Indirect Assertions[*]

Manuel García-Carpintero
LOGOS-Departament de Filosofia
Universitat de Barcelona
e-mail: m.garciacarpintero@ub.edu

Abstract

Imagination and Convention by Ernie Lepore and Matthew Stone is a sustained attack on a standard piece of contemporary philosophical lore, Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicatures, and on indirect meanings in general. Although I agree with quite a lot of what they say, and with some important aspects of their theoretical stance, here I will respond to some of their criticism. I'll assume a characterization of implicatures as theory-neutral as possible, on which implicatures are a sort of indirectly conveyed meanings, illustrated by some traditional examples. Then I will discuss the claim that one can make an assertion indirectly, through a mechanism essentially like the one envisaged by Grice in his account of implicatures. This is something that not just L&S have argued against, but other writers as well, for more or less related reasons. Since it will be clear that assertions, the way I will characterize them, "convey information in the usual sense" and provide "information in the semantic sense of publicly accessible content that supports inquiry", I will be thereby arguing for a claim clearly at odds with some of those made by L&S.

Keywords: assertion; implicature; semantics/pragmatics; testimony.

Introduction

Imagination and Convention by Ernie Lepore and Matthew Stone (L&S henceforth) joins another recent book (whose first author is also a regular co-author of Lepore's), Cappelen & Dever (2013) in taking aim at a good candidate for an instance of philosophical progress and agreement, in the face of scepticism that such things exist. The latter work questions a view which Lewis (1979) and Perry (1979) argued for, and which most contemporary philosophers, linguists, and other cognitive scientists have since adopted: to wit, that there is a distinctive category of thoughts (first-personal or *de se* thoughts) whose rationalizing features cannot be accounted for under natural assumptions – i.e., that thoughts have absolute truth-conditions, and are shareable by different thinkers (García-Carpintero 2017). L&S attack in their turn another standard piece of contemporary philosophical lore, embraced by a similarly wide constituency – Grice's (1975) category of conversational implicatures: "There are no special meanings, over and above the meanings of our utterances, that interlocutors infer by calculation from a Cooperative Principle ... meaning is a matter of conventions, and listeners normally recover the meanings of utterances by recognizing the conventions involved, not by reasoning about the speaker in any deeper sense" (L&S,199).

Both the Perry-Lewis and the Gricean proposals have been disputed; both skeptical works have important precedents, Davis (1998) being a good one for L&S's claims – although Davis doesn't question the category itself, just Grice's explanation of it, offering an alternative one. But perhaps because the new skeptics present their objections in a particularly sharp form, or because the time is ripe for these reappraisals, they have managed to wake more believers from their dogmatic slumber, leading them (us) to try and take up their challenges. This paper is one more attempt, adding to replies like Bezuidenhout (2016), Davis (forthcoming), Horn (2016) or Szabó (2016).

I should say in advance that there is much that I find congenial in L&S's work. Like them, I have questioned the reductionist ambitions of Grice's program. My main reasons are different, though, even if some of them are related in ways that I'll indicate. In the first place, I agree with Chomskians that the evidence from current linguistics and cognitive science strongly suggests that the compositional structure of natural languages has nothing to do with intentions and rationality, but is grounded on specific features of our mind/brain (García-Carpintero 2001, 2012). In the second place, I agree with the Austin-Searle tradition that fundamental speech acts are irreducibly normative, as I'll explain presently. Both points are compatible with, and the second strongly suggests, the idea that conventions have the crucial role in the expression of meaning in natural language that L&S insist upon, in a way that cannot be adequately captured along the lines that Grice envisaged (García-Carpintero 2012).

Here, however, I want to take issue with L&S's (2015, part III) criticisms of Grice's theory of conversational implicatures, a piece of his many contributions to philosophy that (like the Perry-Lewis "*de se* effect", cf. García-Carpintero 2017) is in my view here to stay. It is in fact not very clear what it is exactly that L&S are claiming in this respect, among other things because they tend to hedge their contentions in questionable ways. Thus, for instance, in their discussion of a particular case of alleged implicatures, metaphors (based on previous work, L&S (2010)), the reader finds claims like these (my emphasis): "[a metaphorical utterance] can be … worthwhile and effective … simply by prompting the hearer to organize his thinking … in the dynamic sense we have been exploring, which is *not necessarily tied to* content" (168); "metaphors can shape our responses and guide our thinking … without conveying information *in the usual sense*" (168-9); "there's surprising little evidence to suggest that metaphor EVER contributes information – *if we understand information in the semantic sense that we have emphasized … of publicly accessible content that supports inquiry*" (170). We find the same hurdle in more general claims: "we have no use for a

category of conversational implicatures, *as traditionally and currently understood*"(6) "the category of conversational implicatures *does no theoretical work*" (L&S, 83). While one might well feel entitled to put aside the hedges and assume that what they really mean are the suggested (indeed, implicatured) iconoclastic claims, I'll try instead to circumvent them.

I'll proceed as follows. I'll provide a characterization of implicatures as theory-neutral as possible; on the proposal (similar to Davis's (2014, 2016)), implicatures are a sort of indirectly conveyed meanings, as *prima facie* illustrated by some traditional examples. This allows us to distinguish the weaker claim that implicatures *as characterized by Grice's theory* do not exist from the much stronger one that implicatures in the more neutral sense do not exist either. It seems clear that L&S mean to argue for the first, but in the quotations above they also seem to intend the second – as a sort of guarded implicature.

With this distinction in mind, I will discuss a claim that allows us to sidestep the hedges. The claim is that one can make an assertion indirectly (in the sense to be explained), and in fact through a mechanism essentially like the one envisaged by Grice in his account of implicatures. This is something that not just L&S, but other writers, for more or less related reasons, have argued against; I'll consider arguments by Davis (1999), Fricker (2012), Green (2015) and Soames (2008), in addition to those by L&S (2010, 2015). Given that assertions, the way I will characterize them, "convey information in the usual sense" and provide "information in the semantic sense of publicly accessible content that supports inquiry", my main claim here will be manifestly at odds with L&S's, whether understood relative to the weaker or the stronger notion of implicature.

My argument requires an account of assertion compatible with indirect ones. I'll outline it in the first section, and I will also discuss there some issues about the relation between assertion and convention. They will be important afterwards to explain how, in spite of my agreement with L&S about the crucial role of conventions in communication, Gricean

communicative intentions are in my view still needed in a full account. In the third section, I'll introduce the neutral notion of implicature, and I'll reject arguments by Green (2015) based on the distinction between *lying* and *misleading* for the claim I'll be opposing, that assertions cannot be made indirectly. In the final section, I'll discuss arguments by Fricker (2012) to the same effect. I'll proceed in this way because, while the arguments by L&S (2010, 2015) appear to rely on similar considerations, those I'll be discussing are more specific and more fully elaborated, and I feel more confident engaging with them.

1. Assertion and Convention

Stalnaker (2014, 36-7) contrasts two different ways of thinking about speech acts. Austin (1962) suggests thinking of them as social practices constituted by social norms, usually established and maintained by conventions; Grice (1957) takes them instead to be definable in natural, psychological terms, appealing to a peculiar kind of reflexive intention. As a result of Strawson's (1964) forceful criticism of Austin's (1962) social account of speech acts, and in spite of the work of proponents of such accounts like Searle (1969) and Alston (2000), until recently the Gricean psychological account advocated by Strawson has been the default assumption in contemporary philosophy; Stalnaker's own work is a good case in point. This situation has been changing in the past years, in part through the impact of Williamson's (1996/2000) account of assertion. I'll first compare a paradigm Gricean account of such a speech act – the influential one to be found in Bach & Harnish (1979, 42) – with Williamson's account. 'R-intending' here is to be explicated in terms of Gricean *communicative intentions* (*op. cit.*, 15):

(GA) To assert *p* is to make an utterance thereby R-intending the hearer to take it as a reason to think that the speaker believes *p* and intends the hearer to believe it.

Bach & Harnish's GA is a *descriptive* account, not a *normative* one: unlike normative accounts like those presented below, by itself it does not mention norms, but only certain psychological states of speakers and their intended audiences.[1] As Hindriks (2007) notes, although it is indeed a feature of our assertoric practices that we criticize performances that violate rules like those mentioned in the normative accounts below – for instance those that are *false* – these facts about our practices of appraising assertions are insufficient to justify normative accounts. For we also evaluate assertions – say, as witty, polite or well-phrased – relative to merely *regulative* norms, norms that regulate, relative to certain purposes, acts in themselves not *constituted* by such rules. All norms we apply to assertion are merely regulative of a constitutively non-normative practice defined by GA. The regulative norms in question could be derived from an ultimately *moral* sincerity rule such as SR:

(SR) In situations of normal trust, one ought to be sincere.

Thus, for instance, the appraisal of assertions relative to a truth rule could be explained as merely regulative, on the assumption that GA characterizes their nature, as derived from SR given the further assumption that the speaker's belief that his assertion is supposed to give the audience reasons to ascribe to him is itself regulated by a truth rule.

In contrast with descriptive accounts such as GA, Williamson claims that the following norm or rule (the *knowledge rule*) is constitutive of assertion, and individuates it:

(KR) One must ((assert *p*) only if one knows *p*).

In the course of the debate that this proposal has generated, other writers have accepted the view that assertion is defined by constitutive rules, but have proposed alternative norms; thus,

Weiner (2005) proposes a *truth* rule, (TR), Lackey (2007) a *reasonableness* rule, (RBR), and I myself (2004, forthcoming; cf. Pelling 2013) a *knowledge provision* rule, (KPR):

(TR)   One must ((assert *p*) only if *p*).

(RBR) One must ((assert *p*) only if it is reasonable for one to believe *p*).

(KPR) One must ((assert *p*) only if one's audience gets thereby to be in a position to know *p*).

The obligations these rules impose are *sui generis*, like those constitutive of games, the model on which Williamson bases his account: they do not have their source in norms of morality, rationality, prudence or etiquette. They are not *all things considered*, but *pro tanto*; in any particular case, they can be overruled by stronger obligations imposed by other norms. They are intended to characterize what is *essential* or *constitutive* of *assertion* (and not, as it may seem at first glance, of *correct assertion*). The view is that assertion is an act essentially constituted by its being subject to the relevant norm. On Williamson's view, assertion is the unique representational act such that, in performing it, one is committed to knowing the represented proposition; i.e., the propositional act such that, if one performs it without knowing the intended proposition, one is thereby contravening an obligation. There are additional features or rules contributing to a full characterization of assertion, as in Searle's (1969) well-known account or in Alston's (2000) elaboration, i.e., "sincerity" or "preparatory" conditions. The rules are intended to characterize what an act must "count as" for it to be an assertion, i.e., what Searle describes as its "essential rule".

It is common ground among participants in these debates that assertion is what is done by default (i.e., unless conditions in an open-ended list apply, such as those creating irony, fiction, or the presence of canceling parenthetical remarks such as 'I conjecture' – which allows a conjecture to be made by the utterance of a declarative sentence, etc.) by uttering declarative sentences: "In natural language, the default use of declarative sentences is to make

assertions", Williamson (*op. cit.*, 258). This gives us an independent specification of the phenomenon that we aim to characterize, and hence gives us a grip that allows us to evaluate them: it is the act, whatever its proper definition is, that is in fact associated with the indicative mood in natural languages as used on some occasions (the default, flat-out cases), and which speakers intentionally purport to make by such means on such occasions.

The crucial difference between prescriptive accounts along the lines of those just outlined and descriptive accounts such as GA lies in the question of whether all norms we invoke to appraise assertions are merely regulative (as on the latter view), or some of them (the truth rule, the knowledge rule, the reasonableness rule) are instead essential or constitutive. Williamson presents his proposal as a hypothesis for which he gives abductive support. The first I would mention is provided by well-known compelling objections to GA; this gives support for normative accounts in general. Thus (Alston 2000, ch. 2), the clerk in the information booth uttering "The flight will depart on time", or the victim saying to his torturer "I did not do it", or any of us saying to our neighbor in the elevator "nice weather, isn't it?", may well lack the Gricean intentions that GA requires for them to make these assertions. The clerk may not care about what her audience thinks she believes, or intend them to believe anything; the victim of torture may know it is useless to expect her audience to derive any reason to believe she is innocent from her utterance; when we make small talk in the elevator, we know that our beliefs about the weather are independently manifest to our audience. But the speakers in all these cases are asserting. Normative accounts capture this: irrespective of their intentions, the speakers are still committed to knowing what they say (or to having justification for it, to its being true, or to putting their audiences in a position to know).[2]

Williamson presents additional abductive support for his specific normative proposal. First, he mentions intuitive conversational patterns (*op. cit.*, 252): we challenge assertions politely by asking "How do you know?" or, more aggressively, "Do you know that?" (252).[3]

Secondly, the proposal accounts for what is wrong in a version of Moore's paradox with 'know' instead of 'believe': *A, and I do not know that A* (253-4). Third, mathematics provides for formal situations where the speaker's sensitivity to the norms of assertion is highlighted; in those situations, being warranted to assert *p* appears to go hand in hand with knowing *p*. Fourth, he argues that the truth rule does not individuate assertion; alternative speech acts like conjecturing, reminding or swearing also involve a truth rule (244-5). Fifth, cases in which, knowing that one holds a ticket in a very large lottery, one asserts "your ticket did not win" only on the basis of the high probability of the utterance's truth also question the truth account (246-52). Finally, intuitions about cases in which we assert without knowing but are not subject to blame can be accounted for. In some cases, it is reasonable for us to think that we know, even if we do not; what we do is not permissible, but it is exculpable. In other cases, additional values (saving someone from danger, enjoying a relaxed conversation) prevail, allowing again for exculpation based on their contextual relative strength (256-9).[4]

Now, one might have thought that a normative view of speech acts along the lines of Williamson's for *asserting* could provide some support for Austin's (1962) conventionalist claim about forces, entailed by his proposing a framework for their characterization that assumes that "there must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect" (*ibid*., 14). Of course, Gricean conceptions of forces, such as GA for assertion, reject such conventionalist claims, following Strawson's (1964) influential criticism of Austin.[5] On these views, assertion is a non-arbitrary natural phenomenon, not at all dependent on convention for its institution and preservation. Williamson, however, argues that in fact an account of assertion in terms of constitutive rules makes it impossible for assertion to be conventional in any significant sense.[6] His argument, however, is interestingly fallacious, in that it overlooks an important distinction that we need to keep in mind.[7]

Williamson's argument invokes a *modal disparity* between acts that are essentially defined by a constitutive norm, and conventions. Conventions are arbitrary; they have alternatives, and hence may not have existed, even in the presence of the needs motivating their implementation. The obligations they impose are thereby equally contingent: "if it is a convention that one must ϕ, then it is contingent that one must ϕ" (*op. cit.*, 239). Obligations deriving from constitutive rules, in contrast, are necessary: "if it is a constitutive rule that one must ϕ, then it is necessary that one must ϕ" (*ibid*).

This little argument should be immediately suspicious. Consider the illocutionary forces that Searle (1969) classifies as *declarations*, such as *redoubling at bridge*, *calling out a player* at baseball or *marrying a couple*. Intuitively, such forces are conventional;[8] philosophers with little sympathy for conventionalism about assertion agree on this (cf. Strawson 1964, 456-7). However, if acts like assertions are practices defined by constitutive norms, declarations are likely also similarly defined, and hence, Williamson's modal disparity argument would establish that they cannot be conventional either. The point also applies to games, the very model on which Williamson bases his account: while they are defined by constitutive norms, intuitively they are as conventional as the clearest paradigms of conventional activities, such as using particular expressions to convey particular meanings or driving on the right.

To see where the fallacy in the modal disparity argument lies, we will reflect on a point that Williamson notices. He admits that his account of constitutive rules involves some idealization, which can be seen by considering the case of real games. Let us take the case of (association) football. Throughout its history, there have been changes in the constitutive rules that define that game, without intuitively a change in its identity. How does this fit with the account in terms of constitutive rules? Williamson appeals here to Lewis (1975) related discussion of *languages* and *language*: one and the same historically continuous *language in use* might be properly characterized at different stages by different "grammars" or

theoretically articulated *abstract languages*: "a population that at one time has the convention of speaking a language L may later change to a convention of speaking a distinct language L*, constituted by slightly different rules. Likewise, in the present technical sense of 'speech act', the rules of a speech act are essential to it. A population that at one time has the convention of using a certain device to perform a speech act A may later change to a convention of using that device to perform a distinct speech act A*, governed by slightly different rules. 'Game' can receive a similar sense" (*op. cit.*, 239).

So, in the intended "technical sense", the speech acts defined by norms such as KR, TR, RBR and KPR are like Lewis's abstract languages, and we should distinguish them from the actual speech acts that people perform, which are rather like Lewis's languages in use; for the latter can be characterized by different instances of the former at different stages in their history. There is *actually used English*, which at some time in a history originating from a language brought to England by Germanic settlers in the fifth to seventh centuries might be properly characterized by abstract language AE_1 – and hence had as a proper temporal part *actually used AE_1* – and at a different stage by AE_2 – and hence had as another proper temporal part *actually used AE_2*.[9] Similarly, there is *actually played association football*, with a history going back to games played at public schools in England in the eighteenth century and earlier, and characterized by different set of rules as played at different times and places, first partially codified in the mid-nineteenth century. (There of course also are games specified by each of these set of rules actually played for shorter periods, constituting the history of the temporally extended game *association football*.) In the same way, there is *actually occurring assertion*, which in the quotation above Williamson suggests we understand as we have neutrally characterized it above, as the act done by default when uttering declarative sentences. Perhaps this act has a history such that, say, TR initially defined it, and now Williamson is right that it is rather KR that defines it.

Note also that abstract languages might fail to characterize any actually used language. Two linguists might dispute whether it is AE_1, or rather AE_2, that properly characterizes English at a certain point; perhaps both are wrong, and neither set of rules properly does the job. As Schiffer (1993) notes, it would be inadequate to say in such a case that neither AE_1 nor AE_2 "exist", because being abstract entities they exist in all worlds.[10] We will say instead that they are not *used* or *in force*. The same could apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the acts "in the technical sense" whose constitutive rules TR, RBR, KR and KPR specify. To be perspicuous, let us use 'assertion' to refer to the naturally existing act made by default by uttering declarative sentences, and 'assertion-tr', 'assertion-kr', and on, to the abstract acts that those rules specify. The debate thus concerns whether assertion is characterized by one such rule (as opposed to being a merely psychological type of entity, say, one defined by GA), and, if so, by which, assertion-kr, assertion-tr, etc; or perhaps, as pluralists such as Levin (2008) suggest, in fact several rules define it in different contexts. It could also be the case that some of those acts are not in force in the actual world.

We can now see that Williamson's claim, "if it is a constitutive rule that one must ϕ, then it is necessary that one must ϕ" is just trivially true. For this is a claim about speech acts *in his "technical sense"*, i.e., about speech acts as merely abstract types such as assertion-kr, defined by constitutive rules perhaps nowhere in force. To be sure, these abstract entities are not conventional; but nobody properly understanding the issues would ever deny this.

In order to charitably understand conventionalist claims in this area, let us consider a traditional game before anybody tried to codify its constitutive rules, such as what was later called association football as it was played in a given public school in England in 1800. Let us imagine two different plausible candidates to fully and properly characterize their constitutive rules, $1800F_1$ and $1800F_2$. Imagine also that the first is correct but not the second. They both describe abstract games by their constitutive rules, so, as Williamson notes, to the extent that

one plays either of them, necessarily one is obligated by its rules. But note firstly that this is a rather Pickwickian sense of obligation; for it applies both to the rules codified by $1800F_1$, but also to those codified by $1800F_2$ – a game that we might assume nobody has ever played, so that no actual person has ever been under its norms. Secondly and more important, it is a matter of convention, and hence arbitrary, that people playing association football at that time and place were under the obligations codified by $1800F_1$. For these people could have instead agreed to be under the obligations imposed by $1800F_2$: presumably this would have served equally well whatever motivation they had to engage in that activity. Hence, although the game was defined by constitutive rules, which necessarily oblige in Williamson's sense, it was conventional in this clear sense: it was a matter of convention that a game defined by those rules, $1800F_1$, was in force, as opposed to $1800F_2$.

This establishes that the trivial modal proposition on which Williamson bases his argument might be true (as it should be), while, compatibly with it, entities essentially constituted by norms are conventional – as should also intuitively be the case. For the first is a claim about *abstract* normative types, while the second is one about normative types that are in force – in fact, about what it is that makes them be in force. Hence, Williamson's modal disparity argument against the conventionality of assertion is a *non sequitur*, manifesting a blatant misunderstanding of the true nature of conventionalist claims.[11]

The point of this discussion is this: even when something can be properly considered a conventional type, such as a game like football, intention still plays crucial roles in its instantiation. In the first place, intention plays a crucial role in explaining how a given set of norms (those constitutive of whatever has come to be in force by convention in a population) came to be in force in the first place. Presumably the fact that $1800F_1$ was in force at the time and place that it was – as opposed to $1800F_2$ or some other set of constitutive norms – has to do with the intentions of the relevant subjects to entertain themselves by pursuing an activity

regulated by specific norms. Secondly, when a given set of constitutive norms is already in force in a given population, intention still plays a role in determining when and how they apply in particular cases: it is an intentional matter that subjects place themselves under the relevant obligations, and how exactly they do – the conventions might leave things open for interpretation, as with the application of the rules of football in particular cases. These might seem rather obvious points, which in fact L&S declare not to ignore: "Grice's view is not simply that communication requires the audience to recognize the speaker's intended interpretation of her utterance. This is an obvious truism" (*op. cit.*, 12). Rather than denying the "obvious truisms", L&S go into a discussion of different types of intentions (*op. cit.*, 199-232) distinguishing their views from Grice's, regarding which I'll have little to say. Nonetheless, in fact they appear to ignore the consequences of this "truism" on which my points below rely.

2. Indirect Assertion, Lying and Misleading

Theorists of speech acts assume that some of them are indirectly made. Searle (1975) provides an influential account, which I take to generalize (even if along ways idiosyncratic to Searle's own views) the famous proposal by Grice (1975) for conversational implicatures – hence a particular case, in which one indirectly makes an assertion or a related constative act by means of a declarative. Thus, for instance, an utterance of 'Thanks for not browsing our magazines.' found in the train station kiosk does not seem to be at all an expression of gratitude – or whatever is the default, conventional use for that sentence – but an indirect way of making a request. Similarly, the sentence that George Eliot writes at the beginning of *Middlemarch*, "Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by

poor dress." would presuppose in a standard use the existence of a specific 'Miss Brooke' naming practice, on which she relies for identifying a person about whose beauty she makes a claim; but intuitively Eliot is neither presupposing nor asserting, she is performing a different speech act, with different presuppositional requirements: putting her audience in a position to imagine something (García-Carpintero 2013a).

What is an indirect speech act? We should have an initial characterization involving as little theoretical baggage as possible – one that even sceptics such as L&S could accept as having instances.[12] My suggestion assumes that there are speech acts (perhaps unsuccessful ones) that well-formed sentences might be used to make, given their mood, their constituents, and the way they are compositionally put together, in *minimal* or *default contexts*, in which it is assumed no more than sharing a public language, and whatever is required for disambiguation and context-dependence resolution. An indirect speech act is then either one made with a sentence whose default use would be to make a different one, in force or content; or one brought about by (grounded on, explained by) a different one. This is not entirely free from controversial theoretical assumptions, but I hope it is enough to keep us going.

To justify and illustrate the disjunctive characterization, consider these four typical putative examples of indirect assertions:

(1)   Utterance: 'Who the heck wants to read this book?'; putative assertion: *Nobody wants to read this book*.

(2)   Utterance: 'Paul is a good friend'; putative assertion: *Paul is disloyal*.

(3)   Utterance: 'Nuclear reactors are time bombs'; putative assertion: *Nuclear reactors might disastrously fail at any moment* (Bergmann 1982, 231).

(4)   Utterance: 'Happy families are all alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way' (Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*); putative assertion: *ditto*.

While (1) meets both conditions (one in each disjunct), the other examples meet only one. In (2) and (3) the speaker doesn't make the literal speech act indicated by default by uttering the relevant sentences. That act would be an assertion, but it is manifest that any rational speaker lacks assertoric commitments regarding the literal content of those utterances: she doesn't believe the one in (2), because she is actually indirectly asserting something entailing its negation, nor the one in (3) because it is manifestly false.

In order to stick to just the second disjunct for our characterization, while still counting these acts as indirect, we could perhaps suggest – using Austinian terminology – that the speaker nonetheless asserts whatever she does in virtue of making a different linguistic act, such as putting forward expressions with a phonology, syntax, and compositional semantics. But this would turn all speech acts, even the most straightforwardly literal ones, into indirect speech acts. So we need the first disjunct to capture cases like (2) and (3).[13]

Why counting (4) as indirect, if the content asserted is the same one literally conveyed by the sentence? The utterance occurs as part of a discourse that, as a whole, is put forward as a fiction. Following Currie (1990) and others, I have argued (García-Carpintero, 2013a) that we should understand this activity, against Searle (1974-5), as a specific speech act, fiction-making. Now, Currie (1990, 15) follows Searle (1974-5, 60) in counting utterances produced in fiction-making as literal. If one means by this that the actually made representational act precisely fits what is semantically codified in the sentence uttered,[14] I do not think this is correct. For, with most contemporary semanticists, I take it that some force-indications (at least, those distinguishing declaratives, interrogatives and directives) are semantically conveyed. And I do not think fiction-making fits the semantic contribution of declarative mood: I would only count an assertion as literally made by means of uttering a declarative

sentence. Hence I take fiction-making to be an indirect act, on account of the first disjunct in the proposed characterization.

It is also indirect on account of the second one, because the assertion is dependent on the fiction-made content (via genre assumptions about fiction-made contents also intended as providing knowledge by fiction-makers with certain ambitions). I take it that when Tolstoy wrote the Russian sentence translated as (4) at the beginning of *Anna Karenina*, he was not just fiction-making its content, although undoubtedly he was doing that too – for the content put forward to be imagined by the full "utterance" constituting the novel is to be determined in part by the content of (4). I take it that Tolstoy was also asserting it. And I take it that he was asserting it *in virtue of* fiction-making it; i.e., that its role in the constitution of the fiction that Tolstoy was producing is essential in explaining that he was assertorically committing himself to this, given the type of fiction it was supposed to be, and the sort of claims that authors like Tolstoy are understood to commit themselves to by producing such fictions. So this would be an indirect assertion; but one made by means of uttering a sentence whose literal content is precisely the asserted one.

Now, some writers (e.g., Alston (2000, 116-120); Hindriks (2007, 400); Jary (2010, 15-16); Pagin (2011, 123); Stokke (2013, 49) advance accounts of assertion that imply that this act cannot be indirectly made, in the indicated sense, by requiring that an assertion consists of the communication of the proposition *p by means of a sentence that means p*. This makes it definitionally impossible to make assertions of *p* with sentences that mean something else (or with non-linguistic means). This sounds *prima facie* wrong: (1)-(4) make an intuitive case against it. Moreover, neither the Gricean intentionalist view of assertion nor any of the normative ones we considered in the previous section appear to pose an obstacle to the *prima facie* intuitive view. In addition to these considerations, we might also reason that it appears

to be possible and in fact common to make other speech acts indirectly, as in the above examples; why should assertion (the act made by default with declaratives) be special?

In some cases, the definitional condition on assertion that makes indirect assertions impossible appears to be *ad hoc*. Thus, suppose that one is attracted by some variation of the Fregean notion that making an assertion that *p* is putting forward *p* as true. There are clear counterexamples to this, cases in which intuitively a proposition *p* is put forward as true that intuitively are not assertions of *p*: cases in which *p* is merely guessed or conjectured, cases in which it is presupposed, cases in which it is promised, and so on. An initially suggestive way of averting this objection offers itself: just add the condition that we are discussing, that it is also necessary to use a sentence that means the proposition. However, without independent justification this is just an *ad hoc* maneuver to salvage the Fregean view; why not instead look for a better account of assertion?[15]

As mentioned at the beginning, L&S are among a number of writers who have provided an independent justification of this kind for the contentious condition. In this section I will discuss an argument based on the need to capture the intuitive distinction between lying and misleading. Thus, Mitchell Green (2015, 22-3) writes:

> While indirect communication is ubiquitous, indirect speech acts are less common than might first appear. Consider an example of a type often used to illustrate indirect speech acts. A asks B, 'Can you come to dinner with us tonight?', and B replies, 'I have to study.' B makes it clear that she is too busy to join A for dinner. However, must we conclude that she has done this by illocuting, for instance stating that she is too busy to join A for dinner? This seems unlikely. After all, if B did not think that her studying would prevent her from joining A for dinner, she would be misleading in saying what she does, but not a liar; yet if in answering as

she has, she is asserting that she is unable to join A for dinner, she would be lying

if she took her study plans not to interfere with dinner plans.

In a nutshell, the argument goes like this: intuitively, those indirectly conveying putative assertions of contents they know to be false are not lying, but merely misleading their audiences; hence they cannot be asserting, because asserting what one believes to be false suffices for lying. Now, the obvious problem with this argument lies in this assumption that asserting what one believes to be false suffices for lying. In fact, the condition that has been traditionally considered necessary for lying regarding *p* (precisely on account of the intuitive distinction between lying and misleading) is not (plainly) asserting *p*, but rather *stating* or *saying* it, taken in very specific, almost technical terms. This is understood as something like putting forward a sentence whose literal and direct use would be to assert *p* – cf. Chisholm & Feehan (1977, 150-1), Mahon (2016, 4).

Mahon in fact rejects the necessity of an assertion condition for lying, which I do not think is right. My main motivation for keeping it is that if, after having dropped the assertion condition, we also drop the *intention to deceive* condition on lying that the speaker intends her audience to believe what she says, we are left just with the *saying* condition and the *deceit* condition that the speaker disbelieves what she says. But these do not suffice for lying, because the utterers of (2) or (3) are not liars – although both say (in the sense here at stake) what they believe to be false. However, against Mahon, I think we should drop the *intention to deceive* condition, on account of so-called *bald-faced* lies – as when the cheater flagrantly caught in the act denies having cheated, without expecting or intending to be believed.[16]

Mahon justifies his rejection of the assertion condition with examples that I find shaky, in being crucially underdeveloped. Let me briefly discuss why, because it will help me to advance my overall argument. He has examples like a "fiction liar", who writes a novel (and

hence doesn't assert, Mahon assumes) with the intention that her audience believe that it was a true story disguised as a novel, a sort of (pretend) *roman à clef*; or the following "irony lie":

> if Yin, who does not have a girlfriend, but who wants people to believe that he has a girlfriend, makes the ironic statement "Yeah, right, I have a girlfriend" in response to a question from his friend, Bolin, who believes that Yin is secretly dating someone, with the intention that Bolin believe that he actually does have a girlfriend, then this 'irony lie' is a lie … although it is not an assertion.

These examples are underdeveloped. Consider the "fiction liar". It could be that (as anybody familiar with him would judge) he was merely pretending to write a novel (perhaps to prevent being sued), and the "novel" was instead a pack of openly malicious claims about some of his acquaintances. In this case, Mahon is right that the speaker is lying; but this is because he was also asserting, the fiction-making being merely pretend. Alternatively, the author's taxonomy is to be respected, and he was indeed fiction-making; it might be that he was also making questionable assertions, or related constatives, but then this case is "spoils for the victor" (in Lewis's apt turn of phrase) and, when everything theoretical is said and done, he is to be classified as merely misleading, not lying. This diagnosis carries over, I think, to the other examples that Mahon provides. Thus, either Yin is truly being ironic, and then he is merely misleading Bolin; or he is rather putting forward a wobbly pretence to be so, Bolin sees it for what it really is, and Yin is indeed lying because he is after all asserting.

What is at stake in all these cases is the issue I raised at the end of the previous section in the framework of the normative view of speech acts that I am assuming, and will come back to in the next one: what makes it the case that a set of norms applies to a particular case? As these examples show, this depends to a certain extent on speakers' intentions – but only in a complex way, involving also more external matters.

Let us take stock. The distinction between lying as regards to *p* and misleading as regards to the same content does not consist in that only the former involves asserting *p*. Assertions (like any other speech act) come in different manners: they can be implicit, indirect, merely hinted or insinuated; or they can be as explicit as possible, direct and literal: what is meant in them is then as close as possible to the semantic content of the sentence by means of which they are made. The intuitive distinction between lying and misleading tracks this equally intuitive distinction between the implicit, hinted or insinuated, and the explicit, direct or literal; not the one that Green's argument assumes. The distinction is hence compatible with the possibility of indirect assertions.

It is helpful to emphasize this point, because I'll also be relying on it in the next section. Strawson (1964, 452-4) wrongly takes *insinuating* as a candidate for a speech act, and dismisses it on account of its failure to pass the "explicit performative" test: you cannot insinuate (a bribe, say) by saying 'I hereby insinuate to you that I'll be giving you a good amount of money if you do not put me a ticket'. (He then provides an account of why one cannot do that in terms of his Gricean account.) However, as Vendler (1976) rightly points out, Austin's test is manifestly inadequate, because the test discriminates against acts which could be very justifiably counted as illocutionary. For obvious reasons, one cannot depict by uttering 'I hereby depict you as blonde', but depicting can be a speech act. In the case of 'hint', 'allege', and other verbs, the obstacle lies instead in that trying to make them with the performative formula would be, in Vendler's happy phrase, to commit "illocutionary suicide". The right view here is that *hinting*, *suggesting* and *insinuating* are second-order types: ways of making first-order speech acts. Searle (1979, ix) puts it nicely:[17]

> There are many illocutionary verbs that are not restricted as to illocutionary point, that is, they can take a large range of illocutionary points, and thus they do not genuinely name an illocutionary force. "Announce", "hint", and "insinuate", for

example, do not name types of illocutionary acts, but rather the style or manner in which a rather large range of types can be performed.

Davis (1999, 23, 34) mentions also considerations regarding the distinction between lying and misleading in the course of arguing that what he calls 'telling' and 'stating' (which come very close to what I am calling 'asserting') can only be done by using a sentence that conventionally conveys what is told or stated. However, in p.c. he tell me that he didn't mean those considerations as an argument for the view that asserting p requires saying p, because he takes this to be "obvious on reflection to anyone who understands the English words 'assert' and 'say'– as obvious as the claim that knowing something requires believing it, that being a waitress requires being female, and so on, as well as the claim that asserting that p requires meaning that p".[18] Hence, it is not in need of any argument, which would appeal to more questionable premises – like, indeed, that asserting what one believes to be false suffices for lying. Why does he think it so obvious? He mentions as evidence (p.c.), among other similar data, that (5)(a) seems as blatant a contradiction as (5)(b), and 'also' in (6)(a) feels as jarring and inappropriate there as it is in (6)(b):

(5)   (a) Sam asserted but did not say that Joe has a weak punch.

        (b) Sam asserted but did not mean that Joe has a weak punch.

(6)   (a) Sam asserted, and also said, that Joe has a weak punch.

        (b) Sam asserted, and also meant, that Joe has a weak punch.

This argument, however, is problematic. As has been pointed out (cf., e.g., Cappelen & Lepore 1997), the use of 'say' in ordinary language is considerably looser than its technical uses in philosophy. As Bach points out, in philosophy it has two predominant uses: the one assumed in the discussion of lying above, more or less corresponding to Austin's *locutionary act* (*putting forward expressions with a given phonology, syntax and meaning*), and another

close to Grice's, a "generic illocutionary verb that describes any constative act whose content is made explicit" (Bach 1994, 143). In accordance with my practice in previous work (García-Carpintero, 2013b, 2), I will use henceforth the ugly-sounding 'locuting' for the first sense, and reserve 'saying' for the second. This has of course been the topic of a heated discussion in recent debates on the semantics/pragmatics divide – in part invoking considerations involving the lying/misleading distinction (cf. Saul 2012, Stokke (2016b) – and we'll come back to it in the next section. The problem with Davis's data is that in ordinary language 'to say' is not used in either of these technical terms.

Consider this real-life example, similar to those provided by Cappelen & Lepore (1997):

Bill Buckley demonstrated long ago how dangerous is the truth for anyone running a symbolic campaign. In 1965, when he was running for mayor of New York, Buckley was asked what he would do if he won, and he shot back: "Demand a recount." That one comment got more attention than all the position papers he had labored over to show that the nascent Conservative Party of New York should be taken seriously. More immediately, the quip almost made his assistant campaign manager faint. He took Buckley aside and said, "You have people working night and day for your campaign. You can't dismiss their efforts, making it harder for them to raise money or make voters pay attention." Buckley never again *said he could not win*. (Wills 2015; my italics)

Wills forthrightly ascribes to Buckley having said the content of a particularized conversational implicature.[19] Now, since it is an understanding of *saying* as liberal as this that guides us when we find the (a) sentences similar to the (b) sentences in (5) and (6), this is entirely compatible with the possibility of assertions being indirectly made, i.e., not said, in any of the *technical* senses. Davis's predictable move in reply to this point was to suggest that

reports like Wills's use 'to say' in a non-literal, loose way. Even if this is so (which I strongly doubt, because I think the loose use in question is too common and widespread for this not to be instead a case of polysemy),[20] it is also entirely irrelevant, because the intuitions (in this case, about the similarities between the (a) and (b) sentences in (5) and (6)) that can be legitimately invoked in this kind of argument are those of ordinary speakers, which by themselves do not result from a technical sense perhaps corresponding to a core meaning that disregards such "loose" uses, but from the coarser one encompassing such uses. In a nutshell, unreflective intuitions about (5) and (6) in agreement with Davis's do not establish his claim, because they might manifest an ordinary sense of 'say' on which even indirectly conveyed claims are said; reflective intuitions such as Davis's also fail to establish it, because they might just result from the very theoretical prejudices they are invoked to support.[21]

Soames (2008, 462) declares that he uses "the indirect-discourse sense of 'say' in such a way that *A says that S* is essentially equivalent to *A asserts that S* … saying/asserting that S is a way of committing oneself to the truth of the claim that S, distinct from merely implicating that S". This is unobjectionable, as a mere stipulation of a technical sense both for 'say' and for 'assert'. I would only protest that we do need, for theoretical use, a term for the speech act that we make by default with declarative sentences, preferably one already in use and to be technically used in a way close enough to its ordinary one – because presumably we should have some use in ordinary discourse for such a notion. Last but not least, one such that we can make the named act indirectly, along the lines theorized by Grice. I could find some other term for this ('tell'?), but I think that 'assert' fits the bill better.

Now, discussing the well-known recommendation-letter example (Grice 1975, 33), Soames (*op. cit.*, 443) does come up with a reason for his stipulation: "the proposition implicated – that the job candidate is no good – is the real point of the writer's remark. Although this may tempt one to identify the implicature as the writer's "real assertion," the temptation should be

24

resisted – since the whole purpose of using indirect means to convey this information was to avoid having to state it." But this is not a good argument, as we have seen. This "whole purpose" of using indirect means only establishes that the assertion was not made in a particular way (explicitly, literally), not that it was not made at all.

Moreover, Soames soon finds himself in trouble because of a combination of the stubborn facts and his terminological decisions. Commenting on Grice's (1975, 34) cases of irony and metaphor, analogous to our (2) and (3), Soames feels forced to grant that, at least in some cases, "there is an obvious and definite … proposition asserted … different from the one literally expressed by the sentence uttered" (*op. cit.*, 444). To keep an appearance of consistency, he hence decides "not to classify the propositions asserted in [such cases] as conversational implicatures, even though the explanation of how they come to be asserted relies in part on Gricean maxims" (*ibid.*) But, of course, if one makes terminological decisions to use them in providing explanations that meet decent standards of strength and simplicity, one is not allowed to play fast and loose with them as Soames indulges himself to do here. What but implicatures might these meanings conveyed by (2) and (3) be, constituted as they are ("in part") through the Gricean maxims? (And, what is the remaining "part"?)

I thus conclude that the intuitive distinction between lying and misleading does not give us a satisfactory reason to reject indirect, inexplicit assertions. Let us move now to the other sorts of consideration I wanted to discuss.

3. The "Dodgy Epistemics" of Indirect Assertions

One of the main considerations that L&S (2010, 2015) use against metaphorical, ironic or merely hinted assertions is their relative indeterminacy: "Metaphorical meaning cannot be

merely content 'gotten across' nor can it be merely behaving recognizably as coordinating. It requires an audience to recognize *the specific content* a speaker wants to get across, and to use the signal of the metaphor as the basis for the uptake of that content. Since we deny this must happen in normal confrontations with metaphors, we therefore reject metaphorical meaning" (2010, 170, my italics). The alleged indirectly conveyed meanings are "complex and indefinite", afflicted by "open-endedness" (2015, 176, 188); the inferences leading to them, "indirect and generic" (*ibid.*, 180, 189), requiring the audience's "open-ended engagement". Davis (1998) had similarly made use of the indeterminacy of many alleged implicatures to question the Gricean account. Thus, in a quotation above Soames articulates the proposition implicated in Grice's famous recommendation-letter example as *that the job candidate is no good*. But it could equally be *that there surely are better candidates for the job*, *that he is not good at philosophy*, *that he is not sufficiently bright*, and so on (Buchanan 2013, 729). Instead of a constative, it could be a *recommendation not to hire him*, or an *advice* or *suggestion* to that effect, or a *warning against hiring him*, and so on.

But, what is exactly the problem with this? An immediate one, which Davis emphasizes in his anti-Grice work, is that derivability is supposed to be a necessary condition for the generation of Gricean implicatures, and indeterminacy appears to prevent it. I'll come back to this below. Given that L&S do not say much to explain how indeterminacy supports their claims against metaphorical or hinted meanings, I will discuss a detailed set of arguments by Fricker (2012) based on indeterminacy against the possibility of indirect assertions, otherwise based on assumptions about the nature of assertion that I find congenial.

Fricker focuses on acts that she calls *tellings*, which she characterizes thus: "Tellings that P are a subset of assertions that P – those directed at an audience believed (possibly) ignorant as to P, and actually or purportedly with the aim of letting the audience know what the speaker already knows: P. Crucial amongst the conventional norms governing assertoric tellings is an

epistemic norm: one should assert that P only if one knows that P …", *op. cit.*, 62. Thus, Fricker's *tellings* come very close to what I take assertions to be.[22] At some point she appears to be disallowing indirect tellings just by definition, when she says "'Telling' as I understand it is linguistically explicit communication of a message: one tells that P by stating, asserting that P to one's audience", *op. cit.*, 62. However, I think it is clear that we should take it that she is not by thereby stipulating it, but rather anticipating the result of the arguments we are about to consider; otherwise it would not make sense to provide them.

Fricker describes a full gamut of communicative acts or messages, from the fully explicit, which she calls "Simple Explicit Statement", SES, to the utterly non-linguistic, which she calls "One-Off Grice" (OOG) messages. In between we find three types of "inexplicit" but direct "primary" messages, IPM 1 (cases in which the discourse helps determining the message, as in answering 'yes' to a clear-cut question), IPM 2 (cases in which the linguistic context helps determining the message, by fixing the contribution of anaphoric expressions, say), and IPM 3 (cases in which the extra-linguistic context contributes, as with demonstrative reference). Following the same ordering of comparative (in)explicitness from SES to OOG, we find next the main object of our interest, "Implicit Secondary Messaging", ISM; these are the cases in which the message is conveyed as a Gricean conversational implicature.

Like L&S, Fricker has an annoying tendency to hedge her claims in ways that, taken literally, make them acceptable to everybody. Thus (my emphasis in all cases, all references to Fricker 2012): "Only [the communicative act of overtly stating that P] … constitutes *full-strength* testifying to the fact that P" (64); instances of OOG lack "the *full force* of *explicit* assertion", in that their agents cannot be regarded as "assuming *unambiguous* responsibility"; they do not amount "to vouching *incontrovertibly* for the truth of any specific proposition" (80); cases of ISM do not "amount to *full-strength* testifying", in that the agent is not

accountable for what she implies "*in the way she is for what she explicitly states*" (87), and it is not feasible "to pin *undeniable specific* commitment onto a speaker" (87).

All of this is, of course, literally true; nobody would take issue with any of it. So I think it is clear that we are intended to drop the hedges, thus getting the message Fricker is really conveying (and in fact states, at least by implication, in unguarded cases like those I am about to quote); to wit, the one mentioned above that tellings (assertions) must be understood as being explicit, and hence cannot be made in any instance of ISM (not to say of OOG), nor in some cases of IPM 3. Only cases of SES, IPM 1, IPM 2, and some cases of IPM 3 have "the speech-act force of an assertion" (74), and are "subject to the K-norm" (76). There are no indirect assertions, in brief. What is the argument?

The main one is suggested in the above remarks: to make an assertion is to become beholden to the K-norm; but this can only come to be if what is asserted is made fully explicit, because a specific asserted content must become thereby knowable. For the case of OOG, Fricker mentions this, and then she adds a more specific consideration: "there is no determination of a specific primary message. This being so, there is no question of the utterer signing up, by her utterance, to responsibility for truth of a specific content. Furthermore, language is not involved, and accordingly the K-norm does not apply" (76). "Even if a specific content is acknowledged, the K-norm does not apply, since language is not involved, and the conventional social norms governing language use do not apply" (83).

Let us put aside momentarily the indeterminacy considerations so as to critically examine the more specific one for OOG. Why does the K-norm, or more in general the conventional social norms governing language use not apply when "language is not involved"? This seems like a manifest non-sequitur, unless we assume what is here at stake – to wit, that there cannot be indirect speech acts. For let us assume that one can, say, make a request by uttering what conventionally is an expression of gratitude, as in the 'Thanks for not browsing our

magazines.' example above. If so, the conventional resources devised in natural languages to make requests are not needed for a request to be made, with the speaker incurring thereby the constitutive commitments of such acts – on the assumption, which I presume Fricker might grant, that requests, like assertions, are constituted by norms.[23] So the fact that language is still involved in this case seems irrelevant to the point under dispute: if a request can be made without using conventional resources for indicating it (albeit using other linguistic means), *prima facie* the same might happen without using any linguistic resources at all. And if this can happen with a request, *prima facie* the same might happen with an assertion.

To elaborate, let me outline what I take to be a plausible story about how the speaker comes to acquire the relevant commitments in the indirect request case. An essential condition for the act to come under the purview of the constitutive norms for requests is that the agent (the speaker) makes her intention manifest to potentially involved social agents, in circumstances where general conditions for agents to come under the purview of such norms obtain. This might come to be by the use of a conventional means of doing it, such as uttering a sentence in the imperative in the proper context – although this doesn't detract from the need of the intention-condition to obtain: that an imperative is accidentally flashed in the screen of a computer does not suffice to make anybody beholden to a norm. But there are other ways; the one chosen by the speaker in the indirect case can be understood along the lines of accounts that generalizes Grice's story for conversational implicatures. The speaker *locutes* an expression of gratitude. As such, it would be manifestly inadequate in the context, because the speaker cannot know that the indicated condition for the emotion to be appropriate obtains, and this is mutual knowledge between the speaker and potential audience. A request with the same content would be a saliently appropriate act in the circumstances, on the other hand, and this is equally mutually known. So, assuming that the speaker does indeed have the relevant intention, she might become bound by the norms for requests in this way.

This story assumes three fundamental conditions for a subject to come to be under the obligations constitutive of a given speech act. First, the norm is in force; as explained in the second section, it is not merely an abstract norm: people come to be under it, given that the appropriate conditions are met. Second, the general "preparatory" conditions for agents to be under the purview of norms obtain; in particular, the speaker knows this. Third, the speaker manifests the intention of being bound by a particular instance of it in the occasion, in ways available to the social agents affected by it. Conventions might play an essential role in the first condition, but, as the example shows, conventional means are not required in particular cases for these conditions to be met. So, as initially stated, Fricker's argument is a non-sequitur; for all she says, assertions might be done without using conventional linguistic means, unless there is an independent argument that indirect speech acts in general or assertion in particular are not possible.

Let me conclude this part of the discussion by providing what I take to be a good example of an assertion made by means of an instance of OOG, taken from a famous short story by Borges, 'The Garden of Forking Paths'. In the story, Yu Tsun is a German spy sent to England during the First World War by his superiors in Berlin to find out the name of the exact location of the new British artillery park on the River Ancre, so that the Germans can bomb it. Yu Tsun has in fact discovered it, but in his circumstances he finds no better way of "communicating" or "indicating" (as it is put in the story) them that the city is Albert than killing a famous sinologist named Albert; he makes sure that the news of this apparently inexplicable odd murder will be in newspapers read in Berlin.

I submit that the act of "communication" or "indication" that Yu Tsun performs by killing the sinologist Albert is a telling, and an assertion at that. Indeed, it fits Fricker's account, quoted above: "assertions that P … directed at an audience believed (possibly) ignorant as to P, and actually or purportedly with the aim of letting the audience know what the speaker

already knows: P". It fits equally well her earlier characterization (2006, 601): "it is the purported publication of her knowledge, with the intent to inform her audience, by a teller". Yu Tsun's mission was to inform his superiors where the artillery park was, and this is what he was intending to accomplish with his act. His superiors could have criticized him, if he had been less careful and the artillery park was not there, or if he hadn't had the required epistemic justification for believing, exactly in the way we criticize ordinary assertions. After receiving the news, they acted on the information, as we do when we take ourselves to have acquired knowledge from testimony. So I think that the three conditions above for the request example are also met here when it comes to the K-norm. That "language is not used" is thus not a good reason to establish that assertions cannot be performed in OOG.[24]

Let us move now to the indeterminacy considerations. As we saw in the quotation above for the case of OOG, the argument appears to be that acquiring responsibility for the truth of what one asserts in accordance to the K-norm requires that a specific asserted content is made knowable. The motivation for this lies in Fricker's (2006, 601) account of the justificatory power of testimony: "That the teller knows what he asserted is a key premiss in her justifying grounds for her belief in what she was told". As she puts it in the paper I am discussing, "The overt and undeniable taking responsibility for truth of what she puts forward as true in an explicit speech act of telling is an essential part of what gives acts of testifying their epistemic force, as a source of belief and knowledge" (63) This is the reoccurring point she makes in order to justify her claim: "Insinuations and hints are deniable (albeit maybe only in bad faith), as explicit statement is not" (68). It comes up again when she explains why instances of IPM 1-2, and some of IPM 3, have assertoric power like SESs, while ISMs (and OOGs) lack it: "the message is easily and determinately recoverable, and … the sign … is treated as no less committal than a fully-worded assertion" (74); "Their content is as easily and

determinately recoverable as that of simple explicit statements. Consonantly with this, they are treated by participants as no less committing" (75).

Following Kent Bach's (1994, 143) account, in the previous section we introduced a Gricean notion of saying on which *what is said* is the object of a "generic … constative act whose content is made explicit". I agreed that the lying/misleading distinction shows that this is an intuitive notion, manifested by sensitivity to that distinction – but rejected the argument that it coincides with the notion of what is asserted. Fricker's considerations about non-deniability and overt assumption of responsibility vis-à-vis the K-norm obviously aim at a similarly intuitive notion, likely the same one. The emphasis on explicitness and directness of her distinctions forces us to go deeper now than we did above into what exactly this comes to. The natural suggestion is that what the explicitness and directness of what is on her view said/asserted comes to is that it coincides with semantic content – i.e., with the content ascribed to sentences by accurate semantic theories, or *what is locuted* in my terminology. In that respect, Fricker's views are close to those of minimalists such as Borg (2012), who take what is said to determine absolute truth-conditions, and to coincide with the semantic content.[25] I think this sort of identification is highly questionable. Once we see why, we will be in a position to appreciate that Fricker's argument has (probably unwanted) highly skeptical consequences.[26] This will bleach away the intuitive support that Fricker's condition for being under the K-rule that a specific content is made knowable might initially have had.

Firstly, Saul (2012, 21-68) has forcefully pointed out that the notion of *what is said* needed for the lying/misleading distinction goes a good way beyond minimalism and in the direction of some form of "contextualism", on which context contributes to what is said in ways that minimalists reject. Stokke (2016b) goes a little further in the same direction, by showing that intuitions about the lying/misleading distinction are sensitive to discourse information – in particular, information about what is at issue, or about which question is under discussion

(Roberts 2012). Thus, in a context in which one has been asked about the topic of the book one has written, answering *my book is about logic* counts as a lie if it is the book one has just taken out from the library that is about logic, and one has never written a book. Similar points could be made relative to quantifier domain restrictions, temporal contributions of tense, cut-off points in scales for gradable adjectives, "flavor" and modal bases for modals, and so on.

Secondly and more importantly, even if we stick to the sort of contributions to what is said that minimalists including Borg and (apparently) Fricker accept, such as referents for demonstratives like 'he', following Lewis (1980) I have argued elsewhere that we should still distinguish *semantic* content ("compositional value", as writers such as Ninan (2012), Rabern (2012) or Yalcin (2014) call it in making essentially the same point) from *assertoric* content, or what is said.[27] Semantic content is ascribed to sentences in order to fulfill some of the explanatory tasks for theories of natural languages, in particular accounting for facts about systematicity and productivity in understanding, communication and acquisition, or judgments about entailments or truth-value or appropriateness relative to given situations. Ultimately, the intuitive data in all those cases concern (in the case of declaratives) assertoric contents, and hence semantic contents should contribute to them; but, as Lewis (1980) points out, it doesn't follow that they need to be identified, and (as argued in the papers just mentioned, and others referred to in them) there are very good reasons against doing it.[28]

We do not need to go into the details to see the effects of these points on Fricker's claims. Take first overtness and recoverability. Awareness of the distance between semantic and assertoric content (what is said) shows the extent to which the latter falls short of the ideal in those respects. Audiences have to identify the semantic structure of the uttered sentence, and they must also lexically disambiguate to deal with homonymy and polysemy; this also affects the illocutionary force with which the utterance was made. Difficult questions about salience should be resolved, to decide about the reference of demonstratives like 'he', whether this

depends on the previous discourse or on the extralinguistic context. It is true that we typically do all of this automatically, without any conscious thought; but this is neither here nor there, because the same applies to contents that go well beyond the "explicit" and "primary", including straightforwardly particularized implicatures. The fact remains that all the factors that we have listed place a wedge between semantic content and what is said, and are occasions for it to fall short of clear-cut overtness.

Consider now undeniability. It is unclear whether Fricker means her claims empirically, matter-of-factually, or normatively. In the first case, the facts manifestly contradict her: people shamelessly deny what they have said (however we understand this), taking advantage of the points just made. They may allege that their utterance had a different syntactic structure than the one it in fact had, or used different homonyms, presumed different criteria of salience, or polysemous expressions (including force-indicators) had looser or tighter senses. Fricker grudgingly admits some of this: "one who asserts that P can disavow taking responsibility for P's truth, but only by the desperate expedient of claiming she did not really assert P at all – but, say, only suggested or conjectured it" (63), and she reports a telling anecdote (83) about Republican senator Jon Kyl who, having uttered "If you want an abortion, you go to Planned Parenthood, and that's well over 90 percent of what Planned Parenthood does", alleged that this "was not intended to be a factual statement" when the falsity of the claim was made clear.[29] She is wrong to contend that the only resort that denials "in bad faith" might have is to play with the force; all other strategies are in fact used. In any case, even her restricted admission directly contradicts her claim, taken as empirical.[30]

Alternatively, we can take her claim normatively. I take it that denials are also speech acts, with their own constitutive norms; taken normatively, the claim might be that acts of saying cannot be correctly denied. But intuitively at least, denials of the indirect assertions I attribute to (1)-(4) would in the proper context also be judged incorrect; I take it that Fricker admits as

much when she grants in a quotation above that many such denials can only be made "in bad faith". To be sure, the context has to be set up properly, and, as Stokke (2016b) points out, an important feature of it is which question is under discussion.[31] Bergmann (1982) had in fact already made a similar point in defense of metaphorical assertions, such as the one suggested above for (3). Imagine it uttered in a report commissioned about the safety of nuclear reactors, knowing full well that the research has shown them to be perfectly safe. As Saul (2012, 16) points out about a similar case, we would judge that to have been a lie, and denials that the relevant assertion was meant as made "in bad faith".

Similar points apply to a second, "Kantian" (because it resembles Kant's considerations for condoning merely misleading, in contrast with lying) argument that Fricker invokes: "if I tell [my audience] some other fact Q which, in our mutual K-context, conversationally implies P, then if, in addition to trusting my word about Q, she also infers that P, that is, as it were, up to her. She, not me, is responsible for what she infers from what I tell her – at least, she takes on at least half the responsibility for her coming to have the belief that P" (90). The inferences on the side of the audience in the case of implicatures that Fricker is talking about here cannot be factually occurring conscious derivations, because no such thing occurs in many cases in which we successfully convey implicatures. She must mean inferences understood as "rational reconstructions", perhaps inferences "available" to the audience under counterfactual conditions, or inferences providing a "doxastic justification" for the audience's belief that the implicature was meant.[32] However, for the reasons indicated, similar inferences can be equally posited to explain how audiences "derive" beliefs about what is said from semantic content. If the responsibility is thereby divided between agent and recipient in the case of implicatures, it is similarly divided in most cases for what is said.

Thus, the effect of assuming Fricker's condition on acceptable assertions – that a specific content should become knowable by being fully overt (there being no distance between it and

the semantic content of the uttered sentence), non-inferentially accessible, and undeniable (in a way that pragmatically conveyed contents are not) – is not just that there are no implied assertions; it is rather that almost nothing that we say is an assertion either, or can provide testimonial justification. As Yalcin (2014, 24) puts a related issue, "coordination on items of content is a highly approximate, more-or-less affair, with perfect coordination on content not being especially important, and rarely or never happening"; occasions for lack of perfect coordination are occasions for less than full overtness, for the need for pragmatic inference, and allowing sufficient room for deniability.

Once we appreciate the skeptical potential of Fricker's views, we are led to assess them critically.[33] Why should we follow her in thinking that acquiring knowledge from testimony requires knowledge of a specific asserted content? Buchanan (2013) discusses the problem of indeterminacy for implicatures, and provides a solution to which I am sympathetic and which helps us here. His discussion is conducted in the framework of a Gricean view about assertion, which I have rejected. However, there are relevant parallels, because whereas Griceans appeal to speech-act constitutive communicative intentions, as indicated above I have related intentions to be beholden to the constitutive norms of speech acts, made available to the parties involved. I will thus borrow from his proposals.

Buchanan sets up the indeterminacy problem for implicatures, understood as cases of Gricean speaker-meaning, on the assumptions that a specific content is intended, and also a rationality constraint on intentions that Grice subscribed to. This is the requirement that rationally intending p must come together with the belief that p will obtain. His proposal is to reject both assumptions. Regarding the first, what is meant (not just in the case of implicatures, but – on account of the related indeterminacy-generating features we have discussed above – also for most acts of saying) are not (specific) propositions, but propositional types, or properties of propositions. Regarding the second, according to him it is

not intentions that are needed for meaning, but "partial intentions", which are not subject to the stated rationality condition, but to the weaker one that the agent has a partial belief, or credence, that she will succeed. Now, following Sinhababu (2013, 681), I think we should weaken the rationality condition on intentions anyway, so we do not need to replace intentions with intention-like states in our accounts. To intend p requires merely rationally believing that one's action will make p more likely than otherwise would be. We need this weakening to deal with cases such as that of a basketball player who shoots from behind halfcourt just before time expires. The player rationally intends that the ball should go into the basket, despite knowing full well that long-distance shots like this rarely go in.

On the resulting picture, what is asserted is a proposition-type; assertors become beholden to any proposition of the type; they intend to make available to potential audiences some or other proposition of the relevant type; audiences understand them by grasping some or other proposition of the type.[34] This sounds very close to supervaluationist contentions for dealing with vagueness, and in fact I (García-Carpintero, 2007, 2010) have suggested elsewhere a similar picture to deal with, respectively, two problems that have been posed to supervaluationism: one by Williamson based on intuitions of bivalence about truth-ascriptions to utterances, and a second by Schiffer concerning ascriptions of what is said by *de re* utterances with vaguely specified singular contents. (My only disagreement with Buchanan's strategy is, I think, only verbal; I think that his "propositional types" can be rightfully called (imprecise) 'propositions', on account of the role they play as objects of belief and assertion.) As in the case of Yu Tsun in our discussion of OOG, I submit that this is enough to capture any reasonable notion of *telling*, and that in fact it fits Fricker's own characterization. It is certainly right that in many cases of implicatures no minimally definite commitment is acquired for a felicitous speech act to have been performed, but there are exactly parallel misfires in attempts at saying.

The reverse is also true: although going into the details of the epistemology of testimony is beyond the scope of this paper, both in sayings and in implicatures a sufficiently determinate content (understood as just suggested) is presented with the relevant commitments on the part of the teller, for making it possible for the audience to thereby come to acquire knowledge. As Bergmann (1982) had in fact emphasized for metaphorical assertions, in many cases L&S's (and Davis's) indeterminacy-based criticisms of the Gricean account of particularized implicatures ignore that sufficiently determinate ones are generated in specific contexts, available through non-deductive reasoning; a crucial contributing feature is a question under discussion. As she puts it (*ibid*., 231): "without knowing the context in which a metaphor occurs and who its author is, it is impossible to state conclusively what the metaphor "means" without drawing out all that it could mean … But bring in a well-defined context and a real author, and matters may change drastically". She (*ibid*.) illustrates this with an example:

> Suppose I say to you, after hearing the latest report on Three Mile Island, 'As far as I'm concerned, nuclear reactors are time bombs.' You correctly interpret my remark as an assertion to the effect that nuclear reactors are likely to fail, at any moment-of course, with disastrous consequences. A while later you say, 'That was an interesting metaphor: nuclear reactors being time bombs. Although I don't think that the guys responsible for those things want people to get killed by them, still it seems that, like people who use time bombs, they have a frightening disregard for human lives.' This, then, is something else that I could have used the metaphor to assert. But it does not follow, from the possibility of using a metaphor to make different assertions, that anyone who does use that metaphor is making all of those assertions.

Of course, there are differences between implied assertions and those that are said. As I said in the previous section, hinting at an assertion, or any other speech act for that matter, is doing the same thing that can be done by using explicit means but in a significantly different way. People have motives for choosing inexplicit ways such as, indeed, easier deniability and ensuing risk avoidance (Pinker 2007), politeness in its different manifestations, or (as L&S rightly insist, following Camp (2006b)) mobilizing the values of the imagination in the case of the recourse to fiction and metaphor. But as far as I can tell, and as far as I have been able to gather from the arguments discussed here, the unquestionable differences in overtness, deniability, or inference-dependence do not make talk of implied assertions oxymoronic.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have taken issue with L&S's objections to indirect meanings, although no fully-fledged defense of the Gricean view was intended. With most interpreters (cf. Davis 2014), I take it that conversational implicatures were for Grice cases of speaker-meaning; I agree that they are, but I have given in the first section my reasons to reject a Gricean view of speech acts, and presented an alternative account of assertion in particular. Moreover, I agree with L&S (and Davis 1998) that many conversational implicatures depend on convention in ways for which Gricean views provide poor accounts.

However, in the second section I have provided a sufficiently neutral account of conversational implicatures, and I quoted at the outset some claims of L&S's that contradict the contention that assertions in my sense can be indirectly made in my sense. In addition, my arguments support the rejection of claims like this: "There are no special meanings, over and

39

above the meanings of our utterances, that interlocutors infer by calculation from a Cooperative Principle ... meaning is a matter of conventions" (L&S,199).

In the core of the paper, I have argued against more detailed arguments than those L&S provide for views like theirs, based on considerations analogous to those they mention. In particular, I have rejected arguments against indirect assertions based on the lying/misleading distinction, and arguments based on the epistemological potential of assertions. A more complete rejoinder to L&S's rejection of the Gricean category of conversational implicatures (and to other skeptics, such as Davis) would require going into the details of how exactly the Cooperation Principle and the Conversational Maxims fit into the sort of account of indirect meanings I have suggested. But this must wait for another occasion.

References

Alston, William (2000): *Illocutionary Acts & Sentence Meaning*, Ithaca: Cornell U.P.

Austin, J 1962: *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Bach, Kent (1994): "Conversational Implicitures", *Mind and Language* 9, 124-162.

Bach, K & Harnish RM, 1979, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Bergmann, Merrie (1982): "Metaphorical Assertions", *Philosophical Review* 91, 229-245.

Bezuidenhout, Anne (2016): "What Properly Belongs to Grammar? A Response to Lepore and Stone", *Inquiry* 59(3), 175-194.

Borg, Emma (ms): "Explanatory Role for Minimal Content".

Buchanan, Ray (2013): "Conversational Implicature, Communicative Intentions, and Content", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 43, 720-740.

Buchanan, Ray (2012): "Meaning, Expression, and Evidence", *Thought* 1, 152-157.

Camp, Elizabeth (2006a): "Contextualism, Metaphor, and What is Said", *Mind and Language* 129, 280-309.

Camp, Elizabeth (2006b): "Metaphor and that Certain 'Je Ne Sais Quoi'", *Philosophical Studies* 21, 1-25.

Cappelen, H. & Dever, J. (2013): *The Inessential Indexical*, Oxford: OUP.

Cappelen, H. & Lepore, E. (1997): "On an Alleged Connection between Indirect Speech and the Theory of Meaning", *Mind and Language* 12, 278-296.

Chisholm, R. M., & Feehan, T. D. (1977): "The Intent to Deceive", *Journal of Philosophy* 74, 143-159.

Currie, Gregory (1990): *The Nature of Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davis, Wayne A. (1998): *Implicature: Intention, Convention, and Principle in the Failure of Gricean Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davis, Wayne A. (1999): Communicating, Telling, and Informing. *Philosophical Inquiry* 21, 21-43.

Davis, Wayne A. (2003): *Meaning, Expression, and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davis, Wayne A. (2007): How normative is implicature? *Journal of Pragmatics* 39: 1655–72.

Davis, Wayne A. (2014): "Implicature", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/implicature/>.

Davis, Wayne A. 2016. *Irregular Negatives, Implicatures, and Idioms*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Davis, Wayne A. forthcoming. "Calculability, Convention, and Conversational Implicatures. In G. Preyer, *Beyond Semantics and Pragmatics*, Oxford: OUP.

Fricker, Elizabeth (2006): "Second-Hand Knowledge", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXXIII, 592-618.

Fricker, Elizabeth (2012): "Stating and Insinuating," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* sup. vol. LXXXVI, 61-94.

Friend, Stacie (2014): "Believing in Stories", in G. Currie, M. Kieran, A. Meskin and J. Robson (eds) *Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind*, Oxford: OUP, 227-47.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2001): 'Gricean Rational Reconstructions and the Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction', *Synthese*, 128, 93-131.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2004): "Assertion and the Semantics of Force-Markers", in C. Bianchi (ed.), *The Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction*, CSLI Lecture Notes, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 133-166.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2006): "Recanati on the Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction," *Crítica* 38, 35-68.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2007): "Bivalence and What Is Said", *Dialectica* 61, 167-90.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2010): "Supervaluationism and the Report of Vague Contents," Cuts and Clouds: Essays in the Nature and Logic of Vagueness, S. Moruzzi & R. Dietz (eds.), Oxford: Oxford UP, 345-359.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2012): "Foundational Semantics, I & II", *Philosophy Compass* 7(6), 397-421.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2013a): "Norms of Fiction-Making", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 53: 339-357, DOI: 10.1093/aesthj/ayt021.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2013b): "Explicit Performatives Revisited", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 49, 2013, 1-17, DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2013.01.005.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2013c): 'Emma Borg's *Pursuing Meaning*', *Mind* 122, 2013, 515-521.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2016): 'To Tell What Happened as Invention: Literature and Philosophy on Learning from Fiction', in Andrea Selleri and Philip Gaydon (eds.): *Literary Studies and the Philosophy of Literature: New Interdisciplinary Directions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 145-176).

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2017): 'The Philosophical Significance of the *De Se*', *Inquiry*, vol. 60(3), 253-276.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (forthcoming): *Tell Me What You Know*. Oxford: OUP

Green, Mitchell (2015): "Speech Acts", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/speech-acts/.

Grice, H. P. (1957): "Meaning", *Philosophical Review* 66 (4): 377-388.

Grice, H. P. (1975): "Logic and Conversation", in P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3, New York: Academic Press, 41-58. Also in Grice, H.P., *Studies in The Ways of Words*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., pp. 22-40, from which I quote.

Hawthorne, John (2012): "Some Comments on Fricker's 'Stating and Insinuating'," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* sup. vol. LXXXVI, 95-108.

Hindriks, F. 2007, "The status of the knowledge account of assertion", *Linguistics and Philosophy* 30, pp. 393–406.

Horn, Laurence (2016): "Conventional Wisdom Reconsidered", *Inquiry* 59(3), 145-162.

Ichino, A., & Currie, G. (forthcoming): "Truth and Trust in Fiction", in H. Bradley, E. Sullivan-Bissett & P. Noordhof (eds.) *Art and Knowledge*, Oxford: OUP.

Jary, Mark (2010): *Assertion*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keiser, Jessica (2016): "Bald-faced lies: how to make a move in a language game without making a move in a conversation", *Philosophical Studies* 173, 461-477.

King, Jeffrey (2014): "The Metasemantics of Contextual Sensitivity", in Burgess, A. and B. Sherman (eds.), *Metasemantics: New Essays on the Foundations of Meaning*, Oxford: OUP, 97-118.

Korcz, Keith Allen (2015): "The Epistemic Basing Relation", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/basing-epistemic/>.

Lackey, J. 2007. Norms of Assertion. *Noûs* 41(4): 594-626.

Lepore, E. and Stone, M. (2010): "Against Metaphorical Meaning", *Topoi*, 29, 165-180.

Lepore, E. and Stone, M. (2015): *Imagination and Convention*, Oxford: OUP.

Levin, Janet (2008): "Assertion, Practical Reason, and Pragmatic Theories of Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXXVI, 359-384.

Lewis, David 1975: "Languages and Language," in K. Gunderson (ed.), *Language, Mind and Knowledge*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 3-35. Also in D. Lewis, *Philosophical Papers, vol. 1*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, 163-188.

Lewis, David (1979): 'Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*', *Philosophical Review* 88, 513-43. Also in D. Lewis, *Philosophical Papers* vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, David (1980): "Index, Context, and Content," in *Philosophy and Grammar*, S. Kanger & S. Öhman (eds.), Dordrecht: Reidel. Also in David Lewis, *Papers in Philosophical Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 21-44.

Mahon, J. E. (2016): "The Definition of Lying and Deception", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/lying-definition/>

Marmor, Andrei (2009): *Social Conventions*, Princeton: Princeton U.P.

Ninan, Dilip (2012): "Propositions, Semantic Values, and Rigidity", *Philosophical Studies* 158(3), 401–13.

Pagin, Peter (2011): "Information and Assertoric Force", in Brown, J. & Cappelen, H. (eds.), *Assertion*, OUP, 97-135.

Peet, Andrew (2015): "Testimonial Knowledge without Knowledge of What Is Said", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 97(2), DOI**:** 10.1111/papq.12137.

Peet, Andrew (2016): "Testimony and the Epistemic Uncertainty of Interpretation" *Philosophical Papers* 173, 395-416.

Pelling, Charlie (2013): "Assertion and the Provision of Knowledge", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 63, 293-312.

Perry, John (1979): "The Problem of the Essential Indexical" *Noûs* 13, 3-21. Also in his *The Problem of the Essential Indexical and other Essays*, Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1993, 33-50.

Pinker, Steven (2007): "The evolutionary social psychology of off-record indirect speech acts", *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 4: 437–61.

Rabern, Brian (2012): "Against the Identification of Assertoric Content with Compositional Value", *Synthese* 189(1), 75-96.

Roberts, Craige (2012): "Information Structure in Discourse: Towards an Integrated Formal Theory of Pragmatics", *Semantics & Pragmatics*, 49, 5, 1-69. (Originally published in *OSU Working Papers in Linguistics*, 1998, vol. 49, ed. Yoon, J. and Kathol, A.).

Saul, Jennifer (2012): *Lying, Misleading, and What Is Said*, Oxford: OUP.

Schiffer, Stephen 1993: "Actual-language Relations," in J. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives 7: Language and Logic*, Atascadero, Cal.: Ridgeview Pub. Co., 231-58.

Searle, J. 1969, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge.

Searle, John (1974-5): "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse", *New Literary History*, 6, 319-332; also in his *Expression and Meaning*, Cambridge: CUP, 1979, 58-75, from which I quote.

Searle, John (1975): "Indirect Speech Acts", in P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3, New York: Academic Press, 59-82; also in his *Expression and Meaning*, Cambridge: CUP, 1979, 30-57.

Sinhababu, Neil (2013): "The Desire-Belief Account of Intention Explains Everything," *Noûs*, 47: 680–696.

Soames, Scott (2008): "Drawing the Line Between Meaning and Implicature – and Relating both to Assertion", *Noûs* 47, 440-65.

Stalnaker, R 2014, *Context,* Oxford: OUP.

Stokke, Andreas (2013): "Lying and Asserting", *Journal of Philosophy* 110, 33-60.

Stokke, Andreas (2016a): "Metaphors and Martinis: A Response to Jessica Keiser", *Philosophical Studies*, DOI 10.1007/s11098-016-0709-0.

Stokke, Andreas (2016b): "Lying and Misleading in Discourse", *Philosophical Review* 125, 83-134.

Strawson, Peter (1964): "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts", *Philosophical Review* 73, 439-460.

Szabó, Zoltán G. (2016): "In Defense of Indirect Communication", *Inquiry* 59(3), 163-174.

Vendler, Zeno (1976): "Illocutionary Suicide," in Alfred F. MacKay & David D. Merrill (eds.) *Issues in the Philosophy of Language*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 135-145.

Weiner, M. 2005. 'Must We Know What We Say?'. *Philosophical Review* 114: 227–51.

Williamson, T 1996/2000, "Knowing and Asserting", *Philosophical Review* 105, pp. 489-523; included with some revisions as chapter 11 of his *Knowledge and Its Limits*, Oxford UP, New York, 2000, from which I quote.

Wills, Gary (2015): "Don't Run, Elizabeth!", NYRDaily, 12/5/2015,

  http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2015/may/12/dont-run-elizabeth/.

Yalcin, Seth (2014): "Semantics and Metasemantics in the Context of Generative Grammar",

  in Burgess, A. and B. Sherman (eds.), *Metasemantics: New Essays on the Foundations of*

  Meaning. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 17-54.

Notes

[1] In agreement with the descriptivist ambitions of the program, I take 'reason' in GA not to

be understood in normative terms; a reason is here a piece of evidence, perhaps a premise in a

possible inference. Bach & Harnish (1979, 15-6) are not explicit about this.

[2] There are descriptive, non-Gricean but nonetheless expressivist accounts of speech acts

that also invoke this sort of criticism, and deal adequately with it. The one developed by

Davis (2003) is a case in point: meaning p is performing a publicly observable action with the

intention that it be an undisguised indication that one has the belief that *p*. I cannot critically engage with this here; cf. Buchanan (2012) for objections of the kind that I feel compelling.

[3] Austin (1962, 138) had already pointed this out.

[4] I have argued that these considerations support also KPR, and that we should prefer it because it is more properly individuative: neither KR, nor the other rules, properly distinguishes asserting from presupposing. For this, I argued, is a speech act ancillary to many others, individuated by a norm that *p* should be common knowledge when it is presupposed. This being so, KR entails that whenever it is correct to presuppose *p* it is not incorrect to assert it, which seems wrong. However, here I will put KPR aside, and I will work under the assumption that the more familiar KR is the constitutive rule of assertion.

[5] Note however that Strawson's claims are much more nuanced than the argument by Williamson we will be presently discussing. He points out that many speech acts (all *declarations*, but also more fundamental ones such as commands) are indeed conventional (Strawson 1964, 457), and he is sensitive to the considerations that might drive one to argue that assertions are after all conventional too (*ibid.*, 459-60).

[6] Of course, assertion is "conventional" in the sense that it can be made by using conventional means for indicating it – as when making an assertion by uttering a declarative sentence in a default context. But, as Strawson (1964, 442) points out against some suggestions by Austin that this is all he means by his *prima facie* controversial conventionality claims, in this sense everything is conventional. Thus, there is a serious philosophical debate about whether logical or mathematical necessities are conventional; but, if we meant 'conventional' in this sense, there would be nothing to debate: they are certainly conventional in that sense, in that they can be expressed by conventional means. Hence, this is not an interesting sense of *being conventional* we should care about.

[7] What follows is developed in more depth in García-Carpintero forthcoming).

[8] In a stronger sense than the one considered in fn. 5, such as the following – a minimal common core to the accounts by Lewis (1975), Bach & Harnish (1979, 120-134), Davis (2003, 204-219), and Marmor (2008): a convention is a social regularity in the behavior of a group, which serves a common interest (solves a "coordination problem", on Lewis's account) and is arbitrary in that there is an alternative which would have solved it just as well.

[9] There also of course is some abstract entity that we might concoct corresponding to English throughout its history.

[10] Given the Platonist assumptions that I make, assuming them to be a mere convenience. On a nominalist view, none of them exist at all: "they" are just convenient fictions.

[11] Unlike games and declarations, with Strawson (1964) I do not believe it is sensible to think that fundamental speech acts such as assertions, requests or promises are conventional, even though I take all those types to be defined by constitutive norms. So I ultimately agree with Williamson. But the true reason has nothing to do with modal disparities, although non-arbitrariness has something to do with it. To properly investigate this issue, we should ask ourselves why it is that the norms of assertion are in force, assuming one of them defines assertion. It is difficult to believe that assertion is conventional: the being in force of a norm whose point is ultimately to allow for testimonial knowledge is hardly arbitrary, hardly something for which there are alternatives that might have serve the purpose equally well. The explanation seems more a matter of *rationality* than one of convention.

[12] Cp. Davis forthcoming, §2.

[13] Bach & Harnish (1979, 70) stick to the second disjunct; they would classify the assertion made with (2) and (3) as direct, but non-literal. This is partly a terminological issue, albeit not entirely. There are significant commonalities in the way the intended meanings of (2)-(4) and

other examples of indirect acts are determined, which motivate classifying them in a common category: all involve an essential reliance on rationality and Grice's Cooperative Principle.

[14] Cf. Bach & Harnish (1979), 10-12.

[15] Alston (2000, 114) and Stokke (2014, 46-7) provide *ad hoc* justifications like this to defend accounts with similar problems to the Fregean one, close to it in spirit.

[16] Keiser (2016) argues that bald-faced "lies" are not assertions, and hence not lies. Although I think she is right in demanding an account of assertion that justifies claiming the opposite, I do not find her claims convincing; they rely on a baroque account of speech acts for which I cannot find any justification. Unlike the accounts she criticizes (correctly, in my view; I do not think that Stokke's (2016a) replies succeed), the normative account presented above successfully meets her demands. The reader will have noticed that bald-faced lies are "don't care" cases – like the example of the clerk in the information booth mentioned above that Alston invokes against Gricean accounts of assertion, which, as I indicated above, normative accounts handle well. Note also that, while only incompetent speakers would object to utterers of (2) and (3) that what they say is untrue, rational and competent speakers feel entitled to make this sort of objection to bald-faced liars. Such complaints are successfully pursued in courts, which could not happen in the former case.

[17] Thanks to Ivan Milić for the quotation. See also Davis (2007, 1658).

[18] Davis (2014, §1; forthcoming, §4) indeed presents the claim as obvious.

[19] For another example, consider Stephen Colbert's portrayal in his *Late Show*, June 14 2016, of Donald Trump's notorious remarks about President Obama in the days after the Orlando mass shooting on June 12. Trump had repeatedly said that President Barack Obama had "something else in mind" when he refused to say the words 'radical Islamic terrorism'. "He doesn't get it or he gets it better than anybody understands", Trump told *Fox & Friends*

on June 13; "it's one or the other". Colbert wittily ascribes to a puzzled listener this thought: "Is he *saying* what I think he is *saying*?" In another speech in North Carolina on August 9, Trump suggested that defenders of the second amendment might use acts of violence to stop Hillary Clinton to have it abolished: "Hillary wants to essentially abolish the Second Amendment. If she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do folks. Although the Second Amendment people maybe there is, I don't know...". Robby Mook, Mrs. Clinton's campaign manager, reported it this way: "This is simple, what Trump is *saying* is dangerous. A person seeking to be the President of the United States should not suggest violence in any way."

[20] Vendler (1976, 136) in fact takes 'say', "in its dominant sense" to be a "general performative", encompassing all illocutionary acts, including hints and insinuations. I am not saying he is right, but he certainly had as good an ear for ordinary senses as anybody.

[21] My disagreement with Davis might well be ultimately verbal; if so, my only complaint would be the one I make in the next paragraph about Soames's stipulations. His criticism (forthcoming, §6) of L&S's claims against metaphorical meanings is very much along the lines of the one I am making here. I take it that he would accept that the utterer of (1)-(3) speaker-means – on his account (fn. 2), expresses a belief with – the contents that I characterized as asserted, thereby "contributing information" and "advancing the inquiry", against L&S. (1)-(3) are indirect expressions or belief; he reserves 'assertion' for direct expressions. He would resist the same claim about (4), because he thinks that fictions merely "express thoughts but not beliefs" (forthcoming, §7). I think he is wrong about this, cf. Friend (2014), García-Carpintero 2016, Ichino & Currie (forthcoming). Davis uses there the fact that conversational implicatures contribute to the contents of fictions as one more argument against Grice's theory, on account of the fact that fiction-makers are "not having a conversation with anyone". But here he is using "conversation" in too literal a sense. People

describe authors as having conversations with their intended readers, and it is theoretically acceptable to follow suit, cf. Currie 1990, 29-31.) So it might be that it just sounds better to him to use 'assert' along the lines of 'say' and 'state', but there are no real substantive disagreements among us about the main topic of this paper (as opposed to other issues, such as the nature of assertion and implicatures): what is done by default with declaratives is just expressing a belief, for him to be analyzed as indicated in fn. 2 above, and this (what I call 'assertion') can be done both directly and indirectly.

[22] Cf. also Fricker's (2006, 593-603) earlier detailed account, with most of which I concur.

[23] What are these norms? Inspired by Alston (2000), in García-Carpintero (2013a) I suggest that the constitutive norm for a request that p is that the audience acquires thereby a reason for bringing p about – a reason conditional on different features, such as the speaker having the required authority in the case of commands, or weaker ones concerning the interests and dispositions of the audience in requests, proposals, and so on. To make it simpler, one must make a request that p only if it is true that the audience must thereby p (the obligation in question conditional on a "modal base" restricted to worlds meeting the indicated features). The request is wrong if the audience doesn't acquire thereby the relevant obligation – as when what we find in the kiosk is 'Thanks for buying 100$ of our magazines.'

[24] Fricker admits that, as a matter of fact, cases like the one discussed exist, even frequently, counting them as cases of what she calls "Gricean agential meaning" (71-2). This is essentially what an assertion is, on Gricean accounts like (GA) in the second section. So she must think that it is specifically the normative view of assertion that makes indirect ones impossible. What we have just seen is that the fact that no conventional means are used to indicate them does not provide a good reason by itself to support the view.

[25] Indeed, in recent work Borg (ms, §6) invokes Fricker's sort of consideration in order to argue that her minimal contents do explanatory work

[26] The considerations below parallel Hawthorne's (2012). Cf. also Peet (2016).

[27] Referring to what is said with 'assertoric content' is of course compatible with the main claim of this paper. What is said by a declarative sentence is what is asserted by uttering it in default contexts. This is of course compatible with assertions being made indirectly. The notion of what is said I am envisaging here has close parallels with the "social" notion that Camp (2006a, §6) outlines.

[28] As I have also pointed out (García-Carpintero 2013c, 518), Borg's considerations in favor of the truth-evaluability of semantic contents invoke intuitions about assertoric content; however, even if truth-evaluable, the semantic contents her minimalism posits are almost as theoretical and remote from the intuitions of ordinary speakers about what is said as the index-relative constructs that Lewisian accounts assume. Hence, features of the former, such as truth-evaluability, cannot without further ado be ascribed to the latter.

[29] Donald Trump's 2016 campaign offers dozens of similar examples, of obvious assertions with manifest contents that are declared to have been jokes, or had hidden content.

[30] Fricker tends to make other forthrightly empirical claims that I find clearly unjustified: "'participants' attitudes do not treat what is conversationally implied as being asserted, testified to" (88). But consider this dialogue, which I take to be entirely appropriate and perfectly possible: A: – Where can I get charcoal nearby? B: – There is a garage down the road; A: How do you know/are you sure that I can get charcoal there?; or, A: – You were wrong, they do not have charcoal there. Similarly, the recipients of Grice's recommendation letter, who had asked for it for a job they were offering, can report: "his supervisor is telling us he is no good for the job"; or, angrily address him afterwards, "why did you tell us not to

hire him, if, as we have found out, you have so good an opinion of him as a philosopher?"
These are just further manifestations of the ordinary liberal use of 'say' and its cognates.

[31] Perhaps on account of his independent identification of what is asserted with what is said
(cf. fn. 12 above), Stokke (2016b, 90-1) makes the same mistake as Fricker: he also claims
that implied contents, by conveying which speakers would be merely misleading as opposed
to lying, are such that, because of it, speakers are not assertorically committed to them.

[32] A propositional justification is justification for a belief one might not form, or one might
form for reasons that fail to provide any justification. Doxastic justification comprises the
reasons that in fact ground a belief one has formed. Although on many accounts such
justification should have some "psychological reality" (cf. Korcz 2015), on no account is it
required that the belief was consciously inferred from a representation of the justifying facts.

[33] Cf. Peet (2015).

[34] Cf. also King (2014, 106, 112-4) for further examples and a similar proposal to
Buchanan's. Szabó (2016, 169-70) suggests a similar way of dealing with L&S's (and Davis's
1998) indeterminacy objections to the Gricean view of particularized conversational
implicatures. The picture can be generalized to take into account the fact that what speakers
indirectly convey is not indeterminate only with regard to the specific content meant, but also
with regard to illocutionary force. The idea would be that the speaker intends to become
committed to an illocutionary type, or property of illocutions; i.e., to each of an open range of
speech acts, in each case relative to their specific constitutive norms.