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## *The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy\**

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John Searle has charged R.M. Hare's prescriptivist analysis of the meaning of 'good,' 'ought' and the other evaluative words with committing what he calls the 'speech act fallacy.'<sup>1</sup> This is a fallacy which Searle thinks is committed not only by Hare's analysis, but by any analysis which attributes to a word the function of indicating that a particular speech act is being performed, or that an utterance has a particular il-

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\* The central idea of this paper was suggested to me by, though it was not contained in, a paper by Lloyd Humberstone entitled 'Ingredient Sense and Assertive Content,' which was read to the Semantics Discussion Group in Oxford in Hilary Term of 1976. Although this paper has not been published its main idea, which is a defence of subjective naturalism similar to my defence of prescriptivism, is discussed in the final section of Martin Davies and Lloyd Humberstone, 'Two Notions of Necessity,' *Philosophical Studies*, **38** (1980) 1-30. In developing my own thoughts I have benefitted from correspondence with Lloyd Humberstone and R.M. Hare, and conversation with John Searle and John A. Baker. I have also benefitted from the suggestions of two referees for *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*.

<sup>1</sup> John R. Searle, 'Meaning and Speech Acts,' *Philosophical Review*, **71** (1962) 423-32, and *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1969) 136-41. The same objection is put by P.T. Geach, 'Ascriptivism,' *Philosophical Review*, **69** (1960) 221-5, and 'Assertion,' *Philosophical Review*, **74** (1965) 449-65. Hare's theory is stated in *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1952), and *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1963).

Thomas Hurka

locutionary force. 'There is a condition of adequacy which any analysis of the meaning of a word must meet,' Searle writes, 'and which the speech act analysis fails to meet. Any analysis of the meaning of a word must be consistent with the fact that the same word (or morpheme) can mean the same thing in all the different kinds of sentences in which it can occur.'<sup>2</sup> Hare maintains that the word 'good' is used to indicate the speech act of prescribing. He maintains that one of the principal functions of this word is to indicate that utterances of sentences containing it have prescriptive illocutionary force, and that an analysis of its meaning must make explicit and ineliminable reference to this force-indicating function. But 'good' regularly occurs in sentences utterances of which appear to have no prescriptive illocutionary force. It occurs in questions, like

Is this a good automobile?

in optatives, like

If only this were a good automobile!

and in the antecedents of conditionals, like

If this is a good automobile it will start at twenty degrees below zero.

If utterances of these sentences do not have prescriptive illocutionary force then an analysis which attributes to 'good' the function of indicating that force cannot meet the above-stated condition of adequacy; and if it cannot meet that condition of adequacy, Searle concludes, then it must be mistaken.

Hare has attempted to respond to Searle's charge by distinguishing the concept of illocutionary force from that of subscription.<sup>3</sup> It is one thing for an utterance or part of an utterance to have a certain illocutionary force, he says, and quite another thing for a speaker to subscribe to that force. If a speaker utters the singular evaluative sentence 'This is a good automobile.' with the standard intentions, then his utterance has the illocutionary force of prescribing, and he also subscribes to that force. An analysis of the meaning of 'This is a good automobile.' should

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2 Searle, *Speech Acts*, 137

3 R.M. Hare, 'Meaning and Speech Acts,' *Philosophical Review*, 79 (1970) 3-24

### *The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy*

indicate this by attaching a subscription sign to the prescriptive illocutionary force sign governing the sentence. But if he utters 'this is a good automobile' in the context of asking a question, expressing a wish or stating the antecedent of a conditional, he does not subscribe to its force, and an analysis of the meaning of his utterance should indicate this by leaving the prescriptive force sign governing 'this is a good automobile', a force sign which is itself unchanged, unaccompanied by any subscription sign.

Not everyone has found this response of Hare's persuasive. His distinction between force and subscription, and the use he attempts to make of it, have been criticized in a number of articles,<sup>4</sup> and the frequency with which Searle's original objection is repeated suggests that it is still regarded in many circles as dealing a death-blow to prescriptivism. I do not want to comment here on the adequacy of Hare's distinction. Instead I want to argue that even if we reject this distinction there is another defence of prescriptivism available to us, one which is much simpler than Hare's own and which does not rely on any controversial devices like the subscription sign. This defence concedes to Searle that his objection counts against many speech act analyses but insists that it does not count against the prescriptivist analysis of 'good.' The prescriptivist analysis of 'good' is a more complex speech act analysis than most. While holding that 'good' has as *one* of its functions the indicating of prescriptive illocutionary force it also holds that 'good' has certain other functions, and the fact that it allows these other functions enables it to meet Searle's condition of adequacy in a way that other less complex speech act analyses cannot. To make this point as clearly as possible let me begin by giving a somewhat oversimplified presentation of Hare's analysis, I will add some necessary refinements to it later in the paper.

According to Hare a singular evaluative sentence like 'This is a good automobile.' has prescriptive meaning, that is, an utterance of the sentence has prescriptive illocutionary force. But this is not the only kind of meaning the sentence has. Because of the universalizability of evaluative judgements (that feature which distinguishes evaluative judgements from other prescriptions) the sentence also has descriptive meaning. If I commend a particular automobile as good then I commend it in virtue of certain qualities which it has, qualities which are such that if any other automobile had them it too would be good, and if any automobile does not have them it cannot be good. Let us say that

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4 See e.g., G.J. Warnock, 'Hare on Meaning and Speech Acts,' *Philosophical Review*, **80** (1971) 80-4; and David Zimmerman, 'Force and Sense,' *Mind*, **89** (1980) 214-33.

*Thomas Hurka*

these good-making qualities are X, Y and Z. Then in saying that this particular automobile is good I am really doing two things. I am first of all prescribing generally the choice (and only the choice) of automobiles which are X, Y and Z, and then asserting that this particular automobile is X, Y and Z. The singular evaluative sentence 'This is a good automobile.' which I utter is really equivalent to a concatenation of two sentences, one of them prescriptive and one of them descriptive:

Choose automobiles which are X, Y and Z;  
this automobile is X, Y and Z,

and in uttering it I perform the same two speech acts which I would perform if I uttered these two sentences explicitly. This equivalence can be confirmed in the following way. The two sentences of the concatenation between them entail the singular imperative 'Choose this automobile.' This is as it should be, for it is through the entailment of just such a singular imperative that Hare thinks singular evaluative sentences have the particular action-guiding force they have.

Once we see that prescriptivism treats a singular evaluative sentence like 'This is a good automobile.' as equivalent to a concatenation of two sentences, one prescriptive and one descriptive, it is easy to see how it can account for the occurrence of 'good' in sentences utterances of which have illocutionary forces other than that of prescribing. These non-prescriptive illocutionary forces will apply to the descriptive half of the concatenation while the other half retains its prescriptive force unchanged. Thus the question

Is this a good automobile?

will be analyzed as

Choose automobiles which are X, Y and Z;  
is this automobile X, Y and Z?

the optative

If only this were a good automobile!

as

Choose automobiles which are X, Y and Z;  
if only this automobile were X, Y and Z!

and the conditional

### *The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy*

If this is a good automobile it will start at twenty degrees below zero

as

Choose automobiles which are X, Y and Z;  
if this automobile is X, Y and Z it will start at twenty degrees below zero.

So analyzed this conditional is perfectly capable of playing the role we want it to play in inferences. Consider the following inference, of a kind which has often been thought to pose problems for prescriptivism:

- (1) If this is a good automobile it will start at twenty degrees below zero.
- (2) This is a good automobile.
- (3) Therefore, this automobile will start at twenty degrees below zero.

On our analysis, the premisses of this inference will read:

- (1) Choose automobiles which are X, Y and Z; if this automobile is X, Y and Z it will start at twenty degrees below zero.
- (2) Choose automobiles which are X, Y and Z; this automobile is X, Y and Z.

And from these two premisses, or more precisely from their descriptive components alone, the desired conclusion follows directly.

I can think of only one use of 'good' in a nonprescriptive illocutionary context which this simple scope manoeuvre (for that is what it is) cannot explain. Let us imagine that we are at an automobile dealer's with a friend. We do not know what his standards of goodness for automobiles are but want to find out, so we take him around the lot and ask him of every automobile there, 'Is this a good automobile?' From his answers to these questions we then construct a theory of what his standards of goodness for automobiles are. Now in this situation our questions cannot be analyzed as concatenations of prescriptive and descriptive utterances, for in them we are not doing any prescribing; we are not employing any standards of our own, but only seeking to elicit our friend's standards from him. But although these questions cannot be explained by our analysis they are not counterexamples to it either, for

Thomas Hurka

in them 'good' is quite clearly being used in what Hare has called an 'inverted commas' sense. We are not asking our friend whether the automobiles are good *tout court*, but rather whether they are what he would call 'good'; and if we find that what he would call 'good' is not what we would call 'good', we feel no compunction about using our own standards to produce evaluations which contradict his.

It may be objected that the prescriptivist analysis, or at least my version of the prescriptivist analysis, fails to meet another condition of adequacy, namely that semantic units be treated as semantic units.<sup>5</sup> In the conditional

If this is a good automobile it will start at twenty degrees below zero

the phrase 'this is a good automobile' appears as a unit, all inside the conditional clause. But the analysis I have given breaks up this unity, placing one half of 'this is a good automobile' inside the conditional clause, and the other half outside it. How, it might be asked, can this be justified?

While it is true that semantic units must be treated as semantic units, what counts as a semantic unit does not depend on surface structure alone; it also depends, and depends principally, on what is treated as a unit in the best semantic theory we can devise. Surface structure is an important indicator of semantic structure, but it is only an indicator, and it can be ignored if there are good reasons for thinking it is misleading. In the sentence 'It is not the case that the present king of France is bald,' 'the present king of France is bald' appears as a unit, all inside the scope of the negation operator. But Russell argued that this appearance was misleading. If we were not to saddle the affirmative sentence 'The present king of France is bald.' with metaphysical implications which Russell thought it plainly did not have we would have to analyze it as a conjunction,

There is one and only one present king of France, and he is bald.

But then its negation could contain either a negation operator applied to the whole conjunction, or a negation operator applied only to its second conjunct, as in

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<sup>5</sup> This condition of adequacy was suggested to me by John Searle.

### *The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy*

There is one and only one present king of France, and it is not the case that he is bald.

Russell held that the second reading was in fact more faithful to the meaning of 'It is not the case that the present king of France is bald' as it is normally used in English, and he therefore held that the surface structure of that sentence is misleading, for it treats 'the present king of France is bald' as a unit when semantically it is not.

A similar splitting of 'this is a good automobile' will be justified if there are equally weighty reasons for ignoring its surface structure. I believe that there are such reasons. They have to do with the fact from which all the main arguments for prescriptivism take their start, namely the fact that there is a logical tie between evaluation and action. A speaker who utters a sentence containing 'good,' 'ought' or one of the other evaluative words commits himself not only to having a certain belief (as he would do if he uttered a descriptive sentence) but also to performing a certain action, or at least to having formed the disposition to perform that action should certain conditions be satisfied (in the case of non-moral evaluations like those of automobiles, which support only hypothetical imperatives, these conditions will include his having a certain desire and being unwilling to abandon it). And a hearer who wants to assent to an utterance of one of these sentences must not only form a certain belief (as in the case of descriptive utterances) but also perform a certain action, or at least form the disposition to perform that action should certain conditions be satisfied (once again in the case of non-moral evaluations these conditions will include his having a certain desire and being unwilling to abandon it). This logical tie between evaluation and action is most evident in the case of singular evaluative sentences like 'This is a good automobile.' A person who utters this sentence or assents verbally to its utterance by another commits himself to choosing the automobile in question, or at least to choosing automobiles like it whenever the relevant conditions are satisfied. If he does not choose an automobile like it when these conditions are satisfied an explanation of his behaviour is always called for. Was he being insincere in his utterance? Did he not understand the meaning of his utterance? Or has he changed his mind about the goodness of the automobile he was commending since making it? Hare claims that descriptivist analyses of 'good' cannot account for the logical tie between singular evaluative sentences and action and that prescriptivism can. By building prescriptive illocutionary force, which is by definition action-guiding force,<sup>6</sup> into the meaning of sentences like 'This is a good

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6 I think an illuminating account of illocutionary forces can be developed using the materials first employed by H.P. Grice in 'Meaning,' *Philosophical Review*,

Thomas Hurka

automobile.' Prescriptivism gives a simple explanation of their relation to action. This explanation is, moreover, one which Searle himself seems to find convincing. He agrees that calling something good is characteristically commending it, and allows that this might well form the starting-point of an analysis of 'good.'<sup>7</sup> Searle does not raise any objections to the prescriptivist analysis of 'This is a good automobile.' as such, but only to the implications which this analysis has for the analysis of other sentences containing 'good.' But these implications are only worrying if we have to treat 'this is a good automobile' as a semantic unit. If the prescriptivist analysis of 'This is a good automobile.' is such a convincing one, and we can reconcile this analysis with Searle's condition of adequacy by splitting the prescriptive and descriptive components of 'this is a good automobile' whenever it occurs in non-prescriptive illocutionary contexts, then we already have a good reason for treating 'this is a good automobile' as other than a semantic unit.

This is not, however, the only or even the most important reason we have for treating 'this is a good automobile' as other than a semantic unit. A splitting of the prescriptive and descriptive components of this phrase is also required if prescriptivism is to give an adequate analysis of the conditional, optative and other non-declarative sentences in which it occurs. The logical tie between these non-declarative sentences and action is not as simple or obvious as the tie between 'This is a good

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66 (1957) 377-88. A Gricean account of illocutionary forces will hold (roughly) that a speaker performs an utterance with a given illocutionary force if and only if he performs it (i) intending to bring about a certain response in his audience; (ii) intending to bring about this response by getting his audience to recognize a certain reason for producing it; and (iii) intending his audience to recognize his intentions (i) and (ii) (in some few cases a speaker will intend his audience to take as its reason for producing the response the fact that he has manifested the intentions [i] and [ii]; but I think, contra Grice, that these cases are fairly infrequent). The illocutionary forces so analyzed will fall into two classes, according as the response intended in (i) is a belief (in which case the illocutionary force is broadly speaking assertive) or an action (in which case it is prescriptive). If we then say that a hearer assents to a speaker's utterance whenever he produces the response the speaker intends for the reason the speaker intends, we can explain why a hearer's assent to an utterance with prescriptive illocutionary force always consists (at least in part) in his performing a certain action. And if we say that some illocutionary forces are such that a speaker who performs an utterance with one of these forces commits himself to producing (or having produced) the intended response himself – something that is certainly true of assertions – then we can explain why a speaker who utters a sentence containing 'good' commits himself to performing certain actions. For a sophisticated account of illocutionary forces along the lines I have suggested see Stephen Schiffer, *Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1972).

7 Searle, *Speech Acts*, 139



### *The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy*

automobile.' and action but it still exists, and prescriptivism can only extend its explanation of the tie to these non-declarative sentences if it recognizes that 'this is a good automobile' is not a semantic unit. Consider for instance the conditional 'If this is a good automobile it will start at twenty degrees below zero.' A person who utters this sentence or assents verbally to its utterance by another does not commit himself to anything so specific as choosing this automobile (when the relevant conditions are satisfied). But he does commit himself to refraining from choosing this automobile if it turns out not to start at twenty degrees below zero (and the relevant conditions are satisfied). Imagine that a person utters this sentence, discovers shortly after that the automobile in question will not start at twenty degrees below zero, and then proceeds to buy the automobile even though all the relevant conditions (including his having the relevant desires) are satisfied. Surely some explanation of his behaviour is called for. Was he being insincere in his utterance? Did he not understand the meaning of his utterance? Or has he changed his mind about the good-making qualities of automobiles since making it? Prescriptivism can explain the logical tie between this conditional and action if it splits the prescriptive and descriptive components of the meaning of its antecedent. This will enable it to say that, despite the initial appearances Searle appeals to, utterances of the conditional sentence do in fact have prescriptive illocutionary force (as well as assertive illocutionary force). The concatenation

Choose automobiles which are X, Y and Z;  
if this automobile is X, Y and Z it will start at twenty degrees below zero

does not entail any simple singular imperative like 'Choose this automobile.' But its prescriptive component does entail two conditional singular imperatives:

If this automobile is X, Y, and Z choose this automobile

and

If this automobile is not X, Y and Z do not choose this automobile.

It is the second of these singular imperatives which prescriptivism can use to explain the tie between 'If this is a good automobile it will start at twenty degrees below zero.' and action. If the automobile in question does not start at twenty degrees below zero then by modus tollens it is not X, Y and Z; and if it is not X, Y and Z then the second

*Thomas Hurka*

singular imperative tells us not to choose it. Now consider the optative 'If only this were a good automobile!' A speaker who utters this sentence states (or at least implies) that the automobile in question is not a good one, and he thereby commits himself to refraining from choosing it. If immediately after uttering the optative sentence he proceeds to buy the automobile even though all the relevant conditions are satisfied an explanation of his behaviour will surely be called for. Prescriptivism can once again explain the tie between 'If only this were a good automobile!' and action if it separates the prescriptive and descriptive components of its meaning. The prescriptive component will once again entail the singular imperative 'If this automobile is not X, Y and Z do not choose this automobile', and it will once again follow from the descriptive component that the automobile is not X, Y and Z.

I have argued, then, that there is a logical tie between evaluation and action, and that if the prescriptivist explanation of this tie is to be extended to conditionals, optatives and other non-declarative sentences containing 'good' we will have to recognize that 'this is a good automobile' is not a semantic unit. But may there not be other equally good explanations of the tie which do not require us to deny that 'this is a good automobile' is a semantic unit? May there not, for instance, be explanations which do not talk about illocutionary forces at all, but appeal only to facts about the force-independent meaning of sentences containing 'good,' and facts about the context(s) of utterance of these sentences, including facts about the desires, attitudes and so on of their speakers and hearers? And may these other explanations, which allow us to treat 'this is a good automobile' as a semantic unit, not be just as good as the prescriptivist explanation? These questions are difficult to answer in the absence of a detailed presentation of one of these alternative explanations, and in any case they threaten to take us beyond the scope of this paper, which is concerned less to support the prescriptivist analysis of 'good' against all possible rivals than it is to show that a certain familiar objection to this analysis does not rule it out from the start. Nevertheless I will try to make a few comments to show why I think it likely that even if the prescriptivist explanation does not turn out to be the only possible explanation of the tie between evaluation and action, it will turn out to be the best possible explanation. The prescriptivist explanation is in the first place a very simple explanation. By building action-guiding force into the meaning of sentences containing 'good' it gives the simplest possible explanation of their tie with action. An explanation which appeals to factors external to the meaning of these sentences, factors such as speaker-hearer attitudes, is likely to be much more complex than the prescriptivist explanation, and as a result it is likely to be, at least for those of us who value simplicity in explanations, much less satisfying than the prescriptivist explanation as well. In the se-

### *The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy*

cond place, the prescriptivist explanation is able to account for the universality of the connection between evaluation and action in a way that other explanations are likely not to be able to. If action-guiding force is part of the meaning of sentences containing 'good,' then the tie will be present whenever these sentences are uttered with the standard intentions. But if the tie depends on the presence of such contingent factors as speaker-hearer attitudes it will only be present when those attitudes are present, and it will be absent when they are not. This may not be of much importance in the case of non-moral evaluations, for even on the prescriptivist analysis these evaluations only prescribe specific actions for persons who have certain desires and are unwilling to abandon them.<sup>8</sup> But it is of tremendous importance in the case of moral evaluations. Those of us who believe that moral evaluations support categorical imperatives, that is, imperatives which guide the actions of moral agents irrespective of any desires which they may or may not have, will hardly want to allow the action-guiding force of these evaluations to depend on the contingent presence of any desires or attitudes in their speakers and hearers. And finally, the prescriptivist explanation is able to account for the intimacy of the tie between evaluation and action in a way that other explanations are likely not to be able to. In saying that there is a logical tie between evaluative sentences and action I have not been saying merely that people who assent to utterances of these sentences usually or even always perform certain actions. I have been making the stronger claim that their assent to these utterances *consists* (in part) in their performing certain actions, that their performing these actions is a *criterion* of their sincere assent to the utterances. There are many paradigmatically descriptive sentences, for example 'The food you are about to eat is poisoned,' which are such that persons who assent to utterances of them usually perform certain actions (in this case refraining from eating the food). But their performing these actions is not itself part of their assent to the utterances. Their assent to these descriptive utterances consists in their forming certain beliefs (in this case the belief that the food is poisoned) and it is a purely contingent matter that, given people's normal desires and attitudes, this assent is usually or even

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8 It may, however, still be of some importance. If the prescriptivist analysis is combined with the account of hypothetical imperatives which I defend below it can allow that a person who responds to the hypothetical imperative 'If you desire that *p* do *x*,' by abandoning his desire that *p* is assenting to the hypothetical imperative, but I do not see how any other analysis can allow this. I think that there are in fact good reasons (too complex to go into here) for allowing that abandoning a desire is (one way of) assenting to a non-moral evaluation; and these are therefore also reasons for preferring the prescriptivist analysis of even non-moral uses of 'good' to any other analysis.

*Thomas Hurka*

always followed by the performance of certain actions. If the tie between evaluative sentences and action is more intimate than this – if the performing of certain actions is actually a necessary part of a hearer's assent to an utterance of one of these sentences – then an explanation of this tie cannot appeal only to the kinds of factors which explain why assent to descriptive utterances is sometimes followed by action. An explanation in terms of speaker-hearer attitudes, however, seems likely to appeal to just these kinds of factors.

As I said at the outset, the analysis of 'This is a good automobile.' which we have used to this point has been somewhat oversimplified. Complications have now to be introduced to resolve three difficulties which our current analysis conceals.

The first difficulty concerns the presence in the prescriptive half of our concatenation of three concealed conditionals. The first is present because 'This is a good automobile.' is a non-moral evaluation, and supports only hypothetical imperatives. Any representation of its imperatival content, then, has to be preceded by 'If you desire that  $p$ , ...', for some value of  $p$ . The other two conditionals are concealed in the imperative 'Choose automobiles which are  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ .' Fully analyzed this imperative is equivalent to

For all  $x$  (if  $x$  is an automobile and  $x$  is  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$  choose  $x$ ; and if  $x$  is an automobile and  $x$  is not  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$  do not choose  $x$ ).

Now it might be thought that the presence of these conditionals in our analysis just resurrects Searle's original objection, for was it not a central claim of that objection that prescriptivism cannot account for occurrence of 'good' inside conditionals? The objection is not resurrected, for the conditionals we are now considering have imperatival consequents rather than imperatival antecedents, and a conditional with an imperatival consequent does not present any special problems. There are in fact two ways in which it can be analyzed. One is as a command to make a material conditional true, that is, as a command of the form

Make it the case that ( $p \rightarrow q$ ).

The other is as a conditional imperative, that is, as an imperative which is only in force when a certain condition is satisfied. Conditional imperatives in this second sense are like conditional speech acts of other kinds, such as conditional assertions and conditional pronouncements. If a specified condition is satisfied, then it is just as if a full-fledged unconditional speech act had been performed, but if the condition is not satisfied it is as if nothing had been said.

Unfortunately the three conditionals concealed in our analysis re-

## The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy

quire different treatments. The hypothetical imperative has to be treated as a command to make a material conditional true, for otherwise the whole distinction between moral and non-moral evaluations would collapse. If the consequents of hypothetical imperatives could be detached whenever agents simply had the desires mentioned in their antecedents then these detached imperatives would have exactly the same status as categorical imperatives, and would in fact be perfectly indistinguishable from them. The analysis in terms of a command to make a material conditional true saves the moral/non-moral distinction for it does not allow this kind of detachment. The command is really equivalent to

Make it the case that (either you don't desire that  $p$  or you do  $x$ ),

and agents can assent to it either by doing  $x$ , or by abandoning the desire that  $p$  (if in fact they have it). There are only two circumstances in which a command to make a material conditional true entails a command to make its consequent true. The first is when it is conjoined with a command to make its antecedent true; the second is when it is conjoined with a premiss stating that its antecedent is not only true but unalterably true. The simple truth of the antecedent is not sufficient here, for if it is still in the power of an agent to change the antecedent from true to false it is still in his power to assent to the command without making its consequent true. If we can suppose, as I think there is every reason to believe we can, that a hypothetical imperative always assumes that its antecedent can never be unalterably true – assumes, that is, that an agent who has the desire mentioned in its antecedent can always abandon it if he chooses to – then the consequent of one of these imperatives will never be detachable without the addition of categorical imperative premisses, and the moral/non-moral distinction will remain intact.<sup>9</sup>

This analysis of the hypothetical imperative as a command to make a material conditional true is, it is important to realize, significantly different from the one which Hare himself has proposed.<sup>10</sup> Hare too realizes that we cannot allow the consequents of hypothetical imperatives to be detached whenever agents simply have certain desires.

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9 My account of hypothetical imperatives is drawn from P.S. Greenspan, 'Conditional Oughts and Hypothetical Imperatives,' *Journal of Philosophy*, 72 (1975) 259-76.

10 See Hare, *The Language of Morals*, 34f.; and 'Wanting: Some Pitfalls,' reprinted in his *Practical Inferences* (London: Macmillan 1971) 44-58.

*Thomas Hurka*

But he suggests a different way of ensuring this. He analyzes the hypothetical imperative as a conditional containing imperatives in both its antecedent and its consequent, where the occurrence of an imperative in the antecedent of a conditional involves just the kind of construction which Searle thinks is illegitimate, and which Hare can only allow if he introduces his subscription sign. I think Hare's conviction that we cannot give a satisfactory analysis of the hypothetical imperative without allowing imperatives to occur in the antecedents of conditionals is responsible in very large measure for his refusal to give the simple answer to Searle's objection which I have suggested, and for his introduction of the whole complex apparatus of the subscription sign. But if we can avoid the unwanted result that the consequents of hypothetical imperatives are detachable for agents who simply have certain desires while still treating the antecedents of these conditionals descriptively, then no such drastic moves will be required.

The other two conditionals in our analysis, those present in

For all  $x$  (if  $x$  is an automobile and  $x$  is  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$  choose  $x$ ; and if  $x$  is an automobile and  $x$  is not  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$  do not choose  $x$ ),

cannot be analyzed as commands to make material conditionals true, for if they were a hearer could assent to 'Choose automobiles which are  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ ' by destroying all the automobiles in the world, or by wrecking them enough that they were no longer  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ . These conditionals have to be analyzed as conditional imperatives, and combined with the hypothetical imperative to yield the following analysis of 'This is a good automobile.'

For all  $x$  [if  $x$  is an automobile and  $x$  is  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ , then make it the case that (either you don't desire that  $p$  or you choose  $x$ ); and if  $x$  is an automobile and  $x$  is not  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ , then make the case that (either you don't desire that  $p$  or you don't choose  $x$ )]; *this automobile is  $X$ ,  $Y$  and  $Z$ .*

Despite the complexity of this analysis it still entails a singular imperative. The two halves of the concatenation together entail

Make it the case that (either you don't desire that  $p$  or you choose this automobile),

and while this imperative is not equivalent to 'Choose this automobile', and does not entail it without the addition of further imperative premisses, it often has the same implications for action. An agent who wants to assent to the imperative but is unwilling to abandon his desire that  $p$  can only do so by choosing this automobile.

### *The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy*

The second difficulty concerns the fact that our analysis explicitly mentions a set of standards, namely X, Y and Z. This is not something which evaluations normally do. As we have seen we can understand a speaker's evaluation perfectly and not have any idea what his standards of goodness are. This difficulty has been compounded by our recognition that non-moral evaluations support only hypothetical imperatives. Our analysis now mentions a specific desire, namely the desire that *p*, where once again non-moral evaluations never make explicit mention of any desires.

The simplest way of resolving this difficulty is by replacing our reference to a specific set of standards and a specific desire with existential quantifiers over standards and desires. Something like this is suggested by Hare in the last chapter of *The Language of Morals*, and it would give us the following analysis of 'This is a good automobile.':

There exists a set of properties X, Y and Z, and a proposition *p*, such that {for all x [if x is an automobile and x is X, Y and Z, then make it the case that (either you don't desire that *p* or you choose x); and if x is an automobile and x is not X, Y and Z, then make it the case that (either you don't desire that *p* or you don't choose x)]; this automobile is X, Y and Z}.

But although the introduction of existential quantifiers certainly resolves this difficulty I do not find it entirely satisfactory. In the first place it makes speakers out to be curiously coy. *A speaker who makes an evaluative utterance usually has a fairly specific set of standards in mind, and if he does, would we not expect him to commit himself to these standards in his utterance, rather than hiding them behind an existential quantifier? In the second place, the analysis fails to account for some logical relations which we would normally expect to hold between different evaluative utterances. If a speaker says of an automobile that it is a good one, and then says an hour later that it is not a good one, we would normally (that is, in the absence of any announced change in his standards of goodness) take him to have contradicted himself not only evaluatively but also descriptively, and to have denied in his second utterance that the automobile has certain (descriptive) qualities which he affirmed it to have in his first. But the proposed analysis cannot account for this contradiction. If his two utterances contain only existential quantifiers over standards, then there is no guarantee that the standards employed in them are the same, and no possibility that there is the right kind of logical contradiction between them.*

I think we can give a better resolution of this second difficulty if we recognize that, even if speakers who make evaluative utterances always use specific standards and specific desires, these standards and desires

Thomas Hurka

need not be identified in a purely *semantic* analysis; we may always have to introduce *pragmatic* considerations before they can be identified precisely. This incompleteness of semantic analysis is a familiar enough phenomenon. Standard semantic theory analyzes English sentences containing 'some' and 'all' in terms of sentences containing predicate logic quantifiers, where the truth-value of one of these predicate logic sentences cannot be assessed unless we know the domain of its individual variables. But English speakers never state the domain of their variables explicitly, and hearers who want to understand their remarks must always identify these domains from clues in the context of utterance. This does not usually present problems. When the rock singer asks his screaming audience 'Is everybody happy?', no one thinks his question requires a negative answer because there are people starving in the Third World; his domain is clearly restricted to the people in the auditorium. The standard analysis of an English sentence containing 'some' or 'all,' then, falls into two parts: a semantic part, which gives the truth-conditions of the sentence relative to a yet-unspecified domain of discourse, and a pragmatic part, which associates with each utterance of the sentence an intended domain of discourse, and then explains how hearers can sometimes identify that domain from clues in the context of utterance.<sup>11</sup>

A similar division of labour is appropriate for analyzing evaluative utterances. A semantic analysis of the content of one of these utterances will use specific standards of goodness, and use specific desires, but it will not indicate precisely what they are. The identification of these standards and desires will be the task of pragmatics, which will associate with every speaker and context of utterance an intended set of standards and an intended hypothesized desire, and then explain how hearers can sometimes identify those standards and desires from clues in the context of utterance. The best way to indicate the incompleteness of the semantic analysis is to formulate it using free variables over standards and desires (such as 'X, Y and Z' and 'that p'), and then to say that the values of these variables will be given in a pragmatic supplement to the analysis.

The final difficulty concerns the universal quantifier we have used in analyzing the prescriptive half of our concatenation. As it now stands our analysis prescribes not just the purchase of one automobile which is X, Y and Z but the purchase of *all* automobiles which are X, Y and Z. This

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11 For a general discussion of these issues, see Robert C. Stalnaker, 'Pragmatics,' in Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, eds., *Semantics of Natural Language* (Dordrecht: Reidel 1972) 380-97.



## The Speech Act Fallacy Fallacy

is a crazy policy, and it is certainly not one prescribed by 'This is a good automobile.'

I can think of two ways of resolving this difficulty. The first is by being careful in our selection of the hypothesized desire that *p*, in particular, by always having the pragmatic supplement to our analysis select a desire which will normally disappear when the imperative has been acted on once. The desire to buy an automobile will serve this purpose. If the entailed singular imperative is

Make it the case that (either you don't want to buy an automobile or you choose this one),

then an agent who buys one automobile will not normally be required to buy any more. The specified desire will have disappeared in his case, and the singular imperative will be satisfied no matter what he does. The second way of resolving this difficulty is by making the application of the imperative conditional on an agent's being in a choosing situation, that is, by prefacing our analysis of 'This is a good automobile' with 'If you are choosing an automobile,...'. This is in fact what Hare does in the last chapter of *The Language of Morals*. He there analyzes 'good' in terms of 'better than,' and gives the following analysis of 'A is a better X than B.':

If one is choosing an X, then, if one chooses B, one ought to choose A.<sup>12</sup>

I myself find this analysis of 'good' in terms of 'better than' an attractive one, but a full discussion of it lies outside the scope of this paper.

The complications I have introduced have all been necessary, I think, if my answer to Searle's objection is not to spawn a host of other objections to Hare's prescriptivist analysis of 'good.' But they have also been unfortunate, for they may have obscured what was in the beginning a very simple point. Let me restate this point. Searle has charged that the prescriptivist analysis of 'good' cannot account for the occurrence of 'good' in non-prescriptive illocutionary contexts, such as questions, optatives and the antecedents of conditionals. But if that analysis assigns a sentence containing 'good' two types of meaning, prescriptive meaning and descriptive meaning, it can account for these occurrences easily. A sentence containing 'good' will then be equivalent to a concatenation of two sentences, one of them prescriptive and one of them descriptive, and the prescriptivist analysis can apply any relevant non-prescriptive il-

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12 Hare, *The Language of Morals*, 184

*Thomas Hurka*

locutionary forces to the descriptive half of this concatenation while the other half retains its prescriptive force unchanged. Searle has told us to choose only analyses which meet a certain condition of adequacy; does the prescriptivist analysis not meet this condition of adequacy?

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