

Performative Verbs and Performative Acts*

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The notion of a performative is one that philosophers and linguists are so comfortable with that one gets the impression that somebody must have a satisfactory theory.

(Searle 1989, p. 535)

1 Introduction

The problem of how saying so makes it so

- (1) I promise you to be there at five. (is a promise)
(2) I order you to be there at five. (is an order)

- **Explicit performative** sentences look like indicatives
↪ Ideally, they should have the same force as other indicatives
- Otherwise, whence the magical power of the 1st person present tense?

(3) I promised you to be there at five. (is not a promise)

(4) He promises to be there at five. (is not a promise)

- Attractive idea, proposed time and again since Austin (1962) (Lemmon 1962, Hedenius 1963, Bach and Harnish 1979, Ginet 1979, Bierwisch 1980, Leech 1983, Bach and Harnish 1992, ...):

*The names of the authors appear in alphabetical order.

Explicit performatives are **assertions**, which, somehow, make themselves true.

Searle's (1989) challenge

- STEP 1: Desiderata for a theory of explicit performatives.
 - (a) performative utterances are performances of the act named by the performative verb;
 - (b) performative utterances are self-guaranteeing;
 - (c) performative utterances achieve (a) and (b) in virtue of their literal meaning.
- STEP 2: Speech act theory.
 - Making a promise requires the promiser to **intend** to do so.
 - Similarly for issuing an order, etc.: The **sincerity condition**.
- STEP 3: The fundamental problem with assertoric accounts of performatives: (b) fails, hence (a) and (c) fail.

“The intention to assert self-referentially of an utterance that it is an illocutionary act of a certain type, say a promise, is simply not sufficient to guarantee the existence of an intention in that utterance to make a promise. **Such an assertion does indeed commit the speaker to the existence of the intention, but the commitment to having the intention doesn't guarantee the actual presence of the intention.**”

Searle (1989, p. 546)

Searle's distinction: linguistic vs. extra-linguistic declarations

“A declaration is a speech act whose point is to create a new fact corresponding to the propositional content. Sometimes those new facts are themselves speech acts such as promises, statements, orders, etc. These I am calling linguistic declarations. Sometimes the new facts are not further speech acts, but wars, marriages, adjournments, light, property transfers, etc. These I am calling extralinguistic declarations.”

Searle (1989, p. 549-550)

Two kinds of assertoric accounts

Performativity via inference Bach and Harnish (1979)-style accounts analyze explicit performatives as assertions that give rise to their performative meaning by implicature-like inferences that the hearer may draw.

“The view that explicit performative utterances, such as promises made by uttering sentences such as [‘I promise to be there’], are best analysed as cases of assertions *which licence the inference* that a promise, say, is being made has been endorsed by a number of authors [...]”

Jary (2007)¹

Direct performativity The assertion **is** the promise, threat etc. No hearer inference is necessary for the performative to be true. This is what Searle had in mind and what our account amounts to.

“The crucial point is that an explicit performative utterance has the communicative sense specified by its utterance meaning if and only if the meaningful utterance on which it is based is true.”

Bierwisch (1980)

2 Reportative and Performative Uses

- What is the meaning of the verb *order* so that it can have both a **reportative** use, as in (5), and a **performative** use, as in (6), which brings about the fact that there is an order?
 - (5) *A* ordered *B* to sign the report.
 - (6) [*A* to *B*] I order you to sign the report now.
- An assertion of (5)
 - implies that there was an act of communication from *A* to *B*
 - takes for granted that *A* presumed to have authority over *B*.
- What kind of communicative act is required for (5) to be true?
- (6) or any of (7a-c) would suffice:

¹This is Jary’s characterization of assertoric accounts, which he then proceeds to argue against.

- (7)
 - a. Sign the report now!
 - b. You must sign the report now!
 - c. I want you to sign the report now!

- In the right context, all these utterances commit *A* to a particular kind of preference for *B* signing the report immediately.
- If *B* accepts the utterance, he takes on a commitment to act as though he, as well, preferred signing the report.
 - If the report is co-present with *A* and *B* he will sign it.
 - If the report is in his office he will leave to go there immediately.
 - ...
- The authority mentioned above amounts to this acceptance being socially or institutionally mandated.
- Let us distinguish three notions: **uptake**, **acceptance** and **fulfillment**.
- Of course, *B* has the option to **refuse** to take on this commitment, in either of two ways:
 - (i) he can deny *A*'s authority,
 - (ii) while accepting the authority, he can refuse to abide by it, thereby violating the institutional or social mandate.
- Crucially, in either case, (5) will still be true, as witnessed by the felicity of:
 - (8)
 - a. (5), but *B* refused to do it.
 - b. (5), but *B* questioned his authority.
- Not even uptake is necessary for *order* to be appropriate, as seen (9) and the naturally occurring (10):²
 - (9) (5), but *B* did not hear him.
 - (10) He ordered Kornilov to desist but either the message failed to reach the general or he ignored it.³

However, what **is** necessary is that the speaker **expected** uptake to happen. This, arguably, is a minimal requirement for something to count as a communicative event.

²We owe this observation to Lauri Karttunen.

³<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/citd/RussianHeritage/12.NR/NR.12.html>

The three main ingredients in the previous remarks were

- (a) the notion of a **preference**
- (b) a particular kind of preference that **guides action**
- (c) the notion of **commitment** to such preferences

3 Representing preferences

Need for ranked preferences

- In analyses of modality following Kratzer (1981), the ordering source is used to **rank** the worlds in the modal base, by ranking more highly worlds that make more⁴ propositions in the ordering source true.
- Such ordering sources may well be inconsistent.
- Now, while plain ordering sources may be sufficient for the interpretation of modals, they are not good at modeling guidelines for action based on an agent's conflicting preferences, desires, obligations, etc.
- Suppose, for instance, Sven desires to finish his QP.
- Sven also desires to lie around all day, doing nothing.
- Thus, his bouletic ordering source should include the propositions expressed by (11) and (12):
 - (11) Sven finishes his QP.
 - (12) Sven lies around all day, doing nothing.
- We want to explain why, given that he knows that (11) and (12) are incompatible, Sven *decides* to work on his QP (rather than lying around all day).
- Intuitively, we want a way to specify that finishing his QP (and hence progressing towards his dissertation), is **more important** to Sven than lazing around.

⁴Where 'more' is either explicated in terms of cardinality or a subset-relationship.

Preference structures

- A **preference structure** relative to an information state W is a pair $\langle P, \leq \rangle$, where $P \subseteq \wp(W)$ and \leq is a (weak) partial order on P .
 - You may think of a preference structure as a modal ordering source plus an ‘importance’ ranking.
- A preference structure $\langle P, \leq \rangle$ is **consistent** iff for any $p, q \in P$ such that $p \cap q = \emptyset$, either $p < q$ or $q < p$.
 - Consistency requires that if two propositions are incompatible, they must be strictly ranked.
 - Recall that the propositions in P are subsets of an information state (typically, the agent’s doxastic state).
 - Thus, the consistency requirement would force a ranking of **contextually incompatible**, as well as **logically incompatible** propositions.
 - For example, Sven knows that he won’t finish his QP if he lies around all day, doing nothing (even though this is not a logical necessity).
 - So, if the preference structure representing his desires is to be consistent, the two propositions in (11) and (12) must be strictly ranked.
 - An inconsistent desire structure is perfectly fine, until Sven wants to **act** on his desires.
 - For how will Sven decide what to do, unless the two incompatible propositions are strictly ranked?
 - More generally, the **consistent** preference structures are those that can be used as a guideline for action.
- We assume that the desires, preferences, and obligations of various kinds of an agent A are represented by a set \mathbb{P}_A of preference structures.
 - Not all of these need to be consistent (internally or mutually). For example, preference structures representing **desires** often will not be.
 - Other preference structures may be consistent (that is what one would hope, e.g. for the ones that represent **what the law requires**.)
- A (consistent) preference structure induces a ‘lexicographic’ partial ordering \preceq on a set of worlds.

Consolidated preferences

- Given the multitude of preference structures influencing an agent's decisions, if an agent wants to **act**, he has to integrate all these structures into a global one, resolving any conflict.
- A rational agent A will have a distinguished, consistent preference structure $\langle P_A, \leq_{P_A} \rangle$. We call this A 's *effective preference structure*.
 - This is intended to be consolidated preference structure that the agent uses to decide upon actions.
- We require that $P_A \subseteq \bigcup \mathbb{P}$ and further that if $p, q \in P_A$ such that there is $\langle P, \leq_P \rangle \in \mathbb{P}$ and $p <_P q$ and there is no $\langle P', \leq_{P'} \rangle \in \mathbb{P}$ such that $q \leq_{P'} p$, then $p <_{P_A} q$.
 - These requirements ensure that there are no spurious goals introduced into P_A , and that rankings that are consistent are kept in the preference structure.
- A 's induced preference order \leq_{P_A} will (partially⁵) determine the agent's behavior: If the agent has the choice between w_1 and w_2 (as worlds that differ only in what action, if any, A performs), and $w_1 < w_2$, then A will choose w_2 .
- That is, the definition of \leq is a first step to defining a non-probabilistic kind of **Decision Theory**⁶, with preference structures corresponding to utility functions in classical decision theory, while information states correspond to subjective probability distributions.
- We propose the following desiderata for a more developed version of such a theory:
 - If an agent a effectively prefers p , he believes that he does.
 - If an agent a believes that he effectively prefers p , he does effectively prefer p .
 - More generally, an agent has full knowledge of his effective preference structure.⁷
- **Notation:** We let

$$EP_a(p) := \{w \in W \mid p \text{ is a maximal element of } a\text{'s effective preference structure in } w\}$$

⁵Only partially, as an agent may be genuinely indifferent between two possible courses of affairs.

⁶By 'decision theory', we mean any theory that models how agents, rational or otherwise, choose actions on the basis of their beliefs and preferences. We use the term 'classical decision theory' for what is called 'decision theory' in mathematics and economics.

⁷That is, **effective** preference structure (though not necessarily other ones) may be constrained by processing limitations: It may be impossible for an agent to take into account a sufficiently large number of preferences, in which case the effective preference structure must exclude some of them.

4 Commitments

Commitments as restricting future states

- Hamblin (1971), Gunlogson (2008, ms.): Utterances update **commitment slates**.
- Both authors model only **discourse commitments**, i.e. commitments with respect to the subsequent **linguistic** behavior of the speaker.
 - As a result, they can reduce their respective notion of commitment to a set of 'legal' (Hamblin) or 'expected' (Gunlogson) future states of the discourse, that is, they model commitments as constraints on what agents can **say** without being at fault.
 - But, more generally, commitments arising by linguistic means also constrain non-communicative actions, e.g. in the case of promises, orders, ...
- In order to capture this more general notion of commitment, we can think of the taking on of a commitment as excluding **possible future states of the world**.
 - That is, taking on a commitment makes certain future states of the world **impossible**.
 - Given this conception, we cannot just specify a set of 'good' futures (in which all commitments are honored), as Hamblin and Gunlogson can.
 - For, of course, taking on a commitment does not exclude the possibility of violating it.
- In order to specify which future courses of events are made IMPOSSIBLE by taking on a commitment, we need to appeal to three notions:
 - (i) futures in which the commitment is kept at the relevant time
 - (ii) futures in which the commitment is voided (rescinded or found impossible to fulfill) before the relevant time
 - (iii) futures in which the commitment is not kept at the relevant time without having been voided beforehand
 - Futures of type (iii) are the ones in which the commitment is **violated**.
 - This captures the intuition of what counts as a violation of a commitment:
 - * a commitment that is rescinded only after it is violated still counts as violated
 - * a commitment that is rescinded before it is violated does not count as violated

- With this, we can say that taking on a commitment excludes the following future courses of events
 - (a) the agent does not not keep his commitment AND
 - (b) the commitment is not voided (rescinded or found impossible to fulfill) before the relevant time AND
 - (c) the commitment is not violated.

Keeping a commitment

- What does it mean to ‘keep a commitment at the relevant time’?

We take **commitments** to always be **commitments to act**.

- A **commitment to a belief that p** (a generalization of the notion of a discourse commitment) is a **commitment to act as though the agent believes p** .
- An agent can also be committed to effective preferences—i.e. he can be **committed to act as though he has a certain effective preference**.

- That is, to keep a commitment is to **act** in a certain way: A commitment is kept by making the right action-choices.
- The ‘relevant time’ is thus whenever one has to decide between acting in accord with the commitment, or act in a way that goes against it.
- Such choice points can occur repeatedly and so the ‘relevant time’ need not be a single instance, as in:

(13) I vow to never drink again.
- The commitment taken on with (13) is kept or fails to be kept every time the speaker has the option to take a drink.
- ‘Not keeping a commitment’ involves a choice, resulting in an action, just as keeping a commitment does—this is why it makes sense to talk of ‘the commitment was voided before it was not kept’.
- Thus we can restate conditions (a)-(c) as
 - (a’) the agent does not not keep his commitment AND

- (b') the commitment is not voided (rescinded or found impossible to fulfill) before the commitment was not kept AND
- (c') the commitment is not violated (= not kept without being voided before).
- Construing commitments as **commitments to act** means that the features of the decision theory from the last section get 'lifted' to the respective commitments:
 - If an agent is committed to act as though he has an effective preference for p , he is also committed to act as though he believes he has an effective preference for p .
 - If an agent is committed to act as though he believes that he has an effective preference for p , he is also committed to act as though he effectively preferred p .
- **Notation:** We let

$$PEP_a(p) := \{w \in W \mid p \text{ is a maximal element of } a\text{'s public effective preference structure in } w \}$$

(Where p is a maximal element of a 's public effective preference structure iff a is committed to act as though p is a maximal element of his effective preference structure.)

Assertions and public commitments

- An **assertion** p (\simeq any utterance of an indicative) adds p to the public beliefs of the speaker, thereby publicly committing the speaker to **act as though he believed** p .
- This is surely a minimal requirement for any account of assertions, and we regard it as the **minimal effect** of assertions, in the sense of Zeevat (2003).
- Additional properties of assertions can arguably be explained as pragmatic inferences on the basis of this speaker-commitment (cf. Searle (1975) and Searle (2001) for a recent defense of this view).
 - One of these effects is that it becomes common ground that p .
 - With Gunlogson (2003) and Davis (2009) we assume that an assertion becomes part of the common ground only as a secondary effect, after the hearer has accepted the assertion.

5 Three illustrations

Commitment to a belief: 'I claim that p '

- **Cohen's paradox** (Lycan 1999, Cohen 1964):

(14) I claim that it is going to rain.

- Why does 'I claim' seem 'truth-conditionally transparent'?
- E.g. if it does not rain, the speaker cannot say 'Well, I only CLAIMED ...'
- Why, on the other hand, does 'I claim' seem to contribute to the truth-conditions?
- E.g. (14) entails that somebody claims that it is going to rain.

The reportative use

- What has to be the case for (15) to be true?

(15) Peter claimed that it was going to rain.

- There must have been a communicative event u (typically, an utterance) of a particular kind.
- (14) is one example, but there are many others, e.g. the bare assertion in (16):

(16) It is going to rain.

(17) $claim(u, a, p)$ iff

- u is a communicative event from a in context C
- in C , u commits a to the belief that p .

The performative use

$$\llbracket (14) \rrbracket = \{w \mid w \models \exists u : claim(u, S, \llbracket \text{it is going to rain} \rrbracket)\}$$

- An utterance of (14), as an assertion, commits the speaker S to the belief that $\llbracket (14) \rrbracket$
- By (17b): The speaker is committed to the belief in the existence of an event that commits him to the belief that it is going to rain.
- Assuming positive introspection for commitment: Being committed to the existence of a commitment to p entails being committed to p
- Hence, the very utterance of (14) commits the speaker to the belief that it is raining.
- But then, the assertion of (14) serves as a witness for its own truth.

Commitment to an effective preference: 'I promise to p '

The reportative use

- What has to be the case for (18) to be true?

(18) Peter promised (Mary) to get the tickets.

- Again, there has to have been a communicative event from Peter (to Mary).
- And again, a number of utterances could serve as this event:

(19) a. I promise to get the tickets.
b. I will get the tickets.
c. ...

- An event u is a **Commissive Communicative Act from a to b about p** , $CCA_b^a(u, p)$, iff
 - u is a communicative event from a to b in C
 - in C , u commits a to act as though p is a maximal element of his effective preference structure.

(20) $promise(u, a, b, p)$
denotes: $CCA_b^a(u, p)$
presupposes: a presumes that b has a stake in p

The performative use

$\llbracket(19a)\rrbracket = \{w \mid w \models \exists u : CCA_A^S(u, \llbracket S \text{ will get the tickets.} \rrbracket)\}$

- In asserting (19a), the speaker commits himself to $\llbracket(19a)\rrbracket$
- But, by the definition of CCA , that means that the speaker commits himself to the existence of an event that commits him to act as though he preferred to get the tickets.
- And: If an agent is committed to act as though he believes that he has an effective preference for p , he is also committed to act as though he effectively preferred p .
- Hence, the assertion of (19a) commits the speaker to act as though he preferred p
- But then, the assertion of (19a) serves as a witness for its own truth.

Commitment to an effective preference for an effective preference: 'I order you to p '

The reportative use

- What has to be the case for (21) to be true?

(21) Mary ordered Peter to sign the report immediately.

- Again, there must have been a certain kind of communicative event.
- In the right context, an utterance of (22) or any of the sentences in (7) will suffice.

(22) I order you sign the report immediately!

- (7)
- a. Sign the report immediately!
 - b. I want you to sign the report immediately!
 - c. You have to sign the report immediately!

- An event u is a Directive Communicative Act from A to B about p , $DCA_B^A(u, p)$, iff
 - u is a communicative event from A to B in a context C
 - in C , u commits A to effectively prefer $PEP(B, p)$

(23) $order(u, a, b, p)$

denotes: $DCA_b^a(u, p)$

presupposes: a presumes to have authority over b with respect to p

(= a presumes that if there is u such that $DCA_b^a(u, p)$, then b is socially or institutionally obligated to publicly commit himself to effectively preferring p)

The performative use

$$\llbracket (22) \rrbracket = \{w \mid w \models \exists u : DCA_A^S(u, \llbracket A \text{ signs the report immediately} \rrbracket)\}$$

- By asserting (22), the speaker commits himself to $\llbracket (22) \rrbracket$.
- That is, he is committed to existence of an event that commits him to publicly prefer $PEP(A, \llbracket A \text{ signs the report immediately} \rrbracket)$
- But: If an agent is committed to act as though he believes that he has an effective preference for p , he is also committed to act as though he effectively preferred p .
- Thus, the utterance of (22) commits the speaker to effectively prefer $PEP(A, \llbracket A \text{ signs the report immediately} \rrbracket)$.
- But then, an assertion of (22) serves as a witness for its own truth.

6 Beyond explicit performatives

- We noted that a sentence like (24) can be verified by utterances of imperatives (25a) and assertions of desideratives (25b), among other things.

(24) John ordered Sue to sign the contract immediately.

(25) [John to Sue]

- a. Sign the report immediately!
- b. I want you to sign the report immediately.

- How does this come about, under the proposed analysis for *order*?

Imperatives

- Note that imperatives will verify a reportative use of *order* **only when the context is right**.
- For one thing, the utterer of the imperative must presume to have authority.
 - Our account predicts this straightforwardly.
- But still, in context, the imperative **has to commit the speaker to effectively prefer** $PEP(Addr, p)$.
- We take this requirement to be fairly uncontroversial: Any account of imperatives worth its salt should predict this for imperatives used as orders.
 - NB: Not all utterances of imperatives, even under authority conditions, are orders.
- Here, we show how this works for the account of imperatives we have proposed elsewhere:

Force of imperatives (Condoravdi and Lauer 2010)

An imperative $p!$ commits the speaker to act as though he effectively prefers p .

- Now, suppose that a speaker presumes to have authority and commits himself to effectively preferring p .
- Further, suppose that whether or not p becomes true is up, in part, to the addressee.

- For concreteness, we look at the most simple case: p is about the addressee carrying out an action (e.g. signing the report immediately).
- Now, if an agent a effectively prefers that another agent b carries out an action, he clearly also effectively prefers that b commit himself to effectively prefer this action.
- But that means, if a speaker commits himself to effectively prefer that the addressee carry out an action, he is thereby committed to effectively prefer the respective commitment on part of the hearer.
- But that means that the utterance of an imperative $p!$ can verify a reportative use of *order* if
 - The speaker presumes to have authority (with respect to p) over the hearer.
 - It is mutually presumed that whether or not p becomes actual is (partly) in the control of the hearer.
- This contextual restriction is entirely appropriate: Note that (26) can hardly be construed as an order, and if so, it has to be presumed that the addressee has an influence on the safety of his trip:

(26) Have a safe trip!

Desiderative Assertions

- Suppose that *want* is underspecified with respect to which preference structure it targets.
- It may target (possibly) inconsistent preference structures such as ‘what the agent desires’
 - One has to allow for such a possibility because it is perfectly reasonable to assert two contradictory *want* sentences of the same individual.
 - This fact is a problem for certain classic analyses of *want*, such as Heim (1992)
- (27) John wants to move in with his girlfriend. But he also wants to continue living alone.
- However, *want* may also target the agent’s effective preference structure.
- And, as before: if an agent is committed to act as though he believes that he has an effective preference for p , he is also committed to act as though he effectively preferred p .

- But then, a speaker who utters *I want to p* will become committed to effectively prefer *p* if, in context, *want* targets the speaker's effective preferences.
- That is, an utterance of 'I want you to *p*' can verify the corresponding reportative *order*-sentence if
 - The speaker presumes to have authority (with respect to *p*) over the hearer.
 - Whether or not *p* becomes true is, in part, in the control of the hearer.
 - The contextually specified preference structure targeted by *want* is the speaker's effective preference structure

7 Features of our analysis

- No illocutionary operators in the semantics.
- Verbs like *promise* and *order* express preferential attitudes.
- Meaning (truth conditional content) is computed pointwise
 - Any given world *w* determines the doxastic state and the set of preference structures of an agent in that world.
- The discourse parameter that is updated is the common ground/context set;⁸ utterances constituting promises, orders, claims, etc. are informative.
- Although the formal construct that we are appealing to, namely effective preferences, can be seen as similar to Han's (1998) plan set or Portner's (2007) to-do lists, these do not constitute discourse parameters that get globally updated as a result of a performative utterance.
- An account that globally updates such parameters would have to ensure that they remain in sync with the common ground.
- Our notion of commitment as excluding possible future states of the world relates to, but is more general than, Eckardt's (2009) proposal for acts of social agreement as effecting a change in the possible future states of the world. It can also be seen as specifying the causal relation assumed by Eckardt between the utterance event and the change in possible future states of the world.
- On our account, a performative utterance is self-verifying independently of any concomitant social agreement, which comes about only after uptake and acceptance. By contrast, on Eckardt's analysis the social agreement comes about by virtue of the utterance alone, with a potential non-acceptance by the addressee making the actual world one of the 'something really different' worlds.

⁸Recall from section 4 that on our view the common ground update is itself a secondary effect.

- Eckardt does not discuss how certain other types of utterances, not containing performative verbs, constitute acts of social agreement so that they can be described by verbs denoting acts of social agreement.

Searle's challenge and another look at speech act theory

- Searle's argument against assertoric accounts relies on the assumption that an **intention** is required for a speech act to happen.
- We require only that the speaker is **committed to having an intention** (an effective preference).
- This allows for a straightforward assertoric account.
- It also leads to the (attractive) position that what matters for speech acts (or at least, the truth-conditions of performative verbs) is **public facts**.
- On a Searlean account of speech act, an addressee can never be quite sure which (if any) speech act has been performed by an utterance because he cannot read the speaker's mind.
- But, intuitively and according to our account, private intentions are completely immaterial to speech acts.
- No-one who said 'I promise ...' under the right circumstances can justify his non-conformance to this promise by saying 'I never intended to promise, so I have not broken a promise!'

Jary's (2007) challenge

- Jary (2007): Explicit performatives cannot be assertions, because their content gets added to the common ground automatically.
- The content of run-off-the-mill assertions gets added to the common ground only **after it is accepted by the addressee**.
- This step is unnecessary for performatives.
- As Jary notes, **the fact that the assertion happened** will always become part of the common ground.
- But then, our account predicts Jary's observation: Since the content of the assertion is entailed by the fact that the assertion happened, this content will become part of the common ground automatically.

A new perspective on ‘indirect speech acts’

- A consequence of our approach is that we can reconstruct the traditional distinction between ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ speech acts as one between those assertions that have a particular performative effect in *any context in which they are felicitous* (such as explicit performatives and certain specialized forms) and those assertions that have it only *when the context is right*.
- On such a view, it is not surprising that ‘indirect orders’ turn out to share one of the hallmarks of ‘performative utterances’ in Searle’s sense:
 - They cannot be challenged as being false.
 - For example, (7c), when it has the force of an order, cannot be challenged with *That is false!/That’s a lie!* any more than (6) can.

(7c) I want you to sign the report now!

- This observation gives some more credence to the assumption that explicit performatives are assertions.
- For no-one would want to deny that *I want p* is an assertion, even when used as an order.
- But that means that ‘explicit performatives cannot be challenged as false, so they cannot be assertions’ is not a good argument.
- What about the role of Searlean speech acts? We take them to be useful descriptive labels but we accord them no analytic status.

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