then, on the face of it, it seems that internalism can't be a plausible theory of justification. However, against this, I have argued that internalism and anti-reductionism are compatible after all. To show this, I have presented two internalist versions of anti-reductionism – the assurance view and the assertion view –, drawing on the resources of speech act theory. Hence, one can be an internalist without thereby being committed to either reductionism or anti-reductionism in the epistemology of testimony[34].

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[32] Ross makes a similar point with regard to rules: «It is a quite general feature of rule-governed life that the responsibility for ensuring that one's actions conform to the rules lies primarily with oneself and that others are in consequence entitled to assume, in the absence of definite reasons for supposing otherwise, that one's actions do so conform» (Ross 1986: 77). Arguably, rules mainly differ from norms is so far as the former are typically more explicit than the latter.

[33] Also cf. Bräuer (2018: 12 ff.).

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Assertion, Implicature, and Speaker Meaning

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Abstract Students of conversational implicature generally agree that when a cooperative speaker makes an assertion that, given the conversation in which she is participating, is less informative than it might have been expected to be, she also conversationally implicates that she is not able to be any more informative than she has been. Such cases, often termed either 'quantity implicatures' or 'scalar implicatures', are an established part of research in pragmatics. It is argued here that for typical cases of this kind, interlocutors do not speaker-mean anything beyond what they say. Instead, parsimony enjoins us to see such cases as rudimentary forms of meaning better described in the framework of biological communication theory: they are generally either manifestations, cues, or signals in senses of those terms developed and motivated within that framework; in some cases they are also expressive utterances. Acknowledging this point enables us to see that while some aspects of human communication require cognitive sophistication, other aspects run on comparatively simpler machinery. Such features also provide clues to the cultural-evolutionary processes leading to our current practices of assertion and other members of the "assertive family" *sensu* (Green 2016a).

Keywords: Conversational implicature, Assertion, Speaker meaning, Overtness, Quantity implicature, Scalar implicature, Grice, Biological signaling, Attitude expression

Invited paper.

1. A showcase example, and some ways of violating norms
One of the best-known examples motivating Grice's seminal characterization of conversational implicature is the following.[1] A and B are planning a holiday in France, and it is common knowledge that A would like to see his friend C if doing so would not be too difficult. The following dialogue ensues:

> A. Where does C live?
> B. Somewhere in the south of France.

Grice glosses this example as one in which B conversationally implicates that he is not in a position to be more informative than he has been in answering as he does. Grice writes,

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[1] My thanks to William Lycan as well as two anonymous referees for this journal for comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

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> *Gloss*: There is no reason to suppose that B is opting out; his answer is, as he well knows, less informative than is required to meet A's needs. This infringement of the first maxim of Quantity can be explained only on the supposition that B is aware that to be more informative would be to say something that infringed the second maxim of Quality, "Don't say what you lack adequate evidence for," so B implicates that he does not know in which town C lives (Grice 1989: 32-33).

Conversational implicature (hereafter just 'implicature') is normally construed as a species of speaker-meaning, in that for an agent to implicate that P, she must harbor reflexive communicative intentions toward an addressee.[2] On the most common construal of such intentions, in the South of France case (hereafter 'SF') that would require that B intend A to believe that B does not know anything more specific about C's whereabouts than that C is in the south of France, with the further intention that A come to believe this at least in part by recognition of B's intention that she do so.[3] Accordingly, as Grice and many commentators who follow him, such as Levinson (1983), affirm, B not only speaker-means what he says, namely that C lives somewhere in the south of France, but also speaker-means a further content that he does not say, namely that he is not in a position to be more informative than that.

Many cases of implicature depends upon the violation of conversational norms, and it will be useful for what follows to distinguish among ways of violating such norms.[4] Grice distinguishes among various ways of failing to live up to a conversational maxim or other norm such as the Cooperative Principle: on his account one may opt out, flout, or violate a conversational norm or group of norms.[5] One who opts out, on Grice's usage, gives no indication of attempting to conform to those norms. At the other extreme, in flouting a norm one not only violates it, but does so with the further intention that one's intention to violate that norm be readily discernible by others. On Grice's understanding, one who intentionally violates conversational norms without flouting them still presents himself as aiming to conform to those norms. Grice illustrates his conception of norm-violation with the case of someone who "quietly and unostentatiously" fails to conform to one or more norms, mentioning as well that such a speaker is apt to mislead others. Grice evidently intends his readers to think of lying as a typical case: the liar presents what he says as true, while violating Quality in the hope of avoiding detection.[6]

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[2] See Neale (1992: 24ff), for defense and development of this point, as well as Petrus (2010: 4-12), Bianchi (2013: 110), and Bach (2012: 54).

[3] Such intentions need not be consciously entertained. Instead, they need only be intentions that a speaker would avow were she to reflect on them. Also, the standard, audience-directed conception of speaker meaning is not mandatory for the considerations that follow. The line of reasoning below would work equally well by employing a conception of speaker meaning, such as that defended by Green (2016), which depends on overtness but with no appeal to intentions to produce an effect on an addressee.

[4] Not all implicature requires norm violation. Many implicatures that exploit the Maxim of Manner (formulated in the Appendix to this essay), for instance do not do so: a speaker who describes events in a certain order, tends to implicate that they occurred in the order listed; but in doing so she does not violate any conversational norms.

[5] Grice adds to this list of ways of violating conversational norms the case of a speaker who is faced with a clash, such as between the Quantity and Quality maxims. This is puzzling because being faced with a maxim clash is not itself a way of violating a conversational maxim; violation only occurs if the speaker responds to that clash in a certain way.

[6] In general, we may distinguish at least five ways of violating norms: (1) inadvertent norm violation in which the agent can't have been expected to know that she was in violation of that norm; (2) inadvertent

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The above delineation of the varieties of norm-violation obscures the possibility of such a violation, even by an ostensibly cooperative interlocutor, that is neither covert nor overt. To see why, observe first that 'covert' and 'overt' do not exhaust the logical space of ways of behaving. As I scratch my ear while riding on a crowded subway, I intend to conceal neither my intention to scratch my ear nor my ear-scratching. At the same time, I do not intend to advertise either my intention or my behavior. My ear-scratching is thus neither covert nor overt. (One may by contrast readily imagine cases of covert as well as of overt ear-scratching.) So too for behavior that violates a norm. A pedestrian who deliberately breaks a law by jaywalking in order to save time on her way back to her office from her lunch break is most likely not doing so covertly, but nor is she doing so overtly. The former case would require some effort to hide her behavior, while the latter would require some effort to advertise it: perhaps the jaywalking pedestrian sashays her way across the street in plain view of a police officer. But the pedestrian need do neither of these things on her way back from lunch while still violating traffic laws.

Do matters appear any different as we get closer to the SF case while remaining outside the realm of communication? We approach that case by considering a person who is ostensibly conforming to a set of norms, is unable to live up to them fully, and instead does something that lives up to them only in part. Suppose you've asked me to run an 8-minute mile and I agree to try. As the laps go by and the clock ticks, it is becoming clear that I will take longer than 8 minutes. Assuming that I am still trying to fulfill your request, the best explanation of my sub-par behavior is that I am unable to run any faster than I am currently running. Nothing about my behavior requires the further hypothesis that my violation of the goals we've set is either covert or overt. It is by contrast not difficult to envision both covert and overt variations on this case. For the latter, just imagine that I give you a hangdog look as I pass you on the track, while hyperventilating in a way that is obviously intentional. In this case I am making my violation of our shared expectation overt.[7]

In the SF scenario, B could have satisfied A's curiosity by being more specific about C's whereabouts: B could have claimed that C is in Nimes, even that C is living in a flat in that city right off the central plaza above a boulangerie. However, as the case is normally understood, doing so would have required B's transgressing Quality, the injunction against asserting things for which one lacks evidence. For in answering as he does, B is being as informative as he is capable of being, given his epistemic situation. A can readily discern this, and conclude that B has given only a partial answer to the question posed because B does not take himself to know enough to be any more informative without committing an infraction of Quality. B's norm violation can thus be fully explained by adverting to his awareness of his epistemic limitation and his wish to respect Quality while doing his best to answer A's question. It would accordingly be explanatorily otiose to suppose that B's behavior is covert (for instance that he is "quietly and unostentatiously" violating a norm); so too it would be idle to suppose that his behavior is overt.[8] Consequently, and since speaker-meaning is a form of overt behavior, nothing about the SF case either shows or suggests that B speaker-means that

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norm violation in which the agent can have been expected to know that she was in violation of a norm; (3) a foreseen but not intended consequence of a distinct, intended action; (4) intentional violation of a norm; (5) blatant violation of a norm in which an agent not only violates that norm but does with the intention of making her intention to do so readily discernible.

[7] Mooney (2004) provides a detailed discussion of the approaches that various authors in pragmatics take to conversational norm-violation.

[8] Had B laid stress on 'somewhere' in his answer, that choice would have called for explanation, and would have made an imputation of overtness plausible.

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he can be no more informative than he has been in answering as he does. It follows that the conclusion that Grice reaches in the above-quoted gloss, («so B implicates that he does not know in which town C lives») is a *non-sequitur*: it is neither entailed by the premises that he gives, nor justified as an abductive inference via inference to the best explanation from those premises.[9]

If the argument of this essay is sound, its lessons go beyond a needed correction in our understanding of a famous example. Instead, it will follow that a wide range of alleged quantity implicatures[10] have been inaccurately characterized: except in unusual cases they are not implicatures at all, and are instead best seen as either manifestations, cues, signals, or expressions (in senses of these terms to be explained below) of a speaker's epistemic state. (Which of these categories applies depends on who if anyone benefits from the transaction.) Similarly, it is widely accepted that the ascription of implicature is often justified by the need to make a speaker's apparent violation of a conversational maxim consistent with the assumption that she is being a cooperative interlocutor. We shall see that this view is only a half-truth. It is not true if the violation in question can be accounted for without imputing communicative intentions to speakers beyond what they have said. Rather, the claim is only plausible in situations in which the agent is not only violating conversational maxims but overtly doing so. Only overt norm-violation calls out for explanation that reaches beyond an agent's mere inability to conform to that norm, and thus only there should we expect to find speaker-meaning transcending what (if anything) has been said.[11]

2. A parsimonious route to communication

In this section we will develop some concepts that delineate the minimum requirements for a case of communication that nevertheless stop short of the conditions needed for speaker meaning. Doing so will provide us with alternative ways of conceptualizing the type of information that we now, in light of the last section, know not to be speaker-meant by cooperative speakers who fail to meet a conversation's expectations.[12] While

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[9] Geurts (2010) rightly emphasizes the critical role of inference to the best explanation in the determination of conversational implicature. Also, Geurts does not couch his theory of conversational implicature in the framework of speaker meaning. Instead, on his view, an implicature is simply an attitude we are justified in ascribing to a speaker. In the terminology we develop below, then, for Geurts implicatures are either manifestations of or cues to a speaker's psychological state, and are thus best seen as manifest events in the parlance of Stalnaker (2014). I will instead continue to use 'implicature' as a term for a form of speaker meaning.

[10] I follow Geurts (2010) in calling these *quantity implicatures*, as well as his arguments (*ivi*: 49-66) against the view that so-called scalar implicatures form a useful theoretical category.

[11] Gil (2015) defends a position complementary to that taken here, using examples of parapraxes to motivate it. When for instance Chicago's Mayor Daley remarked, "The police aren't here to create disorder, they're here to preserve disorder," it is tempting to suppose that on some level Daley implied that he believes the police's role is to preserve disorder even though he would not avow that implication if he were to reflect on it. Gil argues that this conclusion poses a challenge to both the Gricean approach to implicature as well as that of Relevance Theory. In terminology to be explained in § 2, the present essay enables us to see such utterances as at least manifestations of psychological states, which once manifested may be entered into conversational common ground. If certain psychoanalytic speculation about such cases is borne out, that may justify claiming as well that such utterances are signals of such states. For further discussion of parapraxes and of psychoanalytic explanations more broadly, see Green (2018b).

[12] The approach developed here shares with Wharton (2003) an interest in communicative phenomena that do not rise to the level of speaker meaning. It differs in that Wharton restricts his concerns to intentional communication, in which, paradigmatically, an agent uses a natural sign such as a rash or a blushed face with the intention of conveying information. By contrast, the approach here, particularly in

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the biologist's notion of meaning may not have a role to play in the discourse of laypeople, its established use in that discipline merits attention from students of natural language. Accordingly, I first set out some theoretical machinery that will help us to conceptualize this middle space between natural and non-natural meaning. First, a creature that *manifests* a state S enables a properly situated observer to know or otherwise act appropriately to the situation of its being in that state. An agent's manifestation of her state need not be intentional. In looking around for my house keys, I manifest my ignorance of their whereabouts without intending to do so. (I may even be trying to hide my ignorance.) Also, enabling others to know something does not guarantee success: one may manifest one's state without anyone else becoming aware of that manifestation or of the state it manifests.

To appreciate how these distinctions relate to communication, let us observe that every object in the physical world is a source of information even if the vast majority of such information goes unused. At the same time, some organisms are able to exploit the information-conveying powers of their surroundings to aid their survival. A mosquito uses the presence of a higher-than-typical level of CO_2 in the air to find a meal, usually in the blood of a mammal (Dekker *et al.* 2005). The presence of CO_2 in the air is thus a cue for the mosquito, though it may not be for other animals. More officially, we may say *C is a cue for organism O* just in case O is competent to use C for the acquisition of information for its benefit. That the presence of a higher-than-typical level of CO_2 in the air is a cue for organism O does not imply that anything (either natural selection or a sentient creature's intention) designed it to play that role. Cues can even be produced by inanimate objects.

An organism's use of a cue is not yet communication. I am not communicating with the mosquito when it enjoys a meal at my vascular expense; nor is it with me. Nevertheless, cues can be precursors to communication. For a related notion, consider that instead of gathering information from other objects for its own purposes, a creature could manipulate that information to gain an advantage over other creatures. Crypsis is a case in point, in which a creature uses camouflage in order to avoid predation or to make potential prey more vulnerable to its attack (Ruxton *et al.* 2005). Following usage in the biological literature, we may call *coercion* any trait or behavior in which an organism manipulates information to gain an advantage in its interaction with others (Maynard Smith & Harper 2003).

When an organism uses a cue, it has an evolved response to the transmission of information; but the entity transmitting that information does not do so as a result of an evolved response. In coercion, by contrast, an organism uses a trait that is evolved to manipulate information. So in cues we have receivers of information making adaptive use of it; and in coercion we have potential senders of information manipulating that information for their own ends. If we now combine these two concepts in such a way that both the sender and receiver of information make adaptive use of it, we approach communication. A process by which this occurs in nature is ritualization (Green 2017b). Signaling emerges at the confluence of cues and coercion, and is a matter of conveying information in a way that is due to design on the part of both sender and receiver. Otte defines a signal as a behavioral, physiological, or morphological characteristic fashioned

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its reliance on the notion of a signal, does not make crucial use of intention in its account of communication: signaling can occur even among mindless organisms. Also, Jary (2013) argues that a class of implicatures – which he terms 'material implicatures' – may be fully accounted for without relying on any mental attributions to the speaker. While space limitations preclude a detailed assessment of Jary's position, I would argue that it is indefensible as it stands, but could be made defensible if supplemented with the notion of a signal as defined below.

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or maintained by natural selection because it conveys information to other organisms. (1974: 385) We can reframe Otte's account in a way that makes clear the relation of signals to cues:

S is a signal iff it is a behavioral, physiological, or morphological characteristic fashioned or maintained by natural selection because it serves as a cue to other organisms.

Or more pithily, *signaling is exploitation of a cue*, where this exploitation benefits the exploiting organism in some way. Although I will not try to do so here, we may generalize this notion of a signal to include other processes that might fashion or maintain an information-conveying characteristic.[13] Also, we should clarify that the notion of information built into the concept of a cue used here includes misinformation: it is possible for a behavior or trait, either by design or error, to convey information that is not correct. Further, when something is a signal, we may ask what it signals, or what it is a signal of. Possible answer-schemata include *a's F ness* (e.g., a particular organism's readiness to attack), *that something is so*, as well as *to do something*. In a given case, the available evidence will not always enable us to settle whether a signal's content is best expressed in objectual, indicative, or imperatival terms. Further, even when this choice is settled, there may still be indeterminacy as to how precisely to express that content. Such indeterminacy does not justify a refusal to theorize about what a given signal means.[14]

Signaling is not restricted to species other than our own. Human pheromones appear to signal sexual arousal or availability, for instance (Grammer *et al.* 2004). Further, some signals pertain to the signaler's psychological state, and only some such signals are voluntary. A number of factors may cause a person's face to redden including hyperthermia, alcohol consumption, anger, etc. Another factor is embarrassment, which may be triggered by one's awareness of one's violation of a social norm. Perhaps blushing is designed by natural selection to indicate such an awareness.[15] If so, then blushing possesses this status even though for most of us it is not within our control. Indeed, if blushing is a signal of the sort we have just imagined, it is also a form of expression, which is that type of signal designed to convey information about an agent's psychological state (Green forth., Green 2016b). Observe, however, that a behavior or trait may be so designed without intentions, to say nothing of communicative intentions, coming into the picture. The reason is that natural selection can design traits and behaviors for the transmission of information (Green 2019c).

Signalers and receivers need not be of the same species, and may be single- or multi-celled organisms. Likewise, nothing in the definition of signaling rules out plants or living things in other kingdoms as potential signalers/receivers.[16] So long as the notions

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[13] Such a generalization would permit not just natural selection, but also artificial selection, cultural evolution, and even conscious intention to produce signals; indeed, the definition should be generalized to allow inanimate objects such as computers to signal one another as well as animate objects. I shall not, however, attempt such a generalization here.

[14] Green (1999) offers a fuller explication and defense of this attitude toward indeterminacy. Also, just as we defined a cue as relative to an organism that makes use of it, so too a more precise definition of a signal would reflect this fact. Our definiens would then be: *S is a signal of M for organism O*. Such a definition would make clear that a single trait or behavior might be a signal for one species but not a signal for another.

[15] Dijk *et al.* (2009) provide suggestive experimental evidence pertinent to this question, considered more fully in Crozier & De Jong (2013).

[16] The definition of signaling would require modification in order to be generalized the important intra-cellular case. Also, Mooney (2004) introduces a notion of *social implication* that bears affinities with the

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of information, transmission, and adaptation apply to a pair of organisms, they are capable of participating in a signaling transaction. Such a transaction does not, however, require intentions to communicate, to say nothing of reflexive communicative intentions. The concepts we have delineated so far are displayed in Table 1 below[17]:

	sender benefits	receiver benefits	mind-involving	communicative
manifestation				
cue		x		
coercion	x			
signal	x	x		x
expression	x	x	x	x

Table 1: three pre-communicative concepts, and two post-communicative concepts that do not rise to the level of speaker-meaning.

3. Intending and being willing

With these options in hand, we can now consider how to conceptualize the kind of information made available by diffident speakers in cases like that of SF. There need not be a single row of the above diagram that covers all such cases uniformly. Instead, where a particular case occurs on this table depends on how the question, *cui bono?* is answered. Some manifestations of ignorance benefit neither the speaker nor addressee; in such cases they are mere manifestations. If the addressee but not the speaker benefits, then we have a cue, and so forth. Again, it may well be that both speaker and addressee benefit, because the incompleteness of the information spurs them to look elsewhere to complete their inquiry. In this situation, the speaker's incomplete answer about C's whereabouts is a signal of her ignorance[18], whence C's diffidence is also an expression of ignorance. Still, however, expression as conceptualized here does not presuppose the conditions that are sufficient for speaker meaning, and so will not constitute a case of implicature.[19] Nothing, of course, prevents B from harboring more complex intentions. At the same time, no part of the original scenario described by Grice (unlike his gloss on that scenario) suggests that any such intentions must be imputed to make sense of B's verbal behavior. But just as we should opt for parsimony, as enshrined in Grice's Modified Occam's Razor, over a facile multiplication of word senses, so too we do well

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notion of signal developed here. However, she explains the notion of social implication as something that «tells us something about the relationship between interlocutors» (*ivi*: 909) This characterization elides the differences among manifestations, cues, coercion, signals, and expressive behavior that we are at pains to tease apart here.

[17] Grice (1989) also contemplated an account – albeit at the level of a just-so story – about how speaker meaning could emerge naturalistically. However, as Bar-On & Green (2010) argue, the explanatory route his account suggests is logically possible but psychologically implausible.

[18] One may reasonably doubt whether ignorance is a psychological state. However, for our purposes it is sufficient to understand 'ignorance' as shorthand for 'belief that one lacks a certain piece of information.'

[19] I should stress that it is still possible for a speaker to speaker-mean the information that is the topic of our discussion here. The only constraint on her doing so is that her behavior must in some way make her communicative intentions available to appropriate recipients. This is in line with what Bianchi (2006) terms the *availability constraint*. See Green (2019a) for further discussion.

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to avoid attribution of communicative intentions beyond those needed to make sense of our interlocutors' verbal behavior.[20]

Grice's reconstruction of an addressee's reasoning process ending in an attribution of implicature makes the above points difficult to appreciate. He writes,

> A general pattern for the working out of a conversational implicature might be given as follows: "He has said that p; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; he could not be doing this unless he thought that q; he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that q is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that q; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that q; and so he has implicated that q" (Grice 1989: 31).

In the SF case the q in question would evidently be something along the lines of, 'B knows nothing more about C's whereabouts than that C is in the south of France.' Further, if B gives a less informative answer than he might have given to a question that he and an interlocutor share, he *may* give some thought to the reaction that that answer would provoke in her. On the other hand B might focus his cognitive efforts on finding other types or sources of information he may be able to offer so that he and A can make progress on their conversational project. Now, if A reasons about B's state of mind, she could discern all this as well. That is, A may discern that B's diffidence in answering the question on the table is due to his awareness of his lack of sufficient information. Must A impute to B intentions going beyond that?

A negative answer comes into view as we reflect on the difference between intending that someone believe something, and being willing to allow them do so. We are willing to allow others to think all manner of things, including those views that pertain to ourselves. That is not the same as intending that they so think. Intentions, for instance, have fulfillment conditions, while being willing to allow others to do or think things does not. I am willing to allow the Flat Earthers in the house next door to persist in their absurd views, but do not intend that they so believe. I am willing to allow you to believe, as I say something to you in English, that I speak English, that I am alive, and that I am not identical to Mt. Fuji. And as I fail to make the 8-minute benchmark in spite of running as fast as I can, I am willing to let you conclude that I am not able to run any faster. In none of these cases, however, do I speaker-mean the proposition in question; nor could an addressee's imputation of such intentions conjure them into existence.[21] Thus unless we are prepared to populate our everyday lives with armies of communicative intentions that are explanatorily inert, Grice's reasoning in the passage quoted above emerges as fallacious.[22]

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[20] Geurts (2010: 34-37) rightly observes that imputing conversational implicatures depends crucially on the abductive process of Inference to the Best Explanation. Davis (2014), & Colonna Dahlman (2013) rightly observe that conversational implicatures are intentional.

[21] Might willing become intending in a context such as we find in conversations governed by the Cooperative Principle? Grice himself gives persuasive reasons to think not, writing, «we should recognize that within the dimension of voluntary exchanges (which are all that concern us) collaboration in achieving exchange of information…may coexist with a high degree of reserve, hostility, and chicanery and a high degree of diversity in the motivations underlying quite meager common objectives» (1989: 369).

[22] One might ask whether adherence to the Cooperative Principle could require that an insufficiently informative speaker signal (if not speaker mean) that she cannot be more informative than she has been? The CP enjoins speakers to do what the conversation requires. What that comes to depends on what kind of conversation they are having. In a conversation aimed at answering a question of fact (where is the bus station?, what is the cause of this illness?, etc.), that injunction comes down to our pooling our

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A similar point emerges as we consider a more recent critical discussion of implicature. Davis (2014) offers a general characterization of implicature as follows:

> **Theoretical Definition:** *S* conversationally implicates *p* iff *S* implicates *p* when:
> (i) *S* is presumed to be observing the Cooperative Principle (*cooperative presumption*);
> (ii) The supposition that *S* believes *p* is required to make *S*'s utterance consistent with the Cooperative Principle (*determinacy*); and
> (iii) *S* believes (or knows), and expects *H* to believe that *S* believes, that *H* is able to determine that (ii) is true (*mutual knowledge*)

We may have our doubts about whether clause (iii) is satisfied in cases such as SF: whether that is the case depends on how we characterize tacit belief. However, even if (iii) is satisfied in that case, it will not follow that we have a case of speaker meaning: one may fulfill all conditions in Davis' Theoretical Definition of implicature without speaker meaning anything beyond what one has said. The reason is that believing that someone believes something (even about oneself) is not sufficient for intending that they do so; likewise for believing that another is able to determine that something is the case.[23]

4. Common Ground and "Manifest Events"

Even if SF and structurally similar cases do not amount to implicatures, this does not entail that they are conversationally inert. In this section I shall explain how such cases may be understood as contributing to conversations without having to be understood as implicatures.

For many purposes guiding conversations, it makes little difference whether one manifests one's psychological state, signals that state, or speaker-means that one is in that state. In the scenario imagined by Grice, A can reasonably infer from B's answering as she does that B is not epistemically in a position to be more informative about C's whereabouts than she is currently being. A may do this without having to suppose in addition that B is speaker meaning that this is the case. In Stalnaker's (2014) conception of conversation, common ground (that set of propositions that all interlocutors accept, and that all interlocutors recognize one another as accepting) may be modified by the at-issue content of utterances (such as when a speaker asserts that he has a pet tortoise and

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information in such a way as to correctly and completely answer whatever question we are jointly trying to answer. A speaker who contributes only a partial answer is being less helpful than she might have been in this endeavor. However, it is doubtful that the cooperative nature of the enterprise requires that in such a situation he also signal that this is the best he can do. Instead, the situation will often make that clear. This is in line with cooperation more generally: someone helping me to fix a flat tire on my bicycle might manifest, by their unsuccessful efforts, their inability in spite of their best efforts to get the tube to fit inside the rim. They could, in the process, also make a point of looking sheepish or apologetic about their incompetence, thereby signaling it. So too in the not-quite-8-minute-mile case, I might also give you a hangdog look as I struggle around the track more slowly than either of us had hoped. But in both cases, context can make it clear that we are doing the best we can. So too, the context can make it clear that I am doing the best I can conversationally without my also having to signal that I am doing so.

23 I assume that 'expects' in Davis' formulation is used as a stylistic variant on 'believes'. Also, Lepore and Stone (2015) offer a general criticism of the Gricean approach to implicature and of pragmatic phenomena more generally. That criticism may appear to make the more specific criticism of certain types of Gricean explanations offered in this essay moot. However, Green (2018a) replies to Lepore and Stone by arguing that their criticisms rest on a number of confusions, including a conflation of speaker meaning with conventional word meaning, and a conflation of eliminative reductions with reductions that do not eliminate the reduced phenomena. See also Roberts (2017) for a detailed critical discussion of Lepore and Stone.

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his interlocutors accept that claim), by the presupposed content (such as when a speaker asserts that his pet tortoise ate some lettuce and his interlocutors accommodate the proposition that he has a pet tortoise), or by a "manifest event" (such as when the speaker's pet tortoise comes rambling into the room in which the conversation is taking place and in plain view of all interlocutors in such a way that they not only all see the animal but all see that they all see it). Any of these events will, assuming interlocutors do not demur, result in common ground's now containing the proposition that the speaker has a pet tortoise. Among other manifest events are the fact of a speaker's making an utterance. Further, an event might be cognitively but not perceptually manifest, thereby requiring observers to draw inferences to discern that it is occurring: at least this much occurs in the SF and like scenarios, with the result that common ground now contains the proposition that B cannot be any more specific on the matter of C's whereabouts than he is currently being. A symptom of this fact is that subsequent utterances may felicitously presuppose that B does not know enough to be more specific than that C is somewhere in the south of France. We could, that is, easily imagine the SF conversation continuing as follows:

> A. Where does C live?
> B. Somewhere in the south of France.
> D. Well, since B doesn't know where C is specifically, why don't we just text her to find out?

Our results about the SF case generalize at the very least to other alleged quantity implicatures in which an erstwhile cooperative interlocutor's failure to provide sufficient information is due to a clash between conversational maxims (such as between Quality and Quantity), or between a conversational maxim and an extra-conversational norm, such as one enjoining politeness. A speaker's diffidence might be due to her not wishing to hurt another's feelings by remarking that P even though she knows that P is true. Such a situation will still not mandate an ascription of implicature, as the speaker's diffidence can be fully accounted for without it.

5. Expressing and implicating
Our line of reasoning thus far is not aimed at minimizing the importance of implicature understood as a species of speaker meaning. Instead, it shows that many cases normally thought of as implicature are better construed in more parsimonious terms. While it is beyond the scope of this essay exactly to delimit the extent of cases that should be so construed, in this section I will first explain why certain types of case do not merit such treatment, and then suggest another range of cases that do merit it.
Geurts (2010: 27-33) in discussing quantity implicature distinguishes between weak and strong implicatures. In a *weak implicature*, a cooperative speaker implicates that a stronger, relevant claim that might have been a useful contribution to the conversation in which she is participating is not one that she takes to be true; in a *strong implicature*, such a speaker implicates that she takes such a stronger claim to be false. As mentioned above, Geurts' discussion of quantity implicatures is not couched in terms of speaker meaning, and he accordingly does not address the question whether strong implicatures should be construed in terms of that concept. We nevertheless do well to address this issue. For instance, the question on the minds of the calculus teacher's students is how many of them passed the exam about to be returned. She now remarks

"Some of the students passed the exam".

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The teacher presumably knows how everyone performed, knows that her students know this, and knows that they are interested in that further question in addition to the one she answered by means of what she said explicitly. Her students may accordingly discern that her violation of Quantity is not due to her lack of sufficient information to answer the question that is on their minds. Instead, her violation of Quantity is more likely due to her desire to let her pupils know of her wish to be diplomatic. This, however, suggests that her violation is also overt: she intends to make manifest her intention to violate Quantity. That in turn makes the following hypothesis a reasonable one: the teacher is overtly manifesting her belief that some of the students did not pass. On at least one view of assertion, discussed under the rubric of "assertion as overt belief expression" in Green (2019b), it will also follow that the teacher is asserting that some of her students did not pass, but without saying that this is the case.

We do not need to dwell on the question whether this imputation of speaker meaning is the best explanation of the teacher's utterance under the mooted conditions; whether it is depends on the details of the case. However, it is at least a reasonable hypothesis that the teacher's signal is also a case of speaker meaning. Similarly, in cases of damning with faint praise, such as Grice's notorious example of the tepid recommendation letter, it is not credible that the writer lacks sufficient information to comment on the student's intellectual abilities. The writer is aware of this, knows that her readers are as well, and so is likely not just violating, but also flouting Quantity, that is, violating this maxim while intending to make manifest his intention to violate it. How can we make sense of such behavior while assuming that the speaker is still being cooperative? The most likely answer is that the writer speaker-means something he would rather not say. This may be because etiquette enjoins us to avoid criticizing people directly, or because of the amusement value of indirection, or a desire not to be sued for causing someone's failure to get a job, or some combination of these. Regardless of which is these conditions holds, it is at least a reasonable hypothesis that the letter writer speaker-means that the student in question lacks talent.

There is no guarantee that a cooperative speaker who patently knows more than she tells, in situations where the withheld information would be conversationally appropriate, also speaker means that withheld information. However, the two phenomena appear to go hand in hand, and where we find the former, it is often a reasonable hypothesis that we will find the latter as well.

Some so-called relevance implicatures may also be amenable to our parsimonious treatment with the concept of expression. Suppose that E is a guest for dinner at D's, and it is common knowledge among D and E that E has to rise early the next morning to begin a new job. The following exchange ensues as they finish their meals:

> D. Would you like some coffee?
> E. Coffee would keep me awake.

E presumably so speaks for the sake of indicating that he doesn't want coffee. In our terms, his utterance is designed to manifest a preference against coffee at this hour, and is thus an expression of such a preference. Nothing of course prevents E from harboring the more complex intentions needed for speaker meaning, such as the configuration of intentions needed for an act of declining an offer. Unless we have

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reason to impute such intentions, however, parsimony enjoins imputing a simpler, expressive aim to E.[24]

6. From Attitude Expression to the Assertive Family

In addition to providing us with conceptual resources to understand forms of communication more primitive than speaker meaning, the concepts of manifestation, cue, signal, and their ilk also provide a suggestive framework for investigating how modern-day practices of assertion could have emerged via cultural evolution. This way of thinking is not the typical one of asking how much cognitive sophistication is needed for an agent to participate in an act of speaker meaning. Rather, although agents' cognitive sophistication plays a part, we may also consider how cultural evolution can develop practices that can in a sense outsource this cognitive sophistication for us.

I have argued elsewhere that it is possible to imbue voluntarily producible sound-patterns with semantic properties without the population in which this occurs needing to do so through acts of speaker-meaning (Green 2017, 2019). Such properties might either be of the NP or VP varieties; although it may be indeterminate which of these two grammatical categories best describes a particular act. But with such semantic properties in place, we can also imagine a practice of what we may call *ur-assertion* (or more succinctly *ursertion*) emerging, in which a speaker expresses her belief with the aid of semantic properties but not in a way that is overt, and not in a way that would make a third party confident that she does so with all of the normative properties we now expect to be carried by assertions: she is not prepared to defend her claim if challenged, nor does she issue an "inference license" to her addressees. On the other hand, her utterance has some normative properties: if by means of her ursertion she expresses her view of a matter, and that view turns out to be incorrect, she has been shown to be in error. That might undermine her credibility in later exchanges. So too, others might find out that she was trying to mislead them; and this could result in a loss of face as well.

Ursertions will have value in primitive societies in which we are imagining them in use: they may be employed in the exchange of information as well as for planning. It is known that honeyguide birds have worked symbiotically with humans for at least 20,000 years in Africa to detect and consume the contents of beehives (Isack and Reyer 1989): the bird leads hunters to the hive, whereupon the hunters destroy the hive and recover the honey; the bird then consumes the wax and larvae from the destroyed hive. We may easily imagine a group following one such bird in search of a hive; presently the bird is out of view, but one hunter utters, 'tree!' accompanied by a pointing gesture as an expression of his belief that the bird is in the ostended tree. Given the intricate normative dimensions that we attach to assertion, it would be anachronistic to suppose that the hunter asserted that the honeyguide is in the tree. On the other hand, he may nevertheless have urserted this.

A linguistic community benefits from the institution of a practice that differentiates the prediction of one's future course of action from the undertaking of a promise to perform that action. Promising enables promisees to coordinate their actions more reliably than do mere predictions, and it does this in part by making the utterance in question a potentially costly one: one who predicts that she will do X in the future but does not do X is subject to milder censure than is someone who promises to do X and

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[24] Green (2007) offers a general account of self-expression, and that account is extended and updated in Green (forth). Also, Bertolet (2017) points out that a piece of behavior's functioning in certain respects as a speech act does not entail that it is a speech act. Thus, even if we say that E's reply in the coffee case functions as an act of declining an offer, it does not follow that it is such an act.

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does not follow through. As Green (2009) argues, it is precisely this potential cost that makes promises more reliable as guides to action than are predictions of future action (even one's own).

A similar pattern emerges with the transition from ursertions to assertions. One who urserts that P expresses her belief but does not thereby represent herself as knowing that P; nor does she commit herself to defending P if challenged. The ursertor might still be shown wrong, since the belief she expresses might turn out to be incorrect. However, just as society gains a valuable new tool in the institution of promising over that of predicting, I suggest that it also gets a valuable tool in the creation of a new practice of assertion over and above that of ursertion. Further, what undergirds this new practice of assertion is its riskiness: one who sticks her neck out with an assertion as opposed to a mere belief expression encourages others to rely on what she says as being true; she also presents herself as knowing, and thus as being justified in saying what she does.

Once assertion has come into being as part of communicative practice, a linguistic group is free to develop cognate practices that differ from assertion proper in some way: conjectures, guesses, and other act that have elsewhere (Green 2016) been said to make up the *assertive family* may be instituted for specific tasks. Whereas not all linguistic groups will have need for guesses, for instance, other groups may find it useful in the generation of hypothesis that could explain otherwise puzzling phenomena. Guesses and conjectures are, however, still more refined than ursertion.

Taking a step back for a wide-angled view, then, we have seen that contrary to established opinion in pragmatics, non-overt violations of conversational norms perpetrated by cooperative speakers need not be loci of speaker-meanings beyond what is said. Instead, the information that is conveyed by such diffidence is better conceptualized as a manifestation, cue, signal, or expression of the speaker's psychological state – which of these it is depends on how the *cui bono?* question is answered in a given case. What is more, acknowledging the value of these more primitive, pre-speaker-meaning concepts provides suggestive material for investigating how cultural evolution might have fashioned assertion and its kin from the loins of ursertion.

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An Inferential Articulation of Metaphorical Assertions

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Abstract This paper argues for the view that metaphors are assertions by locating metaphor within our social discursive practices of asserting and inferring. The literal and the metaphorical differ not in the stating of facts nor in the representation of states of affairs but in the kind of inferential involvements they have and the normative score-keeping practices within which the inferential connections are articulated. This inferentialist based account of metaphor is supplemented by insights from accommodation theory. The account is significant for our understanding of both metaphor's figurativeness and cognitive content.

0. Introduction

The inferentialist-based approach to understanding metaphor pursued here is based on Robert Brandom's (1994, 2000) inferential semantic account of discursive practices. Brandom's inferentialism treats assertion from the point of view of the social practices we engage in the game of 'giving and asking for reasons', that is, it treats assertion on the basis of the commitments and entitlements – the basic normative attitudes – that speakers undertake when they make claims. This game of 'giving and asking for reasons' implies that *asserting* and *inferring* are the fundamental kinds of *doings* in our social-linguistic practices. The crucial argument I make is that, fundamentally, the making of metaphorical claims can be understood from this game of 'giving and asking for reasons' – asserting and inferring – and it is on the basis of these things we do in using metaphors that metaphorical claims have propositional contents that can be evaluated for truth. However, Brandom's inferential account in its complexity presents an account of literal meaning and content but metaphors have contents distinct from that possessed by literal utterances. Hence, Brandom's account is modified and complemented with an account of *presuppositional accommodation*. The modification is required to make the normative social practices of 'giving and asking for reasons' suitable for the understanding and appreciation of metaphors. This modification is apt to show that while both the literal and the metaphorical are indistinguishable in terms of what we fundamentally *do* in using literal and metaphorical sentences, they differ mainly in the kind of inferential involvements they have and the normative score-keeping practices within which the inferential connections are articulated. The insight from accommodation theory is to account for both the contextualism associated with

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metaphors, and the acceptability of metaphorical moves in the language game despite their literal impropriety. This inferential articulation of metaphor is significant in at least two ways: one, it shows that contrary to Davidson (1979), Rorty (1987), Cooper (1986), Reimer (2001), Lepore & Stone (2010, 2015) and others, metaphors can be regarded as truth-evaluable assertions whose contents are conferred by the socio-linguistic practices we engage in; and two, we gain an understanding of how the two dimensions – the seeing-as phenomenological and the assertional – both belong to the phenomenon of metaphor as has been argued especially by Moran (1989), Gaut (1997), Camp (2006, 2017), and Taylor (2016).

1. Brandom's inferential articulation of linguistic practices

It has been observed that most of our utterances and statements stand for, represent, and are about things and states of affairs in the world. According to Brandom, one explanatory strategy to capture this observation, *representationalism*, is to begin with an understanding of representation, truth and reference, «and on that basis explain the practical proprieties that govern language use and rational action» (Brandom 1994: 69). But Brandom thinks that we cannot have a suitable notion of representation or truth *in advance* of our thinking about the correct use of our linguistic expressions. For Brandom, the representational dimension of propositional content is intelligible only in the context of «*linguistic* social practices of communicating by giving and asking for reasons in the form of claims» (*ivi*: 153). Rather than using the concepts of truth and reference as primitive or basic semantic concepts to the understanding of other semantic concepts like meaning and inference, Brandom provides an account of our linguistic practices that takes asserting and inferring as fundamental and then he explains truth and reference in terms of their expressive and inferential roles. He privileges *inference* over truth and reference by adopting an explanatory strategy that understands the meaning of linguistic expressions and the conferment of propositional content in terms of the role they play in reasoning.

Inference, for Brandom, is a kind of *doing*. So Brandom reverses the order of explanation by starting with an account of what one is *doing* in making a claim and then seeks to elaborate from it an account of what is said and the propositional content of what is said. He understands asserting something as «putting it in a form in which it can both serve as and stand in need of *reasons*: a form in which it can serve as both premise and conclusion in *inferences*» (Brandom 2000: 11). He explains propositional contentfulness in terms of being 'fit to serve both as a premise and as a conclusion' in inferences. Instead of construing *saying* (thinking, believing) *that* such and such in terms of its correspondence to states of affairs in the world, Brandom asks us to understand it «in terms of a distinctive kind of knowing *how* or being able to *do* something» and the relevant sort of doing here is understood by its «inferential articulation» (*ivi*: 17). He explains further:

> Saying or thinking *that* things are thus-and-so is undertaking a distinctive kind of *inferentially* articulated commitment: putting it forward as a fit premise for further inferences, that is, *authorizing* its use as such a premise, and undertaking *responsibility* to entitle oneself to that commitment, to vindicate one's authority, under suitable circumstances, paradigmatically by exhibiting it as the conclusion of an inference from other such commitments to which one is or can become entitled (*ivi*: 11).

Brandom is motivated, in part, by finding distinctive features that make human beings sapient beings who have the capacity to engage in discursive or concept-using practices.

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That is, he is interested in knowing what is involved in discursive beings undertaking certain commitments by their utterances, how their utterances come to be assessed as appropriate or inappropriate, and how certain consequences and implications follow from their utterances. His answer to the above inquiries is that the linguistic practices humans engage in are norm-governed social practices, the performances of which are subject to normative attitudes of their practitioners and the attribution of normative statuses to the performers of this social linguistic practice. What differentiates discursive beings and their practices from that of non-discursive animals, according to Brandom is «to be the subject of normative *attitudes,* to be capable of acknowledging proprieties and improprieties of conduct, to be able to treat a performance as correct or incorrect» (Brandom 1994: 32).

The sociality of the discursive practice lies in the normative statuses – the undertaking and attributing of commitments and their attendant undertaking of responsibility for those commitments – and normative attitudes – acknowledging the propriety or impropriety of performances – while the linguistic nature of the practice lies in the institution of the speech act of assertion – the making of claims that can stand for, and be in need of, reasons. The making of claims, asserting, is intimately connected to the practice of inferring in such a way that for Brandom, «asserting cannot be understood apart from inferring» (*ivi*: 158); for the making of a claim is connected to the consequences that follow from that claim and the way in which that claim can be used as a reason for another claim. The inferential involvements of a claim or the network of inferential connections that a claim has to other claims, the propriety of the speaker's commitment to the claim and the appropriateness of the inferences one can make from that claim to others, suffice to determine the semantic content of that claim. The appropriateness of the inferences largely depends on, and is often determined by, the normative statuses and attitudes, the commitments and entitlements of the performers in a conversation.

Brandom understands the linguistic practices of asserting and inferring and the institution of normative attitudes and statuses within the framework of a game which is governed by rules and where certain moves or performances of the game players are deemed appropriate or inappropriate. In this game, the conversationalists are players and score-keepers who undertake commitments in virtue of their own moves, and attribute commitments to other players on the basis of the appropriateness of their moves too. A move in this game authorizes other moves by the speaker and licenses others to make other moves or attribute commitments to the speaker. The speaker's move can be challenged, and when it is challenged, the speaker undertakes the responsibility to provide reasons to justify and vindicate his assertion, or she could retract the assertion if the circumstance demands it. The correctness and appropriateness of moves in the game determine the kind of normative attitudes that score-keepers adopt to the performances of players in the game.

Brandom's inferentialist account of the semantic content of sentences, in a nutshell, is a pragmatic account that treats the uses of language in terms of a social normative practice where the making of assertions and the inferential involvements of assertions are basic and principal to the understanding of language use. These practices are situated within a framework where the making of assertions involves the undertaking of commitments, the attribution of commitments to others, the licensing of others to make certain inferences from the assertion, and the responsibility to justify one's assertions when challenged.

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2. The case for metaphorical assertions

A metaphor is often characterized as a figurative expression used to make someone see one thing in terms of another thing. According to Lamarque and Olsen, a metaphor, by its essence, is not to «*state that something is the case*» but rather, its constitutive aim is «to invite or encourage a hearer to think of, conceive of, reflect on, or imagine one thing (state of affairs, idea, etc.) in terms associated with some other thing (state of affairs, etc.) often of a quite different logical type» (Lamarque & Olsen 1994: 360). Building on Davidson's (1979) thesis that metaphors have no propositional contents, Lepore and Stone contend that «interlocutors use their metaphorical discourse not to assert and deny propositions but to develop imagery and to pursue a shared understanding» (Lepore & Stone 2010: 177). As mere invitations to explore comparisons, metaphors are thought not to be in the business of making claims or assertions that can be evaluated for truth.

However, metaphors go beyond mere invitations and the experience of comparing two things (Kwesi, 2018). Speakers and hearers of metaphors *do more* than what invitors and invitees do; the practices they engage in with metaphors go beyond the intention to issue invitations and the undertaking of thinking of one thing as another thing. A plausible explanation for this something more, other than, and in addition to invitations and undertakings, is that the issue of truth is at play. It is because speakers often make assertions by their utterances of metaphors that they exhibit certain commitments like endorsing and justifying metaphors. We will consider examples from Shakespeare to illustrate these points.

> Example 1:
> *Menenius*: The senators of Rome are this good belly,
> And you the mutinous members; for, examine
> Their counsels and their cares; digest things rightly
> Touching the weal o' the common; you shall find
> No public benefit which you receive
> But it proceeds or comes from them to you,
> And no way from yourselves. – What do you think,
> You, the great toe of this assembly?
> *First citizen*: I the great toe? why the great toe?
> *Menenius***:** For that, being one o' the lowest, basest, poorest,
> Of this most wise rebellion, thou go'st foremost:
> Thou rascal, that art worst in blood to run,
> Lead'st first to win some vantage.
> But make you ready your stiff bats and clubs:
> Rome and her rats are at the point of battle;
> The one side must have bale.
> [*Coriolanus*, Act 1 Scene 1]

This example illustrates the kinds of commitments that speakers of metaphors bring to bear in the use of metaphors. What Menenius is doing in the second speech is to justify why the First Citizen is the great toe of the assembly. Menenius makes a claim in the first speech, his audience demands an explanation or justification for the claim, and Menenius in the second speech, explains the claim, or elaborates on the claim, or justifies the claim. Surely, if speakers do not intend to say or describe something, if they do not intend to state that such-and such is the case, then they will not be committed to endorsing, justifying, and withdrawing their metaphors.

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Example 2:
King Henry: A speaker is but a prater, a rhyme is but a ballad, a good leg will fall, a straight back will stoop, a black beard will turn white, a curled pate will grow bald, a fair face will wither, a full eye will wax hollow, but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon, or rather the sun and not the moon, for it shines bright and never changes but keeps his course truly. If thou would have such a one, take me.
[*The Life of Henry the Fifth*, Act 5 Sc 2]

King Henry is wooing Katharine. In one sentence he says that a good heart is both the sun and the moon, he then withdraws or retracts it, and says later that a good heart is the sun and not the moon. Withdrawal or retraction is possible when what is retracted or withdrawn is considered as a claim or an assertion. King Henry's withdrawal of his initial metaphorical utterance is independent of his intention to invite Katharine to explore certain comparisons.

Example 3:
Ely: But there's a saying very old and true:
"If that you will France win,
Then with Scotland first begin".
For once the eagle England being in prey,
To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot
Comes sneaking and so sucks her princely eggs,
Playing the mouse in absence of the cat,
To 'tame and havoc more than she can eat.
Exeter: It follows, then, the cat must stay at home.
Yet that is but a crushed necessity,
Since we have locks to safeguard necessaries
And pretty traps to catch the petty thieves.
[*The Life of Henry*, Act 1 Scene 2]

This example illustrates that the hearer can do more than just think of, conceive of, or imagine one thing in terms of another thing. The hearer, like Exeter, can draw certain conclusions and make inferences from the speaker's metaphorical utterances. The hearer can only do these things if he or she construes the utterances of the speaker to be making truth-evaluable claims.

What these examples establish are that:

a)   there are certain commitments that bind speakers when they speak metaphorically, and these commitments cannot be accounted for satisfactorily when the invitational norm is thought to constitute the making of metaphors. Invitations do not naturally come with certain commitments like endorsing and justifying – these commitments naturally go with the issuance of claims and assertions.

b)   The things speakers do with metaphors are not incompatible with their inviting others to do certain things; but they are also not derived from, nor dependent on, their aims to invite hearers to do certain things. Hearers recognize that speakers of metaphors intend to make assertions or claims by their use of metaphors and hence, their responses and reactions to metaphors – that they can question, endorse, deny metaphorical attributions – suggest that metaphorical utterances are no different from literal utterances as far as their being claims are concerned.[1]

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[1] Indeed many accounts such as that of Carston (2002), Recanati (2004) and those based on relevance theory such as that of Wilson & Carston (2006) subsume metaphor under a general category of 'loose talk' and argue that there are no special cognitive and interpretive differences between the literal and the

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How do we explain these points from the point of view of an inferential approach to metaphors?

3. An inferential articulation of metaphors
I shall argue below that Brandom's account of the propositional content of sentences and the making of assertions as sketched above, complemented by insights from *presuppositional accommodation*, is appropriate for treating metaphorical utterances as being propositionally contentful, and for taking metaphorical claims as assertions that can be evaluated for truth. In other words, an inferentialist account of the use of language provides us with a theoretical framework within which metaphors count as assertions and can be appraised for truth. Inferentialism does not necessarily give priority of place to literal content and literal assertion. Brandom's account helps us to understand our social, normative and linguistic practices in using language – both literal and metaphorical uses of language. In focusing on what we are *doing* in making claims or saying something, his account is neutral as to whether what we are saying is literal or metaphorical. That is, the distinctive and basic kinds of doing – asserting and inferring – that Brandom identifies are not peculiar to literal uses of language. As the examples above show, in both literal and figurative uses of language, we engage in the drawing of inferences: we put forth claims that can serve as, and stand in need of reasons. In both literal and metaphorical uses of language, we can justify the claims we put forth, and we can challenge the claims that other interlocutors put forward in our conversational practices. Similarly, in asserting metaphorical and literal statements, we undertake certain commitments and license others to make inferences from those claims.
So, inferring here is the common denominator in our linguistic practices of making literal and metaphorical claims. This implies that the propositional content of our claims will have to be inferentially articulated, since what can serve as, and stand in need of, reasons must be propositionally contentful. The basic argument here, therefore, is this:

> P1 – Putting forward a claim is putting forward something that can serve as a reason and stand in need of reasons.
> P2 – What can serve as, and stand in need of reasons, is propositionally contentful
> C: Hence, putting forward a claim is putting forward something that is propositionally contentful.

What is important about this argument is that it is neutral to whether the claims put forward are literal or metaphorical. It shows that there is what we can term as the *principle of uniformity* in terms of the basic kind of doing with respect to literal and metaphorical uses of language. This principle indicates that *asserting* and *inferring* are neither specific to, nor distinctive of, literal uses of language. And since, on an inferentialist account, these pragmatic practices confer semantic contentfulness on sentences, literal and metaphorical sentences come to have propositional contents in fundamentally the same way. In addition, this uniformity principle nullifies the bifurcation between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language and the explanatory work that the distinction is supposed to achieve. For, since inferentialism

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metaphorical. While these pragmatic accounts focus on the comprehension and interpretation of metaphorical utterances, the account pursued here provides a motivation for why metaphorical utterances can be regarded as claims and assertions in the first place. And the thought is that, they are claims in just the same way as literal utterances are regarded as claims.

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considers inferring, rather than truth and reference, as basic and primary, descriptive contentfulness is not a useful determinant for understanding our uses of language.

Despite the sameness of the fundamental action we do in using literal and metaphorical sentences, it can be argued that the game of giving and asking for reasons is suitable for only literal sentences. For the rule-governed nature of the game, the undertaking and attributing of commitments and the score-keeping by players, the propriety of the moves in the game and how such moves are assessed, and the consequences of the moves in the game and how they are determined – all these make sense within a literal understanding of the discursive practices of sapient beings. But I think that there is a possibility of *extending* the details of Brandom's account to include uses of metaphorical sentences, and hence, saving the uniformity principle. This possibility is what I will explore below.

The explanation pursued here is to treat *metaphorically speaking* (or *speaking metaphorically*) as a presupposition marker when it is explicitly used to prefix an assertion or as tacitly presupposed when a speaker asserts a sentence that is identified as a metaphor. This presupposition is pragmatic in the sense used by Stalnaker (1973, 1974, 2002) and Soames (1982), in that it is speakers and not sentences that presuppose anything. However, this *metaphorically speaking* presupposition is not a proposition that is already accepted as part of the common ground of a conversation; and it is not a proposition that is a consequence of a (metaphorical) sentence, the truth or falsity of which affects the semantic value of the sentence. It is a presupposition in the sense of signalling how the assertion is to be understood and interpreted, and therefore, the inferential involvement of the assertion is contingent on acceptance of the presupposition. The *metaphorically speaking* presupposition, in its non-explicit form, marks a ternary relation between the sentence, the context in which it is used, and the speaker's intention in using the sentence. In saying that 'Richard is a lion', for instance, a speaker presupposes that he is *speaking metaphorically* when he is cooperating in the discourse and obeying the Gricean rules of conversation and that the context and the circumstances of the utterance makes it appropriate for construing the utterance metaphorically.

I shall adapt Soames' (1982) definition of 'utterance presupposition' in explaining this distinctive kind of presupposition of *speaking metaphorically*. The presupposition of *speaking metaphorically* can be captured in this way:

> An utterance **U** presupposes that the speaker **S** is *speaking metaphorically* at **t** iff one can reasonably infer from **U** that **S** accepts that he is speaking metaphorically and regards it as uncontroversial, either because
> a. **S** thinks that the conversational context at **t** makes it appropriate to construe **U** only as a metaphor, or because
> b. **S** thinks that the audience is prepared to add the presupposition, without objection, to the context against which **U** is evaluated.[2]

Consider a simple conversation between two people about their head of department, Schneider:

> Tom: What do you think of this new head of department?
> Dick: Schneider is a fox

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[2] This definition itself is not distinctive of *metaphorically speaking*. Indeed, it captures the general mode of *figuratively speaking*, and as such can be extended to other figures of speech like irony and metonymy. What will set metaphor apart from these other figures will be the kind of inferential connections speaking metaphorically warrant.

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> Tom: Well, I think he is more of a serpent
> Dick: Either way, he is treacherous.

Dick's initial utterance presupposes that he is speaking metaphorically and this presupposition seems uncontroversial from the context in which he is talking about his head of department. In this case, the fact that the conversation is about a human being, coupled with the obvious literal falsity of his assertion, make it appropriate to construe his assertion as a metaphor. The conversational context in this case determines that the utterance be construed as a metaphor in virtue of the speaker's intention to speak metaphorically and his interlocutor recognizing that he is speaking metaphorically. Tom's recognition of Dick's speaking metaphorically informs his own use of a related metaphor. The presupposition is sustained by Tom's recognition that Dick is cooperating in the conversational discourse and expects that his utterance will be construed metaphorically.

What is the purpose of this presupposition marker (i.e. *metaphorically speaking*) in the score-keeping game of giving and asking for reasons? Among the moves the linguistic game-player can make is the asserting of a metaphorical claim. In making this move, the speaker presupposes that he is speaking metaphorically in the sense explained above. The metaphorical claim itself usually will be literally inappropriate – it could be literally false, semantically anomalous, pragmatically a misfire, a category mistake, and so on – but the *recognition* of the presupposition (tacitly or explicitly expressed)[3] and the contextual parameters within which the utterance is made leads to both the *acceptability* and *appropriateness* of the move. Understanding the three key words italicized in the preceding sentence – *recognition* of the presupposition marker, the *appropriateness* and *acceptability* of the metaphorical utterance – and the relationship that exist among the three, will shed light on the inferential articulation of metaphors within this Brandomian framework.

A speaker's metaphorical utterance comes with what we have called the presupposition of speaking metaphorically. The speaker, in the first place, relies on his/her hearer's capacity to acknowledge this presupposition behind his utterance, and in the second place, the speaker expects his/her hearer to recognize the presuppositional intent of his/her utterance. Hornsby (1994) and Hornsby & Langton (1998) have characterized a phenomenon that exists between users of language whereby the speaker and hearer depend on a 'mutual capacity for uptake' as users of language and a reliance on a 'minimal receptiveness' of users in their role as hearers, as *reciprocity*. According to Hornsby and Langton, «people who share a language have the capacity not simply to understand one another's words, but also to grasp what illocutionary acts others might be trying to make» (Hornsby & Langton 1998: 25) and that in a successful linguistic exchange «a speaker tries to do an illocutionary thing; a hearer recognizing that the speaker is trying to do that thing is then sufficient for the speaker to actually do it» (Hornsby & Langton 1998: 25). Reciprocity then allows that language users exploit the capacity of others recognizing their illocutionary intent, like staking a claim, and the capacity to acknowledge and receive the communicative intentions of others. One

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[3] When the speaker does not explicitly indicate that she is speaking metaphorically, usually, the features of the sentence such as literal falsity or absurdity in addition to the context in which the sentence is uttered can lead the hearer to recognize that the speaker was speaking metaphorically. This does not mean that metaphors are necessarily identified as being literally false or semantically anomalous – the case of twice-true metaphors present counter-examples to the view that metaphors are literally false. The identification of a sentence as a metaphor is different from the essence or constitution of a metaphor. Literal falsity is an identificational, rather than essential, feature of metaphor.

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implication of this view is that the staking of a claim is not necessarily achieved by convention or by its adherence to certain rules but by the audiencs awareness of the speaker's intention.

The notion of reciprocity is apt here in grounding the linguistic moves that speakers make which come with the metaphorical presuppositions. The recognition of the presupposition marker on the part of the hearer and the speaker's expectation that the hearer recognizes his/her presuppositions is dependent on this mutual capacity for uptake and receptiveness. Reciprocity then suffices for regarding the metaphorical utterances of the game-players as the making of claims, for their status as claims, depends on whether the game players take them to be so. That is, by means of reciprocity, the move of a game-player (when it is a metaphor) is successfully recorded as the making of a claim by other game-players and score-keepers – and this is not because the move is in accordance with the rules of the game *per se* but because it arises from the point of view that speakers *do something* with their words and utterances.

Reciprocity alone, however, does not entail the *acceptability* of an utterance as a metaphor: it needs to be supplemented by a process of presupposition *accommodation* to account for the appropriateness and acceptability of metaphorical utterances in the game. Accommodation, originally understood in relation to presuppositions refers to the process or mechanism by which an utterance that requires a presupposition to be acceptable, and where the presupposition was not part of the common ground of the conversation before the utterance, that presupposition "comes into existence" (Lewis, 1979: 340) at the time of the utterance. That is, if the conversation requires that the presupposition of an utterance is added to the conversational score for the utterance to be acceptable, that presupposition is accommodated and added to the conversational score. As a mechanism a hearer adopts to update the score of the conversation, accommodation does not only imply that a hearer adjusts the context of the conversation to receive the current utterance of the speaker but that the hearer also makes a «tacit extension» (Karttunen 1974: 191) of the conversational context by his/her acquiescence of the presupposition. By tacitly extending the context to accommodate the speaker's presupposition, the hearer adopts a strategy that makes the utterance of the speaker true and acceptable (Richard, 2004, 2008). The hearer updates the conversation and the conversational score by adding the presuppositional information to the shared common ground of the conversational context. The process of accommodation, therefore, guarantees the appropriateness of the speaker's utterance, for in deciding to acquiesce to the speaker's presuppositional suggestion, the hearer comes to regard the speaker's utterance as an appropriate move in the game.

Roberts (2004: 511) identified two necessary conditions of presuppositional accommodation, the satisfaction of which makes hearers accommodate, rather than object to, the speaker's presuppositions:

a) **Retrievability**: what the hearer is to accommodate is easily inferable, so that it is perfectly clear what is presupposed, and it is both salient and relevant to the immediate context, and

b) **Plausibility:** the accommodated material leads to an interpretation that is reasonable and unobjectionable in the context

In this distinctive kind of presupposition – *metaphorically speaking* – that comes with the speaker's making of a metaphor, the process of accommodation ensures both the acceptability and appropriateness of the metaphor. How so? When a metaphorical utterance is made, an initial and perhaps, unreflective, reaction one can make is to see the utterance as inappropriate – a wrong move in the conversational game. However, by

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the hearer's recognition of the cooperative attitude of the speaker and the hearer's recognition of the illocutionary intent of the speaker by means of reciprocity, the hearer sets about to adjust the context and the conversation to admit the metaphorical utterance. The acceptance of the metaphorical utterance, in turn, comes about by inferring from the context that the speaker was speaking metaphorically. The hearer then goes through the process of accommodation by accepting and adding the presupposition to the conversational score and then updating the conversation to make the metaphorical utterance of the speaker acceptable and appropriate. The initial impropriety and awkwardness that seemingly greeted the metaphorical utterance goes away; for, through accommodation, the metaphorical assertion becomes an appropriate move in the game. Roberts' first condition of Retrievability is satisfied by the recognition of the presupposition marker made possible by the context and the mutual capacity of language users to recognize and be receptive to the illocutionary intent of speakers. The second condition, Plausibility, is satisfied by the fact that it is only by the accommodation of the presupposition that the meaning and interpretation of the metaphor become contextually relevant and appropriate.

Accommodation also determines the kind of meaning we give to the metaphor and the inferential involvements of the metaphor. It sets the inferential propriety and aptness of a metaphor which accounts for the metaphor's acceptability. Accommodating a presupposition associated with an utterance and updating the conversational score to include the utterance implies that one *understands* the utterance. A speaker's preference for uttering a metaphor in a conversation – when he/she could have chosen to speak literally for the same effect – is borne out of the expectation that his/her hearer will understand his/her utterance as metaphorical. And it is a linguistic fact that users of a language do understand both the hackneyed and novel metaphors they use in their linguistic exchanges. But what is it to understand an utterance – a metaphorical utterance for that matter?

Understanding a metaphor may involve seeing one thing (Schneider) as another thing (a fox). This is the *phenomenological* or *figurative dimension* to metaphor. Explicitly qualifying one's assertion that one is speaking metaphorically or implicitly presupposing that one is speaking metaphorically means that the assertion should not be construed in terms of the normal signification of the words of the assertion. Recognizing the presupposition and accepting the metaphorical utterance is the way in which accommodation embraces the phenomenological dimension of the metaphor. Understanding a metaphor, however, goes beyond the experiential seeing-*as*; it involves, among others, the ability to reason with the metaphor, the ability to use the metaphor in other contexts, the ability to draw inferences from the metaphor, and the ability to use the metaphor as a premise or conclusion of an argument (Macagno & Zavatta 2014; Oswald & Rihs 2014; Wagemans 2016; Ervas, Gola & Rossi 2018): this is the *assertional* dimension of a metaphor. This is the sense of putting forward a metaphorical claim in the form that is fit to serve as, and stand in need of reasons. In other words, this is the dimension of the dual mode of asserting-and-inferring that is associated with metaphors. By accommodating a metaphor, the hearer reflects his/her understanding of the metaphor, where this understanding consists of both the phenomenological and assertional dimensions of a metaphor. The relationship between the two dimensions is such that the phenomenological dimension which accounts for the presupposition of metaphorically speaking determines the kind of inferential involvement of the metaphor, and hence, it determines the assertional dimension of the metaphor. The correctness and appropriateness of the inferential involvements of a metaphor are set and constrained by the phenomenological dimension of the metaphor through the process of accommodation.

The role of accommodation in grounding both the assertional and phenomenological dimensions of metaphor stems from the idea of accommodation as the making of a tacit extension to the context of conversation or as the adjusting of the extension of a term in order to make an utterance acceptable and true. Richard (2004, 2008) used the notions of accommodation and 'contextual negotiation' to argue for the truth relativity of expressions whose meanings depend on the context in which they are used. Richard explained that it is the processes of accommodation and negotiation that accounts for why a sentence like 'Mary is rich' expresses a claim whose truth is relative. The significant insight from Richard here is that in making an assertion that 'Mary is rich' one is simultaneously inviting others to conceptualize the way in which Mary 'counts as' being rich. Mary may count as rich in the pool of university professors but not rich in the pool of billionaires like Bill Gates. A similar insight is what obtains in the making of metaphorical assertions which corresponds to the phenomenological and assertional dimensions. In saying that Schneider is a fox, Dick is making a claim and simultaneously inviting Tom to think of the way in which Schneider counts as a fox. By accommodating the claim, Tom recognizes that Dick was speaking metaphorically by means of the invitation to think of Schneider as a fox, and also that Dick was making an assertion whose content will be given by its inferential role.

Once the presupposition of *metaphorically speaking* is accommodated and the conversational context and score are updated to make the metaphorical claim appropriate and acceptable, the inferential involvement of the metaphorical claim and the propriety of the inferences from the metaphorical claim can be given. The deductive and material inferences we can make from a literal claim are constrained by the rule-governed nature of literal claims and the compositional analysis that is brought to bear on the understanding of the inferential involvements of literal claims. For instance, from the claim that 'Schneider is a fox' we can logically infer that 'Schneider is an animal' and the propriety of this inference depends on the compositional meaning of the claim and the rules that govern the making of deductive and inductive inferences.

A metaphorical claim, however, is not fettered by compositionality (Kwesi, 2019) and its appropriateness is not dependent on the literal rules of the game. The making of the claim, the acceptability of the claim, and the appropriateness or otherwise of that claim depends on the existence of the metaphorical presupposition marker, the phenomenon of reciprocity and the process of accommodation, all of which are sensitive to the contextual parameters in which the claim is made. The inferences that can be made from the metaphor and the propriety of those inferences depend on what counts as Schneider being a fox. For instance, while 'Schneider is crafty' is a consequence of her being a fox in the context of the conversation, 'Schneider is hairy' is not. In other words, in seeing Schneider as a fox we can infer that she is crafty but the consequence that she is hairy is not plausible when one sees her as a fox in the context of discussing Schneider.

Tom's recognition of the presupposition of Dick's claim and his illocutionary intent of making an appropriate claim, coupled with his accommodating and updating the context, influences his own use of the metaphorical claim that Schneider is, rather, a serpent. When Dick finally asserts that either way Schneider is treacherous, he does not nullify their so taking their earlier assertions as metaphors; he rather shifts the conversational context back to the literal way of talking, and he expects that Tom will adjust the conversation accordingly.[4]

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[4] What makes a particular inference good or bad, what makes a good inference good and a bad inference bad, and the rules governing the making of such inferences will require a more comprehensive framework, one that is beyond the current scope of this paper.

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The undertaking of certain normative commitments and the attribution of commitments to others that participants engage in by means of their assertions are social practices that are relevant and appropriate in the making of metaphorical claims as well as literal claims. The admission or acceptance of metaphorical claims in the game of giving and asking for reasons as explored above implies that the dual statuses of commitments and entitlements that characterize social practices and the playing of games are applicable when the assertions game players make are metaphorical ones. Similarly, the determination of the semantic content of assertions by means of their inferential roles in reasoning is no different when the assertions are metaphorical ones. How the literal differs from the metaphorical is not because the metaphorical is not fit to be instituted in the game of giving and asking for reasons, but that players of this game adopt a different mechanism in determining the propriety of the moves in the game, the propriety of the inferential involvements of those moves, and the ways in which the conversational contexts and scores are adjusted and updated.

4. Implications and merits of the inferential articulation of metaphors
The kind of explanatory strategy pursued here is a *non-reductive*, *uniform*, and inferentialist-based approach to understanding metaphor. It is non-reductive in the sense that it does not explain and evaluate the metaphorical in terms of the literal; it is uniform because it does not provide a *sui generis* kind of 'metaphorical truth' or 'metaphorical assertion'; it is an inferentialist-based approach in treating metaphor from a pragmatically articulated point of view by understanding the questions of truth, content, and assertion, in relation to metaphor, in terms of what we *do* in using metaphors. For Brandom, instead of starting with a metaphysical account of truth such as the correspondence theory and using that to account for beliefs and assertions which are construed to be representations that can be true, he offers an approach of understanding truth ascriptions in terms of the act of calling something true. In other words, the emphasis is on a pragmatic construal of truth, the act of calling something true, rather than the descriptive content of what is associated with what is called true; this is to say that in calling something true one is praising or endorsing it rather than describing it.

Taking a claim to be true, then, is undertaking a sort of 'normative stance or attitude' towards that claim, that is endorsing it or committing oneself to it. Endorsing a claim or committing oneself to it, according to Brandom, is understood «in terms of the role the endorsed claim plays in practical inference, both in first-person deliberation and in third-person appraisal» (1988: 77). Truth, on Brandom's view, is seen not as a property independent of our attitudes but it is understood in terms of 'taking-true' or 'treating-as-true'. He writes that «in calling something true one is *doing* something, rather than, or in addition to, *saying* something. Instead of asking what property it is that we are describing a belief or claim as having when we say that it is true, [we] ask about the practical significance of the act we are performing in attributing that property» (1988: 77). Undertaking a normative stance or commitment towards a claim, we have seen, is understood as putting it forward as fit to serve as, and stand for, the premise and conclusion of an argument. Hence, the ascription of truth to the literal and the metaphorical occur in fundamentally the same way.

The emphasis on the uniformity principle is not to deny that the metaphorical is in an important sense dependent on the literal. But we need to be clearer on what the dependency relation entails and what the primacy of the literal involves. The primacy of the literal is in respect of the production and interpretation of metaphor: words do not acquire mystical meanings when they are used in metaphors; and the literal meanings of the words aid in the interpretation of the metaphor – indeed the interpretation of the

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metaphor is often done using literal language. But the primacy of the literal should not be extended to the appraisal of the metaphor: we get nowhere by insisting that metaphors are literally false, absurd or inconsistent; we will simply be appraising metaphor in literal terms. The fact that A depends, or is parasitic, on B does not entail that A should be reduced to B: dependency does not entail reduction. The dependency relation that exists between the literal and the metaphorical should be understood as a *dependency-for*. So, the question to be asked is that the metaphorical depends on the literal for what? A plausible answer is that the metaphorical depends on the literal for its explication, interpretation, paraphrasing. This means that the literal has a *communicative priority* over the metaphorical, and this communicative priority does not extend over to the evaluation of metaphor.

To understand metaphor *qua* metaphor, to understand metaphor in relation to truth and assertion, however, we must begin with our practices of using language in general, and our use of metaphors in particular, and then account for the notions of truth and assertion in terms of our linguistic practices. The virtue of the approach pursued here is that it does not reduce and explain metaphor in literal terms; it does not begin with a set standard to evaluate metaphor; and most importantly, it explains content, truth and assertion, without a prior demarcation of, and which is oblivious to the differences between, the literal and the metaphorical.

An inferential articulation of the basic kind of doing in using metaphor provides us with a comprehensive account of the roles of the interlocutors and the linguistic expression in our communicative practices. There is what the speaker does, what the hearer does, and what the linguistic expression itself effects in hearers: these three-doings, each independently necessary but jointly sufficient for our understanding of the doings associated with metaphor. An account that focuses on what the metaphor brings about – nudging us to see something, directing our attention to see certain similarities, provoking certain thoughts in us – is focusing on but one of the three-doings, and as such, an adequate and satisfactory account cannot be propounded from that. The Davidsonian account is guilty of this one-sided approach to the use of metaphor. An invitational account is primarily focused on what the speaker does, and so are other accounts that focus on the intentions of the speaker. Similarly, the focus on the acquisition of beliefs and the effects of metaphor on the part of the hearer is inadequate in itself to give a comprehensive account of metaphor. But from an inferentially articulated kind of doing in terms of commitments and entitlements, we get a basic and comprehensive picture of what we do in using metaphors. By putting forward a metaphorical claim the speaker undertakes a commitment by endorsing the claim as fit for a premise or conclusion in reasoning. Whether the speaker, in undertaking such a commitment *thereby* invites, encourages, suggests or proposes something to the hearer is explainable in terms of the inferences that the speaker licenses and the hearer is entitled to draw. That the speaker can endorse a claim, and provide justification or warrant for the claim when it is challenged, stems from the fact that the claim put forward is fit to serve as the premise or conclusion of an argument. Understood this way, the hearer of a metaphor is not just a passive recipient of an invitation; the call to action, the directive to observe something, and the promise of seeing one thing as another thing, are rooted in the practical ability of the hearer to determine whether the claim put forward by the speaker is appropriate to serve as the premise or conclusion in reasoning. The interpretation the hearer can offer to the metaphorical statement is sensitive to the inferential relations that she can derive from both the linguistic and the non-linguistic context of the claim put forward.

Moran (1989), Camp (2006, 2015), Taylor (2016) and others have argued that in addition to a seeing-as framing-effect dimension to metaphor, there is a propositional or

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an assertion dimension to metaphor. Carston (2010), Indurkhya (2016) and others have models for the comprehension of the two dimensions to metaphor. The two dimensions are meant to explain metaphor's figurativeness and cognitive content. But what is the nature and relationship between the two dimensions? It is tempting, as Camp (2006) for instance does, to explain the assertional dimension in terms of speaker-meaning or some form of Gricean implicatures. The approach pursued here differs from the others in the literature by locating the two dimensions within a broader theoretical framework of what pertains in our general practices of using metaphors. The intentions of the speaker, or speaker-meaning in general, does not explain the assertional dimension to metaphor; rather the significance of speaker-meaning and the intentions of the speaker are understood and explainable in terms of the basic things interlocutors do – their commitments and entitlements – in the game of 'giving and asking for reasons'. What makes a metaphor an assertion, and what provides a metaphor with its truth-evaluable content, is determined by its inferential role in our discursive practices. Similarly, the models of comprehension and the cognitive processes hearers go through in their understanding of metaphor that account for both dimensions take as their starting point the contextual and pragmatic features associated with metaphor. The approach pursued here augments such models in showing that the mechanisms for the production and cognition of metaphorical and literal sentences proceed on the same lines – primarily because we engage in the same practices in our use of literal and metaphorical sentences – but the inferential approach explains the differences between the literal and the metaphorical in terms of their inferential roles.

5. Conclusion

Brandom's inferentialism – which subjects semantics to pragmatics by explaining the semantic contentfulness of assertions by their practical role in reasoning – offers a suitable avenue for understanding the making of metaphorical claims. In that, metaphorical claims are contentful in virtue of the role they play as appropriate premises and conclusions in reasoning and argumentation. The propriety of metaphorical claims and the propriety of the roles they play in reasoning are determined by the phenomenon of reciprocity and the accommodative processes that conversational participants go through in adjusting the conversational context to satisfy the presuppositional requirement that participants are speaking metaphorically. Brandom's inferentialist deontic-score-keeping framework in which he characterizes assertion and inferring, is therefore extended to cover metaphorical claims by incorporating the notion of metaphorically speaking as a presupposition marker, Hornsby's notion of reciprocity, and presuppositional accommodation. In view of this extension, we show the plausibility of the *uniformity principle* that indicates that literal and metaphorical contentfulness are determined in the same way – by what we do in reasoning – asserting and inferring. One implication of this view is that metaphorical claims can be 'treated as' or 'taken to be' true claims in the sense in which Brandom treats the ascription of truth to assertions. From this inferential articulation of metaphors, we gain an understanding of the relationship between the seeing-as phenomenological and assertional dimensions of metaphors.

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La teoria dell'indeterminatezza semantica degli *slur*

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Abstract A puzzling element of the derogatory aspect of slurs is its erratic behavior in embeddings, such as negation or belief reports. The derogatory aspect seems sometimes to scope out from the embedding to the context of utterance, while at other times it seems to interact with the linguistic constructions in which the slur is implanted. I argue that slurs force us to maintain a kind of semantic indeterminacy which, to my knowledge, has passed largely unnoticed in philosophy of language.

Keywords: Slurs, Expressives, Indeterminacy, Semantic deference, Discrimination

Invited paper.

1. L'aspetto denigratorio

Negli ultimi dieci anni è proliferata la letteratura su quegli epiteti denigratori, i cosiddetti *slur*, il cui aspetto denigratorio è costituito da una qualche forma di offesa nei confronti di una classe di persone, il cosiddetto *gruppo target*. Se consideriamo il linguaggio degli omofobi o dei razzisti, non è difficile trovare esempi di epiteti denigratori che si riferiscono a gruppi individuati sulla base dell'etnia o delle preferenze sessuali. In ciò che segue, non userò nessun esempio concreto di linguaggio omofobo o razzista. Piuttosto, stipulo che ogni occorrenza di "S" sta per uno *slur*, e ogni occorrenza di "C" sta per la *controparte neutra* dello *slur* in questione. La controparte neutra C di uno *slur* S è un termine che ha la stessa estensione di S, ma che non possiede un aspetto denigratorio.[1] Gli *slur* sono spesso offensivi, indipendentemente dal fatto di essere usati per insultare un individuo in particolare – come in (1) – o no – come in (2).

> (1) Lui è un S
> (2) Gli S sono brave persone

Un aspetto del comportamento linguistico degli *slur* che ha di recente attirato l'attenzione di filosofi del linguaggio, linguisti e psicologi è il comportamento erratico della loro interazione con altri costrutti linguistici, come nel caso della negazione e del discorso indiretto. L'aspetto denigratorio talvolta viene proiettato, ossia "evita"

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[1] Se non esiste una controparte neutra, c sta per una descrizione non denigratoria del gruppo target. Non assumerò che avere una controparte neutra sia una caratteristica distintiva e necessaria degli *slur*. Molti autori sono d'accordo sul fatto che gli *slur* hanno normalmente controparti neutra. Si veda Nunberg 2018 e Ashwell 2016 per alcune considerazioni rilevanti.

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l'interazione con le altre parti del discorso e viene convogliato immutato; altre volte invece interagisce con i costrutti linguistici con cui sintatticamente è legato. Ad esempio, in (3) la negazione non evita che un'offesa vanga convogliata nei confronti del gruppo target, mentre in (4) sembra interagire con l'aspetto denigratorio di S e bloccare, o almeno affievolire, l'offesa nei confronti del gruppo target.

      (3) Non ci sono S in questo spettacolo
      (4) Lui non è un S, è un C

Grossomodo, nella letteratura filosofica riguardante gli *slur* troviamo tre tipi di approcci. Stando a quello che chiamo l'approccio del *contenuto stretto*, l'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur* è determinato dalle convenzioni semantiche che li governano – ossia le regole che ne stabiliscono il significato letterale. Stando a tale approccio, l'aspetto denigratorio è parte del loro contenuto vero-funzionale; dunque, tale aspetto del significato interagisce con le altre costruzioni linguistiche normalmente.[2] L'approccio del *no contenuto* nega che di per sé un proferimento di uno *slur* comunichi contenuto offensivo. Questo perché il contenuto semantico di uno *slur* S è identico a quello della sua controparte neutra C. Ciò che rende offensivo usare S, quando invece l'uso di C non è offensivo, è la presenza nella nostra società di una convenzione riguardante l'ammissibilità dei loro usi.[3] Dal momento che tale convenzione riguarda il mero uso del termine, l'aspetto denigratorio – stando a tale posizione – ha sempre un comportamento proiettivo e viene sempre convogliato. L'approccio del *contenuto largo* considera l'aspetto denigratorio come una sorta di contenuto laterale, come tradizionalmente sono intese le implicature convenzionali e le presupposizioni. Tale contenuto non influisce normalmente sulle condizioni di verità dell'enunciato nel suo insieme, ma è comunque in qualche modo "lessicalizzato", non si tratta di un significato convogliato in virtù di regole meramente pragmatiche e contestuali. Stando a questo approccio, dunque, gli *slur* hanno un contenuto offensivo, perché segnalano una attitudine negativa e ostile da parte del parlante nei confronti del gruppo target. Tale contenuto espressivo e valutativo è automaticamente convogliato dall'uso dell'espressione; non è cancellabile nel modo in cui ciò che è conversazionalmente implicato normalmente è, ma è separabile dal contenuto vero-funzionale dell'espressione (che è in parte è condiviso dalla controparte neutra)[4], nel senso che facilmente viene proiettato invece di interagire con gli altri costrutti linguistici.[5]

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[2] Hom 2008 difende tale approccio. Richard 2008 difende un approccio in cui gli *slur* rappresentano il gruppo target in una maniera negativa, ma il tipo di rappresentazione coinvolta non è aleteica ("truth-apt"). Hornsby 2001 abbozza una teoria in cui l'aspetto denigratorio è parte del significato ma una dimensione espressiva ("gestuale"). Croom 2014 fornisce argomenti contro una comprensione puramente "espressivista" della componente denigratoria degli *slur*.

[3] Si veda Anderson e Lepore 2013, e Feinberg 1985, che difendono l'idea che tale convenzione riguardi un tabù sul termine. Predelli 2010 argomenta che la convenzione riguarda l'ammissibilità soggettiva.

[4] Il rapporto fra il contenuto vero-funzionale uno *slur* S e quello della sua controparte neutra C è una questione complessa e dipende dal tipo di versione di approccio del contenuto largo stiamo considerando. Se l'aspetto denigratorio è una implicatura convenzionale (cf. Williamson 2009) allora il contenuto vero-condizionale di S è lo stesso del contenuto vero-condizionale di C. Se l'aspetto denigratorio viene convogliato come una presupposizione, invece, il contenuto vero condizionale di S coincide con quello di C solo se consideriamo i casi in cui la presupposizione viene soddisfatta. Ci sarà quindi una differenza fondamentale fra teorie stando a cui la presupposizione attivata è soggettiva, ossia riguarda lo stato del parlante, e teorie stando a cui la presupposizione è oggettiva, ossia riguarda le proprietà del gruppo target. Nel primo caso, la presupposizione è automaticamente soddisfatta ("self-fulfilling"), e quindi il contenuto vero-condizionale di S e quello di C, di fatto coincidono (cf. Schlenker 2007). Nel secondo caso, dal

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Ciascun approccio fa delle previsioni distintive rispetto al comportamento degli *slur* nelle interazioni con altre parti del discorso. Il disaccordo però, non riguarda unicamente le predizioni, ma anche l'interpretazione dei dati stessi. In molti casi, infatti, è difficile capire se le intuizioni preteoriche confermino o no una data ipotesi. Per quanto la mia tesi centrale sia che questa instabilità sia caratteristica degli *slur*, non sosterrò con ciò che gli *slur* sono espressioni ambigue. La mia tesi centrale sarà che gli *slur* ci portano a riconoscere un tipo di indeterminatezza semantica che, per quanto mi sia dato sapere, non è stata largamente ignorata in filosofia del linguaggio. Grossomodo, l'idea è che le convenzioni riguardanti gli *slur* lasciano indeterminato se con il suo uso lo speaker stia esprimendo un contenuto negativo nei confronti del gruppo target, o stia segnalando un'attitudine negativa e ostile nei loro confronti. Sebbene altre espressioni possano in una certa misura anch'esse stare a metà fra una dimensione descrittiva e una espressiva, fra i peggiorativi (come le parolacce e gli insulti), gli *slur* tipicamente mostrano tale indeterminatezza. Nel fornire un'ipotesi sull'origine dell'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur*, abbozzerò anche una spiegazione del perché, date certe condizioni storiche e sociali, gli *slur* mostrino tale indeterminatezza.

2. Il comportamento proiettivo

Nell'interazione con gli altri costrutti linguistici, l'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur* talvolta non viene proiettato, come se fosse una normale componente vero-funzionale del loro contenuto descrittivo, altre volte invece si comporta come una componente espressiva relativa ad un'attitudine negativa che il parlante manifesta nei confronti della classe target, e quindi viene proiettato.[6] Entrambe le letture sembrano ammissibili in molti casi, ma c'è disaccordo su quale sia la lettura preferita (e se ce ne sia una). Cosa predicono i tre approcci delineati nella sessione precedente rispetto a tale instabilità? Sia l'approccio del no contenuto sia quello del contenuto largo negano che ci siano usi degli *slur* che non risultino denigratori nei confronti del gruppo target,[7] come sembra essere nella

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momento che la presupposizione riguarda una valutazione stereotipica negativa sul gruppo target e quindi fallisce, il contenuto vero-condizionale è *di fatto* diverso (Cepollaro 2015; Cepollaro e Stojanovic 2016).

[5] Williamson (2009), Potts (2007), Schlenker (2007). Potts chiama la separabilità "nondisplaceability". Mentre la separabilità può essere vista come una caratteristica essenziale delle implicature convenzionali (Potts 2005, Cap. 5; Hom 2012: 177), è normalmente accettato che certi contesti linguistici (ad es., la condizionalizzazione) possono bloccare le presupposizioni, e quindi il comportamento proiettivo. Nel contempo, le presupposizioni espressive sono molto più difficile da bloccare (Maciá (2011); Schlenker (2007)). Si veda Ricard (2008: 18-22) per argomenti stando a cui l'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur* non è dovuto a presupposizioni conversazionali. Inoltre, come vedremo fra poco nel testo, contesti metalinguistici possono bloccare il comportamento proiettivo.

[6] Una dicotomia analoga fra termini e verbi peggiorativi da un lato, e aggettivi e avverbi peggiorativi dall'altro è discussa in Hom (2012), che riconosce una «varietà di intuizioni in conflitto [diversity of conflicting intuitions]», p. 8.

[7] Anderson & Lepore (2013) nel difendere una forma di approccio nel no contenuto sostengono che negli usi "riappropriati" (come negli usi di *slur* razziali nelle canzoni hip-hop Afro-americane) non si comunica nessuna offesa nei confronti del gruppo target, perché gli usi riappropriati sono soggetti a regole d'eccezione rispetto alle convenzioni censorie. Gli usi riappropriati vengono spesso visti come contesti in cui si cerca di cambiare il significato di un termine (Richard 2008: 9; Hom 2008: 428). Anche se ciò è sbagliato (come sostengono Anderson & Lepore 2013), e anche se non è facile caratterizzare in modo preciso l'idea di uso standard (specialmente rispetto a parole problematiche come gli *slur*), gli usi appropriati sono indubbiamente derivativi, e in questo articolo mi focalizza unicamente sul comportamento degli *slur* con le altre parti del discorso nei loro usi standard. Con ciò non voglio dire che gli usi riappropriati non siano interessanti o che una teoria completa degli *slur* non debba tenerne conto. Dico solo che metodologicamente è corretto in questo contesto concentrarsi sugli usi standard.

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lettura preferita di (4).

      (4) Lui non è un S, è un C

Possiamo certo interpretare (4) meta-linguisticamente, come se dicesse che "S" è un termine che non va usato per riferirsi agli C; ma casi come (5) qui sotto sono più difficili da leggere in tal modo.

      (5) Le istituzioni che trattano i C come S dovrebbero essere sanzionate

Per la stessa ragione, entrambe le strategie negano che qualcuno che proferisce (6) possa facilmente attribuire intenzione di offendere i C a Mick, dal momento che la lettura preferita è sempre quella in cui è il parlante a insultare i C.[8]

      (6) Mick pensa che John sia un S

E lo stesso vale per (7), per cui sembra ancora più problematico asserire che la lettura preferita è sempre quella in cui è il parlante, e non Mick, a insultare i C.

      (7) Stando a Mick, John è un S

Ci sono, ovviamente, varie strategie per chi difenda la strategia del no contenuto o quella del contenuto largo per "aggiustare" anche il dato linguistico più recalcitrante: ad esempio, facendo notare che anche (5) ha un sapore meta-linguistico,[9] o insistendo che anche (7) può essere usato senza comunicare l'idea che Mick abbia avuto intenzione di insultare i C.[10] Ciononostante, mi sembra che almeno *alcuni* dei dati rilevanti mostrino che l'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur* possa interagire con gli altri costrutti linguistici al livello del contenuto vero-condizionale, e che qualsiasi posizione che lo neghi si trovi in difficoltà nello spiegare una quantità non banale di dati contrari.
D'altro canto, l'approccio del contenuto stretto non è convincente. Il comportamento proiettivo degli *slur* è un fenomeno pervasivo. Come già notato, in (3) il contenuto denigratorio non viene negato.

      (3) Non ci sono S in questo spettacolo

Inoltre, anche se la lettura preferita di (6) è quella in cui chi la pronuncia sta attribuendo l'uso dello *slur* a Mick, qualcuno potrebbe pronunciarla per insultare il gruppo target anche se l'ascoltatore sa (o crede) che Mick non ha nessuna ostilità nei confronti del gruppo target. Un altro caso problematico è quello della interazione coi tempi verbali. È

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[8] Qui ci possono essere differenze fra gli approcci del no contenuto e gli approcci del contenuto largo. Difficilmente un proferimento di (6) può venir letto come un'accusa a Mick di aver rotto una convenzione censoria riguardante "S", e quindi dargli una lettura in cui l'aspetto denigratoria non abbia un comportamento proiettivo. D'altro conto, almeno alcune versioni della teoria presupposizionale prevedono che in certi contesti di discorso indiretto l'aspetto denigratorio sia affievolito. Si veda Cepollaro, Sulpizio e Bianchi 2019.

[9] Cepollaro e Thommen (2019) difendono questa tesi, che in precedenza era stata suggerita da altri (es. Predelli 2010), ma mai elaborata nel dettaglio.

[10] Si veda Anderson e Lepore 2013, che dichiarano "sospetti" molti dei presunti dati riguardanti gli usi accettabili degli *slur*. Un ulteriore problema per l'approccio del no contenuto è rendere conto della differenza fra frasi come "Tutti i C sono C" e "Tutti i C sono S".

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dubbio che qualcuno che in passato ha avuto un atteggiamento negativo nei confronti del gruppo target, possa ora riferirsi al gruppo come in (8) senza correre il rischio di comunicare offesa e ostilità.

(8) In passato pensavo che gli S fossero persone deprecabili

Anche nel caso della strategia del contenuto stretto è possibile usare diverse strategie per rendere conto degli apparenti comportamenti proiettivi, senza abbandonare l'idea che gli *slur* offendono in virtù del loro significato vero-funzionale. Ma come per le posizioni rivali, la teoria si trova in difficoltà nello spiegare una quantità non banale di dati recalcitranti.[11]

Le mie intuizioni riguardanti le letture preferite di enunciati come (3)-(8) non sono nette, e sospetto che non ci si debba aspettare altrimenti. Se è vero che ci sono lessemi espressivi, la cui lettura preferita è generalmente proiettiva, e lessemi descrittivi, la cui lettura preferita prevede interazione con le altre parti del discorso, allora è difficile inserire gli *slur* nettamente in una categoria o l'altra.[12] La mia ipotesi è che le convenzioni linguistiche che stanno alla base dell'aspetto denigratorio lascino sotto-determinato se l'aspetto denigratorio sia parte del significato vero-funzionale, o se qualifichi l'attitudine valutativa del parlante. Quindi, per quanto vi siano robuste regolarità che connettono l'uso di uno *slur* S e la comunicazione di un'offesa nei confronti del relativo gruppo target, *come* tale regolarità sia riflessa nelle convenzioni linguistiche concernenti il significato di S è in parte indeterminato. Le convenzioni che determinano il contenuto semantico di uno *slur* S lasciano aperto se S abbia un contenuto denigratorio vero-funzionale, o se l'aspetto denigratorio sia solo espressione di un'attitudine ostile da parte del parlante. Si noti che non sto difendendo la tesi che gli *slur* siano espressioni ambigue o polisemiche, nel senso che possano acquisire tanto un significato descrittivo, quando uno espressivo, e richiedano una disambiguazione di tipo pragmatico che assegni (contestualmente) un determinato valore semantico. Stando alla mia proposta, fenomeni pragmatici non intervengono a livello semantico o presemantico. Piuttosto, in qualsiasi contesto, il contenuto semantico è indeterminato, e l'aspetto denigratorio non è dunque né parte del contenuto vero-funzionale, né un elemento separabile.

3. Le origini della denigrazione

Per difendere la mia tesi centrale, mi concentrerò sulla spiegazione delle origini dell'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur*. La strategia del no contenuto spiega l'offensività in termini di convenzioni concernenti il comportamento linguistico accettabile. Nella versione di Anderson e Lepore (2013), l'offesa nasce da una convenzione censoria stando a cui gli *slur* sono parole tabù. Chiunque disobbedisca la convenzione mostra mancanza di rispetto per il tabù, e così facendo comunica l'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur*. In questa versione almeno, la spiegazione dell'approccio del no contenuto all'offensività degli *slur* non è convincente. In primo luogo, il tabù sembra esistere per via del contenuto denigratorio che la parola in qualche modo esprime, piuttosto che il

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[11] Hom (2012) ammette che il comportamento "ortodosso" degli *slur* (e dei termini peggiorativi in generale) sia quello proiettivo, ma sostiene che ciò sia dovuto a implicature griceane calcolate a partire dal loro contenuto vero-funzionale. L'idea è che, in genere, usare un predicato P implichi conversazionalmente che P non abbia una estensione vuota; e ciò genera l'insulto.

[12] La distinzione fra una dimensione espressiva e una dimensione descrittiva del significato si può trovare in Kaplan (ms.). Per esempi di coppie di termini che sono molto simili in significato, ma di cui una ha un comportamento descrittivo, l'altra un comportamento espressivo, si veda Predelli 2010.

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contrario.[13] In secondo luogo, cosa spiega che "S" sia la parola tabù, piuttosto che "C"? L'approccio del no contenuto non può fare appello a una differenza nel contenuto descrittivo o espressivo, dal momento che per assunzione sono identici. Dunque, se spieghiamo l'aspetto denigratorio di "S" nei *meri* termini della rottura di un tabù, siamo costretti a vedere come un fatto bruto, non ulteriormente spiegabile, che "S" e non "C" sia la parola tabù. Certo, in generale prima o poi si arriva a fatti bruti quando si considerano le convenzioni linguistiche. Ma, come argomenterò, c'è una storia ulteriore che si può raccontare al riguardo.

L'approccio del contenuto stretto spiega l'origine dell'aspetto denigratorio in termini di convenzioni riguardanti il loro contenuto vero-funzionale. Nella versione di Hom (2008), l'aspetto offensivo degli *slur* è dato dal fatto che vi sono istituzioni sociali che supportano una ideologia e un insieme di pratiche contro il gruppo target. Ad esempio gli epiteti razziali riguardanti gli Afro-americani (e altre minoranze etniche), che comunicano sia una ideologia composta di credenze (in larga parte negative) riguardanti il gruppo target, sia un insieme di pratiche discriminatorie (l'ideologia è in genere usata per giustificare le pratiche). Credo che Hom sia a grandi linee nel giusto nel fornire una spiegazione "esternista" dell'origine dell'aspetto denigratorio comunicato dagli *slur*. Il maggior problema per la spiegazione così com'è, è che anche se la presenza di una istituzione di questo tipo è (contestualmente) una condizione sufficiente per la nascita di un aspetto denigratorio, non è sicuramente una condizione necessaria.[14]

La mia ipotesi è che l'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur* viene dalla presenza di attitudini denigratorie diffuse nei confronti del gruppo target. Un'attitudine denigratoria è un'attitudine emotiva negativa, condivisa da una certa "comunità" di persone (ad es., gli omofobi, i razzisti, ecc.) nei confronti di un dato gruppo target. Sebbene la semplice appartenenza al gruppo target sia in genere sufficiente per innescare l'attitudine negativa, le persone della "comunità" in questione hanno spesso credenze descrittive e valutative che convergono verso uno stereotipo negativo degli appartenenti al gruppo target. Almeno nei casi in cui l'ostilità della comunità di persone che condivide l'atteggiamento denigratorio è forte, l'aspetto descrittivo e l'aspetto normativo connessi all'attitudine denigratoria si supportano l'un l'altro. Ad esempio, gli omofobi tipicamente credono che (i) gli omosessuali esemplifichino certi stereotipi, e (ii) per questo motivo sono da denigrare e discriminare.[15] Dunque, gli atteggiamenti denigratori condivisi da comunità di persone possono dare origine a "istituzioni" che supportano e rendono effettive pratiche discriminatorie nei confronti di un gruppo target, sebbene non debbano per forza raggiungere un livello istituzionale vero e proprio per avere un effetto semantico su certi termini.

L'attitudine degli omofobi (come quella dei razzisti, sessisti, e così via) ha a che fare con il mondo e le persone che lo popolano, e non con il significato dei termini del linguaggio ordinario, ma alcune parole sono tipicamente percepite da tutta la comunità linguistica come parole *degli* omofobi.[16] Si consideri uno *slur* S che gli omofobi usano per riferirsi

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[13] Per una critica simile si veda Jeshion 2013b e Camp 2013.

[14] Jeshion (2013b) obietta a Hom che non deve per forza esistere un'istituzione con una determinata ideologia e specifiche pratiche discriminatorie affinché esistano *slur*.

[15] Si veda la nozione di "stance" in Blackburn 1993 e il suo legame con le credenze descrittive e normative. Williamson (2009) fa una connessione fra *slur* e stereotipi (si veda anche Jeshion 2013a). Penso che la nozione di "slurring perspective" elaborata da Camp (2013) sia vicina all'idea di atteggiamento denigratorio che sviluppo qui.

[16] Si veda anche Saka (2007: 142): «For in order to believe that a pejorative applies to someone, one must have not only contempt for a certain class but also access to conventionally established pejorative terminology; one must belong to a linguistic community in which pejoratives exist. Since the

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agli omosessuali. Naturalmente, anche la controparte neutra di S, "omosessuale", è in un certo senso un termine negativo per gli omofobi, perché descrive un comportamento sessuale che gli omofobi disapprovano. Però un omofobo che non sa che usare "omosessuale" in un contesto non omofobo non verrebbe percepito come esprimente un atteggiamento negativo nei confronti degli omosessuali, a differenza di "S", non sarebbe linguisticamente competente (e lo stesso vale di un non omofobo). Questa è la mia ipotesi sulla rilevanza della presenza in una società di questi atteggiamenti denigratori per la semantica degli *slur*. La connessione fra l'atteggiamento denigratorio condiviso da una certa comunità e il significato ordinario degli *slur* può essere visto in analogia con il meccanismo della deferenza (Putnam 1975). Usi ordinari di termini tipici del vocabolario di comunità scientifiche sono casi di uso deferenziale. Il fatto che nelle nostre società ci siano esperti di botanica, ad esempio, fa sì che quando io (un non botanico) uso la parola "olmo", anche se ne so poco della differenza fra olmi e faggi, sto deferendo agli esperti di botanica e alla loro capacità di distinguere fra questi due tipi di alberi. In un certo senso, quindi, il mio uso di "olmo" e "faggio" esprime quello che il loro uso esprime. Nel caso dei termini scientifici, il meccanismo della deferenza sembra essere mediato dalle intenzioni del parlante, ma ciò non è essenziale. Il meccanismo attraverso il quale ciò che il parlante veicola è ciò che gli esperti significano con quei termini è innescato dalla semplice presenza, nel contesto rilevante, di esperti che usano le parole in questione in certi modi, e non dall'intenzione del parlante di deferire a loro. Analogamente, la presenza nella società di omofobi che usano S per denigrare gli omosessuali fa sì che in contesti ordinari S abbia un significato denigratorio indipendentemente dalle intenzioni del parlante. Nella nostra società, S è un termine caratteristico degli omofobi, e chiunque lo usi un contesto ordinario corre il rischio di convogliare un contenuto omofobo.[17]

Ora, l'aspetto denigratorio che uno *slur* acquisisce dall'esistenza in una società di una "comunità" di omofobi (razzisti, ecc.) che lo usano non deve per forza essere parte del suo contenuto vero-funzionale – come l'approccio del contenuto stretto sostiene. Infatti, l'attitudine denigratoria, per quanto spesso connessa a elementi descrittivi e normativi più "spessi", è in primo luogo un'attitudine emotiva nei confronti di persone identificate come parte di un certo gruppo. Almeno nella versione che ho abbozzato sopra, la spiegazione esternista dell'origine dell'aspetto denigratorio è compatibile con l'approccio del contenuto largo, e anche con l'approccio del no contenuto, dal momento che sia le regole semantiche che hanno a che fare con contenuti separabili, sia quelle che hanno a che fare con usi ammissibili possono essere spiegate in termini di attitudini tipiche di certe comunità. Indipendentemente dal fatto che l'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur* sia parte del contenuto semantico stretto, o sia una forma di contenuto separabile, o derivi da regole concernenti l'ammissibilità dell'uso di un termine, il fatto che gli *slur* possano essere usati per convogliare denigrazione è spiegato meglio dalla presenza di atteggiamenti denigratori nella società che da convenzioni riguardanti i tabù linguistici.[18]

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conventionalization of contempt relies, like all convention, on societally recognized norms, every pejorative utterance is proof not only of the speaker's contempt, but proof that such contempt prevails in society at large. This is why pejoratives make powerful insults, why repeated exposures to pejoratives can create feelings of alienation, inferiority, and self-hatred, and indeed why a single pejorative utterance evokes measurable bias in overhearers».

[17] Sebbene non consideri qui gli usi riappropriati, penso che anche una spiegazione del fenomeno dell'appropriazione dovrebbe seguire la storia proposta da Hom (2008): se i razzisti e gli omofobi hanno il ruolo di "esperti" rispetto agli *slur*, per riappropriare uno *slur* – sia negli usi interni al gruppo target, sia negli usi della comunità linguistica intera – la connessione semantica fra lo *slur* e gli "esperti" deve essere interrotta o modificata radicalmente.

[18] Nella misura in cui la spiegazione dell'origine della componente denigratoria che Andersen e Lepore

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Tale spiegazione dell'origine dell'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur* è anche compatibile con l'ipotesi che gli *slur* mostrino una forma peculiare di indeterminatezza semantica. La connessione percepita fra uno *slur* S e gli atteggiamenti degli omofobi (o razzisti ecc.) determina certe convenzioni linguistiche. Ma se le convenzioni linguistiche stabiliscono che l'aspetto denigratorio sia parte del contenuto vero-funzionale espresso da usi letterali di S e dunque un elemento descrittivo del termine (qualcosa che un parlante dice esplicitamente con il pronunciare lo *slur*), o un elemento separabile che segnala una attitudine denigratoria del parlante e quindi un elemento espressivo (qualcosa che non è esplicitamente detto con il pronunciare lo *slur*) dipende dai dati linguistici riguardanti il comportamento dello *slur* nella sua interazione con le altre parti del discorso. Come ho cercato di mostrare, le convenzioni linguistiche sono indeterminate rispetto allo status del contenuto denigratorio degli *slur*. Se ho ragione, gli *slur* hanno un contenuto semantico che è costitutivamente a metà strada fra una dimensione espressive e una descrittiva; hanno una componente vero-funzionale che condividono con la loro controparte neutra, e una componente denigratoria indeterminata.

L'indeterminatezza semantica degli *slur* assomiglia in parte alla vaghezza di alcuni termini, come "calvo", piuttosto che all'indeterminatezza dei termini ambigui, come "pesca" – se assumiamo una spiegazione semantica della vaghezza (piuttosto che una epistemica o ontica).[19] Il valore semantico di "calvo" non coincide con quello di nessuna delle sue precisificazioni accettabili, perché le convenzioni linguistiche non ne "scelgono" nessuna. Quindi, in ogni contesto "calvo" ha un contenuto semantico vago. Analogamente, le convenzioni linguistiche per uno *slur* S non stabiliscono se la componente denigratoria sia parte del contenuto stretto o un elemento separabile. L'analogia è solo parziale, perché nei casi dei termini vaghi, l'indeterminatezza riguarda l'estensione di un termine, mentre nel caso degli *slur*, se ho ragione, l'indeterminatezza riguarda più in generale la natura semantica del loro aspetto denigratorio. In altre parole, non sto dicendo che gli *slur* siano termini vaghi. Sto dicendo che gli *slur* mostrano un tipo peculiare di indeterminatezza semantica.

4. Gli *slur* e il linguaggio politicamente corretto

Il fatto che uno *slur* S sia semanticamente indeterminato nel senso appena visto fa sì che quando cerchiamo di stabilire un significato *determinato* che un proferimento di "S" ha convogliato molto dipenderà da come intendiamo l'atteggiamento del parlante. In particolare, se è chiaro dal contesto che c'è una intenzione di insultare il gruppo target, sarà più naturale interpretarlo come un termine espressivo, con un comportamento proiettivo. Ad esempio, anche un uso ironico di uno *slur* S per omosessuali maschi, nella bocca di qualcuno che assumiamo essere omofobo, sarà facilmente letto come convogliante un contenuto denigratorio nei confronti del gruppo target. Si immagini un gruppo di omofobi chiamare ironicamente un amico ritenuto particolarmente maschile

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danno differisce da quella di Hom, la loro posizione non è compatibile con una spiegazione della norma concernente il tabù in termini di atteggiamenti denigratori. Ciononostante, nulla di per sé nell'approccio del no contenuto (ossia, la tesi che l'aspetto denigratorio viene dalle convenzioni che riguardano l'accettabilità degli usi del termine in questione) è in contrasto con tale spiegazione.

[19] Sulla vaghezza semantica si veda Varzi 2007. Si noti che qui faccio riferimento alla teoria semantica della vaghezza per sfruttare una (parziale) analogia, ma nulla di quello che dico dipende dalla verità della teoria semantica della vaghezza (o di qualsiasi altra teoria della vaghezza). Inoltre, per "precisificazione" intendo una possibile interpretazione del linguaggio in questione, piuttosto che un possibile linguaggio (con cui parafrasare o sostituire quello in questione).

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"un S". Se l'atteggiamento ironico è evidente, nessuna offesa nei confronti dell'amico è convogliata, mentre l'insulto nei confronti degli omosessuali non è affatto sminuito dal contesto, per quanto ironico e amicale. Nel contempo, se il contesto rende chiaro che il parlante non ha intenzione di insultare il gruppo target, è più naturale interpretare lo *slur* come contenente un significato denigratorio che può interagire vero-funzionalmente con le altre componenti linguistiche. L'indeterminatezza semantica lascia aperta la questione se il contenuto semantico contenga o meno una componente denigratoria, e se cerchiamo una risposta definitiva, non è sorprendente che la plausibilità dell'ipotesi dipenda dall'attitudine che attribuiamo al parlante (rispetto al gruppo target, più che alla persona a cui si sta rivolgendo). Però strettamente parlando nessuna ipotesi di un significato *determinato* è corretta: il contenuto semantico dello *slur* è indeterminato in ogni contesto, nel senso che non è né determinatamente parte del contenuto né determinatamente un elemento separabile.

Ne segue che le intenzioni del parlante *non* hanno il ruolo di disambiguare contestualmente il contenuto convogliato, come se gli *slur* avessero un elemento indicale sensibile al contesto. L'ipotesi che gli *slur* abbiano un elemento indicale del genere è difficile da riconciliare con il fatto che essi sono tipicamente percepiti come parole tabù, soprattutto nei contesti pubblici. Se l'attitudine del parlante nei confronti del gruppo target fosse sufficiente a disambiguare il ruolo semantico dell'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur*, le loro occorrenze non atomiche (ossia occorrenze in cui interagiscono con altri parti del discorso, come la negazione o il discorso indiretto) nei contesti in cui la mancanza di ostilità da parte del parlante rispetto al gruppo target è evidente avrebbero sempre una lettura preferenziale in cui l'offesa nei confronti del gruppo target non viene veicolata. Ma, come ho mostrato in precedenza, le intuizioni dei parlanti competenti rispetto all'accettabilità di tali usi sono spesso instabili. Per questo motivo una forma di censura ufficiale o semi ufficiale, come quella del politicamente corretto, appare in larga parte giustificabile – nella misura in cui non è corretto discriminare le persone sulla base del loro orientamento sessuale, provenienza etnica, e così via. I principi morali non possono di per sé giustificare atteggiamenti censori nei confronti dell'uso di parole, ma appellandosi al meccanismo di deferenza possiamo spiegare perché una parola usata da una comunità di persone che condividono atteggiamenti denigratori può essere giustificatamente bandita all'interno della più larga comunità linguistica. Se gli *slur* possedessero un elemento indicale sensibile alle intenzioni del parlante, nei contesti in cui le intenzioni del parlante sono evidenti (e lo *slur* interagisce con altre parti del discorso), la censura non risulterebbe giustificata. Ma l'aspetto denigratorio è ereditato dagli usi della comunità linguistica intera indipendentemente dalle intenzioni del parlante. E sebbene il ruolo semantico della componente denigratoria sia sottodeterminato dalle convenzioni linguistiche, un parlante competente è consapevole del fatto che rendere evidenti le proprie intenzioni non ostili nei confronti del gruppo target non è abbastanza per rendere accettabile l'uso dello *slur*.

In conclusione, sebbene abbia rigettato la spiegazione dell'origine della componente denigratoria degli *slur* in termini di convenzioni censorie, l'ipotesi dell'indeterminatezza semantica non è incompatibile con la presenza di tabù, ma solo con l'ipotesi che sia la rottura del tabù a generare l'offesa. Sono d'accordo che anche in contesti in cui il contenuto semantico è neutralizzato, come nei virgolettati, pronunciare uno *slur* può essere comunque inopportuno, come previsto dalle convenzioni censorie. Però anche termini chiaramente descrittivi, che normalmente non hanno comportamento proiettivo, possono essere soggetti a tabù quando il contenuto descrittivo e per qualche motivo socialmente inaccettabile. In altre parole, gli atteggiamenti denigratori sono all'origine *sia* dell'aspetto denigratorio degli *slur*, *sia* delle convenzioni censorie che li riguardano. La tesi dell'indeterminatezza oltre a spiegare il conflitto di intuizioni riguardante la

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copresenza di occorrenze descrittive ed espressive degli *slur*, fornisce ragioni anche per considerare la convenzione censoria come giustificata, senza intenderla come un fatto bruto. Nella misura in cui la lettura espressiva è sempre un'opzione che non può essere facilmente eliminata, una proibizione in linea di principio dell'uso del termine, soprattutto in contesti pubblici, può essere vista come parte della generale disapprovazione dell'atteggiamento denigratorio e discriminatorio nei confronti del gruppo target.

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Pejoratives: a classification of the connoted terms[1]

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Abstract Interest in slurs has partly obscured the issue of pejoratives and connoted expressions in general. However, we believe that a deeper understanding of the class the slurs belong to will have a positive impact on the study of slurs as well. In this paper, we sketch out a classification of the connoted terms, in particular, the pejorative ones. First, we analyze the balance between the descriptive and the connotative dimensions of these terms in order to find their collocation along a plausible meaning continuum. Then, we focus on the connotative component and consider the following criteria by which connoted and pejorative terms can be classified: polarity, kind of attitude, conveyed level of emotion, and vulgarity.

In the last decades, linguists and analytic philosophers of language have dealt with the semantic status of slurs, i.e., with those pejorative terms that convey a negative attitude toward a set of referents. The intriguing feature of these expressions is that they involve an entire target class even though they are directed against only one individual[2]. The interest in this issue has been partly determined by the social and political significance of slurs because the use of such expressions seems to involve the speaker's adhesion to discriminatory practices toward minority groups. For example, the intentional use of pejorative terms based on race (i.e., *nigger*, *chink*, *WOP*), sexual orientation (*faggot*), religion (*yid*, *kike*), and health status (*mongo*), etc. is included in the category of hate speech, which, in turn, is included in the category of hate crimes. Emblematic in this context are the legal responses to verbal discriminatory practices: we simply mention

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[1] Although this paper results from the collective work of the authors, Maria Paola Tenchini has written in particular the Introduction and section 1, Aldo Frigerio sections 2 and 3.

[2] Literature on slurs is vast and often located at the intersection of different disciplines. In Frigerio & Tenchini (2014), we have tried to sketch out a map of the main different theoretical positions on the semantic status of the derogatory content of slurs. Here, we simply recall some of the studies that have contributed most to characterize the research on this issue: Anderson & Lepore (2013a), (2013b) for the deflationary/silentist approach; Hom (2008), (2012); Hom & May (2013) for the literalist/truth-conditional approach; Schlenker (2007), Cepollaro (2015) for the presuppositional approach; Potts (2005), (2007); McCready (2010), Whiting (2013), Gutzmann (2015) for the conventional implicature approach.

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here the famous *fighting words doctrine* drawn up by the US Supreme Court in 1942 in the *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* case[3], which recognizes, in the use of *insulting and "fighting" terms*, a limitation to freedom of speech as protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The primary interest in slurs has contributed to 'obscure' other expressions whose semantics is similar to slurs, but, nonetheless, are not slurs[4]. In various ways and to various degrees, these expressions denigrate the target. They include not only insults like *idiot*, *asshole*, and *bastard* but also less marked terms, such as *cur*, *jalopy*, *dump*, or expressions in their extended meaning, like *fascist*.

Further, expressions classifiable as *profanity* of various kinds (swear words, curse words, and the like), such as *shit*, *damn*, or *fuck* (in all its forms and meanings), are to be considered[5]. Such expressions have the primary function of displaying the speaker's emotional attitude (*Oh shit, I've lost my keys*), and they do not necessarily target an addressee or an outgroup. In this sense, these expressions are similar to interjections, and, like the latter, can be associated with positive facts (*I fucking love cakes*). It is evident that these expressions are very different from each other.

The above-mentioned terms are sometimes classified as pejorative, sometimes as expressive, or offensive, and, in some cases, as vulgar. These labels are occasionally congruent but not always: for instance, there are pejoratives that are not vulgar (cf. *jalopy*) and pejoratives that do not denigrate anyone (cf. *oh shit!*). What these nonhomogeneous terms have in common is that they all conveys an expressive code component. This paper aims to propose a classification for them. It is structured as follows. In section 1.1, the balance between the truth-conditional denotative and the descriptive component of these expressions on the one side and the expressive, attitudinal, or emotional connotative component on the other side shall be used as a classification criterion. On this basis, in section 1.2, we will see that these expressions are distributed over a *continuum*, from purely descriptive terms (like *philosopher*) to purely expressive ones (*damn!*), passing through the middle stages (*fascist, cur, idler, bastard*). In section 1.3, we touch upon the neglected distinction between the attribution of negative properties and the expression of a negative attitude. We will see that the attribution of negative properties is part of the descriptive component of the meaning, which does not imply the expression of a negative attitude or an emotional state of the speaker toward the target. Furthermore, we will see that, admittedly, the two components are often difficult to distinguish in some contexts because negative attitudes naturally arise from negative judgments. In section 2.1, the expression of the attitude conveyed by the connoted terms will be classified on the grounds of i) polarity, which can be negative,

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[3] Cf. *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, 315 U.S. 568 (1942) «There are certain well-defined and narrowly limited classes of speech, the prevention and punishment of which have never been thought to raise any constitutional problem. These include the lewd and obscene, the profane, the libelous, and the insulting or "fighting" words – those which by their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite an immediate breach of the peace. It has been well observed that such utterances are no essential part of any exposition of ideas, and are of such slight social value as a step to truth that any benefit that may be derived from them is clearly outweighed by the social interest in order and morality» (http://bit.ly/2fSZeX6, last access 22/11/2018). According to the definition of fighting words by Nowak, Rotunda, and Young (1986) quoted by Leets e Giles (1997), such expressions constitute «speech that holds no intellectual content to be conveyed to the listener but is merely a provocative emotional message intended and likely to incite an immediate, violent response» (Leets & Giles 1997, p. 262).

[4] There are some exceptions such as Potts (2005) and Schlenker (2007), who provide a theory of pejoratives and expressive terms in general. However, they do not offer a taxonomy of these terms, which is the aim of this paper.

[5] For a survey and a history of this terms, cf. Mohr (2013).

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neutral, or positive; ii) kind of attitude (contempt, disregard, hate, disgust, anger, cursing, etc.); iii) levels of emotion or attitude. In sections 2.2 and 2.3, the dimension of vulgarity will be considered and put in relation with the expressive component and politeness rules. The offense arising from the use of pejorative terms can be of two kinds: i) the offense arising from the use of a pejorative directed toward a person, where offense arises from denigration; ii) the offense arising from damage to negative politeness, when swear words are used. Section 3 concludes the paper.

Our proposal will consider the terms that are connoted as expressive or pejorative on the basis of their code semantics; therefore, the classification will not take into account the appropriated uses of slurs, ironic or sarcastic uses of neutral terms, and the (important) role of prosody and coverbal communication.

1. Expressive/Descriptive

The first dimension by which we classify these terms lies in the balance between their descriptive, truth-conditional component and their emotional, attitudinal, expressive component. The first component concerns the aspects of the meaning, which are explored using the traditional truth-conditional semantics: sense and reference, intension and extension, *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. What matters here is to specify that, in this first meaning component, two aspects are relevant: the set of objects in the world denotated by the noun or the verb and the concept associated with that noun or verb. We will not take position on how strictly the concept determines the denotation.

The second basic component of our classification is what we call, for brevity, *connotation*. The connotation of a term refers to emotions, moods, tastes, feelings, and assessments displayed by the speaker by means of that very term. In our framework, *connotation* is not a descriptive component but an expressive one, which, accordingly, is independent from the truth-conditions assigned to any sentence. This component does not describe states of affairs but concerns the attitude of the speaker toward individuals and states of affairs and the emotional impact the world has on the speaker[6].

1.1 A first classification

We can classify the terms depending on the preponderance of one component on the other. Some terms have a descriptive component but not a connotative one. For example, a term like *doctor* has an extension (the set of doctors) and an intension (the complete set of properties included in the concept), but it does not have any connotation. This is not though to deny that, *in particular contexts*, a speaker can use a word like *doctor* with a negative *connotation*. Let us assume, for example, that Mary has had negative experiences with doctors. She generally considers them incompetent and unsympathetic. Mary's attitude toward doctors is well known within the circle of her friends. One day, Mary is talking with a friend about a recent acquaintance and says:

(1)   He would be nice, but…he is a doctor.

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6 Here, *connotation* is thus intended as the set of semantic values of a word or expression that are additional with respect to its intension and extension. For a survey, cf. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1977) and the references within. We presuppose, then, that the semantic value of a word is not exhausted its truth conditional contribution but that there can be components of the meaning that do not contribute to truth conditions and that are, nevertheless, part of the semantic value of a word. For a similar opinion, cf., for instance, Bach (1999).

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In saying the word *doctor*, Mary stresses it and slows down the speech rate. She also adopts a facial expression conveying disapproval and/or disgust. It is clear that, for this particular use of the word, *doctor* has a negative connotation. Every term can be used like that, given the appropriate context.

Here, however, we are interested in those connotations that are associated to a term at the code level, i.e., connotations that a term expresses *by default*[7]. Just like a dictionary registers the descriptive component, intended as a semantic potential that can be modified, reshaped, and pragmatically adjusted in context, the same applies to the connotative component. The connotative component that a term has by default can be modified and reshaped, like in (1), where a connotative component is added in a particular context. Here, we are interested only in the connotation's code component and not in its pragmatic reshaping in context[8]. So, for example, *doctor* has no component of this kind by default.

A second class of terms have both components, descriptive and connotative. For example, the word *cur* has a clear descriptive component (extension, i.e., the set of dogs, and intension, i.e., the concept of dog) and a connotative component. The latter consists in the expression of the speaker's mildly pejorative feeling when using the term toward the members of the extension. Slurs belong to this second class as well. A word like *faggot* has an intension and an extension (equivalent to those of *homosexual*) and a connotation consisting in expressing a strong, disparaging feeling toward the target referents.

Lastly, there are terms like *damn!* or *fuck!* which have no descriptive component at all[9] but only a connotative component by means of which the speaker expresses the

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[7] Here, we sharply differ from Lepore & Stone (2018), who claim that connotation is not part of either the semantic or the pragmatic meaning. According to them, connotation is something indefinite and elusive, something that can vary from speaker to speaker. Thus, connotation cannot be part of the meaning one intends to communicate, both semantically and pragmatically, as meaning must be shared by participants for communication to be successful. Lepore & Stone (2018) compare connotation ("tone") with the "evocative potential" a poem can generate, thus to something vague and subjective, which cannot be considered part of the literal or intended meaning of the poetic text. However, in order to support their argument, Lepore & Stone (2018) quote a single example, i.e., the different tone (in the Fregean sense) of *bloom*, *flower,* and *blossom*. Indeed, it may be that these terms are synonymous, and that the differences among them do not pertain to the meaning because they are something fuzzy and subjective. But it is difficult to apply Lepore & Stone (2018)'s thesis to other highly connoted terms. Lat us consider, for example, the difference between *very old* and *decrepit*. According to our classification, *very old* is a neutral term, while *decrepit* is a mixed term, which has, more or less, the same descriptive meaning as *very old*, but which also has a connotation component, by means of which the speaker expresses her pejorative evaluation toward something/somebody that is very old. Lepore & Stone (2018) are committed to the thesis that this difference is purely subjective and rather variable from speaker to speaker. Nonetheless, such a difference is registered in dictionary entries (*decrepit* is marked by the traits "wasted or worn out," "decayed," "enfeebled," and "obsolete," which always convey a negative evaluation in comparison to *old*), so we are induced to believe that a competent speaker *must* be aware of the negative connotation of a word like *decrepit* to avoid linguistic mistakes. To relegate connotation to a purely subjective phenomenon does not consider that a speaker, by using *decrepit*, conveys her feelings and attitudes toward an object that is very old, and that her addressees will grasp such an attitude (unless the context does not reshape the negative connotation in some way). Therefore, we claim that connotation cannot be compared to poetical evocations but is part of the meaning of the term (i.e., part of what is communicated by its use), although it is not part of the descriptive and truth-conditional meaning.

[8] We believe that as many terms have a code descriptive component that can be reshaped and specified by the context, the same can happened to the code connotative component. The context can also *add* descriptive and connotative components to a term or to a sentence.

[9] In reality, these terms originate as descriptive ones, but in the course of its linguistic evolution, this descriptive component has faded out. So, *damn* originates as a legal term meaning "to condemn, declare guilty, convict," also in the theological sense of "doom to punishment in a future state" (cf.

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strength of her emotional state. Thus, the use of such terms is not designed to describe how the world is, but to display the speaker's emotional state. In this respect, they are very close to some interjections.

This last example allows us to make some clarifications for our analysis. We have said that our classification concerns only the code meaning of these expressions and not their (potential) contextual meaning. We now note that these terms, as many others, may convey more than one code meaning. For example, *damn* can be used, as we have seen, as an interjection to express an aroused emotional state. But this particular meaning is only one of the code meanings of *damn*. The OED registers other meanings: "(in Christian belief) be condemned by God to suffer eternal punishment in hell" or "Be doomed to misfortune or failure." When we classify a term as descriptive, mixed, or purely expressive, our classification refers to one specific meaning of that term. Different meanings of the same term can be included in different classes. This is the very case of *damn* and *fuck*.

This clarification, *per se* quite obvious, allows us to solve complex cases. For example, how should a term like *fascist* be classified? Is it descriptive, mixed, or expressive? We think that *fascist* has at least two meanings. On one hand, it means someone who is registered with the Fascist party or who supports or believes in fascism. In this use, it is a purely descriptive term. Certainly, it can be used with a negative charge, but this is a pragmatic meaning that can be added in contexts where this term is used by antifascist people. On the contrary, people who sympathize with that ideology can use this term with a positive connotation. In itself, however, this term is neither negative nor positive and expresses only that somebody is enrolled in a party (in this, it is similar to *communist* or *Republican*)[10]. Nevertheless, *fascist* has another meaning by means of which "extreme authoritarian, oppressive, or intolerant views or people" (OED) are denotated. We believe that, in this last meaning, *fascist* is a mixed term: it denotes authoritarian and oppressive people or views or ideas, but it also expresses the very negative judgment of the speaker toward such people or ideas.

1.2 A continuum

It may be legitimately thought from the above that, along the dimension we are analyzing, the division is tripartite: purely descriptive, mixed, and purely expressive terms. But that is not our opinion. We are of the view, however, that there exists a *continuum* from purely descriptive to purely emotional terms.

Indeed, some terms have a well-defined descriptive component and only a mild and weak connotative component. For example, a term like *idler* means "who avoids work or spends time in an aimless or lazy way." According to our classification, however, this is not the only meaning component, as the term also carries a connotation of a mild criticism toward persons of this kind. This component distinguishes *idler* from *lazy*, since, in *lazy*, the connotation is even weaker. Other terms come close to the opposite extreme of the *continuum* without reaching it, however. Such terms have an indefinite descriptive component and a strong connotation: for example, *jerk* or *bastard*. The descriptive component of terms like these is very vague. *Jerk* denotes foolish persons, *bastard* unpleasant and self-centered persons. On the contrary, the connotative

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www.etymonline.com). But in the meaning that we are considering here, such a component has been deactivated.

[10] Let us consider, for example, a history book that details the rise to power of Benito Mussolini's Fascist Party. Evidently, if the authors wish to simply describe the facts objectively without giving any personal judgment, they will use *fascists* as a purely descriptive term.

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component is marked and strong. Finally, cases such that of slurring terms are located in the middle, as their descriptive component is clear-cut and so is their connotation.
This arrangement explains our intuition on sentences like the following:

(2) Paul is a faggot.
(3) Paul is a bastard.

(4) Paul is not a faggot.
(5) Paul is not a bastard.

(6) If there are faggots, I will not come.
(7) If there are bastards, I will not come.

Both (2) and (3) seem to insult somebody, but while (4) and (6) keep insulting homosexuals, (5) and (7) do not seem to insult anybody[11]. Yet, according to our classification, both *faggot* and *bastard* are mixed terms provided with a descriptive as well as a connotative component. So, what does their different behavior in (5) and (7) depend upon? The immediate reaction would be to affirm that, while slurs project their connotative component[12], terms like *bastard* do not[13]. But we do not hold this interpretation of the difference between *faggot* and *bastard* to be correct[14]. We also believe that sentences (5) and (7) express the speaker's negative attitude toward the extension of *bastard* in the same way as (4) and (6) express a negative attitude toward homosexuals, i.e., the extension of *faggot*. Therefore, the connotation of *bastard* is independent from the descriptive component and is projected out of negation and conditionals in the same way as the connotation of *faggot*. It remains to be seen why (5) and (7) seem to insult nobody. In our opinion, this is due to two factors, which are probably connected to each other:

   i.   The extension of *bastard* is very indeterminate because its descriptive component is indeterminate.
   ii. The descriptive component of *bastard* is based on "moral" properties. It is difficult to determine who is part of the extension, and everyone can consider herself part of the complement of the term's extension. On the contrary, the

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[11] Panzeri and Carrus (2016), in an experimental study, find that pejorative terms like *bastard* do lose their offensiveness when negated, possibly because of a metalinguistic effect that they test in a follow up, but they are still perceived as offensive when used in the antecedent of conditionals. This *prima facie* speaks against our intuitions. However, "offensive" is a generic term, which does not clarify what the participants to the study have in mind. A pejorative expression such as *oh shit!*, *qua* vulgar term, can be said "offensive" even though it has no target and does not insult anyone specifically. Cf. section 2.3 on the different reasons why an expression can generate offence.

[12] On this slur's peculiarity, there is a large amount of literature from Potts (2005).

[13] Another possible explanation is that the connotative component of *bastard* does not refer to a group of people but only to behaviors and actions (cf. Cepollaro 2018: 72). Nonetheless, the expression of a negative attitude toward an action should also entail a negative attitude toward the group of people who carries it out. Such a group is the term's extension.

[14] As we will see in section 2.2, some of the terms we are analyzing are vulgar. Part of their expressivity is due to their vulgarity. Further, it is evident that the vulgarity of a term is projected in all contexts. For example, if "Paul is an asshole" is vulgar, so, too, are "if Paul is an asshole, I do not want to see him" and "Paul is not an asshole". And if the expressivity of these terms depends on their vulgarity, then it is evident that such sentences are vulgar and, hence, expressive.

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extension of *faggot* and the other slurs is determined by more "objective" properties and, thus, is easily determinable.

As for the first point, it suffices to note that the descriptive features of *bastard* are very vague. It is difficult to respond to the question: "Which properties should one have to be a member of the extension of *bastard*?". We know that, to be classified as a bastard, one must be an unpleasant and self-centered person, but how unpleasant and self-centered must one be, and what, exactly, *unpleasant* and *self-centered* mean is not clear.
The second point is even more central. The features that define the extensions of *bastard*, *jerk,* and *idler* are "moral", i.e., they concern character, behavior, and intelligence. It is difficult to establish whether a person has these properties or not. A person can always think not to be unpleasant, foolish, or lazy. It is always questionable whether a person has these properties, and it is always possible to deny having them. On the contrary, the skin color, nationality, sexual orientation, etc. of a person are not vague and are not debatable features.
By consequence, even though (5) and (7) express a negative attitude toward the persons who are unpleasant and self-centered, the identification of these persons is very difficult[15]. Everyone might consider herself not to be part of the extension of *bastard* and, thus, everyone might feel that she is not insulted. Conversely, in (3), the speaker states that Paul is part of the extension of *bastard* and, therefore, predicates the property of being an unpleasant and self-centered person of Paul. Furthermore, expressing a very negative and aggressive attitude toward these persons, the speaker also expresses this attitude toward Paul, given that he is declared as part of the term's extension. Paul can, then, feel insulted.
To sum up, words can be arranged on a *continuum* whose ends are the words lacking a connotative component and the words lacking a descriptive component. Slurs are in the middle of this *continuum* because they have both components and they are clearly defined. Instead, words such as *bastard* or *jerk* have a vague descriptive component, but they are strongly connoted because they express a strong attitude of the speaker, so they are located close to an extreme, but not *at* the extreme. Furthermore, many of these terms refer to persons' moral categories, in contrast to slurs. This accounts for our different intuitions on their projectivity, despite their similar semantics.

1.3 Negative description and negative attitude
To better distinguish the connotation and descriptive components, it is worth differentiating the two aspects that are often conflated: the attribution of negative features and the expression of a negative attitude. A word's connotation is something that concerns the speaker's moods, feelings, and attitudes. On the contrary, it does not concern the attribution of negative features, which is part of the descriptive component of the meaning. To clarify this difference, consider the following examples:

(8)   This subject scores I.Q. 76.
(9)   The defendant is experiencing a straitened economic situation.

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[15] An anonymous referee objects that, since the negative attitude towards a whole class does leave no trace in sentences such as (5) and (7), the distinction between a descriptive and a connotative component is unjustified in the case of these terms. This seems equivalent to deny that *bastard* has a descriptive component altogether and not simply to acknowledge that it is vague. However, uttering a sentence such as "I do not like bastards", the speaker is clearly referring to someone – and this demonstrate that *bastard* has an extension after all – and is clearly expressing a negative attitude towards these people – and this demonstrates the presence of a connation. If *bastard* is a purely expressive term, as the referee seems to believe, it is difficult to account for these sentences, in which the use of *bastard* has no specific target.

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(10) The subject suffers from a chronic mental disorder with abnormal social behavior.

Sentences (8)–(10) attribute negative features, such as a lack of intelligence, poverty, and/or mental illness, but they are not negatively connoted. Indeed, neutral and scientific language is used in these sentences to avoid any negative connotation, i.e., any expression of negative attitudes, such as blame, disgust, scorn, etc., for the persons described.
Compare with:

(11) Paul is an asshole.
(12) Paul is a bum.
(13) Paul is a weirdo.

Sentences (11)–(13) attribute the same negative features (a lack of intelligence, poverty, and/or mental illness), but express the speaker's negative attitude. The expression of these attitudes does not add *further* negative features or properties. As we have said, connotation does not describe but expresses something[16].
These two aspects are obviously often difficult to distinguish because negative features easily raise contempt or disapproval. It is often hard to separate the attribution of negative features from the attitudes they generate. However, this distinction is mandatory to investigate the semantics of pejoratives and of the connoted words in general. It is not sufficient to attribute a negative property to have a pejorative or a negatively connoted word. It must also express the negative attitude of the speaker.
An anonymous referee has noticed a resemblance between our classification and the terminology used in meta-ethics about the thick terms[17]. In this context, it is usual to distinguish among descriptive terms, such as *red*, evaluative terms (called *thin terms*) such as *good*, and mixed terms (called *thick terms*), such as *courageous* and *chaste*. The latter terms are both descriptive and evaluative. We acknowledge that this distinction is analogous to ours but we also believe that there are important differences and the referee's remark gives us the opportunity of better clarifying our position. In particular, we would like to distinguish sharply between *evaluative* and *connotative*. Evaluations are not yet connotations because we can express evaluations in neutral and aseptic terms. Consider a teacher who corrects and evaluates the school works of his students: she assigns a mark to each school work, suppose *excellent, good, fair, poor*, etc. In our opinion, the teacher is making an evaluation, but the terms she uses are not connoted. She is expressing a judgement that is as objective as far as possible, assigning each school work to a class along an evaluation scale. She is *not expressing an attitude* towards the students

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[16] An anonymous referee objects that negativity is something socially and culturally laden, so there is no objective description of *negative* features. It is a hard question if values are something objective or subjective. We personally reject the view that all evaluative sentences are expressions of subjective attitudes and we believe in the objectivity of at least some values. For instance, in our opinion neutral terms such as "thief", "murder", and "rapist" ascribe objective negative features to the persons they are predicated of. However, to draw the distinction between description and expression of an attitude we need not solve the very complex questions related to the status of values. *Scoring I.Q. 76* is a description of a state of affairs and it remains a description even though the *value* of intelligence is a social construction. Moreover, if we say that Paul is an *asshole*, we are expressing a negative attitude toward Paul independently of the objectivity or subjectivity of the value of intelligence.

[17] This terminology has been introduced by Williams (1985). The debate on these topics is huge. Cf., for instance, Väyrynen (2013).

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and their school works[18]. Evaluations have to do with the rational sphere and with the analysis, as far as possible, objective of how things are. Rather, connotations have to do with the affective sphere of the speakers, i.e. with their emotions, preferences, and attitudes. Connotations concern the *expression* of this sphere. For this reason, we believe that evaluative but not connoted terms such as those occurring in (8)-(10) should be distinguished by those occurring in (11)-(13). We do not deny that the connotative and the evaluative dimensions are often difficult to disentangle and that sometimes they even overlap. However, a principle distinction between these dimensions is important because they are often collapsed in literature, also in the meta-ethical debate, in which sometimes thick terms are compared with slurs.

2. The classification of connoted terms

After differentiating the connotative and descriptive aspects of meaning, we are now ready to propose a tentative classification of connoted terms. We have already seen one parameter by which connoted terms can be classified: the balance between the connotative and descriptive components. In this section, we will examine some further dimensions by which connoted terms can be classified.

2.1 Dimensions of connotation

We suggest three of these dimensions here:

1)   *Polarity.* So far, we have considered negatively connoted terms because they are more numerous and frequent[19]. However, positively connoted terms also exist. Take, for instance, appellatives such as *darling* and *honey* or politeness pronouns in Italian, German, or French. There are also connoted terms with a neutral polarity, which are neither positively nor negatively connoted but simply express the speaker's aroused emotive state. The context can clarify whether this state is positive or negative. Cf., for example, the word *fucking* and phrases such as *fucking good* and *fucking bad*. In this particular meaning, *fucking* simply expresses the aroused emotive state of the speaker, and the word determined by *fucking* makes it clear whether this state is positive or negative. Polarity – positive, negative, or neutral – is, thus, one of the dimensions by which we can classify connoted terms.

2)   *Kinds of attitude.* Connoted terms, in the present view, express the emotions, moods, tastes, feelings, and assessments of the speaker. Therefore, the second dimension of our classification is the kind of attitude the term expresses, such as contempt or disgust against a target (*faggot, filthy maggot*), curse (*go to hell!*), fondness for someone (*darling*), anger (*Damn!*), surprise or amazement (*holy shit!*), etc.

3)   *Levels of emotion or attitude.* Attitudes can be more or less strong. For instance, an emotion can be faint or intense. Some terms express very strong attitudes, others much less intense attitudes. For instance, some slurs are very derogatory, while others are weaker, though always negative. Compare, for instance, *nigger* with *Yankee* (slur used by Mexicans to designate American people). In the same vein, some constructions express very contained anger or surprise (*oh my dear!*); others express much stronger emotions (*oh holy shit!*)[20].

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[18] That the distinction is real is proved by the fact that students often complain that the negative attitude of their teachers towards them negatively influence the evaluation of their works.

[19] For the bias in favor of negative terms, cf. Janschewitz (2008).

[20] Dimensions 1 and 3 have been pointed out by Potts (2007).

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We do not claim that these are the only dimensions by which connoted terms can be classified. However, we believe that these three dimensions are among the most fundamental.

2.2 Vulgarity

There is at least a fourth dimension by which connoted terms can be classified: vulgarity. As it is clear from the previous examples, many, but not all, connoted terms are vulgar. Further, some slurs are vulgar (e.g., *bitch*, used in this literal meaning to refer to women), but not all slurs are, in our opinion (e.g., *kike*, when used to refer to Jews). We devote a whole section to this dimension because it is more elusive and harder to define than the others. We will not attempt to give a general definition of what vulgarity is here. We simply state that a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of vulgarity is to refer to sex or defecation and physiological functions in general. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition because we can refer to these subjects without being vulgar: e.g., we might use scientific terms to refer to the sexual act or to the physiological functions. It is difficult to say what the difference between the vulgar term and the corresponding scientific term exactly amounts to. They have the same extension and intension and, as a matter of fact, it seems that the sole difference is that one is a vulgar and taboo term, while the other is a neutral term[21].

Vulgarity, like connotation, tends to project in every context. The negation of a sentence containing a vulgar term is still vulgar. Questions and conditionals containing vulgar terms are vulgar sentences as well. Even reported speech containing vulgar terms tends to be felt as vulgar, so that mass media usually uses abbreviations or the initials of vulgar terms when reporting what some person has said.

The connection between vulgarity and connotation is based on the fact that vulgarity intensifies the expressivity of a term. In other words, vulgar terms are usually very expressive. Reference to taboo subjects, such as sex or physiological functions, using taboo words makes the speaker's elocution very emotively loaded. Insults are usually considered more aggressive if vulgar (cf. *idiot* vs. *asshole*), and expressions of anger or surprise are regarded as less intense if they are not vulgar (cf. *wow* vs. *shit!*).

Whatever moral judgment one might formulate about the use of vulgar expressions, some scholars have noted that they can have positive functions. For example, they can have a cathartic function: by using vulgar terms, speakers can vent intense emotions. Moreover, vulgarity can substitute for physical aggression: instead of resorting to a violent conflict, the use of vulgar insults allows the speaker to pour out her aggressivity toward another person[22]. Finally, vulgarity can signal informality and proximity. Since the use of vulgar words is usually confined to informal, friendly, and domestic contexts, to begin to use these terms with another interlocutor can indicate that she is now considered a close friend. Paradoxically, the use of vulgar words may be an index of positive politeness.

2.3 Offensiveness and impoliteness

Since pejoratives are sometimes classified as offensive terms, it is important to clarify the relationship between pejoration and offensiveness because there is much confusion

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[21] An anonymous referee of this journal objects that also religion is a typical target of vulgar expressions. Maybe they are. However, here it suffices to say that, if blasphemy is vulgar, it is a kind of vulgarity different from that we are analyzing here concerning physiological functions. We acknowledge not to have a general theory of vulgarity. In fact, as far as we know, there is no such theory in literature, so our treatment of this dimension is tentative here.

[22] This is suggested, for instance, by Jay (2009).

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in literature on this topic. In fact, a connoted term can cause offense and, then, be impolite for many reasons. The more obvious motive is that some of these terms express the speaker's negative attitude toward the addressee or the whole class of persons to which the addressee belongs. Negative attitudes, like contempt, disgust, and disdain against a person, or a class of persons, warrant offense because they insult somebody and make her feel neglected, ostracized, despised, and scorned. The most studied case is that of slurs, which express disapproval or contempt toward a class of persons. As we have seen, insults, such as *asshole* or *bastard*, display the same attitudes toward a whole class of persons. However, the limits of this class are so vague and indefinite that, when these expressions are predicated of an individual, she can be the sole person who feels offended because she is declared a member of the class. The individuals who are not explicitly said to be members of the target class can believe they are not a part of it. If anything, one might believe that the speaker judges that the class contains only one member: the sole individual the expression is predicated of. For these reasons, expressions such as *asshole* or *bastard* may be considered offensive only for the persons explicitly designated by these terms. The reason why slurs and insults can be considered offensive is that positive politeness prescribes accepting other persons and making them feel appreciated and included in the speaker's social circle. These terms are, therefore, positive face-threatening.

However, connoted terms can be offensive for other reasons. First, expressivity by itself can generate offense. Brown and Levinson (1987) underline that an excessively emotional state can be face-threatening because it gives the addressee reasons to fear the speaker or be embarrassed by her. Thus, excessively expressive terms, especially in formal contexts, jeopardize the negative face of the addressee. A too violent emotional outburst can generate fear because it demonstrates that the speaker is not in full control of her emotions and, thus, of her actions. Moreover, it exposes features of the speaker's psyche that should remain confidential in formal contexts. Therefore, in nonfriendly contexts, even expressions of intense joy, pleasure, or sentiment (which are not negative attitudes) can be offensive.

The third reason why connoted expressions can be offensive is their vulgarity. It has been shown that the offensiveness of vulgar terms depends heavily on the context and the interlocutors. The use of vulgar words among peer college students talking each other in an informal setting, such as a dormitory, is considered as a little or not at all offensive. The use of the same words in more formal contexts, such a classroom or with different interlocutors like professors or the dean, is considered much more offensive[23]. In these cases, referring to taboo subjects and the use of taboo terms to refer to these subjects are regarded as inappropriate.

A concluding note about slurs and their offense potential. According to our classification, slurs can offend for the first two reasons: they express a negative attitude toward a class of persons, and they express emotionality. If they are vulgar words, the third reason can be added to the first two. However, there is a further reason why slurs can arouse reactions. The negative attitude toward the target class is not grounded on some negative feature of the people belonging to this class, but on some neutral property[24]. Insults against a person can always be judged inappropriate but, nevertheless, justified when grounded on a negative feature of the target person (for example, on an

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[23] Cf. Jay and Janschewitz (2008) and Beers Fägersten (2012).

[24] Of course, racists and homophobic persons believe that a certain color of the skin and a certain sexual orientation are negative properties. However, people reacting to the use of slurs think that racists and homophobic persons are wrong and that these are neutral features. If values are objective, as we believe, these opinions are based on *objective* facts.

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improper moral trait or on a blameworthy action). On the contrary, we believe that it is morally wrong to despise people for something that is not negative in itself. This injustice can engender reactions beyond the three reasons we have listed above. This presumably extends to every use of a negatively connoted word when the negative attitude is unjustified.

3. Conclusion
In this paper, we have tried to sketch out a classification of the connoted terms, in particular, the pejorative ones. First, we have analyzed the balance between the descriptive and the connotative dimensions of these terms in order to find their collocation along a plausible *meaning continuum*. We have then focused on the connotative component and considered the following classification criteria: polarity, kind of attitude, level of emotion conveyed by such terms, and vulgarity. Our proposal is only a first step and, obviously, requires enrichment and development to obtain a more structured and fine-grained classification. The interest in slurs has partly obscured the issue of connoted expressions in general, but we believe, nonetheless, that a deeper understanding of the class the slurs belong to will have a positive impact on the study of slurs as well[25].

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[25] We wish to thank three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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