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**On the distinction between uptake and perlocutionary object: The
case of issuing and obeying orders**

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Abstract

This essay investigates and criticizes Austin's distinction between uptake and perlocutionary object, focusing on the speech act of ordering someone to do something. *Pace* Austin's analysis, it is argued that in central and typical cases of ordering, uptake and perlocutionary object merge. In such cases, understanding and obeying an order amount to the same thing. By contrast, in cases where the order is subject to critical scrutiny or disobeyed, uptake and perlocutionary object are distinct. The reasons for and nature of such a disjunctivist conception of uptake are spelled out by reference to Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following in the *Philosophical Investigations*. It is suggested that such a disjunctivist conception calls for substantive revisions of Austin's conception of illocution.

Keywords: J. L. Austin, perlocutionary object, rule-following, uptake, Wittgenstein

1. Introduction

J. L. Austin gives no systematic account of perlocution. He delimits it negatively against illocution by saying that it is not a matter of convention and that perlocutionary effects are effects brought about *by* (rather than *in*) saying something (Austin 1975, 103-109). But he offers no unified positive characterization, and hence the domain of the perlocutionary remains an indefinite motley. Among perlocutionary effects Austin seems prepared to include both intended and unintended consequences, as well as effects that are only indirect (1975, 106). If I order someone to stand up, she may in fact stand up; but it may also happen that she gets angry, that her shadow is cast on the wall, and that a cat is frightened by her sudden movement. Perhaps I did not intend to make her angry, and yet Austin seems willing to count her anger as a perlocutionary effect of my order, and my making her angry as a perlocutionary act. But what about the shadow on the wall and the frightened cat? He gives no definite answer.

This is understandable, given that Austin wishes to focus his investigation on the nature of illocutionary acts. And my aim in this paper is certainly not to criticize Austin for failing to discuss something he did not want to discuss. Rather, I will examine his account of the illocutionary *via* an investigation of what he says about the perlocutionary. I will criticize his conception of illocutionary acts by bringing out the significance of a distinction he does make within the domain of the perlocutionary – namely, the distinction between a perlocutionary *object* and a perlocutionary *sequel*. I will argue that Austin underestimates the significance of this distinction. Properly thought through, it calls for important revisions of his conception of the illocutionary act.

Austin introduces the distinction between perlocutionary object and perlocutionary sequel by observing that many illocutionary acts *invite* a certain response. For example, “an order invites the response of obedience and a promise that of fulfillment” (1975, 117). Such “invited” responses are perlocutionary objects. By contrast, a perlocutionary sequel is a response that is not invited in this sense. So, someone’s getting angry when I order her to stand up is a sequel, not an object. Similarly, “the act of warning may achieve its perlocutionary object of alerting and also have the perlocutionary sequel of alarming” (1975, 118).

Importantly, Austin thinks there is a sharp difference between the perlocutionary object of an illocutionary act and what he calls the speaker’s *uptake*. According to Austin, the uptake is an effect of a quite different sort, which involves the audience’s hearing what the speaker says and taking it in a certain sense – “the understanding of the meaning and of the force of the locution” (1975, 117). Such uptake, he claims, is an effect that is not perlocutionary, but belongs to the illocutionary act. For example, “I cannot be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense” (1975, 116). Arguably, this is where the line between illocution and perlocution is drawn by Austin: between the speaker’s understanding what is done in uttering the words and her actually exhibiting the invited response. So, when I order someone to stand up, her understanding the meaning and force of my order is the illocutionary uptake, whereas her standing up in response to that order is the perlocutionary object. And when she refuses to obey my order, uptake is achieved whereas the perlocutionary object is not.¹

¹ Admittedly, the intricate dialectics of *How to Do Things with Words* makes it notoriously difficult to tell exactly what Austin’s settled views in this area were (if he

I will argue that the distinction between uptake and perlocutionary object cannot be drawn in this way. Rather, in the fundamental case of success, when the perlocutionary object is straightforwardly achieved, uptake and perlocutionary object amount to the same thing. In such a case, understanding an order is not to be distinguished from obeying it – there is no understanding prior to or aside from the act of obedience. Whereas in other cases – cases of disobedience, or cases where obedience is preceded by critical reflection – there is indeed a distinction to be made between uptake and perlocutionary object. My view amounts to what might be called a disjunctivist conception of illocutionary uptake, and it stands in conflict with Austin’s way of drawing the line between the illocutionary and the perlocutionary.

Austin suggests that when Wittgenstein asks us to conceive meaning in terms of use, he does not do enough to distinguish between different notions or dimensions of language use. The distinctions between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and the more fine-grained taxonomy Austin makes within the domain of the illocutionary, are meant to identify such different dimensions that

had any). It may be argued that his discussion of uptake in lecture IX is only preliminary and tentative. In ascribing to Austin the view that uptake belongs to the illocutionary sphere I agree with a standard reading present in such influential interpreters as Strawson 1964, Cohen 1969, Langton 1993 and Hornsby 1995. Other commentators hold that actual uptake should not be seen as part of the illocutionary act (e.g., Alston 2000, Sbisà 2013), or that uptake is part of some illocutionary acts but not others (de Gaynesford 2017). I briefly discuss such views at the end of this paper.

Wittgenstein's less systematic talk of "use" allegedly papers over.² Austin-inspired linguists and philosophers follow suit in their criticism:

Generally speaking, [Wittgenstein-inspired] use-theories of meaning, in spite of their thematic closeness to speech act theory and sometimes their terminological loans from it, fail to give pertinent contributions to the characterization of the notion of saying-as-itself-a-doing, to which (in the most classical speech-act theoretic framework) the notion of meaning should pertain. (Sbisà 2013, 44)

I cannot here discuss the general pertinence of this criticism. However, I will try to show that the objection I make against Austin's conception of the illocutionary is congenial to Wittgenstein's discussions of rule-following in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Just as the practice of ordering presupposes that there are basic cases in which understanding an order and obeying it amount to the same thing, it is one of Wittgenstein's main points that the very possibility of rule-following presupposes that there are basic cases in which understanding the rule and actually following it are not separate acts. Thus, I hope to make clear that there is indeed a genuine conflict between Austin and Wittgenstein at this quite fundamental point, and that Wittgenstein's analysis goes deeper than Austin's.

Ted Cohen's treatment of perlocution in Cohen 1973 foreshadows some of the main points I will make, even if Cohen never goes as far as claiming that uptake and

² For references and an illuminating discussion, see Harris and Unsteinsson 2018, especially section 3.

perlocutionary object are identical in successful cases, and even if he does not make the connection with Wittgenstein on rule-following. My discussion also has clear similarities with Stina Bäckström's contribution to this issue of *Inquiry*, and I have reached my own view by reading Bäckström's paper and discussing it with her. We share a broadly disjunctivist view of speech-acts, and there is perhaps no significant disagreement between us even if we focus on somewhat different aspects of such a disjunctivist analysis. Whereas Bäckström's main example is the act of telling someone something, I focus on the act of ordering someone to do something. Indeed, my paper can be read as an exploration and support of some of Bäckström's main points via a closer look at the case of ordering. Even if I take my account of uptake to fit many other cases, I do not have the space here to consider other kinds of speech act. That will have to be the topic of another paper.

2. Understanding and obedience

When I did my military service, being trained as a squad leader, the officers emphasized how important it was to make sure that orders were correctly perceived. So, in the field, when one ordered a soldier to carry out a certain task – say, secure a certain hill and establish a foxhole on its top – one should require her to repeat the order before she acted to assure that she really knew what to do. Thus, orders were supposed to have the following general form:

Do *p*! Repeat!

And only if the soldier repeated *p* to one's satisfaction should one allow her go on to do *p*.

“Repeating *p* to one’s satisfaction” did not necessarily mean repeating the order *verbatim* – especially not if the task assigned was relatively complicated. The important thing was (of course!) to ensure that the soldier had perceived what the order *meant*. So, if she used a slightly different formulation than the original one, this was perfectly fine – as long as her formulation had the same meaning as the original order. But a *verbatim* repetition was also considered satisfactory, at least in most cases.

This is an example of what “securing uptake” may amount to in real life. And at first sight, it may seem to fit Austin’s scheme quite well. *First*, one makes sure that the soldier has understood the order (that uptake has been achieved); and *then*, she in fact carries out the order (perlocutionary object). On further reflection, however, the fit may appear less obvious. To begin with, one may feel that the mere fact that the soldier *repeats* the order does not guarantee that she has in fact *understood* it. This worry may seem especially pertinent with regard to a case in which the repetition is *verbatim* – for isn’t such *verbatim* repetition quite compatible with the possibility that the soldier has only heard the words and failed to understand their meaning? However, a similar worry may arise also with regard to the case where the soldier’s repetition is not wholly *verbatim*, for even in such a case it seems possible that there is a mismatch between how the soldier understands her own words and how her commanding officer understands them.

I will soon come back to this worry, but let me first make another observation about the example. I said that orders were supposed to have the general form “Do *p*! Repeat!”. However, that was a rather misleading way of putting it. For an order of this form actually consists of *two* orders: “Do *p*!” and “Repeat!”. And it is crucial that the soldier is told to repeat only the first of these two orders and not the second. The

order “Repeat!” is itself exempt from the general requirement of repetition. If it weren’t – if soldiers were ordered not only to repeat *p*, but also always to repeat the order “Repeat!”, a regress would loom and orders would in effect have the general form:

“Do *p*! Repeat! Repeat! Repeat! Repeat!...” and so on *ad infinitum*.

An army with such a practice of ordering would perform quite badly on the battlefield.

So, in real life, when the officer utters, “Do *p*! Repeat!” the soldier first repeats *p*, and is then allowed to do *p*. Again, these two acts may seem to embody the distinction between uptake and perlocutionary object: The soldier’s repetition of *p* manifests her uptake of “Do *p*!”, and her doing *p* constitutes its perlocutionary object. However, the soldier’s repeating *p* is simultaneously the perlocutionary object of the second order “Repeat!”. And with regard to *this* order, there seems to be no other, prior or separate manifestation of uptake. The soldier simply repeats the order on hearing it. So, Austin’s scheme no longer fits. With regard to the order “Repeat!” uptake and perlocutionary object seem to merge.

At this point, one may object that the reason why the soldier is not required to repeat the order “Repeat!” is merely its simplicity: the order “Repeat!” is so plain that we can plausibly suppose that the soldier understands it. A further reason why we can skip the repetition is perhaps that a failure of uptake would in this case probably not do any great harm, since a failure to understand the order “Repeat!” would result in a (as it were) merely verbal failure to provide the required repetition – in contrast to a misunderstanding of *p*, which might have more serious consequences. But *these*

points (the objection continues) do not mean that uptake and perlocutionary object “merge” – for surely, there must still occur a process of uptake or understanding which is separate from and in some sense underlies, precedes and produces the soldier’s actual repetition of *p*. This process of uptake might be hidden – presumably it occurs in the soldier’s mind or brain. But it must still take place, for how else could the soldier know that she is supposed to repeat the order *p*?

In fact, a similarly hidden process of understanding may seem necessary to postulate also with regard to the uptake of the order “Do *p*!”. For even if there *is* a public manifestation of understanding in this case – a manifestation that consists in the soldier’s repeating the order – mere words do not seem to guarantee that the soldier has really understood. Again, it may seem as if the *real* uptake has to occur elsewhere, behind the scenes. After all, only if the soldier has really understood the order will her verbal repetition manifest genuine uptake.

One thing Wittgenstein does in his discussions of rule-following is to put pressure on the notion of “real understanding” which figures in this line of reasoning. It is of course true that the soldier’s verbal repetition of the order manifests real understanding only if the soldier has really understood those words; and it may certainly happen that the soldier repeats the order without understanding them. Thus, the soldier may repeat the order correctly and yet go on to act in a deviant fashion. Wittgenstein does not question these truisms. What he does question is that the truisms show the need to postulate an additional and hidden process of understanding. Indeed, according to Wittgenstein, the idea that such a hidden process of understanding could provide any better guarantee against misunderstanding than ordinary public signs seems plausible only as long as we leave the exact nature of the hidden process unspecified. After all, what, exactly, is it that is supposed to happen in

the soldier's mind when understanding is achieved? The idea cannot just be that a set of *non*-physical, "mental" signs occurs before the mind's eye – for such signs would seem as liable to misunderstanding as any physical signs. And it does not help much to insist that what occurs before the mind is not mere signs but an internally and irreducibly meaningful item whose sheer presence somehow compels understanding – an item that somehow guarantees its own correct uptake. As Jason Bridges notes in a recent discussion of the rule-following considerations, this idea "falls apart under scrutiny. There is simply no making sense of the idea of an item, mental or otherwise, that 'logically' forces us to understand it in a particular way" (Bridges 2014, 278).

"An item," Bridges continues,

cannot tell a person something unless she understands it to tell her that, and there is no getting around the fact that her understanding it this way is something she must bring to the table, not something that the item can itself provide for. (Bridges 2014, 278)

Consequently, uptake would be no more guaranteed in the "hidden" than in the public case, and no more guaranteed in the case in which an "irreducibly" or "non-contingently" meaningful item is what carries meaning and is present to the hearer (whatever such an item would be). The attempt to account for understanding in such terms leads nowhere: the same worry about uptake that motivated the postulation of such items reoccur with regard to the uptake of those items themselves.

So, what if we abandon the attempt to account for uptake in terms of a hidden process? Is there some other way of doing justice to the truism that the soldier's verbal repetition of the order "Do *p*!" manifests uptake only if the soldier has really

understood the words she uses? Well; suppose the soldier actually goes on to do *p*, right after she has repeated the order. Then I suppose we would say that she understood the order correctly. Conversely, if she does not go on to do *p* but instead does *q* – say, climbs the wrong hill – then we might say that she misunderstood the order after all, and did not quite grasp the words she herself used to repeat it.

But if what she actually goes on to do *after* repeating the order is what decides whether she has understood the order, then the repetition of the order seems like an idle wheel, an empty ceremony. However, it *isn't* an empty ceremony – for if it were, it would merely delay the step from order to action, and it would be inexplicable why officers would require soldiers to repeat orders before following them.

So why do officers require such repetition if it isn't a (fallible) way of checking whether a hidden process of uptake has taken place in the soldier? Well, it *is* a way of checking whether the soldier has understood; but what this means is not that the soldier's ability to repeat the order is a consequence of her having grasped a “mental” and perhaps “irreducibly meaningful” item in the sort of hidden process described above. Rather, the soldier's repetition of the order can constitute a manifestation of her understanding the order only *against a certain background of circumstances* – namely, that the soldier has shown her competence as a language-user in innumerable earlier cases, and that human language users are such that someone's ability to repeat an order (either *verbatim* or in words that “mean the same”) in fact makes it more likely that she is able to follow the order correctly. It is against this background we say of a particular soldier who correctly repeats our order that she has understood it.

Certainly, it may turn out that the soldier who repeated the order correctly still fails to follow it properly when she goes on to act. Depending on the details of the

situation, we might characterize such a case in different ways. If the order was relatively complicated, and if the soldier's repetition was purely *verbatim*, we might conclude that she did not understand it after all (but merely repeated the words). In other circumstances, we might conclude that the soldier understood the order all right, but still failed to act in the appropriate way due to other factors: perhaps she panicked in reaction to a nearby explosion, or perhaps she didn't keep track of the intended hill once she started moving and therefore climbed another one, or perhaps she simply forgot what she had previously understood (this might happen if there is a long period of time between her repeating and her carrying out the order). Indeed, it is worth noting that there are situations in which it would be out of the question to say that a soldier who successfully repeats the order has failed to understand it, *even* if she does not go on to follow it properly. If the order is quite simple, if the soldier repeats it not merely *verbatim* but in her own very clear words, and if she has previously shown herself to be highly perceptive, then her repetition may well be enough to exclude the possibility of misunderstanding. Other characterizations will instead be appropriate: confusion due to stress, a sudden fit, and so on. The Wittgensteinian point is *not* that uptake can never be guaranteed; it is rather to question a certain mystifying and ultimately collapsing model of what such guarantee can and must amount to.

3. The difference between a brute reflex response and immediate obedience

I have described how, from a Wittgensteinian perspective, we can allow for a distinction between uptake and perlocutionary object in a case where a soldier repeats an order to do *p* before she follows it: the repetition of the order manifests the uptake whereas the subsequent following constitutes the perlocutionary object. I emphasized that this account invokes no hidden processes of understanding, but instead stresses

the background of circumstances against which we say that the repetition of the order manifests the uptake – a background which consists in the fact that the soldier has shown her competence as a language-user in innumerable earlier cases, and that the ability to repeat an order goes hand in hand with the ability to follow the order correctly.

However, this account of the distinction between uptake and perlocutionary object is in tension with the idea that this distinction can be made in every case or even in typical and fundamental cases. In a case where someone obeys a simple order *without* first repeating it, the account just given gives no ground for a separation between uptake and perlocutionary object. Indeed, as I have already pointed out, the case with the soldier in fact also involves such a simpler case: for when the soldier unhesitatingly repeats the order to do *p*, she directly (i.e. without repetition) obeys the order “Repeat!” which was issued in conjunction with the order “Do *p*!”. And with regard to the soldier’s following the order “Repeat!”, the upshot of a Wittgensteinian analysis is instead that the distinction between uptake and perlocutionary object gets no grip, since there is no distinct manifestation of “mere” uptake. In this case, understanding the order and actually following it amount to the same thing.

This point is easily misunderstood. One misunderstanding is that it assimilates the case where someone immediately and spontaneously obeys an order such as “Repeat!” or “Stand up!” to a quite different sort of case – namely to the case where someone simply jumps by pure reflex in response to an unarticulated roar. Thus, compare the case when someone immediately and spontaneously obeys the order “Stand up!” with the case when someone jumps to her feet in response to the sudden and unexpected roar “UARRGH!!”. The Wittgensteinian point is *not* that these two cases are similar. In the former case, there is genuine obedience in response to the

content of the order: the person who stands up does *what she is ordered to do*. In the latter case, there is no obedience and no order, but only a brute reflex response. Suppose instead that the reflex response had been something completely different – a fainting-fit, say. This response would have been neither more nor less correct than standing up – it would simply be another response to the roar. In contrast to the order, the inarticulate roar invites no particular response – it has no perlocutionary object (even if the intention of the one who roared might have been to achieve a certain effect).

But how can these two cases be distinguished, if we do not postulate a hidden process of understanding that occurs in the former case but not in the latter? Again, the Wittgensteinian point is that this difference can come clearly into view only if we take into account the background of established linguistic practice mastered by both speaker and hearer, a practice to which the order “Stand up!” can be recognized as belonging. Given that the speaker and the hearer have already manifested their mastery of this practice again and again, we can in this particular case say that the order has content, and that it is understood and obeyed, without postulating any hidden process of understanding taking place behind the scenes. By contrast, in the case of the inarticulate roar, there is no such shared practice to which the roar belongs. This is precisely what makes it *an inarticulate roar* (rather than an order) and the response a brute reflex response (rather than an instance of obedience).

It is crucial to see this difference between the two cases, for it has important further consequences. Again, obedience requires the presence of a background linguistic practice. And a human linguistic practice is a resourceful institution. In particular, it provides the resources for reflection and criticism. Thus, if obedience –

at least in its human form³ – comes together with such resources, the upshot is that the possibility of obedience goes hand in hand with the possibility of critical reflection and disobedience. We can obey only if we have some resources to reflect, criticize and disobey.

On the other hand, it cannot be the case that disobedience would be the common response to an order. If so, the institution of ordering would be pointless: “Orders are sometimes not obeyed. But what would it be like if no orders were *ever* obeyed? The concept of an order would have lost its purpose” (Wittgenstein 2009, 345; cf. in this connection the discussion of promises in Cohen 1973, 500).

Even more significantly, disobedience is a “non-standard” response also in the sense that it requires some specific positive reason. Such a reason might be that doing *p* would be bad, or that doing *p* stands in conflict with some other instruction of overriding importance, or that one wants to undermine the authority of the order-giver, and so forth. Unless some such specific reason is present, it is not clear that the order has even been understood. By contrast, immediate obedience does not require any further positive reason to manifest uptake; for, again, such obedience typically constitutes the understanding of the order.

And yet, it would be completely mistaken to object to the Wittgensteinian “merger” of uptake and perlocutionary object in central cases of ordering that it

³ I do not think it is an upshot of the Wittgensteinian conception that non-linguistic animals such as dogs cannot obey orders (if so, the conception would be obviously mistaken). However, I do think it entails that there is a formal difference between obedience among linguistic and non-linguistic animals. I cannot here clarify this point, but for discussions of related issues see Boyle 2012 and Gustafsson 2016.

somehow denigrates critical reflection and belittles the possibility of disobedience. According to the Wittgensteinian conception, in any given particular instance of ordering, critical reflection and disobedience may be called for. And when such critical reflection and disobedience takes place, there is indeed a distinction to be made between uptake and perlocutionary object: She who reflects critically before she obeys has surely understood the order, and the same is true of her who disobeys (rather than just misunderstands). But again, her understanding is not a matter of some hidden process in the mind, but is present *in* the way she discusses the order, weighs its pros and cons against each other, and so forth. And this in turn presupposes the background of a human linguistic practice in which she has shown herself to be a competent participant, *and* of a practice of ordering where orders are by and large obeyed.

Importantly, there are psychological differences between individual human beings. Some are prone to reflection and criticism, whereas others have all too great respect for authority and obey orders unreflectively even when critical reflection is called for. It is certainly a good idea to try to reduce such an exaggerated and unreflective respect for authority – for example, by bringing up children in such a way that they don't obey blindly when there are good reasons to engage in critical reflection and perhaps even disobedience. The Wittgensteinian conception does not deny any of this. It merely clarifies the conditions that must be in place for meaningful discussions about the dangers of blind obedience to so much as get off the ground.

4. Conclusion

According to Austin, a perlocutionary object is a response “invited” by an illocutionary act. This is in fact a quite peculiar characterization. Surely there is an illocutionary act that might be said to “invite” a certain response, namely the act of *inviting*. However, an order precisely does *not* merely “invite” a certain response – it *orders* it. “Invitation” suggests a much too permissive relation between the one who issues the order and the one who receives it, as if the one who issues the order would tolerate disobedience and at most be disappointed by it (as you might be disappointed by someone who declines an invitation to your birthday party). An order is an order only if disobedience is *not* tolerated in this sense – ordering is typically a frank execution of authority in a context where sanctions can be imposed on the disobedient.

However, Austin’s use of the term “invite” in this connection is in a sense congenial to his separation between uptake and perlocutionary object. For this separation encourages the idea that ordering is indeed quite similar to an invitation: *first* the hearer receives it and understands it, and *then* she is to take a stand on whether to “accept” it or not. By contrast, I have emphasized that such a two-step procedure cannot be the standard case. Austin’s scheme hides from view the kind of structure I have been trying to reveal in this paper: how the institution of ordering depends on the fact that obedience is the default sort of reaction whereas disobedience and critical reflection requires specific positive reasons. Thus Austin’s scheme also hides from view how authority functions in the case of ordering: an order is not just a sort of invitation made by a person who has some separately identifiable authoritative status, but an act whose very structure embodies the authority in question. What authority in the relevant sense *is*, what it *amounts to*, is inseparable from the institution of ordering and obeying.

Of course, not all ordering is as formalized as in a military context, and there are many cases of ordering where the possible sanctions are less transparent. However, this does not touch my main point: even in less formalized contexts, a practice of ordering is recognizable as such only because the basic case is one in which uptake and perlocutionary object amount to the same thing. As I explained in section 3, the temptation to think otherwise may be due to a misconceived notion of rationality, according to which the merging of uptake and perlocutionary object in basic cases means that the act of obedience is reduced to a non-rational reflex response. Indeed, a more general upshot of my discussion is this: it is a mistake to believe that separating uptake and perlocutionary object is always necessary to account for the rational character of linguistic exchange. To the extent that speech act theorists hold such a view of what the rationality of linguistic exchange amounts to, they are mistaken.

It may be thought that one can retain a sharp distinction between illocution and perlocution simply by acknowledging that the hearer's actual uptake does not belong to the illocutionary act. Some speech-act theorists have made this claim, either as part of an interpretation of Austin's view or as a claim about how illocutionary acts should be conceived (Alston 2000, Sbisà 2013). It is a central aim of Bäckström's contribution to this issue of *Inquiry* to explain why this sort of move is superficial and fails to meet the substantive challenges of a disjunctivist argument. What I have just said about ordering and authority illustrates Bäckström's point. Counting uptake as a perlocutionary effect rather than as part of the illocutionary act in no way makes the kind of structure I have described in this paper come clearer into view. If anything, it hides it even more, at least if one holds on to the idea that ordering is an illocutionary act. For my point has been that we cannot understand what ordering amounts to if we

do not see how it depends on the actual responses of the hearer. If all these responses are relegated to the domain of the perlocutionary, while we instead focus on what we are willing to count as properly illocutionary elements, then we will miss an essential aspect of the speech act that we are trying to understand.⁴

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⁴ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at Åbo Akademi University, University of Leipzig, and at the 42nd international Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg, Austria. I especially want to thank Stina Bäckström and Alexander George for valuable comments.

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