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Austin, Derrida, and Searle on Intention in Communication

Austin, Derrida a Searle o záměrnosti v komunikaci

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Poděkování

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Čestné prohlášení

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Abstract

The following bachelor's thesis presents an analysis of the exchange between Jacques Derrida and John Roger Searle over the work *How to Do Things with Words* by John Langshaw Austin. Particularly, this text aims to underline the significance of the concept of intention in the discourse and examine the three thinkers' distinct approaches to it. An original reading of Austin's text will be introduced and compared with the interpretations of Derrida and Searle. In pointing out the differences between the two respective understandings of Austin as well as between the three dissimilar conceptions of communication, the main points of disagreement will be shown. Furthermore, the importance of audience reception among all three conceptions will be highlighted and finally, a compromise between the thinkers in the form of a refined account of intention's presence in communication will be proposed.

Keywords

Austin, Derrida, Searle, intention, communication, language, Speech acts, context

Abstrakt

Následující bakalářská práce předkládá analýzu dialogu mezi Jacquesem Derridou a Johnem Rogerem Searlem, týkajícího se díla *How to Do Things with Words* od Johna Langshawa Austina. Konkrétněji, má tento text za cíl zdůraznit významnost konceptu záměrnosti v rámci tohoto diskurzu a prozkoumat, jak různě tyto tři myslitelé k záměrnosti přistupují. Zprvu zde bude předloženo původní čtení Austinova textu, které bude dále srovnáno s Derridovou a poté Searlovou interpretací. Porovnáním interpretací Austinova textu a srovnáním všech tří odlišných pojetí komunikace budou odhaleny hlavní příčiny nesouhlasu. Následně zde bude zvýrazněna důležitost recipienta napříč těmito třemi koncepcemi, a nakonec bude navrhnout kompromis, ve formě propracovaného popisu přítomnosti záměru v komunikaci.

Klíčová slova

Austin, Derrida, Searle, záměr, komunikace, jazyk, řečové akty, kontext

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1. A Brief Introduction Regarding the Motivation and Strategy

1.1. Background

During the 1970s, through a couple of essays, an exchange between Jacques Derrida and John Searle took place. The two thinkers did not see eye to eye in their interpretation of John Langshaw Austin's theory of speech acts presented in *How to Do Things with Words*.

What set the discourse in motion was Derrida's essay *Signature, Event, Context*, which, among other things, criticized Austin's text. The French thinker claimed that Austin's theory relied heavily on the presence of intention in communication, which is untenable because the crux of any system of signs is that it goes on functioning even in the absence of intending subjects.

Searle, Austin's friend and former student defended the conception of communication as transference of intended meaning in his essay *Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida*. There, he accused Derrida of misinterpretation and misuse of terms, arguing that a proper confrontation between Austin and Derrida did not actually take place due to Derrida's misunderstanding of the speech act theory.

That is the general overview of the discourse we are going to examine in this work. Although both thinkers addressed their discourse on various other occasions, we will limit ourselves mostly to the aforementioned key texts. However, as Searle's reply is rather short and bare of any exposition of his theory, we will also look to his work *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.

1.2. Motivation and Strategy

The fact that the two thinkers never came to any form of understanding is a result genuinely curious, considering the topic discussed. I have already examined their discourse in a paper titled *A Series of Infelicitous Misunderstandings: First Half of the Derrida/Searle Debate*, where my main goal was to make sense of the exchange and identify reasons for why it mostly failed. Here, we will focus particularly on the notion of intention, as it is the crown point of disagreement between the thinkers.

What will give us a framework within which we shall proceed, is an interpretation of Austin's theory postulated in the second chapter of this thesis. There, we make apparent that intention was not crucial for the development of his conception and that Austin did not build

his theory around intention. We will further argue that intention is handled as something relatively minor, which has to comply with other, more important aspects of his theory.

From this take on Austin, it follows that Derrida's interpretation of Austin as an intentionalist is guilty of oversimplification, and his critique of intention-based theories of communication is aimed at the wrong target. All the while Austin's conception has perhaps more in common with that of Derrida than it might seem at first. In fact, we shall argue that the two's thoughts are compatible to a certain extent and that the target of Derrida's criticism is not actually the general theory presented by Austin, but rather the way it is presented.

Furthermore, we present the theory of speech acts posited by Searle, for whom the audience's recognition of the speaker's intention is a crucial element which makes communication successful. We will examine Searle's specific use of intention and relate it to our analysis of Austin's approach. Then we shall argue that Searle's reply to Derrida is insufficient due to two major reasons - it does not represent Austin's thought authentically, but more importantly, it is never proven by Searle that intentions are somehow carried by utterances.

Towards the end, we will conclude that no matter the relation to Austin's thought, both Searle and Derrida's handlings of intention are imperfect and untenable. Derrida dramatically separates intention from utterances, while Searle postulates that all utterances are essentially actualizations of intentions. Both of these approaches are too radical to be absolutely correct.

Hence, we will attempt to reconcile all three thinkers by presenting a concept of intention more or less in accord with the crucial aspects of their thoughts. We will agree with Derrida, that the context of an utterance's creation can be considered lost or only hinted at by the isolated utterance. However, we will show that for both Derrida and Searle, the context in which an utterance is received and interpreted by the audience is what the meaning, success and effect of an utterance actually rely on.

2. The Role of Intention in Austin's Lectures

In order to fully understand and justly analyse how Derrida and Searle talk about intention in their respective readings of Austin, it is inevitable to familiarize ourselves with Austin's theory and especially the function (or lack thereof) that intention has there.

Unfortunately for us, intention itself is not a thoroughly explored nor a properly defined term¹ in the collection of lectures *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin pays limited attention to intention, and it comes up only in certain portions of his lectures. Thus, we have to go over his theory and reconstruct Austin's conception of intention in order and show that it *does not* play a significant role in the performance of speech acts, contrary to what Derrida or Searle believe.

Hence, a discussion on the mostly implicit handlings of intention in Austin's lectures will be presented. The results of our interpretative work will afterwards be summarized and used to construct Austin's notion of intention suitable for the theory of speech acts. More importantly, this outline of Austin's theory will later be used as a standard of sorts for judging whether Derrida's or Searle's interpretations accurately reflect Austin's thought.

¹ "I am not using the terms 'feelings', 'thoughts', and 'intentions' in a technical as opposed to a loose way - Austin, John Langshaw, ed. Urmson, James Opie, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1962), pg. 41.

2.1. Overview of How to Do Things with Words

2.1.1. Austin's Project

In his lectures, Austin's main goal is to present his theory of speech acts. He does so by first introducing a class of utterances he names *performatives* – which get something done. These are contrasted with constatives – true/false utterances which serve for presenting information. Through the analysis of the performative, Austin discovers certain aspects of speech itself which go beyond the notion of the performative.²

Austin's motivation is to reject the frequent assumption present in philosophy of language that sentences serve only to present and describe facts. He points out that statements – constatives, do not constitute the whole of language. At first, he actually states that promises, wishes, exclamations, commands, concessions, requests, bets, and many other types of utterances do not inform us of any facts and hence lack a truth value. In instances such as these, “it seems clear that to utter the sentence ... is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: *it is to do it.*”³

Instead of being true or false, performatives, like actions, can be either successful or unsuccessful. Austin further lists the necessary conditions which need be met for the performative to completely succeed:

A1: There needs to be an existing conventional procedure for the given act.

A2: The procedure is executed by the right persons in the appropriate circumstances.

B1: The procedure itself is executed by everyone involved correctly,

B2: and completely.

Γ1: The procedure also dictates the persons have certain thoughts and feelings⁴.

Γ2: and that they act in accordance with them.

As we can see, A1 dictates the specific conventional steps in the procedure, which must be followed. The procedure is conducted in the correct circumstances (A2), and it is followed correctly (B1) all the way to the end (B2). The third group of conditions differs from the other

² Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 147.

³ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 6, italics added.

⁴ Along with intentions

two in its dependence on the subject and deals with their inner relation to the act performed.

While an inability to meet conditions of class A or B leads to the act not being achieved at all, failure to meet conditions Γ does not lead to a complete annulment of the act. Austin says that the act is still achieved, e.g. a promise is still made, although insincerely⁵. While the performative itself is infelicitous, it is not completely void – it still has an effect. This would mean that the act of getting married is still fully achieved even if the participants of the ceremony are not in love and the prospect of spending their life together makes them sick. As we know, this can unfortunately be the case.

So, it would seem to us, that the main factor in completing an act or communicating with others would be simply to follow the generally agreed upon convention. No matter the feelings, thoughts, or *intentions*⁶ of the performer. Of course, the performative itself is not successful, but it still gets the job done.

Something Austin overlooks is that in some specific cases, such as promising, there are two different intentions present. One being our intention to make the promise (1), and the other being the intention to consequently make someone believe us (even though we might be lying)(2). Austin does not differentiate between the two and conditions class Γ oversee only the first type of intention. Insincerity is then a result of making a false promise we do not intend to keep(2), even though we intended for it to appear as if we did(1). Our intentions are fulfilled, yet strangely enough, Austin would still classify these instances as infelicitous because they violate *convention*.

Since there is of course no conventional procedure for making a false promise, and since we know that we are being completely insincere, the performative is an “abuse of the procedure”⁷. Even if we get the hearer to believe us, i.e. realize our intention the way we want. Violating conditions Γ makes the act unsuccessful in Austin’s eyes, as it is the discrepancy between intention and the used convention which makes the performative unhappy.

⁵ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 16.

⁶ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 40-41.

⁷ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 16.

2.1.2. The Explicit Performative

In lecture V, Austin sets out to find a sufficient criterion for distinguishing the performative and the constative utterances. The most promising path that Austin explores deals with what he calls the explicit performative. It amounts to a form of an utterance, which is supposed to make apparent the performativity of an ordinary sentence. Making it obvious which speech act is being performed, but we also notice that it is not necessarily made obvious whether it is intended or reflective of the speaker's thoughts.

Explicit performatives are utterances about which there can seemingly be no doubt that they are *purely* performative. The postulated criterion then, is that any performative can be remade in this explicit and pure form. Considering utterances the likes of "Shut it" remade into "I order you to stop talking" or "Don't" rephrased as "I advise you not to do it," which use performative verbs that should leave no doubt whether we are dealing with a performative utterance.

But a crucial problem is discovered by Austin. Some explicit performatives like "I conclude/assert/postulate/etc." are typically followed by what can only be understood as a statement. In the sentence "I thereby conclude that it was the gardener who murdered the poor mister Whatshisname," to conclude is a performative verb through which a string of utterances is finished. Still, what makes up most of the sentence, what the speaker concludes on the given matter, has all the qualities of a constative.

Not only that, but in saying performatively "I believe/assume/intend/etc." we are essentially describing the contents or states of our mind. As such, fulfilling the condition $\Gamma 1$ of an utterance like "I intend to turn myself in" spoken by a criminal, directly overlaps with the truth of the utterance i.e. whether the criminal actually plans to hand themselves to the authorities. Even worse, an utterance like "I believe that Russia is the aggressor" both describes our thoughts and is also followed by a statement.⁸

A problem that Austin completely overlooks, yet which is critical to us, is that his notion of the explicit performative *does not* make evident what one intends to express. No, an explicit performative makes it apparent what sort of utterance the audience is dealing with. It is used "to make plain how the action is to be taken or understood, what action it is."⁹ The

⁸ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 90.

⁹ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 70.

explicit performative never attempts to mirror what we actually think, or what we intend to say. It only makes clear the means we are using.

Since only the speaker knows their own intentions, it would follow that only they can attempt to rephrase the performative in an explicit form. But Austin, dismissing the individual's intention, instead approaches the creation of an explicit performative as a precise mechanical process with one correct outcome.

Moreover, later on in the lectures, Austin attempts to compile a list of purely performative verbs, which would imply that in his conception, there is only a set number of ways to express oneself explicitly. This would further mean that different utterances would lose their unique expression of the speaker's intention and that they would be confined to appear the same in the explicit form, since there are more ways to be inexplicit than to be explicit.

“You can count on me to be there.,” “I give you my word that I will be there.,” “I’ll be there – cross my heart.” are various utterances which intend to express the same promise. They are different in structure which could be attributed to the different circumstances of utterance. Where the third example is what we would say to someone close to us, the second example is more fitting when conversing with some authority. Regardless, remade in the explicit form, they may all turn into “I promise to be there.” No longer can we guess who the hearer was, what intentions they had, or what context were the words spoken in (so much for being explicit...).

Austin's idea that an explicit performative cannot be misunderstood is not based upon the intentions of the speaker being made evident, but upon the unambiguousness of the performative verb used. It is then apparently the case that for Austin, the speaker's intentions do not play a role in rephrasing the performative into an explicit one. Furthermore, this process of making a performative clearer adheres to conventional language usage, rather than how this convention is employed to express what one intends to express. The intention of the speaker may be thus considered mostly lost in the explicit performative.

2.1.3. Illocution

The failure to find a key characteristic which would differentiate the performative from the constative leads Austin to take a step back and ask “when we issue any utterance whatsoever, are we not „doing something“?”¹⁰. Taking upon a more general approach, Austin asserts that all utterances are performative and presents an account of three acts which we always perform parallel to each other when we speak. This is where the general theory of speech acts starts to take shape.

Firstly, he describes the *locutionary act*, which is the bare utterance. A production of noises, which are in accordance with certain grammar and vocabulary with certain sense and reference.

Secondly, Austin presents the most important of the three acts – the *illocutionary act*. It is essentially the way in which we are using the locution, or perhaps what sort of space for interaction we are creating by it. Are we answering, advising, ordering, or dismissing someone with our utterance? These and many other uses exert their *illocutionary force* which is present in words uttered in various different situations. Furthermore, Austin notes that the illocutionary act is “an act done as conforming to a *convention*”¹¹ and the forces have a *conventional* effect on the listener. In the collection of lectures, the passages describing this act have the strongest appeal to conventional use.

Through convention, the illocutionary effect affects the attitudes, possible responses towards what is being said and the following discourse. This means that feelings or thoughts produced in the listener by the illocution are a somewhat automatized response to an actualized instance of known convention. In fact, this serves as a new home of the explicit performative, which was abandoned as a criterion for performatives in general. Now it serves for making the illocutionary act of an utterance apparent. Making explicit what kind of utterance the audience is dealing with is turned into making explicit what illocutionary force is exerted by the utterance.

Austin does to some extent acknowledge that we willingly choose what illocutionary force our utterance will exert. Still, it seems that for him, the primacy belongs to convention, from which we pick what most fits our intentions and the present situation. “The

¹⁰ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 91.

¹¹ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 105 italics added.

(illocutionary) act is constituted not by intention or by fact essentially but by convention.”¹² It is not the intention that decides completely freely, rather the reins are held by convention, which offers some more or less fitting options.

Lastly, the *perlocutionary act*, is quite similar to the illocutionary act. It, too, is characterized in terms of the effect it has on the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the audience. However, Austin describes it as “real production of real effects”¹³ which is contrasted with the conventional effects of the illocutionary act. The perlocutionary effects are not just a conventional response, they are the unique consequence of hearing the utterance. This is also why we cannot assume what perlocutionary act took place based on the utterance alone, as opposed to the locution and illocution which are apparent even in the isolated speech act.¹⁴ E.g. when someone orders us, we are reminded of a certain hierarchy, we understand that the order is an order – something that ought to be done. Those would be the illocutionary effects. On the other hand, fulfilling the order, asking follow-up questions, or defying it would be examples of perlocutionary effects.

Another possible difference Austin points out is that we can specifically express the illocutionary act through an explicit performative, e.g. “I warn/alert/ask you.” While we cannot do the same for the perlocutionary act¹⁵. This helps us understand the distinction better, but Austin admits that this sort of test is not perfect¹⁶. An insult for example has its own illocutionary force of insulting, which in the listener evokes its conventional attitude towards the situation. While the very movement of being insulted and responding or changing our future interactions with someone belongs to perlocution. However, turning “Screw you!” into the explicit “I insult you” has neither the same illocutionary nor perlocutionary effect.

The key difference for us in tracking the role of intention in Austin’s lectures is that the perlocutionary acts can be viewed as the most intentional out of all the presented acts. We must follow convention in our utterances, which is apparent when we consider the illocutionary act. There, intention has to step back and let itself be limited¹⁷. On the other hand, the unique perlocutionary effects are something that does follow consequently from our intentions via. And these consequences are not bound up by convention.

¹² Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 127.

¹³ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 102.

¹⁴ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 121.

¹⁵ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 130.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Could we even think of or intend to invoke an illocution that is not somehow based on convention?

Here we have once again stumbled upon the distinction between the intention to perform an act(1) and the intention for certain consequences to follow from the act(2). While Austin does distinguish the illocutionary and perlocutionary act, he does not point out the difference in the intentions to perform these acts.

For Austin, it would simply be the case that conditions Γ include both of these types of intention. Yet, here we contend, that only the intentions to perform an illocutionary act are what counts towards the success of a performative. The performer must understand convention well enough and think accordingly in order to act accordingly to produce conventional illocutionary effects. On the other hand, the desire to produce perlocutionary effects such as making someone do something is always context-specific. Sure, we resort to convention in order to perform the act, but why we are performing the act is arguably not defined by the set rules and does not have to fit into any sort of convention.

2.2. Construction of Intention in Austin

We have shown in great detail that Austin's general attitude in regard to intention is dismissive. In specific moments of his lectures, he presents concepts, such as the conditions of a speech act, the explicit performative, or the illocutionary act, which either omit intention altogether, or seek to alter it to fit the needs of convention. Raoul Moati is of a similar view, he agrees that "Austin never ceased to submit intention to a world of conventions that precedes and conditions the deployment of speech acts"¹⁸.

It seems that intention can be perhaps considered free as far as the choice of the performed act goes. However, once the decision takes place, the act itself dictates what thoughts we are to have during it, for it to be completely successful. Intentions are differentiated from the circumstances, or context, in which an act is to be performed, but this all ought to follow the speech act's conditions just the same.

The notion of the explicit performative considers an utterance isolated from the circumstances and intentions of the speaker. An explicit performative's goal is to make apparent what illocutionary effect does an utterance with unclear illocution seek to induce in the audience. No matter the speaker's intentions.

¹⁸ Moati, Raoul. *Derrida/Searle: Deconstruction and Ordinary Language*, trans. Attanucci, Timothy and Chun, Maureen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pg. 42-43.

Furthermore, the illocutionary act itself is defined as “conventional.” It functions through its appeal to convention and the audience’s knowledge of convention. This is how an illocutionary force is brought on and has an effect on the audience. Although the illocutionary act attempted is intentionally chosen, the means to induce the effect are conventional.

This way, it is possible to decide to perform a certain speech act, even though we do not align with it, believe in it, or support it. This is precisely why it is possible to get on with a certain act but not meet the conditions class Γ . And if we want the act is to be fully successful, our thoughts must conform to conditions Γ . It is not the case that we fit the act to our specific needs. Since Austin does not distinguish between intentions to perform an act and intentions regarding the goal of the act¹⁹, it follows that he also does not realize the intentional differences between the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

Because context and intentions are mutable, everchanging, and in Austin’s view convention is constant, unchanging, intention and context must both conform to the rules of convention. If there is a conflict between convention and context, it is the context that is inadequate. And even if we were to declare the convention unsuitable in a certain situation, the blame is actually on intention, who chose poorly which speech act to perform. This makes intention a special part of the context in which an utterance is issued. Another condition to be filled.

In conclusion, the circumstances of an utterance and the intentions of the speaker decide whether a speech act is successful, however they do so through their accordance or conflict with convention, which I believe has the primacy for Austin. Our reading of Austin showed that having the correct intentions when attempting to perform a speech act is important for its full success. Yet even if the speech act does not succeed due to a breach of conditions Γ , the act itself is still performed and understandable by others. More importantly, the correct intentions are defined by the nature of the act performed and as such, they might have to be altered in order for the act to be successful. In addition, we have proposed that a more nuanced conception of intention, distinguishing between the intent to produce illocutionary effects and the intent to produce perlocutionary effects may fix the oversights of Austin’s conditions type Γ , and prove that not all intention must necessarily conform to convention, in order for an utterance to function.

¹⁹ E.g. The willingness to make a promise and the goal of making someone believe us even though we are lying.

3. Signature Event Context

At a 1971 conference in Montreal, Jacques Derrida presented his thoughts on the role of context in communication together with a critique of Austin's lectures. An English translation of Derrida's talk was later published in Glyph (1977) as an article titled *Signature, Event, Context*.

Focusing on written utterances, Derrida claimed that a key characteristic of language is that it can function without the author, addressee, or referent present. In his view, context in which an utterance is formed does not determine its meaning completely. This conception places the author's intentions among the circumstances of the original context and thus among the expendable elements which form an utterance, but not its meaning.

In the latter part of the essay, Derrida pegs Austin as an intentionalist author, whose conception of language is greatly dependent on the intentions of the utterance's originator. This places Derrida into an opposition against Austin and leads him to criticize the doctrine of speech acts, or more accurately, the way Austin presents it.

This following chapter will go over Derrida's text, as split into these two sections. We will present his conception of communication. Then his attack on Austin will be summarized and shown to be misdirected. Finally, we will argue that Derrida and Austin's conceptions are actually quite compatible.

3.1. Derrida's Approach to Intention

In order to better understand Derrida's critique of intention in Austin, we will take a quick look at the theory Derrida is presenting in his essay. Unlike Austin, who in his lectures focused on spoken utterances in connection with the problem of action, Derrida attempts to present a more general concept of communication. Although, his primary insights presented in his essay *Signature, Event, Context* stem from a characterization of writing. This characterization is then expanded upon all language and communication.

What Derrida does in the first place is that he firmly asserts that writing is not simply just a surrogate or derivate of speech. He cites Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, where the fellow French thinker presents writing as a type of communication of its own. According to Condillac, older types of writing such as hieroglyphs or ideograms serve as proof of the fact that writing can and does represent ideas themselves, without the mediator of speech. A later progress towards the alphabet is motivated simply by efficiency, however written words and signs still continue to represent ideas, not speech.²⁰

Perhaps Derrida and Condillac's notion of writing could be presented in a simpler manner, just by an analysis of the experience of reading. When we read for example a novel, we typically do not turn to speech in order to visualize what the scenes are like. During our reading we imagine and comprehend what is going on directly from the writing – the written words represent ideas of things and their images. Another proof of this are abbreviations found in texts of various sorts. We may understand simply from its use that “e.g.” heralds an example, even though we may not be sure what words the letters stand for. An economist might know well that “p.a.” means yearly, yet they might never ask themselves how that came about. Signs like these can represent ideas, without representing words – and as such, they cannot be traced back to spoken word. Abbreviations themselves are a special kind of sign specific to writing, which cannot be said to originate from speech. Furthermore, we may point out that some abbreviations made their way into spoken discourse, which would turn the supposed hierarchical primacy of speech on its head.

But back to Derrida's essay: An essential condition that is fundamental to writing and what is more, to any other system of communication, Derrida believes, is its functioning in the absence of participants: a complete absence of the writer/speaker, of the addressee and

²⁰ Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, pg. 4.

also of the referents. The written utterance must be able to stand alone without its objects, authors, or receivers present. Although this is most apparent in the system of written signs, “writing does not represent a case apart, a rupture with the paradigm of communication, but rather the rupture internal to all communication in general”²¹. Derrida argues that the absence characteristic to writing is present in all other types of communication. The system of speech too presupposes an absence of the referents, while the system itself must additionally be functional even when it is not at the moment put in use by a speaker and a listener in a specific context.

The context or “the “present” of the inscription, the presence of the writer to what he has written, the entire environment and the horizon of his experience, and above all the intention, the wanting-to-say-what-he-means, which animates his inscription at a given moment”²² are all something that the utterance must be able to deal without.

Everything inconstant like the tone, pitch, volume of voice, articulation or accent are contextual variables which are present in any spoken utterance. The same goes for the setting, time, occasion, personal mood, level of energy, relation to the addressee along with intention which together create the circumstances in which we speak or write.

The variables just listed, and many others affect the creation of an utterance. No doubt about that. But they go no further. For Derrida, the resulting utterance itself must be, in order for it to be communicable, “orphaned and separated at birth”²³ from the context of its origin. This also means being cut off from the “parental” consciousness and its intentions completely. Derrida stresses that intentions are present only in an intending mind. But the author is absent, and their absence is similar to death²⁴, it is their complete non-presence. Intentions die with the author and thus are not something that carries on in the utterance.

It is the case that Derrida views intention as a mental phenomenon. It is what we want to say (*vouloir-dire*)²⁵, what we want to communicate to another. There is a certain end (τέλος) the mind (λόγος) seeks to reach in speaking or writing. We should keep in mind that the very process of speaking is conscious and intentional, the act of writing is even more so. When one writes letters, chat-messages, e-mails articles, or books the process is often very

²¹ Moati, *Derrida/Searle: Deconstruction and Ordinary Language*, pg. 46.

²² Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, pg. 9.

²³ Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, pg. 8.

²⁴ Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, pg. 8.

²⁵ Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, pg. 5.

conscious, the author examines each new sentence, rewrites words, and tries to do their best to capture their thoughts in an intelligible and eloquent way. However, these are qualities of the writer's process and mind. The intention, or the end that the utterance is supposed to convey is "tragically" not contained in the resulting utterance itself.

3.2. Derrida's Critique of Intention in Austin

Derrida's essay culminates into an attack on Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*. Interpreting Austin as an author whose theory of communication revolves around intention, Derrida contrasts his own theory of communication with the theory of speech acts. Here, we shall contend that certain parts of Derrida's interpretation are guilty of oversimplification. Still, Derrida's offensive against conceptions based around the locutor's intentions is solid, although it misses its mark almost completely.

A key question to answer is, how is it that Derrida conceives of Austin, as of an intentionalist author? His interpretation seems untenable, considering what we have discovered about Austin's take on the role of intentions in speech acts discussed in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, Derrida writes:

"Austin's analyses at all times require a value of *context*, and even of a context exhaustively determined, in theory or teleologically; the long list of 'infelicities' which in their variety may affect the performative event always comes back to an element in what Austin calls the total context. One of those essential elements – and not one among others – remains, classically, consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act."²⁶

There are two main things that make Derrida view Austin as an intentionalist. The first is that according to Derrida, whether Austin's speech act is successful is always dependent on the relationship between the locutor's intention and the resulting effect. In Austin's text, what a speech act is or does is not examined by itself in isolation, but always in relation to certain conditions. Austin notes that the same utterance might be successful, or appropriate, in one situation, and unsuccessful in another. Derrida concludes that according to Austin, the same

²⁶ Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, pg. 14.

utterance might achieve desired effects or might not, simply depending on what the locutor's intentions are.

This goes hand in hand with the second, more essential, aspect criticized by Derrida. The conditions, or the context, in which the utterance takes place must be evident, for anyone to assess whether the speech act was a success or not – this includes the speaker, but as well as Austin himself. Derrida thinks that Austin assumes that the context itself is “exhaustively determined”²⁷ i.e. completely apparent to the locutor attempting to perform a speech act and he also assumes that everyone present reads the situation identically.

Taken this way, it does seem that for Austin the consciousness of the speaker both recognizes the circumstances²⁸ and freely organizes the act and thus the success of the act is dependent on the conscious mind alone.

Firstly, what Derrida overlooks is that the success of the intended performative is not determined only by the intentions having been realized, but more fundamentally by whether the intended act was at the given time appropriate to the context of the situation. As we have discovered in our chapter on Austin, it is convention that determines what acts are possible to even attempt. The locutor does choose what to say, yet they choose only from a limited list of options which is more primary, than their intentions. – If we intend something which unfortunately lacks the proper procedure, for example if we decide to baptize a penguin²⁹, the speech act would be unsuccessful, despite our intentions.

One might argue that Austin's three classes of conditions (A, B, Γ) are determined by what the locutor intends to attempt, and this is partially true. Nonetheless once the locutor chooses the speech act they want to perform, the performance of the act has to bend to these specific conditions. Not only the manner in which the act is performed but even *what the locutor must think* (Γ) is governed by the custom of the procedure. This does not sound like the mind of the speaker is the one in control of the situation.

The second aspect of Derrida's critique is more fundamental. We have already shown that Austin's locutor must obey the conditions of the chosen speech act. Yet maybe Derrida is right that Austin's locutor is an unreliable judge of the circumstances? Even if Austin talks of specific situations as if they were absolutely evident, the theory of speech acts does not rely

²⁷ Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, pg. 14.

²⁸ In the sense that the mind assumes that it perceives the context in its entirety and thus decides which acts are appropriate and which are not.

²⁹ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 25.

on this, neither is it important for the theory whether those involved agree on the nature of the situation.

The system that Austin presents functions in the absence of the speakers, it is not dependent their presence. No matter how situationally interpreted, the speech acts have their own necessary conditions. A certain type of speech act, e.g. betting, has certain conditions. In the same way, a situation has an objective reality – objective circumstances. The accordance of the conditions and circumstances is the success of a speech act.

However, we must admit that for the use and interpretation of the speech acts, it seems that there really must be someone present. Someone who hears and interprets what is being said. The listeners and speakers can do their best to fulfil the conditions and analyse the context, though they might still be wrong without realizing it. Thus, *practically speaking*, Derrida is right that whether an utterance is successful is decided by someone's understanding of the necessary conditions and their seeing whether the circumstances fulfil these conditions. While the system and the specific success of an utterance are not dependent on a conscious presence, whether it is *viewed by someone* as successful is decided by the present minds.

As such. Meaning would be constituted by the understanding of the specific situation, decided by the listener. But does not Derrida argue for the same in the case of writing? Both Derrida's and Austin's conceptions deal with an overreaching set of rules which must be repeatable in order for a system to function.

The ritual of promising or baptizing or naming a ship itself *is repeatable*. The same goes for any sort of writing. The way in which these events need be interpreted by the reader/listener is not governed by the writer/speaker's intentions in either of the two conceptions, but by the receiver's being exposed to the utterance and their knowledge of the system.

In the end, this is actually what Derrida also argues for. He believes that the doctrine of speech acts has some key similarities with his conception of communication. Austin's theory itself was in fact never the target of Derrida's critique. What Derrida was against, without addressing it clearly or being aware of it, is Austin's non-acknowledgement of this iterable or repeatable structure. With each and every repetition, the convention is influenced by the context, but Austin believes the general structure still stands on its own and provides the possibility of further contextual applications.

In contrast to Austin, Derrida argues that the iteration of convention in various contexts is not just simple application of a constant norm. Derrida believes that as contexts change, so does the convention too. As Moati puts it, eventually, "repetition is no longer

conditioned by a prior ideal form it repeats. The form itself is a product of repetition since it paradoxically draws its own ideal positivity from repetition”³⁰. This is mainly what, in Derrida’s, view Austin’s theory hinted at, yet unfortunately overlooked.

3.3. The Context of Reception

Austin has more in common with Derrida than Derrida himself realizes. For Austin, the intention too plays a role in the formation of an utterance, but what that utterance does or how it is understood does not depend on the intentions of the speaker. As we have seen earlier, the explicit form of a speech act is created mechanically, without recourse to intention. Austin says that it is the conditions, the system of locutionary effects that decide and whether we are understood loud and clear.

This would mean that speech acts are identified via a set system of communication and their success or meaning are dependent on the context of reception, rather than context of creation. And Derrida too would agree with this. As Stanley Raffel points out: “signs - traces - offer no definite truth or origin, instead of being upset by this, we can affirm such a state of affairs by embracing what it offers, namely the opportunity to engage in *active interpretation*”³¹. It is not the case that there is some meaning or intention to be discovered in the isolated utterances, that is precisely why we are invited to actively participate in the creation of meaning, which is as fleeting and flexible as the utterance itself.

Nonetheless, this active interpretation is not completely governed by the listener’s mind and intention either. The established systems of communication still play a role in understanding an utterance, providing a sort of key for understanding. However, the system itself is not something static either, as Frank B. Farrell explains: “A condition for making an expression meaningful is that it be determined, by the conventions of the language, what will count as a repetition of the expression. That is, it is not determined what I am now saying until it is determined what will count as a saying of the same thing at another time”³².

In Derrida’s view each use of a term, convention or a rule alters it. This way, words

³⁰ Moati, *Derrida/Searle: Deconstruction and Ordinary Language*, pg. 47.

³¹ Raffel, Stanley. “Understanding Each Other: The Case of the Derrida-Searle Debate.” *Human studies* 34 (3) (2011) pg. 281.

³² Farrell, Frank B. “Iterability and Meaning: The Searle-Derrida Debate.”, *Metaphilosophy* 19, (1988) pg. 54.

written two hundred years ago are not the same as the words we read today. So, since the written utterances are separated from their context of creation and the author's intentions and also the system or conventions used are everchanging, there is nothing left, but active audience interpretation in the context of reception. We shall further develop this in the upcoming chapters.

4. Reiterating the Differences

In contrast to the other two thinkers, Searle works with the concept of intention to such a great extent, that it becomes a crucial aspect of his revised version of Austin's theory of speech acts. This conception of communication puts great emphasis on what the author of an utterance means to do in their act of speaking. And it is the recognition of the locutor's intention by the audience which makes the exchange successful.

Austin's successor expanded and remade the theory of speech acts, fixing some problems but also creating new ones. We will present Searle's employment of intention in his take on the theory of speech acts and point out that it diverges quite a bit from Austin's theory.

Next, we will show the importance of the audience's comprehension of the speaker's intention for the success of a speech act. And finally, we will turn to Searle's reply to Derrida and assess its justness.

4.1. Searle's Use of Intention

In his work, Searle mainly focuses on illocution i.e. the production of certain effects in the audience. However, unlike Austin who proposed that illocution is based on convention, Searle writes that it is actually based on the context and more importantly the intentions of the speaker, and their recognition. Searle views communication as a type of intentional rule-governed behavior. Not only are speech acts performed volitionally, but their very meaning is constituted by the intentions of the speaker. Specifically, the role of "meaning" is filled by the illocutionary force of the utterances and the illocutionary effects that the speaker intends to evoke in the audience. Recognition of the speaker's intentions amounts to proper transference of meaning.

According to Searle, we must always keep in mind that vocal noises and written marks are always made with purpose, intention, to have an effect on the receivers. Not only that, "I must also assume that the intentions are of a very special kind peculiar to speech acts."³³ These peculiar intentions that Searle writes about are adequate to specific behaviours, intentions, and contexts³⁴ and it is knowledge of social and language conventions, which helps the audience decode the intentions behind utterances.

The way recognition of the speaker's intentions works in Searle's conception of speech acts is inspired by Paul Grice's notion of *non-natural meaning*: "In an article entitled *Meaning* Grice gives the following analysis of the notion of "non-natural meaning". To say that a speaker S meant something by X is to say that S intended the utterance of X to produce some effect in a hearer H by means of the recognition of this intention."³⁵ Searle points out that the "effect" Grice talked about amounts to an illocutionary effect in the speech act theory.

In Searle's view then, the recognition of the speaker's intention to produce a certain illocutionary effect leads to the actual production of the effect in the audience. An illocutionary act thus consists of a) the intention to produce certain effects in the audience, and b) the intention for the first intention to be recognized.

This is not actually anything new in the discourse on speech act theory, as Peter Frederick Strawson also attempted to reconcile Grice's view with Austin's speech acts. In his

³³ Searle, John Rogers, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) pg. 17.

³⁴ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 24-25.

³⁵ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 43.

article *Intention and Convention in Speech Acts*, Strawson interprets Austin's convention as a means to transfer intentions as well. However, Strawson makes the observation, that not all illocutionary acts are necessarily conventional, but that some illocutionary acts may be performed simply by "securing uptake", without the utilisation of social or speech conventions.³⁶

In a similar manner, Searle writes: "Some very simple sorts of illocutionary acts can indeed be performed apart from any use of any conventional devices at all, simply by getting the audience to recognize certain of one's intentions in behaving in a certain way."³⁷

Among the many texts mentioned here in regards to Searle's theory, this passage serves as perfect evidence of Searle's departure from Austin's convention-based view. If, in Searle's view, the speaker's goal is to make their intentions apparent and the listener's work is to recognize these intentions, then since a convention is always limiting, it may be utilized as one of the tools at our disposal, although unconventional means might do the job just as well.

In Austin's text, we have seen that thoughts, feelings and intentions might have to adapt to certain conventions. In contrast to that, in Searle's conception, the speaker's mind-contents are what is to be communicated and as such, they cannot be mutated into something more digestible by the conventions.

4.2. The Audience

Another thing Strawson points out is that in cases, where the speech acts are heavily dependent on conventions it is not actually possible or even necessary "to isolate, among all the participants in the procedure (trial, marriage, game) to which the utterance belongs, a particular audience to whom the utterance can be said to be addressed."³⁸

However, this is where the similarities end. In the case of Searle, the audience uptake must never be overlooked. "I might utter the sentence to someone who does not hear me, and

³⁶ Strawson understands Austin's description of all illocutionary acts being conventional as being in accordance with linguistic or social conventions. However, he argues that there is a difference between situations where some convention is constitutive (rules of baseball, marriage ceremony) and unspecified general communication. It is situations constituted by convention, the performance can do without an audience (a non-participant a passive receiver) – while general communication may achieve transference of intention through non-conventionalized means and with direct interaction with the audience.

³⁷ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 38

³⁸ Strawson, Peter Frederick, "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts", in: *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1964), pg. 456

so I would not succeed in performing the illocutionary act of ordering him, even though I did perform a locutionary act”³⁹. An illocutionary act cannot be considered successfully performed unless it is recognized so by the audience. The audience’s participation via recognition of the speaker’s intention is of paramount importance.

Here, we will actually argue, that the event of the audience’s recognition of an intention is more important than the speaker’s intention itself. What happens when the audience mistakenly assumes the speaker’s intentions? A simple answer from Searle would be that the illocutionary act is unsuccessful. But who is to blame? The speaker or the audience?

“Uttering a sentence and meaning it is a matter of (a) intending (*i-1*) to get the hearer to know (recognize, be aware of) that certain states of affairs specified by certain of the rules obtain, (b) intending to get the hearer to know (recognize, be aware of) these things by means of getting him to recognize *i-1* and (c) intending to get him to recognize *i-1* in virtue of his knowledge of the rules for the sentence uttered.”⁴⁰

Considering this and also what we noted above, it looks like the speaker is always trying to appeal to the audience. To work with what he thinks the audience knows about the world, rules of communication and the speaker. If then, an utterance is a tool which is to be used in certain contexts to evoke illocutionary effects, it appears that the speaker is the one responsible for being misunderstood.

The speaker intentionally chooses which words to use to express themselves, however they may not choose the right tools for the job. They might overestimate the audience’s ability to recognize what the speaker means, or the audience may simply have a slightly different conception of the system of conventions. For example, if one is offered a shopska salad⁴¹ in a restaurant in Bulgaria and they shake their head from side to side, even though the intended act was a refusal, the act understood by the waiter (audience) was a yes, according to the context and convention known to the waiter.

I believe the importance of the audience can be made even more apparent if we consider Searle’s “principle of expressibility.” In essence, Searle believes that anything one means can be potentially expressed. For any act that one might intend to perform, “it is

³⁹ Searle, *Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts*, pg. 409

⁴⁰ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 48.

⁴¹ The Bulgarian national dish – vegetable salad with cheese in the colours of the Bulgarian flag

possible to utter a sentence the literal meaning of which is such as to determine that its serious literal utterance in an appropriate context will be a performance of that act.”⁴²

Elsewhere, Searle writes that “I can in principle if not in fact increase my knowledge of the language”⁴³, which would mean that the performer adapts to the needs of the audience (such as learning that in Bulgaria a head-shake means yes). “Or more radically, if the existing language or existing languages are not adequate to the task, if they simply lack the resources for saying what I mean, I can in principle at least enrich the language by introducing new terms”⁴⁴ - again, in order to make sure that the speaker is understood by the audience. One cannot just make up words anytime they encounter the need to express something without the adequate vocabulary at hand.

Now, to be fair, Searle does write that the fact that anything can *in principle* be said, does not mean that it can always be understood by others. So according to him, private languages understood only by a select few or only a single person are definitely still possible, and not everything we can potentially say can also be potentially understandable⁴⁵. However, that does not stand in the way of our point here. In order to express their intentions, the speaker must be sure that the audience, even if the audience is just themselves, and the speaker are on the same page regarding the use of language. If the goal for communication is to evoke a certain illocutionary force, the locutor must make sure either through learning how the hearer comprehends words or by introducing new terms to the hearer, that the audience understands.

This would then mean that although unfiltered intention to produce certain illocutionary effects is what is communicated according to Searle, whether or not it gets communicated is dependent on the audience’s reception.

⁴² Searle, John Rogers, “Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts”, *The Philosophical Review* 77 (4) 1968, pg. 418.

⁴³ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 20

⁴⁴ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 20; similarly in *Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts*, pg. 415.

⁴⁵ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 20

4.3. Searle's "Defence" of Austin Against Derrida

4.3.1. The Argument

Searle's reply reacts to a number of things in Derrida's essay. Most importantly, Searle sets out to defend the notion of communication as a transference of intention, which is crucial for his own theory of speech acts.

Searle is against Derrida's view that writing breaks away completely from the author's intentionality. He contends that intention is present just the same in writing as it is in speech, "what differs in the two cases is not the intentions of the speaker but the role of the context of the utterance in the success of the communication."⁴⁶

For Searle, the major difference between speech and writing is the permanence of writing outside its context of creation. It is "permanence of the text that makes it possible to separate the utterance from its origin and distinguishes the written from the spoken word."⁴⁷ However, he continues, although writing can be read outside its time of origin, intention is still present in it. Searle points out that every utterance is created with an intention, and this is always taken into account by the audience. So, there can hardly be a separation of an utterance and intention as radical as Derrida claims. Moreover, Searle writes that the utterances themselves are essentially "fungible intentions" – in a certain way, they are the intentions themselves. As such, it does not make sense to view the intention to utter as something separate from the utterance itself.

The necessity of the iterability of a system's rules is something that Searle agrees on with Derrida. Yet he also claims that the permanence of text outside its context of origin consists of a different kind of iterability, than the one that can be seen in the case of speech. Searle believes that Derrida confused two different things in his talk of iterability: the possibility of visiting a text repeatedly in different contexts and the iterability necessary for any system of communication - and that Derrida expanded the former upon all of communication.⁴⁸

Searle's counter-argument aims at this confusion. "The iterability of linguistic forms

⁴⁶ Searle, *Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida*, pg. 201.

⁴⁷ Searle, *Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida*, pg. 200.

⁴⁸ Farrell, *Iterability and Meaning: The Searle-Derrida Debate*, pg. 56 – In a similar manner, Frank Farrell writes that Derrida merges together various kinds of citationality. Mentioning an expression; direct quotation; repeated use of phrases; actualization of a norm in a specific context. This leads to Derrida seeing features of one, in another.

facilitates and is a necessary condition of the particular forms of intentionality that are characteristic of speech acts.”⁴⁹ He argues that although every functional system of communication, written or spoken, has to be iterable, it does not follow that every type of utterance can or must be separable from its context of origin or that the intention would be completely lost were it to appear in isolated utterances. On the contrary, Searle believes the iterability makes the transference of intentions possible, due to shared knowledge of the system of communication.

What Searle fails to do, in his reply and elsewhere, is to actually prove the presence of intentions in an utterance. It is true that Derrida oversimplifies or leaps between various kinds of iterability, but Searle argues in a similar fashion. The fact that all utterances are created with certain conscious or unconscious intentions present, does not automatically mean that intentions are somehow traceable through the utterance or included in it. Yes, the audience might be well aware of the fact that a human being with a mind is the author of an utterance, nevertheless without constant and solid clarification, their intentions are only guessed at by the audience.

4.3.2. The Disagreement with Derrida and Austin

Turning away from Searle’s reply, we find other passages in his texts which evidently propose exactly the points that Derrida criticized.

“The principle that the meaning of a sentence is entirely determined by the meanings of its meaningful parts I take as obviously true; what is not so obviously true, however, is that these include more than words (or morphemes) and surface word order. The meaningful components of a sentence include also its deep syntactic structure and the stress and intonation contour of its utterance.”⁵⁰

Similarly to Austin, the focus on spoken word leads Searle to consider other variables present in the original context of an utterance as elements of meaning. These too may be interpreted according to iterable rules or conventions, as in the case of the intonation specific to questions. But in Searle’s view convention does not exhaust the possible ways to make oneself understood.

⁴⁹ Searle, *Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida*, pg. 208.

⁵⁰ Searle, *Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts*, pg. 416.

Searle writes that “often, in actual speech situations, the context will make it clear what the illocutionary force of the utterance is⁵¹. Once again describing context as something that plays a significant role in the illocution, whether it fits certain conventions or not. Furthermore, “the force is not carried by a convention but by other features of the context, including the intentions of the speaker”⁵², which places Searle in complete opposition to Austin. As we have shown, Austin neglects intention and makes it obey convention, while Searle on the other hand, describes intention as one of the key elements which evoke illocutionary force.

Another thing is that according to Searle “no sentence is completely force-neutral”⁵³ because every sentence is created in a certain context by a certain intending subject which already predetermines the illocutionary force employed. Besides, this is why Searle transforms Austin’s Locution/Illocution⁵⁴ distinction into a distinction of Proposition/Illocution. He observes that any locution is partially always also an illocution. However, the statement of an utterance, or in other words its object – the proposition, itself is force neutral.

In contrast, Derrida would likely argue that every isolated utterance is force-neutral. And if it does evoke some force, it would be in a certain context caused for example by the receiver’s relationship with the words used and their knowledge of the system of communication.

While Searle argues that the context and along with it the intentions, are what makes an utterance have or display a certain force, I contend that this is only partially true: an utterance is always formed with both the intention and the context being present. However, the success of the illocutionary act and the understanding of the utterance are dictated by the context of reception, including the mind of the receiver, rather than that of the speaker.

⁵¹ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, pg. 30.

⁵² Searle, *Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts*, pg. 414

⁵³ Searle, *Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts*, pg. 412-413.

⁵⁴ Perlocution aside

5. Conclusions

5.1. Major Differences

The key discrepancies are to be found between the take on intention upheld by Searle and the conceptions of Austin and Derrida. Searle's inclusion of Grice's notion of intention in his theory of speech acts, fundamentally altered Austin's conception and made Searle's view incompatible with that of Derrida.

Searle points out that to issue an utterance is to always act with an intention. From this, he deduces that the recognition of this intention is the key to successful communication. This contrasts sharply with Austin, especially when we consider his presentation of the explicit performative. The explicit performative serves to elucidate what illocutionary effect an utterance is to have on the audience. However, the nature of illocution is conventional for Austin and the speaker's intentions are arguably not what is made clear by the explicit formula.

Additionally, the two treat context differently. Searle holds that context itself holds meaning and partakes in how an audience understands an utterance. While in a certain sense we can find this thought also in Austin, it is always with recourse to convention that context decides whether an utterance means x or y in his theory.

The differences between Derrida and Searle are even more striking. As we have seen, Derrida argues for a radical separation of utterance from context and intentions. In his view, only then can we consider an utterance functional. Searle on the other hand believes that no utterance is force-neutral, that context and especially intentions are always imprinted upon it in its formation and so it is impossible to consider an utterance isolated from context and intention.

A significant difference between the two proponents of the speech act theory and Derrida is the system of communication through which they are attempting to investigate language. Austin and Searle both discuss dominantly utterances issued in speech. The theory of speech acts, or the ordinary language philosophy, focuses on immediate human interaction which takes place in shared circumstances. That is what leads the two to investigate the context in which an utterance is formed, together with the mind or intentions of the present locutors.

Neither of the two explicitly exclude writing or literature⁵⁵. However, writing is not generally examined by Searle and Austin even points out that certain aspects of context, which are recognized in a speech situation are not translatable to writing⁵⁶. Derrida has the opposite approach: he uses writing as the starting point of his thesis, exactly because it is not as context-laden as a speech situation, in order to demonstrate the functioning of a system of signs in the absence of context.

5.2. Salvaging What Is Left of Intention

No matter how unlikely it might have seemed at the start of this text, there are actually certain aspects of the three thinkers' respective takes on intention which are to an extent compatible. Although a daunting task, we shall now seek to present a concept of intention, which incorporates the points of all three thinkers. Certainly, neither of the three would concede to this compromise, but then again neither of the three were completely correct.

As Searle writes, all utterances are formed with certain intentions. To say or write anything is to express oneself actively and consciously, so there must be someone present and intending, in order for an utterance to be formed. This cannot be denied.

These intentions can be distinguished as illocutionary – such as the aim to issue a warning, advice, or any other kind of illocution, or perlocutionary – attempting to get someone to do, say or think something specific. Keeping aligned with what we discussed in regard to Austin's theory, we point out that illocutionary intentions must fit the conventions dictated by the speech act performed. On the other hand, perlocutionary intentions are context-specific and hence too varied to be considered governed by some set of rules.

However, all that goes into the formation of an utterance (context included) is never included in the utterance itself. There is no way in which a finished utterance mirrors the intentions of its author, neither in speech nor in writing. But this independence from the circumstances of its creation is what makes it communicable and functional. This is also true for the system of signs or conventions employed in the formation of an utterance.

We are never witnesses to intentions themselves. They are only hinted to us through actions and words. This is the case for much if not all mental phenomena or even character

⁵⁵ I believe that Austin's use of the term „parasitism“ was not directed at writing, unlike Derrida interprets it.

⁵⁶ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, pg. 74.

traits. We do not examine someone's sadness or anger by itself, but only through its actualizations, what they say, how they say it, etc. To state that someone is brave is not actually to directly describe something within them, it is actually to describe the nature of some of their decisions and actions. We do not look at bravery itself. Intention is just the same, we see how it is realized and we guess with more or less certainty what it was.

5.3. The Importance of Audience Reception

The original intentions are never present in the finished product. Nonetheless, the utterance still has the intention's fingerprints on it, which may hint at what the original intentions were. Although the hints provided by an utterance are never dependable, the audience always seeks to try and understand the author's intentions. Even though the locutor's intentions are inaccessible, the willingness to attempt to understand them is what motivates the audience in its reception of the utterance.

Above, we have seen how Derrida discards any role of context or intention in the meaning or success of an utterance. And yet he invites the audience to active interpretation of utterances. However, this interpretation never considers just the bare utterance – the reading or listening always takes place in a certain context and is motivated by the desire to understand the utterance's originator.

So, it is important to distinguish between the context in which an utterance is issued and the context in which it is received. If an utterance is definitely isolated from its context of formation, then the only way for it to further be received outside of it is to enter another context and draw its meaning from it. The audience then tries (and inevitably fails) to reconstruct the original circumstances of the utterance's formation, but the source for this is not the utterance itself, nor the context of origin.

It is the knowledge of convention that provides a sort of standard against which the utterance is compared to in order to be understood. Certainly, most utterances do not fit the conventions completely and so convention is combined with supposed knowledge of the original context in order for convention itself to be understood anew by the audience, all the

while the audience is also affected by the context of reception.⁵⁷

The mind of the reader or the listener is essentially the main thing the author of an utterance tries to appeal to. We have shown that in Searle's theory, uptake is secured by the locutor considering the situation and mind in which the audience is. If anyone attempts to communicate, they have to consider how the audience will understand the utterance. The audience does reach out to the author in order to comprehend their words, but it is the author themselves that has to make this possible, by conforming to the needs and workings of the audience.

5.4. Summary

As we are nearing the end of our endeavour, let us look back and assess what we have discovered. Throughout our analysis, we have stumbled across various insights concerning intention and its role in communication coming from three distinct sources – John Langshaw Austin, Jacques Derrida, and John Rogers Searle. Although the discussion between the three typically showed either animosity or sympathy, thinkers who seemed to stand for contradictory theses were found to be in some agreement, while conceptions which seemed to compliment one another were discovered to be incompatible.

First, we have argued for a reading of Austin, which focuses on the role intention plays in his theory of speech acts. This interpretation led us to the conclusion that in case of Austin's theory, intention is a greatly underdeveloped or even mostly overlooked aspect of his theory.

For one, this is simply because Austin did not thematize intention. But we also showed that in his theory, the intention's impact on the meaning, functioning or success of a speech act is extremely limited. In general, a successful speech act is the result of an accordance between context, intentions, and convention. However, since convention is something constant, while contexts and intentions change, it is the latter two which must align with the former.

Additionally, we have suggested an addition to Austin's theory. A distinction between

⁵⁷ Perhaps we could establish a new notion of „context of reception“ which would include the present facts, and the imperfectum understanding of past facts, the understanding of convention and the understanding of the author's personality, mind, and intentions.

illocutionary intentions and perlocutionary intentions could potentially refine Austin's theory to include an appropriate take on intention, without contradicting the rest of his theory of speech acts.

Next our attention turned to Derrida's conception of systems of communication and his critique of Austin. We have presented how Derrida views the functioning in absence of subjects as a crucial feature of any system of signs. And we have identified two major points of his critique of Austin relevant to the discourse on intention.

Derrida reduces the success of a speech act in Austin's theory to the realization of a locutor's intentions. As we have shown, that is not true, as it is the accordance of intention and convention, on which the success hangs. The other point of Derrida's critique is the importance of the presence of an intending mind in Austin. Austin does focus on utterances and their relation to circumstances in which the locutor finds themselves. Nonetheless we have seen his goal is still to present a general theory of speech acts, the rules of which are not governed simply by volition or the present minds or context.

Furthermore, we have shown that in Searle's theory of speech acts, intention plays a primary role in the success of an utterance. Mainly, it is the audience's recognition of the locutor's illocutionary intentions, which brings upon the illocutionary effects and hence grants success to a speech act.

This however is substantially different from how intention is handled in Austin's theory and so Searle's attempt to deflect Derrida's criticisms of Austin can be deemed inauthentic to his mentor's teachings. Although Searle rightly points out certain errors in Derrida's essay, he himself does not provide proof that intention transference is the main principle of language or Austin's theory.

In the final chapter, we highlighted the numerous differences between the three respective theories. We mainly paid attention to how Searle's theory and its focus on intention differs greatly from what Derrida or Austin argued for.

And lastly, we presented a handling of intention which could potentially lead to compromise and reconciliation among the three conceptions. The author's intention was shown to be crucial in the formation of utterances but absent in the utterances themselves. Thus, the audience's context of reception becomes the main source of meaning for the utterance.

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