

Kierkegaard, Indirect Communication and Performativity

By

Hunter Alan Bragg

Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Religion

December 16, 2017

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Paul DeHart, Ph.D.

William Franke, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. Performativity in J.L. Austin's <i>How to Do Things with Words</i>	5
Introduction	5
A Taxonomy of Speech Acts.....	6
Illocutions, Perlocutions and Conventionality	10
Illocutions, Perlocutions and Their Effects	16
Conclusion.....	18
III. Kierkegaard and Indirect Communication	20
Introduction	20
The "Enormous Illusion of Christendom in Kierkegaard's Denmark.....	21
Kierkegaard's Existence Stages	22
Kierkegaard's Task: Introducing Christianity to Christendom	25
Conclusion.....	37
IV. Performativity in Kierkegaard's Indirect Communication.....	39
Introduction	39
Indirect Communication as a Double-Convention.....	40
Making Aware as Performative Act.....	49
Conclusion.....	52
V. Conclusion.....	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	56

PART I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will claim that applying the concepts of J.L Austin's speech act theory to Søren Kierkegaard's practice of indirect communication will provide insight into the performative aspects of indirect communication and will reveal that its ability to introduce readers to the decisive categories of Christianity depends upon this performative capability. Kierkegaard, through indirect, pseudonymous forms of discourse, introduces ethical and religious categories—categories which are concerned with the subjective relation to God—into the aesthetic existence and thought of those living within what he calls Christendom. Because the pseudonyms introduce reflected discourse into an objective form of existence, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship draws attention to the reader's relationship to God in a way that direct communication cannot, namely by altering the mode of communication from an objective to a subjective one. Kierkegaard hopes that this will prompt the reader to become aware of her relation to God and then to make a decision concerning it. After explaining the relevant portions of Austin's and Kierkegaard's respective projects, I will argue that Kierkegaard's use of indirect communication can succeed because of the performative nature of indirect communication which enables the pseudonyms to introduce the reader to the subjective categories of Christianity.

I will first articulate the speech act theory of J.L. Austin, and in particular, his distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Illocutions and perlocutions differ first in their relation to human convention and second in the nature of their effects. In the first instance, for illocutionary acts to be performed, they must take place according to a particular convention for doing a certain activity. Austin provides tests for determining the conventionality of an act and

briefly addresses what he calls double-conventions. Double-conventions are acts performed as a means to accomplish another act. Perlocutionary acts, by contrast, are not performed according to a convention of any kind. Second, the effects of illocutionary acts are imbedded in the acts themselves. An illocution has an effect when it secures understanding, takes effect in such a way as to exclude certain subsequent acts, and invites a response by the audience.¹ The effects of perlocutions, on the other hand, lie outside of the communication itself in any number of audience responses. Nonetheless, the perlocutionary effect can be, and often is, intended by the speaker. Perlocutions have an object or primary effect, and they can also have sequels which follow the intended object. These major distinctions will be important for making clear the performativity of Kierkegaard's indirect communication in the following sections of the essay.

Next, I will explain Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication in light of his historical context in 19th century Denmark. Kierkegaard is convinced that "Christendom," his name for the state of Christianity in Denmark, removes the subjective element necessary for becoming a Christian. Kierkegaard's use of indirect communication is grounded in his conviction that religious truth must be subjectively appropriated. Kierkegaard's project is to remove the "enormous illusion" of Christendom by introducing these subjective elements into it.² He is aware that his ability to accomplish this task is limited. No human being can bring about faith in another individual. That is left to God alone. One can, however, provide the occasion for a human being to receive the condition of faith from God. Such an occasion, according to Johannes Climacus in *Philosophical Fragments*, is one that makes the individual aware of herself and of the decision she

¹ J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 116-17.

² Søren Kierkegaard, "The Point of View for My Work as an Author" in *The Point of View* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 41. Hereafter "The Point of View."

must make concerning her relation to God.³ Given this commitment, the primary aim of Kierkegaard's religious communication is not to convey objective knowledge about religious truth but to make the reader aware of her relation to this truth. In order to do this, Kierkegaard deploys pseudonymous authors as the means by which he engages the reader existing in the aesthetic existence stage in such a way as to introduce her to the subjective categories of the ethical and religious stages and thereby to make the reader aware of her responsibility for her own existence as a single individual before God.⁴

After discussing the role of indirect communication within Kierkegaard's authorship, I will claim that indirect communication is dependent upon its performative nature to accomplish its goal. The performative nature of indirect communication—understood through Austin's double-conventions—enables Kierkegaard to alter the objective mode of thinking about and of relating to God which was prevalent in Christendom in order to bring about a subjective consideration of one's relation to God. I will highlight two points at which Kierkegaard's indirect communication may be seen to be performative. The first is in the double-conventional use of pseudonymous authors as the means by which Kierkegaard introduces the “decisive qualifications of the essentially Christian” to the reader.⁵ This introducing may be understood as an illocutionary act because it has the nature of illocutions described above. That is, it is performed according to human conventions for introducing and it displays each of the effects of Austin's illocutions. This analysis will also reveal that the precise point of performativity is to be found in the way in which indirect communication takes effect. That is, it takes effect by shifting the mode of thinking and speaking

³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 102-4. Hereafter *PF*.

⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vol. 1, A-E ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967), 302.

⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, “On My Work as an Author” in *The Point of View* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 7fn. Hereafter “On My Work.”

from the objective mode of Christendom to the subjective mode of the religious stage. The second point of performativity which I will highlight is the perlocutionary act of making aware, since this is the effect Kierkegaard intends to have upon the reader. For Kierkegaard, this awareness should lead to a subsequent effect, namely a decision concerning one's relation to God. The performativity in these two effects may be understood as perlocutionary acts since, while intended by Kierkegaard, they are not necessarily tied to the illocution. This fits, generally, with what Kierkegaard thinks he can accomplish since he recognizes that he cannot bring his reader to decide to relate herself to God. He can only become an occasion for this decision.

In sum, with the help of Austin's speech act theory, this essay will clarify the way which indirect communication works in Kierkegaard's project. It will highlight specifically that Kierkegaard seeks to accomplish the task of making his reader aware of her relation to God through the deployment of performative language. To be sure, Kierkegaard does not think in terms of Austin's speech act theory, but his use of indirect communication indicates that he recognizes the performative function of language and seeks to use it in its performative capacity to make his reader aware that she must make a decision concerning her relation to God.

PART II

PERFORMATIVITY IN J.L. AUSTIN'S *HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS*

Introduction

J.L. Austin's book *How to Do Things with Words*, which was first given as the William James Lectures in 1955 at Harvard University, argues that language is fundamentally performative, meaning that utterances do not primarily make statements which are verifiably true or false but rather that utterances, like other non-verbal acts, are actions performing certain functions. This section will highlight the main ideas of Austin's theory in an effort to make clear in later stages of the essay how Kierkegaard's indirect communication may be illuminated by it. Austin's distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts stands out as most important for understanding the performativity of Kierkegaard's indirect communication. After a brief description highlighting Austin's taxonomy of speech acts and the various categories of illocutions, I will explain the nature of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts as they relate to conventionality. For Austin, illocutionary acts must be performed according to human conventions, while perlocutionary acts have no such requirement. Understanding the necessity of human convention in certain types of performative language will be helpful later in the essay when I suggest that Kierkegaard used the convention of introduction in order to make his reader aware of her relation to God. In this section, I will also explain Austin's "in" and "by" formulas, and especially his concept of double-conventionality through the use of the "by" formula, since they will be useful in accounting for the possibility of indirect communication of the sort Kierkegaard is engaged in. I will then discuss the effects of illocutions and perlocutions. While the perlocutionary effects can be described without reference to the illocution, Austin shows that illocutions themselves have effects which adhere more closely

to the illocution itself. This, too, will be helpful in later chapters for understanding how Kierkegaard's writings can be taken as performative.

A Taxonomy of Speech Acts

Austin identifies three distinct yet related ways that utterances may be understood to perform. The first and most basic sense he calls the performance of a "locutionary act." Austin writes,

to say something is in the full normal sense to do something—which includes the utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain words in a certain construction, and the utterance of them with a certain 'meaning' in the favourite philosophical sense of that word, i.e. with a certain sense and with a certain reference.⁶

Austin gives names to each of the criteria for a locutionary act. A phonetic act is the performance of verbal articulation of certain sounds, for instance the utterance "go" requires using the vocal chords to form the particular sound. The phatic act is the uttering of certain sounds in accordance with a vocabulary and grammar. "Go," uttered by a speaker of English, is done in accordance with the English vocabulary word "go." Finally, a rhetic act is that which has a definite sense and reference. The difference between a rhetic act and a phatic one may be seen in indirect statements like "He said I was to go to 'the minister,' but he did not say which minister."⁷ The direct statement being reported here—that I was to go to the minister—constitutes only a phatic act since there is no definite reference for "the minister." However, the indirect report "He said I was to go to 'the minister,' but he did not say which minister" constitutes a rhetic act precisely because "the minister" gains a definite reference by being placed within the indirect formula.

Austin spends most of his lectures distinguishing between the second and third senses of performative language, between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Put briefly,

⁶ J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 94.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 96-7.

illocutionary acts are those acts performed *in* saying something while perlocutionary acts are those performed *by* saying something. Austin develops formulas for each of these to show how the performativity of certain utterances can be made clear. The formula for each is as follows: “In saying *x* I was doing *y*,” and “By saying *x* I did *y*.”⁸ One of Austin’s examples will suffice to show how this works. The locution “He said to me, ‘Shoot her!’,” which has a definite sense and reference, is an illocutionary act which can be expressed in the following way: “He urged (or advised, ordered, &c.) me to shoot her.”⁹ Austin is here showing that the same locutionary act can be understood as having any number of forces, for instance, the force of urging, of advising or of ordering. The illocutionary act is determined by the particular way in which the sentence is used on a particular occasion. Any of the three illocutionary forces mentioned for the above sentence (and possibly others, like say, indicating: “Shoot *her!*”) are legitimate ways of understanding the force of the sentence, but only one is being used in any particular instance.¹⁰ In terms of the “in” formula, the performance may be expressed as, “In saying ‘shoot her!’, he was urging (or ordering, or advising).”

Later in his lectures, Austin categorizes illocutions into five groups based on their particular performative functions. While at this point in the essay, it is simply important to know that there are numerous forces which locutions may have and that each force may be said to perform a different illocutionary act, it will be helpful for subsequent arguments to lay out Austin’s five classifications of performative verbs.¹¹ The first class of verbs, called “verdictives,” are those which deliver a verdict or a finding of some kind. Verdictives have a clear relation to truth and falsity insofar as they state what is the case. This class includes verbs like “rule,” “value,” “rate,”

⁸ Ibid., 122.

⁹ Ibid., 101-2.

¹⁰ Ibid., 98-103.

¹¹ For what follows, Ibid., 148-164.

“understand,” and “assess.” The second class, which Austin calls “exercitives,” includes words which involve exercising rights or powers or advocating that something should be the case. Words in this class include “appoint,” “dismiss,” “order,” “proclaim,” “announce,” and “command.” The third grouping is called “commisives,” and they “commit the speaker to a certain course of action.”¹² It includes words such as “promise,” “undertake,” “intend,” and “oppose.” The fourth class is called “behabitives,” which are words which a speaker uses in order to adopt a certain attitude toward something. Verbs like “apologize,” “sympathize,” “commend,” “welcome,” and “bless” have a behabitive force. The final classification is that of “expositives,” which Austin takes to be verbs which are involved with “the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of usages and of references.”¹³ This grouping includes words such as “affirm,” “inform,” “tell,” “illustrate,” “argue,” and “explain.” Austin takes care to point out that the verbs in these classes often overlap and share some of the same characteristics when used in certain contexts. As such, they should be understood as “general families of related and overlapping speech acts” rather than as categories with hard and fast boundaries.¹⁴ With this in mind, we may return to a consideration of the last type of performative act.

The final sense in which utterances may be understood as performative Austin calls “perlocutionary acts.” He explains:

Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the audience, or of the speaker or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them; and we may then say, thinking of this, that the speaker has performed an act in the nomenclature of which reference is made either only obliquely, or even, not at all, to the performance of the locutionary or illocutionary act.¹⁵

¹² Ibid., 157.

¹³ Ibid., 161.

¹⁴ Ibid., 150.

¹⁵ Ibid., 101.

Perlocutionary acts always involve the consequences of other acts. Where the illocutionary act is the act performed *in* saying something, the perlocutionary act is the act performed *by* saying something. To take Austin's example again, if the locution "He said to me 'Shoot her!'" has the illocutionary force of urging, then the perlocutionary act could be one of persuading and thus could be expressed by the sentence "He *persuaded* me to shoot her" or "He *got me to* (or made me, &c.) shoot her."¹⁶ In terms of the "by" formula, the act could be stated "By saying 'shoot her!,' he was persuading." In this way it may be seen how the perlocutionary force of an utterance relates to the illocution. An illocution may have a particular effect upon the hearer which causes the hearer to perform some act or to have a particular emotion or thought. This act, thought or emotion may be described without reference to, or with only vague reference to, the illocution, as is demonstrated by the fact that any number of illocutions, and even non-locutionary acts, could be referenced by the perlocution "he got me to shoot her." Moreover, while the perlocution may be intended by the speaker of the illocution, it also may be unintended. For example, when I am urged to "shoot her," instead of being persuaded to shoot her, I may be alarmed or offended or worried that someone would urge me to do such a thing.

Austin notes that the normal ways in which humans speak about performing certain acts often confuses the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and he spends a great deal of time attempting to sort out these confusions in order to make clear precisely what is meant when the phrase "the use of language" is employed. These distinctions provide insights into Austin's theory and will also help illumine how Kierkegaard's indirect communication is performative. The differences center around two major ideas. The first idea has to do with the performance of an act according to conventions. For an illocution to be performed, it must be

¹⁶ Ibid., 102. Emphasis mine.

conducted according to a convention, while a perlocution has no such requirement. Austin provides certain criteria for determining whether particular utterances are done according to a human convention and thus whether they are illocutionary or perlocutionary actions. The second major idea that distinguishes illocutions and perlocutions is their effects. While effects are most naturally associated with the perlocutionary act as I have just explained, Austin argues that illocutionary acts have effects as well. These effects are more closely associated with the utterance itself. I will take these distinctions in turn.

Illocutions, Perlocutions and Conventionality

The first distinction between illocutions and perlocutions may be seen when the question is asked concerning the conventionality of an act. Austin is clear that illocutions must be performed according to certain conventions while perlocutions need not be. When Austin speaks of convention, he refers to generally accepted human ways of performing actions. To take one of Austin's famous examples, "I do" is considered to perform the act of marrying only when it is said under the appropriate conditions: in this case, in the appropriate setting (a church or courthouse or ship at sea) with the appropriate people (a priest or judge or ship captain and two unmarried people). Saying "I do" outside of these conditions, say, at a basketball game or when one is already married, nullifies the convention and thus cannot be the act of marrying.¹⁷

The conventions for marrying provide an obvious case though, to be sure, not all conventions are as clear. For example, what are the appropriate conditions for welcoming? In welcoming, there is more ambiguity surrounding whether or not a locution may be said to perform

¹⁷ In Lecture II, Austin gives a fuller taxonomy of "infelicities" of performative language than the ones I have given in this example. The examples I have given fall into the first class of infelicities which Austin calls "misinvocations." Other classes involve "misexecutions" and "abuses" in which either the words are not performed correctly or they are said inauthentically. (Cf. *Ibid.*, 12-24).

the illocutionary act of welcoming.¹⁸ In order to adjudicate this, Austin provides four tests for performativity which narrow down the conventions implicit in a given illocutionary act. However, before turning to these tests, it will be helpful to explain briefly the context in which these tests are given, namely in Austin's explanation of an explicit performative formula. After explaining the function of this formula in Austin's thought, I will return to Austin's tests for performativity in an effort to expound more fully the conventionality of illocutionary acts.

Austin's search for performative language leads him to suppose that he might be able to reduce all performative verbs to an explicit performative form. Explicit performatives take the grammatical form of a first person singular present active indicative verb. Austin distinguishes explicit performatives from primary performatives. Primary performatives are vague as to the way in which they are to be understood while explicit performatives make clear precisely how that utterance is to be taken. For example, the primary performative "I shall be there" may be variously understood as a promise, as an expression of an intention, or as a prediction. Reducing an utterance to its explicit form makes clear precisely how it is to be understood. Thus, "I shall be there" can be stated as the explicit performative, "I promise I shall be there," in order to show that the illocution is to be taken as a promise.¹⁹ Placing performative utterances in the form of explicit performatives is helpful for the present argument because it enables us to understand clearly how performative language functions according to conventions. If an utterance may be reduced to the explicit performative formula, then it may be understood as operating according to a convention. Austin gets at the conventionality by highlighting cases in which related words can or cannot be placed in the explicit performative formula.

¹⁸ Austin, 78ff.

¹⁹ Ibid., 68-9.

With this in mind, we may now return to Austin's four tests for performativity. Austin's tests purport to identify which verbs operate in an explicitly performative way and, closer to the purposes of this essay, to identify which verbs operate according to a convention such that they may be understood in terms of their illocutionary force. In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of these tests, Austin chooses a class of verbs—the behabitive class mentioned above—whose performative function is somewhat ambiguous. Cases in this category “trade on [the] ambivalence” of instances in which it is unclear whether an expression is being used as a performative or as a descriptor.²⁰ These cases provide prime examples for Austin's tests for performativity. A verb which Austin uses in several of his tests, the verb “welcome,” falls into this class because there is an ambiguity between the performative nature of “I bid you welcome” and the “half-descriptive” phrase “I welcome.”²¹ For this reason, it will be beneficial to use it as an example here.

The tests are as follows.²² First, can one ask “Did he *really* [do this or that]?” One may in fact question whether a person welcomes an event or a person when he uses the phrase “I welcome.” For instance, it may be questioned whether the sentence “I welcome the opportunity to go on vacation” is really a performance of welcoming or simply a description of one's attitude toward going on vacation. On the other hand, one may not legitimately question whether the utterance “I bid you welcome” is an instance of the performance of bidding one welcome. To bid someone welcome simply *is* to bid that person welcome.

For the second test, one may ask whether one can welcome another without saying anything. The answer is, of course, yes. One may welcome a guest into one's home by showing

²⁰ Ibid., 78. Austin observes that this phenomenon is found not only in behabitives but also in verdictives and expositives.

²¹ Ibid., 78-82 and 85-88.

²² For the following paragraphs on Austin's tests for performativity, see Ibid., 79-80.

hospitality to her without ever saying anything at all about welcoming. One may not, however, bid another person welcome apart from saying “I bid you welcome” or something like it.

Third, one may ask whether one could insert an adverb like “deliberately” before the supposed performative. If one can insert “deliberately” before the word “welcome,” then it would be clear that “I welcome” is in fact being used as a performative, since performatives in Austin’s theory are just like all other actions and can therefore be done deliberately. One can indeed say, “I deliberately bade him welcome,” but not “I deliberately welcome the opportunity to go on vacation.” Welcoming in this latter sense is not performative but descriptive.²³

Finally, one may ask whether the utterance of the purported performative can be literally false. This is a reference to Austin’s initial point of departure in which he disagrees with the prevailing notion in his time that all speech was either true or false. It may be literally false that one welcomed another if one turned another away from one’s home rather than bringing the other in. However, it may not be literally true or false that one bids another welcome, since to say “I bid you welcome” *is* to bid someone welcome. This is not to say, however, that the performance of bidding someone welcome cannot be, as Austin puts it, unhappy. One can say “I bid you welcome,” and any number of infelicities can occur: the one who is bid welcome may not hear the speaker, or the one who is bidding another welcome may do so begrudgingly or sarcastically. This is all possible. What cannot be denied, though, is that when these infelicities are not present, then one does in fact bid another welcome.

²³ Of course, one has the ability in English to *say* “I deliberately welcomed him” instead of “I deliberately bade him welcome.” This reveals precisely the confusion of language that Austin is describing. “I welcome” is a half-descriptive word rather than a full descriptor, meaning that the word tends to slide between performative and descriptive uses. The point, though, is that “I welcome” is not a pure performative whereas “I bid you welcome” is. It should also be noted here that ultimately Austin will reject this provisional distinction between performatives and descriptives. A descriptive use of “I welcome” is in fact performative. However, it performs the act of describing, not of welcoming.

What is important to gain from the preceding explanation is that Austin establishes the conventionality of performative language, specifically of illocutionary acts, through the development of the explicit performative formula. Whether a particular act can be reduced to an explicit performative formula depends upon its ability to pass the tests Austin has set forth. For Austin, the conventionality of an act is demonstrated by the utterance's ability to be placed in this formula. Austin, of course, notices that some acts like implying and insinuating seem to have an illocutionary character but cannot be formulated as explicit performatives. For example, one cannot say "I insinuate that..." These cases will be dealt with momentarily. But before we do, we must turn to Austin's discussion of perlocutions and conventionality.

In contrast to illocutions, perlocutions are not performed according to conventions. That is, they cannot be placed into the explicit performative formula, nor can they pass all of Austin's tests for performativity. As Austin notes, "we can say 'I argue that' or 'I warn you that' but we cannot say 'I convince you that' or 'I alarm you that.'"²⁴ Austin's comments on the unconventionality of perlocutionary acts show the lack of a necessary relation between an utterance and the perlocutionary act performed. He writes, "Further, we may entirely clear up whether someone was arguing or not without touching on the question of whether he was convincing anyone or not."²⁵ The illocutionary act of arguing does not necessitate the perlocutionary act of convincing. One's arguing could be unconvincing, or the hearer could be convinced completely apart from one's arguing, but in both cases, one is nonetheless arguing. In any case, none of these can be placed into Austin's explicit performative formula and consequently cannot be considered to be performed according to convention.

²⁴ Ibid., 103-4.

²⁵ Ibid., 104.

Now that the conventionality of language has been described, it will be helpful to return to the basic distinction between illocutions and perlocutions in order to make clear a more complex understanding of performativity which will be operative in later chapters. I have mentioned that Austin provisionally describes illocutions as the act performed *in* saying something while perlocutions are acts performed *by* saying something. While this distinction holds up generally, Austin is careful to say that it will not ultimately provide a satisfying test for distinguishing between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. There are too many instances in which ordinary, imprecise language blurs the distinction Austin is trying to make. There are instances in which the “in” formula can be used to describe perlocutionary acts and the “by” formula can be used to describe illocutionary ones. While it is not necessary to review all of these possibilities, there is one case which is significant for the possibility of understanding Kierkegaard’s project of indirect communication in terms its performativity.

This particular case occurs when the “by” formula is used with illocutionary verbs to indicate an action performed as a means to another act. According to Austin, there are at least two kinds of “means-to-end” senses. The first simply involves using verbal, as opposed to non-verbal, means to accomplish something. The locution “By saying ‘I do,’ I was marrying her” demonstrates this case.²⁶ The second case, which Austin calls a “double-convention” is most interesting for this essay and requires more attention. A double-convention occurs, Austin writes,

When one performative utterance is used as an indirect means to perform another act. Thus in the example: “By saying ‘I bid three clubs’ I informed him that I had no diamonds,” I use the performative “I bid three clubs” as an indirect means to informing him (which is also an illocutionary act).²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., 130.

²⁷ Ibid., 130.

This brief explanation of double-conventions suggests that one may speak in an indirect way in order to perform a certain act. Austin has in mind the use of an illocution in order to perform both the stated illocution (i.e. *In* saying “I bid three clubs” the speaker was in fact bidding) and an additional illocution (i.e. informing the hearer that the speaker had no diamonds). Austin’s brief comments here clear up an earlier confusion concerning types of speech like insinuating and implying that seem to be performative in Austin’s sense but cannot be put into the explicit performative formula.²⁸ In other words, it is clear now that Austin’s theory can support the notion that locutions can perform multiple illocutionary acts at once. That is, illocutions can participate in layers of conventionality such that multiple acts may be performed, as in the case of the bridge game above.

Illocutions, Perlocutions and Their Effects

The second major distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts is the criteria for their effects. In normal speech and thought, the doing of an action, whether a physical or verbal act, is distinct from its consequences. In Austin’s schema, the consequences of an action, what we normally think of as the effects of doing or saying something, are to be identified with the perlocutionary act rather than the illocutionary act. As I have said, these effects are not necessarily related to the performance of the illocution itself. The consequence of the utterance “The bull is going to charge” may be to make the hearer afraid or it may be to create interest in the hearer. Thus, the perlocutionary effect of an illocution may be intended or unintended. In either case, as I have said, the perlocutionary effect is not directly related to the performance of the illocutionary act.²⁹ Austin writes,

It is certain that the perlocutionary sense of ‘doing an action’ must somehow be ruled out as irrelevant to the sense in which an utterance, if the issuing of it is the ‘doing of an action,’

²⁸ Ibid., 105.

²⁹ Ibid.

is a performative... For clearly *any*, or almost any, perlocutionary act is liable to be brought off, in sufficiently special circumstances, by the issuing, with or without calculation, of any utterance whatsoever, and in particular by a straightforward constative utterance.³⁰

Despite the lack of a necessary relation between an illocution and a particular perlocution, perlocutions are consequences of illocutions and are thus related in some way to them. Austin describes this relation in terms of objects and sequels. A perlocutionary object is *intended* by the speaker whereas a sequel is a separate, not necessarily intended, act or consequence. For example, an illocution, say the act of warning, can achieve its perlocutionary object of alerting the hearer, but it can also bring about the perlocutionary sequel of alarming or frightening the hearer.³¹

On the other hand, the effects of illocutionary acts must be more closely tied to the illocution itself. Austin gives three ways in which illocutions may be said to have effects. First, illocutions achieve a certain effect upon the audience. Essentially, this first effect may be equated to securing the understanding of the utterance. Austin says, “I cannot be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense.”³² The second way has to do with what Austin calls “taking effect.”³³ Austin only provides one paragraph of explanation here, but taking effect, it seems, alters human ways of relating to a thing according to certain human conventions. Austin writes,

The illocutionary act ‘takes effect’ in certain ways, as distinguished from producing consequences in the sense of bringing about states of affairs in the ‘normal’ way, i.e. changes in the natural course of events. Thus ‘I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*’ has the effect of naming or christening the ship; then certain subsequent acts such as referring to it as the *Generalissimo Stalin* will be out of order.³⁴

³⁰ Ibid., 110. Original emphasis.

³¹ Ibid., 118. Alerting must be considered to be a perlocutionary object since the act of alerting is not necessary to the illocution. That is, I may warn you that the bull is going to charge with the intent of alerting you to the danger of a charging bull, but you may not be alerted at all. Instead, you may be intrigued by the possibility of a charging bull, and you may move closer. Your being alerted, while intended by my warning, is not necessarily related to my warning.

³² Ibid., 116.

³³ Ibid., 117.

³⁴ Ibid.

The altering of relations is not necessarily a physical or tangible alteration but one that follows certain human conventions which makes subsequent acts illegitimate. To take Austin's example, the ship that is named by appropriate people in appropriate circumstances is named in such a way as to make illegitimate other names applied to the ship.

The final effect of illocutionary acts is that it, by convention, invites a response. An order requires a response of obedience, and a promise invites the response of fulfillment. There is some degree of flexibility in the form such a response can take. A response can be either "one-way" or "two-way," meaning that the response itself may require a subsequent response (a "sequel") or it may not. It should be noted that the response which is invited need not be a verbal one, as in the case of obeying an order. It should, however, be part of the convention for the performing of a certain action.³⁵

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to articulate J.L. Austin's speech act theory and, in particular, to make clear the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in order to show in the following sections the ways in which Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication can be understood to succeed. The two major differences between illocutions and perlocutions are the conventionality of illocutions and the nature of illocutionary effects as necessarily related to the act of speech itself. It is equally important to understand that, in his articulation of the nature of illocutions, Austin allows for the possibility of speech acts operating according to a double-conventionality. These aspects of Austin's theory will be important for understanding Kierkegaard's indirect communication in terms of their performativity, since, as I will argue in the

³⁵ Ibid.

last chapter, these elements are precisely what allows Kierkegaard's indirect approach to be understood in a performative way.

PART III

KIERKEGAARD AND INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

Introduction

In this section, I move to Søren Kierkegaard's understanding of his pseudonymous writings and the function he thinks they perform. I will argue that Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors are the indirect means by which he accomplishes his primary task of introducing Christianity into Christendom. Indirect communication is reflected, communicating not merely a specific objective content but the speaker's personal relation to the truth. It will be shown in this section that indirect communication as Kierkegaard intends it creates the necessary subjective tension within his reader to make her aware of her relation to God. First, I will situate Kierkegaard's project of introducing reflected religious truth in relation to his context in 19th century Denmark. Kierkegaard calls the contemporary age in Denmark "Christendom" because everyone in Denmark seemingly was a Christian "as a matter of course," and because it was, as he saw it, overrun with Hegelian speculative philosophy and theology which claimed to view the world, including the Christian faith, in objective totality.³⁶ I will then show how Kierkegaard interprets his cultural and religious milieu in terms of existence stages. This interpretive framework allows Kierkegaard to insist that Christendom lacks the subjective relation to the essentially Christian and must therefore be introduced to essential Christian categories. This introduction becomes Kierkegaard's main task for his authorship. Kierkegaard does this not by speaking the truth directly but through reflected, indirect communication, thereby becoming an occasion for the reader to receive the truth from God. Finally, I will show how his task of introducing Christianity into Christendom is enacted by the pseudonymous authorship. The pseudonyms are the means by which he addresses his reader

³⁶ "The Point of View," 41.

within the aesthetic sphere, where he perceives most people live, and by which he introduces reflected ideas and truths into that aesthetic existence in order to help his reader reflect on her relationship to God.

The “Enormous Illusion” of Christendom in Kierkegaard’s Denmark

The context in 19th century Denmark in which everyone just is a Christian was called by Kierkegaard “Christendom.”³⁷ For Kierkegaard, Christendom refers to two interrelated phenomena. The first is the state of Denmark as a Christian country in which all were assumed to be—and indeed, all considered themselves to be—Christian because they were baptized into the Christian church as infants. One became a Christian as “a matter of course” precisely because one was born into Christianity.³⁸ From this point of view, becoming a Christian required no thought or reflection upon one’s existence or one’s relation to God. Kierkegaard encapsulates this well in his posthumously published account of his authorship, “The Point of View for My Work as an Author,”

What does it mean, after all, that these thousands and thousands as a matter of course call themselves Christians! These many, many people, of whom by far the great majority, according to everything that can be discerned, have their lives in entirely different categories, something one can ascertain by the simplest observation! People who perhaps never once go to church, never think about God, never name his name except when they curse! People to whom it has never occurred that their lives should have some duty to God, people who either maintain that a certain civil impunity is the highest or do not find even this to be entirely necessary! Yet all these people, even those who insist that there is no God, they are all Christians, call themselves Christians, are recognized as Christians by the state, are buried as Christians by the church, are discharged as Christians to eternity!³⁹

The second phenomenon that comprises the concept of Christendom according to Kierkegaard, is the speculative Hegelian philosophy prevalent in nineteenth century Denmark. The speculative thought Kierkegaard critiques is that which attempts to view the world in objective

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

terms through a world-historical perspective. To Kierkegaard, speculative Hegelian philosophy moves away from what is essential to Christianity—the subjective, individual appropriation of Christianity through faith—to an objective, systematic understanding of the Christian faith which “declares itself to be the highest development within Christianity” but is devoid of any claim upon individual human beings.⁴⁰

Kierkegaard is here identifying precisely the problem of Christendom as he sees it. Those who consider themselves to be Christians but who find in Christianity no duty to God, no claim upon the self, are under an “enormous illusion.”⁴¹ In Kierkegaard’s thought, there can be no possibility of objective knowledge of religious truth, only a subjective relation to it in which one believes it to be true. Christendom is not Christianity but rather, according to Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Johannes Climacus, a “baptized paganism” in which no claim is placed upon the individual and no individual appropriation of Christian faith is needed.⁴² That is, those who live in Christendom, who go about their lives without any real thought of God while assuming that they are in fact Christians, operate under the most serious of delusions, since what it means to be, or better, to become, a Christian is to relate oneself to Christianity—and more specifically to Christ, the God-man—in an inward way, namely in faith.

Kierkegaard’s Existence Stages

Kierkegaard makes his critique of Christendom by developing his concept of existence spheres or existence stages. While the existence spheres are operative throughout his works, Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Johannes Climacus gives the clearest explanation of them in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Kierkegaard refers to them variously as stages or spheres. He

⁴⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, vol 1, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 361. Hereafter *CUP*.

⁴¹ “The Point of View,” 41. Cf. also *CUP*, 366-68.

⁴² *CUP*, 368.

calls them spheres because they may be understood as forms of existence within which people live, potentially for an entire lifetime. However, they may also be understood as stages because one may move between them throughout one's life. Because this project seeks to highlight the specific way in which Kierkegaard attempts to move his reader to higher forms of existence, I will refer to these categories as stages. A brief account of the stages will be helpful for understanding Kierkegaard's project.⁴³

The lowest stage is the aesthetic, which is characterized by possibility, never actuality. It neither decides nor concludes. Aesthetic existence may be expressed, on the one hand, as action upon base physical desires or on the other hand, through insatiable desires for knowledge, as in the speculative philosophy described above. The aesthetic person senses no commitment to God, to the ethical, to the truth or even to himself. The aesthete is defined by the immediate, by the present moment, by what is possible, rather than what is actual and eternal. Ultimately, according to Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms, the one within the aesthetic sphere is not an existing individual, for human existence requires choosing oneself in actuality. However, in the aesthetic, the self is never chosen. The aesthete remains within the realm of the possible and therefore unknown to himself in "hiddenness, depression, illusory passion and despair."⁴⁴

A human being comes into existence as an individual in the next stage, the ethical. This stage represents an upbuilding of the individual. In the ethical stage, there is a shift from possibility to actuality. If aesthetic existence is defined by fascination with various possibilities of existence, the ethical is defined by the decision to be a particular way and to exist as a particular acting individual. Moreover, in the ethical stage, the individual recognizes herself as relating to the eternal

⁴³ For a fuller explanation of the existence stages and border territories, cf. Mark A. Tietjen, *Kierkegaard, Communication and Virtue: Authorship as Edification* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 34-44.

⁴⁴ *CUP*, 254; and Tietjen, 36-39.

and the universal.⁴⁵ The ethical person chooses herself and takes responsibility for herself as an individual, deciding to be defined by her relation to universal ethical laws.

The final existence stage is the religious. In it, Climacus claims, the religious person recognizes that she cannot truly become herself apart from a relation to God. The ethical cannot lead to full human existence because it cannot bring about this God-relationship. The religious individual, however, chooses to relate herself to God inwardly. There are, according to Climacus, two forms of religiousness. Religiousness A is a movement beyond the ethical insofar as one relates oneself to God, but it is not the religiousness of Christianity since the relation to God remains within oneself.⁴⁶ Religiousness B is the decisively Christian existence sphere, the sphere of transcendence wherein the upbuilding and self-becoming comes from outside the individual when God enters into time. In this way, Religiousness B is considered to be paradoxical. One cannot move into this category on one's own, but rather needs divine aid.⁴⁷ There is much that could be explained here, but what is important for this essay is that the religious stage, and specifically Religiousness B, indicates an individual's recognition that she cannot relate herself to God—and thus truly become herself—within the universal existence of the ethical stage. Religiousness requires an absolute relation to the absolute, to God, rather than to one's universal ethical responsibility.⁴⁸

Between each stage lie border territories in which contradictions occur in the existence of those living in a particular stage. These contradictions require choices to be made concerning one's relation to oneself and to God, and these choices determine whether one moves from one stage of existence to another. Again, it is not necessary to go into detail concerning the nature and types of

⁴⁵ Tietjen, 40.

⁴⁶ *CUP*, 560.

⁴⁷ *CUP*, 560-1; 566ff.

⁴⁸ Tietjen, 41-43. Cf. also *CUP*, 387ff.

border territories. What is important is to note that what is required, according to Kierkegaard's scheme, is that one become aware of the contradiction within one's existence, that one recognize one's need to relate oneself to something higher—for example, to the ethical, to God or to the God-man—and that one then make a decision concerning one's relation to that higher reality.

Kierkegaard understands those living within Christendom to be living, for the most part, in the aesthetic stage. Caught up as it was in the speculative philosophy of Hegel and the unreflectiveness of the state-run church, Christendom did nothing to promote the self-becoming of individuals. Thus, individuals within the aesthetic stage existed in a false-security, believing themselves to be Christians but in reality having no relation to God. This situation and Kierkegaard's interpretation of it through the framework of existence stages shapes Kierkegaard's task for his authorship.

Kierkegaard's Task: Introducing Christianity to Christendom

With this background, we may now attempt to understand the way Kierkegaard approaches the problem of Christendom and specifically, the unique role that indirect communication through the pseudonyms plays in making his reader aware of her relation to God. Kierkegaard believes Christianity to have been abolished under the reign of Christendom. Christendom traps people *en masse* within the aesthetic existence stage and deludes them into believing they are truly Christians. Consequently, Kierkegaard aims to destroy this "enormous illusion" by developing a strategy whereby he can "introduce Christianity into Christendom."⁴⁹ Through this project, he intends to provide the occasion through his writings for his reader to move from existence in the aesthetic stage to true selfhood before God in the religious stage. Kierkegaard maintained at the

⁴⁹ "The Point of View," 50. And Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 36. Hereafter *PC*.

end of his life that his entire authorship, from first to last, was religious, meaning that his entire writing project is aimed at this single goal.⁵⁰

To be sure, Kierkegaard realizes there are limits to his ability to bring about a change in the subjective relation between God and another human being. A human being cannot bring about faith and consequently, cannot effect a relationship between God and another individual. This is seen most clearly in *Philosophical Fragments*, the pamphlet by Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus. A brief review of the relevant features of Climacus' pamphlet will provide a clearer sense of the limits of what Kierkegaard believes he can do to bring about the religious upbuilding of his reader. Climacus begins *Philosophical Fragments* with a discussion on the Socratic method. For Socrates, the eternal truth is in each person, but it has been forgotten and must therefore be recollected. To be able to bring forth the truth, to be able to give birth to the truth, in another human being was prohibited Socrates by the god. Only the god is able to give birth to the truth in a human being. The highest any fellow human being can hope for is to be able to deliver the truth for another person. Socrates understood himself to be a "midwife," delivering the truth another person has within herself. This was precisely the role Socrates sought to play: to be the *occasion* for the truth, to be the midwife through whom the individual discovers the truth for herself.⁵¹

In *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus ultimately rejects the possibility of the Socratic recollection of the truth, opting instead to understand the self as existing in a position of untruth. In this state, the human being has forfeited both the truth and the condition necessary for learning the truth on her own. Where Socratic recollection assumes that one may retrieve the truth from within oneself, Climacus asserts that each individual's existence in untruth means that no access

⁵⁰ "On My Work," 6.

⁵¹ *PF*, 9-11.

to the truth may be gained apart from the help of the god. The god must give both the condition for learning the truth and the truth itself.⁵² Because of this, Climacus calls the god a “teacher,” a “savior,” a “deliverer,” and a “reconciler.”⁵³

While he rejects the possibility of recollection, Climacus nonetheless retains the possibility of a human being functioning as an occasion for the truth in another. The relevance of *Philosophical Fragments* to this essay concerns the role played by other human beings in helping an individual in this process of rebirth. There can be no confusion about whether a fellow human being can bring about the truth in another. For Climacus as for Socrates, the maieutic, that is, the role of the midwife, is the highest role a fellow human being may play. However, the moment of decision in which the individual comes into existence through faith in the paradox comes about by means of an “occasion.”⁵⁴ For those contemporaries of the God-man, this occasion was the historical situation in which a human being claimed to be God and by which each human being was made aware of the decision facing her: whether or not to believe this claim. In the present day, Climacus argues, the occasion for belief is the report of the contemporary believer. It is important to note that the report of the believer which provides occasion for faith *will not* take the form of a historical account or a philosophical treatise. Such forms do not, according to Climacus, deal with the object of faith. These are the products of the objective and speculative philosophy in Christendom. The believer’s report must be given “in such a way that no one can accept it directly and immediately.”⁵⁵ That is, the form of a believer’s report cannot be a direct statement of historical fact or general objective truth, for then the receiver encounters not the paradoxical object of faith—the God-man—but rather a proposition put forward to be accepted by the understanding.

⁵² Ibid., 15.

⁵³ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁴ *PF*, 102. Original emphasis.

⁵⁵ *PF*, 104.

A historical account, Climacus argues, blurs the content of faith and returns one to the speculative, objectivizing activity of Christendom. In contrast, the indirect report that “I believe and have believed that this [the coming of the god-man into time] happened, *although it is foolishness to the understanding and an offense to the human heart*” is addressed to faith, not understanding.⁵⁶ Such a statement is indirect in two ways. First, it has the grammatical form of indirect statement: “I believe that...” In this formula, the content of the communication, that the God-man has come into time, is something that is believed by the speaker, not an objective claim of historical fact, and it is something which must be accepted and believed by the hearer as well. Second, the statement addresses itself for belief not understanding. The emphatic qualifying statement that the speaker believes “although it is foolishness...and an offense...” ensures that the confession may not be received as a statement for consideration and assent. It is rather a communication to be received by faith, and this only with the help of God.⁵⁷ In this sense we may say that the communication is reflected. The communication reveals the interiority of the speaker and requires the same measure of reflection and interiority by the hearer.⁵⁸

The concept of the maieutic and the careful way in which Climacus forms his statements concerning proper, reflected religious communication provides insight into what Kierkegaard himself is attempting to do throughout his authorship. Kierkegaard, like Socrates and Johannes Climacus, seeks to become the occasion for his reader to believe in the god-man. Like Climacus, Kierkegaard believes that becoming this occasion for his reader requires that his communication take a particular form. He is convinced that to successfully destroy the illusion of Christendom, he must begin with the categories of Christendom itself—the aesthetic, the speculative, the objective,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 102. Original emphasis.

⁵⁷ Ibid. cf. also 100.

⁵⁸ “On My Work,” 7.

and the possible—and introduce into Christendom the categories of the religious—the eternal, the God-man, etc.—in such a way that the reader is made aware of her relation to them. As for Climacus, this requires indirect, reflected forms of communication. Kierkegaard explains that his writing “has been decisively marked by *reflection*, or the form of communication used is that of reflection. ‘Direct communication’ is: to communicate the truth directly; ‘communication in reflection’ is: to *deceive into the truth*.”⁵⁹ A description of this statement will be helpful for understanding precisely how the pseudonyms function in Kierkegaard’s project.

Direct communication is the form of communication within Christendom. It communicates “the what,” a certain objective content which may be accepted or rejected. It is talk *about* the truth rather than an existential relation to the truth.⁶⁰ Climacus clarifies the limitations of direct communication when he writes,

the misfortune with our age was just that it had come to know too much and had forgotten what it means to exist and what inwardness is...In the form of direct communication, in the form of bellowing, fear and trembling are insignificant, because the direct communication expressly indicates that the direction is outward...⁶¹

Direct communication, as Kierkegaard and Climacus see it, is focused outward, on the objective truth, on the understanding. But, such a stance toward religious truth precludes any *relation* to the truth. The truth is not considered or reflected upon as decisive for one’s own existence and self-becoming. It is not approached with “fear and trembling,” but rather it is accepted or rejected as either true or false.

Kierkegaard believes indirect communication is better suited to the task of introducing inward, subjective categories. Again, the issue is one of communicating subjective categories in a form which will engage the reader in her relationship to the essentially Christian, that is, to God.

⁵⁹ “On My Work,” 7.

⁶⁰ *Soren Kierkegaard’s Journals & Papers*, 298, 304.

⁶¹ *CUP*, 259, 262.

This, Kierkegaard claims, is done through deceit. He explains in “The Point of View,” “Do not be deceived by the word *deception*. One can deceive out of what is true, and—to recall old Socrates—one can deceive a person into what is true. Yes, only in this way can a deluded person actually be brought into what is true—by deceiving him.”⁶² Ultimately then, the goal of indirect communication, according to Kierkegaard, is to begin in the place in which the audience exists—that is, in the aesthetic stage in which there is neither commitment nor reflection upon one’s relation to the truth—and to introduce subtly the reflected categories of the religious stage into the writings such that the reader is “deceived” into becoming aware of the subjective relation between God and herself. Again Kierkegaard explains,

If, then, a person lives in this delusion, consequently lives in completely different, in completely esthetic categories—if then, one is able to win and capture him completely by means of an esthetic portrayal and now knows how to introduce the religious so swiftly that with this momentum of attachment he runs straight into the most decisive categories of the religious—what then? Well, then he must become aware.⁶³

Kierkegaard claims no more than that his reader will become aware. He, like Socrates, recognizes that he cannot bring about the truth in another human being. He cannot cause the individual to become a Christian or to consider her relation to God. Nevertheless, he believes he can at least make her aware of the decision she must make as an individual before God. He continues,

Yet what follows from this no one can predict, but he must become aware. It is possible that he actually comes to sober reflection on what it was supposed to mean that he has called himself a Christian. It is possible that he becomes enraged with the person who has ventured to do this to him; but he has become aware, he is beginning to judge. In order to retrieve himself, he perhaps judges the other person to be a hypocrite, a charlatan, a half lunatic—it is of no avail, he must judge, he has become aware.⁶⁴

In this sense then, Kierkegaard’s introduction of religious categories in indirect forms is helping the individual to move from an existence stage—either the aesthetic or the ethical—into a border

⁶² “The Point of View,” 53.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

territory in which the individual is made aware of a contradiction in her existence. What she does, the judgment she makes, concerning her relation to this contradiction, Kierkegaard cannot control. Kierkegaard can only provide the occasion by which the individual becomes aware, and he believes this purpose is best served through the use of reflected, indirect forms of communication.

Kierkegaard's specific use of indirect communication through his pseudonyms will be spelled out more fully in a moment, but first, it will be helpful to consider how Kierkegaard understands the paradigmatic case of indirect communication: the God-man. Examining the way in which the God-man functions as *the* indirect communication will yield a more concrete grasp of the ways in which Kierkegaard hopes indirect communication will function in his authorship. In "Practice in Christianity No. II," Anti-Climacus—Kierkegaard's highest pseudonym and the only one who exists in the paradoxical-religious stage—addresses the issue of indirect communication specifically in relation to the God-man, Christ. The biblical text with which he deals is Matthew 11:6, "Blessed is he who is not offended at me." In the exposition of this text, he highlights various kinds of offense associated with the God-man. In each type, the possibility of offense created by human encounters with the God-man plays a crucial role: to open up the possibility of faith. For example, when Anti-Climacus addresses the imprisoned John the Baptist's question to Jesus, "Are you the one to come or should we look for another?" Anti-Climacus notes that Jesus answers by recounting certain miracles. These miracles, Anti-Climacus insists, are not themselves *proofs* of the truth of Christianity, as many in nineteenth century Denmark and throughout Christian history have assumed, but are rather "demonstrations," or aids by which an individual is helped to "come into the dialectical tension from which faith breaks forth."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ PC, 96.

The role of these demonstrations is crucial to the Christian faith as Anti-Climacus understands it. They function as signs that guide the individual human being into the subjective space whereby that individual must decide for herself what to make of Jesus. The demonstrations create “tension” between the contemporaneity of Jesus as a human being among other human beings and the miraculous works of Jesus that are beyond what any human can do. The tension created in the demonstrations is precisely what makes them signs. The demonstration forces the observer to reflect upon the demonstration and, like John the Baptist, to decide whether she will believe in them. That is, for a sign to be understood *as* a sign, it must be reflected upon, and this necessitates that it be brought into the categories of inwardness and subjectivity. Consequently, there is in the tension created by the sign a double possibility: the possibility for offense or the possibility for faith. Whichever possibility the individual chooses, that which is disclosed is decisively *not* concerned with the nature of Jesus as either merely a human being or as the God-man but instead with the individual’s *relation* to Jesus as that which he claimed to be.⁶⁶

The nature of these demonstrations as signs suggests something true of Jesus Christ generally: he himself is a sign, and not merely a sign, but a sign of contradiction. As Anti-Climacus says, “To be a sign of contradiction is to be a something else that stands in contrast to what one immediately is...Immediately, he is an individual human being, just like others, a lowly, unimpressive human being, but now comes the contradiction—that *he* is God.”⁶⁷ The intent of the sign of contradiction is to create tension, to confront, to shock the recipient of the communication in order to bring her to awareness of a necessary decision. Anti-Climacus explains that here, in the receiving of the sign and the subsequent response, the “thoughts of hearts” are exposed:

And only the sign of contradiction can do this: it draws attention to itself and then it presents a contradiction. There is a something that makes it impossible not to look—and

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 125-126.

look, as one is looking one sees as in a mirror, one comes to see oneself, or he who is the sign of contradiction looks straight into one's heart while one is staring into the contradiction. A contradiction placed squarely in front of a person—if one can get him to look at it—is a mirror; as he is forming a judgment, what dwells within him must be disclosed. It is a riddle, but as he is guessing at the riddle, what dwells within him is disclosed by the way he guesses. The contradiction confronts him with a choice, and as he is choosing, together with what he chooses, he himself is disclosed.⁶⁸

Anti-Climacus suggests that in the sign of contradiction, the content of the disclosure is *not* the God-man in objective, historical reality. Rather, what is disclosed in the sign of contradiction is the confronted individual, the one receiving the sign. For this reason, the God-man, as the sign of contradiction, can never be a matter for direct communication. It can never be understood directly, for signs always presume reflection.

It is important to note that Anti-Climacus understands the issue of direct and indirect communication to be getting to the heart of the problem with Christendom in Denmark. Rather than allowing itself to be confronted with the sign of contradiction, Christendom, Anti-Climacus claims, has collapsed, indeed abolished, the categories of subjectivity in such a way that no one considers one's relation to religious truth. Modern theology and philosophy has understood the God-man to be a matter for speculative thought, a matter to be explained directly. Only indirect communication, "communication in reflection," which forces the individual to "begin to judge" and to "become aware," to recognize the tension created, can awaken the individual to move out of this aesthetic existence into the subjective stages of the ethical and the religious.⁶⁹

Now that we have seen the way in which Kierkegaard hopes to attack the illusion of Christendom, we may attempt to understand the role Kierkegaard's pseudonyms play in his task. The pseudonymous authors are the means by which Kierkegaard introduces reflection into the unreflective aesthetic sphere. Kierkegaard understands that he cannot speak or write from his own

⁶⁸ Ibid., 126-7.

⁶⁹ "On My Work," 7; and "Point of View," 51.

religious point of view in order to introduce Christianity into Christendom. Writing under his own name and in a direct religious form would simply result in his writings being swept up into the speculative philosophy and theology of his day, since everyone in Christendom already believed themselves to be Christians. Consequently, he needed a form of communication which would engage his reader in the aesthetic existence sphere in which she found herself, and then, after captivating her with the concepts and possibilities of aesthetic existence, would introduce the reflected content of the religious. Pseudonyms were, Joakim Garff notes, a common aesthetic literary device in Denmark at the time, and they provided the possibility for precisely this reflected, indirect form.⁷⁰ Kierkegaard explains his strategy in a footnote in “On My Work as an Author,”

The maieutic lies in the relation between the esthetic writing as the beginning and the religious as the *τελος* [goal]. It begins with the esthetic, in which possibly most people have their lives, and now the religious is introduced so quickly that those who, moved by the esthetic, decide to follow along are suddenly standing in the middle of the decisive qualifications of the essentially Christian, are at least prompted to become *aware*.⁷¹

This quotation sheds light on the way in which the pseudonyms may be said to deceive. Kierkegaard takes the reader’s “delusion at face value.”⁷² He does not begin by claiming to be a Christian or by proclaiming Christianity as such. Instead, he begins with the aesthetic stage and moves toward the religious by means of reflected communication. The existence of the pseudonym within a particular existence stage or border territory tricks the reader into thinking that she is reading an aesthetic or ethical work. Then, the pseudonyms introduce reflected communication either by making ethical or religious claims or by revealing their particular relation to religious claims. Thus, the one who has engaged in the pseudonymous writings for their aesthetic or ethical value suddenly finds herself confronted with reflected, religious truth which she cannot simply

⁷⁰ Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 216.

⁷¹ “On My Work,” 7fn. Original emphasis

⁷² “Point of View,” 54.

understand in terms of its world-historical value but with which she herself must to come to terms. The point then is to trick the reader into reflection, into engaging with religious truth in a way that she would not have done had Kierkegaard given his communication a direct religious form.

Like the sign of contradiction, the use of indirect communication through pseudonyms creates subjective tension because it alerts the reader to the contradictions of her existence. That is, when the categories and claims of the religious are introduced within the aesthetic or ethical sphere, the reader is no longer given endless possibilities to entertain or flights of fancy to tickle her mind. Rather, she is given a reflected, and perhaps paradoxical, claim—for instance, that God has entered into time in the form of a human being or that the pseudonym is offended by the demanding claims of Christian faith upon the self—to which she must then relate in one of only two ways, either in faith or offense. In other words, the reflected communication of the pseudonyms provides indirect statements similar to the one Climacus described in *Philosophical Fragments* when he wrote “I believe and have believed that this happened, *although it is foolishness to the understanding and an offense to the human heart.*”⁷³ The response to this indirect communication of the pseudonymous authors reveals “the thoughts of hearts,” which is to say that when the pseudonymous authors introduce the religious categories into the aesthetic or ethical existence of the reader within Christendom, the reader’s response reveals not her understanding of the truth communicated but rather her relationship to that truth.⁷⁴ It is as if a mirror has been held up in front of the reader so that her response reveals her true relation to what has been communicated. Kierkegaard cannot determine whether the reader will be offended or whether she will believe. But what is certain, Kierkegaard thinks, is that by this strategy, the reader has been

⁷³ *PF*, 102, Original emphasis.

⁷⁴ *PC*, 126.

made aware of the contradiction of her existence and has been forced to judge for herself how she will relate to the truth conveyed.

Perhaps an example of Kierkegaard's process will be helpful here. In *Fear and Trembling*, the pseudonymous author Johannes de Silentio reflects upon the biblical narrative of Abraham sacrificing Isaac and specifically upon the faith which Abraham displays in giving up his son Isaac while believing that he would receive him back in this life. Johannes de Silentio is not a Christian. He recognizes that he himself can make the move of infinite resignation—of giving up everything in this present life—but he cannot make the movement from infinite resignation to faith—of believing by virtue of the absurd that he will receive back all that he has resigned in this life. De Silentio recognizes the significance of this movement of faith and expounds beautifully upon it. But he also expresses his own relation to that idea. He writes,

[Abraham] did not believe that he would be blessed one day in the hereafter but that he would become blissfully happy here in the world. God could give him a new Isaac, call the sacrificed back to life. He believed by virtue of the absurd, for all human calculation had long since ceased. That sorrow can make a person mentally deranged is apparent and hard enough; that there is a willpower which can pull so drastically to windward that it rescues the understanding even though the person becomes a little peculiar is also apparent. I do not mean to disparage that, but to be able to lose one's understanding and along with it the whole of finitude, whose stockbroker it is, and then by virtue of the absurd to recover precisely this same finitude—that appalls my soul.⁷⁵

From this, we see de Silentio's own reflection upon the claims and demands of Christianity. He is one who has not made the movement of faith and indeed, is offended by it. This is the reflected communication which Kierkegaard believes he must introduce into Christendom. De Silentio's reflection on the impossibility and offense of faith indicates to the reader that she, too, stands in relation to God and that consequently, there is a decision to be made concerning that relation.

⁷⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 30.

Kierkegaard does this in hopes that he can bring about some awareness in the reader that she must relate herself to God either in faith or in offense, as de Silentio demonstrates so eloquently.

The Kierkegaardian corpus is organized, according to Kierkegaard, in such a way as to lead the individual from the aesthetic realm to the religious. This, of course, cannot be guaranteed. That is, Kierkegaard cannot force the reader to go with him to the religious. Kierkegaard can, however, “compel him to become aware.”⁷⁶ Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous authors claim to exist in various spheres and they give reflections on their relation to God from within these spheres. For instance, *Either/Or* begins in the aesthetic and moves in Part II to the ethical. *Fear and Trembling*, whose author Johannes de Silentio adamantly asserts that he is not a Christian, uses the biblical story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac to reveal the distinction between the ethical and religious spheres. Finally, Johannes Climacus, who is a humorist, introduces precisely the issue of the authorship: becoming a Christian.

Thus, we may conclude that Kierkegaard’s aim in employing indirect communication is ultimately to perform the maieutic task, to become the occasion for his reader to receive the truth from God. Like Socrates, Kierkegaard is fully aware that he cannot bring about a new relation between God and his reader. Only God can accomplish such a feat. Kierkegaard can, however, provide the occasion for his reader to consider her relation to God. The pseudonymous authors provide precisely this opportunity by creating the necessary subjective tension within the reader’s existence to make the reader aware of the decision facing her.

Conclusion

This section has emphasized that Kierkegaard employs pseudonymous authors as the means by which he accomplishes his primary task of introducing Christianity into Christendom.

⁷⁶ “Point of View,” 50ff.

According to Kierkegaard, the age of Christendom is an unreflective age in which everyone considers oneself to be a Christian but in which no one appropriates the truth of Christianity for oneself. Kierkegaard uses pseudonyms in order to engage his reader on aesthetic grounds, in order to capture her in aesthetic possibilities, before introducing religious truth in a reflected way. I have suggested that this communication creates subjective tension within the reader. That is, the reflected, indirect way in which Kierkegaard's pseudonyms introduce religious truth reveals the pseudonymous author's stance toward the truth in such a way as to put the question to the reader concerning her relation to God. This subjective tension requires a response from the reader of either faith or offense. The form of this communication precludes any objective acceptance or rejection of what is communicated, for what is truly communicated in the reader's response is the "thoughts of hearts." Kierkegaard's strategy of introducing Christianity into Christendom by creating tension and contradiction in his reader is, I will now argue, a sort of performative speech. The indirect form of his writings acts upon the reader in a way that could not be enacted through direct speech about God or the religious. In the next section, I will attempt to articulate precisely what that way of speech is and how it can be understood as performative in light of the discussion in part one about J.L. Austin's speech act theory.

PART IV

PERFORMATIVITY IN KIERKEGAARD'S INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

Introduction

In the previous part of this essay, I considered Kierkegaard's task of introducing reflected Christian categories into aesthetic discourse. He is attempting by means of indirect communication to introduce new ways of speaking of and relating to God, and he intends that these new ways of speaking will bring about a change in his reader's existence—specifically that she will move from one stage of existence to another. This suggests that he thinks the language he uses is capable of achieving this task. In light of this, I will claim that the success of Kierkegaard's project is dependent upon, and succeeds precisely because of, the performativity of his language. This is not to say that Kierkegaard was employing speech act theory or thinking in its terms since he died almost exactly a century before Austin gave his lectures at Harvard. However, analyzing indirect communication in relation to speech act theory can shed light on the reasons why Kierkegaard's indirect communication may be said to succeed. I will suggest that the performativity of indirect communication may be found in two places. First, it may be seen in its ability as a type of double-convention to alter the mode of communication from an objective to a subjective one. In order to display this performativity, I will focus on the similarity of Kierkegaard's indirect communication to Austin's double-conventionality of indirect statement, and I will analyze the convention of "introducing"—which is the action Kierkegaard claims to be performing—using Austin's tests for performativity and his explanation of illocutionary effects. It will be seen that the introduction of subjective categories takes effect by altering the mode of conversation to include subjective understandings of and speech about God. The second point of performativity may be found in a consideration of the effects of indirect discourse upon the reader, namely of making her aware of

her relation to God. This may be understood in its similarity to Austin's perlocutionary objects and sequels. The double-convention of indirect communication has an intended perlocutionary object of making the reader aware and an intended sequel of moving the reader to relate herself to God in faith. To be sure, there is no perfect match between Kierkegaard and Austin on either of these points. Nonetheless, the way in which Kierkegaard's indirect communication works reveals points of performativity which can be helpfully illuminated by Austin's insights. Thus, I will conclude that Kierkegaard's project can, and indeed does, succeed in accomplishing what it sets out to do because his language can and does perform the act of introducing subjective tension into his writings and may reasonably be thought to bring about a consideration of that tension on the part of his reader.

Indirect Communication as a Double-Convention

In this section, I will suggest that the first point of performativity in Kierkegaard's indirect communication may be understood in terms of Austin's double-conventions. Thinking of indirect communication in these terms makes sense of the performative function of the indirect form in which Kierkegaard writes. Austin used a "by" formula to show how indirect forms of communication like implying and insinuating may be understood as illocutionary acts despite the fact that they cannot be placed in his explicit performative formula. The use of the "by" formula in this way makes clear that one performative verb may be used as a means to accomplish another action. In his explanation, Austin gave an example of a bridge game in which a player makes the performative statement "I bid three clubs," and by so bidding, informs another player that he has no diamonds. Austin suggested that this constituted a double-convention since one surface-level convention (bidding) was the means by which a second-level convention (informing) was performed.

The similarity between Austin's double-conventionality and Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings may be seen at this point. Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonyms as an act of aesthetic communication is the *means by which* he moves away from historical or metaphysical claims about God, which would be swallowed up by the totalizing and objectivizing system within Christendom, and introduces the necessity of a reflected relation to God. The pseudonyms are, as was suggested earlier in the essay, a participation in the convention of aesthetic writing in Kierkegaard's time, and they enable him to accomplish two tasks. First, Kierkegaard is able to address his reader in the stage of existence in which she finds herself, and second, he is able to introduce reflected religious communication by placing his pseudonymous authors in a reflected relationship to the truth of Christianity. That is, the pseudonyms offer Kierkegaard an opportunity to do more than simply describe in historical, philosophical or theological terms the subjective relation one must have to God. This would constitute a direct form of communication and would have no capability to bring the aesthetic reader to an awareness of her relation to God. However, the use of pseudonyms enables Kierkegaard to illustrate certain personalities in various stages of existence who display reflection upon and relation to God and to the claims of Christianity upon the self. The example of Johannes de Silentio in the last section provides a prime example of this point. De Silentio is "appalled" by the intensity of the faith of Abraham and realizes that he can neither understand nor make this movement of faith himself. In this way, the pseudonyms represent and embody the existential relation to God that Kierkegaard perceives is missing from Christendom. By employing the use of pseudonyms, Kierkegaard is able to engage the reader in the aesthetic stage in which she exists and by means of this, to introduce into that existence the reflected concepts and ideas that will, Kierkegaard hopes, disrupt this aesthetic form of life.

This is the task Kierkegaard describes when he writes in “On My Work as an Author” that his authorship “begins with the aesthetic, in which possibly most people have their lives, and now the religious is introduced so quickly that those who...decide to follow along are suddenly standing right in the middle of the decisive qualifications of the essentially Christian.”⁷⁷ In light of this, we may say that Kierkegaard’s use of pseudonyms may be understood as the first convention of the double-convention of indirect communication and is thus the means by which he accomplishes the act of introducing subjective religious categories into the aesthetic existence of those within Christendom.

Before moving to the second act in the double-convention, we must consider a potential problem with this interpretation of Kierkegaard’s indirect communication. The similarity between Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous form of communication and Austin’s double-convention requires taking some liberty with the notion of the pseudonymous writings as a single locution. In Austin’s description of double-conventions, the first illocutionary act is performed by one locution. The bridge player informs another that he has no diamonds with the locution “I bid three clubs.” However, in the case of Kierkegaard, we are dealing with a large portion of his writings, and it is difficult to narrow down a particular locution the illocutionary force of which may be understood as the indirect means to introducing reflected, religious communication. Does this mean, then, that indirect communication does not in fact meet the requirements for double-conventionality as Austin describes them? I do not think so. In order to think of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous strategy as performing an act, we must clarify the way in which Kierkegaard understands his work. Kierkegaard claims that his maieutic strategy encompasses his entire corpus. He does not select only some passages written by his pseudonyms as reflected, but instead, views the entire

⁷⁷ “On My Work,” 7fn.

pseudonymous authorship as the introduction of reflected communication. Therefore, understanding Kierkegaard's indirect communication as a double convention requires thinking of the entire authorship as one locution and consequently, as one act—as Kierkegaard himself does in “The Point of View” and “On My Work as an Author”—rather than as numerous ones. In other words, the locutionary activity in which Kierkegaard is engaged is one that spans his entire writing career.

Understanding Kierkegaard's work in this way allows us to express the act performed by the pseudonyms as the illocutionary act of “communicating aesthetically,” since this is the convention in which Kierkegaard is participating. The act of communicating aesthetically through pseudonyms functions in a similar way to the act of bidding three clubs. As bidding is an act of playing bridge, so also writing in pseudonyms is an act of aesthetic communication. This performance of aesthetic communication is, consequently, the indirect means by which Kierkegaard introduces subjective religious categories into Christendom.

Now that I have analyzed Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writing and concluded that it can be understood as the first part of a double-convention, I will next consider the similarity of Kierkegaard's introduction of subjective Christian categories to Austin's theory in order to determine whether it may be understood as the second layer of conventionality, that is, whether it is the act performed by means of aesthetic communication. In order to do this, I will examine the concept of introducing first in light of Austin's four tests for performativity. Then, I will analyze the act of introducing in terms of its effects. What will be seen through this analysis is that introducing is performative according to Austin's criteria and that this performativity is of note to this project because it enables us to point out that the precise location of performativity lies in the illocutionary effect of introduction. It will be seen that introducing subjective categories alters the

mode of communication and existence from an objective to a subjective one in such a way as to make illegitimate any continued speaking about or thinking of God in objective terms.

Applying Austin's tests for performativity to the concept of introducing will shed light on how Kierkegaard can be said to accomplish his goal of introducing Christianity into Christendom. The first test for the performativity of introducing is to question whether it is possible to ask if one *really* did introduce something. If one could ask whether one actually did introduce something or someone, then "introduce" would not be used in a performative way. When one says "I would like to introduce you to John," or simply, "This is John," one cannot doubt that one is in fact performing the act of introducing. Likewise, when a teacher introduces the basics of calculus, one cannot doubt that the teacher did in fact introduce calculus.⁷⁸ To introduce simply *is* to introduce. The question of whether one did in fact introduce may seem to become more complicated when the introducing is performed by means of another act, as in the case of a double-convention, but this complication has to do with the increased possibility that certain infelicities will occur and not with the nature of introducing itself as a performative verb. What should be seen from this first test is that when these infelicities are removed, then to use "introduce" in either of the examples given above constitutes the act of introducing. In a similar way, Kierkegaard's introduction of reflected categories by means of his pseudonymous authors is in fact an introduction of that reflection, and one cannot ask whether it has really occurred since to introduce simply is to introduce.

We may address the next three tests more briefly. The second test asks whether one can perform the act of introducing without saying anything. If the answer is yes, then introducing may

⁷⁸ To be sure, if one says, "This is John" when this is really Tom, then one cannot be said to introduce, since the participants involved are not the correct ones. Likewise, when the teacher says "I would like to introduce calculus" but proceeds to introduce geometry, then the teacher has not introduced calculus. These cases involve infelicities called misapplications. However, if the correct participants and concepts are in place, which is what is assumed in these tests, then there can be no question that the act of introducing did in fact occur.

not be understood as performative. In the case of introducing, one must, of course, speak. Neither concepts nor objects nor people may be introduced without the use of words. Thus, neither can Kierkegaard's reflected, religious communication be introduced into the aesthetic existence and communication of Christendom without the use of words. In the third test, we must ask whether the act of introducing can be done deliberately. If it cannot be performed intentionally, then it cannot be understood as performative since actions are done deliberately. The answer, of course, is that introducing can and must be done deliberately. One does not introduce accidentally. Kierkegaard's introduction of subjective religious concepts should be understood as performative in this sense. Finally, we may ask whether the act of introducing is a literally true or false statement. If the introduction can be said to be literally true or false, then it is not performative. However, as was said in the first test, in the case of introducing, to introduce something or someone *is* to introduce that thing or person. There can be no truth or falsity when speaking of an introduction.

It is clear now that Kierkegaard's notion of introduction has a performative nature and may be understood as the second piece of the double-convention. This makes clear the possibility of the performativity of indirect communication. The precise nature of that performativity—the kind of action that it performs—is of concern now. This can be discovered through an analysis of Kierkegaard's introduction in light of Austin's illocutionary effects.

The first effect an illocution has is securing uptake or securing the understanding of the hearer. To be sure, there may be cases in which Kierkegaard's reader does not pick up on the introduction of subjective categories. These may occur for any number of reasons. For instance, the reader may not be skilled in understanding or interpreting literary conventions, she may not read closely, or she may not take Kierkegaard's writings seriously. In any of these cases, Kierkegaard's writings would cease to be performative since they could not be said to secure

understanding. Nonetheless, when these infelicities do not occur—and Kierkegaard must assume that his reader will devote the attention necessary to understand him properly—then uptake may be secured and content may be understood to be intelligible. This is, of course, the case for Kierkegaard's indirect communication. Though Kierkegaard insists that an indirect communication is conveyed for faith and not the understanding, the content of the communication is intelligible. The illocution has a meaning that can be secured, paradoxical though that meaning may be. In other words, the reader can indeed grasp the subjective content of the introduction Kierkegaard is performing.

The second effect of illocutions is that the illocution must take effect in such a way as to determine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of subsequent acts. This is an important point for understanding the performativity in Kierkegaard's indirect communication. The use of pseudonymity as the means by which subjective categories are introduced has the effect of bringing these categories to bear upon the thought, speech and existence of the reader. In other words, the introduction of decisive religious categories shifts the mode of communication from an objective to a subjective one, from a communication about objective possibilities for existence (the aesthetic) to one's relation to decisive Christian categories (the religious). Taking effect in this context means that new categories of relating to God have been introduced. We may think of this effect as that which moves the reader toward the border territory between two stages of existence. It introduces tension and contradiction in the reader's existence. This creates a situation in which the objective, totalizing thoughts and speech which are germane to Christendom can no longer be considered legitimate ways of thinking or speaking of God. Instead, the subjective relation to God has come into view. That is, there can no longer be any objective claim on the part of the reader to comprehend God. As in *Anti-Climacus'* exposition concerning the sign of offense, what is made

manifest in one's response to Kierkegaard's introduction of reflected categories is the reader herself. The mode of communication has shifted such that one can no longer think or speak of God apart from one's relation to God.

The final effect of an illocution is that it invites a response that must itself be a part of the convention. A promise invites the response of fulfillment, and an order invites obedience. The response that is invited by an introduction is that of reception and assimilation. After all, this is what one does when one is introduced to a person or thing. One receives the person or information that has been introduced and assimilates it into one's existence by, say, learning the person's name or by incorporating the knowledge conveyed into one's proceedings throughout one's life. In the same way, the introduction of the subjective categories of Christianity must be received and assimilated into the hearer's existence. Receiving and assimilating the introduction of religious categories occurs by recognizing the shift in mode that has occurred and adjusting one's thought and speech accordingly. This is the point of reflection to which Kierkegaard intends to bring his reader.

The preceding discussion has served to confirm the performative nature of introduction and to indicate precisely how this introducing may be said to take effect. With this in mind, we may ask if introducing may be classified as a speech act of a certain kind. Clarifying this point will help us gain more clarity about what type of act is being performed. Austin put forward five classifications for performatives which were discussed briefly in the first part of this essay and which provided a provisional framework for understanding the functions certain verbs play in certain sentences and contexts. It will be recalled that Austin was not fully satisfied with these categories and admitted that there could be significant overlap and slippage between the

classifications.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, it will be helpful as a final point to clarify precisely how introduction functions.

It is possible that introducing as Kierkegaard uses it could be understood as an exercitive verb. Exercitives, according to Austin, are advocacies for certain courses of action.⁸⁰ Taking “introduction” as an exercitive would highlight Kierkegaard’s hope that his reader would engage in reflection upon her relation to God. The introduction of subjective religious categories could then be taken as urging or recommending or advocating for a particular relation to religious truth. To be sure, this sense is present in Kierkegaard’s usage, but he is also aware that he is not able to bring about his desired result. He can only be an occasion. In this way, the exercitive category does not yield a perfect match.

Kierkegaard’s introduction of religious categories also bears similarity to Austin’s expositive class. According to Austin, words in this class “make plain how our utterances fit into the course of an argument [and] how we are using words.”⁸¹ The expositive sense of introduction would make clear precisely how the religious, reflected communication of the pseudonyms is to be taken, namely as an introduction to a specific content. Introducing in this sense bears some resemblance to other expositives like “inform,” “explain” or “illustrate.” It would be understood as a way of making clear how claims about God must be taken. Given that there is overlap and slippage in these categories, I am content to suggest that introducing displays some exercitive and some expositive qualities and may be thought of as lying somewhere between the two.

The purpose of this somewhat lengthy and detailed comparison has been to show that Kierkegaard’s stated goal of introducing the subjective categories of Christianity into Christendom

⁷⁹ Austin, 152.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

can succeed precisely because Kierkegaard's language and form of communication are performative. Kierkegaard can succeed in introducing the subjectivity of Christianity into Christendom because introducing is an action which may be performed with words and which has certain effects. In Kierkegaard's case, the effect of introducing reflected communication into the otherwise objective existence of his reader is that it significantly alters the mode of communication to reveal the hearer's relation to God. This act of introducing reflected, subjective categories can succeed in an objective age because Kierkegaard's indirect form of communication constitutes a double-convention. The use of pseudonyms provides the possibility of engaging in the aesthetic existence of his reader and becomes the means by which Kierkegaard achieves the introduction of reflected religious concepts and ideas. The success of Kierkegaard's project lies in his use of double-conventionality to engage the reader in her current stage of existence and then to alter the mode of communication through performative language so that the subjective relation to God may be made manifest. It is because of the performative function of introducing through reflected forms of communication that Kierkegaard can change the mode of conversation to one which precludes the possibility of objectivity in one's existence and relation to God.

Making Aware as Performative Act

If the performativity of Kierkegaard's indirect communication is understood in these terms, then we may understand more clearly how the effect he hopes indirect communication will have upon his reader is performative in the perlocutionary sense. Kierkegaard intends for his indirect strategy of communication to make his reader aware of her relation to God, and he hopes that this awareness will be the occasion for the reader to make a decision to relate herself to God in faith. I will suggest in this final section of the essay that this intended effect constitutes the second point of performativity in Kierkegaard's indirect communication. This performativity should be

understood as the perlocutionary act: making aware is the act performed by Kierkegaard's introduction of reflected religious categories. Considering the similarity between Kierkegaard and Austin on this point can bring us to a better understanding of why Kierkegaard believes indirect communication can successfully make his reader aware.

Kierkegaard writes in his indirect form in order to bring the reader to an awareness of her own relation to God. He seems to think that if he is successful in introducing the category of reflection into the objective communication of the aesthetic stage, and I think that he is, then his reader will have to consider her own relation to God. This is to say that Kierkegaard believes that the effect of using reflected communication will be that the reader will recognize not only that the mode of communication has been changed but that tension or contradiction that has been created has ramifications for her relation to God. This description of the effect of introducing subjectivity is similar to the way in which Austin conceives of perlocutionary objects which are intended by the speaker. Kierkegaard's purpose or objective for indirect communication is to cause his reader to become aware of the contradiction in her objective existence. She is intended to recognize that she cannot exist in the objectivity of Christendom, believing that she is a Christian as a matter of course. Thus, the perlocutionary act in Kierkegaard's introduction should be understood as the awareness which comes about as a result of the tension created in the shift in mode of communication. If this is in fact the result of the reader's engagement with indirect communication, then the perlocutionary act of making aware has been performed.

There is, however, a difference between Kierkegaard and Austin at this point. In Austin's system there is no necessary relation between the illocution and its perlocution. One illocution can bring about any number of perlocutionary acts. So, while Kierkegaard clearly believes that indirect communication will result in making his reader aware, Austin would suggest that there are perhaps

more possibilities for the perlocutionary act than simply becoming aware of one's relation to God. For instance, one may read Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works and be intrigued by the aesthetic aspects of pseudonyms who write in subjective ways about God, or one may become interested in discovering who the actual author is behind the pseudonyms. To be sure, Austin is correct that a speaker does not have control over any of the effects which may result from his speaking. Kierkegaard is right, though, to think that if a reader understands his writings correctly, that is, if she receives the double-convention as an introduction of subjective religious categories, then it is at least probable that his reader would become aware of her own subjective relation to God. This difference does not ultimately affect the claim I am making here—that the second point of performativity in indirect communication lies in the reader being made aware—since this act is performative regardless of whether Kierkegaard thinks it is a necessary result of his introducing.

Kierkegaard intends for his illocutionary act of introducing to have a further effect. This understanding bears similarity to Austin's perlocutionary sequel. Kierkegaard hopes that his reader will respond to the awareness of a subjective relation to God by deciding to relate herself to God in faith. In this case, Kierkegaard is aware that he cannot bring about faith or truth in his reader. In fact, not even the reader herself is capable of bringing about the result Kierkegaard desires. Kierkegaard believes that all he can do is to make his reader aware, and if he succeeds, he will have succeeded in becoming an occasion for God to bring about truth in the reader. In this case, both the object and the sequel are intended by Kierkegaard, but neither are necessitated by his illocutionary act of indirect communication.

What may be seen in this last section is that Kierkegaard recognized clearly that his communication can create or change realities. It can alter modes of communication and can also have consequences upon the thoughts and existence of those who receive that communication.

Kierkegaard employs performative forms of communication because he believes they can bring about an awareness in his reader that she must relate herself to God. Understanding this awareness in terms of Austin's theory enables an explanation of why it succeeds. Saying something, like doing something, can have either intended or unintended consequences upon those who receive the action. Kierkegaard's indirect communication depends upon and plays into this function of language for its success. His work is, then, uniquely calibrated to perform both an act of introducing subjectivity into objective modes of discourse and to bring about the consequential act of making his reader aware of her relation to God.

Conclusion

The purpose of this final section has been to show that Kierkegaard's indirect communication depends upon the performativity of language and to locate the particular places of performativity in it. I have claimed that the performative elements in Kierkegaard's writings occur first by means of a double-convention in which Kierkegaard uses pseudonyms as the means by which he introduces reflected communication into the objective age of Christendom and second in the perlocutionary effects of this introduction. In the first instance, Kierkegaard uses his pseudonymous authors' subjective reflections on elements of Christianity as the means by which he introduces the necessity of a subjective relation between God and the reader. Thinking of this introduction of subjective elements in terms of performativity is helpful because it highlights the specific way in which introducing reflected communication transforms the mode of conversation to account for the subjectivity that has been introduced. This insight led me to show that performativity also lies in the particular consequences which this introduction has for the reader. That is, Kierkegaard expects that his communication will make the reader aware of her relation to God. While he is powerless to bring it about, he intends that the illocution of introducing will

provide the opportunity—the occasion, as Kierkegaard puts it—for the reader to relate herself to God in faith. These suggestions shed light on how Kierkegaard may be said to accomplish his task of making his reader aware of her relation to God. It is precisely the performativity in Kierkegaard's indirect communication that enables him to inject subjective tension into the objectivity of aesthetic works and to thereby change the tenor of the conversation from an aesthetic one to a religious and subjective consideration of one's relation to God.

PART V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have shown that Søren Kierkegaard's task of introducing the subjective categories of Christianity into Christendom in an effort to make his reader aware of her relation to God is dependent upon the performative capacities of language to alter modes of thinking and existing and to bring about certain consequences for the reader. I have done this by analyzing Kierkegaard's project of indirect communication in terms of J.L Austin's speech act theory. I have suggested that indirect communication functions as a type of double-convention. The pseudonymous form of aesthetic communication functions as the means by which the subjective categories of the religious existence stage are introduced into the aesthetic communication. I then found that the notion of introducing religious categories is a performative act which takes effect by altering the mode of thinking and communicating such that objective communication cannot be legitimately maintained. In other words, the pseudonyms' relations to God effects a change in the mode of communication in such a way as to bring one's relation to God into view. I then showed that Kierkegaard intends that certain effects or consequences would follow. The first, which I suggested functioned as a perlocutionary object, was that the reader would be made aware of her relation to God. The second, functioning like the perlocutionary sequel, was that the reader would make a decision to relate herself to God. While Kierkegaard is aware that he cannot bring about this decision, he thinks that he can achieve the effect of making his reader aware, though as I have suggested, he does not fully recognize that there may be other possible effects which may occur. In any case, each of these acts is dependent upon the performative nature of language to alter human relations and realities. What Kierkegaard displays in his work is an awareness and employment of this performative function of language.

The value of this project, as I see it, is that it grants insight into the significant power which Kierkegaard thought language to possess. I have emphasized the performative aspects of Kierkegaard's indirect communication since, to my knowledge, this aspect of Kierkegaard's work has not been fully recognized. Kierkegaard thought that his age had lost the awareness that God is a being to which one must relate in subjectivity and inwardness, and he devoted his life to retrieving this awareness. It is important, then, that he elected to attack the illusion of Christendom by means of indirect communication, by means of forms of language which depend upon performative capabilities. While Kierkegaard does not at any point give a full account or theory of language, he clearly believes that human words, forms and conventions of speaking and writing can lead hearers and listeners to new forms of existence, and in the case of religious existence, it can lead them to the very border of existence before God. Indeed, Kierkegaard based his entire authorship on the conviction that this was the case. Had he not held this conviction he would have little reason to write theology and philosophy in the form which he did. For this reason, it has seemed important to analyze the ways in which Kierkegaard elected to use language and the performative basis on which this use rests. As I have noted a few times throughout the essay, Kierkegaard had no access to Austin's speech act theory. Nonetheless, he seems to have possessed an awareness that one really can do things with words, and with the help of Austin's analysis, I have attempted to highlight exactly what Kierkegaard thinks he is doing with the words and the forms he has chosen, and I have tried to indicate precisely how this language he has chosen can succeed in bringing about the results he intended.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things With Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Garff, Joakim. *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*. Translated by Bruce H. Kirmmse. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Vol. 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- . *Fear and Trembling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- . "On My Work as an Author." In *The Point of View*, by Søren Kierkegaard, 1-20. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- . *Philosophical Fragments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- . *Practice in Christianity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- . *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*. Edited by Howard V. Hong, & Edna H. Hong. Vol. 1. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967.
- . "The Point of View For My Work as an Author: A Direct Communication, Report to History." In *The Point of View*, by Søren Kierkegaard, 19-97. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Shakespeare, Stephen. *Kierkegaard, Language and the Reality of God*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2001.
- Tietjen, Mark A. *Kierkegaard, Communication and Virtue: Authorship as Edification*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013.