

WHAT IS IT TO UNDERSTAND A DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACT ?

In this paper I want to examine the concept of "conditions of fulfilment" or "compliance" or "satisfaction" which have been introduced by some authors in order to provide analyses of meaning which are just as adequate to directive speech acts as truth-conditional semantics are adequate to assertive speech acts. It will be argued that this aim is missed. Most analyses (except those of some primitive cases) will remain throughout *incomplete* as long as they are not supplemented by a specification of *conditions of normative validity*. In the case of several illocutionary verbs they can be substituted by *conditions under which the speaker could make use of sanctions against the hearer*.

In Analytical Philosophy the notion of the truth-conditions of a sentence is frequently taken to be the key of any cogent semantic theory¹. A theory of meaning for a natural language is claimed² to be a theory of truth, i.e.,

"a set of axioms that entail, for every sentence in the language, a statement of the conditions under which it is true".

But if so, immediately the following problem arises : there are lots of sentences that do not have *any* truth-conditions because they are not even set out to be true or false. The truth-conditional approach only works, as Frege clearly saw, in the case of statements, and questions that can be answered by "Yes" or "No".

“Wieviele Arten von Sätzen gibt es aber? Etwa Behauptung, Frage und Befehl? – Es gibt *unzählige* solcher Arten: unzählige verschiedene Arten der Verwendung alles dessen, was wir ‘Zeichen’, ‘Worte’, ‘Sätze’ nennen. Und diese Mannigfaltigkeit ist nichts Festes, ein für allemal Gegebenes; sondern neue Typen der Sprache, neue Sprachspiele, wie wir sagen können, entstehen und andere voralten und werden vergessen.”³

A truth-conditional approach obviously is too poor in order to do justice to the great variety of language, even though we should not talk, as Wittgenstein was apt to do, about the countless (“unzählige”) uses of language.

“Philosophers will do this when they have listed as many, let us say, as seventeen; but even if there were something like ten thousand uses of language, surely we could list them all in time. This, after all, is no larger than the number of species of beetle that entomologists have taken pains to list.”⁴

Peter Strawson, in his “Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics”, “Individuals”⁵ tries to give an account that allows to save truth-conditional semantics although being suitable for speech acts other than assertives. Strawson starts from the consideration that orders and statements can have the same propositional content. The same referring expressions and the same elements of predication can occur in both. Of course orders cannot be true. But, Strawson argues, just as it is essential to a statement that it can be *true* or *false*, it is essential to an order that it can be *obeyed* or *disobeyed*, and to a promise that it can be *kept* or *broken*. So we may say that a “value of fulfilment” belongs to every proposition: a positive one if the statement, the order, the promise in which the proposition is respectively manifested is

true, obeyed, or kept respectively, and a negative one if the statement, the order, the promise is false, disobeyed, or broken respectively. In his paper "Meaning and Truth"⁶ from 1969 Strawson points out that

"in almost all the things we should count as sentences there is a substantial core of meaning which is explicable either in terms of truth-conditions or in some related notion quite simply derivable from that of a truth-condition, for example the notion, as we might call it, of a compliance-condition in the case of an imperative sentence or a fulfilment-condition in the case of an optative."

This view has also been accepted by Michael Dummett who says in his article from 1975, "Can Analytical Philosophy be Systematic, and Ought it to Be?"⁷, that

"we know the individual content of an imperative sentence by knowing in what circumstances the command it conveys will have been obeyed, and that we know the individual content of an optative sentence by knowing in what circumstances the wish it expresses will have been fulfilled. In this way we may think of the individual content of a sentence of most of the other categories as being determined by associating with that sentence a certain range of circumstances, the significance of that association depending upon the category in question."

This approach to doing theory of meaning—viz. by stating the conditions of fulfilment, or, as he calls them, of satisfaction—has been worked out in more detail (and, as we will see, already corrected in some points) by John R. Searle.⁸ Searle takes the usual first step⁹:

“ We say, for example, that a statement is true or false, that an order is obeyed or disobeyed, that a promise is kept or broken. In each of these we ascribe success or failure of the illocutionary act *to match reality* in the particular direction of fit provided by the illocutionary point. To have an expression, we might label all of these conditions ‘ *conditions of satisfaction* ’ or ‘ *conditions of success* ’. So we will say that a statement is satisfied if and only if it is *true*, an order is satisfied if and only if it is *obeyed*, a promise is satisfied if and only if it is *kept*, and so on.”

So far Searle’s approach does not differ from Dummett’s, although his whole approach, grounded on a general theory of Intentionality¹⁰, notoriously differs. But for reason of space I will leave all problems connected with Searle’s theses that a

“ speech act will be satisfied if and only if the expressed *psychological state* is satisfied, and [that] the conditions of satisfaction of speech act and, psychological state are *identical* ”¹¹

aside. I shall concentrate on an assumption that is common to Strawson’s, Dummett’s and Searle’s approaches.

Their starting point is that statements, orders, promises & c. have one thing in common – the propositional content –, and that they are distinguished by illocutionary force; in speech acts of the form F(p) the illocutionary force F determines the different modes in which the same propositional content can be presented to the hearer, – indeed, for example, as a statement, order, promise, wish & c. Of course we mustn’t think of mode as just some modification that could be left out. On the contrary there is no way that one can just mean that p without meaning it in any illocutionary mode at all. Propositional content after all is just an abstraction. At least as Searle puts it – and I think

he is right in doing so —, one cannot have a propositional content, even in thought, without some indicator of mood or force (e.g. “*I wonder if p*” or “*I doubt whether p*”). Now the question arises: how does the force operate on the propositional content? What is the F doing to the p? To answer this question Searle introduces the subject of *direction of fit*¹². Behind this subject there is the idea of *correspondence between sentence and reality* which forms our intuitive idea of *truth*. The difference between statements on the one hand and orders, commands promises &c. on the other is that in the case of the first, correspondence (or “fit” or “match”) has to be there when they are uttered, whereas in the case of the latter correspondence (or “fit” or “match”) has to be brought about after they have been uttered. They have to be, so to speak, “made true” by realization. And in the case of declaratives their very performance by itself should bring “about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality”¹³. (They alter reality simply by representing it as having been altered.) In each of these cases the *conditions of satisfaction* are fulfilled if and only if there is *correspondence between the propositional content and the facts*. (These may be brute facts, as in the case of many scientific assertions, or institutional facts, as in the case of a declaration¹⁴.)

To understand the argument I want to develop next it is essential to see that the idea of correspondence between sentence and reality — the idea of truth — is behind *all* of these (“obedience—”, “fulfilment—” &c.) conditions that are ascribed to sentences that cannot be true or false. Remember that satisfaction — (compliance — / fulfilment — &c.) conditions were introduced in order to achieve analysis that is as adequate to orders, promises &c. as the analysis of truth-conditions is adequate to statements, assertions and questions with a “Yes”/ “No”-ans-

wer. In this paper, I want to take it for granted that truth-conditional analysis is indeed adequate to assertives, but I want to deny that the conditions of satisfaction-analysis is equally adequate to the other kinds of speech acts mentioned above. If we compare truth-conditions with conditions of compliance, fulfilment &c. there is a revealing asymmetry: whether a statement is true *determines* whether it is *valid* (in the strong sense of *universal validity*), but whether an order is complied with *doesn't even say the least bit* about whether it is conventionally in force (for even orders that are in no way conventionally authorized can be complied with), and it is obvious (and follows a fortiori) that it also doesn't say *anything* about the validity of the order in a sense beyond the merely conventional¹⁵. This manner of speaking may sound a bit strange to English ears for it is no doubt pretty common to say that an *argument* is valid, but neither that a *statement* nor that an *order* is valid. Nevertheless it is justified because in both cases we may ask the Kantian question "quid iuris?" (as opposed to merely "quid facti?") and we will have to answer it by reference to evidence of some kind and a chain of argument in the case of the *statement*, and by reference to a normative justification in the case of an *order*. When we ask: "Why do you, X, suffer from a tooth-ache?", X can *only* specify the *causes* (if he knows them), e. g. by saying: "Because of such and such bacteria damaging my molar." The "why?" is synonymous with "quid facti?". But when we ask "Why do you give this order?" or "Why do you state that p?" the X can specify *either causes* – e. g. neurophysiological events: and these are usually unknown, or, if known, represent a hopelessly goofy level to analyse these speech acts *as* speech acts – or he can specify *reasons*, that is: he can produce – valid or invalid – *argument*. (The "why" can be interpreted as either "quid facti?", or "quid iuris?" which in this case is the much more interesting question.) Now, *if* the *argu-*

ment is valid (in the strict sense, that is *not merely believed* to be valid), I will say in the following that the statement or the order *based on this argument is valid*. And an order is valid, *not* because it is accepted (and therefore complied with) by the hearer, but because it is *right*, just as a statement is valid, not because it is accepted (and therefore believed) by the hearer, but because it is *true*.

“ Conditions of satisfaction ” are just, as it could be seen from our quotation from “ Intentionality ”, the *conditions of correspondence between proposition and facts*, and as philosophers we are allowed to be pedantic and call them like this. In the case of a statement these are plain identical with the conditions under which a statement is valid (because even if a statement is rude or misplaced : if it represents reality as it is, it’s valid), so it *seems* useless to distinguish these two types of conditions. But, as we have just seen, they are *not* identical in the case of directives (and the same holds for commissives and declaratives),— therefore we should draw this distinction, although there is no point to it in the case of assertives :

c o n d i t i o n s

illocutionary categories ¹⁶	conditions of validity fulfilled ¹⁷	conditions of correspondence between proposition and reality fulfilled
ASSERTIVES (e. g. state, predict)	true	true
DIRECTIVES (e. g. order, forbid)	(morally/legally) right	complied with by the hearer

c o n d i t i o n s

illocutionary categories	conditions of validity fulfilled	conditions of correspondence between proposition and reality fulfilled
COMMISSIVES (e. g. promise, contract)	(morally/legally) right	kept by the speaker, observed by the contracting parties
DECLARATIVES (e. g. excommunicate, degrade in military rank)	(morally/legally) right	successfully achieved

Truth-conditions have been the paradigm for all the other Strawson-Dummett-Searlian "fulfilment-conditions". For this very reason they are the *right* concept for analysing—to continue the manner of speaking introduced above—the validity of *statements*, though they are *wrong* concept for analysing the validity of *orders, commands, promises, declarations* &c. But then the question arises whether the latter is *necessary at all* within a theory of meaning and understanding. To answer this question—which is indeed the crucial one—we first have to step back in order to see *how much is achieved by* "conditions of satisfaction". As we know they give us the conditions under which a request would be *complied with* or an order would be *obeyed* or a command would be *followed* or a promise would be *kept* respectively. Now doubtlessly this *is part* of understanding the meaning of a request or an order or a command or a promise respectively. There is no disagreement about that. The point I want to make is this: these are *not the whole story* about understanding requests, orders, commands, promises.

To make the argument for this thesis we have to clarify the notion of "*understanding*". A hearer shows his understanding of a speech act by his reply to it : by accepting it or reserving judgement ("I cannot decide this at the moment") or rejecting it in a certain form. This is *not* tantamount to the opinion that meaning and understanding have to be defined in terms of hearer's reactions. The intended effect of *meaning* is *not*, as Grice put it falsely, *a hearer's reaction*, that is : a *perlocutionary* effect. If someone says "It's raining" and means it, he does *not necessarily* intend to produce in the hearer the *belief* that it is raining. Although the *perlocutionary* aim of *convincing* the hearer may very often be connected with statements, it is, as I take it, *not* part of a definition of meaning. Both are not internally connected, as, on the contrary, *meaning and understanding* are internally connected. *Understanding* is the knowledge of what speech act a speaker is performing, that is : a knowledge of its propositional content and its force.

I do *not* advance the thesis that only hearers which react by "yes" / "no"-answers, connected eventually with reasons understand statements or orders. On the contrary it seems to me thoroughly possible that a hearer understands a statement or even an order and nevertheless (or even therefore ?!) ignores it. He may reply nothing at all, turn around and go away, although he has understood pretty well. *If he has understood*, then turning around and going away would be characteristically equivalent to a (n unfounded) *rejection* in the case of essentially hearer-directed speech acts (such as orders, commands &c.), whereas we would not know how to interpret this behaviour in the case of *not* essentially hearer-directed speech acts (i.e., assertives and expressives). But at *all* events, *if* the speaker's behaviour is like this, he cannot—that's crucial—*show* unmistakably whether he has understood or not. Therefore the speaker will

not know whether he has achieved uptake. To summarize this point : trivially, a speaker *can* understand without performing a speech act in response, but all the same, since the achievement of uptake cannot always be made out by observation of the hearer's physiognomy, it becomes definitely accessible if there is some reply like acceptance or explicit reserve from judgement or rejection.

What I have said so far was by way of a *preliminary remark* to an *argument*. The *argument* is this : *There is a series of ways of rejecting an order which are at least as "I'm not going to do it" = "the propositional content will not be satisfied"*. One can say, e. g. : "You are not the boss here" or "You are the boss but you are not authorized to give me any command you like, e. g. not the command to lick the floor of this room" or "You are the boss here but the command you gave me is inconsistent with the penal code, and that's the higher authority" or "You are the boss here but the performance of the action you told me to do is morally not justifiable" or "You are the boss but that whole principle of hierarchical organisation is incompatible with the principle of equal rights". So if we think of what it is to give a command as opposed to a simple expression of a wish, we see that there are all kinds of features on a morally / legally relevant speech act that have *nothing* to do with conditions of satisfaction and the dimension of correspondence to the fact. Rather, *why* – this means : *for which reasons* – the speaker can expect the hearer to perform the action ordered or commanded, seems to be *part of the understanding* of an order or a command. This even holds for simple imperatives – the gunman shouting "Hands up" is also giving a reason for obeying his order : it is the gun that will normally function as a reason for the hearer to do the thing he was ordered to do.

Now one might remark on these considerations : all this is quite nice but it's a point about *pragmatics* rather than about semantics. But, I want to say : So what? This doesn't show that my point is irrelevant but rather that pragmatics then have to be integrated into a general theory of meaning and understanding : the semantics of propositions obviously is *not* the only thing that matters in a theory of meaning.

Now if we adopt the approach proposed in this paper we can see there really *is* an analogy between assertives and directives, but that it does *not* consist in the circumstance that understanding them *is the same as* understanding their correspondence to the facts (truth in the case of assertives, obedience in the case of directives &c.) – on the contrary, that's wrong – but rather *that there is an internal connection between meaning and validity in both cases* : between truth and meaning in the case of assertives, between normative validity and meaning in the case of directives. In both cases we have to know the conditions of possible *validity* and, of course, the *conditions of possible correspondence between proposition and reality*, as I want to call them precisely. Now these two sorts of conditions *converge* in the case of *assertives*, because a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts. This convergence is the reason why some people just forget about the conditions of validity in the case of directives, commissives, and declaratives. But that is a mistake, because in the case of the latter these two sorts of conditions *diverge*. (The reason for this divergence is the noted difference between "Is" and "Ought".)

In order to understand the whole illocutionary meaning of a speech act $F(p)$, where F has got the force of a directive, commissive, or declarative, it is *necessary, but not sufficient* for the hearer to understand the conditions of fulfilment for p . The mistaken view, that these are *sufficient*, can be refuted as follows

the request that you do A, the command that you do A, even the perlocutionary act of exhorting you to do A all have *the same* propositional content and *the same* direction of fit ("hearer-based world-to-mind", to speak with Searle), hence they have *the same* conditions of fulfilment: so there wouldn't be any difference in understanding these quite different acts—and this cannot be correct. Within the class of directives there is a wide variety of cases ranging between requesting, asking, urging, requiring, demanding, commanding, ordering, forbidding, prohibiting, enjoining, permitting, advising, recommending, begging, supplicating, entreating, beseeching, imploring, praying &c. – and they have all different sorts of features, some of which are essentially normative. Discriminating these is obviously relevant to getting the meaning right. Therefore Searle is correct in *rejecting* the view that *all* that matters to meaning are the *conditions of satisfaction* determined by *illocutionary point*¹⁸: according to his recent analysis¹⁹ it is *hardly ever* the case that *all* we have to understand is the *propositional content* with a *direction of fit*, though the grasp of these two of course is a *minimum* requirement. (As Searle puts it, illocutionary *point* is *just one of seven* components of illocutionary *force*²⁰ such as degree of strength... – I won't list them here.)

In the case of an imperative the speaker must *at least* understand what he is supposed to do in order to bring about the state of affairs desired by the speaker. But this is *not enough* in order to understand the illocutionary force of the imperative. The hearer must in addition understand why the speaker expects that he can successfully impose his will on him. Searle gets close to this point when he argues that different "modes of achievement"²¹:

"a speaker who issues a command from a position of authority does more than someone who makes a request.

- Both utterances have the same illocutionary point, but the command achieves that illocutionary point by way of invoking the position of authority of the speaker. In order that the utterance be a successful command the speaker must not only be in a position of authority, he must be using or invoking his authority in issuing the utterance."

And already in "Speech Acts"²² Searle introduced the notion of *preparatory conditions* as internal conditions on the performance of directives and declaratives. Fulfilment of these should consist in the speaker's being the authorized person or being otherwise in the position to perform the speech act. It is an internal criticism of the command "I command you to pull down St. Peter's Church" or the declaration "I hereby excommunicate you", to say: "You cannot do that, you are not the Pope."

Still there are cases that differ from these two. Searle tends to deal with the question of normative rightness as if it were *only* a matter of *institutional facts*, or whether the speaker was *in fact in a position of authority over the hearer* – at least he does not go into any other examples. However, *there are cases* where it is *not at all* a matter of social facts, but which would *have to be* included into a general and complete theory of meaning and understanding for directives. If someone wants to understand the "Categorical Imperative" he is certainly *not* confronted with the question whether Kant was in fact in a position of authority to command people as follows:

"Handle so, daß du die Menschheit, sowohl in deiner Person, als in der Person eines jeden andern, jederzeit zugleich als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel brauchest."²³

The question whether Kant was "in a position" to utter this imperative comes down to the issue: could he present sufficient *reasons* to convince people that they ought to act like this and

not otherwise? (And although I do *not* propose to *define* directives by reference to a dominant "normative rightness claim" on which Habermas tries to base the classification – implausibly, because there is quite a lot of directives where there is no such thing internal –, we may also call into question the Searlian approach. According to the latter it is the illocutionary point of *any* imperative *whatever* "to try to get other people to do things"²⁴, such that the "other people" serve as a means to achieve an end viz. the state of affairs in the world that is specified in the propositional content. But *obviously* this is *not* the illocutionary point of the Kantian imperative just cited. Furthermore a definition of the *illocutionary* point in terms of tried achievement of a *perlocutionary* effect – "getting other people to do things" – must be wrong.)

To put the chain of argument presented more systematically²⁵ : In the case of a directive a speaker's pretension is *either* backed by reasons (that's the case of a rational moral justification : Kant), *or* by some institutionalized authority (that's the case of a lieutenant gives commands), *or* by potential sanctions (that's the case of the robber's "Hands up!"), *or* by some combination of these (that's the case of many judicial systems today where reasons are given during the debate before legislation, where there is an institutionalized authority and thirdly punishment as a permanent threat to all those which are apt to violate the law).

Therefore knowledge of conditions of satisfaction has to be supplemented by knowledge of conditions for the possible agreement with an imperative. A hearer understands an imperative,

- (1) if he knows the conditions under which he would bring about the desired state, *and*

- (2) if he knows the conditions under which the speaker would have convincing reasons to regard an imperative as either
- (a) *valid* (that means: *normatively justified*) or
 - (b) *efficient* (that means: supported by potential sanctions sufficiently deterring from disobedience).

Of course the robber's gun *itself* is *external* to the performance of his speech act "Hands up!", but it is *not* external to the performance of such a speech act *that the speaker is able to give a reason of some kind* why people should raise their hands; and the only recognizable reason in this case is the gun which provides, as a possible sanction, the efficiency of the imperative, (Instead of sanctions there may be also baits and lures in favour of the hearer.) The same holds for normative reasons. The military rank of, let's say, the lieutenant which provides the legal basis for his giving commands *itself* is not internal to his giving commands; – however, *a reference to a legal authority of some kind* which functions as a reason for the hearer to do what he is commanded to do *is lexicalized* in the illocutionary verb "to command"²⁶. (The ability of giving reasons of some sort *needn't* be a preparatory condition to *all* directives, but it certainly is a preparatory condition to all exacting demands which cause the hearer trouble of some kind. I will come back to this point.)

One of the preparatory conditions to issue a directive consists in the speaker's being either in a position of *authority* or in a position of *power* over the hearer. We ought to be struck by the fact that the normative rightness claim can be *substituted* (or complemented) by a claim to power supported by reference to sanctions which will be executed in the case of the hearer's contravention. There is *no analogy* to this in the case of *assertives*, – there is *no way* I can *substitute* the conditions of validity of the Pythagorean theorem by anything else, e.g. a reference to my

power or to sanctions of which I dispose. However, as soon as I perform a speech act of the directive kind, like "Explain the Pythagorean theorem!" or "Repeat the Pythagorean theorem!" or "Assent to the Pythagorean theorem!" I have the *option* to add *either* "..., because that's the right thing to do" or "..., otherwise I will blow your brains out". In the case of an *assertion*, if there is doubt whether it is true, I can *not* say "Well, I don't say that p is true, nevertheless I assert it." By way of contrast, if there is doubt whether an *imperative* is legally right, the robber may say without *any* pragmatic inconsistency "Well, I don't say it is right, nevertheless I tell you to do it" or "Right or not, all the same you have to do what I want, otherwise I will blow your brains out!". The "true"–"false"–dimension of assessment is internal to *all* assertives, whereas the "legally right"–"legally wrong"–dimension of assessment is external to at least *some* directives. *It is internal only if the speaker himself has (implicitly) claimed to be legally justified like the lieutenant commanding his troops or the judge sentencing someone to five years in prison. If the claim wasn't raised by the speaker (implicitly or explicitly), but just by some other people (e.g. legislators and judges), there is no way to identify a performative self-contradiction. A claim to legal rightness can be external even if the speaker is aware that it will by all known odds be applied to his act (as crooks usually are). This is true of any external feature whatever: I may be aware with certainty that criteria of relevance or intelligence will be applied to what I'm saying, nevertheless there is no internal commitment to relevance or intelligence in what I'm saying, because "saying something" is not constituted by or defined as "saying something relevant and intelligent" in the first place. There may be external commitments to say solely intelligent and relevant things (e.g. if the speaker is a member of a learned society); likewise there may be external commitments to direct people only if it is normatively*

justified, because *trivially* it is *always* possible to *connect* a claim to legal / moral rightness with a directive, e.g. by saying "In the name of law I order you to do A". This of course is possible with every aspect you like. I might claim that all I say is relevant or noisy—and up from this moment it has *become* an internal criticism to say "That's irrelevant" or "That wasn't noisy". But exactly this shows that claims of this sort originally were external: that there isn't any necessary conceptual link between "saying something" on the one hand and "saying something relevant" or "saying it noisily" (that is: not only at a certain loudness level, but really at the top of my voice) on the other. It shows that they were external because, as distinct from this case, it's *impossible* to make an assertion and then, to *connect*, as an *extra*, a *truth claim* with the assertion. It's possible to utter imperatives with or *without* a claim to normative validity, or to make assertions with or without a claim to relevance – but it is *impossible* to make assertions *without* a *truth claim*. By making an assertion I *have already* raised a truth claim – if I want to avoid the truth claim I have to avoid the assertion. There is no *option* if I would *like* to *connect* a truth claim with my assertion for the very reason that the truth claim is a claim *constitutive of* speech acts of the assertive mood.

Only internal features of a speech act can be *part of its meaning*. Or, if we start from the viewpoint of the hearer: *only* by an *internal* criticism or by an acceptance motivated by reasons that were *implied* in the *speaker's* utterance a hearer shows his understanding of *the particular speech acts under consideration* in an unmistakable way. (Trivially, also someone who advances an external criticism or no criticism at all can have understood pretty well – this issue has already been discussed.) Our first thesis that understanding a directive consists

in the knowledge of conditions of satisfaction plus conditions of validity therefore was much *too rough*. Knowledge of the conditions of validity is *only then* part of the meaning, *if* a claim to validity has been—implicitly or explicitly, justly or not—*raised by the speaker*. If he says “Hands up—otherwise I will blow your brains out”, then it’s clearly an internal criticism to say “You can’t do that, because what you’ve got in your right hand is just a water pistol”. In terms of what we’ve said so far: knowledge of the conditions under which the speaker is in a position to *enforce* the hearer to satisfy his perlocutionary intention is part of the understanding of *this* speech act. But it would be an *external* criticism of *this* speech act to say “You mustn’t do that, because it is in conflict with § umpteen of the penal code of the Federal Republic of Germany”. Why? Because *the speaker* did *not* claim that it was in good accordance with the penal code. Knowledge of the conditions of validity is *not* part of the understanding of *this* particular speech act. Therefore a modification in our previous argument about different ways of rejecting an order becomes necessary. In terms of the argument given: *It is constitutive* of the claim to blow the hearers’ brains out that the speaker disposes about a weapon of some kind that is *fit* to attain this aim in the case of hearers’ contravention, *but it is not constitutive* of this claim that it is or is not in good accordance with penal code of the Federal Republic of Germany (which includes *regulative* rules on acts of different sorts). We are inclined to confuse meaning-constitutive rules and other regulative rules imposed on the speech act performed in such a case because in order to live a social existence it is never sufficient to understand *only* the *one* speech act that has *just* been performed. We have to understand speech acts that are performed by robbers *and* speech acts that are included in the penal code, and we have to *combine* our knowledge of both. But we mustn’t draw false consequences from this necessity. It is

by no means part of the *sentence-meaning* of "Hands up—otherwise I will blow your brains out!" that the performance of this speech act is in particular circumstances in conflict with § ump-teen of the penal code of the Federal Republic of Germany. This simply doesn't follow. (And the *avoidance* of *this* absurdity does *not* bring on consequently the alternative absurdity that a hearer can understand *one and only one* sentence. I think Searle is right in stating that the concept of the literal meaning of a sentence is perfectly compatible with holism, i.e., with the thesis that literal meaning only functions against what he calls 'the network' and "the background"²⁷).

To summarize the approach developed so far: To understand a directive is to know the conditions under which it is complied with *plus* the conditions under which it is valid (if there are such) *or* the conditions by which conditions of validity can be *substituted*. Either the speaker does by his order appeal to the validity of some norms in the background shared by him and the hearer – these may be conventional ones like an office, a military rank, positive law or, at least in their pretension, superconventional ones like a moral principle – (= 2a), *or* he appeals to the conditions under which he will make use of particular sanctions of which he disposes (like the gunman) (= 2b), *or* both (like the penal code appealing to its –conventional– validity and to the punishment laid down in the law). In *each* of these cases the speaker – for short we may speak of the legislator as a speaker as well – wants *more* to be recognized than just his *intention*, i.e., how he would like the world to be or what state of affairs must be brought about: he wants the hearer also to recognize either the *legitimacy* (= 2a) or the *efficiency* (= 2b) of the order or both. He raises a *claim to validity* (= 2a) or a *claim to power* (= 2b) which has to be understood in order to understand a directive speech act (– just as

the claim to validity, i.e., to truth which is internal to an assertive speech act has to be understood in the case of, e.g., a statement). So the conditions under which the command would be *legitimate* or *efficient* have to be *added* to the conditions under which the command would be *satisfied* (conditions of correspondence between proposition and reality) in order to get a *complete* analysis.

This will be necessary at least for many directives, though, as already suggested, presumably *not for all*. Indeed it does make sense to *call upon* somebody by reference to pure subjective arbitrariness, although it does *not* make sense to *state* anything by reference to pure subjective arbitrariness: You can *not* say "2 + 2 = 4 for the only reason that I want it so", but you *can* say "Give me a light for the only reason that I want it so." We might think of an example where the speaker and the hearer are not bound by any duty to give each other lights, nor is the hearer under an unilateral obligation of this content to the speaker. The speaker is supposed to be much weaker than the hearer, and he is not equipped with any device – as, e.g., a machine-gun – to *enforce* the hearer to give him a light. If we make these (in no way extraordinary) assumptions, then there will be neither any conditions of validity nor any conditions of the speaker's being able to enforce the hearer. The hearer does what the speaker wanted him to do – *if* he does it – *only* because the speaker wanted him to do it. That's so to speak the "*minimum reason*" which comes automatically with the *sincerity rule* (that the speaker *wants* the hearer to do the thing which he asked for). Now one might argue that there may be sometimes other reasons, like the "Golden Rule", and then there will be also "conditions of validity". But that's no objection to the restriction I'm proposing now: that there are *not always internal* conditions of *validity* and that there is *not always*

the necessity to *substitute* lacking conditions of validity by conditions of the efficiency of sanctions.

Therefore a "dominant claim to normative rightness" (Habermas) *cannot* be the right criterion to classify directive speech acts, because there can be, as in the example given, perfectly correct requests constituted by no internal normative justification claim. The normative justification is in no way "lacking", it is *not* a defective speech act. The smoker's appetite for a cigarette may well be the *only* reason which he presents to the hearer, and it may be the *only* reason for the hearer to act – there is *nothing* pragmatically inconsistent about this. Hence there *are* directives where it *needn't* be known whether the call is normatively valid or whether the speaker is in a position to enforce the hearer – *because neither of them is claimed at all*. What we called the "minimum reason" is absolutely sufficient in *primitive* cases. Still it has to be *insisted* on the general thesis of this paper that we will *never* reach out with *conditions of satisfaction*, if we are going to analyse the meaning of directives. Rather there will *always* be features *internal* to the speech acts that are *not* plain identical with conditions of fulfilment, such as the *sincerity condition* that the speaker means what he says, the *preparatory conditions* that the hearer is able to do the thing he is directed to do and that the speaker believes the hearer to be able to do the thing he directs him to do, and the *existential presupposition* that there is a certain state of affairs in the world (the one that is to be changed). All these conditions and necessary presuppositions are part of the meaning of a directive speech act. If the claim that X *ought* to do A *entails* the claim that X *can* do A, then it is part of its meaning, and X's assertion that he is *unable* to do A will be an *internal* criticism of the prescription that he ought to do A. There are even more features to *many* other directives – though not to all – like conditions of the *legitimacy*, or conditions of the

efficiency of sanctions. Knowledge of them will form an *essential* part of understanding their meaning.

Now Strawson might be aware of the whole line of argument advanced against the sufficiency of his conception of "conditions of fulfilment" and nevertheless reject it; for in his article "Austin on 'Locutionary Meaning'"²⁸ he attacks Austin's view which is in some details similar to the account presented here. I regard it as the great advantage of Austin's way of dealing with speech acts that the dimension of legal and moral validity of "rightness", as we may say – does not drop out of his approach. In his lectures "How to do things with words"²⁹ Austin points to the circumstance that advice can be "good or bad" (and, as we may perhaps add, not merely followed or not followed) as being relevant to the "locutionary meaning". Strawson is right in referring to this very passage, for Austin in this lecture (the XIth) develops a thesis about the similarity of the procedures of practical and theoretical reason, and the inadequacy of the traditional fact–value–distinction that is quite exciting. Austin insists on the analogous role of *reasons* with practical and theoretical discourse; he points out that "the truth, as an attribute of sentences, yet entirely our way of *finding out* that is true is *not simply* a matter of brute facts accessible without (linguistic) mediation, but of facts in the light of a *worded* interpretation, that is of *reasons* :

"Consider also for a moment whether the question of truth and falsity is so very objective. We ask: 'Is it a *fair* statement?', and are the good reasons and good evidence for stating and saying so very different from the good reasons and evidence for performative acts like arguing, warning and judging?"³⁰

In all these cases there exist rational methods of finding out what is true and right, and there are internal standards of criticism and justification. Austin, as Strawson puts it,

“wants us to join him in refusing to draw any sharp line between saying that an announcement, accusation, or surmise was true, and saying, that a request, a piece of advice, or a command was warranted or justified.”³¹

According to Strawson “the theorist of the proposition (...) must reject the assimilation.” The only thing he accepts are the conditions of fulfilment relative to the facts³²: “If he is impressed by an analogy between constatives and imperatives, it will be a different analogy.” (Different, we may add, also from the analogy I have emphasized here: that both have got conditions of validity.) “He will be impressed by the fact that just as constatives are (just or more or less) *true* or not, so imperatives can be (just or more or less) *complied with* or not. He may even be prepared to assimilate them to each other (for some purposes) on this ground, the ground, we might say, of the possibility of common (propositional) content. But of course this ground is *totally different* from that proposed by Austin.” That’s true. ‘But’, Strawson concludes, “is the theorist of the proposition justified as against Austin? Surely he is.”³³ Well, I don’t think he is. As I have shown above, it is a short-coming, and leads to an incomplete analysis of meaning and understanding, if the aspect of validity can be specified *only* for sentences that are set out to be true or false.

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NOTES

1. Cf. P. M. S. Hacker, G. P. Baker : *Language, Sense & Nonsense*, Oxford 1984. p. 11. E. g. it is argued by D. Davidson (*Truth and Meaning*. In : *Synthese* 17/1967, p. 310) that " to give truth-conditions is a way of giving the meaning of a sentence. "
2. D. Davidson : *Semantics for Natural Languages*. In : B. Visentini (ed.) : *Linguaggi nelle Società e nella Tecnica*. Milano 1970. p. 178
3. L. Wittgenstein : *Philosophische Untersuchungen* § 23.
4. J. L. Austin : *Performative Utterances*. In : *Philosophical Papers*. Oxford 1961. p. 221
5. I have given an English paraphrase of the German translation (Stuttgart 1972) of this book, because the original edition wasn't available at Frankfurt. The paraphrased passage can be found in the chapter before the last (German translation p. 313 f.).
6. In : *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, London, 1971. p. 178
7. In : *Truth and Other Enigmas*, Cambridge, Ma. 1978. p. 449
8. *Intentionality*. Cambridge 1983
9. *Ibid.*, p. 10
10. The concept of " satisfaction " is genuinely Intentionalistic : desires and wishes can be " satisfied ", " fulfilled " &c. In general Searle argues " that the philosophy of language, is a branch of the philosophy of mind " (*ibid.*, p. vii), whereas Dummett regards philosophy of language, as introduced by Frege, as First Philosophy.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 10f. These are discussed by K.-O. Apel : *Läßt sich sprachliche Bedeutung auf Intentionalität reduzieren ?* forthcoming in an omnibus volume ed. by M. Benedikt and R. Burger, Wien 1987.
12. *Expression and Meaning*, Cambridge, 1979. p. 3-29
13. *Ibid.*, p. 16f.
14. J. R. Searle : *Speech Acts*, Cambridge, 1969. p. 50-53
15. Of course we can hardly say that a *law* is " in force " or " effective " or " in operation ", *that it is " valid " in the weak sense of being an institutional fact*, if it is *not observed by anybody at all*. But, at least according to Kant, the validity of the principle of *morals* is *not* affected adversely by the assumption that *none ever* acted purely " aus Pflicht ", and not merely " pflichtmäßig ".
16. Cf. Searle (see note 12). Expressives, like declaring love, are left out in the following diagram, because they in general have got *neither* conditions of correspondence between proposition and facts (which Searle

indicates by a ϕ) nor conditions of validity. J. Habermas in his writings suggests that "Wahrhaftigkeit" (sincerity) has also to be regarded as a sort of validity. If this were true, we would have to add :

	conditions of validity fulfilled	conditions of correspondence between proposition and reality fulfilled
expression of a feeling	sincere	ϕ ("empty" - direction of fit)

But I think that's the wrong way to put it. We can justify our manners of speaking "A statement is valid, if it is true" or "An order is valid, if it is right", but it would be absurd to maintain that the expression of a feeling is "valid", if it is sincere. We can ask: What's the *argument* for your statement and your claim that it is true? or "What's the *argument* for your *order* and your claim that it is right?" But in the case of an expressive we are not equally entitled to insist on a rational justification. Quite on the contrary it generally *won't* make sense to ask "What's the *argument* for your expression of a feeling and your claim that it is sincere?" The answer "There isn't any *argument*!" will be perfectly all right. If we adopt the aesthetics of expressionism sincerity of expression might be a reason for aesthetic appraisal. The criterion of the quality of a work of art is then whether it is a sincere expression of the artist's feelings or not. I regard this kind of aesthetics as *hopelessly inadequate*, but *even if it wasn't*, it would not justify us in talking of sincerity as "validity" with regard to speech acts.

17. The concept of "conditions of validity" ("Bedingungen der Gültigkeit") is due to K.-O. Apel (see Note 11).
18. According to Searle's taxonomy which is (at least in the result, not without exception in the definitions of the categories) quite plausible, there are five and only five illocutionary points: assertive, directive, commissive, declarative, and expressive.
19. Together with D. Vanderveken *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*. Cambridge 1985. p. 12-20.
20. Searle's conception is that illocutionary point is the primary component and that the F gets its particular characteristics by adding on to the illocutionary point.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 15f.
22. See Note 14, p. 60-67. Cf. *Foundations...* (see Note 19), p. 16-18.
23. *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten*. BA 66f.

24. Foundations... (see Note 19), p. 37
25. Some of the following points are due to a lecture delivered by Jürgen Habermas at Frankfurt University.
26. Speech Acts (see Note 14), p. 66 : “ order and command have additional preparatory rule that [the] S[peaker] must be in a position of authority over [the] H[earer]. ” An internal legal rightness claim is characteristically built into these directives, as distinguished from simple imperatives.
27. Intentionality (see Note 8) p. 141–159.
28. In : I. Berlin (ed.) : Essays on J. L. Austin, Oxford 1973. p. 46–68.
29. Oxford 1962. p. 141.
30. *Ibid.*
31. See Note 28, p. 66.
32. The *first* aim of Strawson’s article is to clarify the notion of “locutionary meaning”; he does this by introducing the concept of conditions of fulfilment (*ibid.*, p. 54) : “ the very same content may sometimes be dressed as a verdict, and sometimes delivered only as an opinion, [...] the very same content may sometimes figure in a request or an order or a piece of advice as well as in a prediction; and we observe that, however it figures and however it is dressed, we may raise the question whether *the facts and it correspond to one another in the way in which they do so correspond, alike when a predicted act is performed and when a command or counselled act is performed.* This content, then, we look for in every utterance in which we can find it and declare, when found, to be the *locutionary meaning of that utterance* and its constative aspect, the aspect associated with *truth and falsity*, with the *dimension of correspondence with the facts.* ” – The *second* aim of Strawson’s article is to give an exegesis of “How to Do Things with Words”; but then Strawson detects that the analysis in terms of conditions of fulfilment does not only fail to be an Austin-interpretation, but that it is even in contradiction to Austin’s intentions, and “though we might find thus [by the correspondence-with-the-facts-approach] a relatively clear [...] notion of locutionary meaning, it can hardly be said to be clearly the correct one ” (*ibid.*) in the sense of an interpretation of Austin’s lectures.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 66. – One could argue that Strawson had a much smaller fish to fry, because he was looking for the “locutionary meaning”, whereas this paper presented a tentative analysis of the “illocutionary meaning”. That’s right, but what Strawson presents as the “locutionary meaning” is in fact just a *defective* and *incomplete illocutionary* meaning, a hybrid of locutionary and illocutionary meaning : it includes the meaning of the propositional content and of *one* component of the *illocutionary* force, *viz.* (to use Searle’s jargon) of “illocutionary point”, although *excluding* all the other components.