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Beata Gallay

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ON
SEARLE ON THE BACKGROUND OF COMMUNICATION

by

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Department of Philosophy

Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
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ABSTRACT

This is a detailed exposition and development of some of the epistemic implications of John R. Searle’s ontology of the "Background" of communication. Detailed references are made to Searle’s more recent and therefore lesser known relevant works, including his 1992 text, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, and *The Construction of Social Reality*, published in 1995. 'Communication' refers to the intentional action of an individual speaker to let another individual (the addressee) know the contents of the speaker’s subjective conscious mental state, by way of producing a linguistic utterance made in one or the other conventional language, as well as to the intentional action of the addressee to interpret the contents of the speaker’s subjective conscious mental state expressed in the production of the speaker’s utterance. The notion of "Background" occupies a central position in Searle’s work: it is defined as a speaker’s own set of nonconscious, innate and/or acquired neurophysiological capacities that ultimately determine the contents of the speaker’s intended utterance meaning on a particular occasion. The speaker is not aware of the actual set of Background capacities effective on a particular occasion, and so the Background is wholly inexplicit in the utterance produced publicly. All members of the human species share some fundamental Background capacities which makes communication at all possible. However, the interpreter’s attribution of his/her own Background to the interlocutor -- the primary method employed in communication -- is not always justified, given the potential dissimilarities in individual speakers’ own Backgrounds. This work provides a detailed assessment of how speakers’ Backgrounds both enable and at the same time potentially undermine the possibility of successful communication.
Keywords in the order of relevance:

Searle, communication, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, internalist approach to meaning, neurophysiological Background, consciousness, subjective mental states, Intentionality, perception, the epistemic Other Minds Problem, meaning intentions, collective intentionality, speech acts, interpretation, Quine, Grice.
In vain the Sage, with retrospective eye,
Would from the apparent What conclude the Why,
Infer the Motive from the Deed, and show,
That what we chance'd was what we meant to do.

Alexander Pope
For Professor Searle who gave meaning to my life
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INTRODUCTION

This is a philosophical text about communication. If not specified otherwise, in this text 'communication' refers to the intentional action of an individual speaker to let another individual (the addressee) know the contents of the speaker's subjective conscious mental state, by way of producing a linguistic utterance made in one or the other conventional language, as well as to the intentional action of the addressee to interpret the contents of the speaker's subjective conscious mental state expressed in the production of the speaker's utterance.

John R. Searle, whose philosophical work encompasses more than three decades, is well known for his unique approach to the philosophy of language, mind and social reality. His Speech Acts (Searle 1969), following his mentor Austin's footsteps, is the first systematic comprehensive philosophical work on linguistic actions. His speech-act theory found countless admirers and critics, not only within philosophy, but also in socio- and psycholinguistics and literary criticism, among others, and provided an important incentive to a new field of inquiry, linguistic pragmatics. Searle soon discovered that the notion of intention was hitherto left unanalyzed by those, who, like Searle himself, explained language in terms of intentional actions. Searle turned to the study of the mind that underlies the intentional production of linguistic acts. Since his Intentionality (Searle 1983), Searle has viewed the philosophy of language as a branch of the philosophy of
mind. Searle now characterizes the mind as the set of the subjective conscious Intentional\textsuperscript{1} mental states of an individual, produced by and realized in the individual's brain. Although the subjective contents of an individual's conscious (Intentional) mental states are publicly inaccessible, they are known (i.e., consciously experienced) by the individual from the first-person point of view. Thus, Searle's theory necessitates the study of the mind from the first-person point of view. He rejects all and any contemporary approaches to the mind that are based on third-person empirical observation: they "leave out the mind." His unique views on the mind, again, created much controversy, this time mostly among philosophers of mind, psychologists and cognitive scientists.

There seem to be relatively few commentators who are equally interested in Searle's speech-act theory and in his theory of the mind. His commentators are divided into two camps, and the members from one or the other camp seldom exchange their views with one another. This is especially apparent among those who, like myself, are particularly interested in Searle's views on communication. When Searle underwent his so-called "intentionalist turn," this move apparently became a real turn-off to some people who failed to realize that Searle did not abandon his theory of speech acts by turning his attention to the study of the mind: instead, he understood that his previous views on intentional linguistic acts lacked the necessary foundation without a theory of the mind. If language is viewed as our primary means to communicate, and Searle's philosophy of language is a branch of Searle's philosophy of mind, then Searle's views on the mind must be an integral feature of any discussion concerning his views on communication.

\textsuperscript{1} Throughout this text I adopt the method suggested by Searle: certain common terms, when used in a specific Searlean, technical sense, are capitalized: e.g., Intentionality, Background, Aspectual Shape, Network, etc.
This is then the approach taken in the present text, with the hope that it may help to launch a dialogue between the two camps mentioned above.

Searle himself is not overly concerned with the intersubjective inaccessibility of speakers' subjective mental states: he focuses on the ontology of what it takes to mean something by speaking, rather than on its epistemology, which he repeatedly delegates to the science of linguistics. Searle holds ontology to be prior to and independent of our epistemic "frailties," and regards the philosopher's job as done when the conceptual analysis of the ontology of the entity or process under scrutiny is completed. My own work, while it is largely based on, and, in general, sympathetic to, Searle's ontological views, introduces a new approach to his ontology: an exploration of some of the epistemic implications of his ontology of meaning, in so far as they are relevant to communication.

Searle does offer a cursory solution to the epistemic problem of the intersubjective inaccessibility of mental states: since subjective conscious mental states are produced by and realized in the brain, and since the brains of all members of the species homo sapiens are relevantly similar, by applying the same-causes same-effects principle, it is fair to assume that the products of relevantly similar brains, that is, the subjective conscious mental states of all human beings, will turn out to be relevantly similar. With particular respect to the interpretation of speakers' intended utterance meanings, Searle suggests that since speakers know the contents of their own subjective conscious mental states from the first-person case, when they interpret the utterances of another, they simply attribute to the other person what is known to them from the first-person case.

The present text is focused on the purpose of communication, that is, on the intentions motivating speakers' linguistic behavior, with particular attention to the Background of such intentions. 'Background' in Searle's work refers to those nonconscious, nonrepresentational, nonintentional, neurophysiological capacities common
to all members of the human species that ultimately enable all conscious mental activity, among others communication, to take place. According to Searle, the contents of a speaker's subjective conscious mental state are determined relative to the speaker's own nonconscious Background that is partially innate, i.e., determined by the speaker's individual genetic make-up, and partially acquired through the speaker's individual learning history and personal experiences. The Background functions in a nonconscious manner, so that the person having a subjective conscious mental state occurring to her is not consciously aware of the particular set of Background capacities that are said to determine the contents of her occurring conscious mental state on that particular occasion.

According to Searle, anything that can be meant (subjectively), can be said (publicly). This means that, in principle, speaker and addressee can always attempt to clarify what the speaker subjectively meant in the public production of a particular utterance, should the need arise. However, a speaker can intend to render public only the consciously experienced subjective contents of her mental state in her utterance: the nonconsciously operating Background effective on a particular occasion cannot be rendered explicit in the utterance. "There is more to the speaker's subjective meaning than what is said," is the point Searle himself emphasizes. I focus on the consequences of Searle's theory of the Background with respect to communication: there is even more to the speaker's subjective meaning than what is (consciously) meant, namely, the set of nonconscious Background capacities effective on a particular occasion, yet that set of Background capacities cannot be said, because it cannot even be meant on that particular occasion.

This state of affairs presents an epistemic problem for communication: In so far as the speaker is concerned, the speaker cannot be said to be fully aware of what is on her own mind, so to speak. More importantly, as long as it is the Background that
ultimately determines what the speaker means by speaking, the addressee would have to be able to identify the set of Background capacities effective on the occasion of the speaker's utterance. Yet the addressee can only presume that a certain set of Background capacities apply.

Both speakers are limited to mutual presumptions as to what "made" the other person mean and/or say the utterance produced. Searle stresses that, given the relevantly similar causally efficacious innate and/or acquired neurophysiological structure of human beings that produces their conscious mental states, it is fair to assume that their nonconscious neurophysiological Backgrounds, too, will turn out to be relevantly similar. In this sense, our mutual presumptions with respect to our interlocutors' Background capacities will turn out to be relevantly similar, and probably correct, most of the time.

While, in principle, this reasoning is inherently plausible and provides a possible explanation as to how communication can at all succeed, in actual instances of communicative activities, a premature bias for presumed relevant similarities coupled with an unjustified negligence of the potential dissimilarities in persons' individual Backgrounds may lead to miscommunication. No two persons' individual genetic make-ups (giving rise to their biological Backgrounds) are completely identical, and, more importantly, any two persons' individual learning histories and personal experiences (i.e., their acquired Backgrounds) are likely to be dissimilar. In so far as this is the case, the attribution of a set of Background capacities to one's interlocutor from the first-person case may lead to possible failure in communication.

While it is undeniably the case that all of us, as communicators, do rely on such Background attributions and, moreover, do not even realize that we do rely on them, since such attributions are "performed" nonconsciously (i.e., it is part of our nonconscious Background skills that we "engage" in such attributions), it is important to consider that
such potentially unjustified attributions may constitute a fundamental source of communication failure. The present text is meant to provide a careful assessment of relevant similarities as well as potential dissimilarities in individual persons’ Backgrounds, for the purpose of identifying a possible source of communication failure.

The material to be discussed is divided into six chapters, of which the first four contain a detailed exposition of Searle’s views relevant to the issue of communication. The first chapter compares Quine’s and Searle’s approaches to meaning. No two approaches to meaning could be more radically dissimilar than Quine’s third-person approach, and Searle’s first-person point of view. Quine’s approach is an extreme example of contemporary theories of meaning categorically rejected by Searle. Quine argues that meaning is indeterminate, and against Quine Searle argues that (the speaker’s) meaning is subjectively determinate.

The second chapter presents Searle’s theory of the Background and related concepts, and Searle’s solution to what can be called the epistemic Other Minds Problem: an important issue in any discussion about communication.

The third chapter contains an exposition of Searle’s views concerning the individual speaker’s subjective intention to engage in linguistic behavior. Searle’s early theory of how speakers’ subjective intentions are interpretable in the case of the so-called indirect speech acts (strongly influenced by Grice’s views on this subject), is especially interesting, for his 1979 theory of indirect speech acts appears to have led him to the realization that the philosophy of language is inseparable from, and indeed, a branch of the philosophy of mind. As well, it is in his treatment of indirect speech acts that he first discovered the need to appeal to speakers’ nonconscious Background capacities that underlie both the production and the interpretation of linguistic actions. In the last section of this chapter, I provide some speculative suggestions that perhaps our ability to correctly
interpret other speakers' subjective intentions is perceptual, rather than inferential (as Searle in his early treatment of indirect speech acts suggests).

My fourth chapter is an exposition of Searle's views concerning the intersubjective aspects of communication, among others of Searle's more recent views on the so-called "collective intentionality," that, in his opinion, together with the more fundamental notion of the Background, is a necessary ingredient of any discussion regarding communication.

In my fifth chapter, I survey and develop further those aspects of Searle's theory of language and mind that are particularly relevant to the Background of communication. This part of my text is intended to sort out what kind of Background attributions from the first-person case may contribute to, and what kind of Background attributions from the first-person case may potentially undermine the possibility of successful communication.

My last chapter offers a short case study: an analysis of a particular sequence of communicative actions between two interlocutors, employing Searle's inherently plausible theoretical apparatus.
PART ONE: MEANING
CHAPTER ONE

INDETERMINACY, EMPIRICISM AND SEARLE

One of the fundamental questions with respect to communication is the question of meaning: What is it that speakers communicate by way of speaking to one another? To a large extent, Searle's unique theory of meaning arose from his dissatisfaction with the prevailing accounts, among them most prominently the account provided by Quine. In the following I compare the radically different views of the two prominent philosophers, beginning with Quine.2 In the last section of this chapter I focus on Searle's 1987 paper, "Indeterminacy, empiricism and the first person," as this paper contains Searle's most explicit critique of Quine.

Quine on meaning

While lay persons seldom wonder about the precise nature of meanings (as a matter of fact, there is no clear, pretheoretical notion of meanings among lay persons), its proper explication has been one of the main concerns of modern philosophers. One intuitive way to approach meanings would be to appeal to translation, taking meanings to be what is preserved in correct translation. On this account, meanings with a

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2 The reader's familiarity with Quine's work is presupposed. My discussion of Quine's views is not meant as an exhaustive analysis, but only as a reminder to the reader: I discuss only those aspects of his theory that are relevant to Searle's critique of him.
determinate semantic content ("graspable" by minds) would exist prior to, and independently of some specific translation scheme (e.g., English to French), to be captured by correct translation, or missed by incorrect translation. The ontological construal of meanings as linguistically neutral mental entities with determinate semantic contents is the notion Quine argues against. Quine’s general charge against the "uncritical," "mentalistic" notion of meanings is that it is unintelligible: there is no fact of the matter to be right or wrong about.

Quine uses two thought experiments to illuminate this point: the example of the learner of a first language, and the example of the radical translator of a hitherto unknown language spoken by an alien tribe. Linguistic interaction between the interpreter and the speaker, in the form of the interpreter observing the speaker’s responses to observation sentences\(^3\) queried by the interpreter under shared stimulus conditions, exhausts the admissible empirical evidence (the "entering wedge") isolated by Quine from all the other types of information we actually use to interpret meaning. Quine’s question in the famous Chapter Two of Word and Object is precisely: "How much of language can be made sense of in terms of its stimulus conditions, and what scope this leaves for empirically unconditioned variation in one’s conceptual scheme" (Quine 1960, 26). From the third-person observer’s view, neither the language learner (radical translator), nor the language tutor (alien speaker) has direct, empirical access to the other’s "mental life." Adult radical translators differ from prelinguistic infants in that they already possess a conceptual scheme: that of their own home language. However, they, like prelinguistic infants, are ignorant of the conceptual scheme of their interlocutors. In an attempt to

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\(^3\) ‘Observation sentence’ is a technical term, used by Quine to refer to the basic unit of linguistic interpretation: “an observation sentence is an occasion sentence on which speakers of the language can agree outright on witnessing the occasion.” Occasion sentences, e.g., "It is raining," are "true on some occasions, false on others" (Quine 1990a, 3).
match the expressions of Jungle language with expressions of their mother tongue, say English, under shared stimulus conditions, they are bound to impose their own conceptual scheme onto their interlocutors, taking English words at their face value. Quine's examples were meant to highlight what is equally applicable to the domestic case: conjectures concerning other minds, or conceptual schemes, can be and are made by language users, but such conjectures are not directly discovered from the shared stimulus conditions: they are imposed by interpreters taking their own conceptual scheme for granted.

According to Quine, in order to make scientific sense of the pretheoretical notion of meaning, one can and must rely on public evidence. Given the ways in which language is acquired and used, linguistic behavior is eminently suited for empirical study. Language, "a social art," is publicly learned and produced; therefore, it can be publicly studied as well. As recently as 1990, Quine has emphatically maintained that linguistic behaviorism, that is, the method of observing speakers' linguistic behavior from a third-person point of view, is mandatory for the purpose of explicating the objective nature of meaning.

In psychology one may or may not be a behaviorist, but in linguistics one has no choice. Each of us learns his language by observing other people's verbal behavior and having his own faltering verbal behavior observed and reinforced or corrected by others. We depend strictly on overt behavior in observable situations. As long as our command of our language fits all external checkpoints, where our utterance or our reaction to someone's utterance can be appraised in the light of some shared situation, so long all is well. Our mental life between checkpoints is indifferent to our rating as a master of the language. There is nothing in linguistic meaning beyond what is to be gleaned from overt behavior in observable circumstances. (Quine 1990a, 37-8)

Quine unconditionally accepts the basic method of natural science, namely, third-person observation as the final arbiter of truth, and demands that all our intuitive notions -
- if they are to be considered scientifically legitimate -- be transformed into publicly testable ones; that is, their clarification should proceed in a manner dictated by the methods of empirical science. Quine does not hold science infallible, but he insists that the epistemic justification of scientific claims cannot but come from science itself: epistemology is naturalized (Quine 1969, 69-91). We have no independent means to judge whether our knowledge claims, formulated on the basis of observable sensory evidence, correspond to actual states of affairs in the world. We cannot get "outside" our senses and compare our sensory data with the world from a God's eye view, in order to find out whether or not our theories describe the world correctly. Instead of aspiring for the ultimate truth about the world, we have to settle for posits that yield inferences to the best explanation. We predict future sensory stimulations by means of our theories formulated on the basis of past sensory stimulations. All of our theoretical predictions are subject to revision. Their ultimate success lies in correct predictions of future sensory stimulations.

Traditionally, public accessibility has been the cardinal requirement of empirical science. The term 'empirical' is used by Quine to describe the method that relies on sensory evidence: "nihil in mente quod non prius in sensu" (Quine 1990a, 19). 'Objective' for Quine is an epistemic term that restricts our method of empirical inquiry: "The requirement of intersubjectivity is what makes science objective" (Quine 1990a, 5). Only publicly observable states and events may become objects of an objective, empirical science. Intrasubjectively experienced states and events (beliefs, thoughts, desires, etc.) are therefore excluded from the list of suitable objects for empirical inquiry.

One's sensory stimulations, the "surface irritations of our nerve endings," are themselves not publicly observable, yet are the fundamental clues of the empiricist. Quine acknowledges that since no speakers share sensory receptors with another, they
cannot, strictly speaking, share stimulus conditions, if these are defined as surface irritations. Each speaker can, though, assent to a given observation sentence queried on any occasion at which the same total set of her receptors are triggered, and if such a sentence is assented to by all speakers at the same time, then it can be said to be observational for the whole community (Quine 1981, 25). Quine reflects on his pupil, Donald Davidson’s proposal to locate the intersubjectively accessible stimulus, not at the nerve endings, but “farther out, in the nearest shared cause of the pertinent behavior of the two subjects.” "But," Quine responds, "I remain unserved in locating stimulus in the neural input, for my interest is epistemological" (Quine 1990c, 3). His most recent stance on this issue is to appeal to what he calls "empathy":

The view that I have come to, regarding intersubjective likeness of stimulation, is rather that we can simply do without it. The observation sentence ‘Rabbit’ has its stimulus meaning for the linguist, and the observation sentence ‘Gavagai’ has its stimulus meaning for the informant. The linguist, observes natives assenting to ‘Gavagai’ when he, in their position, would have assented to ‘Rabbit.’ So he tries assigning his stimulus meaning of ‘Rabbit’ to ‘Gavagai’ . . . Empathy dominates the learning of language, both by child and by field linguist. In the child’s case it is the parent’s empathy. The parent assesses the appropriateness of the child’s observation sentence by noting the child’s orientation and how the scene would look from there. In the field linguist’s case it is empathy on his own part when he makes his first conjecture about ‘Gavagai’ from the native’s utterance and orientation, and again when he queries ‘Gavagai’ for the native’s assent in a promising subsequent situation. We all have an uncanny knack for empathizing another’s perceptual situation . . . comparable, almost, to our ability to recognize faces . . . Empathy guides the linguist still as he rises above observation sentences through his analytical hypotheses, though here he is trying to project into the native’s associations and grammatical trends rather than his perceptions. (Quine 1990c, 3-4)

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4 See also: "Practical psychology is what sustains our radical translator all along the way, and the method of psychology is empathy: he imagines himself in the native’s situation as best he can" (Quine 1990a, 46).
Closely related to Quine's position on naturalized epistemology is his thesis concerning the *relativity of ontology*. If we, like Quine, adhere to a naturalized epistemic approach, it will constrain our ontological commitments, that is, how much we can surmise of the constituents of the world. The question of what is *real* must be settled within science, "there being no higher tribunal." Quine claims that he is a "scientific realist" (Quine 1990b, 229), but he draws a boundary between what information regarding the real world is received through the senses, and what is added by way of linguistic conceptualization. While we must accept the reality of the external world and its (uninterpreted) effects on our senses (because this much is taken for granted by all natural science, and we cannot do better than follow the dictates of science), claims about the independent existence of any particular entity, event, state of affairs or fact are not conclusively verified by empirical evidence, hence the truth or falsity of such claims is relative to the theory that asserts them. There can be no philosophy of ontology prior to science. Our world-view concerning the ontology of particular entities is *derived via inference* from theoretical posits, on the basis of our only *discoverable* clues -- the effects of the external world upon our senses.

By 'theorizers' Quine means not only scientists or philosophers but everyday language users as well. Only as we learn our first language from our tutors do we acquire our notions of common everyday objects, together with the language to name them. The stimulations of our sensory surfaces alone do not provide us with such notions: the socially inculcated language of our tutors associated with the stimulations of our sensory surfaces does so.

The nerve endings, on the one hand, are the place of unprocessed information about the world. The stage where this information has become processed to the point of awareness, on the other hand, is the basic level for conceptualization and vocabulary. (Quine 1970, 3)
To perceive that there is a rabbit is to divide the totality of available sensory stimuli received from without according to one particular conceptual scheme: although the rabbit, its shadow and the noise its scurrying-about makes, can be considered as one entity under one scheme, we learn to perceive the rabbit, its shadow, and the noise as three different entities, relative to another scheme, as dictated by our community. We learn to report a salient portion of the empirical data by the use of the term 'rabbit.' For Quine, rabbits and other middle-sized, everyday objects are as much posits, as are the most esoteric scientific objects, such as neutrinos or protons. Quine repeatedly emphasizes the pragmatic usefulness of our strong predilection of conceiving of the world as one that contains rabbits and other objects: "Bodies, for the common man, are basically what there are; and even for the esoteric ontologist bodies are the point of departure. Man is a body-minded animal, among body-minded animals. Man and other animals are body-minded by natural selection; for body-mindedness has evident survival value in town and jungle" (Quine 1973, 54). He only warns philosophers not to take the entities named by language, but unsupported by sensory evidence, for granted. Quine’s comment: "There are . . . philosophers who overdo this line of thought, treating ordinary language as sacrosanct" (Quine 1960, 3). Quine allows the "common man" to go about his business as usual, but expects philosophers to develop a self-critical awareness of what all of us "body-minded animals" are doing. What portion of the totality of occurrent sensory stimulations counts as salient is relative to the particular interests of the theorizers: ontological claims are relative to theory. Conceptualization helps to organize the stimulations in a usefully simple way; entities posited by conceptualization, however, are not discovered in, but only inferred from the occurrent sensory stimuli.

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5 See also Quine 1960, 234: 238.
Everything to which we concede existence is a posit from the standpoint of a description of the theory-building process, and simultaneously real from the standpoint of the theory that is being built . . . What reality is like is the business of scientists; . . . and what there is, what is real, is part of that question. The question how we know what there is is simply part of the question . . . of the evidence for truth about the world. (Quine 1960, 22-23)

That there can be several theories compatible with the available sensory evidence is the tenet of the well-known underdetermination-of-theory-by-evidence thesis. However, Quine’s indeterminacy-of-translation thesis goes one radical step further: Given the empirical constraints on admissible evidence as imposed by Quine, there is no way for us to decide which of the several possible theories (i.e., translation manuals, each compatible with the admissible evidence, but incompatible with one another) is correct in associating linguistic expressions with the available sensory evidence. Between linguistic expressions and their association with sensory stimulations, there is no unique (objective) fact of the matter with respect to meanings to be right or wrong about, with the exception of observation sentences that we interpret holophrastically, that is, directly on the basis of empirical data, and without the intrusion of some theoretical hypothesis. Given the multiplicity of possible ways in which each of us may associate his or her own nerve-firings with public linguistic expressions, both speaker and interpreter are bound to impose fully as much as they discover when attempting to establish the objectively "correct" meaning of linguistic expressions (Quine 1990c, 4-5).

With respect to the meaning of subsentential elements, i.e., of referring terms, Quine's conclusion follows from his ontological relativity thesis. The intuitive notion that there are determinate, publicly discoverable entities of the world to which speakers can correctly or incorrectly refer by means of referring terms, is not conclusively supported by the admissible empirical evidence, according to Quine. Reference is indeterminate,
because both the extension of the referring term, and the speaker's meaning (sense) of the purported referent are inscrutable. The purported referents of referring terms are theoretical posits inferred from the speaker's association of his occurrent sensory stimuli with publicly inculcated linguistic concepts: "[T]he maxim is his own imposition, toward settling what is objectively indeterminate" (Quine 1969, 34; italics are mine).

To summarize Quine's points so far discussed: It is taken for granted that there exists a preconceptual external world that affects our sensory apparatus. Our best means to explain and to predict such influence is natural science; its methods must be applied in all objective inquiry. Scientific claims are constrained by the requirement of intersubjective observability. Our ontological commitments are relative to the theory contributed by us, the theorizers. The ontology of meanings can only be defined in terms of empirically accessible stimulus conditions. On this analysis, the meanings of linguistic expressions are indeterminate.

Searle on meaning

Searle, focusing on the competent, mature speaker's accomplishments, claims that no sense can be made of the observation of others' speech behavior unless the observer attributes to others the same underlying causal events that are experienced by the observer herself when speaking: the states of affairs of the world are represented by mental states, which in turn are expressed in the production of utterances. When observing the "behavior" of molecules, clouds, or even of plants and lower animals, the observer need not project her own experiences in order to interpret correctly the events occurring. When observing the (speech) behavior of humans, however, the observer must rely on what is known to her from the first-person case in order to correctly characterize the observed
event as an instance of meaningful speech: it is constitutive of meaningful utterances that they involve the intentional public representation of the contents of one's subjective mental states. The emission of sounds (i.e., physics) without the intention to represent the contents of one's relevant mental state does not amount to meaningful speech behavior; therefore, an observation thereof cannot lead to a correct characterization of the nature of meaning (i.e., semantics). The correct characterization of meaning, following our commonsense intuitions, must involve first-person knowledge of what a speaker means when speaking: "The philosophy of language is a branch of the philosophy of mind" (Searle 1983, vii). According to Searle, the problem of meaning is "the problem of how do we get from the physics to the semantics" (Searle 1983, 27).

Like Quine, Searle asserts that "external realism," i.e., the claim that there exists an external world independent of our representations of it, must be simply taken for granted, although not because natural science says so, but because without this presumption no normal understanding of any further claims could be possible.⁶ According to Searle, Quine's "scientific" realism itself is already relative to one particular epistemic view, i.e., that science is the final arbiter of truth, while Searle's external realism is a fundamental ontological presupposition that is independent of the adoption of one or the other epistemic approach. This presupposition in itself does not imply that there is one best vocabulary for describing reality: "Realism does not say how things are

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⁶ In fact, Searle has never liked the external-internal distinction so dear to some philosophers. He calls it a "spatial metaphor" that "resists any clear interpretation" (Searle 1983, 37). See also his rejection of the Cartesian "privileged access" and its nineteenth-century variant, introspection, discussed below. The external-internal distinction is important to those who build their systems on sharp dichotomies such as mind vs. world, mental vs. physical, private access vs. public access, discovered vs. construed facts. Searle regards minds, their contents and the conditions of the world that depend on contents of minds, as much part of the "exactly one world" that exists, as the features of the world located "outside" perceivers' minds. He labels his realism "external" realism only because in explicating it he feels compelled to argue against contemporary postmodernist approaches that hold all realism to be "internal" to perceivers' minds (see chapter seven of Searle 1995 for details).
but only that there is a way that they are" (Searle 1995, 155; Searle’s italics). The thesis of external realism is consistent with the notion of conceptual relativity, namely, that there can be several distinct ways of describing reality: "The fact that alternative conceptual schemes allow for different descriptions of the same reality . . . has no bearing whatever on the truth of realism" (Searle 1995, 165).

Searle argues that to presume an ontological stance of "external realism" is not to prove it. In fact, Searle says, any attempt to prove external realism would turn out to be circular, that is, it would have to make use of the very claim it intended to prove. External realism is not a hypothesis that upon new evidence may turn out to be false: it is a precondition of our having hypotheses about the world. External realism functions as a "taken-for-granted part of the Background"; it identifies "a space of possibilities" for our statements about the world. It is "pervasive" and "essential for the normal understanding" of our utterances: the possibility of producing pronouncements concerning the world already presupposes the world. The possibility of successful communication depends on the presumption, taken for granted by all speakers, that in speaking we all make reference to the same world that exists independently of our various ways of representing it. Such is the fundamental condition of mutual intelligibility (Searle 1995, 195).

While not contesting the Quinean conceptual, epistemic relativity, Searle disagrees with Quine on the latter’s more controversial ontological relativity thesis. Unlike Quine, Searle does not hold that our ontological commitments regarding the particular entities of the world depend fully on our theories describing it. Instead, more in accordance with

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7 Quine himself only presumes, and does not attempt to prove, his brand of scientific realism, mainly because his interest is epistemological. He is interested in the "flow of evidence from the triggering of the senses to the pronouncements of science" (Quine 1990c, 3).
our commonsense intuitions, Searle holds that, prior to and independently of our theorizing about it, the world contains entities, events and facts or states of affairs with an ontology that is determinate, regardless of our available epistemic means to access, describe, explain or predict them. The mountains and rabbits of the world are not mere theoretical posits, but objectively real entities of the world that would exist pretty much the same way they in fact do, even if we humans had never existed or produced statements about them.⁸

Searle allows the possibility that there are facts in the universe that are not intersubjectively accessible to us, and proposes that the understanding of the nature of any purported phenomenon of the world ought not to be made dependent on, or confused with, the epistemic difficulties of accessing the phenomenon in question. Epistemology does not determine ontology; on the contrary, "the whole point of epistemology is to get at the preexisting ontology" (Searle 1992a, 23).

The world is constituted by organized systems of particles in fields of force (Searle 1992a, 86; see also Searle 1995, 156). This admission is consistent with both external realism and conceptual relativity. Searle’s view is significantly different from Quine’s in that he suggests that the ways in which the particles of the world are organized into systems (the so-called "brute" facts) are discoverable rather than merely construed. Ontology is not fully relativized to human conceptions. In that sense the ontology of the world can be described as constituted by clearly individuated conditions: facts, objects and

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⁸ As we saw, Quine allows such intuitions to be held by laypersons; he even suggests that such intuitions may in fact be correct; but he insists that, scientifically speaking, such intuitions are not justified by our admissible empirical evidence. Quine suggests that empiricism is the epistemology of ontology: if epistemology is naturalized, our ontology must become relativized to it (Quine 1983, 500). There is no first philosophy prior to natural science.
events, most of which exist independently of us observers. Searle’s explanation of what facts are is as follows:

In general, statements are true in virtue of conditions in the world that are not parts of the statement. Statements are made true by how things are in the world that is independent of the statement. We need general terms to name these how-things-are-in-the-world, and “fact” is one such term. Others are “situation” and “state of affairs.” (Searle 1995, 219)

Under the presumption of external realism, the “exactly one” world we live in, according to Searle, comes fully furnished with determinate objects, events and facts, divided into two fundamental ontological categories: objectively vs. subjectively existing entities. The Searlean term ‘objective’ used in the ontological sense describes a mode of existence of some of the entities of the world that is independent of any perceiver or any mental state (Searle 1995, 8). It is an objectively existing fact that there is a keyboard in front of me now, and an objectively existing event that there was a thunderstorm about an hour ago. On the other hand, pains, for example, are subjectively existing states or events of the world, in so far as their mode of existence depends on their being experienced by conscious beings. Naturally, subjectively experienced mental states are at the same time physical, biological states, produced by and realized in the brain, but the fact that they are someone’s subjectively experienced state renders their ontology subjective. The fact that presently I have a headache is a subjectively existing fact in so far as it is experienced by me subjectively. At the same time, my headache, as experienced by me must have some objectively existing neurophysiological causal constituents. Most importantly, for Searle, but not for Quine, both objective and subjective ontologies are features of the pretheoretical, real world; that is, they are not

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9 His 1995 text focuses on what he labels “institutional” facts, facts of the world the existence of which depends on human agreement, as opposed to the “brute” facts of the world which are totally independent of any human representations (Searle 1995, 2).
defined by our theories or preferred world-view, but rather, they are the pre-existing conditions that make our public language possible. The determinate ontology of the world is what makes our statements true or false. As we shall see shortly, Searle claims that, although the reality of the determinate facts of the "external" world cannot be proven, they must be taken for granted for the sake of the intelligibility of our perceptions of the facts of the world. We experience our perceptions as caused by the determinate objects, states or events of the external world (regardless of whether or not our perceptions are actually caused by the entities of the world). This is the view that Searle calls "naive realism": I directly experience the causal impact of objects on me (Searle 1983, 74).

The distinction objective vs. subjective is also drawn by Searle in an epistemic sense. Epistemically speaking, these terms characterize our judgments about the features of the world. The truth or falsity of objective judgments is determined by their correspondence to objective facts of the world, independently of anybody’s attitudes or feelings about them. It is an objective judgment, stating an objectively existing fact of the world (the past-tense form of the verb notwithstanding) that "Rembrandt lived in Amsterdam during the year 1632"; on the other hand, "Rembrandt is a better artist than Rubens" is a subjective judgment, depending on the speaker’s comparative evaluation of the artistic merits of the two painters (Searle 1995, 9; see also Searle 1992a, 19).

Searle agrees with Quine that knowledge is by definition objective in the epistemic sense, but there is an important difference between their views concerning the ways in

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10 As I alluded to earlier, Quine himself has pondered the theoretical possibility of acknowledging the ontology of the facts of the world as independent of our theories; despite his pupil Davidson’s repeated attempts to convince Quine about the plausibility of locating the intersubjectively shared stimulus "not at the bodily surface, but farther out, in the nearest shared cause of the pertinent behavior" of interlocutors, Quine remains "unimpressed" by the "peculiarly philosophical appeals" to the purportedly determinate facts of the world (Quine 1960, 248; 1990a, 41).
which objective impartiality can be achieved. For Quine, we must rely on public observation in order to achieve objective (=impartial) knowledge; according to Searle, the adoption of the third-person point of view is not the only approach to objective (=impartial), empirical knowledge. In fact, the subjectively existing ontological features of the world crucial to the correct explication of the nature of linguistic meaning must be studied from the first-person point of view, given their mind-dependent ontology. Subjectivity is constitutive of the ontology of these facts, and a third-person characterization of subjectively existing facts of the world simply cannot capture all the ontological aspects that constitute such facts.\footnote{In 1992 he explains that among the foundations of Modern Materialism is the following \textit{incorrect} view:}

\begin{quote}
Science is objective. It is objective not only in the sense that it strives to reach conclusions that are independent of personal biases and points of view, but more important, it concerns a reality that is objective. Science is objective because reality is itself objective. (Searle 1992a, 10)
\end{quote}

A little later he adds:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Because it is a mistake to suppose that the ontology of the mental is objective, it is a mistake to suppose that the methodology of a science of the mind must concern itself only with objectively observable behavior.} (Searle 1992a, 20; Searle's italics)
\end{quote}
everyday commonsensical usage of the term.\textsuperscript{12}

Searle strongly disagrees with the prevalent scientific \textit{Weltanschauung} that dictated the adoption of the constrained method of observation from an exclusively third-person point of view, and gives some suggestions as to the historical explanation for this pervasive practice.

It is part of the persistent objectivizing tendency of philosophy and science since the seventeenth century that we regard the third-person objective point of view as preferable to, as somehow more "empirical" than, the first-person, "subjective" point of view. What looks then like a simple declaration of a scientific fact -- that language is a matter of stimulations of nerve endings -- turns out on examination to be the expression of a metaphysical preference and, I believe, a preference that is unwarranted by the facts. The crucial fact in question is that performing speech acts -- and meaning things by utterances -- goes on at a level of intrinsic first-person intentionality. Quine's behaviorism is motivated by a deep antimentalistic metaphysics which makes the behaviorist analysis seem the only analysis that is scientifically respectable. (Searle 1987, 145)\textsuperscript{13}

According to Searle, empiricists, when attempting to account for our naive, commonsense notions of mental phenomena, falsely view themselves as facing but two options: either to follow the untenable Cartesian dualism, or to declare our commonsense notions of the mental unintelligible (to be either wholly eliminated, or rewritten in materialistic terms). To choose the second option would mean to go against the most natural, everyday experience that is taken for granted by all of us: the indubitable fact that we have conscious thoughts. To choose the first option would mean to accept the embarrassing "Cartesian paraphernalia," such as "meanings-as-introspectable-entities," "private objects," "privileged access," etc., that cannot be accommodated by a serious science of physical

\textsuperscript{12} In 1992, Searle points out that it is wrong to suggest, as Quine did, that "all empirical facts, in the ontological sense of being facts in the world, are equally accessible epistemically to all competent observers. We know independently that this is false. There are lots of empirical facts that are not equally accessible to all observers" (Searle 1992a, 72).

\textsuperscript{13} Similar views are expressed in Searle 1992a, 16.
matter. To accept the Cartesian class of mental entities would be akin to accepting the belief in the immortality of the soul, spiritualism and other related religious, "mysterious," or "occult" sentiments. Empiricists end up choosing the second option, led not so much by their conviction of its truth, as by their terror of the implications of accepting the other alternative, religious antis cientism (see for example Searle 1980a, 422; 1983, 263; 1987, 146; 1992a, 13; 1994, 208).  

Part of the problem as Searle sees it is that discussions of the irresolvable mind-body problem (our Cartesian legacy) are couched in terms of dichotomies between which philosophers feel compelled to choose. With respect to the mind, you either subscribe to Cartesian dualism, or to one of the various sorts of materialism; you are either a mentalist or a physicalist; you talk either about the mind or about the brain; you can either introspect the contents of your mind or observe overt behavior; you believe either in matter or in spirit (Searle 1984, 14). We have inherited a Cartesian vocabulary, which, in Searle's opinion

includes a series of apparent oppositions: "physical" versus "mental," "body" versus "mind," "materialism" versus "mentalism," "matter" versus "spirit." Implicit in these oppositions is the thesis that the same phenomenon under the same aspects cannot literally satisfy both terms . . . Thus we are supposed to believe that if something is mental, it cannot be physical; that if it is a matter of spirit, it cannot be a matter of matter; if it is immaterial, it cannot be material. But these views seem to me obviously false, given everything we know about neurobiology. (Searle 1992a, 14)

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14 I believe that there is another, independent reason why philosophers tend to view the sacrificing of the achievements of Enlightenment as far more difficult than the elimination of some commonsense notions held by naive lay persons. The promoters of scientism in philosophy see themselves not only in opposition with Church dogma, but also as seekers of knowledge, in opposition to the vulgar masses and their uncritically held opinions. Traditionally, commonsense views have been held by most philosophers to be unworthy of serious consideration. John Searle, a philosophical offspring of the Oxford school of the ordinary language movement, is one of the few who possesses both the analytic skills of the learned and, more importantly, the openness to take our everyday notions seriously. That Searle would perhaps agree with me on this can be seen in what he diagnoses (after Austin) as philosophers suffering from the "ivresse des grands profondeurs" (Searle 1992a, 17).
Searle proposes a new option according to which "one could accept the obvious facts about mental states without accepting the Cartesian apparatus that traditionally went along with the acknowledgment of these facts" (Searle 1992a, 13). According to Searle, among the world’s systems of particles in fields of force, there are certain living systems that possess consciousness, "a biological, and therefore physical, though of course also mental, feature of certain higher-level nervous systems, such as human brains and a large number of different types of animal brains" (Searle 1995, 6). Conscious mental events and states are unique to brains with certain causally efficacious neurophysiological structures. They are biological, physical events and states in so far as they are produced by and realized in the brain (this view is called by Searle "biological naturalism"), but they are also mental by virtue of having some intrinsic, irreducibly mental, ontological features. They are subjectively experienced by the organism that has them; they have a determinate content (with a particular Aspectual Shape) subjectively known by the organism; some mental states are directed towards objects and states of affairs of the world, other than themselves: such mental states are said to Intentionally\textsuperscript{15} represent the world.\textsuperscript{16}

The determinate content of a person’s mental state may be expressed in an utterance produced by that person, although mental states with a determinate content can occur without being expressed through overt linguistic behavior. Conversely, a person may emit an acoustic blast without any relevant mental state occurring to her, as in the case of certain mental disorders. In order for the observable behavior to count as

\textsuperscript{15} I follow Searle’s suggestion of capitalizing terms used in a specific technical sense. ‘Intentionality’ refers to philosophers’ semantic notion of the aboutness relation, while ‘intention’ is understood as the speaker’s purpose (Searle 1983, 3).

\textsuperscript{16} See chapter one of Searle 1983 for details.
meaningful speech, the speaker must *intend* that the determinate content of a mental state be represented (i.e., expressed) by the utterance produced. Linguistic meaning has a first-person subjective ontology, in virtue of being constituted by the subjective experience of the speaker, *both* in the form of her relevant mental state (Intentionally) *representing* the world as well as in the form of her *intention* that the mental state in question be expressed by the utterance produced. The utterance produced by the speaker *derives* its meaning from the determinate content of the speaker's relevant mental state that is intentionally expressed by the speaker in the production of that utterance.\(^\text{17}\)

For my present purposes this much about Searle's general ontology of linguistic meaning ought to suffice. Despite Searle's insistence that this ontology must be dealt with independently of our epistemic frailties, we may justly wonder how one gains epistemic access to subjectively existing facts. The exclusive reliance on the observation of overt linguistic behavior must be rejected: publicly observable speech behavior and the contents of speakers' actually occurring mental states are only contingently related, Searle says, and the mere description of observable behavior "leaves out the mind" that makes meaningful speech behavior possible.\(^\text{18}\) Given the subjective ontology of (conscious) mental states, their epistemology must necessarily involve the first-person point of view, according to Searle: "In all discussions in the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind, it is absolutely essential at some point to remind oneself of the first-person case" (Searle 1987, 126). However, the Cartesian "privileged access" or its nineteenth-century variant, the method of introspection, are categorically rejected by Searle (Searle 1990b,

\(^{17}\) See chapter six of Searle 1983 for details.

\(^{18}\) The main focus of this analysis is Searle's critique of the Quinean behavioristic explanation of linguistic meaning; however, in 1992 Searle gives a detailed critique of several other contemporary materialistic theories of the mind, each reaching the common verdict: all of them leave out the mind, without which meaning cannot be explicited. See chapter one of Searle 1992a for details.
635; 1992a, 13). This rejection is in full accordance with his earlier rejection of the
 external vs. internal dichotomy. According to Searle, privileged access is a spatial
 metaphor suggesting that one's consciousness is like a privately owned room into which
 only the "owner" herself is allowed "to enter." This notion is unintelligible, for the
 "owner," the "property" and the "act of entering" are indistinguishable. Similarly, says
 Searle, introspection, a visual metaphor, is just outward observation (i.e., "specting")
turned inward (i.e., "intro"). The means of the inward viewing, that is, consciousness,
cannot be separated from the object of viewing, which is in this case consciousness itself.
Consciousness itself cannot be turned into an object of observation (Searle 1992a, 98).

But then it is false to claim that the only admissible source of objective, empirical
knowledge is the method of third-person observation. The modern dichotomy of the
observing subject and the observed object does not work for the contents of subjective
consciousness itself. For example, I know of my own consciousness because
consciousness is the way in which I experience my occurrent mental states. It would be
impossible for me to deny that I am conscious, because my denial itself presupposes my
being conscious. The apparent Cartesian flavor of this consideration ought not to confuse
us here, since, unlike Descartes, Searle does not postulate any special metaphysical realm
in order to account for the conscious experience of our mental life: mental states are
subjectively experienced physical states with a determinate Intentional content under a
certain Aspect, produced by and realized in the brain. Although Searle uses his
consciousness as an epistemic means for conceptualizing the ontology of our fundamental
epistemic means, consciousness itself, he concludes that the contents of one's own
consciousness are not observed, but subjectively experienced. When I have a certain
subjective mental state with a particular content, I do not observe this content (akin to
observing an object of the external world), instead, I consciously experience the content
of my mental state, and I know what it is I have, or experience. I know (in this moment) that I am not hungry, that I see the keyboard in front of me, that I would like to have a glass of water etc, because that is what I (in this moment) consciously experience. Subjective, first-person experience is a perfectly legitimate form of objective (i.e., impartial) knowledge in Searle’s opinion.

According to Searle, I do not infer the presence of rabbits by "construing a theory based on evidence," I simply see that there is a rabbit scurrying by (Searle 1987, 146; Searle 1995, 134). Searle makes an important distinction between the object and the content of visual experiences, and of all other Intentional mental states as well. The object of the above mentioned subjective visual experience is an objectively existing, determinate event of the world: there is a rabbit scurrying by. The content of my subjective visual experience in the above case is that I see that there is a rabbit scurrying by, and that there is a rabbit scurrying by is causing this visual experience. The objects and the contents of Intentional mental states exist independently. I could have a visual experience with the same content as the above even if there were no rabbit out there, scurrying by.19 I know the determinate content of my current visual experience directly, through my conscious experience of the mental state I have at the moment.20

Another important theoretical notion of Searle is the so-called Aspectual Shape

19 See chapter two of Searle 1983 for details with respect to perception. Searle differentiates between a visual experience that I could have of seeing a rabbit, even if there were no rabbits existing in the world, and a veridical visual perception of a rabbit that requires for its veracity that there be a rabbit causing my seeing a rabbit. Hallucinations are real events produced by and realized in the brain: they have a determinate content, but they lack an object existing in the world that corresponds to their content (Searle 1983, 38).

20 Obviously, I can have mental states the content of which does not involve currently perceived events of the world, such as thoughts. Still, whatever the content of my mental state is, I experience it subjectively, i.e., I know what I am thinking. Naturally, I may be wrong about the facts of the world in what I am thinking or perceiving. Searle is a fallibilist with respect to our knowledge of the world, but he claims that we do know the determinate contents of our own mental states.
that concerns the particular point of view from which the object of an Intentional mental state is being experienced: I always experience the contents of my mental states under certain Aspects and not others: there is a difference in the Aspectual Shape between my seeing that object out there as a rabbit, as opposed to seeing it as a complex of undetached rabbit parts, and I know the difference.

When I intend to represent publicly the determinate content of my current mental state by uttering 'There's a rabbit,' I know what I mean by my uttering of this English sentence, since I know the determinate content (under a determinate Aspect) of my subjective visual experience that I intend to represent publicly by uttering this sentence.\(^2\)

There is a difference in the Aspectual Shape between my meaning rabbit and my meaning a complex of undetached rabbit parts by my uttering 'rabbit,' and I know the difference, even if this difference may not be obvious to the third-person observer (Searle 1992a, 156).

Searle's conclusion is that what he himself means by the linguistic expressions uttered by him is a determinate fact, directly experienced by him. What is true of him, of course, must be true of other competent persons, given that all normal, competent members of the human species possess the necessary neurophysiological structures that produce subjectively real conscious mental states: same causes beget same effects (Searle 1992a, 75). There exist determinate meanings expressed by way of utterances produced by speakers, subjectively experienced by the speakers themselves. The question of interpersonal interpretability of such meanings is an epistemic problem, the so-called

\(^2\) See chapter six in Searle 1983 for details with respect to intending to represent by speaking. Naturally, Searle has a lot more to say about the factors that determine the content of one's mental states: the contents of mental states (always experienced with a specific Aspectual Shape) are determined relative to the speaker's Network of beliefs, which in turn function relative to the speaker's Background capacities. These issues will be dealt with in the next chapter. For the purpose of the present discussion it suffices to point out that Searle views mental states as having a determinate content.
epistemic Other Minds Problem, that does not affect the determinate ontology of meanings subjectively intended by speakers (Searle 1992a, 71). In the remainder of this chapter I comment on Searle’s critique of Quine’s indeterminacy thesis, as it appears in Searle 1987.

Searle contra Quine

The opening statements of Searle’s assessment of Quine’s indeterminacy thesis are worth quoting at length as they provide a summary statement as to why, in Searle’s opinion, Quine’s thesis leads to a reductio:

Let us begin by stating the behaviorist assumptions from which Quine originally proceeds. For the sake of developing an empirical theory of meaning, he confines his analysis to correlations between external stimuli and dispositions to verbal behavior. In thus limiting the analysis, he does not claim to capture all the intuitions we have about the pretheoretical notion, but rather the "objective reality" that is left over if we strip away the confusions and incoherencies in the pretheoretical "meaning." The point of the "behavioristic ersatz" is to give us a scientific, empirical account of the objective reality of meaning. On this view, the objective reality is simply a matter of being disposed to produce utterances in response to external stimuli. The stimuli are defined entirely in terms of patterns of stimulations of the nerve endings, and the responses entirely in terms of sounds and sound patterns that the speaker is disposed to emit. But we are not supposed to think that between the stimulus and the verbal response there are any mental entities. We are not supposed to think that there is any consciousness, intentionality, thoughts, or any internal "meanings" connecting the stimuli to the noises. There is just the pattern of stimulus and the pattern of learned response. There will, of course, be neurophysiological mechanisms mediating the input and the output, but the details of their structure do not matter to a theory of meaning, since any mechanism whatever that systematically associated stimulus and response would do the job as well. For example, any computer or piece of machinery that could emit the right sounds in response to the right stimuli would have "mastered" a language as well as any other speaker, because that is all there is to the mastery of a language. Quine, I take it, does not deny the existence of inner mental states and processes; he just thinks they
are useless and irrelevant to developing an empirical theory of language. (Searle 1987, 123-24)

Searle's diagnosis of Quine's attitude to a semantics based on common sense is as follows:

... he is assuming from the start that there is no psychologically real level of meaning beyond simple physical dispositions to respond to verbal stimuli. To repeat, Quine assumes from the very start the nonexistence of (objectively real) meanings in any psychological sense. If you assume that they are so much as possible, his argument fails. But now it begins to look as though the real issue is not about indeterminacy at all; it is about extreme linguistic behaviorism ... It is only assuming the nonexistence of intentionalistic meanings that the argument for indeterminacy succeeds at all. (Searle 1987, 129)

In other words, Quine's argument is valid only if one accepts his, in Searle's opinion, untenable, adherence to a third-person point of view. Searle suggests that Quine denies that speakers know what they themselves mean when speaking, a fact that ought to be obvious to any mature speaker of a language. Quine denies this obvious fact simply because he is bound by his loyalty to the third-person point of view. Objectively real facts known commonsensically by all of us ought not to be sacrificed for the sake of some questionable standard of scientific respectability. Searle charges Quine and his followers with confusing the question of the ontological nature of meanings with the epistemic question, "How do I know what another person means." While a response to this epistemic question may be useful because it helps to explain how we communicate meaning from one speaker to another, the nature of meaning itself must be considered as

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22 Searle remarks, hinting at his personal disagreement with the current Zeitgeist upheld by the scientific-minded philosophical community:

In a different philosophical environment from the one we live in, this might well be the end of the discussion. Linguistic behaviorism was tried and refuted by Quine ... But interestingly, he does not regard it as having been refuted. (Searle 1987, 127)
more fundamental, and so it must be explained, regardless of the epistemic peculiarities of the phenomenon. Quine and his disciples treat the ontology of meaning as *wholly* dependent on their *preferred* epistemic method, namely, third-person observation, which is simply assumed but not argued for as preferable (Searle 1987, 143).

Searle's main critique of Quine's theory is that Quine, perhaps unwittingly, by the very claims in support of his indeterminacy thesis, had in fact produced a *reductio ad absurdum* argument of his basic premises (Searle 1987, 124). According to Searle, Quine himself employs certain distinctions concerning meaning, known to all of us "from our own case," to show us what is left undetermined by conditions imposed by his unjustified preference for "extreme" linguistic behaviorism. If such distinctions were indeed indeterminate, Quine could not have employed them to make the very case for indeterminacy. Hence, Quine's thesis leads to a *reductio*.

In Searle's opinion, there is an objectively real fact of the matter concerning meanings: "By any reasonable standard of objective reality, it is a matter of objective reality that 'There's a rabbit' and 'There's an undetached rabbit part' just do not mean the same things" (Searle 1987, 126). In light of Searle's recent distinctions between the epistemic vs. the ontological senses of the terms 'objective' and 'subjective' (as explained in his 1995 text), Searle may mean here that (epistemically speaking) our personal inclinations do not play any role whatsoever in establishing the linguistic fact that these two expressions of the English language do not mean the same: the difference in their meaning is an impartially judged fact of the world in general, and of semantics in particular. But, are facts concerning meanings objective in the Searlean ontological sense? In line with Searle's own 1995 ontological definition, semantic facts, i.e., facts concerning meanings in general, exist subjectively, that is, dependent on being experienced by some conscious mind: there exist no meanings independently of the minds
of observers. Meanings constitute a type of "agentive function" assigned to physical objects (such as speech sounds or marks on paper) by agents. All agentive functions are observer-relative: "Within the category of agentive functions is a special category of those entitites whose agentive function is to symbolize, represent, stand for, or -- in general -- to mean something or other (Searle 1995, 23; Searle's italics). For example, the function of the sentence 'There's a rabbit' is to represent, truly or falsely, the state of affairs that there is a rabbit.

Observer-relative features are always created by the intrinsic mental phenomena of the users, observers, etc., of the objects in question. Those mental phenomena are, like all mental phenomena, ontologically subjective; and the observer-relative features inherit that ontological subjectivity. But this ontological subjectivity does not prevent claims about observer-relative features from being epistemically objective. (Searle 1995, 12-3)

While in principle it is possible to assign any meaning function to a string of sounds (e.g., I can stipulate that by 'rabbit' I mean Bugs Bunny), for social, communicative purposes the meaning functions assigned to various strings of sounds must be assigned collectively, and the assignment must be maintained collectively: it would become very hard to communicate by way of uttering strings of sounds had we not collectively agreed upon their assigned meaning function. The collective or social agreement by which the meaning of linguistic expressions is created and maintained over time, is, of course, produced by the individual members of the collective, via their individual Intentional mental states representing the collective agreement. Thus, by 'meaning' Searle either means the collectively produced and maintained public (i.e.,

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23 Searle defines those features of the world that exist "relative to the intentionality of observers, users, etc" as being "observer-relative" (Searle 1995, 9; Searle's italics).

24 For details, see chapter one of Searle 1995.
social) meanings of linguistic expressions over time (as argued in his *Speech Acts* in 1969, and reiterated in Searle 1995)\(^{25}\) or, alternatively, he means individual speakers’ biologically produced and realized subjective Intentional mental contents from which the meaning of the utterance is derived on a particular occasion of being produced by the speaker (as argued in Searle’s *Intentionality* in 1983). Neither the "social" nor the "subjective"\(^{26}\) notion of meaning suggested by Searle are compatible with Quine’s notion of stimulus conditions correlated with speakers’ behavioral dispositions. Quine denies that mental states have determinate Intentional contents, i.e., meanings. It is important to keep apart the three distinct notions of meaning involved in this discussion:

1) The naive, mentalistic notion of meanings, according to which meanings are determinate, independently existing entities with a possibly Cartesian mental ontology, "graspable" by minds. Both Searle and Quine deny that such meanings exist.

2) The socially determined "meanings" of linguistic expressions: in Quine’s opinion, these "meanings" do not "exist" independently of some particular linguistic-conceptual scheme, and are not discoverable from the stimulus conditions. Rather, these "meanings" are relative to and arise from the practice of the social art of language in one or the other linguistic community; e.g., if the community of English speakers no longer uses the term ‘gay’ to describe Easter baskets but rather to label homosexuals, there are no facts that determine the new "meaning" of the term; it "exists" only relative to the new communal practice. However, as even Quine admits, we do make use of our knowledge of such "meanings" when communicating, or when actually translating alien languages to our home language. For Searle, such "meanings" are social facts, created and maintained by the collective of individuals within a speech community. Type (2) "meanings" are what Searle’s 1969 *Speech Acts* is about.

3) The so-called speakers’ intended utterance meanings, i.e., the determinate Intentional content of a speaker’s mental state that is intentionally expressed by the speaker in the

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\(^{25}\) In his 1995 text Searle explains that the ontology of collectively created and maintained meanings of linguistic expressions (like any other social fact) is partially determined by being represented in the individual Intentional mental states of the members of the collective; in this sense meanings *qua* social facts are subjectively existing ontological facts. For details, see chapter one of Searle 1995. See also my detailed discussion of Searle's notion of "collective intentionality" in chapter four of this dissertation.

\(^{26}\) See also Searle’s detailed discussion of how the "social" and the "subjective" approaches to meaning are consistent "non-competing answers to different questions" (Searle 1989b, 3).
production of a particular speech act. Searle makes an important ontological distinction between this type of meanings and type (1): type (3) meanings are biologically produced and realized, and have certain subjective properties such as the Intentional content, the psychological mode and the Aspectual Shape. Type (3) meanings are what Searle's own theory of language and mind (as discussed in his 1983 *Intentionality*) is about.

That any competent speaker of English knows that the two English sentences 'There's a rabbit' and 'There's an undetached rabbit part' are different in "meaning" does not render Quine's conclusion that there exist no type (1) meanings question-begging: either one of these translations is compatible with the particular set of stimulus conditions effective on the occasion of the native uttering 'Gavagai!' The "meanings" of these two English expressions do not exist prior to and independently of a specific conceptual scheme, that is, our home language. For Quine, the difference in meaning for these two sentences is just a matter of (arbitrary) social practice.

The various, mutually incompatible translation schemes Quine's field linguist may come up with upon witnessing the utterance of 'Gavagai' produced by a native speaker are a result of the field linguist's projections with a bias for his own home language and conceptual scheme, that is, for type (2) "meanings," and with a bias for his own occurrent sensory experience of the stimulus conditions assumedly shared with his interlocutor. When Quine maintains that the indeterminacy of translation applies to the domestic scene as well, he means this: When an English native speaker interprets a particular utterance of another English native speaker, the former assumes that the latter shares his conceptual scheme associated with the publicly inculcated terms of the English language. This is, however, just the assumption of the hypothesis of homophonic translation, based on a shared membership of the same English-speaking community, rather than on the stimulus conditions effective on that occasion (Quine 1960, 59). More importantly, even within the same speech community, there is no fact of the matter on the basis of which the
assignment of type (1) meanings to publicly used linguistic expressions proceeds: the assignment is a mere matter of linguistic practice. Since the "surface irritations" of a speaker’s nerve endings are not publicly accessible, the domestic interpreter projects his own occurring sensory experience of the assumedly shared stimulus conditions onto the other member of his speech community, by way of empathy (Quine 1990a, 46; see also Quine 1990c, 2-4).

When the English native speaker field linguist attempts to translate Jungle expressions into English, his projection is twofold: he projects his own occurring sensory experience of the assumedly shared stimulus conditions onto the Jungle speaker by way of empathy just as he would do with a fellow English native speaker at home, and he projects the domestic linguistic-conceptual scheme of his own speech community onto the Jungle speaker. In other words, he takes his learned home language for granted, and the projection of his sensory experience onto the other speaker to be justified, both of which may be incompatible with the native speaker’s own linguistic-conceptual scheme and occurring sensory experience, respectively. Both the hypothesis of homophonic translation, and the notion that one’s sensory experience of the assumedly shared stimulus conditions is just like someone else’s (i.e., empathy) constitute projections from the first-person case. Although we do rely on such projections when interpreting another, the occurring irritations of one’s nerve endings (the discoverable data) alone do not justify such projections.

Let us examine the example Searle uses to demonstrate his views on translation:

Let us suppose that, as I am out driving with two French friends, Henri and Pierre, a rabbit suddenly crosses in front of the car, and I declare, "There is a rabbit." Let us suppose further that Henri and Pierre do not know the meaning of the English 'rabbit', so each tries to translate it in a way that is consistent with my dispositions to verbal behavior. Henri, we may suppose, concludes that 'rabbit' means stade de lapin. Pierre, on the
basis of the same evidence, decides it means *partie non-détachée d’un lapin*. Now, according to our pre-Quinean intuitions, the problem for both Henri and Pierre is quite simple: they both got it wrong. (Searle 1987, 133)

Searle’s example of Henri’s or Pierre’s erroneously translating Searle’s meaning associated with his utterance of ‘There’s a rabbit’ involves the socially defined, type (2) "meanings" of English and French expressions and Searle’s subjective, type (3) intended utterance meaning. Searle utters an English sentence that has a type (2) "meaning," in order to publicly express his subjective, type (3) intended utterance meaning. Henri and Pierre not only have to translate the English sentence produced by Searle into a French sentence, their translation also has to capture the subjectively intended utterance meaning of Searle, associated with Searle’s uttering of that sentence on that particular occasion. In other words, their translation must depict, not only what was *said* by Searle, but also what was *meant* by him. If Searle *meant* rabbit and not undetached rabbit part by uttering the English term ‘rabbit,’ then ‘partie non-détachée d’un lapin’ is neither an adequate French rendering of what he *said*, nor of what he *meant*. Had he actually *meant* undetached rabbit part27 by uttering the English term ‘rabbit,’ ‘partie non-détachée d’un lapin’ would be an adequate French rendering of what he *meant*, although not of what he *said*. On the other hand, ‘lapin’ would only be an adequate French rendering of what he

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27 Incidentally, the somewhat bizarre expression coined by Quine is "all and sundry undetached parts of rabbits" and not, as Searle puts it, "undetached rabbit part," which could mean the undetached ear, or the undetached paw, or the undetached spleen etc., of the rabbit, surely different from the *whole* rabbit. Searle repeatedly writes "undetached rabbit part" and in French, again he puts it in singular form: "partie non-détachée d’un lapin." I believe that this difference in the exact wording is rather significant in connection with the point Quine intended to make. Both "rabbit" and "all and sundry undetached parts of rabbits" are compatible with *the same set* of stimulus conditions occurring when the native utters ‘Gavagai!’, while the "undetached ear," or "the undetached paw," or "the undetached spleen" translations would have to be associated with *different sets* of stimulus conditions, that is, these translations are not interchangeable translations of 'Gavagai!' uttered under one particular set of stimulus conditions. I also believe that my calling Searle’s attention to this obvious oversight would not radically change his opinion with regard to Quine’s point, since for him, meaning does not depend on external stimulus conditions.
said, but not of what he meant in this latter case.

Since it is the speaker’s intended utterance meaning that determines the meaning of an utterance produced on a particular occasion, the translations provided by Henri and Pierre are inadequate French renderings, not only of what he said, but especially of what Searle implicitly meant by way of producing the utterance of the English term 'rabbit.' That the French phrases provided by Henri and Pierre are inadequate renderings of Searle’s intended utterance meaning can be appreciated by us, sufficiently bilingual readers, only because in his paper Searle made explicit a) the contents of his actually intended implicit utterance meaning in English: "by 'rabbit' I meant rabbit and not undetached rabbit part," and b) the utterance meaning falsely attributed to him by his French interlocutors in French: "Pierre translated what I meant by 'rabbit' as partie non-détachée d'un lapin." As bilingual speakers, we know that the socially defined, type (2) "meaning" of the English term 'rabbit,' and the socially defined, type (2) "meaning" of the French term 'partie non-détachée d'un lapin' (used by Searle to depict the inadequacy of the French translation of his intended utterance meaning) do not happen to coincide. In principle, members of the respective English and French speech communities could stipulate that from now on, the "meaning" of 'rabbit' shall coincide with the "meaning" of 'partie non-détachée d’un lapin.' Relative to their new decision, 'partie non-détachée d’un lapin' would count as an adequate rendering of what Searle originally meant by uttering 'rabbit.' The judgment that 'partie non-détachée d’un lapin' is an inadequate rendering of what Searle meant when he said 'rabbit' is conditional on the respective linguistic-conceptual schemes of English and French as they are defined today.28

28 Quine’s answer, when defending his own theory against the claim that it has the "absurd" consequence that the speaker herself does not know what she means by uttering 'rabbit,' is this: Relative to the coordinate system of one or the other language, "we can and do talk meaningfully and distinctively of rabbits and parts"; but "it is meaningless to ask whether, in general, our terms "rabbit," "rabbit part" .
Neither the subjectively determined "fact" of what Searle intends to express by means of the English sentence uttered by him, nor the socially "determined" social "fact" concerning the "meaning" of the English sentence and its translations into French is factually grounded in Quine's opinion. They are the result of individual or collective human intention and intention is not a concept Quine would want to employ in his theory. For Searle, both "subjectively intended" type (3) and "socially constructed" type (2) meanings are as real or factual (or, epistemically speaking, objectively known) as are the so-called "brute" facts of the world (see chapter one of Searle 1995 for details), and Quine flatly denies this.

Searle argues: "We can detach a specific meaning from a specific linguistic system and find an expression that has that very meaning in another linguistic system. Of course, a word means what it does only relative . . . to a language of which it is a part, but the very relativity of the possession of meaning presupposes the nonrelativity of the meaning possessed" (Searle 1987, 135). Using my above distinctions regarding the various types of meanings involved in the present discussion I interpret Searle here as follows: Although type (2) "meanings" are defined by collective agreement, it is a (Searlean) fact that determinate type (3) meanings exist prior to and independently of language: it is a fact, according to Searle, that speakers have Intentional mental states with determinate contents and that speakers publicly represent the determinate contents of their Intentional states in the production of utterances. It is very likely that, given their relevantly similar species-specific neurophysiology, English and French speakers have Intentional mental states with relevantly similar determinate contents. The determinate Intentional contents

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really refer respectively to rabbits, rabbit parts . . ., rather than to some ingeniously permuted denotations. It is meaningless to ask this absolutely; we can meaningfully ask it only relative to some background language" (Quine 1969, 48).
of English speakers are expressed publicly by way of uttering English expressions, and the determinate Intentional contents of French speakers (relevantly similar to those of the English speakers) are expressed publicly by way of uttering French expressions on particular occasions, when these speakers intend to render public their determinate Intentional mental contents. The socially created and maintained29 "meanings" of the English and French expressions used on such occasions arise from the relevantly similar Intentional mental contents of speakers in the respective linguistic communities. The public "meanings" of linguistic expressions (used in the respective speech communities to express relevantly similar individual Intentional contents of speakers) are plausibly expected to be relevantly similar as well. This explains the intertranslatability of linguistic expressions belonging to different conventional languages such as English and French.

Searle claims that according to Quine, the systematic emission of noises in response to environmental stimuli is "all there is to the mastery of language" (Searle 1987, 124). When Quine says that his radical translation situation applies to the domestic case as well, he does not thereby mean to equate our complete mastery of language with the barren scene of the radical field linguists' attempts to make sense of the native's utterance of 'Gavagai!' Quine does not equate human experience in general, or the mastery of language in particular, with the acquisition of simple S-R connections: Quine is using the strategy of isolation, a strategy often employed by theoretical science. Quine wishes to isolate those components of the complex social phenomenon of language that can be explained in empirical terms; he subjects language to the most rigorous, "preternaturally circumspect" public scrutiny available, in order to separate the empirical

29 I shall discuss in detail the social nature of linguistic meaning in chapter four.
evidence from interfering human interpretation.

My development of stimulus meaning was an exploration of the limits of an empirically defensible and scientifically indispensable core idea of meaning. (Quine 1986, 367)

Empirical evidence alone takes us only as far as the learning of observation sentences, whose set does not constitute a language at all, but only an "entering wedge."

In a democratic court of law, for the sake of impartial justice, we stipulate how much of all the actually available information is admissible as evidence. Onlookers and participants alike may at times feel frustrated (or elated, as the case may be) when learning that certain known facts are to be disregarded. Searle's telling comment on our present judicial system is that it comes short of the pure forms of truth-seeking as established by the "Western Rationalistic Tradition": "there are rules of procedure and evidence in the law which are adhered to even in cases where it is obvious to all concerned that they do not produce the truth. Indeed, they are adhered to even in cases when it is obvious that they prevent arriving at the truth" (Searle 1993, 57). Searle's charge against Quine is fuelled by the same disappointment: Quine's thesis, derived by means of a fictional thought-experiment, for the sake of what Quine requires for objective knowledge, does not truthfully depict our actual linguistic practice.

That there are certain shared and enduring biological and cultural features of human coexistence that, apart from the evident relation between the speaker's occasion sentence and its translation, play a fundamental role in the mastery of language is nowhere denied by Quine. His repeated discussion of the "immemorial doctrine of ordinary enduring middle-sized physical objects" taken for granted by all of us is a case in point. Other fundamental aspects of our mastery of language, not part of the admissible empirical data, but part of the social practice that enables us to engage in
successful linguistic exchanges, are the various types of collateral information we make use of when interpreting others: our particular observations and our general knowledge of the world and of our interlocutors, amassed prior to the occasion of the linguistic exchange, tend to raise our expectations as to the recurrence of familiar events (Quine 1960, 38). We generate "analytical hypotheses" with respect to the meaning of subentential linguistic forms, based on their consistent reappearence in observation sentences, whose meaning (taken holophrastically) we can discern from the empirical data. We may make use of the help of "kibitzers" or bystanders' remarks, and ultimately of our bilingual capacities: 'butterfly' does translate into the French 'papillon,' as Searle says, but that this is so is not determined by stimulus conditions; rather, it is relative to the linguistic practice within the English and French speaking communities (see for example Quine 1960, 47). In the long run, "cognate word-forms" between kindred languages, and "traditional equations that have evolved in step with a shared culture" between unrelated languages, may aid translation (Quine 1960, 28).

Quine discusses some universal characteristics of all rational human beings, mirrored in the methods of empirical science, such as the attitude of conservativism, "a favoring of the inherited or invented conceptual scheme of one's own previous work," the drive for simplicity and the principle of sufficient reason, shunning "gratuitous singularities," and suggests that these are probably based on some unknown, innate neurophysiological mechanisms, as their survival value is overwhelming (Quine 1960, 20-21). The employment of the Principle of Charity, the assumption that one's interlocutor shares the universal logical demands of human reasoning, together with the already mentioned assumption of the hypothesis of homophonic translation (unless we have evidence to the contrary), are our further fundamental working assumptions that make communication possible (Quine 1960, 59). Our capacity for empathizing with another's
perceptual situation is familiar to all who teach children how to speak, and in fact to all
speakers interpreting their interlocutors' statements regarding the environment shared by
both: we assess the appropriateness of the observation sentences of others by noting their
orientation and how the scene would look from their position (Quine 1990a, 42; see also
Quine 1960, 219; Quine 1990c, 3-4).

"There is a difference for me between meaning rabbit or rabbit stage" (Searle
1987, 130; emphasis is Searle's). Searle's repeated assertion to the above effect needs
to be clarified. It is important to realize that, in this context, Searle does not talk about
the type (2) "meaning" of the English noun 'rabbit' that has been defined and maintained
by social practice over time, but about a particular instance of type (3) meaning, his, the
individual speaker's subjectively intended utterance meaning.

As we saw, Searle characterizes (Intentional) mental states as having both a
determinate Intentional object (at which they are Intentionally directed) as well as a
determinate representative content in a psychological mode, under a certain Aspect, prior
to and regardless of their association with linguistic expressions.\footnote{30} Does this
characterization of Intentional mental states amount to the claim that they themselves are
meaningful or that they mean something? Yes and no. In so far as Intentional mental
states are said to represent the states of affairs of the world, they can be said to be
"meaningful." But the Intentional representation of the world by Intentional mental states
does not in itself involve the intention (i.e., purposeful act of a speaker) to represent.

\footnote{30 He says this, although he also repeatedly acknowledges that certain beliefs with a more complex
semantic content (e.g., a belief about the prevalence of mononucleosis among first-year undergraduates at
American universities; see Searle 1969, 38), or beliefs, the contents of which are language-dependent (e.g.,
that these black squiggles on this white sheet of paper are part of the text of my first chapter), cannot be
held prior to the mastery of language (see for example Searle 1983, 54; 1994, 204; 1995, 60). We do not
have complete knowledge as to what sorts of Intentional contents prelinguistic infants or high animals
have without the use of language. The answer can be given only by experimental neurophysiology.}
Your linguistic report, on the other hand (i.e., 'I see a rabbit scurrying by'), is said to derive its Intentional meaning from your intention to represent your Intentional visual experience by way of producing the relevant speech act. Such is the double level of intentionality involved in meaning (see for example Searle 1983, 27-28). The latter is what Searle in general understands by meaning something (by speaking). The speaker’s Intentional mental states (although they have an intrinsic Intentional content) themselves do not function in a purposeful way; they do not mean anything: the speaker does.

Searle’s claim that he knows that he means rabbit and not all and sundry undetached parts of rabbits by uttering 'rabbit' involves the subjectively experienced determinate Aspectual Shape of the intrinsic content of his relevant visual experience, as well as the implicit yet determinate Aspectual Shape of the derived content of his relevant verbal report, i.e., 'I see a rabbit.' Searle argues that the way in which a linguistic expression is associated with the particular Aspectual Shape of an individual speaker’s occurring mental state is determinate and is known to the speaker from the first-person point of view. Hence, the speaker’s intended utterance meaning is determinate, regardless of the epistemic problem relevant to communication, i.e., knowing what another speaker means.

The determinate Aspectual Shape of Intentional mental states, an important Searlean notion, warrants a separate discussion, to be provided in my next chapter; I mention it here only as one of the irreducibly mental features of Intentional mental contents underdetermined by third-person characterization:

Behavioral evidence concerning the existence of mental states, including even evidence concerning the causation of a person’s behavior, no matter how complete, always leaves the aspectual character of intentional states underdetermined. There will always be an inferential gulf between the behavioral epistemic grounds for the presence of the aspect and the ontology of the aspect itself. (Searle 1992a, 158)
Searle uses the notion of the determinate Aspectual Shape as an argument against Quine: "our utterances do, on occasion at least, have determinate meanings with determinate aspectual shapes, just as our intentional states often have determinate intentional contents with determinate aspectual shapes" (Searle 1992a, 164). See also: "Quine argues that within certain limits there simply is no fact of the matter about under what aspects a speaker represents a situation when he utters an expression that we are inclined to translate as 'rabbit'" (Searle 1989a, 200).

The utterance meaning of linguistic expressions is relativized by Searle to the (often implicit) Aspectual Shapes of speakers' subjective Intentional mental states that occur on the particular occasion the utterance is made. From this it follows that there can be as many determinate associations of particular subjective Aspectual Shapes of speakers' mental contents with public linguistic expressions as there are (tokens of) utterances of a given (type of) linguistic expression produced by individual speakers under a distinct subjective Aspectual Shape. Each utterance token of the English phrase 'There's a rabbit' produced by one or the other speaker could have a determinate, yet potentially different implicit Aspectual Shape subjectively associated with it. For example, the utterance of the English phrase 'There's a rabbit' produced by a particular speaker under a particular implicit Aspectual Shape A₁, on a particular occasion has a particular utterance meaning \( UM_1 \). The utterance of the same phrase produced by the same speaker under a different implicit Aspectual Shape A₂, on a different occasion has a different utterance meaning \( UM_2 \), even though the phrase uttered has the same socially defined "meaning" (the speaker said the same, but on each occasion, the speaker meant something different by saying the same). This difference in the same speaker's intended utterance meanings on the two different occasions is known to the speaker herself, but another person trying to interpret what the speaker meant on the two different occasions
may not be able to tell the difference, if the Aspectual Shape is left implicit in the uttered sentence. On the other hand, the utterance of the same English phrase 'There's a rabbit' produced by another particular speaker under the same particular implicit Aspectual Shape $A$, as the one that belongs to the utterance of the first speaker on the first occasion, has the same particular utterance meaning $UM$, as the utterance of the first speaker (the two speakers said the same, and, moreover, they both meant the same by saying the same). The fact that the two speakers meant implicitly the same is not directly observable from their explicit behavior, that is, the interpreter may not be aware that it obtains. In yet another case, the utterance of the same English phrase 'There's a rabbit' produced by the second speaker under yet another particular implicit Aspectual Shape $A$, has yet another particular utterance meaning $UM$, (the first and the second speaker said the same, but they did not mean the same by saying the same). In the following chapter I discuss Searle's notion of the Aspectual Shape and the factors that determine the particular Aspectual Shape of a given Intentional mental content.
CHAPTER TWO

ASPECTUAL SHAPE;
THE NETWORK AND THE BACKGROUND;
OTHER MINDS

The most important claim in Searle’s general proposal for a theory of meaning, as discussed in my first chapter, is the following. Although our possession of language enables us to give expression to our perceptions, beliefs, desires, and other states of mind and, in fact, language allows us to have vastly richer and more complex mental states than we could have without language, language does not create meaning: individual speakers engaged in purposeful linguistic behavior do. Language derives its meaning from the intrinsic Intentionality of speakers’ subjective mental states. The determinate Intentional contents of speakers’ subjective mental states are expressed by means of utterances that are intentionally produced by speakers. The philosophy of language is a branch of the philosophy of mind; the philosophy of meaning is essentially a philosophy of speakers’ intended utterance meaning, and so the proper way to approach the nature of meaning must involve both of its fundamental constituents, namely, the determinate Intentional contents of speakers’ subjective mental states and the intentions of speakers to express these contents in the production of utterances.

In the present chapter I discuss three important features of the determinate

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31 This very important view was first formulated by Searle as early as in 1976 in the paper "Intentionality and the use of language," presented in 1976 at a conference in Jerusalem, and published 1979 (Searle 1979b).
Intentional contents of speakers' subjective mental states as characterized by Searle, while in the next chapter I discuss Searle's views on the other constituent of meaning: speakers' intentions to produce meaningful public utterances.

The three features analyzed in the present chapter are: The Aspectual Shape, the Network and the Background. Two important characteristics are shared by these features: a) all three constitute determining factors as to the contents of speakers' Intentional mental states that in turn determine speakers' intended utterance meaning, and b) none of the three is in most, if not all cases, explicitly expressed in the public production of utterances. The immediately apparent problem with these characteristics, central to the issue of interpersonal verbal communication, is the following.

When interpreting a particular utterance produced publicly by a speaker, we must get at the speaker's subjectively intended utterance meaning. The speaker's subjectively intended utterance meaning is determined by the subjective contents of the speaker's Intentional mental state to be expressed in the public production of the utterance; the subjective contents of the speaker's Intentional mental state are determined by the above three features. However, the subjective contents of the speaker's Intentional mental state as determined by the above three features are not rendered fully explicit in the public production of the utterance. If that is so, the correct interpretation of the speaker's determinate, subjectively intended utterance meaning from the third-person interpreter's point of view is a fundamental epistemic problem that needs to be addressed in a discussion dealing with communication.

Interpersonal verbal communication involves both the production and the

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32 This list of features is by no means exhaustive, but the three features listed above are the ones most relevant to the topic of interpersonal verbal communication. For further details on the nature of Intentional mental states, see for example chapter one of Searle 1983.
interpretation of meaningful linguistic utterances. Searle's entire theory of meaning is characterized by an intense focus on the production aspect of communication; at the same time, the receiving end of communication or the interpretation of the meaningful speech behavior of another, with its inherent problem of intersubjective access to speakers' subjectively intended utterance meanings (the epistemic Other Minds Problem), has been comparatively neglected by him. Searle has several reasons for his rather one-sided interest. One of his reasons has already been discussed in my first chapter: For Searle, the nature of meaning is a genuinely philosophical issue that is prior to and independent of the epistemic\textsuperscript{33} problem of third-person interpretation -- a problem delegated by Searle to empirical science.

Early in the development of his theory, Searle separated the two issues and invested most of his subsequent effort into the proper characterization of the nature of our fundamental means for the production of meaningful linguistic behavior, characterized by him as rule-governed. In *Speech Acts* (Searle 1969) he focused on the socially created and maintained constitutive rules that underlie both the production and the interpretation of speech acts (and are mutually known by all competent speakers of a language). Since around 1976 Searle has been concentrating on the nature of speakers' intrasubjective Intentional mental states that give meaning to utterances produced by speakers.

In Searle's early work the interpretation of utterances is regarded as wholly unproblematic, as it is considered explicable from speakers' shared and mutual knowledge of the constitutive rules of speech acts. In his more recent work he offers a solution to the epistemic Other Minds Problem by an appeal to speakers' shared possession of the

\textsuperscript{33} The reader may recall Searle's critique of Quine and his followers who "confuse the epistemic with the semantic" (Searle 1987, 143). Searle's other reasons for not considering the third-person interpreter or addressee's role as crucial to the communicative situation will be discussed in my next chapter.
neurophysiologically realized nonconscious Background capacities that enable both the production and the mutual interpretation of speakers' meaningful speech behavior. In the following I provide an analysis of the three determinant features of the Intentional contents of speakers' subjective mental states listed above as well as of Searle's recently offered solution to the epistemic Other Minds Problem.

The Aspectual Shape

One of the earliest instances of Searle's discussing what he later came to call the Aspectual Shape is found in "Intentionality and the use of language" (Searle 1979b). Searle's main purpose in this paper is to clarify the confusions surrounding the philosophical notions of intensionality vs. Intentionality, and the notion of Aspect is only used by Searle for this purpose. According to Searle, Intentional mental contents always occur under a specific Aspect, namely, that which is specified in the intensional-with-an-s descriptions of such contents. Intensionality-with-an-s is a logical characteristic of the (verbal) specifications of Intentional mental contents, not to be confused with Intentionality-with-a-t, which is an ontological characteristic of mental states: Intentional mental states are directed at actual objects not identical with the mental states in question.

The philosophical trouble arises because the properties of the intensional description of Intentional states are confused with the Intentional properties of the states described (Searle 1979b, 187). The result of this confusion is that some philosophers falsely conclude that no actual object can ever be an Intentional object, for actual objects have all sorts of properties that are not included among the specific Aspects under which Intentional states are directed at the objects, nor are all properties of actual objects included in the intensional descriptions of the specific Aspects under which the Intentional
contents of mental states represent their objects. The Intentional object represented under a specific Aspect is viewed as "incomplete" in comparison to the actual object and this view gives rise to the opinion that the two cannot be identical (Searle 1979b, 186).

Searle's solution to these quandaries (already discussed in my first chapter) is to distinguish the contents from the objects of Intentional mental states:

The distinction between the representative content and the intentional object is parallel to Frege's distinction between sense and reference. Just as a definite description refers to an object in virtue of its sense, but does not thereby refer to its sense, so an intentional state is directed at an object in virtue of its representative content, but it is not thereby directed at its representative content. Both sentences describing intentional states and sentences describing acts of referring are subject to extensional and intensional interpretations and both for the same reasons. (Searle 1979b, 185; italics are mine)

The objectively existing actual objects at which Intentional mental states are directed are what they are, and have the properties they have, independently of the indefinitely many ways they may come to be represented in the contents of the Intentional mental states of organisms. When objectively existing actual objects or states of affairs do become represented by organisms (i.e., when they become Intentional objects), however, the Intentional representation of their objectively existing features always occurs under some determinate Aspect, which can be specified only in a description that is intensional-with-an-s.

Keeping in mind the distinctions between Intentional states and the intensional specification of their contents, Searle gives an early clue here as to why the first-person characterization of Intentional mental contents is mandatory when he invokes the two traditional tests of intensionality: "if existential generalization over the occurrence of referring expressions is not a valid form of inference or if the sentence fails to allow the substitution salva veritate of expressions which normally have the same reference, then
it is intensional-with-an-s" (Searle 1979b, 181). With respect to Intentional contents, the former test is connected to but not identical with Searle’s claim that one can have an Intentional state directed at an object that does not exist (e.g., one’s search for eternal youth), and the latter test is connected to but not identical with his claim that the Aspect (similarly to the Fregean "sense") determines the speaker’s reference: intensional descriptions of the speaker’s reference under Aspects other than the one subjectively intended by the speaker may be incorrect (that is why both Henri’s and Pierre’s translations of Searle’s English utterance 'There’s a rabbit' were incorrect). To quote Searle: "from the fact that I want E, and E is identical with F, it does not follow that I want F" (Searle 1979b, 186). In his earliest formulation, Searle’s notion of Aspect demonstrates his internalist attitude to meaning: What the speaker means by way of uttering a sentence is not determined by the external states of affairs of the world referred to, nor is it fully determined by the socially maintained meaning of the linguistic expressions uttered. Instead, the speaker’s intended utterance meaning is determined by the particular Aspect under which the speaker’s subjective Intentional representation of the features of states of affairs of the world occurs. 44 Whenever the particular set of conditions of satisfaction of an Intentional mental state (determined by the particular Aspect under which it occurs) are met, there will be an actual state of affairs of the world with which the contents of the Intentional mental state correspond. But the same contents of an Intentional mental state under the same Aspect could occur, without there being a

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44 See Searle’s example from an 1989 paper dealing with the same issue: "the belief that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris represents its conditions of satisfaction under certain aspects and not others. It is, for example, distinct from the belief that the tallest iron structure built in France before 1900 is located in the French capital, even assuming that the Eiffel Tower is identical with the tallest iron structure built in France before 1900, and Paris is identical with the French capital. We might say that every intentional state has a certain aspectral shape; and this aspectral shape is part of its identity, part of what makes it the state that it is" (Searle 1989a, 197; Searle’s italics).
relevant actual state of affairs to satisfy the set of conditions of satisfaction that belongs to the Intentional mental state.

In chapter five of *Expression and Meaning* (Searle 1979a) Searle names perception "the primary form of intentionality, the one on which all others depend" and discusses the "contextual dependency of the applicability of the contents of our perceptions."35 He refers to what he calls "the qualitative visual aspects" (he adds: "and I don't know a better vocabulary than 'qualitative visual aspects' to get at what I am talking about") of a particular visual experience reported as "I see that the cat is on the mat." The content of Searle's perception of this particular state of affairs involves among others the following contextual features: Searle perceives the cat and the mat "from a certain point of view" where his body is located; he assumes that his visual experience is causally dependent on the state of affairs perceived; he further assumes that various conditions hold: For example that he is not upside down, that gravity applies, etc. (Searle 1979a, 135).

While it is evident that Searle views the contents of a visual experience as being relative to the many aspects of the context in which it is experienced by the organism, in this early discussion Searle lists among the "qualitative visual aspects" of perception not only the features of someone's subjectively existing perceptual contents but also some of the features of objectively existing complex states of affairs of the world that exist independently of someone perceiving them (e.g., gravity, location of bodies). In other words, the Aspect specifies the Intentional content of a perceptual experience, but it is not clear which features of the complex situation of someone's perceiving a given state of affairs of the world determine the relevant Aspect itself that specifies the content of the

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35 The main point Searle wishes to make here is that, contrary to the opinion of many (most notably the philosopher Jerrold Katz) the meaning of even the most straightforward sentences uttered in a literal sense, such as 'The cat is on the mat,' is context-dependent. See Katz 1977, 14; see also my discussion of the same issue in the next section.
perceptual experience.

The apparent ambiguity arises from the fact that Searle here uses the term 'aspect' both extensionally and intensionally. In the former sense, 'aspect' refers to objectively existing aspects or features of objects and of states of affairs of the world (e.g., the cat is on the mat whether I see it or not) represented; in the intensional sense to the subjective mode of representation that determines the identity of Intentional mental contents (e.g., I see the cat as being on the mat). The extensional reading of 'aspects' implies that there exist actual features of objects out there. This is consistent with Searle's professed "naive realism": i.e., I perceive that there is a particular feature of an object out there that causes my visual experience. In other words, it is part of the contents of my visual experience that I perceive objects (and features of objects) out there as causing my visual experience, and for the sake of the intelligibility of my visual experience, I take it for granted that this is in fact the case (e.g., it is the cat's being on the mat that causes my visual experience of seeing the cat as being on the mat).\(^{36}\) This realism is "naive," partially because all lay persons accept it, and partially because the taken for granted presumption of naive realism is not something that could be proven or disproven by any of the traditional methods of philosophers.

The intensional reading of 'Aspects' implies that the contents of Intentional mental states must be explained independently of the actual objects and features of the "external" world. This is consistent with Searle's "brain in a vat" ideology, according to which I could have a visual experience with the same content specified by the same Aspect, even if the world "external" to my brain did not exist (e.g., I could have a visual experience of seeing the cat as being on the mat, even if in fact there were no cat, nor mat out

\(^{36}\) See Searle 1983, 74; see also Searle 1995, 195.
there). External objects have countless features at which one’s attention may be selectively directed. The cat-plus-mat state of affairs is an objectively existing fact of the world that would be the same even if no one perceived it. But the same objectively existing state of affairs could be represented by an organism under the subjective Aspect of the cat’s being on the other side of the mat, as opposed to be on the mat, depending on the location of the perceiver relative to the cat-plus-mat state of affairs. Imagine the following: the cat is positioned the same way relative to the mat, except that the mat, instead of being located close to the earth’s surface, is floating in space, sandwiched between the cat and the perceiver, both of which are somehow stuck to the mat. Is the cat still on the mat, from the perceiver’s subjective point of view? How would you describe the peculiar Aspect of the perceiver’s visual experience of the cat-plus-mat state of affairs in this situation? The objectively existing cat-plus-mat state of affairs is what it is, and has the features it has, even though this state of affairs could be described both by 'the cat is on the mat' and by 'the cat is on the other side of the mat,' depending on the observer’s own point of view. That alternative descriptions can be true of the same objectively existing state of affairs does not mean that the objectively existing cat is, at the same time, both or the objectively existing mat, and on the other side of the objectively existing mat. The two alternative descriptions are produced relative to the alternative Aspects under which the same objective state of affairs is being observed.

In chapter six of Expression and Meaning, in the context of his critique of Donnellan’s well-known distinction between the so-called referential and attributive uses of referring terms, Searle asserts that in referring to an object, the speaker uses a

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37 Contrary to Donnellan (Donnellan 1966 and 1968), Searle argues that there is no such distinction, that is, in both cases there is a genuine referring act produced by the speaker in the context of his complete speech act: the only difference between the two cases is "in the degree to which the speaker makes his intentions fully explicit in his utterance" (Searle 1979a, 137).
linguistic device (a referring expression) to represent the object referred to "under some aspect or other." What the speaker intends to refer to under a specific Aspect determines her reference. For example, the speaker may correctly refer to Smith's murderer by the term 'Schmidt's murderer.' The speaker's mistake in the above case is a mere linguistic error. "Such cases have to be distinguished from genuine cases of mistaken identity, where there really is a confusion of aspects" -- adds Searle: e.g., person X represented by Searle's speaker as Smith's murderer, and referred to by the speaker by means of the expression 'Schmidt's murderer,' is in fact not the killer (Searle 1979a, 142).

The first case involves a mere linguistic error: the speaker intends to refer to the actual murderer of the actual victim named Smith, except for the speaker's confusion as to the victim's name. The latter case involves a factual error: There exists an actual person X, who, however, is actually not a murderer but an honorable citizen. X's not being a murderer is an actual property (or aspect) of X that X has, regardless of whether or not anyone knows of it or cares to represent it. Yet, for some reason, Searle's speaker comes mistakenly to represent X as being Smith's murderer. Searle's speaker can have such an Intentional mental representation of X under the Aspect "Smith's murderer" even though this representation of X by Searle's speaker does not correspond with the actual state of affairs, in which X is an honorable citizen. Searle's speaker is mistaken about an actually existing objective aspect of the world, i.e., X's being an honorable citizen. Hence the factual error may be interpreted as a confusion of the actual aspects of the world by Searle's speaker. The confusion is in Searle's speaker's mind but it is about the actual aspects of a state of affairs of the world.

For Searle's speaker to have the Intentional mental representation of X under the Aspect "Smith's murderer," X need not even exist. There need not be any person who is Smith's murderer: Smith could have committed suicide. Or, Smith may have simply
dropped out of the picture and lives happily on a Texas ranch. Perhaps Smith himself has never existed either. The whole sordid affair could have been dreamed up by Searle's speaker. Even though it is a subjectively existing fact that Searle's speaker has an Intentional representation of the Intentional object \( X \) under the Aspect "Smith's murderer," it is the objectively existing state of affairs of the world that would, but in fact does not satisfy the Intentional Aspect of this speaker's Intentional representation. Whenever a speaker has an erroneous representation of a certain state of affairs of the world, the error is manifested in the subjective contents of the speaker's Intentional mental state (there would not be any errors if there were no representors; error is a mind-dependent feature of the world). However, it is the actual features of the world relative to which a speaker is said to be mistaken or in error, whenever the contents of her Intentional representations do not correspond to them. It is the features of the real world that speakers may on occasion be mistaken about.\(^\text{38}\)

Searle analyzes Donnellan's so-called referential cases as follows. The speaker in such cases picks one from a "whole lot of aspects" under which she could have referred to the object in question, preferably the one "that will enable the hearer to pick out the same object" (Searle 1979a, 144). Should the hearer not get the speaker's intended utterance meaning, the speaker may pick another one of the many available

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\(^{38}\) A linguistic error, such as calling someone Schmidt, instead of his real name, Smith, has to do with a Searlean socially created and maintained fact of the world, namely the fact that the name of the murder victim is Smith. This error, however, does not render the speaker's reference to the murderer erroneous; after all the murderer is in fact the murderer of what's-his-name, Smith or Schmidt, and the murderer is precisely who the speaker intends to refer to. Donald Davidson discusses similar cases in his paper "A nice derangement of epitaphs" (Davidson 1986). The paper's peculiar title itself contains some so-called malapropisms. Such malapropisms, although often produced by speakers, do not pose any problems for competent interpreters who can still figure out the speaker's intended meaning. Davidson's point in this paper is that the so-called literal or conventional (socially maintained) meaning of an expression is only contingently related to speakers' intentions, and so it is not by way of knowing the conventionally held standard linguistic meanings that speakers succeed in communication.
Aspects. Speaker and hearer may continue this process of clarification until "they reach bedrock." Eventually, a so-called "primary Aspect" will be found, "such that if nothing satisfies it, the speaker's statement cannot be true and if some one thing satisfies it the statement will be true or false depending on whether or not the thing that satisfies it has the property ascribed to it" (Searle 1979a, 145; italics are mine). In other words, the speaker's reference has a determinate primary Aspect that ascribes a specific feature to the Intentional object, and the correct specification of the content of the speaker's intended utterance meaning must involve the specification of this primary Aspect of the speaker's reference, regardless of the many other, so-called "secondary Aspects" that could have been used by the speaker to refer to the object in question.39

In the so-called attributive cases of Donnellan, the expression uttered explicitly expresses the primary Aspect under which reference is made: at the same time, all other Aspects are suspended, either because the speaker is ignorant of any other Aspects, or because the speaker does not intend to express them, e.g., 'Whoever Smith's murderer was, must have used a gun' (Searle 1979a, 148; 154).

In chapter two of Intentionality (Searle 1983) Searle discusses the Intentionality of visual perception in greater detail. In section II he analyzes the differences between

39 In case the addressee is unable to pick out the speaker's intended referent, the speaker may use any of the available secondary Aspects for the sake of clarifying her original referring intention, but these secondary Aspects do not count in the truth-conditions of the original statement. For example: When speaker S says during a party 'The man with the glasses is cute,' S means the man with the eye-glasses, but as parties go, S could be misunderstood by addressee A to mean another man with wine glasses in his hands. Confusion would thicken if the man actually referred to by S had both eye-glasses on his nose and wine glasses in his hands. The clarification of S's correct reference would take some time, involving the Aspect of eye-glasses and the Aspect of wine glasses, and perhaps also a digression regarding a further Aspect, namely that the glasses believed to be wine glasses are really beer glasses made of transparent plastic; nevertheless the relevant feature that determines the truth or falsity of S's original statement would be the eye-glasses of the man, because that is the feature that was originally meant by S. S's original statement is true if and only if the man has eye-glasses and the man is cute.
perceptions and beliefs or desires.\textsuperscript{40} According to Searle, a crucial Aspect of the Intentional content of every visual (but also aural, tactile, olfactory, etc.) experience directed at an object is that the perceptual event is experienced by the perceiver \textit{as} caused by the object (Searle 1983, 47). This so-called Intentional causation in perception is a specific case of efficient causation in the sense of "some things making other things happen" (Searle 1983, 135).\textsuperscript{41} Searle argues that in this primitive form we do have a subjective experience of the causal nexus, regardless of whether or not actual objects of the world do in fact cause our perceptual experiences. We could have perceptual experiences under this causally relevant Aspect even if there were no objects "external" to our Intentional states. However, for the intelligibility of our perceptual experiences we must \textit{assume} that the states of affairs of the world are in fact causing our perceptions of them.

The role of this causally relevant Aspect of perception is again that it specifies the content of the Intentional mental state in the form of its conditions of satisfaction. "For what the Intentional content requires is not simply that there be a state of affairs in the world, but also that the state of affairs in the world must cause the very visual experience which is the embodiment or realization of the Intentional content" (Searle 1983, 48). As I mentioned earlier, a veridical perception is more than just a visual experience: While one could have a visual experience with a particular Intentional content under a particular

\textsuperscript{40} Among the early distinctions made by Searle between these various types of Intentional mental phenomena is the following: while Intentional mental states such as desires and beliefs can be held \textit{unconsciously}, it is part of the ontology of certain Intentional mental events, such as for example visual experiences, that they are \textit{consciously} experienced (Searle 1983, 45). I discuss the ramifications of this claim as elaborated by Searle in his more recent works later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{41} The other form of Intentional causation involves the intentional (purposeful) actions of the agent, experienced by the agent \textit{as} caused by his or her intention. For details of Searle's argument for Intentional causation see chapter four of Searle 1983.
causally relevant Aspect that determines the particular conditions of satisfaction for that experience, namely, that there be an object causing the experience as represented in the content, for a veridical perception there must in fact be an object causing the experience as represented in the content. If the object is missing or the object exists but does not cause the visual experience, the satisfaction conditions of the experience are not satisfied; in other words, the perceptual experience is not veridical. For example, in the case of hallucinations, we experience the same determinate content of a visual experience but the object (the presence of which would render our experience veridical) is not out there. An example of the latter case, where the appropriate causal connection is missing, would be the situation where the visual experience of an object is in fact caused by the electrical stimulations effected on certain parts of the patient’s brain by a neurosurgeon. There may actually be an object out there that has all the features that correspond to the features represented in the patient’s visual experience, yet it is not the object but the electrical stimulus of the electrode that causes the visual experience. This experience is not veridical.

Apart from the causally relevant Aspect of perceptions, there is another sense in which the Aspects of the contents of Intentional mental states differ in cases of perception: the "character of the aspect or the point of view under which an object is seen or otherwise perceived" (Searle 1983, 50). All Intentional mental states have a specific Aspect under which their objects are represented, but with respect to visual perception, 'Aspect' refers to the particular spatial position or physical vantage point of the perceiver relative to the three-dimensional object perceived. Literally, only a part, that is, a particular aspect of the object (e.g., when viewed from the left, only the left side of the
station wagon) is represented by the Intentional content of a visual experience.\footnote{See also Searle 1983, 154 for his remarks concerning the physical location of our perceiving organ, the brain, vis-à-vis the objects perceived.}

Again, Searle uses the term 'aspect' both in an extensional and in an intensional sense: In the extensional sense, Searle speaks of aspects as objectively existing features, "fixed by the sheer physical features of the situation" (Searle 1983, 50). In the intensional sense, Aspect refers to the subjective point of view of the perceiver vis-à-vis the object represented, which itself is ambiguous as it means either the perceiver's physical vantage point or the perceiver's subjective psychological relation that inform the way in which the perceiver "sees" the object. For example, I may be physically located beside a station wagon on the driver's side, and from my physical vantage point I cannot see whether or not the tires on the passenger's side are flat. I can only see the tires on the side I am on. The tires of the wagon are objective aspects of the wagon itself. My seeing the tires on the driver's side but not the ones on the passenger's side is an Aspect of my perceptual experience of the wagon, determined by my objectively existing physical location relative to it. If a couple of gangsters begin to shoot at me from behind the passenger's side of the wagon, I duck and regard my station wagon as a shield that will hopefully protect me from the bullets. Seeing the same wagon now as a protective shield is a psychological Aspect of my Intentional mental representation of the same wagon, even though the reason why I believe that it will function as a protective shield for me is still determined by my physical vantage point relative to the wagon and the gangsters.

According to Searle's early analysis, in the case of beliefs or desires, the whole physical object is represented, regardless of the physical position of the organism vis-à-vis the object of its belief or desire. If John wants Sally, Sally is the object of John's desire, regardless of John's physical vantage point vis-à-vis Sally at any given moment. Even
if John can only see Sally's left side from the position he is in at the moment, he still wants Sally, and not only Sally's left side: "in the non-perceptual cases, though the Intentional object is always represented by way of some aspect or other, it is nonetheless the object itself that is represented and not just an aspect" (Searle 1983, 51). John's wanting Sally as a friend or as the future mother of his children would be different psychological Aspects of John's desire directed at Sally.

The "external" world may have all sorts of aspects that may or may not be represented by organisms, but what really matters to Searle, as an internalist, are the Aspects of Intentional mental states. "What is inside the head is entirely sufficient to determine the identity of each of our intentional states. The various 'causal' and 'contextual' conditions referred to by the externalists are entirely represented by the mind" (Searle 1991a, 237). The fundamentally relevant internal source of the Aspect is the perceiver's occurrent point of view vis-à-vis the object perceived, both in the physical and in the psychological sense.

In his analysis Searle has separated perception from other kinds of Intentional mental states, such as beliefs and desires. In reality, he says, the contents of our perceptions are inseparable from the contents of our relevant beliefs and desires.43

43 He discusses three sorts of cases where the visual experience is influenced by other Intentional mental states. Depending on what we expect to see (and our expectations are part of the Network), different conditions will satisfy our visual experience. In the theater, we expect to see a painted flat that looks like a house, but is in fact just a façade. In order for us to have a veridical perception of a façade, there must be a façade that causes our expected visual experience (some clever set-designers may fool the most experienced theatre connaissance by using the actual upstage, solid brickwall of the theatre, lit to look like a mere flat façade).

In other cases, most notably in visual illusions, (e.g., the Müller-Lyer illusion) the content of our visual experience is in conflict with the contents of our relevant beliefs. On Searle's analysis, the content of the visual experience is what it seems to be (i.e., one line is experienced as being longer than the other), but we allow our beliefs concerning the "illusory" nature of this experience to override what we actually see.

A third sort of case mentioned by Searle is the written word "TOOT" seen by Searle as a word, and by Searle's dog -- well, certainly not as a word, perhaps as some dark squiggle on a lighter surface. In both instances of visual experience the same visual stimuli cause different visual experiences (Searle
Moreover, even though both some beliefs or desires as well as some perceptions can be experienced by an organism without the possession of language (higher animals have beliefs, desires and perceptions), the acquisition of linguistic concepts vastly enriches the possible contents and Aspects of beliefs and desires as well as that of perceptions. In section III of chapter two of *Intentionality* (Searle 1983), Searle discusses some of the complex connections between the contents of all Intentional states and language. He stresses that many of our visual and other perceptual experiences "aren't even possible without the mastery of certain Background skills and prominent among them are linguistic skills" (Searle 1983, 54). As if echoing his opponent Quine's 1960 thesis, Searle declares that the Aspectual differences of our visual experiences of a certain object are dependent on our having mastered a series of linguistically impregnated cultural skills. It is not the failure, for example, of my dog's optical apparatus that prevents him from seeing this figure as the word "TOOT". In such a case one wants to say that a certain conceptual mastery is a precondition of having visual experience; and such cases suggest that the Intentionality of visual perception is tied up in all sorts of complicated ways with other forms of Intentionality such as belief and expectation, and also with our systems of representation, most notably language. Both the Network of Intentional states and the Background of non-representational mental capacities affect perception. (Searle 1983, 54)

The difference between Quine and Searle remains: Quine, unlike Searle, would not allow any intelligible perception (only the stimulations of our sensory surfaces) prior to the acquisition of linguistic concepts. In Searle's view, there are "intelligible" determinate Intentional mental contents prior to one's acquiring linguistic skills, even though the process of acquiring concepts through verbalizing -- a lifelong achievement -- vastly

1983, 54-56).

44 Recall his point quoted earlier: "The nerve endings, on the one hand, are the place of unprocessed information about the world. The stage where this information has become processed to the point of awareness, on the other hand, is the basic level for conceptualization and vocabulary (Quine 1970, 3)."
enriches one’s mental capacities to represent the world.

In a 1991 volume\(^4\) that contains both commentaries on Searle’s work and Searle’s responses to his critics, Searle explains Aspect as being “something like Frege’s notion of the ‘mode of representation’” (Searle 1991a, 229). The Aspect specifies how the Intentional object is being represented in the Intentional content. The Evening Star Aspect of Venus being represented is different from the Morning Star Aspect of the very same Venus being represented. Searle reiterates his distinction made earlier between Aspects of perceptual representations and Aspects of belief or desire representations.\(^6\) Further, he reiterates his earlier claim that the Aspect determining the conditions of satisfaction for a particular Intentional state is relative to the speaker’s Network of other Intentional states and to the speaker’s Background capacities, both of which, unlike the Aspect itself, are not internal to the particular Intentional state under consideration. (I have much more to say about this in the next section). Again, it is important to note that not only the conditions effective at the time the Intentional mental state occurs, but the person’s entire prior experience, may potentially play a role in generating the specific Aspect under which the content of her Intentional mental state occurs. The problem is not only that one’s interlocutor does not have direct access to the subjective contents of one’s Intentional mental states, but we ourselves, when perceiving an object under some specific Aspect, may not be aware of the details of how the Aspect itself became specified by our Network of Intentional states and by our Background capacities.

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\(^6\) He mentions a further case hitherto not discussed: ”There is, for example, clearly *some* difference between the thought that John loves Mary and the thought that Mary is loved by John, yet in some sense their conditions of satisfaction are the same, because the same requirement is placed on the world by each thought” (Searle 1991a, 230; italics are Searle’s). For details on Searle’s notions of conditions of satisfaction imposed on the world by speakers’ thoughts, see Searle 1983.
Burge has something very similar in mind when, in his paper, "Vision and intentional content" (Burge 1991), he discusses the specific causal Aspect ascribed by Searle to the contents of visual experience, namely, that it is part of the contents of a visual experience that the object of a visual experience is perceived by the individual as causing the contents of that very visual experience. Burge argues that in order for this Aspect to be a proper part of the contents of the perceiver's visual experience (i.e., to play a role in determining the conditions of satisfaction for that experience), the perceiver needs to be aware of the fact that this is the case, by way of a meta-awareness about the experience itself. In his response to Burge, Searle counters that the speaker (perceiver) need not be aware of all that goes on in her mind in terms of how the Aspect is generated in order to possess such an Aspect specifying the contents of her Intentional state: "An agent may have a conscious Intentional content and that Intentional content may determine the conditions of satisfaction under certain aspects, that is with a certain 'mode of presentation,' where the agent may not himself have a second-order awareness of how the conscious Intentional content functions to determine the conditions of satisfaction under those aspects" (Searle 1991a, 231; Searle's italics). This response harks back to the attitude of Searle discussed earlier: the ontology of a phenomenon is prior to and independent of our epistemic frailties. This response answers the general ontological question Searle is after: What determines the determinate intrinsic Intentional mental contents? For an adequate answer to the epistemic questions, How do we know the particular set of causal factors that determine the contents (conditions of satisfaction) of a particular occurring conscious Intentional mental state, or, How does communication succeed if the factors determining the speaker's meaning are not only largely subjective, but potentially unknown to the speaker herself?, we cannot avoid addressing the epistemic accessibility of the particular causal determinants of the speaker's intended utterance.
meaning.

Searle’s response involving unconscious mental events also leads to the final segment of this section on Searle’s notion of Aspect. According to Searle, Intentional states with a particular Aspect specifying their contents need not at all times be consciously experienced by a speaker. At times, the speaker can be characterized correctly as *unconsciously* possessing such Intentional states.47 This point has been stated and restated in several of Searle’s most recent works: see for example Searle 1989a; 1990b; 1992a. In these three works Searle attempts to rehabilitate the notion of the conscious mind (that, in Searle’s opinion, fell into disrespect since the dawn of the Enlightenment) within the framework of biological naturalism. Before discussing Searle’s views regarding the specific Aspect of unconscious Intentional mental states I would like to mention those details of Searle’s important and complex argument that are relevant to his notion of Aspect and have not been previously dealt with in the present chapter.

Since at least 1989, Searle calls the Aspect "aspectual shape." The Aspectual Shape must matter to the agent: "It must exist from his/her point of view" (Searle 1989a, 199). Here the expression 'from the agent’s point of view' is used mainly in a psychological, and not so much in a spatial sense. The Aspectual Shape is said to be constitutive of the way the agent thinks about an object: I can thirst for water, without wishing to drink H₂O. Conscious Intentional states are individuated by the particular Aspectual Shape in which they are subjectively experienced by the agent. From the subjective nature of the Aspectual Shape it follows that third-person, scientific explanations of mental states based on observable evidence are insufficient for the

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47 This claim has been made by Searle as early as 1983: many Intentional states are not conscious, e.g., "I have many beliefs that I am not thinking about at present and I may never have thought of" (Searle 1983, 2).
complete characterization of Intentional mental states, as they leave out the individuating factor, the particular Aspectual Shape in which a given mental state is being subjectively experienced. "There will always be an inferential gulf between the evidence for the presence of the aspect and the aspect itself. (This is one feature of the other minds problem") (Searle 1989a, 199).

According to Searle, not even a completed neuroscience, science's ultimate hope for an adequate explanation of the mind, could fully describe the facts relevant to the Aspectual Shape of Intentional mental contents. Even though Intentional mental states are caused by and realized in the neurophysiological structures of the brain (and in so far as there are law-like causal connections between the facts of the brain and the facts of the mind, these could be specified by a complete neurophysiology), no neurophysiological causal explanation from the third-person point of view would adequately describe the ontology of the Aspectual Shape of someone's subjectively experienced Intentional mental state: "The aspectual feature cannot be exhaustively or completely characterized solely in terms of third-person, behavioral, or even neurophysiological predicates. None of these is sufficient to give an exhaustive account of the way it seems to the agent" (Searle 1989a, 199). Complete knowledge of all the relevant objective facts would not suffice for a determination of the particular Aspectual Shape of an Intentional mental state. The conscious person's subjective, first-person experience of the Aspects of his or her own Intentional mental states is therefore the only proper epistemic method to get at the

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48 See also Searle 1990b, 586; 1992a, 151.

49 See Searle's renewed criticism of Quine, who, because he (in Searle's opinion mistakenly) believes that the only facts are third-person facts, would (mistakenly) conclude that the notion of what Searle calls the Aspectual Shape is not only underdetermined but left indeterminate by all available evidence. In Searle's opinion the subjective facts concerning the Aspectual Shape are determinate facts of the matter and known from the first-person point of view (Searle 1989a, 200).
determinate Aspectual Shape of Intentional mental states. But what about the Aspectual Shape of Intentional mental states that are not presently consciously experienced?

If it is the Aspectual Shape that makes a conscious Intentional mental state the state it is, then, by analogy, an unconscious Intentional mental state, too, must have a particular Aspectual Shape that makes it the state it is. Searle claims that unconscious Intentional mental states with fixed Aspectual Shapes exist and he defines them as those mental states that at least in principle may become accessible to consciousness. The Aspectual Shape serves as the link between Intentionality and consciousness, as any unconscious Intentional mental state that may at least in principle become conscious or "thinkable" or "experienceable" must have a particular Intentional content with a fixed Aspectual Shape that is part of its identity (Searle 1989a, 198)

The above analysis from analogy in itself seems unproblematic, until we consider Searle's next claim:

The ontology of unconscious mental states, at the time they are unconscious, can only consist in the existence of purely neurophysiological phenomena. At the time the states are totally unconscious there simply is nothing else going on except neurophysiological processes . . . the ontology of unconscious intentionality is entirely describable in third person, objective neurophysiological terms, but all the same the states are irreducibly subjective. (Searle 1989a, 202)

Since there is no subjective experience, awareness, relevance, point of view, etc., involved when someone purportedly has an unconscious Intentional mental state, how could that purported unconscious Intentional mental state possess the crucial individuating subjective feature, namely, a particular Aspectual Shape? S earle's solution to this puzzle is as follows:

The notion of an unconscious intentional state is the notion of a state which is a possible conscious thought or experience. There are plenty of unconscious phenomena, . . . to the extent that they are genuinely mental they must in some sense preserve their aspectual shape even when
unconscious, but the only sense that we can give to the notion that they preserve their aspectual shape when unconscious is that they are possible contents of consciousness. (Searle 1989a, 202; emphasis is Searle’s)

A possible conscious thought may be a thought that has been previously entertained consciously by the agent but is presently not thought of; or, it may be one that had never before been consciously thought of by the agent, as in Searle’s earliest comment on this issue: "I have many beliefs that I am not thinking about at present and I may never have thought of" (Searle 1983, 2; italics are mine). In Searle’s opinion, we may have indefinitely many such nonconscious thoughts that constitute what he initially called our "background assumptions."

**The Network and the Background**

Searle’s views on the Background underwent certain changes that parallel the development of his views on the Intentional foundation of linguistic meaning. He shifted his early interest in the semantics of speech acts to a focus on the more fundamental, neurological, causal underpinnings of the mental representations that give meaning to speech acts. His notion of Background is central to both his theory of language and his theory of mind. Two fundamental tenets of Searle’s theory are relevant to his notion of Background: biological naturalism and holism. I have previously discussed in detail Searle’s biological naturalism according to which Intentional mental states are produced by and realized in the brain, but have subjectively existing mental properties.

Searle’s holism consisted initially of the claim that particular Intentional states that occur under a certain Aspect are parts of a Network of other Intentional states and have the particular content they have (i.e., their conditions of satisfaction) only relative to their position in the Network. This is the view he labels "orthodox holism" (Searle 1983, 20-
21; 66). In his first treatments of the notion of Background, the background\(^5\) was not easily distinguishable from the Network, as Searle's main goal was to argue that in an utterance of a particular sentence not all beliefs relevant to the determination of the speaker's intended utterance meaning (i.e., not all Intentional states of the Network that contribute to the conditions of satisfaction of that utterance) are realized in the semantic structure of the sentence (Searle 1979a, 130). To the best of my knowledge, before 1980 Searle did not use the term 'Network,' only the term 'background assumptions.' He used both terms to refer to a relevant system of beliefs that contributes to the determinate contents of an Intentional mental state, but is external to the contents of that state, and is not explicit in the sentence used by the speaker to publicly represent her mental state.\(^5\)

The idea that all Intentionality, linguistic and nonlinguistic, functions relative to the background assumptions, was formulated by Searle as early as in 1979 and was consistent with his thesis that linguistic meaning is founded in Intentional mental representations. "The general point is that representation, whether linguistic or otherwise, in general goes on against a background of assumptions which are not and in most cases could not also be completely represented as part of or as presuppositions of the representation" (Searle 1979a, 131).

As explained above, Searle's earliest views on background assumptions were in

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\(^5\) For the sake of greater clarity, in this section 'Background' with a capital 'B' refers to Searle's final notion of a nonrepresentational or nonintentional Background, while 'background' with a lower-case 'b' refers to Searle's earlier notion of "background assumptions," that is, the Intentional states that constitute the Network.

\(^5\) See Searle's distinction between conditions that are internal to the contents of a mental state (Aspect is one of them) and conditions external to it, yet relevant to the determination of the content: "On my view, relations to the holistic Network of Intentionality and to a nonintentional Background are crucial in determining conditions of satisfaction, but neither Network nor Background is part of each state" (Searle 1991a, 230).
fact views on what he, since about 1980, came to call the Network. The prevalence of so-called indirect speech acts, regarded by Searle as cases in which the "speaker means more than what she says," prompted his appeal to certain implicit background assumptions mutually shared by speakers that partly enable speakers to interpret the meaning of indirect speech acts (Searle 1979a, 31-32). Soon, however, it became clear to Searle that, not only in the case of indirect speech acts, but also in the case of direct, literal utterances of sentences, speakers must rely on certain factual and practical knowledge that is not expressed in the semantic structure of sentences.52

The literal semantic meaning of a sentence has been understood as interpretable in a so-called null context, i.e., under circumstances completely devoid of any information concerning the interlocutors' character, their relationship to one another, their intentions, their environment, etc. Jerrold Katz illustrates the null context by the so-called "anonymous letter situation."

The anonymous letter situation is the case where an ideal speaker of a language receives an anonymous letter containing just one sentence of that language, with no clue whatever about the motive, circumstances of transmission, or any other factor relevant to understanding the sentence on the basis of its context of utterance . . . the semantic component [represents] only those aspects of the meaning of the sentence that an ideal speaker-hearer of the language would know in such an anonymous letter situation. (Katz 1977, 14)

Searle emphasizes that speakers' background assumptions are needed even when the sentence uttered by the speaker "expresses exactly what the speaker means" as is the case in literal utterances; e.g., "cutting the cake" and "cutting expenses" have different although unambiguous, literal meanings, the correct interpretation of which requires speakers' background knowledge of various facts concerning cooking and finances, respectively.

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52 This important point is argued by Searle in his 1978 paper "Literal meanings," reprinted in the volume Expression and Meaning (Searle 1979a, 117-137).
Searle rejects the notion of a context-free literal sentence meaning as he believes that in order to understand even such a seemingly innocent-sounding, unambiguous sentence as 'the cat is on the mat,' interlocutors must rely on certain background assumptions not realized in the semantic structure of this sentence.\(^5\)

Another axiom of traditional semantics has been that the meaning of the sentence determines the truth-conditions of that sentence. Searle argues that the truth-conditions of a sentence can be determined relative to a set of background assumptions only; i.e., the truth-conditions of the sentence will vary with variations in these background assumptions and, given the absence of some background assumptions, the sentence does not have determinate truth-conditions. For example, the truth-conditions of 'Sally cut the mountain' cannot easily be determined, unless one is creative enough to come up with some crazy, outlandish background conditions, relative to which this sentence is either true or false: "the notion of the literal meaning of a sentence only has application relative to a set of background assumptions, and furthermore these background assumptions are not all and could not all be realized in the semantic structure of the sentence" (Searle 1979a, 120).\(^5\)

Searle argues that the complete set of background assumptions determining the truth-conditions of a given sentence cannot be made explicit for two reasons: "First, they are not fixed and definite in number and content; we would never know when to stop in

\(^5\) Even as recently as 1995 he writes: "The simplest argument for the thesis of the Background is that the literal meaning of any sentence can only determine its truth conditions or other conditions of satisfaction against a Background of capacities, dispositions, know-how, etc., which are not themselves part of the semantic content of the sentence" (Searle 1995, 13v).

\(^4\) For entertaining details regarding "things in the cat and mat line of business" see Searle 1979a, 122.

\(^5\) As we have seen, in his more recent work Searle no longer talks about the meaning of sentences themselves, but about the speaker's intended utterance meaning expressed by means of a sentence of a conventional language.
our specifications. And second, each specification of an assumption tends to bring in other assumptions, those that determine the applicability of the literal meaning of the sentence used in the specification" (Searle 1979a, 126)\textsuperscript{56} The specification of specifications would eventually lead to a vicious regress. "Even, for example, if someone understood (grasped) the meaning of a sentence . . . the sentence is still subject to an indefinite range of different interpretations. The sentence is not self-applying, and sometimes a meaningful sentence with meaningful words admits of no literal interpretation at all" (Searle 1991b, 291). A fascinating early hint as to Searle's distinction of the nonrepresentational, nonintentional Background capacities from the Network of background assumptions is worth quoting at length:

But even assuming we could not do a sentence by sentence specification of the assumptions behind the understanding and application of each sentence, could we do a completely general specification of all the assumptions, all the things we take for granted, in our understanding of language? Could we make our whole mode of sensibility fully explicit? . . . The fact that for each of a large range of sentences the assumptions are variable and indefinite and that the specification of one will tend to bring in others does not by itself show that we could not specify an entire set which would be independent of the semantic analysis of individual sentences but which taken together would enable us to apply the literal meaning of sentences. The practical difficulties in any such specification would of course be prodigious, but is there any theoretical obstacle to the task? In order to show that there was we would have to show that the conditions under which sentences can represent were not themselves fully representable by sentences. (Searle 1979a, 130; italics are mine)

Searle's initial views on background assumptions were aimed at explaining how particular Intentional mental states expressed in sentences acquire the content they have and he appealed to the Network of beliefs that played an important role in that process. A related, but distinct issue, namely, how the totality of Intentional mental states (i.e., the

\textsuperscript{56} See also Searle 1980b, 223; 1992a, 180.
Network itself) acquires the content these states have, however, could not be resolved adequately by an appeal to the Network itself, on pain of circularity. That Searle was well aware of this problem early in his work can be seen from the following passages: "by describing intentional states using the concept of representation I have described intentionality in intentional terms. Is there any way out of this circle? I do not believe there is. I do not believe there is a nonintentional explanation of intentionality" (Searle 1979b, 196). A page later, he elaborates:

It seems to me not at all paradoxical that there should be non-linguistic analyses of the linguistic but not non-intentional analyses of intentionality. Speaking a language is, after all, a part of human behavior and of human conscious life. It would be surprising if we could not describe it in terms derived from human behavior and human conscious life. But in the way that intentionality underlies the possibility of linguistic acts there is nothing that conceptually underlies intentionality. (Searle 1979b, 197; italics are mine)

In 1983 Searle’s early worries concerning the problem of circularity in his explanation of Intentionality in Intentional terms became intensified again, but he changed his earlier opinion as to the impossibility of getting out of this "Intentional circle." In 1983 he stipulates that the Background must be nonintentional, or nonrepresentational (as is reflected in his recent use of the term 'Background capacities,' instead of his earlier use of 'background assumptions') if one wants to explain how the totality of the Network of Intentional representations functions. "If representation presupposes a Background, then the Background cannot itself consist in representation" (Searle 1983, 148). Were the Background itself Intentional, or representational, it would become indistinguishable from the Network, and thus it would be in need of an independent explanation by nonintentional, nonrepresentational means, which would result in the vicious regress previously alluded to. Given Searle’s stipulation of the nonintentional nature of the Background, however, it becomes extremely difficult to discuss the nature of the
Background, as one, by default, must revert to the use of Intentional vocabulary. Under the heading "Why are we having so much trouble describing the Background or even getting a neutral terminology for describing it? And why, indeed, does our terminology always look 'representational'?" (Searle 1983, 156), Searle comments:

The reader by now will have noticed that there is a real difficulty in finding ordinary language terms to describe the Background: one speaks vaguely of "practices", "capacities", and "stances" or one speaks suggestively but misleadingly of "assumptions" and "presuppositions". These latter terms must be literally wrong because they imply the apparatus of representation . . . and that is why I normally preface "assumption" and "presumption" with the apparently oxymoronic "preintentional", since the sense of "assumption" and "presupposition" in question is not representational. (Searle 1983, 156)

A little further down he explains: "just as language is not well designed to talk about itself, so the mind is not well designed to reflect on itself . . . there simply is no . . . vocabulary for the Background, because the Background has no Intentionality. As the precondition of Intentionality, the Background is as invisible to Intentionality as the eye which sees is invisible to itself . . . Ordinary usage invites us to, and we can and do, treat elements of the background as if they were representations, but it does not follow from that, nor is it the case that, when these elements are functioning they function as representations" (Searle 1983, 156-7).

There was a separate problem with respect to the functioning of the Network to reckon with: if the Network is but a collection of the possible beliefs that the brain is capable of generating, then there must be a separate capacity of the brain to "bring these beliefs into action," so to speak. In keeping with his view on the Intentional foundation of linguistic meaning, as early as 1983 Searle already suggests the idea that the contents of Intentionality are not self-interpreting. He says that

if all we have is a verbal expression of the content of . . . beliefs, then so far we have no Intentionality at all . . . propositions are not self-applying.
You still have to know what to do with the semantic elements before they can function; you have to be able to apply the semantic contents in order that they determine conditions of satisfaction. Now it is this capacity for applying or interpreting Intentional contents which I am saying is a characteristic function of the Background. (Searle 1983, 153)

In other words, the brain must be able not only to produce or generate the Network, but also to "make connections" between the constituents of the Network.

The Background . . . permeates the entire Network of Intentional states; since without the Background the states could not function, they could not determine conditions of satisfaction. Without the Background there could be no perception, action, memory, i.e., there could be no such Intentional states. (Searle 1983, 151-52)

From 1983 on Searle separated the orthodox holistic notion of the Network of Intentional mental states (i.e., the totality of the Intentional contents that the brain has the capacity to generate) from the notion of Background (i.e., the capacity of the brain that "enables" the functioning of the Network). Searle repeatedly warns us that the brain's causal capacities (abilities or mechanisms) to produce Intentional states cannot be confused with the effects or products of such capacities. His emerging view comprises the following steps:

a) Intentional mental states are produced by and realized in the brain (biological naturalism).

b) The conditions of satisfaction for the representational contents of Intentional mental states are not individuated atomistically, but are determined relative to the Network

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"C Capacities of the body that generate physical processes or states are physical capacities (e.g., the proper functioning of certain complex neural, muscular and skeletal mechanisms results in my walking, a physical event produced by physical abilities of my body. Naturally, my walking, like any other of my actions, is partially constituted by my intention, produced by my brain). Capacities of the body that generate mental processes or states are mental capacities (e.g., the proper functioning of certain complex neural mechanisms results in my having a conscious thought, a mental event produced by the mental abilities of my brain). It is in this sense that the Background is a mental capacity. It is a mental capacity by virtue of its causal contribution in producing conscious mental states. The Background is at the same time a biological capacity, since it is part of the neural mechanisms of the brain that produce mental states: "the existence of Intentional states is explained by the fact that we are creatures with the certain sort of neurophysiological structure, and certain sorts of biological capacities" (Searle 1991b, 293)."
c) "In addition to the Network, we need to postulate a Background of capacities that are not themselves part of that Network. Or rather, the whole Network stands in need of a Background, because the elements of the Network are not self-interpreting or self-applying" (Searle 1992a, 176).

In this sense, Searle’s recent notion of Background supersedes orthodox holism, as it includes the possible causal underpinnings for the functioning of the Network; a view that is consistent with his biological naturalism.

Intentional phenomena such as meanings, understandings, interpretations, beliefs, desires, and experiences only function within a set of Background capacities that are not themselves intentional. Another way to state this thesis is to say that all representation, whether in language, thought, or experience, only succeeds in representing given a set of nonrepresentational capacities . . . intentional phenomena only determine conditions of satisfaction relative to a set of capacities that are not themselves intentional. Thus, the same intentional state can determine different conditions of satisfaction, given different Background capacities, and an intentional state will determine no conditions of satisfaction unless it is applied relative to an appropriate Background. (Searle 1992a, 175-76)

Speakers’ shared and mutually known background assumptions have been understood by Searle as speakers’ knowledge of certain formal and informal social institutions of human coexistence, e.g., facts about about restaurants, food and money; facts about preparing for an exam or going to the movies; facts about presidential elections in democratic systems, etc. Among speakers’ background assumptions are also certain facts of physics, e.g., the gravitational force of earth, the solidity of objects, the position of objects relative to one another, etc., or even such general metaphysical claims as that the real world exists, the presumption of regularities in the world and the predictability of nature, or that other persons are conscious and potentially cooperative. In other words, background assumptions refer to how things are (i.e., theoretical knowledge) and how one does things: "certain fundamental ways of doing things and
certain sorts of know-how about the ways things work" (i.e., practical knowledge) (Searle 1983, 143). Certain background assumptions were called by Searle cultural or local, as they depend on the social environment in which a certain group of humans lives (Searle 1983, 143-44; 1992a, 194).

Among speakers' shared, nonrepresentational, nonintentional, biological "deep" Background capacities that are said to be common to all members of *homo sapiens* are practices, skills, habits and stances, the mastery of representational systems, most notably of language. Among such capacities are for example the ability to recognize familiar faces (Searle 1983, 69); the "sheer ability to make certain associations" between the meanings of metaphorical and literal utterances (Searle 1983, 149); the ability to acquire skills necessary for the expert performance of (physical and mental) actions, where, according to Searle, repeated experiences create certain neural pathways enabling the smooth execution of tasks (Searle 1983, 150).

That certain types of experience recur over time plays a role in the subjectivity of one's total set of experiences. Each Intentional mental state of a person is experienced as her own. Over time, one develops a subjective Network of Intentional states that contribute to the content of one's current experience. All this is generated, of course, by one's subjective Background (the Background is located literally where one's brain is located). The Aspect of a current Intentional mental state is determined by the agent's Network of other states previously generated by the agent's Background: "agents stand in indexical relations to their own Intentional states, their own Networks, and their own Backgrounds" (Searle 1983, 65). The agent's current experience of an object under a familiar Aspect can make reference to her prior experience of the object under the same Aspect. In Searle's words, it can be "internal to one representation that it makes reference to other representations of the Network" (Searle 1983, 66). While it is possible
that two persons' respective desires are directed at the same object, e.g., water, there is
an uneliminable subjective Aspect to their respective desires, resulting from the two
persons' unidentical Networks generated by their unidentical history of experiences (and
from the simple difference in the location of their respective brains). Although it is the
occurrent subjective Aspect that determines the conditions of satisfaction for the agent's
occurrent mental representation, this Aspect is generated by the agent's subjective
Background capacities and within her subjective Network. The conditions of satisfaction
for a given Intentional state are not determined by those external objective features of the
external world that are not represented in the totality of the agent's subjective Network
of Intentional states and Background capacities. For example, a person's thirst for water
must be causally related to the same person's prior identification of water as water. This
person (a high school drop-out) may have never learned that water is H₂O, and therefore
may have never represented the object of his thirst as being H₂O, regardless of the
extensional identity of water with H₂O. The conditions of satisfaction for his occurring
state of thirsting for water therefore cannot be identical with the conditions of satisfaction
of another state of someone's thirsting for H₂O.

Each of us is a biological and social being in a world of other biological
and social beings, surrounded by artifacts and natural objects. Now, what
I have been calling the Background is indeed derived from the entire
congeries of relations which each biological-social being has to the world
around itself. Without my biological constitution, and without the set of
social relations in which I am embedded, I could not have the Background
that I have. But all of these relations, biological, social, physical, all this
embeddedness, is only relevant to the production of the Background
because of the effects that it has on me, specifically the effects that it has
on my mind-brain. The world is relevant to my Background only because
of my interaction with the world. (Searle 1983, 154)

I now turn to the discussion of the difficult concept of unconscious Intentional
mental states. The original "background assumptions" were regarded by Searle, not only
as inexplicit in the representational structure of particular mental states as well as in the semantic structure of the uttered sentence, but also as taken for granted, i.e., not consciously thought of.

Background assumptions are so fundamental and so pervasive that we don’t see them at all. It takes a conscious effort to prise them off and examine them, and, incidentally, when one does prise them off it tends to produce an enormous sense of annoyance and insecurity in philosophers, linguists, and psychologists - or at any rate such has been my experience. (Searle 1979a, 133)\textsuperscript{18}

In the previous section I discussed Searle’s more recent views on unconscious Intentional mental states with a specific Aspectual Shape (first formulated in Searle 1989, publicly discussed in Searle 1990b and reiterated in Searle 1992a). Searle’s claim that there exist unconscious Intentional mental states with a fixed Aspectual Shape provoked much criticism in the journal Behavioral and Brain Sciences (Searle 1990b). In response to this controversy, in 1992 Searle emphasized that, apart from the occurrent conscious mental states, the brain "contains" only certain neurophysiological capacities or mechanisms capable of generating conscious thoughts and actions, and the Background is constituted exclusively by these neurophysiological capacities, some of which are innate, some acquired:

Once you see that the description of a mental state as "unconscious" is the neurophysiological ontology in terms of its causal capacity to produce conscious thoughts and behavior, then it seems there could not be any factual substance to the ontological question: Do unconscious mental states really exist? All that question can mean is: Are there nonexistent neurophysiological states of the brain capable of giving rise to conscious thoughts and to the sorts of behavior appropriate for someone having those thoughts. Of course neither side thought of the issue this way, but perhaps

\textsuperscript{18} A similar idea is expressed in Searle’s saying that the Network "shades off into a background of capacities" (Searle 1983, 151); "Intentionality rises to the level of the Background abilities." It is the Background capacities of a human being that enable a continuous flow of skilled action, where one no longer thinks about the steps to be taken, just acts (Searle 1991b, 293-94; Searle 1992a, 195; Searle 1995, 129).
part of the intensity of the dispute derived from the fact that what looked like a straight ontological issue -- do unconscious states exist? -- was really not an ontological issue at all. (Searle 1992a, 167)

There is only the nonrepresentational, nonintentional, neurophysiological Background and the consciously experienced subjective Intentional mental states, each with a specific Aspectual Shape. We have no subjective conscious meta-awareness as to how the latter are generated by the former.

In Searle’s view, one’s behavior can be seen as the overt manifestation of a commitment to certain beliefs, not consciously thought of at the time of displaying the behavior: One can be committed to the truth of a proposition without having any Intentional state whatever with that proposition as content. “The sense of commitment involved here is that one cannot deny, consistently with one’s behavior, the truth of certain propositions; such propositions are taken for granted” (Searle 1991b, 292; see also Searle 1992a, 185). For example the fact that I am sitting at my desk without holding it down commits me to the truth of the proposition that "gravity is doing the holding down," without me having to think about it.

Another way for Searle to approach unconscious mental phenomena by appeal to the Background is when in 1995 he refines his early view on speech behavior as a rule-governed behavior. This point of view provided the theoretical foundation of his speech-act theory in 1969 (see for example Searle 1969, 12). In the earlier work Searle relied on his notion of “constitutive rules” of speech behavior that are socially created and maintained. The different types of speech behavior, the so-called speech acts, are identifiable by the constitutive rules that underlie their production. Searle’s scheme illuminating the nature of constitutive rules is that

the utterance of a certain sentence \( S \) under certain conditions \( C \) counts as the performance of a certain speech act \( A \). (Searle 1969, 36)
In 1969 Searle asserted that competent speakers have a shared and mutual knowledge of the constitutive rules of speech behavior that enables them to produce and to interpret rule-governed speech acts. An obvious problem arises upon viewing speech as a rule-governed behavior: It is one thing to describe the rules of what speakers do on the basis of observable regularities (Searle calls this "rule-described behavior" in 1995), but can we, on the basis of observable regularities, conclude that speakers are actually following the rules identified when engaging in speech behavior? (Searle calls this "rule-governed behavior" in 1995). Searle's early view on this problem is the following:

Sometimes in order to explain adequately a piece of human behavior we have to suppose that it was done in accordance with a rule, even though the agent himself may not be able to state the rule and may not even be conscious of the fact that he is acting in accordance with the rule... Two of the marks of rule-governed as opposed to merely regular behavior are that we generally recognize deviations from the pattern as somehow wrong or defective and that the rule unlike the past regularity automatically covers new cases. Confronted with a case he has never seen before, the agent knows what to do. (Searle 1969, 42)

According to the above characterization, speakers' commitments to the constitutive rules of speech acts are manifested in their rule-governed speech behavior, even if they never consciously thought of the existence of such rules.59

Searle's 1995 book focuses on socially created and maintained "institutional" facts that are constituted by rules whose existence depends on human agreement; among them, of course, is the use of language. In his chapter on the Background Searle asks the old

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59 Part of the motivation for Searle's article (Searle 1990b) is his disagreement with Chomsky's well-known thesis that the source of speakers' ability to engage in rule-governed speech behavior is that they possess an innate "language acquisition device" that contains the rules for a so-called "transformational generative grammar" that speakers follow when speaking. The main point of opposition between Searle and Chomsky is that Chomsky claims that the rules (although being followed by speakers) are not accessible to consciousness, not even in principle. Searle declares that it is "incoherent" to posit unconsciously held rules as being followed by speakers, if the rules are said to be absolutely inaccessible to consciousness. Searle's response is that speakers act in accordance to the rules, without thinking of them, although the rules must, at least in principle, be accessible to consciousness (Searle 1989a, 196; 1990b, 586; 1992a, 152).
question: "How can it be that the rules of the institution play a role in our dealings with the institution, even though we are not following the rules either consciously or unconsciously?" (Searle 1995, 137). He claims that the answer to this question must rely on his nonrepresentational notion of Background capacities. If the use of language is considered as being merely "rule-described," then the Background cannot be said to play any causal role in grounding our behavior: we just act the way we act. If the use of language is considered more "adventurously" as being genuinely "rule-governed," then the nonrepresentational notion of Background as the foundation of Intentionality cannot be maintained, since in this case the semantic content of the rules would have to be Intentionally represented in the Background. Searle’s solution is to assert that the "Background can be causally sensitive to the specific forms of the constitutive rules of the institutions without actually containing any beliefs or desires or representations of those rules" (Searle 1995, 141). The neurophysiological structure of the person causes the person to behave the way he does; given his neurophysiological structure, the person possesses certain (innate and acquired) Background dispositions that, being sensitive to the rules, enable the person to act according to the rules (Searle 1995, 145). 'Being sensitive' is used by Searle to refer to the species-specific and individual evolution of the brain that brings about the disposition to behave according to societal rules.

In his most recent text, the Background is explained by Searle as that part of the neurophysiological structure that enables (i.e., functions causally in) the production of certain sorts of Intentional phenomena (Searle 1995, 130). Searle lists seven types of Background enabling functions (Searle 1995, 132–137). Notice the absence of the notion of Network from Searle’s most recent list of Background functions.
1. The **Background enables linguistic interpretation to take place.**
Linguistic interpretation is not possible merely on the basis of the literal semantic content of sentences. It requires shared Background capacities that are mutually attributable to speakers.

2. The **Background enables perceptual interpretation to take place.**
We are able to see things as certain sorts of things because we bring to bear on the raw perceptual stimulus a set of Background skills, the ability to apply certain categories.

3. The **Background structures consciousness.**
The first two functions are extended to consciousness: Because all Intentionality is Aspectual, all conscious Intentionality is Aspectual: the possibility of experiencing under Aspects requires a familiarity with the set of categories under which one experiences those aspects. The ability to apply those categories is a Background ability.

4. The **Background is the source of the so-called "narrative" or "Dramatic Shape" of a temporally extended sequence of experiences.**
The Background has not only an episodic application, "but it also has what we might call a dynamic application over a series of successive events" (Searle 1995, 134). We possess certain "scenarios of expectation" that enable us to cope with people and objects of our environment. This is especially relevant to forms of social interaction (e.g., we know what in general happens when we plan to eat in a restaurant).

5. The **Background is the source of a set of motivational dispositions that condition the structure of our experiences.**
A big city person who abhors the "joys of rural living" will experience a vacation on a farm differently from an avid nature or animal lover, even though the objective circumstances of their vacations are the same.

6. The **Background facilitates certain kind of readiness.**
This point, too, has to do with our expectations: Based on our previous experiences certain events are viewed as congruent with the given context, while others affect us as shocking (e.g., the sudden appearance of a skier in full gear in a university lecture hall).

7. The **Background disposes one to certain sorts of behavior.**
This function of the Background is called in psychology one's set of enduring personality traits.

Earlier Searle pointed out that the Background provides necessary but not
sufficient enabling conditions for the operation of Intentional states: "Nothing forces me to the right understanding of the semantic content of 'Open the door,' but without the Background the understanding that I have would not be possible, and any understanding at all requires some Background or other" (Searle 1983, 158).

Searle asserts that the "right" interpretation is not forced by the semantic content of linguistic expressions, and that grasping all the component meanings does not guarantee the understanding of the uttered sentence, since these depend on an indeterminate number of possible Background conditions (Searle 1983, 146). He expresses the same idea even more forcefully by stating that "sentence meaning radically underdetermines the content of what is said" and that there is nothing whatever "in the semantic content of the sentence, construed by itself, that blocks . . . crazy interpretations" (Searle 1992a, 182). A couple of pages later, under the heading "Common Misunderstandings of the Background," Searle explains that the thesis of the Background "does not show that meaning and intentionality are unstable or indeterminate, that we can never make ourselves understood, that communication is impossible or threatened; it merely shows that all of these function against a contingently existing set of Background capacities and practices" (Searle 1992a, 191). That the inherently plausible thesis of the Background has certain ramifications for the possibility of successful communication is clear, even if Searle appears to downplay such consequences. A comprehensive overview of the Background's role in both permitting and undermining the possibility of successful communication will be provided in my chapter five.
The Other Minds Problem

Given the subjective mode of existence of mental phenomena, inaccessible to public scrutiny, the ontological Other Minds Problem (OMP) has been traditionally treated as "a basic question, perhaps the basic question in the study of mind" (Searle 1992a, 11). Since Descartes, the paradigmatic question has been: "Do other minds exist?" Searle explains that this doubt concerning the ontology of other minds arose from our epistemic frailties. It was wrong to consider the decision of an ontological issue as being dependent on our epistemology. (Other) minds exist and are what they are, regardless of whether or not we have access to them: the epistemology of the mental does not determine its ontology; rather, "the whole point of the epistemology is to get at the preexisting ontology" (Searle 1992a, 23). Thus, ontology is prior to epistemology, and in this particular case there is simply nothing to get at, or to solve: the OMP in the ontological sense simply does not arise. The primary question to ask is: "what is it that people actually have when they have mental states?" Once the ontology of the mental properties has been explained in terms of "biological naturalism," i.e., that mental states are "both caused by and realized in the brain," then, by applying the same-causes same-effects principle, the causal explanation can be extended to cover all minds with relevantly similar causal underpinnings (Searle 1983, 264; 1992a, 22).

Apart from the priority of ontology over epistemology, there is another aspect to the OMP, namely, the difference between commonsensical and philosophical views on the subject. In everyday life, says Searle, we simply know that cats, dogs and other people have a conscious mind. Moreover, this is not a conclusion reached by hypothesis testing: "we do not go around solving the OMP." Rather, except for unusual cases, it is something we simply take for granted. It constitutes part of our Background ways of behaving; this is the way we relate to other conscious beings.
We can readily see in the case of other human beings that the causal bases of their experiences are virtually identical with the causal bases of our experiences. This is why in real life there is no "problem of other minds." Animals provide a good test case for this principle because, of course, they are not physiologically identical with us, but they are in certain important respects similar. They have eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc. For this reason we do not really doubt that they have the experiences that go with these various sorts of apparatus. (Searle 1992a, 75)

Searle’s assertion that, commonsensically speaking, the existence of other minds is not something anyone ever doubts, is important, since in his view this fact alone provides sufficient reason for rejecting the OMP in the ontological sense. That the OMP exists at all, and only in philosophy, is due to the fact that, unlike lay persons, skeptical philosophers refuse to take the notion of a conscious mind for granted and treat it as if it could be a possible subject for doubt (Searle 1992a, 77).^60^

In the ontological sense there is no OMP. Other higher organisms do have minds, says Searle; doubting this would be inconsistent with our behavior, hence irrational. The epistemic question, "How do I know that other organisms have mental states just like mine?" is a legitimate one, according to Searle. He provides a solution to the epistemic question of OMP, at least in principle. He criticizes the traditional solution to this problem, according to which only by observing its behavior do we know about the existence of mental phenomena in another system: "I believe that the traditional 'solution'

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^60^ Searle’s tone in discussing the above distinction is unmistakeably later Wittgensteinian. Notions taken for granted by any sane layperson, yet scrutinized and even doubted by philosophers, are often subject to the Wittgensteinian "therapy." Among these is the Background, a central technical notion in Searle’s theory. "The work of the later Wittgenstein is in large part about the Background," says Searle (Searle 1992a, 177). In the footnote at the end of this statement he adds: "Especially On Certainty (1969), which I believe is one of the best books on the subject" (Searle 1992a, 253). See also Searle 1995, 132.

Both authors claim that there are certain notions taken for granted by all humans, such as that objects are solid, or that other people have experiences just like ours, or that the earth existed long before our birth. Searle says that the sense of commitment in "taking for granted" is that we cannot, consistently with our behavior, deny the truth of such notions (Searle 1992a, 185). I cannot relate to another person’s mind unless I take it for granted that she does have the capacity for consciousness. To behave this way and at the same time to deny such facts would be inconsistent, therefore irrational. Consequently, philosophers are being irrational when they treat certain Background notions as if in need of justification.
to the 'problem of other minds,' though it has been with us for centuries, will not survive even a moment's serious reflection" (Searle 1992a, 21). Two things are wrong with the claim that our only means to get at other beings' mental phenomena is via their behavior, according to Searle:

1) Observing the organism's behavior is not our only clue, it is not even the relevant clue about the mental contents of others. Behavior and conscious mental phenomena are only contingently related (Searle 1992a, 65-70). Instead, our relevant clue is provided by the causal underpinnings of mental phenomena. Epistemologically speaking, observing the system's behavior as the expression or manifestation of an underlying mental reality becomes relevant only because we know what that underlying mental reality consists of, prior to and independently of our observation of the behavior.

It isn't just that the dog has a structure like my own and that he has behavior that is interpretable in ways analogous to the way I interpret my own. But rather, it is in the combination of these two facts that I can see that the behavior is appropriate and that it has the appropriate causation in the underlying physiology. (Searle 1992a, 73)

2) By merely observing the behavior, we cannot get at the actual mental phenomena we are after, since this study leaves out the crucial features that distinguish mental from nonmental, i.e., it is the wrong way to study other minds (Searle 1992a, 19). As we saw earlier, Searle asserts the existence of subjective facts that are not publicly accessibl

Among the facts we know about other minds are the following, according to Searle. We know that dogs and cats and other people are conscious, while computers and robots are not. Moreover, we know that other people (and higher animals) have conscious mental phenomena more or less like our own; in other words, "things look to other people the way they look to us" (Searle 1992a, 76).61 I know that I myself have a mind for I have

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61 See also Searle 1983, 5; Searle 1992a, 21, 74; Searle 1994, 207.
a subjective experience of having conscious Intentional mental states, Searle says. With respect to other minds, there are "indirect methods" to get at the target phenomena: the principle on which we solve the epistemic OMP is simply the same-causes same-effects principle (Searle 1992a, 22). Since the causal basis in others' physiology is relevantly similar to mine, it is fair to presume that their subjective conscious states will also be relevantly like my own.

While Searle uses the expression 'relevantly similar' on numerous occasions, he does not produce a clear definition of it. The key concept is the species-specific "causal powers of the brain." The capacity of my brain to cause conscious Intentional mental states must be relevantly similar to the capacity of your brain to cause conscious Intentional mental states, given the species-specific relevant similarities in our respective neurophysiological structures. This fact encourages the strong presumption that your mental states must be relevantly similar to mine. Thus, the epistemic OMP is resolved, at least in principle.
PART TWO: COMMUNICATION
CHAPTER THREE
INTENTION, REPRESENTATION
AND
COMMUNICATION (I)

I have spent a considerable portion of my dissertation on analyzing WHAT, in Searle's opinion, is being communicated when speaking. In my first chapter I concentrated on Searle's contention that, contrary to Quine's indeterminacy thesis, meaning, that is, the speaker's (intended utterance) meaning, does involve a determinate (subjective) fact: By way of producing an utterance, the speaker intends to express or represent publicly the determinate content of a subjective, conscious Intentional mental state that is known to the speaker. In my second chapter I assessed in detail Searle's views on the role of the Background in enabling or causing speakers' occurrent, subjective, conscious Intentional mental states and on its role in determining the satisfaction conditions of their subjective contents.

From now on my main concern is with the question of HOW speakers' intended utterance meaning is communicated by means of the publicly produced utterance. My present chapter focuses on Searle's views on the speaker's subjective intention involved in publicly representing the determinate content of a subjective, conscious Intentional mental state.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the exchange between Searle and Paul
Grice, in order to show the extent to which Searle's theory of mind as the foundation of the theory of language was influenced by Grice. Searle's "intentionalist turn" from an analysis of meaning in terms of the constitutive rules of speech acts to one in terms of speakers' subjective mental states was at least partially prompted by his critique of Grice's seminal work on meaning intentions.\textsuperscript{62} In Searle's opinion, Grice left the fundamental notion of his meaning theory -- intention -- unanalyzed (Searle 1983, 161). This critique brought about Searle's focus on the analysis of intention and eventually the founding of his entire theory of linguistic meaning on individual speakers' subjective Intentional mental states that underlie their production of utterances.

Another criticism of Searle directed at Grice is that the speaker's intended utterance meaning cannot be analyzed in terms of the so-called perlocutionary effects (i.e., in terms of the addressee's verbal, attitudinal or behavioral responses, following Austin's terminology).\textsuperscript{63} The perlocutionary effects are not considered by Searle to be a proper part of the theory of meaning, mainly because they are said to be beyond the speaker's control. Addressees' responses, unlike speakers' speech acts, cannot be formalized, standardized, rendered predictable or individuated according to certain conventionally realized constitutive rules. For Searle, an instance of the speaker's so-called communication intention is fulfilled when the addressee has understood that the speaker intended to communicate her prior intention to represent a subjective Intentional mental state.

\textsuperscript{62} The other incentive for Searle's "intentionalist turn" was provided by Quine's (in Searle's opinion) untenable behavioristic approach to meaning. As we saw, Searle argued forcefully that an account of the ontology of meaning must be separated from the epistemic account of how we can access the meaning of others: "To be of theoretical interest, the 'empirical' facts have to accord with our inner abilities and not conversely" (Searle 1992b, 20).

\textsuperscript{63} See Austin 1975, 102.
My section "No communication without representation" is about Searle's most important criticism directed at both Grice's and his own early work: Linguistic representation is prior to and independent of speakers' communicative purposes, and consequently, a correct account of it cannot be derived from a theory of communication. Rather, an account of linguistic representation must be derived from the notion of the intrinsic Intentionality of speakers' subjective conscious mental states. The intention to communicate to another is just an optional intention, in addition to the speaker's more fundamental intention to represent her Intentional mental state by the production of an utterance.

Searle's views on indirect speech, too, were prompted, at least partially, by Grice's claim that so-called literal utterances (taken for granted in Searle's Speech Acts) are but a subclass of all utterances. In order to explain how indirect speech can be interpreted, Searle relied on two important notions, both of which are included in Grice's theory of "conversational implicatures": a) the distinction between the so-called literal meaning of a sentence and the so-called speaker's intended utterance meaning; b) the notion of speakers' background knowledge. Both notions turned out to be indispensable to the development of Searle's later theory. The distinction between the sentence meaning and the speaker's meaning provided the basis for Searle's recurring criticism of Quine and for his fundamental view developed in the early 1980's, according to which the philosophy of language is a branch of the philosophy of mind. His thesis of the Background, that eventually became central to his entire theory of mind, language and social reality, arose initially from the specific need to explain how indirect speech can be interpreted. At the same time Searle realized that even the so-called literal meanings of sentences function only relative to speakers' shared Background capacities which are not themselves explicitly expressed in the semantic structure of the sentence.
My analysis of Searle’s theory of indirect speech incorporates some of Searle’s relevant views expressed both prior and subsequent to his 1975 explanation. It leads from a discussion of the \textit{intrasubjective} aspects to a discussion of the \textit{intersubjective} or social aspects of communication. The possibility of interpreting indirect speech cannot be explained without reference to the inherently social nature of speech.

\textbf{Searle vs. Grice}

Paul Grice introduced at least two important new ways to analyze meaning. One has to do with speakers’ \textit{intentions} to engage in communicative behavior, the other with certain \textit{implicit} principles of discourse. Grice’s views generated innumerable comments and critiques, and were given a number of revisions by the author himself. Among Grice’s most ardent critics is Searle, who, while acknowledging the general value of Grice’s pioneering attempts, disagrees with several of Grice’s most fundamental arguments.

In his seminal paper, "Meaning" (Grice 1957), Grice distinguishes two senses of the expression ‘\(x\) means that \(p\).’ The so-called \textit{nonnatural} sense of the expression, signified by the abbreviation "\text{mean}_{NN}\," involves "\textit{some} sort of reference to somebody’s intentions," while the so-called \textit{natural} sense of the expression does not involve such reference (Grice 1957, 76). Grice remains vague about the notion of intention; he merely says that commonsensically, an "utterer is held to intend to convey what is normally conveyed," and "similarly in nonlinguistic cases: we are presumed to intend the normal consequences of our actions" (Grice 1957, 77).

According to Grice, ‘\(A\) meant\text{\textsubscript{NN}} something by \(x\)’ is "(roughly) equivalent to ‘\(A\) intended the utterance of \(x\) to produce some effect in an audience by means of the"
recognition of this intention" (Grice 1957, 76). In the case of statements, the intended effect is a belief induced in one’s interlocutor that so-and-so is the case; in the case of imperatives, the intended effect is an act performed by one’s interlocutor, in the case of insults the intended effect is that one’s interlocutor feel distressed, etc. In either case, says Grice, the intended effect "must be something which in some sense is within the control of the audience, or that in some sense of 'reason' the recognition of the intention behind x is for the audience a reason" for believing or for doing (Grice 1957, 77).

Searle acknowledges the inherent value of Grice’s account in creating a connection between meaning and intention and in capturing an essential feature of linguistic communication: the addressee’s recognition of the speaker’s intentions. However, Searle considers Grice’s initial account defective in at least two crucial aspects: firstly, the distinction and the connection between the so-called speaker’s meaning and the so-called conventional sentence meaning is not made sufficiently clear, and secondly, meaning is defined in terms of the so-called perlocutionary effects (Searle 1969, 43-44).

In Searle’s counterexample to support his first objection, an American soldier wishes to achieve the effect in his Italian captors that they mistake him for a German soldier and, in mistaking him for their ally, release him. However, he intends to achieve the desired effect by means of uttering a line from a well known German poem: "Kennst du das Land wo die Zitronen blühen?" The meaning of this German sentence in English is "Knowest thou the land where the lemon trees bloom?" It is obvious that the German

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64 It is important to note that Grice uses the term 'utterance' to cover both linguistic and non-linguistic (purposeful) behavior in so far as it is relevant to communicative exchanges.

65 Later Grice (Grice 1968) amended this view by claiming that in the case of imperatives the speaker’s intended effect is that the addressee should intend to do the act in question (and not, say, merely make an accidental movement); in the case of indicative-type utterances, the speaker’s intended effect is that the addressee should think that the speaker believes something.
sentence’s meaning and the effect intended by the American speaker are not at all the same, even though the American’s plan to deceive his captors may work nevertheless. The reason why it may work, says Searle, is because the speaker’s intention is not just randomly related to the sentence’s meaning:

What we can mean is at least sometimes a function of what we are saying. Meaning is more than a matter of intention, it is also at least sometimes a matter of convention. One might say that on Grice’s account it would seem that any sentence can be uttered with any meaning whatever, given that the circumstances make possible the appropriate intentions. But that has the consequence that the meaning of the sentence then becomes just another circumstance. (Searle 1969, 45)⁶⁶

Searle wishes “to amend” the Gricean account by adding that, if the speaker “is using words literally, he intends this [the addressee’s] recognition to be achieved in virtue of the fact that the rules for using the expressions he utters associate the expression with the production of that effect” (Searle 1969, 45).

In his “Utterer’s meaning and intentions” (Grice 1969), Grice responds to Searle’s “American soldier” counterexample in the following way: Searle attempted to adapt Grice’s general discussion of the nature of meaning to a limited set of speech acts (i.e., where these are used in a conventional, literal, straightforward sense). Grice points out that the so-called conventional use of sentences is only a special case of meaning something by an utterance, for a conventional correlation between a sentence and a specific response provides only “one of the ways in which an utterance may be correlated

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⁶⁶ A similar critique is expressed by Searle as late as 1989, when he claims that “on a Gricean analysis, there is no suggestion that conventions, rules, or social practices are in any way essential for the performance of speech acts” (Searle 1989b, 3). Here Searle emphasizes that the conventional nature of speech acts is not a mere matter of accident; instead, it does constrain what can be meant by speaking. Compare this with Searle’s assertion made during his “intentional phase”: “The Intentionality of the mind not only creates the possibility of meaning, but it limits its forms” (Searle 1983, 166). See, however, the following conciliatory remark from his most recent work: “There are words, symbols, or other conventional devices that mean something or express something or represent or symbolize something beyond themselves, in a way that is publicly understandable” (Searle 1995, 60-61; italics are Searle’s).
with a response" (Grice 1969, 161). Further, Grice argues that Searle's purported counterexample is not a genuine one, as Searle's imaginary situation allows at least three radically different interpretations: (1) Given the fact known to the American officer, namely, that the Italians do not speak German, the American's intended utterance meaning ought not to be characterized by Searle as "I am a German officer," but as a wish that the Italians should argue in the following way: "he has just spoken in German . . .; we don't know any German, and we have no idea what he has been trying to tell us, but if he speaks German, then the most likely possibility is that he is a German officer" (Grice 1969, 161). (2) To point out, as Searle did, that the German line means not "I am a German officer" but "Knowest thou the Land . . ." is not relevant. The American could be said to have meant that he was a German officer by way of saying the line, not by the meaning of the words which he uttered (Grice 1969, 162). (3) It would be different for the American officer to mean that he was a German officer, as opposed to mean that the Italians should believe that he was a German officer (Grice 1969, 163).

With respect to Searle's second objection concerning Grice's initial account, namely, that meaning is defined by Grice in terms of perlocutionary effects, Searle has the following to say: Grice's account is wrong, since there are many cases where the speaker's intention in speaking does not involve any response on the addressee's part, but merely that the addressee understand what the speaker has said. In some cases, there is simply no perlocutionary effect customarily associated with the utterance, e.g., greeting. Even in cases where there is a certain perlocutionary effect customarily associated with the production of the utterance, the speaker may produce the utterance without caring whether or not its customary effect is in fact achieved, e.g., asking a question rhetorically.

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67 Searle dealt with the Gricean challenge (i.e., that literal utterances are but a subclass of all utterances) in his various papers on indirect speech (Searle 1979a).
or speaking only because it is the speaker’s duty to say something, regardless of whether or not the addressee responds appropriately. Lastly, the speaker’s intention to induce a belief in the addressee, even though recognized by the addressee, may not be the reason for the addressee to hold such a belief. Similarly, the speaker’s intention to get the addressee leave the room, even though recognized by the addressee, may not be the reason for the addressee’s departure (Searle 1969, 46).

According to Searle, while speakers’ social purposes often do involve the behavioral, attitudinal or verbal responses of their addressees, the perlocutionary effects of speech acts cannot be conventionalized (Searle 1979b, 194). The speaker has no control over the addressee’s actions, so the success of the speaker’s communicative intention cannot be made dependent on the addressee’s possible range of responses. Although, at least in certain cases, there are some indications as to what counts as an appropriate response,\(^6\) the addressee could always in principle respond inappropriately. There can be no constitutive rules to constrain the addressee’s responses to the speaker’s utterance, and it is in this sense that the perlocutionary effect is not part of communication proper. Rather than the perlocutionary effect, the achievement of the so-called *illocutionary effect* on the speaker’s part is what counts as a successful instance of communication. The achievement of the illocutionary effect (i.e., to get the addressee to recognize the speaker’s communicative intention) provides a reason for the addressee to act, to develop expectations, or to take the speaker as expressing a belief etc., upon the speaker’s utterance, but does not compel the addressee to do so.

The emerging picture of communication is worth quoting at length:

\(^6\) For example, an appropriate response to a *question* would be an *answer*, to a *proposal*, *acceptance*, *rejection*, *counterproposal* or further *discussion*, etc.; to a *demand*, either *fulfilment* or *rejection*, etc. See Searle 1969, 66-67; 1979a, 34).
1. Understanding a sentence is knowing its meaning.

2. The meaning of the sentence is determined by rules, and those rules specify both conditions of utterance of the sentence and also what the utterance counts as.

3. Uttering a sentence and meaning it is a matter of \((a)\) intending \((i-1)\) to get the hearer to know . . . that certain states of affairs specified by certain of the rules obtain, \((b)\) intending to get the hearer to know . . . 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.

4. The sentence then provides a conventional means of achieving the intention to produce a certain illocutionary effect in the hearer . . . the intention . . . will in general be achieved if the hearer understands the sentence, i.e., knows its meaning, i.e., knows the rules governing its elements. (Searle 1969, 48)

In his paper, "Meaning, communication and representation"\(^{69}\) (Searle 1986a), Searle summarizes the differences between Grice’s and his own early account on communication as follows: In "Meaning," Grice was concerned with a general account of meaning, while in Speech Acts Searle focused exclusively on literal utterances of sentences (just as Grice pointed out). "Grice argued that the intended effects of meaning were what Austin called perlocutionary effects," while against Grice Searle argued that "meaning-intentions were intentions to produce understanding in the hearer, and that understanding consists in the knowledge of the conditions on the speech act being performed by the speaker" (Searle 1986a, 210-211). Searle’s main purpose in this paper, however, is to turn his criticism of Grice’s account against his own early theory: While intention must indeed be a crucial element in the analysis of meaning something by speaking, in the past neither Grice nor Searle himself had managed to capture the precise role of intention, according to Searle (Searle 1986a, 210). The exposition of Searle’s

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\(^{69}\) First presented five years after the publication of Speech Acts.
criticism directed against both Grice's and Searle's own early account will be provided separately, in the next section.

In "Logic and conversation" (Grice 1975), Grice points out that for a large class of utterances, the total meaning is not fully expressed by the meaning of the sentence uttered. Instead, some of the total meaning of the utterance is only implied by the linguistic expression uttered. This implied part of the total meaning of the utterance may be "implicated" (to use Grice's term) either conventionally ("conventional implicature"), or nonconventionally ("conversational implicature").

With respect to so-called conventional implicatures, "in some cases the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said"; e.g., the use of the connective 'therefore' between two statements is a conventional means in English to imply that the fact stated in the second statement follows from the fact stated in the first one (Grice 1975, 44). For example, 'it is pouring, therefore it is raining' could be rendered more explicit by this: If it is the case that it is pouring, then from the statement of this fact it follows that it is raining. "Given a knowledge of the English language, but no knowledge of the circumstances of the utterance, one would know something about what the speaker had said, on the assumption that he was speaking standard English, and speaking literally" (Grice 1975, 44).

Nonconventional implicatures may or may not be verbal: It is the verbal subclass of nonconventional implicatures that is referred to by 'conversational implicatures' in Grice's theory. Conversational implicatures are "essentially connected with certain general features of discourse" (Grice 1975, 45). Nonverbal nonconventional implicatures are the other subclass of nonconventional implicatures: Within a discourse, there could be some actions on the speaker's part that implicate certain interpretations, without the speaker's saying anything (gestures and facial expressions may "speak volumes").
Commonsensically, discourse takes place as a result of cooperative efforts between rational participants. According to Grice, the most fundamental principle of discourse which participants are expected to observe is the *Cooperative Principle*: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1975, 45).

Grice identifies four categories of maxims and submaxims the observance of which will yield results in accordance with the Cooperative Principle: "Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner" (Grice 1975, 45). The first three categories refer to *what* is said: "Quantity" refers to the informativeness of the contribution, "Quality" to its truth and "Relation" to its relevance, while the category of "Manner" refers to *how* what is said is to be said, i.e., to the requirement that one's contribution to the discourse be perspicuous (Grice 1975, 46). Grice explains that a participant in a talk exchange may fail to fulfill a maxim in various ways: she may either quietly or blatantly violate (flout) a maxim, or may refuse to cooperate, or may find herself facing the need to follow two or more, mutually exclusive maxims (Grice 1975, 49).

As to the connection between the Cooperative Principle, the maxims and the Gricean "conversational implicatures," Grice says that for a "conversational implicature" to take place, the following conditions must obtain:

For a speaker $S$ to conversationally implicate that $q$ by saying that $p$,

1. $S$ must be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle

2. $S$ must be presumed to be aware that $q$ is required in order to make her saying that $p$ consistent with (1)
(3) S must think (and expect the addressee to think that S thinks) that it is within the competence of the addressee to work out that (2) applies. (Grice 1975, 49-50)

It must be possible to work out inferentially an occurring "conversational implicature," Grice stresses. The features relevant to such an inference are the following: the conventional meaning of the expressions used in terms of their references, where applicable; the Cooperative Principle and its maxims; the linguistic and nonlinguistic context of the utterance; participants' background knowledge; and "the fact (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case" (Grice 1975, 50).\(^70\)

In his "Notes on conversation"\(^71\) (Searle 1986b), Searle points out some inadequacies in the account of the Gricean conversational maxims. His first objection to Grice's categories of maxims is that "the four are not on a par." The category of "Quality" that requires the truth of statements stands out: to speak sincerely is the essential constitutive rule of making a statement. "It is the condition of satisfaction of a statement that it should be true, and it is an internal defect of a statement if it is false" (Searle 1986b, 11). All the other categories of maxims involving informativeness, relevance and perspicuity are "external constraints on the speech act, external constraints coming from general principles of rationality and cooperation" (Searle 1986b, 11).

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\(^70\) Compare this list with Searle's list of features that are necessary for the correct interpretation of indirect speech in Expression and Meaning. In that early volume, Searle basically agrees with the Gricean maxims of conversation (see for example Searle 1979a, 32; 50; 175).

\(^71\) Searle's article "Notes on conversation" (Searle 1986b) (first presented at a conference held in 1981 in Brazil), was republished with certain changes made by the author in 1992, under the title "Conversation" (Searle 1992b). The new version constitutes the target article to a set of critical papers together with Searle's response, "Conversation reconsidered" (Searle 1992c). This volume is a supplement to two recent collections of articles on Searle's work: Burkhardt 1990, and Lepore and V. Gulick 1991.
These other three categories of maxims all have limited explanatory power in characterizing the structure of discourse, says Searle. With particular respect to the Gricean maxim of relevance, Searle claims that we do not have a theoretically clear enough explanation of what relevance among speech act sequences would amount to. Such an explanation would have to be provided independently of the notion of discourse, in order to avoid circularity. "Relevance, although it is certainly a fact about discourse and it is crucial in understanding discourse, has rather little explanatory power in characterizing the structure of a conversation because the form of relevance in question seems to require a prior understanding of precisely such talk exchanges as conversations in order to have any application" (Searle 1986b, 11).

In the revised version of the original article Searle elaborates this point. It is quite understandable, Searle says, to appeal to the maxim of relevance with respect to speech act sequences, i.e., conversation. "A series of random remarks between two or more speakers does not add up to a conversation" (Searle 1992b, 12). A set of speech acts must be connected by some sort of internal coherence in order to constitute communication. Relevance with respect to talk exchanges is supposed to have a function that is analogous to that of the constitutive rules of single speech acts. Searle believes that this analogy, although it is initially attractive, eventually fails. The reason why this analogy fails is because, unlike individual speech act types that are individuated by virtue of the specific purpose or point associated with them, conversations qua conversations cannot be said to have such a clearly defined individuating purpose: "Relative to one conversational purpose an utterance in a sequence may be relevant, relative to another it may be irrelevant" (Searle 1992b, 13). What is relevant in a conversation is not determined by the fact that it is a conversation: it is determined relative to the interlocutors' purposes which are external to the conversation qua conversation.
Relevance in general is always specified as relative to some purpose or other; but the purpose in question is not the purpose of the conversation (the event): rather, the purpose belongs to one or the other interlocutor. This analysis is consistent with Searle’s internalist approach according to which speech events (the physical phenomena of making noises), whether singular or sequential, derive their meaning from the intrinsic Intentionality of the agents. Not even the point or purpose of a single speech act can exist independently of the speaker who produces it; it is derived from the intrinsic purpose of the agent.

I have previously mentioned Searle’s admission that his objection, namely, that the notion of intention central to the explanation of linguistic meaning has been left unanalyzed by Grice, could equally well be applied to his own early work. This objection of Searle warrants a separate discussion as it can be seen as the strongest incentive for his theory of Intentionality, that in turn eventually came to be considered by Searle as the foundation of the theory of language.

No communication without representation

For Searle, the notion of communication essentially involves the notion of the individual speaker’s Intentionality. One of his earliest assertions to this effect is as follows.

The essential feature involved in a genuine case of communication: the speaker or sender of the signal has an intentional state, such as a belief or a fear or a desire, and he or she performs some action with the intention of producing in the hearer or the receiver of the signal the awareness that he or she has that intentional state by means of getting the receiver to recognize the intention to produce in the receiver the awareness that the sender has the intentional state. (Searle 1978, 177)
This passage highlights what Searle originally meant by the double level of intentionality involved in the production of speech acts: The speaker has an *Intentional* state, that she may or may not wish to communicate to another; in case she wishes to do so, she has the *intention* to let the addressee know that she has that Intentional state. Unless both levels of intentionality obtain, the case is not a genuine case of communication. To give an example, the speaker could be suffering from Tourette’s syndrome, a mental disorder involving mechanical, repetitive speech, apparently disconnected from the speaker’s Intentional mental states, and clearly not a result of communicative intention. Or someone could overhear the speaker’s utterance, without being the intended addressee, or one could simply "read something into what the speaker said," something the speaker did not intend to communicate. In these cases the hearer simply acquires an awareness of some information that was not meant to be communicated (Searle 1978, 178).

Most importantly, as we shall see shortly, for Searle it is evident that a normal person in an everyday situation may have the *intention to speak* (*meaningfully*) without the *intention to communicate*. This latter idea is at the core of Searle’s view on meaning, representation and communication. It resulted in a theoretical refinement of Searle’s early notion of the double level of intentionality involved in the production of utterances, as he eventually separated the speaker’s *communication* intention from the speaker’s *representation* intention.

In his paper, "Meaning, communication and representation" (Searle 1986a), reflecting on his own past views on communication, Searle states that his criticism of Grice’s views can equally well be applied to his own past account: "The precise role of intention . . . has been at least partly misdescribed by Grice, myself, and other authors"  

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72 This essay, like so many of Searle’s other articles, was publicly presented much earlier (in 1974 in Hamburg and at the APA Western Division in 1976), but it did not appear in print until 1986.
(Searle 1986a, 210). His single most important objection to Grice (and to his own early views) is that speakers' utterances are meaningful even if they are not intended to be communicated to an audience; since this is obviously the case, linguistic meaning cannot be derived from communication, as Grice (as well as Searle himself) seems to have claimed. Linguistic meaning exists independently of the intention to communicate that meaning.

Like most speech act theorists I have analyzed meaning in terms of communication. The intentions that are the essence of meaning are intentions to produce effects on hearers, that is, they are intentions to communicate. But now it seems to me... that in at least one sense of 'meaning', communication is derived from meaning rather than constitutive of meaning. (Searle 1986a, 212)

Some of the examples provided by Searle for the case where the speaker speaks meaningfully, without the intention to communicate, are as follows: I may know that the other person does not pay any attention to me or cannot even understand me, yet I feel that it is my duty to make a statement (e.g., an American police officer reciting the Miranda rights to a suspect who obviously does not speak English: "You have the right to remain silent...")); cases of soliloquy, diary, or journal, which had been analyzed by Searle in the past as limiting cases of communication, where the speaker was held to be identical with the addressee. The relevant difference, according to Searle, is not at all whether there is an audience present, but whether or not the speaker has the intention to communicate.

The utterances produced under these circumstances are clearly meaningful, even though the speaker cannot be said to be trying to get another person to understand her meaning. These are clearly cases where the speaker says something and also means something by speaking (unlike the Tourette patient who does not seem to mean anything by speaking). The analysis of meaning therefore must be separated from the analysis of
communicative intentions. The relevant question (that, as Searle acknowledges, originates from Wittgenstein) with respect to meaning is: "What is the difference between saying and meaning it and saying but not meaning it?" (Searle 1986a, 217). In other words, What is the difference between producing an acoustic blast and producing a meaningful utterance? This question must be answered prior to the issue of how to communicate one's intended utterance meaning to another. The fundamental question of meaning is "What is it for a speaker to mean something by an utterance, with or without communicative purposes?" (Searle 1986a, 209; Searle's italics).

Searle's answer is this: "A speaker's uttering something and meaning something by it consists in the speaker's uttering something with the intention that his utterance should represent the world" (Searle 1986a, 212). The early notion of the double level of intentionality is reiterated here: utterances are seen by Searle as intended expressions (representations) of Intentional mental states and Intentional mental states are said to be intrinsically Intentional representations of the world. The speaker could just have an Intentional mental state (e.g., the speaker believes that it is raining) but remain silent about it. If the speaker purposefully utters the sentence 'I believe that it is raining,' the speaker has an intention to express her occurrent Intentional mental state; hence the double level of intentionality. So, for Searle, a double level of intentionality exists prior to the speaker's additional intention to communicate the represented Intentional mental state to another. If the speaker intended, not only to represent, but at the same time to communicate an Intentional mental state to another, this would be a third level of intentionality in accordance with Searle's theory. Thus the representation intention has been isolated from the communication intention.

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73 Some of this material also appears in chapter six of Searle 1983.
What has to be added to the physical object, i.e., to the noise made with the speaker's mouth, in order to make it into a meaningful representation? Searle asks. Mere words uttered without the representation intention would be just meaningless noise; utterances derive their meaning from the speaker's intention to represent. The intention to represent a certain state of affairs by means of producing an utterance is what renders the physical event of the utterance meaningful.

With regard to the communication intention, some of Searle's characterizations are as follows: The intention to communicate is that "the hearer should recognize that the act was performed with the representation intention" (Searle 1983, 168); "to produce in the hearer the knowledge of the force and content of the speech act" (Searle 1989b, 4); or that "the speaker's meaning intention be recognized by the hearer" (Searle 1986a, 212); "to produce in H [the hearer] the knowledge that the . . . [speech act] . . . represents a certain state of affairs, by means of H's recognition of S's [the speaker's] intention that it should represent that state of affairs" (Searle 1986a, 217). From these characterizations it appears that the representation intention is not only independent of the communication intention, but more importantly, it must be prior to it: "No communication without representation," says Searle's slogan (Searle 1989b, 5). In communicating, the speaker communicates her subjective Intentional representation of the relevant state of affairs of the world to her addressee. The speaker has a subjective Intentional mental representation of the state of affairs that she intends to represent publicly by way of an utterance, and in addition, the fact that the speaker has a subjective Intentional mental representation will be communicated to (i.e., intended to be recognized by) the addressee (Searle 1986a, 213). The speaker's intention to communicate simply consists in the intention that her addressee should become aware of the fact that the speaker has a representation intention when speaking. In so far as the speaker's communication intention, as characterized here,
is recognized by the addressee, communication is deemed successful by Searle (Searle 1986a, 223). To summarize Searle's view in his own words:

On my present account the primary meaning intentions are intentions to represent and they are independent of and prior to the intention to communicate those representations. A primary meaning intention is an intention to represent; a communication intention is an intention that the hearer should know the representing intention. (Searle 1986a, 216)

**Indirect speech acts and direct intentions**

Searle's definition of indirect speech acts is as follows: "In the special case of indirect speech acts, the speaker means what he says but he also means something more" (Searle 1979a, ix), while he defines the literal production of speech acts as cases where "the speaker means exactly and literally what he says" (Searle 1979a, 30).

According to Searle's 1969 speech act theory, in each literal production of a speech act a certain type of illocutionary point or purpose of the speaker is rendered explicit. Literal speech behavior is rule-governed: the rules are derivable from the conditions under which speech acts are produced literally (the nature of such conditions is mutually known to all competent speakers of a language). Types of speech acts are individuated by the specific set of constitutive rules derivable from the conditions associated with their literal production; among them most importantly the rule that determines the typical illocutionary point associated with the literal production of a given type of speech act. The typical illocutionary point of an *order* for example is to get the addressee to do something, the point of a *promise* is to commit the speaker to the undertaking of an obligation, etc. The constitutive rules of a literally produced speech act are publicly manifested in the utterance of a sentence, so that, by observing the
semantic structure of the publicly uttered sentence, competent speakers can discern the type of illocutionary point intended subjectively by the speaker (Searle 1969, 17-18). In this volume, Searle considers indirect speech acts as not being "theoretically essential," as being "deviant" or "defective" (Searle 1969, 21), or "not-serious" or "parasitic" upon the so-called "correct" or "literal" utterances of sentences (Searle 1969, 57).

The collection of papers *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Searle 1979a) contains Searle’s unique early treatment of indirect speech acts. Consistently with his early view, in the 1979 volume, "addressed to the specific problems that arise within the paradigm of speech acts" (Searle 1979a, xii), Searle views indirect speech acts as parasitic upon literal speech acts. His explanation of how indirect speech is interpreted is also parasitic on his groundbreaking speech act theory. The main subject matter of *Expression and Meaning* consists of the so-called "deviant" or "defective" cases where the speaker’s subjectively intended utterance meaning differs from the rule-governed meaning of the sentence. More precisely, in such cases the speaker’s subjectively intended illocutionary point differs from the rule-governed illocutionary point of the sentence.

The specific aim of chapter two, "Indirect speech acts,"74 is to articulate the principles on which the interpretation of such cases is possible. In Searle’s words, "the theoretical apparatus presented here suffices to explain the general phenomenon of indirect illocutionary acts" (Searle 1979a, 35). In performing any speech act, the speaker is said to perform an illocutionary act consisting of a propositional act with an illocutionary force, directed at the achievement of the illocutionary effect, together with

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a perlocutionary act directed at the achievement of the perlocutionary effects, and an utterance act, that is, the emission of words (Searle 1969, 24). An indirect performance of a speech act is the indirect production of a primary illocutionary act by way of performing a secondary, literal illocutionary act (Searle 1979a, 31). The primary illocutionary act constitutes the speaker’s intended utterance meaning that is only implied but not made explicit by means of the public, literal performance of the secondary illocutionary act.

This characterization is difficult to comprehend. See for example Marcelo Dascal’s comment: Searle “believes that both the literal and nonliteral acts are performed whenever one performs an indirect speech act . . . This is surely a strange doctrine. For, why should one say that an assertion was actually made if it does not correspond to the speaker’s actual point in uttering his utterance?” (Dascal 1992, 42-43; Dascal’s italics).

Searle’s own answer to Dascal given in the same volume is puzzling: "In any indirect speech act the literal secondary act is always performed because responses which are appropriate to it but not to the primary nonliteral act are appropriate" (Searle 1992c, 143). For example, if somebody made an indirect request at the dinner table by way of uttering the question "Could you pass the salt?" then, according to Searle in 1992, it would be appropriate to respond with "Why, certainly; I am capable of doing that." But, according to our general, shared background information concerning North-American dinner table conversation, it would not be appropriate to do that, since the first speaker did not mean to ask about our capabilities, rather, he meant to indirectly request that the salt be passed to him. According to some other background setting, say, in the neurologist’s office, if the doctor meant to literally ask the recovering patient who was suffering from a partial paralysis a very pertinent question by way of uttering the same sentence, the exchange would be perfectly appropriate. So, Searle cannot say that a literal
response to the literal portion of an indirect speech act would be appropriate, independently of the background setting, that ultimately determines how the first utterance was meant.\textsuperscript{75}

I have actually found an answer to Dascal's question in Searle's theory of intentional action that, I believe, is more consistent with Searle's work as a whole than the one given by Searle above. In the sentence defining indirect speech acts, "The speaker means what he says, but he also means something more," the first 'means' indicates the intention of the speaker to speak (instead of just accidentally making a noise), the second 'means' indicates the intention of the speaker to represent publicly his primary illocutionary point by way of speaking. In general, according to Searle, whenever a person performs an action (a purposeful instance of behavior) there is a so-called intention-in-action involved in the very performance of that act. In particular, the act of speaking, too, involves an intention-in-action, that is, to speak intentionally, as opposed to accidentally (e.g., unlike the patient suffering from Tourette's syndrome).\textsuperscript{76}

The intentional act of speaking serves as the speaker's intended means to publicly represent the contents of a subjective mental state with a certain illocutionary point. The purpose or end for the sake of which the act of speaking is produced, is to publicly represent that point. If I intentionally sprayed the walls of a government building with paint in order to publicly represent my subjective mental state (my opinion of the government), then my intentional act of spraying on that occasion would be performed as my intended means to represent the contents of my subjective mental state with a certain illocutionary point. My purpose or end for the sake of which my act of spraying

\textsuperscript{75} This is Searle's main point in his own argument in "Literal meaning," included in the same volume as "Indirect speech acts" (Searle 1979a, 117-137).

\textsuperscript{76} See chapter three of Searle 1983 for details on intention and action.
was performed, would be to publicly represent that point. When speaking (spraying) intentionally, I mean to perform the act of speaking (spraying) as a means to an end (to represent my subjective point/opinion publicly) and I also mean to achieve that end.

How does the act of speaking (spraying) serve as a means to the end of publicly representing a subjective mental state with a certain illocutionary point? Searle’s 1983 answer is that the act of speaking (spraying) has a meaning imposed on it by the agent who performs it. The act of speaking (spraying) derives its Intentionality from the intrinsic Intentionality of the speaker’s subjective mental state with a certain illocutionary point, purposefully rendered public by the speaker (sprayer) in the performance of the act on a particular occasion. If my subjective opinion of the government on the particular occasion of spraying the walls with paint was that I believe that the government is doing a fabulous job in serving the people, then I believe that the government is doing a fabulous job in serving the people would be the derived meaning of my act of spraying the walls with paint on that occasion. My point associated with the contents of my subjective Intentional mental state on that occasion would be that I am committed to the truth of the contents of that Intentional mental state. That is the point that I would intend to publicly represent on that occasion, by means of my intentional act of spray-painting the walls of the government building. Both the opinion to be represented, and the means by which I intended to represent that opinion publicly, may appear somewhat eccentric; nevertheless, that is precisely what I would mean to do on that occasion.

The difference between speaking and spraying is that speaking is a rule-governed means to a subjective end, while spraying is an idiosyncratic means to a subjective end. Searle’s point relevant to the issue of indirect speech is that when we speak literally, we intend to use rule-governed speaking as a means to our subjective end, in accordance with the rules. When we speak indirectly, we intend to use rule-governed speaking as a means
to our subjective end, but not in accordance with the rules. That must be possible because we cannot make the notions of "rule-governed action" or of "acting in accordance with the rules" intelligible, unless there is a possibility of "breaking" the rules purposefully, so to speak. Of course the intentional "breaking" of the rules depends on what rules are being "broken," and so the very "breaking" of the rules is still governed by the rules that are being "broken." So how is it possible for the addressee to figure out what the speaker (speaking in an indirect manner) means?

Uncharacteristically for Searle, his approach to indirect speech acts is largely epistemic, rather than ontological. Characteristically for Searle, his epistemology of how indirect speech acts are interpreted is based on the interpreter's attributions of what is known to her from the first-person case to her interlocutor. That such attributions are not always justified is acknowledged by Searle himself, when he claims that the method proposed by him is merely probabilistic (i.e., not infallible). In "Indirect speech acts," published in 1975, Searle seems to adopt Grice's own 1975 explanation of how the so-called "conversational implicatures" can be interpreted. Let me reiterate the method suggested by Grice in "Logic and conversation":

It must be possible to work out inferentially an occurrence "conversational implicature." The features relevant to such an inference are the following: the conventional (i.e., literal) meaning of the expressions used; the Cooperative Principle and its maxims; the linguistic and nonlinguistic context of the utterance; the participants' background knowledge; and "the fact (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know

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77 It is in this sense that Searle calls indirect speech acts "deviant" or "defective."
or assume this to be the case" (Grice 1975, 50).\footnote{This last item on Grice’s list refers to participants’ shared and mutual knowledge of the facts relevant to the interpretation of "conversational implicatures." Searle’s own early appeal to speakers’ shared and mutual knowledge of the constitutive rules of speech acts was later transformed into a new appeal to speakers’ shared and mutually taken for granted Background capacities.}

In Searle’s own words, "the apparatus necessary to explain the indirect part of indirect speech acts includes a theory of speech acts, certain general principles of cooperative conversation . . . and mutually shared factual background information of the speaker and the hearer, together with an ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences" (Searle 1979a, 32). Searle offers a reconstruction of the steps necessary to derive the speaker’s subjectively intended primary illocutionary point from the publicly produced literal speech act (Searle 1979a, 34-35). These steps, he says, provided that all other things are equal, and that the speaker is sincere, provide a probabilistic method of establishing that \(a\) the speaker’s subjectively intended primary illocutionary point is not identical with the one expressed; \(b\) what the primary illocutionary point intended by the speaker is. Searle stresses that his step-by-step analysis is not meant to suggest that interpreters consciously go through such steps. In the following I explain and critically comment on each of these steps in the sequence they appear in Searle’s analysis that is derived from a concrete example of an indirect refusal of an invitation, by way of uttering a literal assertion.

\textit{Facts about the conversation}

\textit{Step 1:} The interpreter is aware of the context in which the speaker’s (indirect) speech act was produced. In particular, the interpreter knows the conversational context, i.e., in response to what type of speech act was the speaker’s sentence uttered (Searle
Searle’s explicit epistemic appeal to the conversational context in the case of indirectly produced speech acts suggests that the interpretation of indirectly produced speech acts, unlike that of literally produced speech acts, depends on the type of conversational context in which they are produced. It is as if the speaker’s primary illocutionary point implied in the literal speech act uttered could not be identified qua indirect speech act independently of the conversational context, that is, without being related to the preceding speech act as a purportedly indirect response.

Marina Sbisà makes a somewhat similar suggestion when she argues that all "illocutionary acts . . . may be held to be 'conditional' in the sense that they have to be accepted as illocutionary acts of certain kinds, if they are to 'take effect' in the corresponding ways" (Sbisà 1992, 105). In other words, the decision as to what type of illocutionary act was produced by a speaker is conditional on the interpreter’s relevant response, without which the speaker cannot be said to have produced any illocutionary act of a certain type. Searle’s 1992 reply to Sbisà’s suggestion is that she "is right in thinking that illocutionary acts 'take effect', but wrong in thinking that no act has even been performed until it takes effect." Indeed, he says, "the only way an illocutionary act can take effect is if it has already been performed" (Searle 1992c, 141). Sbisà’s point, according to Searle, is that no illocutionary act whatsoever was performed by the speaker until the addressee interpreted the speaker’s utterance in the appropriate way. If this is what Sbisà meant, it cannot be right, since whenever the speaker speaks intentionally, she does intend to express a determinate illocutionary point, no matter whether it is identified by another or not.

The primary illocutionary point of a single speech act (whether produced with a literal or a purportedly indirect intent) is independent of any epistemic considerations involved in the interlocutor’s attempts to interpret it, since it is determined solely by the
autonomously chosen subjective intention of the speaker producing it. In principle, nothing prevents a person from using any linguistic expression, or even gibberish, as a means to represent the contents of her subjective mental state (à la Humpty Dumpty). The utterance so produced will count as meaningful to the person herself and the person herself will know what she intends to mean by the utterance produced. That such "oval" speech behavior is clearly antisocial is beside the ontological point of what it takes to mean something by speaking.

Granted, individual speakers’ individual subjective purposes represented publicly by way of utterances produced alternatingly by one or the other speaker, in a manner that is disconnected from each others’ mutual social purposes, would not be what we commonsensically understand by the notion of conversation. Commonsensically, we expect that single utterances produced in a conversational context ought to be related to one another in a coherent way. The general principle that renders the utterance sequences of a conversational exchange coherent is the Gricean Cooperative Principle, together with the maxim of relevance as being most germane to the issue of coherent conversation. Although, as we saw, Searle more recently dismissed the Gricean maxim of relevance as having little explanatory power, in 1975 he attributes a central role to it in the interpretation of indirect speech acts.
Principles of conversational cooperation

Step 2: The interpreter assumes that the speaker is obeying the (Gricean) Cooperative Principle, in particular the (Gricean) maxim of relevance (Searle 1979a, 34).\(^{79}\) Searle’s more recent dismissal of the Gricean maxim of relevance was based on the following thought: "relative to one speaker’s purpose an utterance in a sequence may be relevant, while relative to another it may be irrelevant" (Searle 1992b, 13). Here Searle views the notion of relevance as a relation between a publicly produced utterance and the subjective purpose of one or the other participant of the conversational exchange. The conversational exchange discussed by Searle in 1975 involves two participants, A and B; a prior utterance, \(U_A\), produced by A, and another utterance \(U_B\), produced by B in succession of \(U_A\). It is the relevance of \(U_B\) which is under A’s scrutiny. The question is, relative to whose purpose is \(U_B\) assumed by A to be relevant? A’s assumption, according to Searle’s 1975 explanation, is that \(U_B\) is intended by B to be relevant relative to A’s purpose underlying A’s prior production of \(U_A\). Let us assume that B in fact does intend to obey the Gricean maxim of relevance (although the possibility is always there that B does not intend to do so). What is it that B needs to know in order to be able to respond relevantly to \(U_A\)? B minimally needs to know

1) A’s purpose underlying A’s prior production of \(U_A\)
2) A’s expectations in terms of what would count as a relevant response to \(U_A\), relative to A’s purpose underlying A’s prior production of \(U_A\)

From B’s point of view, the main problem is that the fulfilment of condition (2) depends on the the fulfilment of condition (1); however, with respect to condition (1), B can only

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\(^{79}\) It is presupposed by Searle that the two persons are competent speakers of the same language, share the same cultural Background, are on equal footing in so far as their social status is concerned, are in no particular emotional conflict with one another at the time of the exchange, are sincere, etc. These are some of the most important aspects of a conversational exchange that may influence the relevance attributed to an utterance by one or the other participant, but, for clarity’s sake, I assume, following Searle’s example, that the ceteris paribus clause applies.
*presume* what A's purpose underlying A's prior production of $U_A$ was. B can only attempt to fulfil condition (2) on the basis of a presumption that is potentially incorrect. This is not meant to suggest that we can never tell what the purpose of another is, but only that our presumption of another's purpose may be erroneous, and the ensuing inferences based on this first error will result in misinterpretation. B's intention to obey the Gricean maxim of relevance can now be characterized as follows: Based on what B *presumes* to be A's purpose underlying A's prior production of $U_A$, B intends to respond relevantly to $U_A$. If (unbeknownst to B) B's presumption with regard to A's purpose is in fact erroneous, then (unbeknownst to B) B's response may turn out to be *unintentionally* irrelevant to $U_A$. If (unbeknownst to B) B's presumption with regard to A's purpose is in fact correct, then (unbeknownst to B) B's response may turn out to be relevant to $U_A$, as it was intended by B.

From A's point of view, A may charitably assume that B is obeying the Gricean maxim of relevance, but A cannot tell, only presume, whether or not this is in fact the case. Objectively speaking, B either does or does not intend to be relevant. But as I argued above, B may genuinely intend to be relevant, and still inadvertently produce an utterance that is irrelevant to $U_A$, simply because B misidentified A's purpose. When B utters $U_B$, B does not know that, despite his/her most fervent attempts to obey the Gricean maxim of relevance, $U_B$ is in fact irrelevant to $U_A$, and, although A can tell that $U_B$ is irrelevant to $U_A$ relative to A's purpose underlying A's prior production of $U_A$ (A knows what A expected in response to $U_A$), A does not know the reason for $U_B$'s being irrelevant. As we, observers from a God's eye point of view can tell, the reason for $U_B$'s irrelevance lies not in B's unwillingness to obey the Gricean maxim of relevance, but in B's erroneous presumption as to A's purpose.
So far I only discussed condition (1), that is, B’s knowing A’s purpose underlying A’s prior production of $U_A$. Actually, it is quite difficult to talk about the relevance of an utterance to another utterance relative to one or the other participant’s purpose, without having recourse to a principle by virtue of which such utterances and such purposes can be individuated in a publicly recognizable way. So far, I only individuated the respective utterances and purposes of the participants according to the principle of ownership, that is, the utterance or purpose of participant $A$, or the utterance or purpose of participant $B$. But any competent participant in a conversation can produce infinitely many different utterances, to express essentially five different types of purposes.\footnote{In Searle’s opinion, there are five major types of purposes underlying the production of all linguistic utterances, depending on the type of illocutionary point intended by the speaker. These are the so-called Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declarations. For details, see “A taxonomy of illocutionary acts,” included in the volume Expression and Meaning (Searle 1979a, 1-29).} There must be a principle by virtue of which the various purposes and utterances of either participant can be individuated by his or her interlocutor. Such a principle is suggested by Searle’s speech act theory.

\textit{Speech act theory}

\textit{Step 3}: The interpreter’s knowledge of the constitutive rules tells her what response would have been relevant (Searle 1979a, 34). Condition (2), namely, B’s knowing A’s expectations in terms of what would count as a relevant response to $U_A$, relative to A’s purpose underlying A’s prior production of $U_A$, is supposed to be fulfilled by virtue of B’s and A’s shared and mutual knowledge of the rules that constitute types of (literally produced) speech acts.

An appropriate response to a \textit{proposal} would be one of "acceptance, rejection,
counterproposal, further discussion etc." (Searle 1979a, 34); to a demand, one of either fulfilment or rejection; to a question, one of answer, etc. As competent speakers, we know that this is generally and commonsensically true. Expectations on the part of the speaker to get the addressee to respond to her speech act in the relevant manner indicated above are the speaker’s so-called perlocutionary aims. Searle did list such relevant responses among the conditions of satisfaction for various types of (literally produced) speech acts (Searle 1969, 66-67). When such conditions of satisfaction are met, the speaker’s perlocutionary aims are fulfilled. But a speaker’s speech act produced with certain perlocutionary aims may in fact produce various perlocutionary effects in the addressee that were not aimed at by the speaker. The speaker may entertain expectations as to the perlocutionary effects of her speech act, but ultimately she has no control over them. There is nothing, in principle, to prevent the addressee from responding contrary to the speaker’s expectations or in any other unexpected, hence irrelevant, manner, from the speaker’s own point of view. The actually produced perlocutionary effects of a speech act are not rule-governed, or formalizable. This is the main reason why Searle restricted his analysis of communication to the achievement of the so-called illocutionary effect (Searle 1969, 48). In his more recent papers on conversation, the unpredictability of perlocutionary effects was one of the reasons given for his rejection of the possibility of construing conversation as a rule-governed activity (Searle 1992c, 140). Given Searle’s 1969 arguments that perlocutionary effects ought not to be considered a proper part of the theory of meaning, it is strange that he would ascribe a vital role to them in his 1975 theory of indirect speech acts.

In addition, his more recent arguments concerning the limited explanatory power of the notion of relevance are valid here, too. Consider the following: If B presumed, for example, that A intended to ask B a question by way of producing $U_A$, then, relative to
B's presumption concerning A's intention, producing an answer to \( U_A \) would be deemed relevant by B. However, B's presumption is not infallible: as we saw, B's presumption regarding A's intention may be mistaken, if in fact \( U_A \) was not intended by A as a question. In that case a response, in the form of producing an answer to it in \( U_B \), would not count as a relevant response to \( U_A \), relative to A's actual intention. To use Searle's favorite example: if A uttered "Could you pass the salt?" during a normal dinner conversation, then, relative to A's actual intention (i.e., indirect request), B's uttering "Why, certainly; I am capable of doing that" as an answer to A's purported question would not count as relevant; although this response would count as relevant, relative to B's (mistaken) presumption as to A's actual intention.

Or consider the following case: Both speakers A and B are in full command of the constitutive rules and so they know what sort of responses would count as appropriately relevant to a given type of speech act. Speaker A intends to produce a particular type of speech act \( U_A \) with a particular perlocutionary aim associated with it as a relevant response. Addressee B may (mis)identify \( U_A \) as being another type of speech act with another perlocutionary aim associated with it as a relevant response, and attempt to fulfill dutifully that mistaken perlocutionary aim. For example, in a dialogue, speaker A's utterance of "You never come down here" produced in a colorless tone of voice was taken by addressee B to be a complaint, and so B began to excuse remorsefully his recent absence, just to be interrupted by A who said, this time in the appropriate tone of voice: "That was not a complaint, but an order: You! Never come down here."

After having lived for more than a decade as a non-native citizen in Canada, I am still not entirely clear what the relevant response to the literal question (or indirect greeting?): "How are you?" would be, upon meeting someone in a variety of everyday
contexts. I sometimes take it as an indirect greeting and in response I murmur something like "Fine thanks. And you?" This works most of the time, although nobody has ever answered my question included in my response. Without adding 'And you?' my response feels too curt, while with adding it, my response seems to be invariably ignored. But sometimes my interlocutor seems to find even my full response insufficient and asks additional questions, such as "How is your daughter?" or "How is your work going?" Based on this, I retroactively adjust my original judgement concerning my interlocutor's original intention: Uttering the first 'How are you?' was not meant as an indirect greeting, but as a literal question concerning my well-being. On days when I am in an exuberantly gregarious mood, or, conversely, when I am wallowing in lamentable self-pity, I may immediately take my interlocutor's uttering "How are you?" to be a literal question, and launch an irrepressibly garrulous tirade describing all the (at least to me) relevant details of my pathetic life. Suffice it to say that such a response, on more than one occasion, turned out to be less relevant in my interlocutor's opinion than in my own. Even if speaker B managed to identify A's illocutionary point correctly and knows what would count as the relevant response to that point, nothing compels B to actually produce a relevant response: there are cases where B purposefully produces an utterance $U_B$, such that the production of $U_B$ counts as an irrelevant response to $U_A$. For example, in order to teach my infant child to express her wishes verbally, I used to pretend not to understand her demands for orange or apple juice, expressed by a shrill cry "Dju!" occasionally accompanied by her imperious pointing into the general direction of assorted juices on the shelf. I sometimes purposefully gave her all sorts of responses that were obviously irrelevant to her demand, by way of pretending to ignore her, singing a song, or giving her a bath instead of the juice, etc. She was immensely frustrated by my cunningly Macchiavellian pretended "obtuseness," but she soon learned to be explicit
about her wishes (as her explicitness was promptly and consistently rewarded by the appropriate perlocutionary effect aimed at by her). Of course, in order to act in a purposefully irrelevant manner, speaker B must first correctly identify A’s actual intentions, and know what response is expected from B by A, and only in the possession of such information can B intend to respond irrelevantly, thereby defying A’s expectations. This implies that your defiance is not fully independent of your opponent’s intentions, because the irrelevance of your purportedly defiant response is irrelevant only relative to what would count as a relevant response. Defiance is dependence in disguise, and for that matter, so is manipulation, no matter how cunning.

From A’s point of view, $U_b$ may be correctly or mistakenly taken to be relevant or irrelevant, relative to A’s purpose underlying A’s prior production of $U_A$. The reasons for a potential misjudgment of relevance in this case are similar to the ones demonstrated above. $U_b$ produced by B in succession to $U_A$ may appear to be a relevant response, relative to A’s subjective purpose, from A’s own point of view, and, therefore, A may prematurely presume that $U_b$ is actually meant by B as a relevant response to $U_A$, relative to A’s original purpose, when in fact this is not the case. For example, speaker A may ask speaker B: "How old are you?," and B may utter "Sixteen," immediately following A’s question. From A’s point of view, this is a perfectly proper answer to A’s question, providing the information concerning B’s age in an elliptical fashion. However, unbeknownst to A, B was not really paying attention to A’s question, instead, B was trying to remember the lyrics to the 50’s hit song "Sixteen candles make a lovely light." B was quite preoccupied with this activity and as soon as B could finally recall the first word, B blurted it out: "Sixteen" (with no communicative purpose). From B’s point of view, this elliptical sentence is completely relevant to B’s present preoccupation, and so it is from A’s point of view. Yet, their respective concerns or Aspects are incompatible, and
neither of them seems to detect this, at least not immediately, when B’s utterance is made. In summary, the decision whether or not a particular utterance counts as relevant cannot be made without knowing relative to whose presumed purpose we are trying to judge the purported relevance of an utterance.

*The interpreter’s inferences*

*Step 4:* The addressee’s publicly observable speech act does not constitute a relevant response (Searle 1979a, 34). This is the first one in a series of inferential steps taken by the Searlean interpreter in order to establish that the speech act produced in response to the interpreter’s original utterance was not meant literally, and hence it must have been meant indirectly by the addressee. As I argued, for the interpreter to establish whether or not the utterance does constitute a relevant response, it is not enough to consider what would count as a relevant response from the interpreter’s own point of view. The interpreter can certainly tell, whether or not the speaker’s response appears relevant relative to the interpreter’s actual intention (i.e., she knows what she meant and knows what she expected in response), but this, as we saw, does not guarantee that the addressee’s own point of view of the relative relevance of her utterance is identical to that of the interpreter.

Naturally, if the purpose of interpersonal verbal communication is to connect with others, we must strive to respond in a manner that is presumably relevant, not only to ourselves but to our interlocutor as well; our interlocutors’ expectations to that effect toward us as cooperative social beings are appropriate, although not always fulfilled, expectations. But the responsibility to cooperate goes both ways: the interpreter cannot simply assume that the relative relevance of a response, as perceived by the other, always
and completely coincides with her own perception of it.

*Step 5:* Assuming that the addressee did intend to be relevant, and observing that the addressee's public speech act does not constitute a relevant response to the one produced by the interpreter, the interpreter infers that the addressee probably means more than he says (Searle 1979a, 34). In Searle's words, "This step is crucial. Unless the hearer [interpreter] has some inferential strategy for finding out when primary illocutionary points differ from literal illocutionary points, he has no way of understanding indirect illocutionary acts" (Searle 1979a, 34). Based on Searle's characterization, our ability to infer the speaker's intention to produce an indirect speech act is parasitic on our prior ability to infer whether or not a speech act was produced literally. In turn, our ability to infer whether or not a speech act was produced literally is parasitic on our prior ability to infer whether or not the speech act was produced relevantly, and this last inference is made on the basis of the assumption that our knowledge of the constitutive rules of literally produced speech acts is shared and mutual. As my examples show, even if our knowledge of the rules constituting the various types of speech acts is in fact shared and mutual, it alone does not allow us to discern whether or not a speech act was in fact meant relevantly, and therefore literally, by the speaker. This does not mean, of course, that we can never tell whether or not a speech act was produced relevantly; rather, this suggests that we may be mistaken in our attributions of relevance to another and our knowledge of the speech act rules does not in itself help to prevent such mistakes. Whenever we cannot tell that a seemingly literal response is in fact not meant literally by the speaker, we cannot conclude from a mere presumption to that effect that the response is therefore meant indirectly. Literally produced sentences do not wear their "literalness" on their sleeves. Although we often speak carelessly of the publicly observable *sentences*
as being literal or having a literal meaning, being literal is not an intrinsic property of the sentence (i.e., of the public means of representation) uttered; rather, it is a property of the utterance (i.e., of the purposeful act of representing) of the sentence as intended subjectively by the speaker.

The interpreter's inferences based on shared and mutual background information

Step 6: The interpreter takes it for granted that certain background\(^{81}\) conditions, relevant to the addressee's response, must apply. Steps 7-9: Given the relevant background conditions attributed to the addressee (together with his understanding of the rules of speech act theory), the interpreter infers which of the satisfaction conditions relevant to the speech act implied must be met or unmet. Step 10: From this the interpreter is able to infer the intended indirect illocutionary point of the addressee's utterance (Searle 1979a, 35).

The steps discussed up to now were meant to establish that the speaker's primary illocutionary point differs from the illocutionary point associated with the literal production of the sentence uttered by the speaker. The remaining moves summarized above are directed at finding out what exactly the speaker's intended illocutionary point is. The only new theoretical element involved in these moves is the notion of shared and mutual background information. As I explained in my second chapter, the terms 'background assumption' or 'background information' in Searle's early work were used to refer to a set of unconsciously held relevant beliefs that were said to determine the meaning of even the most simple, literally produced sentences (e.g., 'the cat is on the

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\(^{81}\) My use of the lowercase initial in 'background' is not accidental here. As I discussed in chapter two, in 1975 Searle did not yet clarify the distinction between the representational, Intentional background assumptions (i.e., the Network) and the nonrepresentational, nonintentional Background capacities.
mat'). The total set of such unconsciously held beliefs were said to constitute a speaker's individual Network that could, at least in principle, be brought into consciousness. Although even at this early stage, Searle emphasizes that the steps "taken" towards interpreting the indirect speech act of another are not to be understood as consciously thought of by the interpreter, his allusion to inference suggests otherwise. Phrases like the "general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer" or the "ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences" imply the conscious application of one's cognitive powers (Searle 1979a, 32).

As the later development of Searle's notion of the Background shows, nonconscious, nonrepresentational, nonintentional Background capacities do function causally in the production of conscious cognitive behavior, among other things by enabling the the drawing of inferences from consciously experienced beliefs or perceptions. An inference is a logical "step" "made" in order to connect the content of a conscious Intentional mental representation to that of another conscious Intentional mental representation. In order for the Background to serve as the basis of inferences, the Background itself had to be a conscious Intentional mental representation. But the causally efficacious nonconscious, nonrepresentational, nonintentional Background capacities by definition cannot be identical to conscious Intentional mental representations. If the detection of other persons' subjective intentions is at all inferential, then the conscious basis of such inference cannot be the nonconscious Background itself.

Searle's early and unique treatment of indirect speech acts is parasitic on his treatment of literal speech acts where he claimed that, by studying the semantic structure of the publicly produced sentence, we can infer the speaker's subjectively intended illocutionary point. We can do that on the basis of our knowledge of the constitutive rules of speech act theory, and under the mutual assumption that our knowledge of the
rules is shared, and that the rules themselves are adhered to by our interlocutors. In "Indirect speech acts" Searle focused on the possibility of getting at the speaker's subjectively intended illocutionary point in cases where the speaker's way of rendering her subjective point public appears to deviate from the rules of speech act theory. On the basis of our knowledge of the constitutive rules of speech act theory, and under the mutual assumption that although our knowledge of the rules is shared, the rules themselves may be purposefully disobeyed, we can do that, too, as long as our shared background information allows us to infer our interlocutor's subjectively intended illocutionary point from the observable circumstances of the utterance. I argued above that, while the nonconscious Background is causally efficacious in enabling other things the production of conscious inferences, the nonconscious Background itself cannot serve as a conscious assumption, from which we could infer some other facts. At the very end of his paper "Indirect speech acts," Searle compares the problem of interpreting indirect speech acts to

those problems in the epistemological analysis of perception in which one seeks to explain how a perceiver recognizes an object on the basis of imperfect sensory input. The question, How do I know he has made a request when he only asked me a question about my abilities? may be like the question, How do I know it was a car when all I perceived was a flash going past me on the highway? (Searle 1979a, 57)

Searle's suggestion -- a remarkable analogy (an early hint of his 1983 views on perception) drawn between our ability to directly recognize (rather than infer) the nature of objects of perception and our ability to directly recognize (rather than infer) speakers' implicit illocutionary points -- encourages me to propose a plausible explanation of our ability to discern other persons' subjective intentions. In the following, admittedly speculative, discussion, I heed Searle's advice that "philosophical investigation should begin naively" (Searle 1995, 31).
Our everyday experience suggests that perhaps we have a Background ability to identify other persons' subjective intentions -- not at all via inference, but by way of direct perceptual recognition, comparable to our direct, noninferential Background capacity to recognize faces or objects. Recall Searle's discussion of our general ability to perceive objects: We do not infer the presence of rabbits by "construing a theory based on evidence," we simply see that there is a rabbit scurrying by (Searle 1987, 146). While our general Background capacity of pattern recognition is innate, the ability to recognize organized systems of particular patterns (e.g., rabbits, cars or faces) comes with exposure to them in our physical environment. Similarly, upon sufficient exposure to our social environment, we acquire the ability to recognize some publicly observable cues in the form of body language, gestures and facial expressions, and what Frege called Klangenfarben (=tone-color) or evocation, all of which constitute organized systems of particular patterns that are correlated with speakers' subjective intentions. Such extralinguistic cues to speakers' intentions have always been commonsensically considered as part of the speaker's speech behavior.

In his most recent publication, Searle mentions Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus that comes close to the sort of phenomena that he calls the Background (Searle 1995, 132). Bourdieu, like Searle, emphasizes the nonconscious, taken for granted functioning of the habitus. Commenting on the elaborate code of honor among members of an African tribe, the Kabyles, he writes:

The system of honor values is enacted rather than thought, and the grammar of honor can inform actions without having to be formulated.

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82 There are some significant differences between the concepts of habitus and the Background, most important among them being that, according to the sociologist Bourdieu, the individual's habitus is entirely an acquired result of certain social pressures and power relations between persons' institutional statuses (akin to Searle's notion of the cultural or local Background), rather than being a partially innate genetically determined predisposition (akin to Searle's notion of the biological or deep Background).
Thus, when they spontaneously apprehend a particular line of conduct as degrading or ridiculous, the Kabyles are in the same position as someone who notices a language mistake without being able to state the syntactic system that has been violated. (Bourdieu 1979, 128)

Bourdieu’s suggestion here is that the Kabyles’ recognition of the subjective purposes motivating their interlocutors’ actions is immediate, rather than being the result of inference from the tacit rules of social behavior.

Often the speaker’s true primary intentions do seem to show in some perceptible and recognizable, patterned way, without the speaker’s conscious awareness of the fact that they show, and consequently without her conscious effort to reveal them. Everyone is familiar with the exchange when we are apologizing for something we did to another by saying "I’m so sorry!" and are rebuked by our interlocutor who warns us: "Say it like you mean it!" It is as if the words alone, without the appropriate extraverbal effects, did not suffice to express our genuine remorse. Can one be genuinely remorseful, yet utter "I’m so sorry!" with a mischievous glint in the eye or an impish smirk in the corner of the mouth? "Wipe that grin off your face!" we are instructed and, if it really matters to us, we bow our head penitently (the shoulders go up), and we stare at our shoes full of sorrow and humbleness, the corners of lips turned down.83

Oliver Sacks, a neurologist working with patients suffering from receptive aphasia (i.e., a disorder of the left temporal lobe that renders the patient incapable of understanding the lexical meanings of words uttered), writes that, despite their severe disability, such patients can interpret speakers’ intentions correctly by way of their reliance on perceptible extraverbal cues, such as, for example, tone of voice, intonation, inflection and various visual cues, such as facial expression or gestures: “one’s entire,

83 I realize that the true Hungarian way to be penitent as described above is not necessarily the same one a person from another culture would display.
largely unconscious personal repertoire and posture." Sacks adds that in receptive aphasiacs, there is a "reversion" to something "more primitive and elemental" in their method of interpreting speakers' intentions, in that their recognition of such unconsiously (and often unintentionally) produced cues is not only preserved but "preternaturally enhanced":

Something has gone, has been devastated, it is true -- but something has come, in its stead, has been immensely enhanced, so that -- at least with emotionally laden utterance -- the meaning may be fully grasped even when every word is missed. (Sacks, 1985, 77)

Sacks' practical comment to this point is that

one cannot lie to an aphasic. He cannot grasp your words, and so he cannot be deceived by them; but what he grasps he grasps with infallible precision, namely the expression that goes with the words, that total, spontaneous, involuntary expressiveness which can never be simulated or faked, as words alone can, all too easily. (Sacks 1985, 78)

There is some further commonsense, anecdotal support for the claim that we may be able to recognize the subjective intentions of others based on some directly perceptible cues. Mothers maintain that they recognize whether their infant's crying signals hunger, cold, wetness or fright. Identical twins and old couples who have lived together for a long time often claim to know without speaking what the other person wants. Sometimes we think we can tell the intentions of two foreigners speaking to one another in a language that is completely alien to us, although such guesses often go wrong: I am told by English native speakers that when two Hungarians talk to one another it looks and sounds as if we were fighting, ready to jump and grab one another at the throat, when in fact all we do is talk about the weather (a rather dull activity, at least by Hungarian standards). Strangers, especially if they come from radically different backgrounds, are bound to exhibit radically different perceptible cues as to their intentions.
For example, in rape cases male perpetrators often claim that, although the female victim said 'No!' to their sexual advances, it appeared to the perpetrator that she in fact meant 'Yes!' I have never heard this excuse used by male rapists about male victims. Although I most emphatically do not wish to condone genuine acts of rape, still, I wonder if this excuse is (at least sometimes) based on a genuine misreading of the female's intentions by the male. If the female's 'No!' did not sound sufficiently aggressive (judged from the male's point of view), it could have been genuinely mistaken for hesitation or even for an actual agreement to the male's advances. Despite feminists' well-meaning slogan "NO! means No!," the alleged perpetrators of unwanted sexual acts, just like any other communicators, often pay more attention to the expression of how an utterance was made, rather than what exact words were uttered. The question, then, whether or not the sexual act committed counts as rape, becomes difficult: according to the female's actual intentions, it does count as rape, but according to the male's genuine (mis)judgment of the female's intentions (that is based not on what she said, but on how she said it), it does not count as rape. No matter what verdict is reached, one of the participants will consider it genuinely unjust.

Another well-known example is the professed difficulty of white North Americans to "read" the true intentions of persons of Asian origin, even if both speak the same language fluently. Non-Asian persons are often unable to detect any behavioral differences between persons of Japanese, Chinese or Korean origin: their inability to do so is often perceived as insulting by these people of various cultural origins. Within the Japanese culture, parents, who seem to be much more aware of the revealing nature of unintended body language than their North-American counterparts, teach their children from early on to purposefully control their body language in public, in order to reveal only those of their intentions that they truly wish to render public. Their public,
interactional body language is consciously controlled, ceremonial and continually adjusted according to the sanctions of their audience. For example, the precise angle of the often observed bowing of one's upper body as a form of greeting is carefully regulated according to whether a husband, a boss, a coworker, a guest, or someone with an institutional status lower than that of the person doing the bowing is being greeted. As long as the Japanese person is performing in the public world, his or her true intentions remain hidden, while multiple and variable, ritualistic, precisely measured, nonverbal, public exhibitions of the intentions meant to be conveyed are produced. The Japanese describe this state as jibun ga nai (devoid of self). Their true, core self, kokoro, stands in complementary juxtaposition with their publicly exhibited intentions, and is identified as the residence of a god with which each individual is endowed. This divine self can be spontaneous, free, and is considered a site of purity and truthfulness, uncontaminated by the guardedness of public exhibitions (Rosenberger 1992, 105).

Even within our culture (by 'our culture' I mean the culture of white North-Americans, in a sweepingly overgeneralized and therefore inherently faulty manner), we are more or less skilled in consciously controlling our public appearance. Moreover, there is a specific context in which great efforts are made to consciously and intentionally use extraverbal cues to convey intentions that are meant to be conveyed: it is aptly called the "make-believe" world of the theatre. To a large extent, actors' training consists of learning how to convey the intentions of their assumed characters by way of expressive extralinguistic means. The British comedian, Rowan Atkinson, for example, almost never speaks when performing his hilariously funny skits depicting the adventures of the physically awkward, yet amazingly ingenious, lovable Mr. Bean. Yet we greatly enjoy his nonverbal performance, precisely because we do understand perfectly the miriad and complex nuances of Mr. Bean's trials and tribulations, masterfully represented by
Atkinson, almost exclusively by way of a rich array of extralinguistic means.

All this commonsensically plausible speculation hopefully helps to make my intended point clear: competent "social perceivers" may be able to recognize other persons' subjective intentions directly, in so far as these are directly manifested in the form of perceptible and predictable extraverbal cues. The acquired skill of "social perception" is, of course, not infallible. In this section I have discussed some of the specific errors involved in "social perception": attributions from the first-person case combined with an ignorant or arrogant disregard for significant differences in our interlocutors' Backgrounds may undermine our ability to correctly interpret other persons' true intentions.
CHAPTER FOUR

INTENTION, REPRESENTATION
AND
COMMUNICATION (II)

In this chapter I continue my analysis of Searle’s theory, with an emphasis on the intersubjective aspects of intention, representation and communication. I address three particular issues: the notion of collective intentionality, the principles underlying the evolution of a public means of communication from individuals’ subjective Intentionality, and the institutional (i.e., rule-governed) nature of language.

Apart from the fundamental thesis of the Background, the notion of collective intentionality is the core concept on which an adequate theory of communication, in Searle’s opinion, must be based. Communication is the paradigm of social behavior. Searle’s analysis of social activities is that each of the participating individuals entertains a so-called "we-intention" or collective intention, to which his or her particular individual contribution is related as an individual means to a collective end. Collective intentionality is enabled to function by the participating individuals’ Backgrounds.

Searle lists some of the principles that must be included in an account of what it takes for individuals who are capable of having Intentional mental states to engage in (linguistic) communication. The last principle on this list is that, in order for successful communication to be possible, the (linguistic) means by which to convey or express the contents of one’s Intentional mental states must be publicly recognizable. This
requirement leads to my short exposition of Searle’s early and recent views on the institutional nature of language, our primary means to communicate. Language, like any other institution, is partially constituted by certain rules and practices that are created and maintained by way of collective agreement achieved through collective intentionality. Collective intentionality is founded on individual intentionality which in turn is enabled to function by the participating individuals’ Backgrounds. In this sense, it is ultimately the Background that underlies both the intersubjective as well as the intrasubjective aspects of communication.

**Collective intentionality**

The idea that communication, the paradigm of social behavior, involves a so-called "shared" intentionality was alluded to by Searle in 1983, in connection with his early discussion of Aspectual Shape. In a case where several persons are viewing and commenting on the same object, each person’s Intentional representation of the same object occurs with a distinct, subjective Aspectual Shape: I see and comment on the object under my Aspect, you see and comment on the same object under your Aspect. Nevertheless, a mutual understanding of one another’s representations is possible, because part of my subjectively experienced Aspectual Shape involves the fact that I am seeing the object as part of our seeing it. The same is valid for your subjective Aspect. If I were alone in the room, then the subjective Aspectual Shape of my seeing the same object would be different, as it would not contain any reference to our seeing it. If both of us were in the room, but only I were viewing the object, again, the Aspectual Shape of my visual experience would differ from the one in the first case. Since the Aspectual Shape determines the conditions of satisfaction for each Intentional representation, in each of
these cases, the conditions of satisfaction would be different (Searle 1983, 71).\footnote{Even during this cursory treatment of the idea, Searle mentions an interesting consequence of shared intentionality. My individual representation of a shared situation under a subjectively experienced Aspectual Shape may be mistaken. It may or may not be the case that I am viewing an object (or doing something) as part of our seeing it (or doing something). When both my daughter and I are pushing a shopping cart together, then I may represent my pushing the shopping cart as part of our pushing it. If, unbeknownst to me, my daughter stops pushing it, and I continue to (falsely) represent what I am doing as part of our pushing the cart, then it is true of me that I do not know what I am doing; see Searle 1986b, 15, for essentially the same example.}

In his "Notes on conversation" (Searle 1986b) Searle emphasizes that shared intentionality, characteristic of conversations, is not "just a case of a conjunction of individual intentionality about the other person's intentionality" (Searle 1986b, 15). It is not a case of mutual knowledge as is often asserted: I know that you know what I am thinking, etc. It is rather the case that I, the individual speaker, participating in a discourse with you, another individual speaker, am aware of the fact that we are having a conversation. Part of both your and my individual Intentional mental contents is constituted by the Aspect that we are participants in a collective activity. This shared Aspect of our respective individual representations of the situation cannot be reduced to "an infinite sequence of iterated cognitive states about the other partner" (Searle 1986b, 15). Shared or collective intentionality cannot be reduced to individual Intentionality plus mutual knowledge.

Shared intentionality is a genuine social phenomenon that underlies social behavior in general, and conversations in particular; so it is a basic concept, necessary for the correct understanding of how communication succeeds, Searle argues. In the revised version of his original paper, Searle adds: conversation is a joint activity, rather than the sum of two individual activities. "In collective behavior, such as conversations, the individual intentionality is derived from the collective intentionality" (Searle 1992b, 22). In his response to criticisms of this article, included in the same volume, Searle explains:
Let us allow then that conversations are forms of collective intentionality and that the "we-intention" of "we are having a conversation" allows for differing "I-intentions", e.g. for my "I-intention": "I am explaining such and such to you" and for your "I-intention": "I am disagreeing with what you say", etc. (Searle 1992c, 138)

Searle’s single most detailed account of collective intentionality is found in his essay "Collective intentions and actions" (Searle 1990a). Collective behavior is obviously pervasive among humans and higher animals; it is a biologically primitive form of animal life (Searle 1990a, 402). What needs to be shown, Searle stresses, is that it is not the same as a collection of individual actions. One clue leading to the above analysis is that the same type of bodily movements may count on one occasion as a set of individual acts (e.g., the milling of the crowds on a town square), or on another occasion as an instance of collective action (e.g., the milling of the crowds on a town square on the set of the second Act of Puccini’s opera, La Bohème). In the latter case, each individual on stage is representing whatever he/she is doing as part of the collective action "we are performing La Bohème." Person A is the band-leader, person B is the toy-vendor, person C is the waiter, etc., as part of "our performing La Bohème." In the first case, even if one person on the street is aware of the other person’s intentions, their doing whatever they are doing are just instances of individual intentional acts, independent of the other persons’ individual acts on the square. In the second case, the respective "I-intentions" of the participants are derivative from their collective "we-intention." Another clue to the above analysis, according to Searle, is that the contents of the derived "I-intentions" differ from the content of the "we-intention." In the particular example of La Bohème, none of the individual chorists and extras can be performing La Bohème all by herself. Each must contribute his or her own, distinct activities in order for it to be the case that "we are performing La Bohème."
Even if the above account sounds intuitively plausible, Searle says, it is crucial to show how the individual "I-intentions" are derivative of the collective "we-intention" and not just a case of a set of individual intentions connected by mere mutual knowledge of the participants. To continue the example of La Bohème, all the observable behavior of the persons on stage could be the same. Each person could be playing whatever his or her role was, i.e., the band-leader, the toy-vendor, or the waiter etc., respectively. Moreover, each person could be convinced that every other person on the set is doing whatever he or she is supposed to be doing. Such a case would still not amount to an instance of collective Intentionality, if no individual person’s mental representation included the crucial collective Aspect "we are performing La Bohème."

To argue that the persons on the set could be characterized as each doing his or her own part toward achieving the common goal, namely, performing La Bohème, will not do for Searle. According to this characterization, the collective intention or goal is part of the individual intentions, that is, collectivity is seen as a result, rather than as the source of individually held intentions. The correct analysis must go the other way around: it is not the case that collectivity is part of individual intentions; rather, individual intentions are a part of the collective intention (Searle 1990a, 405). Collective intentions must necessarily involve the notion of cooperation, and cooperation involves more than just a group of people who happen to strive for the same (shared) goal. The term 'shared' is somewhat ambiguous: if several persons strive to achieve the same type of goal, they can be said to have a shared goal. For example, several graduate students share the goal of being granted a Ph.D. degree. The shared intentionality Searle is talking about has a specific feature not characteristic of the set of graduate students striving for the same type of degree: In the case of a Searlean shared or collective intentionality, each person represents his or her intention as subsumed under the goal of the collective. This
is perhaps the reason why, in his most recent works, Searle labels this notion "collective intentionality" rather than "shared intentionality."

Any correct analysis of the notion of "we-intentions" must meet two requirements, continues Searle:

1) Society is but a collection of individuals, and all consciousness is located in individual minds/brains.\textsuperscript{85}

2) All Intentionality must be analyzed independently of the question whether or not the Intentional mental representations do in fact correspond to the states of affairs represented by them.\textsuperscript{86}

Searle claims that his analysis of collective intentionality satisfies both constraints: "Collective intentionality in my head can make a purported reference to other members of a collective, independently of the question whether or not there actually are such members" (Searle 1990a, 407). To apply this assertion once again to the example of La Bohème, person A may be representing what he is doing as "I am playing the band-leader in our production of La Bohème," even if person A is a resident at Bellevue Hospital, suffering from a hallucination. The content of A's Intentional mental representation is under the aspect of a "we-intention," even if the "external" state of affairs does not correspond to it. Searle reiterates his early, markedly anti-Cartesian intuition. Descartes argued that we are infallible in so far as the contents of our "mental life" are concerned, according to Searle, his analysis

\textsuperscript{85} By this requirement Searle excludes the possibility that some mysterious group-consciousness, such as the Jungian "collective unconscious," may be causally efficacious in instances of collective intentionality (Searle 1990a, 406).

\textsuperscript{86} In other words, Searle here, consistently with his earlier stated "brain in the vat" ideology, subscribes to a framework of methodological solipsism. But see his single endnote to this point, so characteristic of Searle by virtue of the attitude toward traditional philosophy it expresses: "Readers will recognize that these two constraints are close to 'methodological individualism' and 'methodological solipsism' as traditionally construed. I am anxious if possible to avoid sinking into the morass of the traditional disputes, so I am trying to present a version of these in which they can be construed as just commonsensical, pretheoretical requirements" (Searle 1990a, 415; italics are mine).
allows for the fact that I may be mistaken in taking it that the "we" in the "we intend" actually refers to a we; that is, it allows for the fact that my presupposition that my intentionalty is collective may be mistaken in ways that go beyond the fact that I have a mistaken belief. I do indeed have a mistaken belief if I have a collective intention that is not in fact shared, but on the proposed analysis, something further has gone wrong. Now, this does violate a very deep Cartesian assumption that we feel inclined to make. The assumption is that if I am mistaken, it can only be because one of my beliefs is false. But on my account, it turns out that I can not only be mistaken about how the world is but am even mistaken about what I am in fact doing. (Searle 1990a, 408)

This has happened to me during the writing of my dissertation. I am not a native speaker of English. It was pointed out to me that in my early drafts, unbeknownst to me, I was mixing British-Canadian with American standards of spelling (e.g., I wrote "behavior" but I also wrote "characterise" in the same text). I did intend to spell these words correctly, but I did not know that, by spelling them the above way, I was in fact engaged in "participating" in two different communal "activities": the British-Canadian and the American spelling. So, I was mistaken about what I have been doing.

This way of analyzing individual vs. collective intentions can have interesting legal repercussions: a) An individual may be oblivious of an existing law and could be (unintentionally) breaking it. b) In full knowledge of an existing law, an individual may choose to break the law, not necessarily with immoral intent. Resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied France intentionally chose to break the law and not to inform the authorities about the hiding place of Jews. In such a case, the "we-intention" is to cooperate with the Nazis, and the individual's "I-intention" is to resist this "we-intention." The individual resistance fighter must still be representing her "I-intention" as derivative of the collective intention, or else her action is not an instance of "resistance." In this interesting sense, individual resistance is an instance of a person’s negative cooperation with "we-intentions." Searle himself addresses the related issue of aggression at the end of his
paper: "For human beings, most social forms of aggressive behavior require higher-level cooperation" (Searle 1990a, 414).  

Searle's next question is: How is a collective "we-intention" realized in a world that contains only individual Intentional mental representations produced in the individual minds/brains of individual organisms? Searle's response to this question is this: "the individual component of the collective actions plays the role of means to ends" (Searle 1990a, 410). Each agent has an individual intention to act that represents a means (the individual's contribution) to the collective end. The toy-vendor in the collective production of La Bohème has the representation: "We are producing La Bohème by means of my playing the toy-vendor." It is important to understand that, in Searle's view, the individual chorist's whole intention to act represents both the means and the ends involving her participation in the production of La Bohème.  

Finally, consistently with his recent views on the Background and on the priority and independence of mental states vis-à-vis public behavior, Searle asserts that the

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87 Recall the similar points made earlier with respect to purposefully irrelevant utterances that function only relative to what would count as relevant, or the intentional deviation from speech act rules that again only functions relative to the rules that are being transgressed. Both the notion of relevance and the constitutive rules of speech acts are part of our social reality that involves a collective "we-intention," in which purposefully acting individuals participate, whether in accordance with or contrary to the collectively maintained norm.

88 As to how exactly La Bohème does get produced as a collective end by a set of individual means (no individual participant is capable of producing that end by him or herself), let us apply the solutions considered by Searle: first a "socialist" and a "capitalist" solution and then a combination of the two. Searle finds them equally unsatisfactory. According to the first solution, the collective intention of cast and crew brings about the collective production of La Bohème. According to the second one, the toy-vendor's individual intention brings about the collective production of La Bohème. The first solution leaves out the participating individuals' personal contributions, the second one the collective intention (Searle 1990a, 411).

The next solution pondered by Searle is that the collective intention to produce La Bohème as a collective brings about the chorist's individual intention to play the toy-vendor (in the collective production of La Bohème), i.e., a combined "socialist-made-capitalist" solution. This must be false, says Searle, because it implies that the collective intention to produce La Bohème is not satisfied unless it brings about the chorist's intention to play the toy-vendor. That cannot be right because the individual chorist's collective intention is that they produce La Bohème by means of his playing the toy-vendor (Searle 1990a, 408-412).
capacity to engage in collective behavior requires something like a preintentional sense of "the other" as an actual or potential agent like oneself in cooperative activities . . . The collective behavior certainly augments the sense of others as cooperative agents, but that sense can exist without any collective intentionality, and what is more interesting, collective intentionality seems to presuppose some level of sense of community before it can ever function. (Searle 1990a, 413)

Searle stresses that an attempt to explain society in terms of either conversation in particular, or collective behavior in general is futile since "each of these presupposes a form of society before they can function at all" (Searle 1990a, 415). This argument parallels his view concerning the possibility of deriving meaning from conversation in particular or from communicative behavior in general; that attempt is equally futile, since each of these presupposes meaning before they can function at all.

In "Conversation reconsidered" Searle points out: In the course of a conversation, "the content of the collective 'we-intention' is determined by the process of the conversation and is not given by an antecedently intended structure" (Searle 1992c, 138). Searle is pessimistic about the possibility of determining a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that (similarly to his efforts regarding single speech acts) would adequately characterize entire conversations. The main reason for his pessimism is that conversations, unlike individual speech acts, lack a particular purpose or point by which they could be individuated. Speech acts are distinct events, while conversations are dynamic processes, with multiple purposes that evolve or change throughout the course of the conversation. Another feature of individual speech acts is that these are representational, that is, they characteristically have an Intentional propositional content. As Searle's well, known formula of speech acts $F(p)$ indicates, $F$ is the force that expresses the point of the speech act, and $p$ stands for the propositional content that represents a certain state of affairs. Conversations do not have such a structure: they lack
a clearly identifiable point or force, and they are not representational in the sense of having a propositional content of their own.

Conversation as a whole is characteristically not representational, it does not represent an additional state of affairs. So there need be no additional representational propositional content in the entire conversation beyond that of the individual speech acts of which it is composed. There is no additional level of meaning that goes with the conversation as opposed to the meaning of the individual speech acts. (Searle 1992c, 147)

The dynamic quality of conversation notwithstanding, Searle asserts that certain principles necessary for the correct description of this phenomenon can be established. The central role of collective intentionality is one of these principles, and the fundamental role of the Background that enables even the functioning of collective intentionality is the other principle that would be needed to construct a theory of conversation.

From Intentional states to verbal communication

Searle acknowledges that the ability and the need to communicate are an essential part of the evolutionary account of the origin of the human, and of many nonhuman species of animals. It is the communicative social purpose common to all humans, after all, that made it necessary to develop public systems of representations. Language, by virtue of its rule-governed nature, allows Intentional "representations to be readily communicated from one speaker-hearer to another in virtue of their common knowledge of the rules" (Searle 1986a, 218). He proposes a programmatic view of what it would take for beings capable of having Intentional mental states (e.g., perceptions, beliefs or desires) to be able to perform linguistic acts.89 He does not wish to provide an historic

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89 This view was first formulated by Searle as early as 1976 (Searle 1979b), and was reiterated in Searle 1983 and in Searle 1989b.
account of how in fact language use has evolved, as that would be a matter of empirical inquiry; he only wishes to lay down the principles that need to be included in such an account (Searle 1979b, 193).

According to Searle's biological naturalist approach, Intentional mental states are produced by and realized in the brains of individual organisms. Individuals capable of producing Intentional mental states or representations of states of affairs of the world must have the ability to distinguish the frustration from the satisfaction of their representations. They must have the capacity for recognizing what it would take to satisfy the satisfaction conditions of their Intentional states. For example, a person's desire for ice-cream represents its essential condition of satisfaction, namely, that there be ice-cream available to the individual. If the ice-cream is available, the desire is fulfilled; if the ice-cream is not available, the desire is frustrated. The individual who has this desire must have an understanding that it would be the availability of ice-cream that would satisfy the condition represented in that Intentional mental state, regardless of whether or not the ice-cream is in fact available (Searle 1979b, 193). Desires are the most convenient examples for the frustration or the fulfilment of satisfaction conditions, but the idea is equally relevant to belief states. A tree branch that looks strong enough to hold a man's weight is believed by the man to be so, until it either breaks or does hold the man's weight. In the former case the man's belief must be readjusted to fit the actual state of affairs: the satisfaction conditions of the belief "The branch is strong enough to hold a man's weight" were frustrated. The terms 'frustration' or 'fulfilment' or 'satisfaction' have, of course, nothing to do with the appropriate emotions (that may accompany such Intentional mental representations). These terms are used by Searle to make sense of Intentional mental contents in nonsemantic terms.

Many Intentional mental states represent states of affairs that are related to other
human beings: humans characteristically have *social purposes* with one another, i.e., to request or to share information, to get others to do something, or to make a commitment to others. It is therefore necessary to have some *means to externalize* or to express one’s Intentional mental states (Searle 1979b, 193). The means by which to express one’s Intentional mental states, and to convey one’s intentions towards others, must be *publicly recognizable*. It is by virtue of competent speakers’ knowledge of the rules underlying conventional speech acts that speakers manage to communicate with one another. I quote Searle’s own summary of these principles:

The steps, then, necessary to get from the possession of intentional states to the performance of conventionally realized illocutionary acts are, first, the deliberate expression of intentional states for the purpose of letting others know that one has them, second, the performance of these acts for the achievement of the extra-linguistic aims which illocutionary acts standardly serve, and, third, the introduction of conventional procedures which conventionalize the illocutionary points that correspond to the various perlocutionary aims. (Searle 1979b, 195)

**The institution of language**

Both at the very beginning of his philosophical career, and in his most recently published text, Searle discusses the institutional nature of our socially created and maintained linguistic facts and practices. To be exact, in his early work he makes explicit claims concerning the institutional nature of the social art of language, while in *The Construction of Social Reality* (Searle 1995) he merely mentions language as the most fundamental one of our institutions.

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90 As we have seen, in his more recent writings Searle explains speakers’ communicative success by an appeal to their shared biological and cultural Background capacities. This new approach, however, is consistent with his earlier appeal to constitutive rules, since speakers’ ability to act in accordance with such rules is made possible by their Background.
According to the early Searle, a specific virtue of analyzing speech acts as constituted by rules is that it permits the translation of, say, a promising act uttered in one conventional language into another conventional language. 'I promise' can be translated into 'ich verspreche' or into 'je (te) promets' because speakers of English, German or French share the underlying rules that constitute the act of promising (Searle 1969, 40). Speakers of English, German or French etc., share what Searle calls "human institutions" or "systems of constitutive rules" (Searle 1969, 51). It is a shared institutional fact that when English, German or French speakers make a promise, they essentially undertake an obligation to fulfill what is promised.

The fact that the same institution of "undertaking an obligation" is expressed by members of different speech communities in the form of uttering different sentences is what the early Searle calls the conventional aspect of language: "In the case of speech acts performed within a language . . . it is a matter of convention . . . that the utterance of such and such expressions under certain conditions counts as the making of a promise" (Searle 1969, 37). While simple communicative acts can be performed without the use of a conventional language (you can "request" food by looking longingly at the sandwich on my plate), certain complex (speech) acts require the use of some conventional language, e.g., to request of someone that she "undertake a research project on the problem of diagnosing and treating mononucleosis in undergraduates in American universities," to use Searle's example (Searle 1969, 38).91 In order to perform a speech act, Searle says, there must be some publicly recognizable conventional device for performing the act, since such acts are performed within certain rules and there must be some way of putting the rules into operation. Both the rules and "some conventions or

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91 We may note here that this latter request is not any more complex than the former one, qua request; rather, it is the precise identification of the object requested that necessitates the use of language.
other" are needed to perform speech acts, where the rules are conceptually prior and hence fundamental to the performance of the acts, and the conventions are the manifest ways in which these rules are realized.

Searle may have several reasons for not including language among the social objects discussed in *The Construction of Social Reality*. The most plausible reason for this omission may be that in 1995 Searle stands firmly behind his claims made in 1969 concerning the institutional nature of language, so that there is no need to reiterate. Another reason for his omission could be that he does not wish to confuse the reader: in 1995 he spends the entire chapter three on explaining the role of language in the construction and maintenance of other socially created institutional facts, such as marriage, money, government, etc. Here language is regarded as a *means*: most of our institutions are language-dependent in the sense that the specifications of the rules constituting the institutional fact *qua* institutional fact in most cases could not be created without the use of language. At the same time, Searle is aware of the problem of circularity lurking behind the claim that all institutions require language as a means: in so far as language itself is an institution, language itself requires language.92

Although in 1995 Searle does not discuss language as an institutional object *per se*, we can extrapolate his current view on the institutional nature of language from his general discussion of institutional facts. The sounds made by speakers when engaged in the production of speech acts are mere "brute," objectively existing physical objects of the world. In order to render them meaningful, we must assign certain so-called "agentive functions" to them: agentive functions are functions assigned to a physical object relative to some purpose, expectation or value system of an agent. For example, I *individually*

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92 See his halfhearted explanation as to how to resolve the problem of circularity in the section "Does language require language?" (Searle 1995, 72-76).
assigned an agentic function to my ruler placed on top of my manuscript that I am rewriting right now: the placement of the ruler under a specific line in the manuscript signifies to me where I am at in the revision of my manuscript. The specific agentic function assigned to the speech sounds and marks is to "symbolize, represent, stand for, or -- in general -- to mean something or other" (Searle 1995, 23; Searle's italics). The assignment of the specific agentic function (i.e., meaning) to a particular speech sound must be a product of collective human agreement, as the meaning function of a speech sound must be publicly recognizable: members of a speech community must collectively agree that a given speech sound uttered by any of them has the same meaning function. For example, the term 'Schussboomer' and its precise referent is a constant source of hilarity between my preadolescent daughter and her giggly friends: whenever they spot a certain type of guy (small, greyish figure with suspiciously darting eyes behind thick spectacles) they whisper conspiratorily: "Schussboomer." The origins of this piece of intelligence are not known, but the members of this small collective communicate perfectly among themselves, discriminating precisely which token of the set of all pathetic little guys qualifies as a referent of the term 'Schussboomer.' They never sat down to discuss the necessary and sufficient conditions under which a pathetic little guy can be properly referred to by 'Schussboomer,' yet they act in accordance with the rule, subject to their unspoken collective agreement.

The physical object, that is, the string of sounds made by speakers, obtains an institutional status with a particular function as a meaningful linguistic expression, imposed on it by way of collective agreement (Searle 1995, 41). The physical object thus becomes an institutional object. Its continuous existence qua institutional object depends on a continuously maintained collective agreement regarding its function. In other words, the collective agreement is partially constitutive of the existence of an institutional entity,
such as a meaningful linguistic expression. The scheme of the assignment of status function reiterated by Searle from his *Speech Acts* is as follows:

\[ X \text{ counts as } Y \text{ in } C \]

where 'X' stands for the description of the brute physical object, 'Y' stands for the description of X's new status function conferred onto it and 'counts as' stands for the act of imposition of a status to which a function is attached by means of collective agreement. 'C' stands for the context in which the status function is applicable. For example:

Individual speakers of English participate in the collectively maintained institution of the act of *promising*, by way of producing the string of sounds *I-P-R-O-M-I-S-E* . . . , whenever they speak intentionally, sincerely and literally, provided that all the (other) conditions of satisfaction relevant to the institution of the act of *promising* are met. In a different environment, where there is no collectively agreed upon, and maintained institution of promising, you could not make a *promise* (although you could certainly produce the string of sounds *I-P-R-O-M-I-S-E* . . . ). Institutional objects created from brute objects partially consist of constitutive rules, practices and procedures. Searle's test for the presence of genuine institutional objects is whether or not we could codify their constitutive rules explicitly. The criterion is always whether or not the assignment of the status label carries with it the assignment of a function which is fulfilled by the brute object only if there is a continuous collective acceptance of the function (Searle 1995, 87).

It is important to note that, just because Searle analyzes the existence of institutional facts as partially dependent on collective agreement, this does not mean that such agreement was in fact reached *consciously* by the founding fathers and mothers of language, akin to a baptism ceremony; nor does this mean that such an agreement must
continuously be "kept alive" by virtue of some conscious attention paid to the constitutive rules (although lexicons, translation manuals, legal criminal and civil codes and formal or informal discussions about the proper implementation of the constitutive rules are obviously products of conscious efforts). The institutional meaning of speech acts is rule-governed in the sense that it is constituted by rules that can in principle be rendered explicit, just as Searle attempted in his *Speech Acts*. In agreement with Searle's more recent view, we act in accordance with the rules ("we just act"), without being consciously aware of the fact that we are doing so, by virtue of our Background capacities that are said to be "causally sensitive" to the constitutive rules of the institution of language.

I have now presented a sufficient amount of information concerning Searle's view on language, mind and social reality to be able to assess some of its most important implications for a theory of communication. In short, the production of speech acts is characterized by Searle as a rule-governed, institutional means to a subjective end, i.e., to let our interlocutors know the contents of our subjective conscious Intentional mental states. Searle's general view on interpretation is that we interpret others on the basis of what we know from our own first-person case. Both the production and interpretation of utterances is ultimately enabled by our nonconsciously operating Background capacities. We "just act"; that is, engage in communication, unaware of the fact that it is our nonconscious Background that is ultimately responsible for how we produce or interpret the utterances made. In my previous chapters I indicated through several isolated examples the main contention of this dissertation, namely that the success of communication depends on whether the two participants' Background capacities coincide, while breakdown in communication may be a result of the dissimilarities of the participants' respective Backgrounds. More precisely, communication breakdown may
occur when one or the other speaker takes it simply for granted that her own Background capacities, know-how, practices or assumptions are fully shared with her interlocutor, without considering the possibility that some of the interlocutor’s own Background capacities may in fact be different. In such a case, the former speaker can be said to "project" her own first-person Background onto her interlocutor. In the following I provide a systematic overview of those features of Searle’s theory of language, mind and social reality that explain the extent to which such projections from the first-person case are justified. This overview may begin to explain how we succeed or fail in communicating with one another.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE BACKGROUND OF COMMUNICATION

As always, the terminology needs to be clarified: There are several \textit{shared} features of communication, where 'shared' describes a type of process occurring in more than one individual. Subjective conscious Intentional mental states, for example, are produced and experienced by brains; we take it for granted that this is a process shared by \textit{all} members of the human species. A process shared by more than one, or even by all individuals is not necessarily a directly observable process. We take it for granted, but cannot directly observe the process of other brains producing and experiencing subjective conscious Intentional mental states. No amount of third-person observation can access the subjective ontological features of Intentional mental states produced and experienced by other brains.

'\textit{Shared and mutual}' in this context is an expression to describe some Background presupposition concerning other individuals. Such Background presuppositions constitute most of our communicative activities and they function in a nonconscious and therefore unintended (=spontaneous) manner. For example, it is part of our universally shared Background that we \textit{presuppose} that other humans are potentially cooperative. It is a mutual Background presupposition in the sense that we attribute to other persons the same presupposition concerning us. Another shared and mutual Background presupposition is
that the observable movements of another human, unlike those of a cleverly disguised robot resembling a human, constitute intentional action. Searle’s point about the difference is well taken. The regard of certain movements as instances of cooperative intentional action constitutes a double level of taken for granted Background presupposition. A caveat: the use of terms like ‘regard,’ ‘presupposition’ or ‘attribute,’ in connection with the Background ought not to mislead us into taking the Background for a conscious representational capacity.

Finally, I need a suitable term to refer to the nonconscious, spontaneous, nonrepresentational and nonintentional Background disposition of speaker A to attribute or to ascribe to speaker B the same set of Background capacities that are known to speaker A from the first-person case.\footnote{The reader is reminded of Searle’s own worries concerning the difficulties to find a suitable vocabulary for describing the Background (Searle 1983, 156).} Such spontaneous, nonconscious Background disposition is effective whenever one speaker interprets another. ‘Attribution’ would be a likely candidate to refer to this Background disposition, but ‘attribute’ does not indicate the crucial fact, namely, that what is attributed to B by A is the same Background that A knows from the first-person case. I can attribute to you x, without taking for granted that x is attributable to you because it is attributable to me as well.

As we recall, according to Searle, the mind can only be studied from the first-person point of view, since any third-person description will leave out the mind: "In the actual practice of investigation, we will of course study other people, simply because most of our research is not on ourselves. But it is important to emphasize that what we are trying to get at when we study other people is precisely the first-person point of view. When we study him or her, what we are studying is the me that is him or her" (Searle 1992a, 20-21; Searle’s italics). This is a suggestion concerning the proper scientific and
philosophical study of the human mind. But recall his early discussions concerning
speakers' ability to understand speech acts produced by another: speakers understand one
another by virtue of their shared and mutual knowledge of the constitutive rules of speech
acts (Searle 1969, 22). In 1979 he introduced the notion of speakers' complex, shared
and mutual background information that is needed to understand even such simple and
straightforward sentences as 'The cat is on the mat' (Searle 1979a, 117-137). In his 1995
text he explains that "one can develop, one can evolve, a set of abilities that are sensitive
to specific structures of intentionality without actually being constituted by that
intentionality" (Searle 1995, 142). About speakers' shared and mutual knowledge of the
speech act rules in particular, he now says that the speaker "is just disposed to behave in
a certain way... he has acquired those unconscious dispositions and capacities in a way
that is sensitive to the rule structure of the institution" (Searle 1995, 144).

I have settled for the term 'projection' instead of 'attribution.' This term is used
by Quine to refer to the method of the interpreter;\(^4\) a method very much like the
Background disposition I am talking about. The difference between the Quinean field
linguist's projections and the Background projections I will be talking about is that the
latter must be conceived of as being nonconscious, spontaneous, nonrepresentational and
nonintentional.\(^5\) I cannot emphasize this crucial distinction strongly enough: it is very

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\(^4\) "Empathy guides the linguist... as he rises above observation sentences through his analytical
hypotheses... here he is trying to project into the native's associations..." (Quine 1990b, 3-4; italics
are mine). See also: "he [the radical translator] imagines himself in the native's situation as best he can"
(Quine 1990a, 46). See Searle on essentially the same point: "When I seek to understand another speaker,
I seek to acquire in his case what I already have for my own case" (Searle 1987, 141).

\(^5\) Searle emphasizes that "from the fact that whenever one understands something, one understands
it in a certain way and not in other ways, and from the fact that alternative interpretations are always
possible, it simply does not follow that in all discourse one is engaged in constant 'acts of interpretation.'
One's immediate, normal, instantaneous understanding is always possible only relative to a Background,
but it does not follow from that that there is some separate logical step, some separate act of interpretation
involved in normal understanding" (Searle 1992a, 192).
hard to keep it in mind since I am compelled to use an Intentional vocabulary. In the following I provide a systematic overview of types of Background projections from the first-person case that enable, or, conversely, of Background projections that may potentially undermine the possibility of successful communication. The main thesis of the following discussion is that, at least in some cases, such a spontaneously operating Background disposition is the very cause of communication failure.

**Some fundamental shared Background assumptions**

The nonconsciously operating, nonrepresentational, nonintentional, neurophysiological Background capacities enable the functioning of the conscious Intentional mental states of the mind/brain, and constitute the central determining factor of the contents of each of our subjective conscious Intentional mental representations. The Background is said to be partially innate (i.e., determined by individuals' genetic make-up) and partially acquired (i.e., determined by the environmental influences affecting individuals throughout their lives).

Given that the brains of all conspecifics are relevantly similar, there must be a considerable overlap between the respective Backgrounds of human individuals: all individual members of the human species share a species-specific genetic make-up ("deep" or "biological" Background), just as members of a given community living in the same environment share certain enduring influences affecting them ("local" or "cultural" Background). In this sense the Background, in general, constitutes the fundamental shared neurophysiological capacity that makes communication at all possible.

One of the most fundamental shared and mutual Background assumptions of all humans, according to Searle, is the thesis of external realism. In 1995 Searle asserts that
the thesis of "external" realism "does not say how things are but only that there is a way that they are" (Searle 1995, 154). This statement leaves room for conceptual relativity, i.e., for multiple and various descriptions of the "exactly one" world we live in. According to Searle’s ontological description, the "exactly one" world we live in is divided into subjectively and objectively existing facts. The existence of the former depends on being subjectively experienced by some conscious organism, while the existence of the the latter is independent of being experienced by an organism.

Our primary connection to the objectively existing entities of the world is through perception, and perceptual experiences are subjectively existing facts. According to Searle, when I have a perceptual experience of an object x "out there," the content of this experience is that there is an object x "out there" and that object x’s being "out there" is causing this occurrent subjective perceptual experience. The same goes, of course, for all human beings with relevantly similar neurophysiological structures that enable them to have such subjective perceptual experiences.

For the sake of the mutual intelligibility of our statements about the world, we must take it for granted that there are publicly accessible objects "out there" that exist independently of my or your subjective perceptual experiences of them, and we must take it for granted that the object of your subjective perceptual experience is the same one as the object of my subjective perceptual experience (in a shared environment). Unless I accept the thesis of external realism, and unless I project my acceptance onto you (i.e., unless I take it for granted that you accept it, too) communication between you and me is not possible. Naturally, this is not meant to say that, after I studied the philosophical arguments concerning realism, I have come to accept the thesis of external realism rather than being skeptical about it, and that I hope that you have come to the same conclusion: the thesis of external realism is not something that upon new evidence may turn out to
be false. It is a fundamental Background stance towards the world that we all share, and one that we all project mutually onto our interlocutors whenever we communicate.

Among the objectively existing organized living systems of physical particles in fields of force that constitute our world are those that evolved into nervous systems (i.e., brains) capable of causing and sustaining consciousness. The objectively existing neurophysiological structures of human beings are observable (i.e., you can, à la Penfield, open up someone’s skull and take a look at her brain), and are relevantly similar. Each human being has a first-person experience of her subjective conscious mental states caused by and realized in her brain. By applying the same-causes same-effects principle, according to Searle, we may justifiedly infer that the process of producing and experiencing consciousness in all our conspecifics occurs in a manner that is relevantly similar to our own. It is a fundamental Background stance towards conspecifics that we all share and one that we all project mutually onto our interlocutors whenever we communicate.

The next issue I wish to discuss is our universally shared and mutual Background notion of other humans as being potentially cooperative beings. According to Searle, the capacity to engage in communication requires a preintentional sense of "the other" as an actual or potential agent like oneself in cooperative activities . . . The collective behavior certainly augments the sense of others as cooperative agents, but that sense can exist without any collective intentionality, and what is more interesting, collective intentionality seems to presuppose some level of sense of community before it can ever function. (Searle 1990a, 413)

Our shared and mutual Background sense toward other humans as potentially cooperative beings must be closely related to the universally shared and mutual, taken for granted Background feature already mentioned: we take it for granted that all humans are relevantly similar beings who experience the same, exactly one world we live in, in
relevantly similar ways. It would be unjustified to expect a Martian or a plant or even a lower animal to cooperate with us, for we have no reason to take it for granted that it is a being relevantly similar to us.

But before we can have a Background sense of the other as a potentially cooperative being, we must have a Background sense of the other as a being who is distinct from us in a significant way. Among the most important states of affairs represented by our subjective conscious Intentional mental states are those that involve various perlocutionary aims directed at other human beings. The psychological modes of many of our subjective conscious Intentional mental states involve conscious desires to get others to perform various acts for us (or, conversely, to get others to abstain from the performance of various acts that we consider noxious to ourselves). Beneath our conscious desires to affect the actions of other human beings must lie a fundamental shared and mutual Background expectation that the fulfilment of such desires is possible, by virtue of the potentially cooperative nature attributed to others. The very expectation of success in this area is inseparable from our awareness that at times, human beings are uncooperative, despite our expectations. We must develop specific Background capacities that enable us to know what it would take to fulfill or to frustrate such expectations.

In particular, we must have the Background capacity to distinguish the case when the other person's apparently cooperative behavior is due to the fact that the person has correctly identified, and does intend to fulfill, our perlocutionary aims directed at her (e.g., when I want you to close the door, you close the door, because you understand that that is what I want you to do), from the case when the other person's apparently uncooperative behavior is due to the fact that she has an intention of her own that is incompatible with ours (e.g., when I want you to close the door, you do not close the door, because, although you understand that that is what I want you to do, you have an
intention, contrary to my own, to keep the door open). A person may exhibit seemingly uncooperative behavior simply because she did not understand what we wanted from her, or because she is physically unable to comply with our wish (e.g., when I want you to close the door, you do not close the door, because you do not understand the precise nature of my perlocutionary aim directed at you; you close the window, or bring me a glass of water, instead of closing the door. Your behavior is motivated by the intention to do something for me, you just do not quite get what it is I want you to do. Or, when I want you to close the door, you do not close the door, even though you both understand what I want you to do and intend to fulfill my perlocutionary aim, except for the fact that you are suddenly overcome by a paralysis from the neck down). If we suspect that we were not understood, we repeat our request, speak louder or rephrase our previously uttered sentence, etc.; if we suspect that the other person does actually wish, but is physically unable to fulfill our request, we modify or give up our wish, or suggest alternative solutions for its fulfilment. None of these methods work if the other person does not cooperate, simply because he or she does not want to do so.

The self-centred Background expectation for others’ onesided compliance with our own perlocutionary aims characterizes our primary social intentions in infancy. Commonsense morality prescribes that, eventually, we ought to learn to perform actions for others, for their sake, and to perform actions with others, for the sake of the collectivity. Primarily, however, the Background notion of cooperation is understood one way only, namely, in the sense that "I expect you to do for me what I want or need from you."

How do we acquire such self-centred Background expectations for other persons’ onesided compliance with the perlocutionary aims we direct at them? We can only have such a Background expectation once we have learned to distinguish the fulfilment from
the frustration of this Background expectation. The developmental stage at which we are able to identify a conflict of mutual perlocutionary aims is a tremendously important one: it signals the beginning of our Background awareness of the other as having a mind distinct from us, with subjective and potentially uncooperative intentions of its own. Most caretakers, quite apt at recognizing and even anticipating the infant's wishes, do cater to the infant's needs and wants almost before the infant itself becomes aware of them. Food, warmth, comfort and stimulation are just there, without the infant's having to ask for it. At times, however, the caretaker does not come to feed the infant or change its diapers, despite its loud wailing. At times, the caretaker attempts to put the infant to bed, or to dress it, despite its audible and visible protest. At times the "obtuse" caretaker simply does not understand: she offers a toy, instead of the apple juice desired by the infant.

It is ironic that in the initial period of our life, when we depend most on others' altruistic cooperation and understanding, we are the least able to communicate with them. Our developing Background awareness of this paradoxical situation must be the strongest incentive for communicating. The infant must eventually realize that the caretaker is not just a seemingly inexhaustible source of food, warmth, comfort and stimulation, but a separate person with intentions and Intentional contents of her own. What necessitates communication in the first place is our Background awareness that other humans have intentions that may at times be in conflict with our own, or that other humans do not "see" things the way we see them, both in the visual and the psychological sense of the term 'see.'

I focused on our perlocutionary aims because these are most fundamental with regard to the development of the communication intention. Getting others to do things for us must be our primary social intention, for its enormous survival value is undeniable,
especially at the beginning of our life when we depend fully on others. Many of the infant’s earliest representations directed at objects or events (i.e., beliefs) are inseparable from its desires directed at the actions of others on its behalf. For months, the infant depends on the caretaker for a change in its location, or even for a change in its bodily position. Unless the caretaker lifts it up or carries it around or places objects within its vicinity, the range of objects available for the infant’s visual and tactile scrutiny is rather limited, comprised mostly of its own body parts (this may explain the well-documented fascination of infants with their own bodies: they need to be stimulated but most of the stimulating things are out of their reach). The infant is fully at the mercy of the caretaker if it wants to be fed apple sauce as opposed to spinach, to look out the window rather than having to stare at the ceiling, or to be cuddled in a nice warm blanket rather than being buckled up in a cold plastic infant seat.

In the case of a prelinguistic infant, the adult observer must fully rely on nonlinguistic cues as to the infant’s own intentions and Intentional mental contents, and most caretakers are good at figuring out what their infant wants. As is inferable from infants’ discriminative behavioral responses, infants do develop distinctive intrinsic Intentional mental representations of objects, events and actions, even before they acquire a publicly inculcated linguistic-conceptual scheme to distinguish such stimuli. Infants respond to the various offerins of adults with clearly distinct behavior on distinct occasions. In a social environment that either constantly anticipates and indulges the infant’s wants, even before the infant would become aware of them, or in one that constantly neglects the infant’s needs, the infant’s chances to learn to distinguish other minds with intentions and Intentional contents that are distinct from its own may become thwarted, for the infant is seldom exposed to perlocutionary aims directed at it that are potentially in conflict with its own. Such treatment must undermine the infant’s ability
to realize the need to communicate with others in order to get them to understand and to fulfill its subjective perlocutionary aims.

How exactly the prelinguistic infant comes to realize the existence of distinct other minds with intentions and Intentional contents that are potentially in conflict with its own is a matter of complex and difficult empirical inquiry. The foregoing, largely speculative discussion was meant merely to highlight the fundamental relevance of the notion of Other Minds to communication: our need to communicate arises from our acquired Background sense that there exist Other Minds with intentions and Intentional contents that are potentially distinct from our own, and that the precise contents of our mind and those of the other minds are not directly mutually accessible. Our social behavior is consistent with a Background notion of the Other Minds Problem in the sense discussed above. We would not intend to communicate (i.e., to render the subjective contents of our mental states public), were it not for such a Background notion. The possibility of successful communication ultimately depends on our shared Background capacities; but the need for successful communication is dictated by a) the potential dissimilarities in our respective Backgrounds that ultimately give rise to our dissimilar intentions and Intentional mental contents at particular occasions; and b) the fact that the precise contents of our mind, and those of the other minds are, not directly mutually accessible.

Once our Background capacity to detect the distinctiveness of other minds with distinct Intentional contents and intentions that are potentially in conflict with our own has been acquired, we are capable of learning to develop a Background stance towards others as potentially cooperative beings. The cooperation Searle attributes to mature communicators is quite advanced compared to the infantile egocentric Background expectations towards our caretakers' onesided cooperation. Recall the example of performing the opera *La Bohème*: each of the participating individuals has a subjective
representation of a collective "we-intention" (i.e., "we are performing La Bohème") to which their individual contributions are related as individual means to a collective end. "We are performing La Bohème, by means of my playing the toy-vendor," represents person A; "we are performing La Bohème, by means of my playing the waiter" represents person B. Even though the collective "we-intention" is located where the participating individuals' brains are located, none of the individuals is able to produce the collective end on his or her own. Further, if either A or B is mistaken about the nature of the collective "we-intention," they can be truly said not to know what they are doing (qua members of the collective). It is plausible to assume that, unless each participating individual has a Background sense of each of the other participating individuals as potentially cooperative beings, the collective end cannot be produced by means of their individual intentional acts.

Is communication between two individuals a truly collective event in the sense characterized above? The answer to this question is important, because Searle, although he is skeptical about the prospects of determining a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that (similarly to his efforts regarding single speech acts) would adequately characterize conversational exchanges, asserts that "conversations are a paradigm of collective behavior" (Searle 1992b, 21) and that collective intentionality "is a concept we will need for analyzing conversation" (Searle 1992b, 22).

Take, for example, the minimal exchange between two speakers, A and B: A requests B to close the door by way of uttering "I want you to close the door," and B closes the door as requested by A. A has a subjective conscious Intentional mental representation with the content "I want you [B] to close the door." Obviously B cannot, at this very moment, be in the very process of closing the door, for then it would be pointless for A to develop such an aim directed at B. B must be doing something else,
maybe reading a book.

So A is contemplating this aim, and B is reading a book. There is nothing social about their present state in the moment, since there is no collective "we-intention" involved in the scene as it stands. Instead, there is a dyad of different individual intentions in a mild conflict with one another: A’s involves "I want you [B] to close the door," and B’s involves "I intend to read this book." Although A cannot observe B’s subjective intention, at least A can infer that, consistently with B’s behavior, B must have an intention that is incompatible with A’s present perlocutionary aim directed at B: the source of ever so mild conflict (known to A but not to B), is that B cannot both close the door and go on reading the book at the same time.

Moreover, B cannot tell by observing A that A has this mental content that incidentally involves a perlocutionary aim directed at B, and that A is aware of the mildly conflicting nature of their respective intentions. B is at a disadvantage compared to A, in terms of knowing what is going on. But B’s not knowing that A has "designs" on B is not the kind of ignorance Searle is referring to in the case of collective intentionality: B at this moment is truly not a participant in a collective action, and neither is B perceived, either by A or by B, as being a participant in a collective action.

A must get B to cooperate in order to fulfill A’s aim. This is the infantile, egoistic kind of expectation: "you [B] must do what I [A] want you to do." Although A has no ultimate control over B’s actions or intentions, A must be hoping that A’s expectation will be fulfilled, i.e., that B will cooperate. If A did not think that such a Background expectation is appropriate, it would be irrational of A to have any perlocutionary aims directed at B. A must communicate A’s aim concerning B to B, if A wants to get B to fulfill A’s perlocutionary aim. It is in A’s individual interest to reduce the discrepancy
between their respective levels of informedness about the situation, by way of letting B
know what A wants B to do. A must act in accordance with the assumption that B does
not know what A wants. A's acting in accordance with this assumption is not a case of
cooperation, because it, again, does not involve a collective "we-intention"; rather, it is
dictated by the simple fact that at this moment, A, but not B, knows what A wants from
B.

So, at last, A emits an acoustic blast: "I-W-A-N-T-Y-O-U-T-O-C-L-O-S-E-T-H-E-D-O-O-R." In the moment A utters this string of sounds with the subjective intention to
communicate A's perlocutionary aim to B, A begins to participate in a collectively defined
institutional activity of speaking English (provided that A does intend to speak English
by way of uttering this particular string of sounds). At the same time, A is participating
in the collectively defined institutional speech act of making a request. Although these
activity types are defined by the collectivity of English speaking request makers, A's
current intention to participate in these activities is partially autonomous, in the sense that
A autonomously chose to speak as a means to letting B know what A wants B to do,
instead of trying to hypnotize B, for example. On the other hand, A's choice to make a
request in English by way of uttering the string of sounds "I-W-A-N-T-Y-O-U-T-O-C-L-O-
S-E-T-H-E-D-O-O-R" is not a fully autonomous choice in the sense that A could not make
a request in English by way of producing this string of sounds, unless there were such
an institution as requesting and such a complex of institutions as requesting in English.

But is there a genuine case of "we-intention" between A and B? A must assume
that B is a competent member of the English speaking collective of request makers, or
else it would be rather hopeless for A to try to get B to know A's aim by this means.
And, of course, in order for A to have any hope of being understood by B, A must assume
that $B$ assumes that $A$ spoke as a competent member of the *English speaking collective of request makers*, rather than, say, just making some accidental noises. But a genuine case of a collective "we-intention" is not just a set of mutual assumptions concerning a shared mastery of speech acts in English. Although both $A$ and $B$ end up participating in a collectively defined complex of institutions of *request making in English*, by means of $A$'s *making the request* and by means of $B$'s *understanding the request*, their participation in this particular communicative exchange is initiated by $A$'s utterance (an individual initiative: $A$ "calls the shots") and so it is not fully determined by a collective agreement between $A$ and $B$, as two individuals who decided to cooperate on this particular occasion (unlike the performers of *La Bohème*).

By making a request directed at $B$, $A$ compels $B$ to become an active participant in this situation of $A$'s individual "design." To some extent, $A$ is indeed in control of $B$'s actions: Regarding $A$'s individual perlocutionary aim directed at $B$, no matter how $B$ responds, $B$'s perlocutionary response will be one that was *elicited* by $A$'s *request*: $B$ can ignore it, refuse to comply with it, or fulfill it (or act purposefully in an irrelevant manner, say by watering the flowers instead of closing the door). No matter which course of action $B$ chooses, it will not be a completely free choice in so far as it will be, in either case, constrained by $A$'s *request* (provided, of course, that $B$ heard and understood what $A$ wanted of $B$). So there is no collective "we-intention" represented here by either participant: there is a dyad of different individual intentions. $A$'s involves, as before, "I want you [$B$] to close the door," and $B$'s involves 'I understand that you [$A$] want me to close the door, but I intend to ignore your request" or "I understand that you [$A$] want me to close the door, but I refuse to do so" or "I understand that you [$A$] want me to close the door, and I intend to close the door," etc.
In summary, in this particular case, at no stage of the process have the participants A and B collectively agreed upon a "we-intention" to which they would have made their individual contributions as individual means to a collective end. On the contrary, there is an initially autonomous individual end intended by A (that B close the door), for the sake of which A has to resort to using a collectively determined means, i.e., the production of a request in English. In so far as we regard communication as a means to achieve an understanding of the contents of our subjective conscious Intentional mental states in another, communication is a collectively determined means to a subjectively determined end. A and B did not reach their own two-person collective agreement regarding the institution of making a request in English: it was handed down to them by their tutors in the speech community. Although their present exchange does contribute to the continuous preservation of the institution of making a request in English, that was not what either of them intended to further by way of this exchange.

This conclusion does not exclude the possibility that there exist genuinely social actions (such as for example the production of La Bohème) in which communication does play an important role as a (collective) means to a genuinely collective end that is produced by way of the individual contributions of the participants. It may even be possible that in some (rare) cases, the very activity of communication itself is the collectively desired end. Consider: "Let's have a conversation," "We are having a discussion," "We had a nice little chat the other day." But even in such cases we are having a conversation in order to fill the awkward silence, to relax, to get to know each other; we are having a discussion in order to reach consensus, clarify our misunderstandings, or our mutual disagreement about something, or to reach a collective decision. In all these cases, the collectively agreed upon activity serves as a means to some other end. It is hard to find a plausible example where communication is produced
as a collective end for its own sake.

Subjective Backgrounds and their effects

There cannot be a complete overlap between individual persons' respective Backgrounds: each person has an individual genetic make-up, and an individual history of environmental influences and learning experiences. This point is of particular importance inasmuch as, according to Searle, "agents stand in indexical relations to their own Intentional states . . . and their own Backgrounds" (Searle 1983, 65). Recall Searle's explanation:

Each of us is a biological and social being in a world of other biological and social beings, surrounded by artifacts and natural objects. Now, what I have been calling the Background is indeed derived from the entire congeries of relations which each biological-social being has to the world around itself. Without my biological constitution, and without the set of social relations in which I am embedded, I could not have the Background that I have. But all of these relations, biological, social, physical, all this embeddedness, is only relevant to the production of the Background because of the effects that it has on me, specifically the effects that it has on my mind-brain. The world is relevant to my Background only because of my interaction with the world. (Searle 1983, 154)

Individuals' entire idiosyncratic prior experience may potentially play a role in determining the unique set of conditions of satisfaction for an occurrent Intentional mental state. In this sense each individual's Background constitutes a fundamental unshared

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96 Whether Searle himself would call an individual's own Background subjective is debatable. The Background is not subjective in the ontological sense (as defined by Searle in 1995), for the existence of the neurophysiological Background itself is not dependent on being consciously experienced by the individual whose Background it is. It is the other way around: the Background is an objectively existing, neurophysiological precondition of all conscious experience of that individual. On the other hand, the individual's unique genetic make-up and unique history of exposure to environmental influences and learning experiences, via subjectively experienced perceptions and other mental states, are all said to contribute to the evolution of each individual's own unique Background capacities. It is in this sense that I call an individual's own set of Background capacities her subjective Background.
neurophysiological capacity that may, at times, render communication difficult or even impossible. How exactly speakers’ dissimilar Backgrounds may affect communication negatively will be discussed shortly. Here I only wish to establish the fact that speakers’ Backgrounds may be dissimilar and that this fact may have repercussions for the prospect of communication.

Occurrent conscious mental states are subjectively existing entities. The term 'subjective' has several applications here. Ontologically speaking, occurrent conscious mental states are subjectively existing entities, as their existence depends on being subjectively experienced by a conscious agent. In terms of epistemic accessibility, they are subjective, as their contents are subjectively experienced by the agent who has them. Their contents may be called subjective in a third sense if they involve a judgment that is led by one’s personal (e.g., aesthetic) preferences rather than being true or false, depending on its correspondence to some fact of the world (Searle 1995, 9).

Subjective conscious Intentional mental states have an intrinsic representative content in a psychological mode with a certain Aspectual Shape, directed at some state of affairs of the world. The above constituents of a subjective conscious Intentional mental state represent a set of intrinsic conditions of satisfaction that are determined relative to the Background of the person who has the state. If these conditions of satisfaction are met, the contents of the subjective conscious Intentional mental state are said to correspond to the state of affairs of the world represented by them. At the same time, the occurrence of subjective conscious Intentional mental states is independent of the external facts of the world, in the sense that such states may occur even if their contents do not correspond to any actual state of affairs of the world.

Our occurrent subjective conscious Intentional mental representations of the external world are individuated by the particular Aspectual Shape under which they occur:
They represent their conditions of satisfaction under aspects . . . This aspectual feature must matter to the agent. It must exist from his/her point of view. It is for example, from my point of view that there can be a difference for me between my wanting water and my wanting H₂O, even though the external behavior that corresponds to these desires may be identical in each case . . . the aspectual shape . . . is constitutive of the way the agent thinks about a subject matter: I can think about my thirst for a drink of water without thinking at all about its chemical composition. I can think of it as water without thinking of it as H₂O. (Searle 1989a, 199)

Similarly, based on our respective subjective perceptual experiences in our shared environment, you and I may both perceive the glass of liquid on the desk in front of us, but you may represent the glass of liquid under your subjective Aspect as water, while I may represent the same glass of liquid under my subjective Aspect as something that has the chemical structure of H₂O. Your belief that there is a glass of water does not occur under the same Aspect as my belief that there is a glass of H₂O, although we may both report our occurring respective beliefs by uttering the sentence 'There is a glass of water,' leaving the difference in our respective Aspects implicit.

The particular Aspectual Shape of an occurring subjective conscious Intentional mental state is ultimately determined by the person's own set of Background capacities effective on that occasion. We do not know enough about the precise causal functions of the Background that enable the occurrence of conscious Intentional mental states under a specific Aspect to be able to figure out how the former gives rise to the latter. To the extent to which our biological and cultural Backgrounds overlap, it is not implausible to claim that, in general, we may experience subjective conscious Intentional mental states under relevantly similar, or even identical Aspectual Shapes. You and I may both regard the colorless liquid in the glass on the desk under the Aspect of water (our respective Backgrounds do overlap to that extent), but if you never attended high school, you (unlike I) may never represent the same glass of liquid under the Aspect of something that has
the chemical structure of H$_2$O. Regarding liquids as being chemical compounds is just not part of your Background know-how. In this case, we could have the following exchange:

You: "There's a glass of water and I am going to drink it if you don't mind."
I: "Will a glass of H$_2$O do?"
You: (staring at me in utter perplexity) "Huh???

Your inability to understand my question may be due to the fact that your own Background, unlike mine, does not encompass this bit of information regarding the chemical structure of water.

It is possible that two interlocutors with vastly different general Backgrounds should represent the same object under two different Aspects occurring to them and still succeed in communicating. You could be a stockbroker from New York and I a poor Canadian student with vastly dissimilar general Backgrounds in other respects, and yet we could have a sufficient overlap in our Backgrounds relevant to the particular occasion to render our respective Aspects compatible, and therefore the particular communicative exchange mutually intelligible.

You: "There's a glass of water and I am going to drink it if you don't mind."
I: "Will a glass of H$_2$O do?"
You: (thinking for a split second) "Sure. Are you trying to be funny?"

Since, despite our vastly dissimilar general Backgrounds, we both know that water has the chemical structure of H$_2$O, your response manifests your ability to relate to my current Aspect, even though it is dissimilar from yours.\footnote{And only philosophers with a shared Background that includes familiarity with Putnam's famous Twin Earth thought experiment would understand the following exchange: You: "There's a glass of water and I am going to drink it if you don't mind."
I: "Will a glass of XYZ do?"
You: (thinking for a split second) "Sure. We are on Twin Earth, aren't we?"}
What seems to matter to mutual intelligibility on a particular occasion is the overlap in the respective specific Background assumptions that give rise to the respective Aspects of the interlocutors' subjective mental states. Without our shared Background knowledge that water has the chemical structure of \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \), our exchange (stockbroker to student) could not have been successful. This one shared Background assumption seems necessary, but certainly not sufficient for the success of the above exchange. There may be other necessary Background assumptions (not specific to this occasion) that nevertheless must be shared by the interlocutors in order to communicate successfully. For example, they must mutually assume that their interlocutor is conscious, or that she sees the same glass of water on the desk, or that she speaks English, etc. What is remarkable is that a lack of overlap in the Background knowledge that water has the chemical structure of \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) would have overridden the enabling function of all the other shared Background assumptions of the interlocutors (as happened in the exchange between the high school drop-out and the student of chemistry). But imagine the following. For all appearances, the exchange proceeds as before:

You: "There's a glass of water and I am going to drink it."

I: "Will a glass of \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) do?"

You: (staring at me in utter perplexity) "Huh???

I may have asked that question under the Aspect of a psychological need to show you my superior educational level, because according to my Background know-how those who look as disheveled as you are losers, or high school drop-outs. But (unbeknownst to me), you may have stared at me in utter perplexity, because you in fact are the recipient of the Nobel Prize in chemistry, and you have more important matters on your mind than combing your hair or ironing your clothes, and you could not believe what an insufferable, pompous snob I was. You may have sensed that I was mocking you, and wondered why I would want to mock someone with a Background that involves winning
the Nobel Prize in chemistry with such a simpleminded question. Under the Aspect you were responding to my question, my question must have appeared far too simple to you to be really humorous. In this case, the crucial Background assumption relevant to my question concerns the correlation between educational level and appearance. According to my Background (obviously unshared by you) there is such a correlation. With this Background I am likely to attempt to mock someone who has a disheveled appearance. Within a matter of split seconds, one single difference in the crucial Background assumption overrides the enabling effect of all the other Background assumptions that we may share.

While the speaker's and the interpreter's respective Backgrounds may be relevantly similar, or significantly dissimilar in general, what seems to matter most to the prospect of successful communication is the relevant similarity of the speaker's and the interpreter's particular Background assumptions effective on a particular occasion that give rise to relevantly similar, or at least compatible Aspects. Conversely, the dissimilarity of such relevant Background assumptions effective on a particular occasion may give rise to dissimilar or incompatible Aspects under which communicative attempts may be (mis)interpreted. Moreover, speaker and interpreter are both oblivious to the particular Background assumptions that nevertheless affect their production and interpretation of utterances.

The next issue I wish to discuss is the subjective intention to communicate. Searle maintains that the purpose of a communicator who has an intention to communicate is to let the addressee know that the communicator has a prior intention to represent a state of affairs of the world. If the addressee understands that the communicator has this prior representation intention, the communication between the two is deemed successful. Searle acknowledges that many (although obviously not all) of our communicative actions
involve perlocutionary aims, yet he emphatically rejects the perlocutionary effects aimed at as being part of the communication intention. In his early work Searle argues that the perlocutionary effect cannot be analyzed as part of the communication intention proper, since the possible range of responses given to communicators could never be formalized. It could not be formalized because nobody has ultimate control over other persons' responses. But having perlocutionary aims directed at others means precisely that: we desire to gain control over other persons' behavior. And, at least sometimes, we do succeed in getting others to do what we want them to do.

While the achievement of the illocutionary effect (i.e., the addressee's understanding of the communicator's representation intention) is obviously a fundamental criterion of any successful communication, it seems prima facie arbitrary to stop at it, to the exclusion of the achievement of the intended perlocutionary effects, for the sole reason that the latter cannot be fully controlled by the person whose aim it is. In terms of control over others' responses, there seems to be no radical difference between the two kinds of effects: the communicator has no control over whether or not the illocutionary effect is achieved either, since any attempt to communicate may fail to achieve the illocutionary effect of being understood. Finally, although it may in fact be the case that we expect no more than the addressee's understanding of our communication intention, and this expectation can be met without our knowledge of it, typically, our only way of ascertaining whether or not such understanding has in fact occurred is by receiving some feedback, i.e., some appropriate behavioral response. Searle's own interest, of course, is not epistemic: he regards his job as a philosopher as done when the ontological analysis of the communicative process is completed. How communication is realized is a matter for empirical linguistics, in Searle's opinion.

Apart from the fact that my only way of having at least probabilistic evidence that
you understood that I intended to communicate something to you is by eliciting some behavioral response from you, it appears commonsensically true that, if I have a perlocutionary aim directed at you, for example, if I want you to close the door, then I want you not merely to understand that this is what I want you to do, but I want you to respond accordingly, i.e., I want you to close the door. I will not consider my perlocutionary aim fulfilled unless you close the door. At first sight it seems puzzling that Searle would not wish to consider your appropriate response (i.e., the achievement of the perlocutionary effect intended by me) to be part of my communication intention.98

The production of acts with a communication intention in general serves as a means to convey the contents of one's subjective mental states that may involve aims other than perlocutionary ones to another (e.g., I intend to let you know that I am committed to holding certain beliefs, or that I am in the position to perform certain actions, etc). The case of perlocutionary aims is especially poignant, because it explains the inevitable need to communicate. The satisfaction conditions of my being committed to holding a belief, or my being in the position to perform an action, can be met even if you do not know that I have such mental contents occurring to me. The satisfaction conditions of my mental state that involves a perlocutionary aim directed at you, however, cannot be met, unless you know that I have it. Let us return to the example of my subjective wish that you close the door.

The content of my occurrent subjective Intentional mental state is that I want you to close the door. The essential condition of satisfaction of this state occurring to me involves a perlocutionary aim directed at you, namely, that you close the door. Unless

98 Recall Searle's discussion on perlocutionary effects: See Searle 1969, 43ff; Searle 1979b, 194. See for example Bennett 1991; Sbisà 1992; and Holdcroft 1992 for criticisms on this issue.
you do so, this essential condition of satisfaction will not be met; in other words, my
perlocutionary aim directed at you will not be fulfilled. It is therefore crucial that you
be aware of the fact that I have this particular subjective conscious Intentional mental
state with this particular perlocutionary aim that only you can fulfill. Of course, you also
have to be able and willing to comply with my request in order to fulfill it, but these are
conditions over which I indeed do not have much control (although I ultimately expect
to be able to gain such control). I can, however, at least attempt to let you know that I
want you to close the door.

I not only can, but I must attempt to do so; I have to let you know that I want
something from you. While my primary goal is to get you to close the door, I have a
secondary goal that involves letting you know that I want you to close the door. This
secondary goal itself serves as a means to the achievement of my primary goal to get you
to close the door. This secondary goal is what Searle calls the communication intention,
and it is achieved if I succeed in letting you know that I have a certain perlocutionary aim
directed at you, independently of whether you are able or willing to fulfill my
perlocutionary aim to close the door.

My communication intention, that is, my secondary goal itself requires a means
by way of which it can be achieved: I must exhibit some publicly observable behavior
by way of which I can let you know that I want you to close the door. In some
circumstances, it may suffice that I gesture with a barely perceptible movement of my
eyebrow while glancing at you in an imperious manner, as the Godfather commands the
mobster. In other circumstances, the most efficient means would be to actually utter the
sentence 'I want you to close the door.'

The point I am stressing here is that there is a means-end hierarchy among the
various levels of intentions directed at others when we communicate, and Searle's own
analysis of the communication intention does not make this hierarchy sufficiently clear. Although I cannot intend to communicate to you my wish that you close the door without having also an intention to represent this subjective wish in some publicly recognizable manner, my intention to publicly represent my wish serves as a means to my intention to communicate my wish to you, which in turn serves as a means to fulfill my wish, i.e., to get you to close the door. In terms of the means-end hierarchy, my perlocutionary aim is prior to my communication intention, and my communication intention is prior to my representation intention. My communication intention is dependent on the subjective fact that I have a perlocutionary aim directed at you (that only you can fulfill) and on my Background knowledge of the fact relevant to this occasion -- that my subjective perlocutionary aim directed at you may not coincide with your present intentions, and that you may not know that I have such a subjective perlocutionary aim. My representation intention is dependent on my need to communicate with you.

On another occasion I may have an intention just to represent, but not to communicate the contents of my subjective conscious Intentional mental state, and in that case my intention to represent is indeed independent of an intention to communicate (that is fully absent in this case). The notion of the priority of the representation intention to a possible but not actual intention to communicate becomes unintelligible in this case. However, in the situation analyzed above, where my goal is to communicate for the sake of conveying my perlocutionary aim to you, my intention to represent is neither prior to, nor independent of my intention to communicate. It appears, then, that although the communication and the representation intentions are distinct, their relation to one another

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99 Recall his summary statement: "On my present account the primary meaning intentions are intentions to represent and they are independent of and prior to the intention to communicate those representations. A primary meaning intention is an intention to represent; a communication intention is an intention that the hearer should know the representing intention" (Searle 1986a, 216).
in terms of priority and dependence cannot be stated generally, but must be analyzed relative to the situation in which they occur.

Although you may not be able to tell just from observing my behavior, nevertheless, the subjective conscious Intentional mental state I have when I utter the sentence 'I want you to close the door' with the intention to communicate must be different from the subjective conscious Intentional mental state I have when I utter the same sentence with the intention to merely represent, since my intentions to communicate as opposed to merely represent are clearly different. The intention to represent, according to Searle, consists in the "speaker's uttering something with the intention that his utterance should represent the world" (Searle 1986a, 212). The intention to communicate is "to produce in H [the hearer] the knowledge that the . . . [speech act] . . . represents a certain state of affairs, by means of H's recognition of S's [the speaker's] intention that it should represent that state of affairs" (Searle 1986a, 217).

The intention to communicate a given Intentional mental content as opposed to having the intention to merely represent the same content requires a different set of Background capacities that ultimately enable such intentions. Let us label the communication intention \( I_c \), and the representation intention \( I_r \), both involving the same subjective Intentional mental content, namely, that "I want you to close the door." In the case of \( I_c \), the set of relevant Background capacities must include my various presumptions concerning the possibility that you, at the moment, do not wish to close the door and that you do not know that this is what I want you to do. Further, unless I have the Background presumption regarding your ability to understand my communication intention; that is, unless I presume that you are a human being with a relevantly similar biological and cultural Background that enables you to perceive our shared environment in a conscious way that is relevantly similar to mine, that you are conscious at the
moment, that you will, in case I produce some apparently communicative behavior, take me as a person who wishes to convey something to you, etc; unless I have these specific Background presumptions effective on this occasion, I cannot expect my communication intention, to get you to understand that I want you to close the door, to be fulfilled.

In the case of $I_R$, that is, when I utter the same sentence merely with an intention to represent, I do so without the above listed Background presumptions that concern you occurring to me. I may have experienced a hitherto undefined yearning for the door to be closed by you, and upon figuring out precisely what it was I wanted from you, I mutter to myself: "That's it! I finally got it! What I want from you is to close the door. Yes, oh, yes! I want you to close the door!"

From the third-person observer's point of view, you can observe me making the characteristic sounds of speech (or exhibiting other, apparently communicative behavior), but you may not always be able to tell, just by observing me, whether I intend to communicate or just to represent. ¹⁰⁰ The intention to communicate is a subjective feature of communication. It is at the same time a shared feature of communication, for all of us competent mature human beings intend to communicate with another at some time or other. Our shared Background presumption that this is so is mutual. It is based on the universally shared and mutual Background presumption that other humans are potentially cooperative beings, which in turn is closely related to the shared and mutual Background presumption that all humans are relevantly similar beings who experience the

¹⁰⁰ I would like you to ponder the following example: my devious preadolescent child's favorite pastime is to say something annoying to me and when I respond by getting annoyed, she asks: "Who says I was talking to you?" I usually repay her by remaining silent after her challenge, until she cannot stand it anymore and yells: "Hey, I am talking to you!"
same, exactly one world we live in, in relevantly similar ways. The need to communicate arises from our shared and mutual Background knowledge of the existence of other minds, with potentially different or even conflicting subjective intentions and Intentional contents that are not directly accessible to third-person observers.

**Our shared means of communication**

A competent individual who has a subjective conscious Intentional mental state with a certain perlocutionary aim directed at another knows what satisfaction conditions must be met in order for that perlocutionary aim to be fulfilled. If I want you to close the door, then the essential satisfaction condition of my mental state is that you close the door for the reason that you recognized that I wanted you to close the door. This condition will not be met unless your reason for closing the door is that I wanted you to close it, and not some other reason, e.g., that you were about to do it anyway; unless it is you and not someone else who closes the door; unless it is the door and not something else that gets closed (and it must be the specific door I have in mind and not another door); and unless the door gets closed, as opposed to getting unhinged or cut up for firewood, etc. Pace Godfather and the mobster, you may not be able to tell, just by observing me, that I have this subjective conscious Intentional mental state occurring to...

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101 Although some of us tend to get carried away and read all sorts of messages into other persons' behavior, none of which was intended by the person herself. Fanatics routinely claim to have received messages from God, from disembodied souls or from oracles, even from everyday objects and events that are said to bear a specific meaning, such as a good or bad omen. Such extreme examples show that there need not even be a real person with a veritable intention to communicate with us, in order for us to presume that we are the recipients of communicative intentions.

102 I must apologize to the reader for using the somewhat unexciting example of my wish that you close the door again: the simplicity of this example makes the analysis of how we succeed to communicate easier. I do not harbor any serious worries about the possibility to communicate such a simple wish successfully.
me in the moment, with these rather specific contents, under some specific Aspects, although you may be able to recognize just by observing certain extraverbal cues that I want you to do something, rather than, say, offering to do something for you. I need a means by which I can let you know the specific details of my aim directed at you. You need a means by which you can recognize the specific details of my aim directed at you. According to Searle, our institutionally created and maintained speech acts are our primary means by which to render the contents of our subjective conscious Intentional mental states recognizable to others. To what extent does a publicly produced speech act render the contents of one’s subjective conscious Intentional mental state recognizable to others? Can a competent addressee tell just by witnessing a speech act produced by a speaker what precisely is on the speaker’s mind? 103

Searle gave an early answer to this question in his Speech Acts, when he appealed to our shared and mutual knowledge of the constitutive rules that underlie both the production and the interpretation of various types of speech acts. Moreover, Searle said, "the speech act or acts performed in the utterance of a sentence are in general a function of the meaning of the sentence" (Searle 1969, 18): the semantic structure of the sentence uttered is a publicly recognizable manifestation of the underlying rules that constitute the type of speech act produced. In other words, if you know which rules are manifested in the semantic structure of the sentence uttered by me, you will recognize the type of speech act produced by me. If you recognize the type of speech act produced by me, you will be able to interpret what I meant.

While a competent interpreter knows what speech act rules must apply, or what

103 The following is a reflection on Searle’s early theory, where he did not yet appeal to our shared Background capacities; although later he listed our Background sensitivity to the speech act rules as one of our most important Background capacities. Recall his discussion in Searle 1995, 141.
conditions must be met when a certain sentence is uttered, the interpreter can only presume that all the relevant rules do in fact apply, i.e., that all the relevant conditions are in fact met. It is possible to utter the same sentence successfully even if certain relevant conditions are not satisfied (i.e., even if the performance of the speech act is defective). For example, to make a statement for which the speaker has "hopelessly insufficient evidence or warrant" would be a case of a successful, yet defective performance of a statement since, after all, the speaker does succeed in producing a statement. An apparently successful public performance of a speech act may mask the fact that (unbeknownst to the interpreter) not all conditions of satisfaction were in fact met: the performance of the speech act is in fact defective.

Public utterances are publicly observable in a trivial way. After all, we can observe others making sounds and movements. Public utterances are not only publicly observable but also recognizable. We learn to recognize recurrent patterns of sounds and movements emitted by speakers on various occasions. That the sounds and gestures produced by speakers constitute intentional speech behavior is a taken for granted Background presumption that in extreme cases may turn out to be false (e.g., certain mental disorders manifest themselves in the eerie, mechanical production of speech-like sounds, as when the patient is "speaking in tongues"). That the speaker intends to speak, say English, as opposed to German, when she utters the characteristic speech sounds of the English language, is yet another Background presumption that may turn out to be false. Consider Davidson's example: the utterances of 'Empedocles leaped' and 'Empedokles liebt' are homophonous, yet, the former counts as a fragment of the English

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104 For details concerning Searle's definition of a successful and nondefective performance of an elementary speech act, see Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 21-22. See also Searle's comparison of his notion of a "defective" performance of a speech act with Austin's notion of "infelicities" in Searle 1969, 54 and in Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 13. See Austin 1975, 14, for his notion of "infelicities."
and the latter as a fragment of the German [=Empedocles loves] language (Davidson 1984, 98). That the speaker’s speech behavior is produced with the intention to communicate is another taken for granted Background presumption that may or may not be correct, as I discussed above.

Lest the reader get the impression that I am here advocating some deep skepticism concerning the prospect of successful communication, I hasten to stress, emphatically, that that is not my purpose: my purpose is to show the diversity of fundamental Background assumptions that we all take for granted, and, therefore, do not realize that they are necessary for successful communication. And, at the same time, precisely because such Background assumptions are automatically taken for granted, in cases when they are taken for granted but do not apply, these Background assumptions may become the very source of communication failure.

To return to the issue of our shared and mutual knowledge of the constitutive rules of types of speech acts: The constitutive rules are derivable from a set of recurring conditions under which such sentences are uttered by competent members of a speech community. Just in case all the relevant conditions of satisfaction associated with the rule-governed production of a type of speech act are met, the production of the speech act is said to be successful and nondefective.

The problem is that at least some of the conditions of satisfaction involve conditions that may not be directly accessible to the interpreter. For example, the essential condition of satisfaction of a commissive is that the speaker intend to commit herself to some future course of action; of an assertive, that the speaker intend to commit herself to the truth of the expressed proposition; of a directive, that the speaker intend to get the other person to do something, etc. A more general (meta)condition of satisfaction, that must be met every time the type of speech act counts as an expression of a
psychological state is that the speaker be sincere -- the so-called "sincerity condition" (Searle 1969, 65). The sincerity condition, apart from its obvious moral connotations, has a technical application in Searle’s theory: The sincerity condition is met, if and only if, the satisfaction conditions of the speaker’s actually occurring psychological state and the satisfaction conditions associated with the type of speech act produced by the speaker, coincide.¹⁰⁵ The general (meta)condition of satisfaction for the literal production of a speech act is that the speaker means exactly what she says.¹⁰⁶

Speakers’ shared and mutual knowledge of the rules that constitute types of speech acts allows them only to ascertain what conditions must be met whenever a sentence is uttered publicly. The interpreter can only presume but cannot tell, based on the publicly observable circumstances of an utterance plus her knowledge of the rules, whether or not the relevant set of conditions has in fact been met, if most of the essential conditions involve the subjective contents of the speaker’s Intentional mental states. The mere knowledge of the rules will not allow the interpreter to ascertain whether or not the speaker meant what she said. A speaker may utter "I promise . . ." but not intend to commit himself to any obligation -- the sincerity condition is not met in this case. The speaker may sincerely (nonmaliciously) utter a sentence with a particular illocutionary point associated with it according to the constitutive rules, but mean something else by it, that is, speak indirectly: in such a case, the sincerity condition in the morally neutral, technical sense is not being met, since the satisfaction conditions of the speaker’s primary illocutionary point and the illocutionary point determined by the rules associated with the

¹⁰⁵ The speaker need not have the expressed psychological state actually occurring to him: this is how liars operate.

¹⁰⁶ Searle does not list this condition anywhere as a condition of satisfaction in his 1969 speech act theory, simply because the entire theory is based on the literal (rule-governed) utterances of sentences.
sentence uttered, do not coincide. Yet the interpreter may not be able to tell but only presume that this is in fact the case. On the basis of the publicly observable utterance of a sentence alone, i.e., without the presumption of a shared Background, the competent interpreter can only tell what type of speech act the sentence uttered would count as, had the set of relevant satisfaction conditions associated with that type of speech act in fact been met. On the basis of the publicly observable utterance of a sentence alone, the interpreter cannot tell what actually was meant by the speaker.

If our knowledge of speech act rules is to function as a public means for rendering publicly recognizable the contents of a speaker’s actually occurring subjective conscious Intentional mental state, then, by virtue of our knowledge of the rules constituting speech act types, we ought to be able to interpret what actually goes on in the speaker’s mind. Our knowledge of the speech act rules does the job; but it does the job only conditionally, provided that a whole set of charitable Background presumptions concerning the similarities between one’s own Background and that of one’s interlocutor are in fact met. As we know, since the first publication of his "Literal meaning" in 1978 Searle himself stresses the role of the Background in enabling the understanding of speech acts. I am not arguing against his thesis of the Background: I am simply trying to show that, at least in some cases, communication breakdown occurs precisely because too much is being taken for granted on the basis of the first-person case. It is possible that Background projections from the first-person case are not always justified, because speakers’ respective Backgrounds effective on a particular occasion do not completely overlap.

For simplicity’s sake let us examine the ideal case when a speaker in fact speaks literally and sincerely. The speaker means exactly what she says, and the satisfaction conditions of the speech act produced and the satisfaction conditions of the actually occurring psychological state coincide. Even in such an ideal case, the speaker’s relevant
set of Background capacities effective on that particular occasion that determine the speaker's intended utterance meaning, are left inexplicit in the public utterance of the sentence. Even in such a case, the interpreter interprets the speaker's intended utterance meaning by projecting her own first-person Background know-how onto the interlocutor. Given the lack of complete overlap in speakers' respective idiosyncratic Backgrounds, such projections may at times be mistaken.

A publicly produced speech act has a propositional content that mirrors the representative content, and an illocutionary force that mirrors the psychological mode, of the expressed mental state.¹⁰⁷ Searle divides the propositional content of a speech act into a so-called referring act and a so-called predicating act. The referring act, manifested by the referring term uttered by the speaker, is meant by the speaker to identify the object of the speaker's subjective Intentional mental state. The predicating act, manifested by the predicate term uttered by the speaker, is meant by the speaker to indicate that the speaker commits herself to the existence of a certain state of affairs in which the predicate is true of the object referred to, relative to the subjective psychological mode of the speaker's Intentional mental state. In his Speech Acts Searle stresses that neither the referring nor the predicating act can occur independently of the performance of a complete speech act with an illocutionary force.¹⁰⁸

Searle's 1979 discussion of Donnellan's so-called referential cases has shown that since it is the (often implicit) Aspect that determines the speaker's intended meaning of

¹⁰⁷ I list the various components of Intentional mental states and of speech acts one by one, for the sake of greater clarity, notwithstanding the fact that the conditions of satisfaction of an Intentional mental state as a whole, or of a speech act as a whole, are always determined relative to the speaker's subjective Background. In other words, the various components jointly, and only relative to the Background, contribute to the speaker's intended utterance meaning.

¹⁰⁸ For details, see chapters four and five of Searle 1969.
a referring term, the interpreter's knowledge of the lexical meaning of a referring term may not be sufficient to interpret the speaker's intended reference: speaker and addressee may have to search for the speaker's primary Aspect until they "reach bedrock" (Searle 1979a, 145). Searle introduced early in his theory the so-called Principle of Expressibility that was meant to take care of this problem: "whatever can be meant, can be said" is the dictum of this Principle (Searle 1969, 19). It is always, in principle, possible to ask for and receive clarification of some implicit conscious components. Most of the time, however, we do not ask but simply presume that we know what the speaker meant by the referring term. We project our first-person Background know-how onto our interlocutor. This may or may not be a justified move, depending on the relevant similarities and dissimilarities in our respective Backgrounds effective on that particular occasion.

The psychological mode is often left inexplicit by a missing illocutionary force indicator.\textsuperscript{109} In his \textit{Speech Acts} Searle reassures us that, in actual speech situations, the context will often make clear what the implicit force of the utterance is. In his 1978 "Literal meaning" Searle mentioned for the first time in his work that our ability to recognize the psychological mode (i.e., the illocutionary point) meant by the speaker is ultimately dependent on the shared Backgrounds attributable to one another on the particular occasion. 'Context' then ultimately refers to the context of our respective Backgrounds, and the method of projecting my own Background information onto you at a particular occasion may or may not work, depending on the relevant similarities and dissimilarities in our respective Backgrounds effective at that particular occasion.

By definition, the psychological mode (i.e., the speaker's intended illocutionary

\footnote{\textsuperscript{109} Among the illocutionary force indicating devices of English Searle lists "word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and the so-called performative verbs" (Searle 1969, 30).}
point) is left implicit in the sentence uttered by the speaker in the case of an indirect speech act. As I argued in my discussion of Searle’s theory of indirect speech acts, inferences from our knowledge of speech act rules to the speaker’s implicit primary illocutionary point may not be justified since the speaker’s and the interpreter’s judgment as to what response would count as relevant to a certain utterance depends ultimately on their often incompatible personal Background assumptions concerning the type of the speech act manifested in the sentence uttered. The witnessed utterance of a sentence may appear to manifest a certain type of speech act based on the interpreter’s own Background assumptions, while, based on the speaker’s own Background assumptions, it may have been actually intended by the speaker as another type of speech act. The witnessed utterance of a sentence does not always reveal the speaker’s intention to speak directly or indirectly. The speaker’s subjective intentions are presumed to be so and so by the interlocutor on the basis of what the interlocutor thinks she herself would mean by producing such a sentence on such an occasion. But this is, once again a projection of a set of Background assumptions from the first-person case, assumptions that may or may not coincide with the Background assumptions of the speaker effective on the occasion of the utterance. In this sense, there is no relevant difference between the interpretation of speech acts that were intended literally and the interpretation of those speech acts that were intended indirectly by the speaker. In both cases, the witnessed utterance is the utterance of a (literal) sentence, and it is by virtue of the speaker’s subjective intentions to mean it literally as opposed to indirectly, that the utterance acquires its meaning.

110 See Searle on this point: “What the participants in the conversation take as relevant, what is as relevant, will always be relative to the cognitive apparatus they bring to bear on the conversation. That is to say, it will always be relative to their . . . background” (Searle 1992b, 26).
The Aspectual Shape of the publicly produced speech act (to mirror the consciously experienced Aspectual Shape of the expressed mental state) may or may not be explicit in the utterance. As Searle’s "There’s a rabbit" example shows, the semantic structure of the sentence does not reveal that Searle subjectively represents the rabbit under the Aspect of rabbit and not of undetached rabbit parts (Searle 1987, 133), unless we take it for granted that he means exactly what he says. Searle himself knows what he means, but his interlocutors, Henri and Pierre, obviously misinterpret his intended meaning. We can always in principle explain or elaborate on the particular Aspectual Shape we had in mind, just as Searle did.¹¹¹

More often than not, instead of asking for clarification, we simply assume that we know how (i.e., under what Aspect) the speaker meant what she said. Most of the time this works; but in some cases, such spontaneous, nonconscious Background projection may become the source of miscommunication. Searle claims: "Some of the most frustrating and unsatisfying conversations occur between people of radically different backgrounds, who can speak at great length and achieve only mutual incomprehension" (Searle 1992b, 29). The problem (as I indicated earlier) is that the respective general Backgrounds of the interlocutors need not even be radically different; what matters is the specific discrepancy of the respective particular determinate set of Background capacities of the two interlocutors, effective on the particular occasion of a communicative exchange that gives rise to incompatible (and often implicit) Aspects under which the two interlocutors represent the given state of affairs spoken about. Let me give another example.

I once asked the service person at a fancy restaurant if the "Singapore Chicken,"

¹¹¹ Recall again his discussion of Donnellan’s so-called referential uses of referential terms in Searle 1979a, 144.
tantalizingly displayed on a tray in front of me in a glass cabinet, had bones in it. There was a little cardboard sign beside the meal, displaying its name, its ingredients, its nutritional value, etc., except the information regarding the bones. I pointed at the meal and asked: "Does the 'Singapore Chicken' have bones in it?" The service person first seemed to assume that I was maybe too old or illiterate to read the sign myself, because she dutifully began to read the sign aloud to me. I impatiently and rather rudely interrupted her and said that I myself read the sign already and that it contained no information regarding the bones; if it had, I obviously would not have asked the above question. Obviously? Hah! As a response to my tirade, the rather flustered chicken expert now asked me: "Would you like to order a "Singapore Chicken" with bones in it?" This time she seemed to assume that I was a somewhat eccentric customer shopping perhaps for her dog at the fancy restaurant. It never occurred to her that I was asking that straightforward question because I obviously did not want a "Singapore Chicken" with bones in it. What was I thinking, asking that question in a restaurant anyway?

The source of our frustrating miscommunication was that both of us represented my question under radically different subjective and implicit Aspects, and not only that, but we also mutually projected our own Aspect onto the other person, with rather disastrous results. Under my implicit subjective Aspect of not wishing to eat a meal with bones in it, both my question regarding the presence or absence of the bones, and my expectation that the service person provide information about the presence or absence of the bones seemed justified. The service person, however, interpreted my original question "Does the 'Singapore Chicken' have bones in it?" under her own Aspect, namely, that either this question was meant by me as an indirect request, that is, I implicitly wanted her to read the sign aloud on my behalf, or that this question was posed by me directly, because I wanted to be reassured by her that the meal did have bones in it. According
to her own Aspect, her polite attempts to respond to her eccentric customer seemed justified to her. The justification for projecting our mutually incompatible subjective Aspects onto each other came from our cooperative intention to obey the troublesome maxim of relevance. This example once again shows that the general social expectation that all competent speakers ought to be able and willing to contribute relevantly to the communicative exchange is too general to be theoretically useful.\textsuperscript{112} Speakers' judgments as to the relevance of an individual utterance depend on the subjective Aspect under which they contemplate the purported relevance of the utterance in question. Speakers' subjective Aspects are ultimately determined by their respective Background capacities effective on that particular occasion, which, as I have stressed throughout this discussion, may not coincide with that of their interlocutors.

One would presume that competent speakers from relevantly similar cultural Backgrounds are sensitive to what sort of social behavior, including speech behavior, speech acts based on mutual social expectations, \textit{counts as} relevant in a typical situation of being in a restaurant.\textsuperscript{113} Restaurants are social environments, and typical restaurant activities such as ordering, inquiring about, paying for or serving food are social activities, their propriety collectively determined. Individual interlocutors contribute to this collective activity by doing their own part in their respective roles as the customer, service person, bus person, or head waiter, etc. As a competent restaurant customer, I presumed that the activity of \textit{information exchange concerning the ingredients of a meal} between a customer and a service person, produced by way of the customer's \textit{requesting} and the service person's \textit{providing} the information requested, is part of typical restaurant


\textsuperscript{113} Restaurant settings are among Searle's favorite examples when he wishes to emphasize the role our shared Background plays in enabling us to behave appropriately in a typical social setting.
behavior (it would be inappropriate to ask the service person to clean my shoes, or to start carrying the furniture of the restaurant onto the street).

The service person was justifiably taken to be a competent human being in a conscious state, coming from a cultural Background presumably relevantly similar enough to mine to enable her both to know the constitutive rules determining the proper production of, and the perlocutionary aims associated with, requesting information, as rendered in English, as well as to know the appropriately relevant behavior of service persons and customers in the typical social setting of a restaurant. Still, our exchange went wrong because there were dissimilarities in our respective Backgrounds effective on that occasion sufficient to produce significantly dissimilar subjective Aspects under which the meaning of my question "Does the 'Singapore Chicken' have bones in it?" was understood by us. Let me summarize what I have been trying to show here:

1. All of us who engage in communication rely on a determinate set of our own Background assumptions at any given occasion of a communicative exchange.

2. The speaker’s intended utterance meaning is ultimately determined relative to a determinate set of Background assumptions of the speaker, effective on the particular occasion of the speaker’s utterance.

3. The speaker’s Background assumptions are taken for granted but not consciously thought of by the speaker at the time they are effective. The total set of such Background assumptions are not and cannot be rendered explicit in the semantic structure of the sentence uttered on that occasion.\textsuperscript{114}

4. The interpreter is enabled to interpret the speaker’s utterance by the determinate set of her own Background assumptions taken for granted but not consciously thought of by the interpreter at the time they are effective.

5. Unless most of the Background assumptions effective on a particular occasion of a communicative exchange are shared by the interlocutors, no communication whatever

\textsuperscript{114} Recall Searle’s early discussion concerning the impossibility of specifying all background assumptions relevant to the meaning of even such a simple, straightforward sentence as ‘The cat is on the mat’ (Searle 1979a, 126).
6. However, it is plausible to assume that at least some of the respective taken for granted Background assumptions of the interlocutors on a particular occasion differ, given the potential differences in their innate and acquired Backgrounds in general.

7. In so far as the relevant Background assumptions effective on a particular occasion of a speaker producing a speech act are different from those of the interpreter, such relevant discrepancy may give rise to different, or even incompatible implicit Aspects under which the two persons represent the same state of affairs spoken about.

8. A discrepancy in the relevant Background assumptions of the speaker and the interpreter on a particular occasion may override all similarities in their shared general Backgrounds, and affect negatively their attempts to communicate.

It took me a very long time to analyze the exchange concerning the "Singapore Chicken," which took place in a couple of seconds. We, the unlucky participants, of course had no idea that all these things were happening during those couple of seconds. All our mutual judgings, presumptions and projections occurred in our respective nonconscious Backgrounds that were different enough to create an acute case of miscommunication. Miscommunication in this case occurred precisely because we both prematurely took our shared and mutual Background capacities for granted and so acted without consciously and purposefully pondering potential dissimilarities.

The expert communicator, as opposed to the novice, does not just project him- or herself onto the other, as it is practiced by most of us, most of the time. Such projections work only in so far as our respective individual Backgrounds overlap. Rather than "banking on" the justification of some of the projections from the first-person case that is provided by our relevantly similar Background capacities, the expert communicator is sensitive to potential individual divergences. Such expertise can only be achieved, if at all, with exposure to a large variety of communicative contexts and, initially, it must involve constant vigilance, in the form of conscious and purposeful consideration of the
possibility of mutually incompatible Backgrounds. This suggestion may appear tedious, time consuming and somewhat paranoid. But, after all, it took quite a long time to acquire the shared Background skills that are now our "trusted" spontaneous nonconscious motivators.

The enormous value of having such shared Background skills in communication is undeniable. But precisely because such shared Background skills became our nonconsciously operating habits that spontaneously motivate our communicative behavior, we sometimes fail to recognize the potentially dissimilar aspects of our respective individual Backgrounds. Besides, the time we spend trying to clarify our failed communicative attempts (in so far as we detect them at all), or the time we act erroneously under the mistaken assumption that we did understand what the other person meant, could be better spent on anticipating potential dissimilarities in interlocutors' Backgrounds. This conscious and purposefully practiced method, like most of our practical knowledge, would eventually fade into and become part of our nonconsciously operating Background skills, and then we would "just act," sensitive both to our similarities and to our potential differences. All my foregoing attempts were undertaken as the first step toward achieving such expertise in communication: the step that involves a plausible diagnosis of the problem.
CHAPTER SIX

EPILOGUE - A CASE STUDY

At last, I would like to apply the Searlean theoretical apparatus to an extended segment of communicative exchange between two speakers, O and D. Here it goes:

O: Is't lost? Is't gone? speak, is it out of the way?
D: Heaven bless us!
O: Say you?
D: It is not lost; but what an if it were?
O: How!
D: I say, it is not lost.
O: Fetch't, let me see't.
D: Why, so I can, sir, but I will not now. This is a trick to put me from my suit:
Pray you, let Cassio be receiv'd again.
O: Fetch me the handkerchief: my mind misgives.
D: Come, come;
You'll never meet a more sufficient man.
O: The handkerchief!
D: I pray, talk me of Cassio.
O: The handkerchief!
D: A man that all his time
Hath founded his good fortunes on your love,
Shar'd dangers with you, --
O: The handkerchief!
D: In sooth, you are to blame.

In the following I discuss various possible attributions of Background capacities effective on this particular occasion, from two different kinds of viewpoints: one kind involves the two interlocutors, O's and D's, own mutual attributions of certain Backgrounds to one another, most of them misattributions resulting from unjustified projections from the first-person case; these misattributions must be understood as nonconscious, spontaneous, simultaneously running dynamic changes in dispositions
affecting their production and interpretation of the utterances in the exchange. The other kind involves my own post hoc attribution of Background capacities to the two interlocutors that may be effective on the particular occasion of one or the other interlocutor interpreting an utterance. Such a comparative exercise helps to show how or why these two speakers end up talking at cross purposes. There is an obvious possibility that my own post hoc Background attributions as to why and how these two interlocutors end up miscommunicating could themselves be mistaken projections from my own first-person case. As well, if you, my patient reader, feel that my projections are implausible or even absurd, you may feel that way, simply because your and my respective Backgrounds are significantly dissimilar.

Let us see first the list of shared Background capacities mutually attributable by the two interlocutors to one another. The importance of these capacities is not to be underestimated because without the mutual projection of such capacities, the two interlocutors could not even attempt to communicate with one another. Both interlocutors are justified in nonconsciously attributing the following shared Backgrounds to one another: the other one is a conscious human being residing in a shared physical environment, in full possession of all his or her relevantly similar cognitive, perceptual, and motor capacities; the other one is a competent speaker of a shared conventional language, in possession of a shared and mutual knowledge of speech act rules and of the general principles of cooperative behavior. In other words, both of them have a mutual Background expectation toward the other as a potentially cooperative being, with respect to their mutual intention to communicate: that is, if one of them initiates a communicative exchange by intentionally producing a particular speech act in English, then he expects the other one a) to recognize his intention to be understood; b) to understand him; c) to produce an appropriate response in a manner that corresponds to the principles of
cooperative communication. Further, both of them have a mutual Background expectation toward the other as a potentially cooperative being, with respect to the fulfilment of their possible perlocutionary aims directed at one another: that is, they both hope to be able to affect successfully one another's attitude and/or behavior. Finally, it is mutually presumed by both that the other one is a willing participant in the present exchange with the intention to communicate by means of his or her shared language. All the above are just general Background projections, taken normally for granted by all communicators, without which the mere attempt to communicate would be unreasonable. Any of the above Background projections may, in the odd case, turn out to be mistaken, and therefore provide a source of communication failure.

Moreover, these two interlocutors know many specific details about each other's relevant Backgrounds, for they have known each other for a while now. Such knowledge does not mean that they consciously think of these details when engaging in the exchange. Nevertheless, this tacit Background knowledge does affect the dynamics of this conversation. O is a gloriously successful army general, and D is the young "supersubtle" daughter of a Venetian Senator. O used to be a guest at the Senator's house where he would tell father and daughter about his adventurous youth of "most disastrous chances," of "hairbreadth escapes," of being taken "by the insolent foe, and sold to slavery," of his pilgrimages to the faraway lands of Cannibals. In spite of their differences in age and nature, D, the dutiful daughter, the blushing maiden of a most "still spirit," the "fresh and delicate creature" fell in love with O, the fierce warrior who spent his life in the "tented field" amidst "feats of broil and battle," "ploomed troop," "neighing steed," "shrill trump, spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife, / The royal banner, and all quality, / Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!"

O is "true of mind," of a "free and open nature," for "men should be what they
seem." Although D deceived her father, to whom she was "bound for life and education," and eloped with the general, O, very much in love, sees his new wife as "fair, feeds well, loves company, / Is free of speech, sings, plays and dances well," and his own soul "hath her content so absolute / That not another comfort like to this / Succeeds in unknown fate." Why did they have to elope?

O is a black man.\(^{115}\) He knows that, despite having greatly benefited from his fearless victories in the field, most Venetians view him as a mere "extravagant and wheeling stranger of here and everywhere," a "lascivious Moor," an "erring Barbarian," a "bond-slave," a "pagan," an "old black ram... tupping the white ewe." He knows that the suspicion against him (one that Othello denies) is that he must have corrupted Desdemona by "spells" and "witchcraft," he must have "abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals that weaken motion" to get her to fall in love with "what she fear'd to look on," for Othello is "defective" in "loveliness," "years, manners and beauties." He is "rush and very sudden in choler." Othello sees himself as "rude in his speech" for he has not "those soft parts of conversation that chamberers have" and has "declined into the vale of years." He believes that Desdemona fell in love with him, for she pitied him for the "dangers" he "pass'd." He believes that Desdemona pities him only because, in fact, he pities himself. In fact, it was not pity, but fascination with his charming, dangerous, exotic, mysterious magic that captured Desdemona's heart: "when she seemed to shake

\(^{115}\) They are, of course, Othello and Desdemona in Shakespeare's Othello, Act III, Scene IV. (Shakespeare, 1926, 1000). Using this particular example as opposed to one made up by me is preferable, partially because I cannot ever hope to be able to surpass Shakespeare's genius in understanding the human psyche and in crafting such a perfectly realistic, timeless example of marital discord, partially also because the reader, familiar with the play, can more easily verify the plausibility of my analysis, the reader's own Background projections permitting. My own attributions of Backgrounds to the characters are, of course, based on the information derived from the play. It is a most common practice of playwrights to let the characters agonize over their mutual misunderstandings, while the audience is let in on their secrets in order to enable them to empathize with the characters' plight. I must disregard the effects of Shakespeare's own Background that led to the writing of this dialogue, for mine is not a discussion about literature.
and fear [his] looks, / She lov'd them most." Othello is not aware of his power over her, for he sees himself as powerless, despite his bravery as a soldier.

The two had a common friend, Cassio, "himself a Florentine," a "bookish theoretic" who knew of their love, and took Othello's side whenever the lovers quarrelled. Cassio, who "never set a squadron in the field." who is "mere prattle without practice" and has a drinking problem, was elevated by Othello to become his new lieutenant, stepping over Iago and Rodrigo who were up next for promotion. Cassio got into a drunken fight on the watch, after Othello's recent victory, and Othello had to let him go, for the general could not tolerate "private and domestic quarrel" in a "town of war yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear." Or so goes his official statement.

We know from an eavesdropping gossip that Othello and Desdemona had several private talks about Cassio's reinstatement, but Othello the general cannot but refuse to take his friend back, for the man Cassio beat up is of "great fame" and "great affinity" in the town. Othello the great military leader is in conflict with Othello the friend of a fallen man, and with Othello the black husband of the Senator's white daughter. Desdemona took it upon herself to persuade Othello in Cassio's favor, for she has no conflict of interests and Cassio is her friend, as before, and he is truly penitent. Desdemona likes him. She is fascinated by men who appeal to her compassion.

Othello knows that Desdemona deceived her father in order to become Othello's wife. Othello, for whom honesty is a cardinal virtue, used to view her youthful defiant deception as a sign of her love and loyalty to him. However, unbeknownst to Desdemona, Othello was made (by Iago) to suspect that Desdemona may have deceived him, too, and of all people, with Cassio, their friend. All of a sudden, Desdemona's deceptive nature appears despicable to Othello, when Iago, whom Othello thinks of as being "full of love and honesty," puts the idea in Othello's head that Cassio is in love
with Desdemona, talks about her in his dream -- and the other day, he even had Desdemona's handkerchief in his hand.

That handkerchief is not just any piece of cloth: it was the "first remembrance" given to Desdemona by Othello. More than just a lover's gift, that handkerchief is a special family heirloom and so is the magical story of its origin. It was given to Othello's mother by an Egyptian charmer who told her that, as long as she kept it, "'Twould make her amiable, and subdue [his] father / Entirely to her love; but if she lost it, / Or made a gift of it, [his] father's eye / Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt / After new fancies." Othello (who previously denied the Venetians' charge against him as being "the practiser of arts inhibited and out of warrant") now, full of superstition, wonders if the charmer's prophecy did not, after all, "become truth. He is in a jealous rage: That handkerchief is evidence ("ocular proof") -- if and only if Desdemona has it -- of her innocence; if she has lost it -- of her indubitable deceit. Desdemona, oblivious of all this, thinks of Othello as the noble Moor who is "true of mind, and made of no such baseness / As jealous creatures are." She thinks that "the sun where he was born / Drew all such humours from him." This explanation implies that if Othello is unlike anyone else in a similar situation, it is because he is from a faraway place; he is an alien. Desdemona here perhaps shows an inkling of an awareness of possible dissimilarities between their Backgrounds. Or, conversely, she, like most members of homogenous cultural groups, automatically tends to overestimate the dissimilarities between the group's collective norm and the behavior of an individual outsider: he is an alien; he cannot possibly react like one of us.

Desdemona did in fact misplace her handkerchief the other day, quite innocently, but she did not think much of it. Immediately before the dialogue I am about to begin to discuss, Othello asked her to lend him her handkerchief (and we know under what
specific Aspect he did so), to which she responded honestly and casually that she did not have it about her. Othello (ignoring her reminder that he promised to talk about Cassio’s case yet another time) began to tell her about the handkerchief’s wondrous power. Desdemona did seemingly listen to him going on and on about it, this time less fascinated by this one of his many exotic tales than she used to be at the beginning of their courtship. Has his charm truly begun to fade in her eyes? Perhaps, yes. Perhaps it was just that she had a so much more important issue to discuss: She had to get Othello to forgive Cassio, their old and true friend. All this may be working in the nonconscious Background of their minds and may affect, unbeknownst to them, the ways in which they interpret, and misinterpret one another. Othello begins.

Othello’s rapidly fired three questions, "Is’t lost? is’t gone? speak, is it out of the way?,” each paraphrasing essentially the same point as the one preceding it, reveal his urgency by their redundant repetitiveness, rather than by their actual explicit content. On the surface, 'Is’t lost?’ is a mere request for information as to the whereabouts of the handkerchief (from the conversational context it is clear that 'it’ refers to the handkerchief). Othello orders Desdemona to speak by interjecting 'speak’ between his two last questions, but without giving her a chance to do so, since he continues to speak instead. Although Desdemona herself has no clue, we know why Othello desires to receive urgent information about the whereabouts of a piece of cloth: he represents the ominous piece of cloth under the Aspect as being "the ocular proof” to bring about either his relief from his galling suspicion, or "black vengeance, from the hollow hell.” His Background disposition determining this Aspect is that the handkerchief’s presence or absence is correlated with Desdemona’s fidelity or infidelity. An alternative Background possibly effective on the occasion of Othello’s uttering of the first line could be that perhaps Othello tries to mislead himself by a last mad hope that the reason for
Desdemona's inability to produce the information requested is that she simply did not understand the question. If only it were a problem of comprehension, then, perhaps, by paraphrasing the question in three possible ways, he could get her to understand what he wants, and the whole horror would turn out to be a harmless linguistic problem. It is not implausible that this is what is running through Othello's nonconscious Background motivating his threefold request. How many times do we deceive ourselves into believing that the other person's apparently noncooperative behavior is only due to her inability to hear us or to understand us, and so we paraphrase our request or repeat it more and more loudly, all the while sensing the futility of the attempt. Are we, in our nonconscious Background, trying to provide an excuse for her, or are we trying to evade having to confess to ourselves that we are being ineffective in our perlocutionary aims? It is plausible, given Othello's situation, that he himself is torn by such "ambivalence" in his nonconscious Background.

The essential satisfaction condition of a request for information is that the requested information be given in response to the request. Desdemona, who tacitly knows this, and must have understood Othello's questions (Othello cannot seriously doubt this) responds with a seemingly irrelevant utterance, an Expressive: "Heaven bless us!" It is a sigh of exasperation, which is a literal expression of how she must feel upon being bombarded with such urgency about a -- piece of cloth, for Heaven's sake. But her exasperation is not completely irrelevant to Othello's requests. Desdemona, rather than paying attention to the actual sentences uttered, reacts to the underlying, implicit desperation. She responds, not so much to what has been said, but what she senses as being Othello's occurrent psychological state: Although the true importance of Othello's desperate urgency eludes her, at least her Background sense of what is happening seems correct: the fact that the whereabouts of this handkerchief, for some odd reason, is
extremely important to her husband.

Othello's next *Directive* "Say you?" has the increased force of a *demand*, interrupting her *Expressive*, and this time, not even the slightest trace of charity can be attributed to him regarding Desdemona's possible problems with comprehension, since he only repeats the *order* but not the actual *questions*. Desdemona's Background disposition changes abruptly: this time she must give an *answer* (instead of just reacting to Othello's inexplicably foul mood), and so she does: "It is not lost" -- a straightforward *statement* to express her commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed. She is sincerely unaware of the fact that the handkerchief is missing, unaware of why this is so important to Othello, and obviously unaware of Othello's specific *Aspect* concerning the handkerchief (i.e., what it would signify to Othello should the handkerchief really be found to be missing).

In utter ignorance of her treading on a potential minefield, Desdemona asks: "but what an if it were?" Why did she have to ask that question right then and there? After all, she came to plead with Othello on Cassio's behalf, and all this talk about the handkerchief was not hers, but Othello's idea. Perhaps she forgot for a second why she came, or perhaps she asks this question under the placating *Aspect*: "All right, let's talk about the handkerchief if you insist"; or under the *Aspect* of genuine curiosity: "I do want to know why this is so important right now." The relevant Background disposition in the former case could be that a good wife humors her husband's follies; in the latter case it could be that clarifying Othello's purpose with the handkerchief may ease the growing tension, or that they cannot go on discussing her actual concern, that is, Cassio's fate, until this issue with the handkerchief is settled.

Othello does not get it. The *Aspect* under which he reacts to Desdemona's *question* is: "The gall of it! She is wasting time, instead of giving me what I want." His
Background, as before, is still focused on the correlation of the handkerchief with fidelity, colored ominously by his growing suspicion that Desdemona has reasons for stalling, instead of obeying him. His verbosity is gone, he can merely bark: "How!" This utterance may count as an Expressive, blurted out spontaneously; it could be taken as a mere unintended, extralinguistic vocal effect of his underlying state of mind.

Now Desdemona is being charitable, "pretending" that perhaps Othello could not hear her clearly, so she announces, dutifully repeating the performative verb (perhaps a little mockingly), used by Othello: "I say, it is not lost." Her Background disposition may be that an extremely clear elocution may help to get one’s point across. Alternatively, her Background disposition could be that childish tantrums are best responded to in an firm, no-nonsense manner.

Othello finally loses his patience (if he ever had any at all) with the question-and-answer period that did not lead anywhere. All this time, his literal requests for information were actually meant by him under the Aspect of yearning for the tangible, visible symbol of his wife’s loyalty to be brought to him. He realizes that his implicit wish has not and could not have been understood by her, and so this time he produces a direct, literal demand with an explicit perlocutionary aim: "Fetch’t, let me see’t." The essential condition of satisfaction of this perlocutionary aim is no less than that the handkerchief be presented to him for his scrutiny. The same utterance also counts as a response to Desdemona’s "I say, it is not lost" immediately preceding it.

As a response to Desdemona’s preceding utterance, Othello’s line may have been produced with the point of an elliptical challenge: "If you say, it is not lost, then you can Fetch’t, and let me see’t" (the Background assumption of the speaker of this type of challenge usually is that he is convinced in advance that the interlocutor cannot comply with the challenge, and expects an explanation as to why not. It is an ingeniously subtle
way to force the other to expose some sort of handicap or admit some guilt). A relevant verbal response to Othello's demand would be acceptance (followed by the appropriate behavior), or refusal. A relevant response to his challenge would be some reassurance as to her capability to comply with the challenge, or an explanation as to why she could not comply with it. Ideally, from Othello's point of view, Desdemona either fetches the handkerchief (and all is well) or confesses the "real" reason for her inability to do so (she gave it to Cassio).

Desdemona, a true match for Othello in terms of subtleness, ingeniously responds at once to both of his intended meanings: "Why, so I can, sir, but I will not now." The first part of her response, "Why, so I can, sir," is a relevant response to his challenge with the force of a reassurance. Since she sincerely believes that the handkerchief must be somewhere in her house, in principle, she is capable of producing it. So much for the challenge. The second part of her response counts as a direct refusal of Othello's demand: "but I will not now." We know that Othello must be interpreting her utterance under the Aspect that it is a maddeningly ambiguous response to his demand-cum-challenge. Given the seriousness of the issue, as Othello sees it, Desdemona, in her own interest, should not toy with him and refuse to comply with his demand, if it is true that, as she says, she can comply with it. But if she lied, then her response counts as -- the first step of a confession. She will not fetch't because she can't. She can't fetch't because Cassio has it. Cassio has it because Desdemona was unfaithful to him (any logician could tell him that there is a step missing here; but he is not a logician). But Othello cannot discern whether or not Desdemona is telling the truth. Once more I must remind the reader that although Othello's present Background disposition may encompass all of the above and consequently affect his behavior, the Background itself functions in a nonconscious, nonrepresentational manner. Although I am compelled to use an
Intentional vocabulary for these characterizations of his Background, we must not forget that these Background features can be thought of only as a set of neural traces and connections that are active on this occasion. We are shamefully ignorant about how the enormous complexity of our mental life becomes realized in the brain.

To return to Desdemona: from her own point of view, the same situation looks completely different, since, as we know, she has no idea about what the real purpose behind all this handkerchief talk is. In fact, "I will not now" may have been meant by her under the Aspect of an indirect attempt to change the subject, by way of producing a literal refusal of Othello's demand. The emphasis, relevant to her, is on "now." She will not now fetch the handkerchief, for now she wants to talk about Cassio. That is why she came here in the first place, and all this talk is just "a trick to put me from my suit," as she murmurs. "Pray you, let Cassio be receiv'd again," she humbly makes her request at last; she let Othello have his way (as is her marital duty to her husband, according to her unemancipated Background), even though that is not what she wanted; she found his obsessing about that piece of cloth rather aggravating, but "when I have a suit / Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed, / It shall be full of poise and difficult weight, / And fearful to be granted" is her own first-person, preferred Background way to go about asking for a favor. She, quite unjustifiedly, projects her characteristically feminine Bacchanalian know-how from the first-person case onto Othello, who, as we know, is "rush and very sudden in choler" and "rude in speech" (Othello takes it for granted that this is an acceptable way to treat his wife, according to his Background). Maybe, if Desdemona were able to shout back at him, equally rudely, she could put a stop to his increasing obsession with the handkerchief. She, however, takes it for granted that her soft, humble, yet persistent request on Cassio's behalf (whose execution "within three days" Othello, unbeknownst to Desdemona, had already ordered), will help her to get her point across.
By now they have stopped taking turns, they have stopped listening, they have stopped communicating by any reasonable standard of communicative behavior. From Othello's point of view, it is Desdemona who, instead of doing as she was told, keeps talking incessantly about his most hated enemy, Cassio. Othello, obsessively and with increasing force repeats the only thing on his mind, "The handkerchief!," as if to drone out her own whimpering, beseeching plea. He muffles her with the ominous word, as he will ultimately suffocate her with his hands.

None of the above is readily discernible from the mere semantic structure of the sentence; uttered. None of the above is readily discernible even from their shared Backgrounds, justifiably attributable to one another. Seemingly, some sort of communication did take place, at least in the first half of the excerpt, between the two interlocutors: after all, Othello asked questions, and Desdemona eventually gave answers. At a more subtle level, even implicit, indirect intentions were more or less successfully conveyed and responded to accordingly. But Othello's increasingly aggressive demand for the handkerchief masks a much deeper, pathetic appeal for certainty; he is torn between his conviction of her guilt (motivated by his Background of frail self-worth, defined only by his association with her; without her love, "Othello's occupation 's gone") and a mad hope that his conviction may still turn out to be false. Desdemona has no clue that every straightforward and nonchalant answer she gives him about the handkerchief is (mis)interpreted by Othello under the Aspect of a purposeful attempt to keep the coveted and at the same time dreaded symbol of certainty out of his reach. At this level, their communication fails, largely due to their mutually incompatible personal Backgrounds, on the basis of which they keep misinterpreting one another's true intentions, by way of unjustified projections from the first-person case.

There is an even more deeply buried Background in Othello's case and it is his
natural affinity with magic. The magic symbol of the alleged betrayal, the handkerchief, becomes a catalyst: as if by magic, Othello received Desdemona's love, because he was in the possession of the handkerchief. The Egyptian charmer's prophecy poisoned his mind: "to lose't or give't away were such perdition / As nothing else could match," and, lo and behold, as if by magic, the handkerchief is lost. It is natural for a person with such a Background to convince himself that, if the handkerchief is gone, the prophecy must have come true. He knows that this must be the case, that prophecies never err, and nothing could ever convince him otherwise. Othello the practiser of witchcraft did not need Iago's intrigue to entrap him in the web of his own jealousy. Had the handkerchief been lost (without Iago's contribution, of which Othello is completely oblivious) as if by magic, Othello would have ended up murdering Desdemona just the same.

Othello, the noble general, however, did learn to doubt the magic prophecies of his youth. This Background motivates his incessant need for questioning, his hope that Desdemona may still be innocent, his maddening ambivalence about her and about himself, about them. This is Othello's Background level that Iago understands and exploits masterfully to further his own interests (Iago is what I would call an expert social perceiver or communicator, his evil purposes notwithstanding). This is Othello's Background level that remains completely alien to poor Desdemona. Desdemona communicates only at a very superficial surface level with him: at the level of their shared Background capacities. It cannot work, for Othello's entire idiosyncratic Background plays a role in motivating his behavior. This applies, of course, to Desdemona as well, and to all of us human communicators. Communication can never bring about a complete understanding of what is on another person's mind. Most of the time we get by, even if our mutual understanding is incomplete. Occasionally, we may get ourselves murdered, as a result of miscommunication.
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