Groups can speak: a study on group speech acts
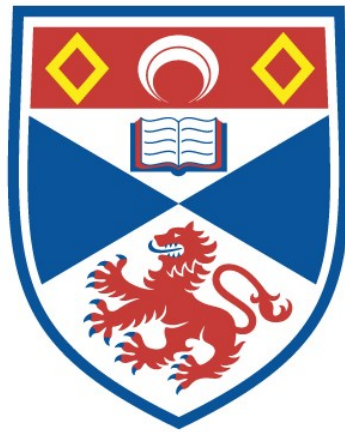
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Para mi familia

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Thesis Abstract

We naturally interpret groups as making all kinds of speech acts. However, it is not obvious under which conditions we can properly say a group performed such actions. This thesis provides a comprehensive study of group speech acts and group communicative actions, with group assertion as my main (but not only) case study. I propose to understand group speech acts as *illocutions* that are not just performed by groups but attributable to groups and not just to individuals. The debate so far has included all communicative acts performed by groups —causing philosophers to misclassify cases of individual speech acts as group speech acts. I propose that group speech acts, properly understood, are distinguished by the authority to speak on behalf of the group. I start by providing a classification of the group speech acts views. Until now, there has not been a panoramic picture of the debate. Then, I analyse the case of group assertion, taking input from the debate over the epistemic normativity of assertion. I argue against previous accounts of group assertion that they do not account for some cases of scientific assertion and misclassify some individual assertions. I propose the authority account of group assertion. Next, I show that my authority account extends to all group speech acts and reject the dominant view that there are two kinds of group speech acts. Additionally, I provide a functional account of protests and distinguish group protests using the authority account. Finally, I argue that group mental states inflationism and vehicle externalism follow from group speech acts inflationist accounts like the one I defended, which means that the group belief's vehicle can be outside the group's members. Contrary to what some philosophers claim, this shows that we cannot hold both group speech acts inflationism and group mental states deflationism.

Contents

Introduction

We commonly attribute a wide range of states and actions to groups: beliefs, knowledge, intentions, and intentional actions like building a bridge or conducting research, etc. But we also routinely talk of groups performing speech acts. We naturally interpret groups as making promises, assertions, requests and demands, issuing prohibitions and warnings, giving orders and advice, etc. Social epistemology has shown increasing interest in groups, and several theorists have provided comprehensive studies of group epistemological phenomena like belief, justified belief, knowledge, evidence, and so on (Brown, 2024; Lackey, 2021). Here, I offer a necessary counterpart to those kinds of projects by approaching group phenomena from the point of view of the study of language. This thesis provides a comprehensive study of group speech acts and group communicative actions, with group assertion as my main (but not only) case study. In the following six chapters, I offer a detailed proposal for how to understand and account for the notion of *group speech acts,* and a way to categorise different views in the debate and different kinds of communicative actions performed by groups. In addition, I propose novel accounts of group assertion, group protests, and group lies. Further, appealing to the relation between group speech acts and group mental states, I use the proposed inflationist account of group speech acts to defend an inflationist account of group mental states.

Two central issues run through the thesis; the first is what question we aim to answer when we study group speech acts. When discussing group speech acts, there are two related but different questions we usually do not distinguish. The first is what characterises *illocutionary forces* (acts performed *in* saying something, like promising or asserting), what is essential to each one of them and distinguishes them from each other. The second is what an agent (an individual or a group) has to do to perform an *illocution*; when is a particular *illocution* properly attributed to that agent? In my view, the second is the central question of our debate. We aim to answer the question: What does it take to perform a group speech act at all?

The second issue is, what exactly are group speech acts? Several philosophers have engaged with the topic (Hughes, 1984; Lackey, 2018a, 2018b, 2021; Ludwig, 2014, 2020b; Marsili, 2023; Meijers, 2007; Tollefsen, 2007, 2009, 2020; Townsend, 2020), but they seem to wrongly assume that every communicative action performed by a group is a group speech act. In contrast, I see group speech acts as *illocutions* that are not just performed by groups but attributable to groups and not just to individuals. I will show that not all communicative actions performed by a group are group speech acts. Groups can speak in representation of individuals: imagine your best friend asking her partner to marry her by hiring a choir to sing the question (let's call this example Marriage Proposal). The proposal was performed by the group, but your friend is the one who proposed, not the group.

I take a realist approach to group speech acts, meaning that I assume they are a real phenomenon that cannot be eliminated or explained away by carefully examining the deep logical structure of sentences containing plural subjects (like 'we', 'they', or singular terms that refer to groups). In other words, I take it that our attributions of speech to groups are not just a way of speaking. I am mainly interested in pragmatics (understood as a branch of the study of language) and not in semantics. So, I say nothing about the semantics of sentences containing plural subjects. My main interest is in group speech acts (like group assertions and protests) and other group communicative actions (like group lies and other forms of deception using language). However, my view is bound to be incompatible (or in tension) with some semantic accounts. For example, Ludwig (2007) proposes a semantic account of plural sentences, arguing that we do not require group agents to model their truth conditions.[1] My view is in tension with this kind of deflationist approach to semantics.

Theorists in the debate often distinguish between deflationist and inflationist views on group phenomena (or between summative and non-summative accounts). Deflationism (or summativism) about group property Φ holds that a group G has Φ if and only if at least some of G's members have Φ. Inflationism (or non-summativism) about

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[1] Ludwig proposes to distinguish between distributive and collective readings of plural sentences. 'They painted a wall' can be read as saying that they painted the wall together (collective reading) or as saying that each one of them painted a wall (distributive reading). This dissertation is concerned in part with cases of collective readings like 'The scientists gave their assurance that the vaccine is safe' or 'The protesters demanded change'.

group property Φ is the view that a group G can have property Φ even if none of G's members has Φ. In this dissertation, I defend an inflationist view of group speech acts, meaning that it is possible for a group to "speak" (perform a speech act that is attributable to the group) even if no member of the group spoke (performed a speech act attributable to the individual). Inflationism is sometimes also taken to be committed to the claim that even if all G's members have Φ, it does not follow that G has Φ. In my view, it is also possible for G to stay silent even if all of G's members have spoken.[2] The core of my account (Chapters 3 and 4) is that group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak for a group. In my view, it is possible for speakers to exercise this authority even if they are not speaking for themselves (performing a group but not an individual speech act), and for all G's members to speak without exercising such authority (performing a collection of individual speech acts with no group speech act).

Across the debate, there are questions about categorising groups and what kinds of groups can be genuine group agents. It might be useful for the current study to consider some of these distinctions. The first one is separating groups from mere collections. The latter are sets of individuals who belong to the set just by sharing a common property, with none of the hallmarks of collective phaenomena like sharing an intention or coordination. For example, the collection of women wearing white shoes in Dundee or the collection of children taller than 1.4m in Toluca. I do not presuppose any account of what a group is, but whatever the right account is, it should be more robust than simply sharing a property. A second important distinction is between organised and disorganised groups. This is probably more like a spectrum, with groups like governments, institutions and corporations on one end and crowds and mobs on the other. It might be thought that organised groups are the best candidates to be genuine group agents (Brown, 2024). I do not contest this claim, and I do not presuppose any specific account of group agents. However, I do claim that disorganised groups can perform group speech acts, and that is central to my contention in Chapter 5: that disorganised groups can perform speech acts, such as the act of protesting.

I assume, as is standard in the literature, that *force* and content are independent from each other. Utterances with the same *force* can differ in content, and utterances

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[2] However, in my view it is also possible that the same utterance is a group and an individual speech act.

with the same content can differ in *force*. I rely on Austin's distinction between *locutions, illocutions* and *perlocutions*. A *locution* is the act *of* saying something (Austin, 1975, p. 95), roughly equivalent to uttering a sentence with meaning in a language (Austin, 1975, p. 110). An *illocution* is the act performed *in* saying something, in opposition to the mere act *of* saying something (Austin, 1975, p. 100), and is what we call speech acts nowadays. *Illocutionary forces* include the actions of asserting, asking, promising, ordering, requesting, demanding, hypothesising, swearing, warning, protesting, voting, agreeing, advising, greeting, marrying, baptising, apologising, congratulating, hiring, firing, sermonising, excommunicating, appointing, begging, permitting, prohibiting, etc. *Perlocutions* are the effects we bring about or achieve *by* saying something (Austin, 1975, p. 110). Examples of these are convincing, producing feelings and emotions in the audience, etc.

I start in Chapter 1 by offering a map of the views of speech acts in the group case and how they relate to traditional views of individual speech acts. The literature on group speech acts sometimes seems disconnected from the traditional debate about speech acts performed by individuals. I aim to correct this problem. I bring forward a distinction between two theoretical jobs we ask of speech act accounts (one that is often disregarded in both the individual and the group cases): to distinguish between different *illocutionary forces* and to account for when a speech act is performed at all. I claim that accounting for when a group speech act is performed is the central question for the group speech acts debate.

In Chapter 2, I turn to examine the nature of assertion. There are many speech acts, and all of them are important and interesting for us for numerous reasons. Nevertheless, assertion has a special place in the study of speech acts, especially in epistemology and logic, due to its deep relationship with knowledge and argumentation. Epistemologists have been drawn to assertion as it seems to be the standard speech act we use to communicate knowledge. Due to assertion's central place in our theorising of language and knowledge, I take group assertion as my main case of study.

Now, much work has been done on assertion, and a very popular view (if not the canonical view) nowadays is the constitutive norm account of assertion, according to which assertion is distinguished by a special epistemic rule that explains its relationship with knowledge. To prepare the ground for my analysis of group assertion, in Chapter 2, I

examine the literature on the normativity of assertion. This is central to our current debate; since Lackey (2021), theorists (including myself) use epistemic arguments to attribute speech acts to groups and not just to individuals. I argue that there are good reasons to believe that even if assertion has an important epistemic dimension, it does not distinguish it from other speech acts, specifically from other speech acts strongly related to the truth like warning, hypothesising and swearing. Nonetheless, I claim this does not jeopardise our use of epistemic arguments to attribute assertion and other speech acts to groups.

Having examined the normativity of assertion, I then turn to examine the idea that groups, as opposed to individuals, can make assertions. Many philosophers have spoken about authority regarding speech acts (Austin, 1962; Langton, 1993; Ludwig, 2014) and group speech acts (Hughes, 1984; Lackey, 2021; Ludwig, 2020b; Marsili, 2023). In the group speech acts debate, most theorists believe that there are two kinds of group speech acts, one characterised by authority and one by joint-intentional coordination. In contrast, in Chapter 3, I propose that authority give us an all-inclusive account of group assertion that accurately distinguishes group from individual assertion, and in Chapter 4, I extend that account to all group speech acts. I argue Against previous accounts that they fail to provide necessary conditions for group speech acts because they fail to account for cases found between their two proposed kinds. They also fail to provide sufficient conditions because joint-intentional coordination is also present in some instances of individual speech acts. In Chapter 4, I offer a classification of group communicative actions that distinguishes between group speech acts, and other actions groups make with speech. Throughout the thesis, I defend that group speech acts should be understood as *illocutions* that are not just performed by groups but attributable to groups and not just to individuals.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I appeal to Austin's distinction between individual locutions and illocutions to argue that previous accounts of group speech acts have failed to notice an analogous distinction between *group locutions* and *group illocutions*. The former are *locutions* performed by groups, and the latter are *illocutions* attributable to groups. Groups performing *group locutions* can perform individual *illocutions* when they represent individuals (as their proxies). Recall Marriage Proposal: The group performed a *locution*, but the group was representing your friend; she is the one who

asked someone to marry her. The failure to notice this key fact has caused many theorists to mistakenly take some cases of individual speech acts as cases of group speech acts, thus failing to provide sufficient conditions for group assertion and group speech acts in general.

In Chapter 5, I turn to consider the act of protesting. Protests seem to be the emblematic case of a communicative action performed by groups. Furthermore, I argue that group protests cannot be taken just as collections of individual protests. That would misconstrue group protests both in their impact and in their collective nature. In Chapter 5, I propose a novel functionalist account of protests as speech acts, as they essentially are communicative actions and *things we do with words* that go beyond just conveying information. Then, I apply my authority account to the protest case to distinguish between group and individual protests.

To further my inflationist approach to group phaenomena, in Chapter 6, I argue that group mental states inflationism follows from group speech acts inflationism. This resonates with Brown's (2024) linking claim that accounts of different group epistemic phenomena link to each other in such a way that it is problematic to defend inflationist accounts of some, but not all group phenomena. This distinguishes my view from that of Lackey (2021), who holds that we can pair an inflationist view of group assertion with a deflationist account of group belief. I argue that group speech acts inflationism implies a form of group mental states vehicle externalism (according to which the vehicle for the group's mental state is outside the group's members) that is incompatible with deflationism. This thesis can be seen as an argument for group agents since I argue in favour of an inflationist approach to both group speech acts and group mental states.[3]

I see my dissertation as making several key contributions to the debate on group speech acts, ranging from general considerations about how to understand the debate to specific claims about group speech acts. First, this debate is about when groups perform *illocutions*, not about characterising particular *illocutionary forces*. Second,

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[3] While I assume the realist claim that group speech acts are a real phenomenon, I do not assume that inflationism is true; instead, I argue that the best explanation of group speech acts is inflationist and that deflationist accounts are incorrect. Deflationism could be seen as a form of antirealism, which would agree with the realist claim that the phenomenon is real, only that it can be reduced to individual actions. In contrast, eliminativism is the claim that group phenomena are not real (that it is literally false to speak of groups speaking or thinking) and that we only speak of them metaphorically or "as if" they were real for practical reasons.

group speech acts should be understood as *illocutions* that are attributable to groups, in contrast with speech acts merely performed by groups or attributable just to individuals. This is a substantial development since the debate so far wrongly assumes that every communicative action performed by a group is a group speech act. Third, a classification of group communicative actions (which includes but is not exhausted by group speech acts) that better represents what groups can do with speech. Fourth, I provide a new argument for inflationism about group mental states by appealing to inflationism about group speech acts. Fifth, I argue against dominant disjunctive views of group speech acts and instead defend a novel unified account of group speech acts that is able to see them as one category instead of a cluster of ways to perform group speech acts. In my view, group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak for the group. I claim my account is able to accurately distinguish group speech acts from individual speech acts. Sixth, I defend the use of epistemic arguments in the group debate even despite holding that assertion is not distinguished from other speech acts by its epistemic normativity. Contrary to what may be assumed, we do not need to commit to the existence of constitutive epistemic norms to talk about group epistemic responsibility. Seventh and last, protests are of high importance to our debate as they are communicative actions emblematic of groups. So, I provide a novel functionalist account of protest in general, and group protest in particular.

Now, I provide a more detailed summary of the contents of the individual chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter 1: The Group Speech Acts Theoretical Landscape.

This chapter aims to get a clearer view of the group speech acts landscape: find where the different proposals stand in relation to each other (find kinships and disagreements) and, importantly, distinguish different aims that theories can have when accounting for speech acts. To this end, I develop a map of the views in the group speech acts debate. I use this to position myself within the debate. My picture runs on two axes. The first one is drawn following Fogal, Harris & Moss's (2018) picture of the contemporary landscape of individual speech acts. According to them, there are five families of speech act theories: conventionalism, intentionalism, functionalism, expressionism and normativism. I hold that proposals in the group debate can be classified into four categories, each one shares a family resemblance to one of the five families: joint intentionalism, disjunctive accounts, authority accounts and group normativism.

The second axis of my map is given by the distinction between *performance accounts* and *force accounts*. Fogal et al. hold that the central question of speech act theory is "What makes it the case that an utterance constitutes an illocutionary act of a given kind?" (Fogal et al., 2018, p.2). While this is true, it lacks some finesse. I argue that we should distinguish between accounts according to whether they answer one of the following questions 'What does it take to perform a group speech act at all?' (The *performance question*) and 'What distinguishes the force of different group speech acts?' (The *force question*). I hold that not all views answer both questions. I do not consider this an objection against them but just a distinction about the objectives our theories may have. With this distinction in mind, I claim that the central question of the group speech act debate is the performance question. Within this landscape, I position my general authority account (a *performance account* to be developed in Chapters 3 and 4), my group assertion (Chapter 3) and group protest (Chapter 5) accounts; these two combine my authority proposal with a *force account* to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion and protest.

Chapter 2: Epistemic Normativity and Force of Assertion

The subject of this chapter is the epistemic normativity of assertion and its relationship with the force of assertion. Assertion is central to communication and knowledge transmission, and, importantly, group assertion is this dissertation's main case study of a group speech act. Before examining the nature of group assertions in Chapter 3, we must examine the nature of assertions in the individual case. The task of this chapter is to do so. In particular, the chapter focuses on the "norm view of assertion", the popular view that an epistemic rule distinguishes assertion from other speech acts. The reason for focusing on the norm view is two-fold: 1) this is very likely the view to beat at the moment, and 2) after Lackey (2021), I and others (Paterson, 2020) use epistemic arguments to attribute speech acts to groups based on the idea that an epistemic norm governs assertions.

There are two different claims associated with the norm view of assertion: 1) assertion is governed by an epistemic norm, and 2) this norm distinguishes assertion from other speech acts. There is much debate about the content of said epistemic norm of assertion and whether it distinguishes assertion from other speech acts. In this chapter, I argue that the epistemic norm of assertion is context-sensitive. While this claim has been defended before, I argue against one of its main defenders –Goldberg (2015)– that it does not, as he suggests, distinguish the force of assertion from the force of other speech acts. Specifically, I argue that a context-sensitive norm also governs the larger *illocutionary* class *of "representatives"* –the set of speech acts distinguished by their relation with truth (hypothesising, asserting and swearing, among others) proposed by Searle (1975) and also distinguished by Turri (2010).

Toward the end of the chapter, I link the discussion of individual assertions to the discussion of group assertions to come in Chapter 3. I show how my rejection in this chapter of the idea that the epistemic norm of assertion individuates it from other speech acts is compatible with my later defence of an inflationary account of group assertion.

Chapter 3: Authority and Group Assertion

Philosophers have become increasingly interested in group speech acts, especially in group assertion. It is a common practice to attribute assertions to groups and interpret statements as made by groups. We naturally treat groups, not just individuals, as accountable for their assertions when we challenge their veracity or epistemic standing. I aim to account for this and the fact that we seem to be able to gain knowledge from groups. To do this, I need to account for when an assertion is properly attributable to a group and not to (or not just to) individuals. My main proposal here is that a special kind of entitlement distinguishes group assertion from individual assertion: the authority to assert on behalf of a group. I argue that an utterance is a group assertion only if the speaker(s) exercise this authority. I claim that we need a unified account of assertion; thus, I reject the popular disjunctive claim that there are different kinds of group assertion (coordinated and spokesperson-based) that need to be accounted for separately (e.g. Lackey (2021), Ludwig (2020b), Marsili (2023)).

Against disjunctive accounts, I argue that they fail to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion. They have failed to account for all cases of group assertion, specifically for those cases of collaborative work, where the group divides the communicative piece among its members instead of going through it all together; I call these *Radically Collaborative Assertions* (RCA). I defend this claim using Lackey's (2021) idea that groups are epistemically responsible for their assertions and evidence from scientific retractions (Andersen & Wray, 2023). I also object that disjunctive accounts mistakenly take some individual assertions as group assertions due to their failure to distinguish between *group locutions* and *group illocutions*. For example, a group hired by a politician to paint walls across a city with his face saying, 'I will solve the corruption in this city' (Propaganda); the group members cooperate to paint, intending to be seen as a group representing a politician. They perform a *group locution*, but not a group speech act. I argue that my authority account succeeds in including all cases of group assertion and in distinguishing it from individual assertion. Moreover, it gets rid of the coordinated and authority distinction, which I argue it is just a superficial distinction between kinds of group assertion.

Chapter 4: Group Speech

We surely attribute assertions to groups, but that is not all. We credit them with making promises, orders, protests, requests, warnings, hypotheses, demands, prohibitions, etc. Moreover, they have various ways to communicate: coordinating to produce the piece, dividing the work, appointing one or more spokespersons, etc. Given these two facts, there is an interesting question about what distinguishes group and individual speech acts in general. This chapter undertakes the ambitious task of accounting for all these cases with a single theory. The strategy is to extend the authority account defended in Chapter 3 to account for all cases of group speech acts. I argue that group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak on behalf of a group. Roughly, a set of speakers perform a group speech act if and only if they have this authority and act in virtue of it when speaking.

In support of my authority account, I show how the objections I raised in the last chapter to disjunctive accounts of group assertion also extend to the general case of group speech acts. I argue that previous proposals do not account for all cases of group speech acts where the group divides the production of a communicative piece among its members (*Radically Collaborative Speech*). My argument can be extended directly to all *representatives* using the idea that all of them (and not just assertions) are governed by epistemic norms (as seen in Chapter 2). Moreover, I suggest it can be extended to all group speech acts by appealing to Paterson's (2020) notion of speaker responsabilism or Lance & Kukla's (2013) theory of speech acts. I also argue that the distinction between *group locutions* and *illocutions* cuts across all speech acts. Failure to notice this distinction caused previous accounts to mistake some individual speech acts for group speech acts. In my view, not all instances of communicative actions involving groups are group speech acts. However, they could still be considered "group speech actions" in the sense of being actions groups perform with speech in a broad sense (broader than just *illocutions*). In this chapter, I propose a new classification, not of group speech acts, but of a broader category that I call *Group Communicative Acts*, which includes, but is not exhausted by group speech acts properly understood.

Chapter 5: Group Protests and Individual Protests

In this chapter, I apply the tools developed in previous chapters to the case of protests. Protests are intrinsically communicative public actions, and they are emblematic of groups. Whether we are talking about combating climate change, inequality, or oppression, protests are frequently made by groups of people. Additionally, they do more than just transmit information, they are *things we do with words*. They aim to transform the public space, voice opposition, demand action, etc. This makes them prime targets for pragmatic analysis as group speech acts. In this chapter, I aim to provide an analysis of protest, both as what characterises it as a speech act and what differentiates the individual and group cases. I consider and reject a number of previous accounts of protests as speech acts (Barnes, 2021; Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b; Medina, 2023). I argue that they do not distinguish between individual and group protests, they fail to account for protests that are morally corrupt or not about justice, and they have not successfully accounted for the two elements of protests: that they express opposition and demand change.

In this Chapter, I offer a functional account of protests. I claim that their purpose determines their pragmatic structure. Protests aim to express opposition and transform the public space, and this purpose determines their structure. I roughly follow Kukla & Lance (2009) and Lance & Kukla (2013) to characterise their pragmatic structure. I characterise the pragmatic structure of protests by its entitlements and commitments. However, my account departs from their proposal in that I argue that protest entitlements are not only normative. I claim this proposal accounts for the two elements of protest and applies to all cases of protests. Finally, I apply the authority account to distinguish between group and individual protests. I argue that what distinguishes individual and group protests is a particular kind of entitlement: the authority to speak in the name of a group, which can be owned and exercised by individuals and collections of individuals. My pragmatic approach to protests as speech acts should help us further understand their social and communicative dimensions.

Chapter 6: From Group Speech Acts Inflationism to Group Mental States Inflationism

In the last three chapters, I provided an inflationary account of group assertion (Chapter 3), a generalisation of that account to all group speech acts (Chapter 4), and an application of that account to group protests (Chapter 5). In this chapter, I argue that my inflationist conclusions about group speech acts motivate inflationism about group mental states. In particular, I argue that group belief inflationism, the thesis that a group can believe P even if none of its members do, follows from group assertion inflationism, the thesis that a group can assert even if none of its members do. I offer the novel argument that group assertion inflationism entails a form of externalism —group belief vehicle externalism— according to which the vehicle of the group's belief can be outside the group in external spokespersons, for example. This form of externalism is incompatible with the deflationist claim that for a group to believe that p, it is necessary that at least some of its members believe that p. I defend functionalism about group belief; I claim it can capture group vehicle externalism. Finally, I hold that the same case can be presented in favour of group intention vehicle externalism and inflationism.

This contradicts what Lackey (2021) thought. She defends an inflationist view of group assertion. Nevertheless, she holds what can be seen as a form of 'neo-summativism' about belief, according to which it is necessary (but not sufficient) that some group members believe P for the group to believe P. For she argues that inflationist accounts of belief cannot account for group lies and bullshit. Against her, I hold that spokespersons external to the group can lie and bullshit about P on behalf of a group, even if the group members have no belief about P. I will call these *external lies* and *external bullshit*. I argue that we cannot accurately account for group lies and bullshit and distinguish one from the other without accepting group belief vehicle externalism.

My group belief externalism is analogous to the extended mind view (Clark & Chalmers, 1998). This is the view that not all mental states are located inside the person who has them. Clark & Chalmers claim that the mental state's external vehicle can play the functional role of a normal belief. Here, I hold that external spokespersons can be the external vehicle that plays the functional role of belief in the group's cognitive system.

Chapter 1: The Group Speech Acts Theoretical Landscape

This Chapter aims to build a map of the views in the group speech acts debate. My objective is to gain a clearer view of the landscape: find where the different proposals stand in relation to each other (find kinships and disagreements) and, importantly, distinguish different aims that theories can have when accounting for speech acts. To this end, I develop a map of the views of the group speech acts debate. I use this to position myself within the debate. My proposed map has two axes: The first axis is given by the views in the traditional group speech act debate. To present these views, I am following Fogal, Harris & Moss's (2018) landscape of the contemporary views on speech acts. According to them, there are five families of speech act theories. I propose that there are three families in the group speech act debate so far (the third is the new view I propose in this thesis), and each one of them has a family resemblance to one of the five traditional families.[4]

The second axis of my map is given by the distinction between *performance accounts* and *force accounts*. Fogal et al. hold that the central question of speech act theory is "What makes it the case that an utterance constitutes an illocutionary act of a given kind?" (Fogal et al., 2018, p.2). While this is true, it lacks some finesse. I argue that we should distinguish between accounts according to whether they answer one of the following questions 'What does it take to perform a group speech act at all?' (The *performance question*) and 'What distinguishes the force of different group speech acts?' (The *force question*). I hold that not all views answer both questions. I do not consider this an objection against them but just a distinction about our theories' objectives. This distinction allows us to better categorise different views on speech acts.

The debate on group speech acts sometimes seems disconnected from the traditional speech acts debate. Here, I aim to solve this problem. While there are significant developments in the group case, there are also meaningful connections

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[4] By this I mean that each group view resembles at least one of the five families, not that there is a one to one match between them.

between group and traditional speech acts views. Making these connections not only helps us better understand the work done around speech acts in general (which is a major gain in itself) but also opens up new possible routes for research. The view developed in this dissertation (Chapters 4 and 5) exemplifies this. Nevertheless, I also hope this map leads to new advances.

Now, the structure of this chapter is as follows: In the first section, I present the five families' landscape. In the second section, I distinguish between two questions a speech act theory may try to answer. These are the *performance* and the *force* questions. A full answer to the central question requires answers to both issues; I argue that not all views answer both questions. In the third section, I distinguish between two analogous questions for the group speech acts accounts. I also argue that *force* and *performance* group accounts fulfil different roles in a complete group speech act theory. In the fourth section, I present the group speech acts views' landscape and map my own proposal into it.

1. The five families

According to Fogal, Harris & Moss (2018), there are five families of views about what makes it the case that an utterance constitutes an illocutionary act of a given kind. The five families include, first, the two views that started the debate: the classical conventional and intentional views. Second is the functional view, which tries to combine the best elements from both theories. And third, two new contenders: the expression and normative views.

1.1 The conventional view

The view originates in Austin (1975), later championed by Searle (1969, 1979) and, more recently, by Lepore & Stone (2015). Conventionalism focuses on social rules, roles and practices to explain communication. They hold that speech acts are defined by conventional procedures. To perform a speech act is to satisfy the convention associated with it, which could roughly be understood as saying the right words by the right person in the right context: "For an utterance to be a conventional illocutionary act, not only must it be the utterance of what the convention requires (the specified words, or words with the specified meanings), it must be issued by the right person under the right circumstances." (Bach and Harnish, 1979, p. 110). For example, to marry a couple,

an individual must have the authority of a religious representative or public servant. Marriages must also be performed in the right context; a ceremony with particular characteristics must occur. And finally, a particular formula, like "I pronounce you husband and wife", must be said.

Two kinds of conventions have been used by conventionalists to explain speech acts. Austin based his explanations on social and institutionalised conventions. Marring and baptising are great examples of this, as they usually involve institutions and agreed-upon procedures to be performed. However, speech acts like assertions, questions and requests do not seem to fit this kind of convention. For example, there does not seem to be an institution or established procedure for asserting. So, some philosophers, like Dummett (1973), proposed considering linguistic conventions instead. In this view, making an assertion, for example, requires satisfying the linguistic convention: roughly, using a declarative sentence. Searle (1969) incorporates some elements of linguistic conventions into his proposal, and more recently, Lepore & Stone (2015) appeal to linguistic conventions and defend the view against many standard objections.

The conventional view faces many challenges: Speech acts can be made with sub-sentential expressions; picture someone uttering 'Very fast' to assert that a car is going fast. This puts pressure on using types of sentences to distinguish speech acts. And elliptical explanations struggle with these cases (Stainton, 1995, 1997). It has been argued that linguistic conventions underdetermine illocutionary force, for example, jokes and utterances performed in a play may superficially seem to be assertions, but they are not (Davidson, 1979). Furthermore, sentence types can be used to perform more than one speech act. For example, declarative and interrogative sentences can be used to make requests; picture someone using "the window is open" to request to open it (Kölbel (2010) has an interesting discussion of these cases where he tries to defend the conventional view).

1.2 The intentional view

This view is based on Grice's theory of conversation. Grice himself did not discuss speech acts or try to explain them using the tools he developed. Speech act theory was, in a sense, a rival approach to communication. However, philosophers like Strawson (1964) saw the opportunity to use his intentional theory to explain better those speech

acts where conventionalism struggles.[5] The main claim of this view is that speech acts are distinguished by different communicative intentions. In other words, to perform an illocutionary act is to produce an utterance with a particular communicative intention, and to succeed in communicating is to produce in the audience a particular mental state by their recognition of that intention. For example, assertion would be characterised by the speaker's reflexive intention to produce in the audience the belief that P, by their recognition that the speaker has that very same intention when uttering that P.

In this view, different kinds of speech acts are characterised by the intention to produce different kinds of states in the audience. Intentions to produce different states count as different communicative intentions. For example, a command would be characterised by the intention to move the audience to do φ; a question would be characterised by the intention to move the audience to answer, etc. (Fogal et al., 2018, p.5). People like Bach and Harnish (1979) have shown how to characterise different speech acts using intentions and proposed a taxonomy for speech acts.

It is important to notice that, in contrast with the conventional view, no intentional theory has tried to account for all speech acts. They have been happy to accept that some speech acts, like marrying or baptising, are defined by conventions. Instead, they defend that there is a distinct group of speech acts that cannot be accounted for by social or linguistic conventions. They argue that these are distinguished by the speakers' intentions when performing them. So, while the conventional view focuses on social rules and practices, the intentional view focuses on intentional mental states to explain speech acts.

1.3 The functional view

The functional view can be seen as an answer to the debate between the intentional and conventional views. As we saw, philosophers like Strawson (1964) and Bach & Harnish (1979) hold two separate kinds of speech acts: intentional ones, defined by communicative intentions, and conventional ones, defined by our social practices, just as the conventionalist says. For Millikan (1998), there are not two distinct and neatly separate kinds but a continuum with conventional speech acts on one end and

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[5] He seems to be the first to offer an intentional account of speech acts. However, Bach and Harnish (1979) have become the canonical intentional approach to speech acts.

intentional speech acts on the other. In the middle of the spectrum, we can find speech acts that involve a complicated mix of both. For her, what distinguishes a speech act is its *proper function*, which can be understood as what the speech act, as a kind, is supposed to do (Millikan, 1989, 1998). The proper function of a speech act is determined by its history of uses, previous uses, and their aims determine what the speech act is supposed to do now. So, for example, the proper function of assertion is to cause belief, and the proper function of orders is to cause the action ordered (Millikan, 2005, p.157). In this view, the main element is the function of the speech act; it determines the kind of action it is. Conventions and intentions have a role to play; the proper function of a speech act can be obtained by either of them or by a combination of both. It is worth saying that Millikan sees this proper function as a sort of convention. However, her understanding of convention differs from that of traditional conventionalists; a proper function may be derived from innate human features.

1.3.1 The essential effect account

The essential effect account is commonly taken as a distinct proposal to account for assertion as a speech act (see Goldberg, 2015; MacFarlane, 2011; Tollefsen, 2020). According to the essential effect account, to assert is to propose to update the common ground. In general, the common ground can be seen as the background information shared by the participants in a conversation. More specifically, they are the set of presuppositions that are common knowledge to all the participants (Stalnaker, 1999).[6] Fogal et al. (2018) do not see it as a distinct proposal in the speech acts debate but instead as a conversational score approach. Conversational score accounts propose to model conversations with a "conversational score" that registers the important items for a conversation, like the history of the conversation, the moves made, and their effects.[7] They argue that score approaches are not distinct views from the five families since they can be, and have been, combined with various views of the five families (Fogal et al., 2018, pp. 15–18).

While I agree with Fogal et al. (2018) that the conversational score should rather be seen as a useful formal tool available to all accounts, I believe that the essential effect

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[6] Stalnaker (1999) discusses what exactly is required for something to be common knowledge or a presupposition. This detail does not matter for us here.

[7] A view that has origins in Stalnaker's "Assertion" (Stalnaker, 1999, pp. 79-96) and Lewis (1979).

account should be included as a contender in the speech acts debate. While it is modelled in a score fashion, it has its own view of what assertion is. I hold it should be seen as a functional account. While it is not an account in Millikan's fashion, it does propose to distinguish assertion, as a kind, for what it aims to do, and this seems to be the central tenet of functional accounts. A problem with the essential effect account is that it is a proposal that aims just to distinguish assertion and not other speech acts. However, this problem may not be unique to this view, as we will see when talking about the normative view.

1.4 The expression view

Expressionism about speech acts is the view that speech acts are determined by the kind of mental state they express. Different kinds of speech acts express different kinds of mental states. Expressionism should be understood in contrast with intentionalism. The latter characterises speech acts by the mental states the speakers intend to produce in the audience, while the former takes into account only the "mind state" the speaker expresses without relating it to the audience's intended mental state.[8]

According to Fogal et al. (2018, p. 9), expressionism is a close cousin of intentionalism since it individuates speech acts by the mental state associated with it. However, in contrast with intentionalism, expressionism is less demanding since it does not require complex higher-order thoughts from speakers. According to expressionism, the states expressed are defined by the mental state the speaker represents herself as having. A second difference that will be very important later is that expressionists have been very willing to combine the claim that speech acts are individuated by the mind state they express with the conventional and intentional views. Green (2007) combines expressionism with intentionalism; he holds that performing a speech act is a matter of intentionally and overtly making one's thoughts manifest. But in contrast, others like Ridge (2014) believe that expressing a mental state associated with a force is a matter of convention. "A declarative sentence 'p' in sense S in a natural language N used with assertive force in a context of utterance C expresses a state of mind M if and only if

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[8] Fogal et al. (2018, p. 10, footnote 12) distinguish this view from what is commonly known as expressivism, which can be seen as the view that some speech acts express non-cognitive mental states (see Gibbard, 1990, 2003; Schroeder, 2008).

conventions which partially constitute N dictate that someone who says 'p' in sense S in C with assertive force is thereby liable for being in state M." (Ridge, 2014. P. 109).

1.5 The normative view

The general claim of normative accounts is that speech acts are characterised by their normativity, which means either their upstream normative requirements, downstream normative effects, or both. This view has two versions: norm accounts and entitlements and commitments accounts. The first was popularised by Williamson (2000), and it focuses on upstream normative requirements. He claims that assertion is distinguished from other speech acts by a special kind of epistemic normativity captured by a constitutive rule. What is special about Williamson's claim is that he is not just saying that some epistemic norm governs assertion but that this norm is constitutive and individuating of assertion. According to Williamson (2000), knowledge is the norm of assertion:

> KN: Assert that P only if you know that P

There is an extensive discussion about whether knowledge is the norm of assertion. Many agree with Williamson that there is a norm of assertion; it is more contentious that KN is such a norm.[9] Furthermore, while many believe that there is an epistemic norm of assertion, not that many explicitly argue that it is constitutive and individuating.[10] Many have challenged the idea that Williamson's arguments are strong enough to prove this claim (Maitra, 2011; Pagin, 2011). Moreover, this view faces the challenge of being too narrow, as it has mostly focused on assertion, while little work has been done on epistemic norms governing other speech acts (Fogal et al., 2018, p. 12).[11]

A second normative approach is provided by entitlements and commitments accounts (often referred to as commitments accounts, for short). This view sees speech acts as part of a complex normative matrix of rights and obligations. They argue that

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[9] See Douven, 2006; Garcia-Carpintero, 2004; Goldberg, 2015; Hawthorne, 2003; Kvanvig, 2011; Lackey, 2007; Weiner, 2005; among others.

[10] Goldberg (2010) and Simion & Kelp (2020) are among those that do.

[11] Turri (2010) is an honourable exception; he addresses the larger class he names 'alethic speech acts' and argues they are governed by epistemic norms. Similarly, Williamson (2000) suggests that weaker speech acts than assertion (like suggesting) and stronger speech acts (like swearing) are governed by epistemic norms. However, he does not argue in detail that they also have constitutive and individuating norms. More recently, Simion (2022) offers a study on the normativity of conjecture.

speech acts are characterised by the normative pre-requisites and the normative effects they produce. Brandom (1983) and Macfarlane (2011) offer influential commitment accounts of assertion. However, they seem to make the same mistake as the rule accounts, as they do not offer explanations of other kinds of speech acts. However, Kukla & Lance (2009) and Lance &Kukla (2013) offered a general taxonomy for all speech acts, characterised different speech acts in a functional normative fashion and argued that imperatives and requests are better understood in normative terms.

2. Two questions in the debate about individual speech acts

According to Fogal et al. (2018), the central question of speech acts theories is: What makes it the case that an utterance constitutes an *illocutionary* act of a given kind? They are not wrong about this. However, this question can be broken into (at least) two sub-questions, and not every view discussed here answers both. The first question is: What distinguishes between *illocutionary forces*? Let us call this the *force question*. People interested in the *force question* are interested in characterising *illocutions*; they want to know what makes them the kind of action they are. The second question is: What does it take for a speech act to be performed at all? Let's call this the *performance question*.[12] People interested in the *performance question* want to know by virtue of what an utterance has the *force* it has. Identical utterances (those with the same content, words, order, etc.) can have different *forces*, so what gives them their force is not obvious. It is not impossible to answer both questions at the same time. It is very possible that what gives an utterance the *force* α is precisely what distinguishes α. The fact is that some views answer just the *force question*.

Let's start with rule accounts. According to them, some speech acts (assertion in particular and maybe some other truth-related *illocutions*) are distinguished by a particular epistemic norm. This norm distinguishes assertion from other speech acts, but take a particular utterance *u* of (1):

(1) Toro is in the house.

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[12] Correspondingly, let's call something a *force account* if it answers the *force question*, and a *performance account* if it answers the *performance question*.

Let's assume that a norm, KN, is constitutive and individuating of assertion. The rule account does not tell us why *u* is an assertion of (1) and not, for example, a conjecture or a swearing of (1); in virtue of what must the speaker of *u* know that (1), and not be sure about it, or just reasonably belief it. Even assuming KN governs assertion, we have no answer to why it is in place in this particular instance.

It could be argued that the rule account's answer to the *performance question* is that an utterance has the force of assertion if it is subject to the right norm. This is what Goldberg (2015) seems to answer in relation to Maitra's (2011) objection that the norm of assertion is not constitutive, as it does not resemble other game rules (those that specify when an action counts as X in the game). "To wit: to assert is to perform the unique type of speech act that is subject to the norm in question." (Goldberg, 2015, p. 23). I agree with Goldberg that failing to answer the *performance question* does not disqualify any norm of being constitutive. However, as he admits (Goldberg, 2015, p. 23), this answer is not illuminating at all regarding the subject of performance, even if it technically is an answer to the question. This is something Williamson (2000) seems to agree with:

> Given a game G, one can ask 'What are the rules of G?'. Given an answer, one can ask the more ambitious question 'What are non-circular necessary and sufficient conditions for a population to play a game with those rules?'. Competent unphilosophical umpires know the answer to the former question but not to the latter. Given a language L, one can ask 'What are the rules of L?'. Given an answer, one can ask 'What are non-circular necessary and sufficient conditions for a population to speak a language with those rules?'. Given a speech act A, one can ask 'What are the rules of A?'. Given an answer, one can ask 'What are non-circular necessary and sufficient conditions for a population to perform a speech act with those rules?'. This chapter asks the former question about assertion, not the latter.
>
> (Williamson, 2000, pp. 239-240)

"What are non-circular necessary and sufficient conditions for a population to perform a speech act with those rules?" is Williamson's way of putting the *performance question* in normative terms. This result is not completely unexpected. Normative accounts tell us when speech acts are properly or improperly performed, not when they are performed at

all.[13] For example, breaking KN means the assertion was improper, not that it was not performed at all.[14]

The conventional and intentional accounts are two views that clearly have distinct answers to both questions. Conventional speech acts distinguish speech acts according to the convention that defines them. At the same time, a specific speech act is performed if and only if the convention is followed, as stated. For example, a marriage is the *illocution* that follows the convention that an individual with the proper authority utters, 'I pronounce you husband and wife' in a special ceremony. At the same time, an utterance *u* of those words has the *force* of marriage if they satisfy the convention. Intentional accounts distinguish speech acts by the communicative intention that accompanies them. Each speech act is identified by a particular communicative intention. And, an utterance *u* has its *force* depending on the speaker's communicative intention when uttering. For example, an utterance of (1) is an assertion because the speaker had the intention that the audience form the belief that the cat of the speaker is in her house.

Now, two clarifications are worthy here. First, I do not intend to offer a full map of which of the five families answers which question. My aim is just to distinguish the two questions so that I can use them to talk about group speech acts views. To this end, showing that rule accounts do not answer both questions is enough. However, I suspect that the expression view also does not have a distinct answer to the *performance question*. Evidence of this is that they often mix their view with intentional or conventional accounts. I also would expect Millikan's functionalism to answer the *performance question* by appealing to conventional or intentional mechanisms or a mixture of both. Second, I don't intend this to be an objection; different theories have different objectives. The fact that rule accounts cannot answer the *performance question* is not a problem by itself. It would be so if we had reasons to think that a theory of speech acts should be able to answer the question, and I currently do not see any reasons to believe this. Of course, at the end of the day, we are going to want a complete theory of speech acts.

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[13] I suspect that an argument like this can be presented in relation to commitment accounts. I will not pursue it here. My aim is just to distinguish these questions so I can use them to discuss group speech acts views, not to give a full discussion about the traditional five families.
[14] In Austinian terms, rule accounts have a theory of when speech acts are *abuses* (when they were performed but broke the rules) but not a theory of *misfires* (when the speech act was attempted but failed).

Such an account must answer both questions, but it might very well be the cases that we need different explanations for each of them.

Here, I finish my discussion of the traditional individual speech acts debate. In what follows, I use the tools developed to map the views in the group speech acts debate. The five families and the distinction between the *performance* and the *force questions* provide the two axes of my classification. What I do next is to show that there are two analogous questions in the group speech acts debate.

3. Two questions in the debate about group speech acts

In the last section, I argued that we can distinguish between two different questions that traditional speech acts theories may try to answer. In the group case, we can distinguish between two analogous questions: What distinguishes *group illocutionary forces*? And what does it take to perform a *group* speech act at all? For now, let's call them the *group force* and *group performance question*s, respectively, to distinguish them from their counterparts in the previous section. In the rest of the dissertation, I will simply call them the *force* and *performance questions* (or talk about *performance* and *force* accounts), as I will not reference their counterparts in the future, given that our main subject is group speech acts.

Similarly to the last section, we could say that these two questions are part of the central question of group speech act theory: What makes it the case that an utterance constitutes a group speech act of a given kind? This is true, but it frames the debate as an application of the central question of speech act theory to the group case. Group speech acts are interesting because they seem to be different from the individual case. It makes sense to have a discussion about group speech acts apart from the traditional debate if there is something new to be accounted for. We naturally attribute speech acts to groups: speakers say things like 'The government promise', 'The company lied', 'The research group claimed', 'Refuges asked for help', 'The police ordered', etc. Additionally, sometimes when we see mobs chanting a statement or individuals representing groups asserting, we interpret those statements as coming from a group. So, we want to know what, if anything, distinguishes group speech acts from individual speech acts; when speech acts are properly attributed to groups and not to (or not just to) individuals. I believe that answering this is a matter of answering the *group performance question*. The

debate about group speech acts is not about characterising *illocutionary forces* but about explaining when groups perform actions with those *forces*. For example, when discussing group assertion, we are not accounting for a new kind of *illocutionary force* but explaining when that *force* is attributable to actions performed for or by groups. Of course, we may expect to make some adjustments to traditional force accounts, yet we assume that both individual and group assertions are kinds of assertion. So, the way I see the group speech acts debate is to be about *performance* rather than *force*. The four main views I distinguish in the next section are, in my map, *group performance accounts*. Nevertheless, we will see some hybrid views that mix between force and performance accounts of different kinds. In short, in the group case, *performance accounts* are the ones that distinguish between individual and group speech acts, while *force accounts* have more of a control role; they explain why, even in the group case, we are still talking about the same kinds of speech acts.

With this, I finished presenting the two axes of my map of the views of group speech acts. We can classify the accounts depending on their kind of view (roughly, which family they belong to). But we can also classify them as *group performance* or *force accounts*. A few clarifications are needed before entering the map itself: first, the views in the group case are not a one-to-one match to the five families. Not all the five families have been explored in the group debate—for instance, the expression and functional views. Second, all the views in the group case resemble one of the five families, but this is a family resemblance; they are not exactly the same kind of views, although I would argue they share the same spirit. Moreover, the group speech act accounts do not necessarily take inspiration from the five families. Instead, some take inspiration from group action accounts (like Gilbert's (1989, 2006, 2009, 2013). And third, to better represent the *dialectic* of the group speech acts debate, I decided to include the disjunctive view as a distinct class.[15] The disjunctive view holds, very roughly, that there are an "intentional" kind and a "conventional" kind of group speech acts. I hope this decision becomes clearer when we examine the proposals themselves.

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[15] This is another reason why there is not a one-to-one match between the five families and the views in the group speech act debate.

4. The group speech acts landscape

The group speech acts landscape has four main views: group intentional, disjunctive, authority and group normative. They answer the *group performance question*; they account for when a group speech act is performed. As part of the exposition, we will see some hybrid views that mix a *force account* to account for specific group speech acts properly.

4.1 The group intentional view

This view shares a family resemblance to the traditional intentional view. The main claim of the group intentional view is that group speech acts are distinguished by shared or joint intentionality. We can generally think of shared or joint intentions as intentions individuals have to do something as a group. Picture traditional cases of individuals intending to do something, like Gaby intending to water her plants, Jimena intending to take her cat to the veterinarian, or Javier intending to play the guitar. Compare these cases with a situation where the three intend to clean the house. In one scenario, it might be a coincidence that they all intend to clean the house; in another, they may instead make plans and coordinate to do it more efficiently. The latter is an example of what we may call 'shared or joint intention'. They intended to clean the house as a group.

Now, there are several proposals to account for shared intentionality. In the literature, we-intentions (intentions individuals have when acting as a group) are commonly used in contrast to I-intentions (intentions individuals have when acting alone). Searle (1990) argues that we-intentions are primitive and irreducible to I-intentions. However, he argues that joint intentionality is not something groups have over and above individuals; we-intentions are special kinds of intentions individuals have when working as groups, not intentions groups have as agents different from their members. So, in his view, Gaby, Jimena and Javier had each one the we-intention that they clean the house. To avoid some criticism, Searle (2010) adds the condition that all participants must have the belief that others also have we-intentions. For Tuomela (2006) and Tuomela & Miller (1988) we-intentions are reducible to I-intentions plus the mutual beliefs about the conditions for success and others also sharing an intention. Gilbert (1989, 2006, 2009, 2013) characterises joint intentionality in terms of joint commitments. A joint commitment is a commitment made by a collection of individuals

to perform a present or future action as an individual would. Each one of them must express their willingness to do their part. For Gilbert, a group shares an intention to do *A* if and only if they are jointly committed to intend *A* as a group.[16]

Regardless of the best account of shared intentions, this kind of intentionality is the core part of group intentional views. The group speech acts debate starts with this view. Hughes (1984) argues that traditional speech acts theories have not accounted for group speech acts. He argues, against Austin and Searle, that the canon has overlooked that groups can also perform speech acts. Group speech acts have not been included in traditional speech acts taxonomies or accounted for by them. In his view, group speech acts are those originating in more than one individual:

> I understand group speech acts to be the coordinated effort of more than one individual informing utterances in the same rule-governed form of behaviour as the speech acts of individuals. The group speech act differs from the individual's monologic utterance only (or at least characteristically) in that its meaning and intention originate in multiple persons.

> Hughes (1984, p.379)

So, the idea is that while there is much work done on explaining *illocutionary forces*, something extra needs to be said to account for when they are performed by "plural" subjects. The core of his account is that there must be a *group illocutionary intention*, which is characterised in Gricean terms as an intention to produce in the audience a specific effect by their recognition of that very same intention (Hughes, 1984, p. 381). This makes explicit the connection with the traditional intentional view. However, Hughes adds that the intention must be shared. "The members must individually want to convey something as a group. There must be a sense of 'we'ness and each member must think of the act as a collective act." (Hughes, 1984, p. 382). Hughes adds further conditions to ensure that the speaker conveys the group's intention, not her own:

> An utterance X by speaker S is a group speech act if and only if
>
> (1) There exists a group (G), this group has an illocutionary intention, and X conveys that illocutionary intention.
>
> (2) S is a member of G.

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[16] Bratman (2014) offers another influential account of shared intentionality.

(3) S (believes that he/she) knows the illocutionary intention of G and that X conveys this illocutionary intention.

(4) G does not object to S uttering X on its behalf and if G intends for any specific individual(s) to utter X, it intends for S to utter X. S (believes that he/she) knows this.

(5) #3 and #4 are (the) reasons S utters X.

<div align="right">(Hughes, 1984, p. 387)</div>

Hughes offers a general account of group speech acts. More recently, Tollefsen (2009) uses his theory to account for group testimony. She is interested in how we can gain knowledge from testimony coming from groups, like what happens when we read Wikipedia, and offers a revised version of Hughes's theory. Importantly, she adds a condition to account for the *force* of testimony:

A group G testifies that p by making an act of communication a if and only if:

1. (In part) in virtue of a's communicable content G reasonably intends to convey the information that p.

2. The information that p is conveyed by either (i) a spokesperson S or (ii) a written document.

3. If (i), G does not object to S's uttering p on its behalf and if G intends for any specific individual(s) to utter p, it intends for S to utter p and S believes that he or she knows this.

4. If (i), S utters p for the reasons in 3.

5. If (ii), G does not object to the way in which p is conveyed in writing.

6. G conveys the information that p in the right social and normative context.

7. In conveying the information that p in the right social and normative context, G is taken to have given its assurance that p is true.

<div align="right">(Tollefsen 2009, pp. 12–13)</div>

Tollefsen (2009) specifically offers an account of group testimony by combining an amended version of Hughe's theory with Lackey's (2006) account of individual testimony.[17] Condition 7 states that giving testimony is a matter of giving assurance of P.

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[17] This gives evidence of my distinction between *group performance* and *force accounts*

Another group intentional account of testimony comes from Fricker (2012). But instead of using Hughes's account, it is based on Gilbert's notion of joint commitment. Her core view is that ". . . construe a group testifier as constituted, at least in part, by way of a joint commitment to trustworthiness as to whether p (or whatever range of p-like questions might delineate the body's expertise, formal remit, or informal range of responsibility)" (Fricker, 2012, pp. 271–272). Fricker uses the notion of joint commitment to distinguish the action as a group speech act, while the commitment to trustworthiness accounts for the *force* of testimony.[18] It could be thought that Fricker's proposal should be seen as a normative proposal akin to Brandon's commitments account. However, Gilbert's joint commitment proposal is offered as an account of group intentions and other collective intentional phenomena such as group beliefs and group actions. So, taking accounts based on Gilbert's view as group intentional accounts is straightforward.[19]

Against group intentional views, it has been argued that they do not correctly account for assertions performed by large, organised groups like governments or companies (Meijers, 2007; Lackey, 2018, 2021). Their problem is that they require most (or all) group members to either intend to communicate as a group or commit to doing it. However, in many cases of spokespersons representing institutions or companies, most members have no shared intention nor joint commitment to communicate as a group. Furthermore, even if we were to restrict the accounts to operational members, Lackey (2021, pp. 158-163) argues that spokespersons can perform group assertions even if no group members intend to assert. Hughes (1984) recognised this potential problem very early. He restricted his account to groups where deliberation is possible, denying group status to very large collections of individuals. However, he admits a more inclusive account may want to include them: "I suspect that a comprehensive account of non-monologic speech acts might not deny these large entities status as groups..." (Hughes, 1984, p. 385). And suggests that authority might be taken as an auxiliary to shared intentions. "Whether authorization is occasion-specific or standing it might be thought

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[18] A commitment to trustworthiness is something that both individuals and groups can have.

[19] In more detail, both Fricker (2012) and Tollefsen (2009) can be seen as giving group intentional-normative hybrid accounts. They mix a group intentional *performance account* with a normative *force account*. For them, what accounts for the force of testimony is the normative commitment the testifier acquires. But what makes them group and not individual testifiers is the notion of shared intentions.

of as an 'auxiliary' intention of the group." (Hughes, 1984, p.386). This is what disjunctive accounts attempt to do.

4.2 The disjunctive view

The central claim of disjunctive accounts is that there are two different kinds of group speech acts: one characterised by shared-intentional coordination and another by authorised spokespersons. Crucially, they account for these two separately. This is the current leading view of group speech acts; Lackey (2018, 2021) and Ludwig (2020b) hold the most influential disjunctive proposals. They agree with group intentional views that shared intentions are the core of some group speech acts, but noticing they fail to account for large institutions and companies, they add a second kind. Importantly, this distinction does not cut between kinds of *illocutions*; for example, a group assertion can be performed by individuals coordinating to communicate or by a spokesperson representing the group.

Ludwig (2020b) divides group speech acts into two main categories: collective speech acts and group proxy speech acts. Collective speech acts are those in which all the group members participate in the production at the time of the speech act (Ludwig, 2020b, p. 46). It is required that the members share an intention to perform the communicative act.[20] His main examples are groups chanting a statement with the intention of communicating as a group. Picture a group chanting 'Welcome' to a new member. We can also include groups writing a statement together in real-time, but they must intend to represent themselves as part of a group saying something. Furthermore, Ludwig argues that some speech acts categorised as individual speech acts are always group speech acts, meaning they are always performed by groups. Marriage, greetings, and voting are among the acts that should be understood as group speech acts since they essentially require shared intentions to be performed. On the other hand, proxy group speech acts are characterised by proxies representing the group. Proxies are, on Ludwig's account, a kind of status role; these are defined by a set of constitutive rules that specify the function of the role and are dependent on a community accepting the rules and accepting that the proxy has such a role (Ludwig, 2020b, pp. 51-54). Money is

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[20] For Ludwig (2020b), individuals have we-intentions not just when they intend to do an action A but when they intend to represent themselves as being part of a group doing A.

a classic example of a status role. For paper bills to be worth something, a community must be willing to act as if it has value. Analogously, spokespersons' roles are defined by a set of rules, and their ability to perform group speech acts depends on a community accepting that they occupy such a role.

Ludwig offers a general account of group speech acts and a taxonomy for them. In contrast, Lackey (2021) proposes a disjunctive account of group assertion:

> CGA: A group G asserts that p in the coordinated way if and only if the members of G coordinate individual acts a1, … , an so that they all reasonably intend to convey that p together in virtue of these acts.
>
> ABGA: A group G asserts that p in the authority-based way if and only if that p belongs to a domain d, and a spokesperson(s) S (I) reasonably intends to convey the information that p in virtue of the communicable content of an individual act (or individual acts) of communication, (ii) has the authority to convey the information in d, and (iii) acts in this way in virtue of S's authority as a representative of G.
>
> (Lackey, 2021, pp. 149-150)

Coordinated Group Assertion (CGA) requires the group members to perform an utterance through their coordinated actions and intend to convey P in virtue of them. Examples are groups writing a paper together at the same time or a group of castaways writing "We need help" on a beach with their bodies. On the other hand, Authority Based Group Assertion (ABGA) sets the conditions for spokespersons to speak on behalf of a group. As examples of Ludwig's proxy assertion and Lackey's ABGA, picture the spokesperson of Coca-Cola Company asserting (2) or a representative for the UK government stating (3):

(2) Coca-Cola does not cause obesity.

(3) Shortages are not related to Brexit.

There are substantial disagreements between Lackey (2021) and Ludwig (2020b) regarding the relationship between acceptance and authority (see Lackey, 2021, pp. 141-142). However, both agree that there are two different kinds of speech acts that must be

accounted for separately. Moreover, they roughly agree that one is characterised by shared-intentional coordination, and the other by authorised spokespersons. The first requires participation from all the members and a shared intention to communicate, and the other requires that a particular individual is given the authority to represent the group, and acts in virtue of (and within) this capacity. This is the central claim of the disjunctive view.

Now, the relationship between disjunctivism and other views is pretty complex. CGA or collective speech acts are accounts of what I call the shared-intentional coordinated kind. They are a form of group intentional account: they both propose that group members intending to communicate as a group is the key property of the kind. However, disjunctive accounts are distinct from group intentional accounts because they propose a second kind of group speech acts that is not characterised by shared intentionality but by individuals playing a specific role. While shared-intentional accounts are close to traditional intentional accounts, I propose we should see authority accounts –like Lackey's ABGA or Ludwig's proxy speech acts— as close to conventional accounts. Conventionalism focuses on social rules, roles and practices to explain communication rather than the intentional mental states of the individuals. This is what authority accounts do: Lackey and Ludwig attempt to explain group spokesperson cases by appealing to the role individuals play when representing the group as proxies or spokespersons. Moreover, Ludwig's approach follows Searle in both its understanding of constitutive rules (Searle, 1969) and status functions (Searle, 1995). Searle is one of the main and most famous proponents of the conventionalist view of speech acts, and his *Speech Acts* book (Searle, 1969) is one of the most influential defences of linguistic conventionalism. Then, we can see disjunctivism as proposing a group intentional and a group conventional kind of group speech acts.

There is a parallelism between this and what philosophers like Bach and Harnish (1979) have argued. They hold that there are two kinds of *illocutionary forces*: intentional and conventional. However, let's not forget that they do distinguish between *illocutions*. Speech acts like marring and baptising are always conventional, while others, like asserting or asking, are always intentional. Disjunctive accounts do not cut between *illocutionary forces*. For example, group promise can be performed by a group writing a

statement together intending to promise as a group and by a spokesperson representing that group.

Marsili (2023) also offers a disjunctive account of assertion. However, he mixes it with a commitment *force* account of assertion. He argues against Lackey (2021) that her account does not distinguish assertion from other speech acts. Both CGA and ABGA have the condition that the speakers intend to convey that P in virtue of their communicative actions. Nevertheless, assertion is not the only communicative action that conveys propositions. Indirect forms of communication like implicatures or presupposition accommodation[21] also convey propositions. Moreover, other speech acts, like hypotheses, warnings, swearing, etc., convey propositions too. They would be categorised as group assertions by Lackey's account (Marsili, 2023, pp. 371-373). To amend this, he proposes to pair her disjunctive account with a commitments account of assertion. Recently, Tollefsen (2020) has proposed that the commitments account of assertion is the account of assertion best suited to be extended to the group case. She proposes that "For a group G to assert that p, G must be committed to the truth of p." (Tollefsen, 2020, p. 339). I take her proposal to be just a *force* group account of assertion. It distinguishes between assertion and other speech acts but does not explain when the group is committed and not the individuals. Marsili (2023) proposes to solve this problem by fusing Lackeys and Tollefsen's proposals:

> (AC)   A speaker S asserts that p iff (1) S utters an expression with content p, thereby (2) presenting p as true, and (3) undertaking assertoric commitment to p.
>
> (CAC)   A group G makes a collective assertion that p iff the members of G coordinate individual acts a1, ... an, so that they intentionally satisfy AC(1–3) together in virtue of these acts.
>
> (PAC)   A group G makes a proxy assertion iff a spokesperson(s) S(a) (1) utters an expression with content p, thereby (2) presenting p as true, and (3) undertaking assertoric commitment to p on G's behalf (b) S has the authority

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[21] The phenomenon of adding to the common ground those presuppositions needed for the expressed proposition to have a truth value. See Lewis, 1979; Stalnaker, 2014; Von Fintel (2008).

to undertake commitment to p on G's behalf, and undertakes commitment to p in virtue of that authority.

<div align="right">(Marsili, 2023, p. 374)</div>

Disjunctive accounts are the current dominant view in the group speech acts debate. Marsili (2023, p. 371) makes this explicit when he states there is a "substantial consensus" that there are two kinds of group assertion. In this dissertation, I challenge this consensus. I argue that disjunctive accounts fail to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion (Chapter 3) and group speech acts in general (Chapter 4). In short, I argue that they do not account for all cases of group speech acts and failed to distinguish group from individual speech acts. I propose that all group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak on behalf of the group. This is the last kind of view to map in this chapter.

4.3 The authority view

The main claim of this view is that group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak on behalf of a group. Instead of seeing group speech acts as part of two different kinds, this view proposes that we should see shared-intentional coordination and authorised spokespersons just as ways groups perform their communicative actions, but not as distinct kinds that require different treatment. I argue that there is a continuum of cases between coordination and spokesperson cases. And that some of the cases in the middle (*radically collaborative assertions*, to be discussed in Chapter 3 and, more generally, *radically collaborative speech*, to be discussed in Chapter 4) have not been accounted for by previous accounts. So, I propose that we need a unified account for the continuum of cases, one that explains what is common to all of them, instead of a case-by-case characterisation of the range of different examples we may find. Moreover, spokespersons and shared-intentional coordination should be seen just as ways to perform speech acts, since they can also be ways to perform individual speech acts. It is not controversial that individuals can also have spokespersons. However, it has gone unnoticed that groups can be proxies of individuals. Recall Marriage Proposal; an individual can ask her partner to marry her via a group proxy chanting 'Would you marry me?'. All kinds of *illocutions* can be performed this way. I discuss this in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

The authority account of group speech acts is summarised in the following necessary and sufficient conditions:

The Authority Account

A group G performs a group speech act if and only if:

I. A communicative act A that has some meaning under a language is performed by one or more speakers, and at least one of them intends to express that meaning.

II. The speaker or speakers have the authority to speak for the group and are acting in virtue of this authority.

I argue that the authority to speak for the group is not something only speakers have when playing the role of spokespersons. But it is also something group members may individually have when, for example, they write a paper collectively by breaking the work into parts and writing them individually, later putting them together as a single piece. The authority to speak for the group is also something groups have as collections of individuals when they decide to write a statement together by, for example, writing a message on the beach with their bodies, intending to convey what is written as a group.

To my knowledge, this is the first pure authority account of group speech acts. Shared intentionality plays no role in the account; I argue through the thesis that shared intentional coordination is not necessary nor sufficient for group speech acts. This distinguishes the authority account from both group intentional accounts and disjunctive accounts. They both agree that we-intentions (with some extra conditions) are sufficient for a group speech act to be performed. I deny this claim. Now, like Lackey's ABGA or Ludwig's proxy group speech acts, I see the authority account as close to the conventional view. It places social roles, relations and practices at the centre instead of intentional mental states. This does not mean that intentions have no role in the account or that I deny the existence of joint intentionality. It is just that these are not powerful enough to account for all cases of group speech acts and clearly distinguish them from individual speech acts.

The authority account is a *performance account* of group speech acts. It needs to be supplemented by a *force account* to explain specific *group illocutions*. So, granting to Marsili (2023) that we need to add something to distinguish assertion from other *illocutions*, in Chapter 3, I offer a detailed defence of the authority account and show how

it can be mixed with different assertoric *force* theories to account for group assertion. An authority-commitments account of group assertion seems particularly promising. In Chapter 4, I show how this account extends to all kinds of group speech acts —providing a general condition of what is distinctive of group speech acts. Additionally, in Chapter 5, I offer a functional account of the *force* of protest; then, I combine it with my authority account to provide an explanation of group protests.

Summary

In this chapter, I offered a classification of the views in the group speech acts debate. I claim that, so far, there are three kinds of views in our debate: the group intentional view (the one that started the debate), the disjunctive (the predominant view at the moment) and the authority view (the one championed in this dissertation). The intentional view's main claim is that group speech acts are distinguished by shared intentionality. The disjunctive view holds that there are two kinds of group speech acts: a shared-intentional coordination kind and an authorised spokesperson kind. The authority view I defended proposes that group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak on behalf of the group. Additionally, I argue that to classify speech acts theories properly, we must distinguish between *force* and *performance accounts*. I use this distinction as the second axis of my classification. The three main views in the group speech act debate are *group performance accounts*. They answer what it takes to perform a group speech act. *Performance accounts* are the ones that distinguish between individual and group speech acts, while *force accounts* have a control role; they explain why, even in the group case, we are still talking about the same *illocutions*. We need to pair a *group performance account* with a *force account* to account for specific *group illocutions*. I hope that the map I offer in this chapter gives us a clear view of the landscape: distinguishing and explaining what is central to the views in the debate but also showing the kinships and disagreements group speech acts accounts have with each other and with the traditional theories of speech acts.

Chapter 2: The Epistemic Normativity and *Force* of Assertion

In the last chapter, I distinguished between *force* and *performance accounts*. In this chapter, I focus on a specific account of the *force* of assertion: norm accounts. Assertion is central to communication and knowledge transmission, and, importantly, group assertion is this dissertation's main case study of a group speech act. So, before examining the nature of group assertions in Chapter 3, we must examine the nature of assertions in the individual case. The task of this chapter is to do so. I focus on normative rule accounts because, currently, it is probably the most popular approach to assertion. There has been a heated and extensive discussion regarding the best rule to account for the epistemic normativity of assertion. Additionally, after Lackey (2021), others (Paterson, 2020) and I use epistemic arguments to attribute speech acts to groups based on the idea that they have a special normativity.

There are two different claims associated with the norm account of assertion: 1) assertion is governed by an epistemic norm, and 2) this norm distinguishes assertion from other speech acts. Much debate exists about the content of said epistemic norm and whether epistemic rules can be constitutive and individuating of assertion. In this chapter, I argue that the epistemic norm of assertion is context-sensitive. While this claim has been defended before, I argue against one of its main defenders (Goldberg (2010)) that it does not, as he suggests, distinguish the *force* of assertion from the *force* of other speech acts. Specifically, I argue that a context-sensitive norm governs the larger *illocutionary* class of *representatives* –a set of speech acts distinguished by their close relation with truth (hypothesising, asserting and swearing, among others) proposed by Searle (1975) and also distinguished by Turri (2010).

Toward the end of the chapter, I link the discussion of individual assertions to the discussion of group assertions to come in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I show how my rejection of the idea that the epistemic norm of assertion individuates it from other speech acts is compatible with my later defence of an inflationary account of group assertion.

The chapter's structure is as follows: In section 1, I describe the Norm view and some of its main motivations. We see that a variety of different statuses have been suggested as the norm of assertion, including truth, justified belief, justification to believe, knowledge, and context-varying standards (Douven, 2006; Garcia-Carpintero, 2004; Goldberg, 2015; Kvanvig, 2011; Lackey, 2007; Weiner, 2005; Williamson, 2000, among others). I focus on two main claims: Williamson's claim that assertion is individuated from other speech acts because it is governed by the knowledge norm and Goldberg's claim that a context-sensitive epistemic norm individuates assertion. The different proposed norms of assertion have been motivated through discussion of many examples and counterexamples; in section 2, I claim that, if we take them at face value, they suggest that the standard for proper assertion varies from context to context, which supports a context-sensitive view, like the one defended by Goldberg. As a result, I endorse a context-sensitive norm for assertion. However, in section 3, I argue that the same reasons that motivate a context-sensitive norm of assertion also support a context-sensitive norm for the broader class of *representatives*. So, against Goldberg, I argue that a context-sensitive norm cannot distinguish assertion from other *representatives*. Once we see that a context-sensitive norm cannot distinguish assertion from other speech acts, defenders of the Knowledge Norm (KN) for assertion could suggest that this is a reason to prefer KN. In section 4, I reject this idea. In section 5, I discuss whether it is a problem for my later discussion of group assertion that I reject the claim that assertion is individuated from other speech acts by its epistemic norm. In particular, I consider whether it is a problem for the view I share with Lackey (2020) that, in some cases, an assertion is attributable to a group because the group is epistemically responsible for the assertion. I show that it is not a problem. Group epistemic responsibility arguments only need the weak idea that assertions are epistemically evaluable, so asserters are epistemically responsible for their assertions.

1. The norm view and its motivations

The norm account is associated with two claims: that there is an epistemic norm governing assertion and that it distinguishes assertion. First, I will examine the norm before turning to whether it distinguishes assertion. There is good reason to suppose that some epistemic condition governs assertion, and many think the relevant epistemic

condition is knowledge. Here, I present three motivations for connecting assertion and knowledge: the plausible idea that assertion is the vehicle for knowledge, the fact that assertions are epistemically challengeable, and intuitions about Moorean sentences. Let's see them in order.

First, consider the idea that assertion is the vehicle for knowledge. There are two readings of the claim that assertion is the vehicle for knowledge. A weak reading: Assertion is frequently used to transmit knowledge. And a strong reading: Among speech acts, assertion is the primary vehicle for knowledge transmission. The strong reading seems highly plausible since speech acts similar to assertion seem weaker in this regard (like hypothesising or suggesting), and other speech acts related to inquiry (like asking questions), even if they have an important place in building knowledge, they do not seem like their primary aim is to transmit knowledge.

Second, as many have pointed out, assertions can be —and often are— epistemically challenged.[22] This is not accidental; for every assertion, there is always the possibility to challenge them epistemically, even if we end up not doing so. Now, by an 'epistemic challenge an assertion', I mean the kind of requests for evidence, justification or reasons we ask to support an assertion. Commonly, we use phrases like the following to challenge an assertion that P:

1. How do you know that?
2. What are your reasons for P?
3. What is your evidence?
4. Are you sure?
5. You do not know that.
6. You have no reason to believe it.
7. You have no evidence.

Of course, this list is not exhaustive, but it points out that we hold assertions to an epistemic standard. We often accuse speakers of doing something improper when they fail to meet this standard.

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[22] Assertions are also challenged for non-epistemic reasons, like rudeness, etiquette, etc., but this is a feature of discourse in general. Here, we focus specifically on challenges related to justification, evidence, truth, etc.

Third, as is widely observed, it seems intuitively infelicitous to make "Moorean" sentences of the following form (e.g. Williamson 2000):

A. P, but I do not know that P.

However, as others have pointed out, similar sentences with different epistemic standards can also elicit the intuition of *infelicity*, especially if we provide some context:

B. P, but I am not sure about P.
C. P, but I have no evidence for P.
D. P, but it is not reasonable to believe that P.
E. P, but P is not true.
F. P, but I have no reason to believe that P.

Many of these probably already sound weird to the reader, but some may seem more acceptable. Later, I will say more about the idea that they may require more context; for the moment, to motivate the infelicity, we can imagine B being said in a very high-stakes context, like in the mouth of a surgeon talking about her patient (see Brown, 2008, 2010).

The Norm View is in a great position to account for these cases.[23] More succinctly, it claims that a rule of the following form governs assertion:

> Epistemic Norm of Assertion: Speaker S should assert P only if S satisfies epistemic condition E with respect to P.

Normativists disagree about the specific standard E that captures the normativity of assertion. The specific details of the possible explanation given to the data presented above may vary depending on the specific condition E. In general, they all can give explanations in the following fashion: if assertions must satisfy an epistemic standard, speakers can choose to assert that P, in doing so, implying they satisfy E. In addition, they can expect their audience to infer that S satisfies E from the fact that S is asserting P and that assertion is governed by a norm. Furthermore, assuming assertion is governed by such a norm, we can expect unconvinced audiences to challenge assertions using sentences of the form 'Does S satisfies E?' or 'S does not satisfy E'. Finally, if an

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[23] I do not intend this to exhaust the data about assertion. There is more data that we may aim to explain with an account of assertion and with the norm of assertion (see Goldberg, 2010). But I take these to be enough to motivate the idea that assertion has an important, if not essential, epistemic dimension.

epistemic norm governs assertion, it explains the infelicity of assertions of the form 'P, but P does not satisfy E'.

I gave a general scheme for the norm, but many contenders exist. Knowledge, justified belief, truth and reasonable belief (among others) have been proposed as the epistemic standard for proper assertion. I do not intend to present a full list of the proposals, but here are some noteworthy candidates and their champions:

Knowledge Norm (KN): S should assert that P only if S knows that P.

KN seems to be the most popular candidate. In addition to Williamson (2000), it has been endorsed by DeRose (2002), Hawthorne (2004), and Stanley (2005).

Truth Norm (TN): S should assert P only if p is true.

Weiner (2005) and Whiting (2015) defend it. Weiner argues that the KN can be derived from TN plus a Gricean framework.

Justified Belief Norm (JBN): Assert that P only if you justifiably believe that P.

JBN does not require truth, but it could be interpreted with varying degrees of justification. Kvanvig (2011) argues that the relevant notion is knowledge-level justification.

Reasonable to Belief Norm (RTBN): S should assert P only if it is reasonable for one to believe that p.

Douven (2006) and Lackey (2007) support it. Lackey adds the condition that it is reasonable to believe that P should be part of the reason for asserting P.

(TK-A): S should assert P only if one's audience comes thereby to be in a position to know that p.

Proposed by Garcia-Carpintero (2004), TK-A emphasises the hearer.

Context-Sensitive Norm (CSN): S should assert P, only if S satisfies context-sensitive epistemic condition E with respect to P.

Goldberg (2015) argues that the epistemic standard for assertion is context-sensitive. Roughly, he proposes standard E is fixed by what the conversation participants mutually believe. Brown (2010) also endorses a context-sensitive norm. Gerken (2017) proposes

that assertion must be based on a degree of discursive justification for believing that P.

In what follows, I will offer reasons favouring a context-sensitive norm (and examine the extent to which the norm should be context-sensitive). I believe that the plethora of counterexamples to KN favour a norm that admits a great degree of variation (like Goldberg's proposal). Nevertheless, I will argue that such a norm, even if favoured as an account of the epistemic normativity of assertion, is prone to the objection that it does not distinguish assertion as a speech act. Ultimately, I argue that invariant norms like KN are in no better position to account for the epistemic normativity of assertion.

2. Challenges to KN and context-sensitivity

KN is the first and most popular approach to the normativity of assertion; as such, most challenges are directed at it. Here, I will discuss some alleged counterexamples that either argue that the epistemic standard for assertion is higher than knowledge in some contexts or that it is lower. A context-sensitive norm is a good candidate to account for this variation. I will discuss introducing some context-sensitivity in some normative proposals and conclude that Goldberg's CSN is better positioned since it allows for a greater degree of variation in the standard. Of course, there is always the option to resist the counterexamples and explain them away; KN advocates have done this in different ways. I favour an approach like CSN since it can directly explain many of these counterexamples instead of explaining them away.

2.1 Counterexamples against the necessity of KN

A common counterexample to KN is assertions in Gettier cases (Lackey, 2007; Brown, 2008, 2010). Accepting the intuitive result that individuals in these cases lack knowledge, we can asses whether assertions in these contexts are epistemically improper.

> Gettier's timetable
>
> Susy has to leave her office at 12pm to meet with a friend for lunch at 1 pm. She believes truly that there is an express train at 12:20 pm that would get her on time for the meeting and she believes so because she checked the timetable online in the morning, and before departing. Unbeknownst to her, a hacker has changed the timetable as a joke, but by mere luck, both the false and real timetables say that there is an express train at 12:20 pm. Her friend

asks her if she will be able to arrive on time, and she answers (1).

(1) Yes, there is an express train at 12:20pm.

<div align="right">(Brown, 2008)</div>

Susy does not know that (1); she has a true justified belief, but her belief turns out to be true by luck. As Zagzebski (1994) puts it, her bad luck (the timetable's hacking) is cancelled by good luck (the match between the false and real timetable regarding her train). Nevertheless, her assertion seems proper; her evidence in favour of (1) is such that it would be enough to guarantee knowledge in normal circumstances.

A similar problem arises regarding unlucky assertions. These are cases where it seems to the speaker that she knows P, and it is reasonable for her to think that, but by bad luck, P turns out to be false.[24] For example:

> **Unlucky timetable**
>
> As in Gettier's timetable, Susy believes the 12:20 pm express train will take her to her destination on time. Furthermore, she knows that the train service is very reliable. It hasn't malfunctioned in a decade and is internationally recognised for its good service. As before, some hackers mess with the timetable, but in this scenario, the time for her train is wrong. So, when her friend asks her if she will be on time, she asserts the false proposition (1).

Although Susy's assertion is false, it seems appropriate. She has a justified belief, and her evidence favouring (1) is reasonably strong. (1) is false due to unusual circumstances. However, any norm that requires truth as a condition for appropriate assertion predicts that Susy's assertion is inappropriate.

Selfless assertions are presented by Lackey (2007, pp. 598-599) as a counterexample to KN:

> **Distraught Doctor**
>
> Sebastian is a doctor who knows that all the evidence suggests that there is no correlation between vaccines and autism. He also knows autism signals appear around the same age babies are vaccinated. Even with this knowledge, he has the irrational belief that vaccines cause autism because his son was

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[24] Pagin & Marsili (2021) mention these cases in their entry for the SEP.

diagnosed with autism not much later than his first vaccine. In this context, he

is asked by some patients if there is a relation between vaccines and autism,

and he manages to overcome his irrational belief and asserts (2).

(2) There is no correlation between vaccines and autism.

Sebastian does not believe that (2); therefore, he does not know (2). However, his assertion might be not just proper but also praiseworthy since he managed to overcome his prejudices and provide information based on his best evidence.

The last case against the necessity of knowledge I will discuss is introduced by Goldberg (2015). He argues that in contexts with systematic peer disagreements, individuals lack knowledge but can still assert properly. In short, he argues that systematic peer disagreements constitute a defeater of the justification of one's belief. Then, for proper assertion to exist in these contexts, the standard for assertion must be less robust than knowledge (Goldberg, 2015, pp. 251-271). For a specific instance of the kind of cases he is talking about, we can take assertions made in philosophical academic contexts; those that are especially contentious, like a thesis about the mind-body problem, are great examples. Assertions in these contexts will often be made against enduring disagreement from our epistemic peers, and knowledge of this fact constitutes a defeater since we know that people with equivalent intelligence, abilities and evidence have considered our position to be incorrect. We can find further support for the claim that the epistemic standard of assertion in these contexts is not knowledge on how we challenge and evaluate assertions. As Golberg points out, we do not use phrases like 'you do not know that' or 'How do you know?'. Instead, we ask for arguments, reasons, or evidence. This suggests that in these contexts, we aim for assertions to be well-supported or reasonable under the evidence, not that we know or believe in them. It is very common to find philosophers championing ideas they find most reasonable, even if they are not completely convinced or believe in them.

2.2 Counterexamples against the sufficiency of KN

Most norms are presented as necessary conditions for proper assertion. On the one hand, a necessary condition is all that is needed to explain motivations like the ones given in Section 1, and on the other hand, there are other reasons to judge an assertion as improper or incorrect. However, DeRose (2002) endorses a biconditional form of the

knowledge norm (let's call it BKN), and Hawthorne (2004) seems at least inclined to accept it. Against them, Brown (2010) argues that knowledge is not always sufficient for proper assertion:

> Surgeon
>
> A surgeon has been studying a case with her student to perform surgery. They looked at the patient's chart in the morning and decided to move the surgery to the afternoon. Later, when preparing for the operation, the student asks which kidney she must remove. Before answering, the surgeon looks at the chart again and then asserts (3).
>
> (3) The damaged kidney is the left one.[25]

As Brown (2008, 2010) claims, in this case, someone may ask, 'Why did she check? Doesn't she know which kidney she must remove?' A reasonable reply is, 'Of course she knows, but she wants to be sure!'. The idea here is that knowledge is sometimes insufficient for proper assertion; in cases like this, certainty is required. The surgeon knew which kidney to operate on, but it would have been wrong to assert without being sure; the stakes were simply too great.

Surgeon is a counterexample to BKN, not to KN, but it can still be argued that it presents a problem to KN. Assertions like (3) are judged as proper or improper using an epistemic standard (that is higher than knowledge). Part of what the norm of assertion is supposed to do is to explain the epistemic profile of assertion. It is part of this profile that cases like Surgeon seem proper only if the speaker is sure. Of course, KN advocates can say that what Surgeon exemplifies is not part of the epistemic profile of assertion, but an outlier. Nevertheless, (3) is judged by an epistemic standard (not by a different metric); a norm that can account for this judgement would be in a better position than one that does not.

2.3 A context-sensitive norm

Now, we can discuss how to deal with these cases. As we know, KN advocates can try to explain them away. I will talk about that later (section 4). Here, I want to discuss what to do if we take them at face value. If we do that, these cases support the claim that the

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[25] This example is taken from Brown (2008).

epistemic standard for assertion goes up and down in different contexts. Some norms can explain some of these cases without appealing to context sensitivity. However, I argue that we cannot explain Surgeon specifically without context-sensitivity.

For example, RTBN (Reasonable to Believe Norm) may account for all the counterexamples to the necessity of KN without any context-sensitivity: assertions in Gettier cases do not amount to knowledge, but they are reasonable to believe. Given their evidence, it was reasonable for them to believe what they asserted. Selfless assertions are also reasonable to believe; the speaker asserted what was best supported by their evidence in spite of their lack of belief. Assertions in contexts of systematic peer disagreements, like philosophical discussions, can also be reasonable to believe if they are well-supported, even if peer disagreement defeats knowledge. However, RTBN struggles with cases like Surgeon, just as KN, given that it does not explain why it would be incorrect for the surgeon to assert before checking (3) was true. It could be argued that a context-sensitive form of RTBN could explain Surgeon: if what is reasonable to be believed varies with the context, in some scenarios, it could be the case that P is reasonable to be believed only if P is certain. While this is an option, it would be a stretch since being reasonable and certain are traditionally considered different standards. Of course, Surgeon is not a counterexample to RTBN, as it only states a necessary condition on the propriety of assertion. But, in trying to account for the epistemic propriety of assertion, it seems clear that RTBN does not explain why, in cases like this, it would be improper to assert unless one is certain.

CSN seems to be in a better position to account for Surgeon. According to CSN the epistemic standard E for assertion is sensitive to context. To explain how the standard changes, Goldberg appeals to Grice's conversational theory. He argues that the Gricean view of communication supports his CSN, specifically the idea that conversations are cooperative activities between rational agents. He appeals to the Maxim of Quality and the Cooperative Principle:

> Cooperative Principle (CP): Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.
> Quality (Q): Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
>
> (Grice, 1989, p. 26-27)

He states that Q itself can be seen as a proposal for the norm of assertion (Goldberg, 2015, p. 257). To this story, Goldberg adds that what counts as adequate evidence depends on what would be reasonable for all parties to believe. The idea is that the CP itself is helping determine the standard for evidence. So, the core of the proposal is the proposed context-sensitive norm CSN, and the Reasonable Mutual Belief Standard:

> Context-Sensitive Norm (CSN): S should assert P, only if S satisfies epistemic condition E with respect to P.

> "RMBS When it comes to a particular assertion that p, the relevant warranting authority regarding p depends in part on what it would be reasonable for all parties to believe is mutually believed among them (regarding such things as the participants' interests and informational needs, and the prospects for high-quality information in the domain in question)."
>
> (Goldberg, 2015, p.267)

Finally, to explain why the standard changes in cases of philosophical discussions, he adds the notion of "epistemic group". "When a group has such mutual (epistemic) expectations regarding each other as epistemic (knowledge-seeking) agents, I will call the group an epistemic group." (Goldberg, 2015, p.261) The idea is that by belonging to the group, philosophers or scientists, for example, members have mutual expectations about what others in the group should know or believe, about specific practices for obtaining and transmitting information, and so on. These epistemic groups set what is reasonable for all parties to believe is mutually believed. So, in systematic peer disagreement, all parties would know about the entrenched disagreement, which lowers the standard E required for proper assertion. As requiring knowledge would be unreasonable, we demand something else, like rigorousness, clarity, etc.

This seems to apply quite naturally to cases like Surgeon. The medical community has its own expectations about what its members should know and the practices they should follow. It reasonably is mutual knowledge that surgery cases involve high-stakes given the health implications for the patients, plus the legal consequences of malpractice. Given this, we can expect that they demand something stronger than knowledge from assertions in such contexts. Concerning selfless assertion, Goldberg argues that if the assertion is performed under epistemic diminished hopes, belief is not required (Goldberg, 2015, p.286) —which would explain why they are

not improper in his view—. This does not seem to be a full answer to a possible objection using selfless assertion since it is reasonable to believe that some cases do not involve epistemic diminished hopes. Distraught Doctor seems to be like that. It does not seem to be a case where the participants have a collective or individual expectation of epistemic diminished hopes. Nonetheless, I think there is a better explanation of selfless assertions using CSN and RMBS. Following cases like Surgeon we can expect the standard for assertion for doctors in medical contexts to be set by the medical community. What is expected of doctors would be to give the best medical advice guided by the best evidence available to them. This seems to be what Sebastian is doing when disregarding his emotion-led beliefs.

Nevertheless, Goldberg (2015, p. 263) also asserts that in most cases, the epistemic standard for assertion is knowledge. The reason is that, in most cases, we are not part of an epistemic group, so the standard goes to its "default setting". This might pose a problem when dealing with Gettiered assertions since subjects in those cases intuitively lack knowledge. If knowledge is assertion's default setting, then both Gettiered and unlucky assertions are improper under CSN. Gettiered assertions are just true and justified to believe, and unlucky assertions are not true at all. A possible answer is that the default setting is weaker than knowledge. Goldberg leaves the door open to this possibility; while his preferred option is knowledge, through his book, he claims that the default standard needs to be epistemically robust but not necessarily knowledge. Justified true belief is another possible robust standard; if it were the default standard of assertion, Gettiered assertions would be proper. This verdict depends on our intuitions regarding the propriety of Gettiered assertions. If they indeed are proper assertions, that is a reason to believe assertion's default setting is justified true belief. Yet, this does not work in the case of unlucky assertions, unless we lower the default standard all the way to justified belief, which starts looking less like the robust standard Goldberg argues for. So, CSN has a reasonable answer for Gettiered assertions, but it has to explain away unlucky assertions in the same fashion KN advocates do. This shows the limitations of a context-sensitive approach. It may look like it has the range to account for all the examples discussed in the literature, but it needs a principled way of explaining why standards go lower or higher. In defence of CSN, we should notice that it can directly account for a wide range of counterexamples presented to KN, even if it struggles with

unlucky cases. KN must explain away most if not all, counterexamples presented here. In my view, this represents a clear advantage for CSN over KN. I favour an account like CSN over KN because it can directly account for the cases instead of explaining them away. Now, both Goldberg (2015) and Williamson (2000) claim that the norm of assertion distinguishes it as a speech act. I now argue that CSN struggles with individuating assertion.

3. *Representatives* and CSN

The thesis that KN is constitutive of assertion was defended by Williamson (2000) in analogy with game rules. Just as games are defined by their rules, he argues that "the game of assertion" has a constitutive rule. This claim has been widely discussed: Pagin (2011) and Maitra (2011) have challenged the idea that the norm of assertion is analogous to constitutive rules of games. They argue that the analogy with games breaks in several points, which cast doubt on the idea that the norm of assertion is constitutive. Given that he pursues a different argumentative strategy, Goldberg's (2015) proposal may withstand some of these challenges. Instead of proposing CSN as analogous with game rules, he claims that there are some desiderata that any account of assertion must try to account for. He argues that a robustly epistemic norm can account for most of them better than other proposals.[26] So, his argument is that the norm of assertion accounts for the *force* of assertion, given that it can explain the central characteristics of assertion.

In this section, I challenge the idea that a context-sensitive norm accounts for the *force* of assertion, not because it does not apply to the assertion or because it does not account for its characteristic but because it selects a wider class of speech acts. Goldberg's claim is not that the norm of assertion is constitutive and individuating but that it accounts for the *force* of assertion. Part of what we expect of a *force* account is to explain what is distinctive of a speech act. As MacFarlane (2011, p. 80) puts it: "An account of an illocutionary force-type V ought to help us understand both how Vings with different contents differ from each other, and how Vings differ from other kinds of illocutionary acts." While a context-sensitive norm may be more suitable to explain the data about the epistemic propriety of assertion, I argue that it struggles at distinguishing

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[26] He concedes that CSN is not always robustly epistemic, but he defends that this is not a problem but a virtue. Goldberg (2015,

assertion. CSN is able to account for different counterexamples to KN by selecting different conditions in different contexts; the question here is whether a norm that allows this kind of variability applies to just one illocutionary type. I argue that there are good reasons to believe it does not.

Some philosophers propose a class of speech acts distinguished by its relation with truth. Searle (1975, p. 354) talks about a category distinguished by a commitment to truth (in varying degrees), which he calls *'representatives'*.[27] A speaker who performs a *representative* commits himself to the truth of the proposition expressed, but different *representatives* involve different degrees of commitment. Some, like conjecturing, hypothesising, and guessing, impose a weak commitment to truth, while others, like swearing and guaranteeing, a strong one. Assertion can be found relatively in the middle between strong and weak *representatives*. According to Searle, warning and advising can also be taken as *representatives* (Searle, 1975, p. 369)[28], and they are probably close to assertion regarding the epistemic standard they require.

Turri (2011) brings forward a similar distinction to the debate on the epistemic normativity of assertion. He proposes a class of "alethic speech acts", that includes conjecturing, asserting and guaranteeing. Alethic speech acts have in common that they aim at truth. He claims that they are distinguished (or ranked) by the degree of credibility they require. "The higher an alethic speech act ranks on the credibility index, the stricter the epistemic norms that govern it." (Turri, 2011, p. 85). If the norm of assertion accounts for the *force* of assertion, it should explain what distinguishes assertion from other *representatives*. Advocates of KN, like Turri, can hold that assertion is ranked in the middle of the index by requiring knowledge specifically; stronger speech acts require something stronger than knowledge, like certainty or knowledge of knowledge; weaker speech acts require something weaker, like just truth, or to be reasonable to belief, etc.

If CSN is the norm of assertion and it distinguishes it from other speech acts, then it must govern only assertion. If CSN were to govern other speech acts, then it would not be an account of assertion but something more akin to a general principle or maxim for

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[27] In a later edition of this paper (Searle, 1979, pp. 1-29), Searle calls them 'assertives' instead of '*representatives*'. I opted for the first name to avoid confusion; the definition is the same, and they both refer to a class of speech acts that includes but is not exhausted by assertion.
[28] The claim that they are *representatives* can be challenged; however, the claim that they also involve epistemic standards that govern their correctness should not be contentious.

speech acts whose objective is to state facts. The problem with this is that the same evidence we have in favour of CSN in the case of assertion (or other context-sensitive norms, for that matter) also supports the claim that CSN governs the wider class of *representatives*. To support this, I have two arguments: Goldberg appeals to a Gricean framework to support CSN, but given that Grice's theory is not specific to assertion, it also motivates context-sensitivity for (at least) any *representative*. Furthermore, we can argue for a context-sensitive norm for *representatives* using the same range of scenarios that support CSN for assertion. I think this can be seen as a virtue of Goldberg's account rather than a problem since it can be used to explain a broader spectrum of communication than was expected, but, of course, at the cost of losing its pretence of accounting for the specific nature of assertion.

3.1 A Gricean motivation of a context-sensitive norm for *representatives*

Golberg (2015) argues that his account is motivated by a Gricean view of communication. He suggests that we can see Q (Quality) as a proposal for the norm of assertion (Goldberg, 2015, p. 257) and that the standard for evidence is guided by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk, which can be captured by a notion of mutual belief (or reasonable mutual belief). I am sympathetic to this approach, but it is not specific to assertion. The CP and its maxims are intended to govern conversations in general and not specific speech acts. Evidence of this is Q's sincerity requirement. It states, "Do not say what you believe to be false." (Grice, 1989, p. 27). This applies to assertion, but it is not specific of it. We can conjecture, propose, suggest, swear, guarantee, etc., things we believe are false, and we would be guilty of insincerity. So, as a condition for sincerity, Q governs not just assertion but a wide range of speech acts. The same can be said about the evidence part of Q ("Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence." (Grice, 1989, p. 27)); it is not specific to assertion. We demand a reasonable standard of evidence for speech acts other than assertion. For example, warnings, advice, hypotheses, and swearing can fail to meet such standards. A storm warning is inappropriate if there is no evidence of a storm, diet advice is bad advice if it is supported only by anecdotes, and a scientific hypothesis should not rely only on opinions. So, if Q supports a context-sensitive approach to assertion, it also supports it for at least any *representative* since they all involve a standard for adequate evidence.

Goldberg is right to notice that Grice's theory of communication already includes a demand for speakers to meet epistemic standards. Building CSN using Q gives it a strong foundation. It explains how the epistemic standards we demand are not arbitrary but, in fact, tied to our objectives as speakers and rational agents. Given that those objectives change from context to context, we can also expect the epistemic standards to change. However, at the same time, this motivates the same approach to be applied to a wider range of speech acts. Reasonable evidence is what we demand from speakers in general and not just from asserters in particular. So, CSN seems more like a refined version of Q than a norm specific to assertion. If it is a refined version of Q, then it is a maxim of conversation governing more than just assertions. In what follows, I show that not just Gricean considerations support the idea that CSN has a broader range of application. I argue that the same data that supports a context-sensitive norm for assertion supports it for at least the class of *representatives*.

3.2 *Representatives* and the counterexamples to KN

The idea that there are other speech acts governed by epistemic norms is not new, and it is not highly controversial. Both Williamson (2000) and Turri (2011) claim that swearing has a stronger and conjecturing a weaker epistemic norm than assertion. Those who propose invariant standards for different speech acts can argue that those specific standards distinguish them from each other. Aside from the fact that some have already accepted that there are several speech acts governed by epistemic norms, we can also motivate the claim. Moreover, we can motivate this claim in a very similar fashion to the evidence used to motivate the idea that assertion is governed by an epistemic norm.

First, we can generate Moorean sentences for all of them:

1) I swear that P, but I am unsure about P.

2) I warn/advise you that P, but I don't know that P.

3) I conjecture/suggest/hypothesise that P, but P is not true/reasonable to belief.

All three sound infelicitous. Even the weak *representative*s sound improper under conditions like truth or reasonable belief. *Representatives* also have the characteristic of being epistemically challengeable. It is not part of the content of any *representatives* that the speaker has some epistemic standing to perform them. Nevertheless, this

epistemic standing can be questioned with phrases similar to those used to challenge assertion.

4) Are you sure that P? [against swearing P]

5) How do you know that? [against warning or advising P]

6) Do you have reasons to believe P? [against any *representative*]

7) P is false/not reasonable to believe. [against any *representative*]

Even weak *representatives* make a normative change. Before hypothesising that P, the speaker did not need to defend that P, but after doing so, she must at least hold that P is an epistemic possibility. This is a low bar, but it is an epistemic standard that not every possible hypothesis meets. Both data points can be explained by appealing to epistemic norms, and it would be puzzling that assertion happened to be the only *representative* governed by a norm while sharing many important characteristics with other *representatives*.

It could be argued that there are scenarios where hypothesising or conjecturing comes very cheap, free in fact. Imagine two teenagers wondering about the nature of the stars; neither of them knows too much about them, and they have not paid attention in Astronomy class. So, one of them advances the hypothesis that "they are fireflies that got stuck in that black think over there". The stakes are pretty low; nothing hangs off that conversation, and it is just a friendly chat to pass the time, so it does not really matter if P is not actually an epistemic possibility relative to the evidence a teenager these days should have. However, the same can be said about assertion; there are conversations where speakers are not really interested in the epistemic quality of what they say. But this is not taken as a threat to the norm of assertion. For comparison, take the case of jokes, where statements can be openly false without this fact making them bad as jokes. In contrast, a weak *representative*, like a hypothesis, would be as bad as a hypothesis if it were openly false.

If we accept that *representative*s are governed by epistemic norms, we can discuss if the former can be distinguished by the latter. We have seen that invariant norms can do this by appealing to the specific standard they propose for each speech act. Can context-sensitive proposals do the same? One possibility is that assertion is the one *representative* governed by a context-sensitive norm, while other *representative*s

have invariant norms. This would be quite surprising, but it is an open option. However, I will show that the evidence supporting a context-sensitive norm of assertion supports a context-sensitive norm for all *representatives*.

Another option would be to say that there are different context-sensitive norms governing different speech acts. This is an alternative, but I find it hard to picture how we could distinguish between different context-sensitive epistemic norms in a way that is not *ad hoc*. First, the variable on any context-sensitive epistemic norm will be epistemic standards. Second, warnings and advice are bound to have similar, if not identical, epistemic standards in every context to that of assertion. Third, if what determines the standards is something general like RMBS, meaning what is reasonable for all participants to believe regarding the objectives of the conversation and prospects for high-quality information, this mechanism can be used to determine the epistemic standard for any *representative*. It has nothing specific that selects assertions only. Now, in this chapter, I motivated context-sensitive norms for assertion by appealing to the plurality of cases presented against KN that suggest varying standards for proper assertion. The same scenarios can be used to argue for extending CSN to all *representative*s.

3.2.1 Gettiered *representatives*

Representatives similar to and stronger than assertion can fall prey to Gettier scenarios:

Gettier's Warning Timetable

Susy has to leave her office at 12 pm to meet with a friend for lunch at 1 pm. Her friend (Gaby), knowing that Susy is not always on time, checks the timetable online, so she truly believes that there is an express train at 12:20 pm that would get Susy on time for the meeting. Unbeknownst to them, a hacker has changed the timetable as a joke, but by mere luck, both the false and real timetables say that there is an express train at 12:20 pm. Gaby warns Susy (4):

(4) You must take the express train at 12:20 pm.

Gettier Swearing Timetable

It is like the original, but in this case, the meeting is very important. Knowing

this, Susy checked the timetable the night before, checked again on the station and asked the staff to be sure. But she falls prey to the hacker. Gaby asks Susy which train she should take, reminding her about the importance of the meeting. In these circumstances, Susy swears (5):

(5) I swear there is an express train at 12:20 pm.

The speakers have a justified true belief in both cases. Nevertheless, they both seem proper. They did enough to be in a good epistemic position to warn (4) and swear (5), it was just by luck that they did not meet the standards. So, just as in the case of assertion, warnings and swearing seem proper in Gettier scenarios.

3.2.2 Unlucky *representatives*

Representatives similar to and stronger than assertion can also be prey to bad luck. It can be the case that it seems to the speaker that she knows or is sure that P and it is reasonable for her to think that, but by bad luck, P turns out to be false. For example:

> Unlucky Swearing/Warning Timetable
> The situation is the same as in the previous two cases, with the only difference being that the hacked timetable shows an incorrect time for the train. In these scenarios, Gaby warns (4), and Susy swears (5).

As in the original unlucky assertion scenario, arguably, warning and swearing seem acceptable in cases of bad luck.

3.2.3 Selfless *representatives*

In selfless assertion cases, the speaker manages to assert what is supported by his best evidence and overcome his biases. The same can occur when performing other *representatives*. In Distraught Doctor, Sebastian knows that the evidence suggests that there is no correlation between vaccines and autism. However, he no longer believes this is due to his personal situation.

> Distraught Advice/Warning Doctor
> Just like in the original scenario. But this time, Sebastian advises the couple to vaccinate their child on schedule and warns them that doing otherwise would be irresponsible.

Distraught Swearing Doctor

Knowing that his patients are very preoccupied with vaccination, he spends extra time searching for the latest vaccine data. After reading the latest papers on autism, he tells them:

(6) I swear there is no correlation between vaccines and autism.

Selfless advice, warning and swearing exhibit the same characteristics of selfless assertion. Even if Sebastian does not believe that there is no correlation between vaccines and autism, he knows the evidence supports this claim, so he speaks following his best evidence. These cases seem appropriate, if not commendable, just as a selfless assertion.

3.2.4 High-stakes *representatives*

The last three cases support that the epistemic condition required to perform *representatives* similar to or stronger than assertion can be weaker than knowledge or certainty. We can also argue that *representatives* similar to or weaker than assertion have stronger conditions than normal in high-stakes cases. Recall Surgeon: A medic must operate on a patient's kidney; when asked about which kidney, the doctor reviews the chart before answering. Let's start with a speech act weaker than assertion.

Hypothesis Surgeon

A doctor is reviewing a strange case; several medics are puzzled by the symptoms and by how the patient has responded to treatment. They are not sure about what is the disease the patient has. Given the degree of uncertainty, after hours of reviewing the evidence and studying similar cases. The doctor says (7) to the patient:

(7) We are still unsure what the problem is. Given what we do know, we are going to work with the hypothesis that you have lupus.

After hearing this, one of the students working with the doctor says to a classmate:

— Why did he take so long? Didn't she know that lupus was a possible explanation?

The classmate answers:

> — Of course, lupus is a viable explanation, but she had to offer the best possible explanation.

In Hypothesis Surgeon, the doctor was not sure about what was wrong with the patient, given that it was an anomalous case. Therefore, she was not in a position to assert that the patient had lupus, but they still needed a working hypothesis to move on. In this context, the fact that P was an epistemic possibility was insufficient to present it as their hypothesis. P had to be the best possible explanation, which requires support, as close as possible to knowledge level justification (acknowledging that full-level justification was not possible). So, weak *representatives* can also have a variation in their epistemic standard.

Similar examples can be presented with warnings and advice:

Warning/Advising Surgeon

Like in the original case, a surgeon must operate on a patient. She checks the patient's state. While doing so, the patient asks what should be done to help his condition. Before answering, she reviews the chart again and then advises removing the left kidney and warns about the possible problems of not doing it.

Just as in the original case, the surgeon must be sure about the operation before answering. It would not be appropriate if she advised the patient before making sure she knew the state of the patient and his problem. Then, speech acts other than assertion in some contexts also require something stronger than knowledge to be proper.

3.2.5 RMBS and *representatives*

Cases from 3.2.1 to 3.2.4 support the idea that *representatives* are governed by different conditions in different contexts. Strong *representatives*, like swearing, can go lower than certainty or knowledge of knowledge. Weak *representatives*, like hypotheses, can go higher than just epistemic possibility. *Representatives* similar to assertions, like warnings and advice, behave very similarly to assertions, as their standards go higher or lower than knowledge in the same way. Goldberg does not use all these cases to support CSN; instead, his proposal is motivated by the idea that we can properly assert in

contexts of diminished epistemic hopes. Nevertheless, the canonical argument for context-sensitivity appeals to the variation of a variable across contexts. These cases show that my argument can be extended to other context-sensitive proposals, even if my focus is on Goldberg (2015). Still, his argument for CSN can also be used to argue in favour of a context-sensitive norm for *representatives*.

According to Goldberg, systematic peer disagreement works as a defeater, so knowledge is unattainable in contexts of diminished epistemic hope. However, warranted assertion is still possible in these cases (Goldberg, 2015, p. 251). He argues that CSN determines a condition lower than knowledge in some scenarios. Importantly, proper assertion in contexts of systematic peer disagreement motivates CSN, but diminished hopes do not immediately imply a different standard. RMBS, his notion of mutual belief, and being part of an epistemic group is what changes the standard. Only in cases where groups have robust enough mutual beliefs (regarding their objectives and conditions for high-quality information) can the condition be lowered or raised. The philosophical community is one of these epistemic groups, just like other communities like the scientific or medical community.

Notice that asserting is not the only speech act individuals in epistemic communities perform. Swearing might be a bit odd to find in a research paper, but we often warn, suggest, advise, and hypothesise. Scientists may warn of the effects of climate change, philosophers can suggest a tentative answer to the mind-body problem, surgeons may advise on possible treatments, etc. So, it is expected that the epistemic conditions for *representatives* will be affected by what would be reasonable for speakers to believe. Just as it should be possible for warranted assertability to exist in contexts of diminished epistemic hopes, warranted advice, warnings, suggestions, and hypotheses should also be possible in the same scenarios. RMBS and the notion of epistemic groups are not defined specifically for assertion. They are notions about the reasonable presuppositions speakers should have depending on their context, and this is not unique to assertion. If they change the standard for warranted assertability, they change the standard for any *representative* to be warranted.

Here, I want to highlight something interesting about Goldberg's framework that was not his main focus. The condition for assertion in some diminished epistemic hopes cases is lower than knowledge, which may make it seem like speaking, in philosophy, for

example, comes cheap; however, participating in many of these debates is actually pretty hard! Finding something substantial to say about the mind-body problem or the definition of knowledge is not easy at all. There is a sense in which RMBS and epistemic groups make asserting harder even if they lower the epistemic condition from knowledge to justified belief or something similar. This is because, as Goldberg puts it, we must "conform to professional standards (of rigour, clarity, responsiveness to prevailing reasons, and so on)." (Goldberg, 2015, pp. 261-262), which is not an easy thing to do. In standard cases, knowledge is the standard, but it is not so hard to get; in other cases, the standard is lower, but asserting properly is hard. This is relevant to our discussion here because it has an interesting effect on weak *representatives*. These never had knowledge as their epistemic standard; they were always cheap in this way. We conjecture when we cannot afford to assert. However, when we have to hypothesise under the conditions set by an epistemic group like the philosophical, medical or scientific community, it becomes harder. We must meet the standards of rigourousness that are not in place in a normal conversation. Making a hypothesis in these contexts might be even more demanding than satisfying the knowledge standard for assertion in a normal context. This explains, at least in part, what is going on in Hypothesis Surgeon. The doctor must meet the standard set by the medical community for these cases, which puts a burden on any tentative explanation he offers for his patient.

To conclude, in this section, I argued in favour of a context-sensitive norm for *representatives* using the same kind of evidence and considerations that support CSN for assertion. The case for a context-sensitive norm for *representatives* is just as strong as the case for assertion. But more than that, both cases are tied together, so we cannot accept CSN for assertion without accepting an extension for *representatives* as well. This is not necessarily a problem for Goldberg's proposal as it can be seen as a virtue; the proposal is able to explain the epistemic normativity of a wider range of speech acts than it was thought; however, this comes at the cost of abandoning the claim that CSN accounts for the *force* or nature of assertion.

It cannot be replied that my examples are governed by CSN precisely because they are assertions. The reply would imply that a large range of speech acts are also assertions. Testimony could be an example of this, as it can be said that it is a form of assertion with a further condition. The same could be said about warning, advising,

swearing, etc. I find this reply a little suspicious. *Representatives* were a class of similar but different speech acts; I would find it surprising that they all happened to be just different forms of assertion. At least, we would need independent motivations for this claim to avoid beginning the question. Moreover, while this may be said about *representatives* similar to or stronger than assertion, it cannot be said of weak *representatives*. Conjecturing and hypothesising are not forms of assertion; they involve a weaker commitment to the truth. They can be rejected but do not need to be retracted, which is a core characteristic of assertion.

A second possible reply is that even if CSN itself does not distinguish assertion, having knowledge (or another robust epistemic standard) as its default setting does distinguish it. Goldberg says that knowledge is the standard when our mutual beliefs are not robust enough to change the setting (Goldberg, 2015, p.263). Then, different speech acts would have different conditions as their default setting and would be differentiated by these "default conditions". First, we have to notice that this is a weaker claim. Assertion would not be distinguished by its norm but by its default setting. This would be dangerously close to just accepting KN or a justified true belief norm of assertion. Second, speech acts like warning and advice have very similar epistemic profiles to assertion, so I do not see how to argue that they have different default settings. And third, we need to answer how speech acts get their default settings. My suggestion would be that it is derived from RMBS plus something like the proper function (Millikan, 1998) or the essential effect (Stalnaker, 1999) of assertion. Because assertion has a particular communicative function, it requires a robust epistemic condition to be proper (unless the context is such that, given the objectives and prospects for high-quality information, the standard is higher or lower).[29] But this would be equivalent to saying that the epistemic standard is determined by the *force* of assertion plus a notion of mutual belief, which is not something Goldberg can say as it would mean accepting that we need an account of assertion to determine the epistemic standard of assertion. However, I have argued that CSN is better seen as a refined version of Q rather than a norm that individuates assertion. If I am right, then it is clear that we need something else to

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[29] To this story, we should also add the notion of epistemic groups. For simplicity, I do not mention them in this paragraph.

account for what distinguishes these speech acts from each other. In my view, this is what Goldberg gave us, a way to explain the epistemic normativity of a wide range of speech acts using a Gricean framework.

4. Back to KN?

After seeing the problems faced by CSN as an account of the *force* of assertion, someone could say that this supports the idea that KN is the norm of assertion and that invariant standards are suited to distinguish between *representatives*. In this section, I want to push back against this claim. I prefer CSN over KN, although not as the norm of assertion, but as the epistemic norm of *representatives* (or even as something akin to a conversational maxim). The reason is that I believe that this view is more methodologically sound than KN and the invariant standards ranking of *representatives*.

In the literature, there is a similar argument against invariant standards views (Marsili, 2015). The objection is that any *representative* similar to or stronger than assertion must also satisfy KN (or the robust epistemic standard proposed), so KN is not individuating of assertion. For example, swearing must meet the standard of certainty (or a similar standard stronger than knowledge), but any norm stronger than knowledge implies KN. So, swearing must also satisfy KN. This is not surprising; if a speaker is in a position to swear, she is also in a position to assert. Therefore, KN also governs any speech act similar to or stronger than assertion (Marsili, 2015, p.120). However, this objection does work; it can be replied that assertion is the speech act governed specifically by KN and swearing specifically by certainty. Being governed by KN is not sufficient for something to be an assertion, for it must be the only epistemic norm that governs it due to it being the kind of speech act it is.[30] So, what can be said against KN and the invariant standards view?

As mentioned earlier, Williamson proposes KN as an idealisation. He is aware that games change rules all the time in the ordinary use of the term. Therefore, he takes an idealised version of the notion of a game, where they are defined by their rules in such a way that a change in rules is a change of game. If we change the norm, we change the speech act in question. This fact is key to what is at issue between norms like CSN and

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[30] Other norms, some epistemic, may govern a specific assertion due to contextual factors, but not as the norm the action has due to the fact it is an assertion.

KN. I think that the difference between norms like CSN, my own view, and KN is how much we are idealising away. The problem for Williamson is that he idealises much more than Goldberg or myself. To show this, let's briefly talk about the responses KN advocates have offered to the counterexamples discussed in section 2.

In section 2, I discussed a set of counterexamples presented against KN and asked the reader to take them at face value as genuine cases of proper assertion. However, KN advocates have responded to many of these counterexamples, trying to explain away these cases. In general, they do not deny that these counterexamples are intuitively proper; they try to explain the appearance of propriety by, for example, appealing to the interaction of KN with other norms. For instance, cases like S u r g e o n could be explained by norms specific to the medical community, where their standards are higher than normal. Williamson also argues that, in some cases, an assertion could be reasonable but not warranted. Gettiered or unlucky assertions might be reasonable; the speaker might have good grounds to believe she knew that P, but if they fail to meet the norm of assertion, they are unwarranted nonetheless (Williamson, 2000, p. 257). A way to put this reply is that a speaker can be excused when breaking KN, but that does not warrant the assertion. DeRose (2002) gives a similar reply. He distinguishes between primary and secondary propriety. Primary propriety is when the condition as stated is satisfied; in this case, when S knows that P, S's assertion that P is primary proper. Secondary propriety is when we justifiably believe that the condition (KN) is being satisfied. For example, we might have good reasons to believe that we know that P, but given that, unbeknownst to us, we are in a Gettier case, we do not. In these cases, we have good reasons to believe that we know. Then, Gettiered and unlucky assertions are secondary proper but primarily improper.

Now, as we have seen, no norm can account for all cases discussed in the literature. Any proposal has to pick some and try to explain away the others. However, I would like to point out here that while proposals like Golberg's can account for many of these cases directly, KN must instead explain away most counterexamples. I think this is not fortuitous but rather a consequence of the idealised nature of the proposal. KN and the invariant standards view offer a picture where *representatives* are neatly distinguished by specific epistemic conditions that are invariant under practical considerations, which is only possible after we idealise them. This view does not just

need to explain away the data regarding assertion that suggests different standards for it but also explain away all the evidence for all *representatives.* Explaining away that much evidence seems to suggest that instead of trying to adjust the theory to the data, we are trying to adjust the data to the theory.

5. The responsibility argument and the epistemic norm of assertion

Finally, I want to discuss the consequences of the position I defended here for the rest of the dissertation, specifically for using the responsibility argument in chapters 3 and 5. What I call the 'responsibility argument' is the argument made by Lackey (2021) in favour of an inflationist account of group assertion. An inflationist account holds that a group can assert that P even if no individual asserted that P. Lackey's argument uses the idea that assertion is subject to an epistemic norm. As we have seen, there are many candidates to account for the epistemic normativity of assertion. However, they all seem to accept that the asserter is epistemically responsible for his assertions. The concept of epistemic responsibility can be fleshed out in different ways, with asserters committing to knowing what they asserted, or that it is true, reasonable to be believed, etc. Regardless of which is the best way to account for the normativity of assertion, we can accept that asserters are epistemically responsible for their assertions. Following this line of thought, Paterson (2020) develops the view that an agent is the speaker of an illocutionary action by virtue of being responsible (in the relevant way) for that action. She offers a concept of *illocutionary* responsibility, according to which a speaker's *illocutionary* responsibility depends on her community's conventions about the specific speech act performed (Paterson, 2020, p. 64). Then, the responsibility argument is that if a group G is epistemically responsible for assertion A, then A is a group assertion, meaning that A is an assertion attributable to a group. Take the case of a spokesperson asserting (8) on behalf of the government:

(8) Shortages are not related to Brexit.

In this case, the epistemic propriety of (8) rests on the group. The spokesperson can properly distance herself from the assertion; she was speaking only as part of her role as a representative for the government, so she does not need to be personally committed to (8). On the other hand, even if the government were to change spokespersons, they

must provide reasons or evidence sufficient for (8). Then, even if (8) was uttered by an individual, it is a group assertion.[31]

In this chapter, I rejected the idea that an epistemic norm distinguishes assertion. My preferred view is that speech, in general, needs to satisfy epistemic conditions that vary from context to context. One may worry that this position is at odds with the responsibility argument and the claim that assertions are group assertions when the group is epistemically responsible for them. The question is if epistemic responsibility arguments commit us to the constitutive norm view of assertion. My answer is that they do not do it. As I said in the beginning, two claims are associated with the norm view. One is that an epistemic norm governs assertion; the other is that this norm distinguishes assertion as a speech act. The weak claim that an epistemic norm governs assertion is compatible with many, if not all, accounts of assertion. And it is all we need to run epistemic responsibility arguments. Moreover, the notion of epistemic responsibility can also be fleshed out by commitment accounts (see Brandom (1983) and Macfarlane (2011)). In short, they argue that assertion is distinguished by the commitment to defend or retract the assertion if challenged. In this view, to say that an asserter is epistemically responsible for P is to say that she is committed to the truth of P.

The claim that assertion has an epistemic normative dimension is not something that many (if anyone) would deny. The only difference is that most accounts would try to explain it indirectly. They would try to account for it by deriving it from communicative principles or what they see as central to assertion. What is special about accounts like Williamson's (2000) and Goldberg's (2015) is that they bring that epistemic dimension to the forefront of the explanation by claiming it distinguishes assertion as the kind of speech act it is. The only thing we need for epistemic responsibility arguments is the weak idea that by asserting, speakers are obligated to support what they say if they are challenged.

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[31] Of course, an agent can be epistemically responsible for P for other reasons. The key fact is that someone is responsible for (8) because it was asserted.

Summary

In this chapter, I challenged the idea that an epistemic norm distinguishes assertion as the kind of speech act it is. I argued that a context-sensitive norm, like the one championed by Goldberg (2015), is better suited to account for the epistemic normativity of assertion than accounts with invariant standards like the one proposed by Williamson (2000). Context-sensitive approaches like CSN have the advantage that they can directly explain many of the vast range of counterexamples discussed in the literature. In contrast, invariant accounts must explain away most of these cases, which cast doubts on the empirical adequacy of norms like KN. Against Goldberg, I argued that a context-sensitive norm cannot distinguish assertion from other speech acts. I argued that his account generalises to at least all *representatives*. This proves that CSN is closer to being a general communication maxim than a norm specific to assertion. I hold that this is not necessarily a problem for his account since it shows CSN can account for a wider range of cases than thought. However, this comes at the cost of abandoning the claim that CSN accounts for the *force* of assertion.

Chapter 3: Authority and Group Assertion

In the last two chapters, I showed the landscape of our subject and discussed a popular view of the *force* of assertion. In Chapter 1, I talked, in broad strokes, about the view I defend in my dissertation. In this chapter, I develop it in detail for the case of group assertion. Recently, philosophers have taken great interest in group speech acts, especially in group assertion. It is a common practice to attribute assertions to groups and interpret statements as made by groups, from work and research groups to large institutions. We treat groups, not just individuals, as accountable for their assertions, and we, as individuals, seem to gain knowledge from groups (just imagine all you learned by reading collaborative research work). To explain all this, we need to account for when an assertion is properly attributable to a group and not to (or not just to) individuals. So, what does it take for an utterance[32] to count as a group assertion? This chapter aims to answer this question.

Natural language speakers naturally attribute assertions to groups, but what makes it the case that groups, and not just individuals, assert? The standard assumption today is that there are two kinds of group assertion: one distinguished by joint-intentional coordination and the other by spokespersons representing the group (Lackey, 2021; Ludwig, 2020b; Marsili, 2023). In this chapter, I reject this disjunctive view and propose a unified account of group assertion: the authority account. I propose that a special kind of entitlement distinguishes group assertion from individual assertion: the authority to assert on behalf of a group. Speakers (lone and in collections) perform group assertions only if they exercise this authority. I argue that previous accounts failed to account for all cases of group assertion and to successfully distinguish between group and individual assertion. I hold that my proposal explains what is common to all cases of group assertion and allows us to see them as instances of one kind of action instead of a cluster of ways of performing assertions.

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[32] By 'utterance', I refer to the specific physical event of making noises or signs that count as saying words in some language.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: In section 1, I present the current dominant view on group assertion (the disjunctive view) and how it explains the relevant cases found in the literature. Its defining assumption is that there are two kinds of group assertion and that they must be accounted for independently. The most influential accounts of group assertion (Lackey (2021) and Ludwig (2020b)) are committed to this claim. In sections 2 and 3, I argue against this picture that it does not provide us with necessary (s.2) or sufficient (s.3) conditions for group assertion. In section 3, I hold that some cases do not fit the disjunctive picture. I call these *radically collaborative assertions* (or RCAs for short). I argue that some RCAs are genuine group assertions; previous proposals have not accounted for them. Furthermore, in section 3, I argue that previous accounts have failed to distinguish between performing utterances as a group (*group locutions*) and performing group speech acts (*group illocutions*). Failing to see this distinction has stopped them from accurately distinguishing between individual and group assertion. My view is that the range of group assertion cases is best seen as a continuum that requires a unified explanation rather than two distinct kinds of assertion. So, in section 4, I present my proposal: the authority account of assertion. The main idea is that the authority to assert on behalf of the group distinguishes between group and individual assertion. I claim that individuals and collections of individuals can have and exercise this authority. It is in virtue of it that they perform group assertions.[33]

1. Disjunctive accounts of group assertion

Various cases are relevant to discussing group assertion; some involve large, organised groups, some small and unorganised ones. Let us start with a clear case of something that is not a group assertion: Imagine we are in a room full of people, and suddenly, a goat enters. Surprised, we all shout (1) at the same time:

(1) There is a goat in the room.

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[33] I will assume that there are group speech acts and group assertions. Hughes (1984) and Lackey (2021), among others, have already defended this claim. There is also good evidence in favour of this statement. As natural language speakers, we tend to ascribe assertions to groups, and we make them responsible (morally, legally and epistemically) for them. Philosophers often aim to explain linguistic practices such as this.

Following Lackey (2021), this is just a collection of individual assertions. It just happened that we all shouted at the same time. Genuine group assertions may be found when groups coordinate in various ways to write or speak, or when spokespersons represent them. For example, a group of researchers writing together a paper in a web document, a group of activists chanting a statement or a rector speaking in the representation of her university. The most currently accepted view of group speech acts is disjunctivism. In Chapter 2, we talked about disjunctive accounts; when applied to group assertion, they hold that there are two kinds: one distinguished by shared-intentional coordination and the other by authorised spokespersons. The two currently most influential accounts –Lackey (2018a, 2021) and Ludwig (2014, 2020b)—are committed to this claim, but they are not the only ones.[34] The coordinated kind is characterised by individuals producing an utterance act together by intentionally coordinating their actions. Lackey's coordinated group assertion (CGA) is an example of it:

> CGA: A group G asserts that p in the coordinated way if and only if the members of G coordinate individual acts a1, ..., an so that they all reasonably intend to convey that p together in virtue of these acts.
>
> (Lackey, 2021, p. 149)

Her example is that of a group of people stranded on a desert island (Lackey, 2021, p. 139). To ask for help, they decide to write (2) on the beach with their bodies. They all intend to ask for help from the group and coordinate so that they can get their message across:

(2) We need help.

According to Lackey, cases of people writing a document together are also CGA as long as all members are involved in writing the document and all intend to communicate everything that is in it (Lackey, 2021, p. 139).

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[34] Marsili (2023), following Lackey, proposes a coordination and an authority-based kind of group assertion. Hughes (1984) does not propose two kinds but he offers a partial joint-intentional account covering some cases and suggests that those instances not covered may be explained with authority as a proxy for joint intention.

Ludwig (2020b) has a similar account for the coordinated kind. For him, collective speech acts are those in which all the group members participate in the production at the time of the speech act (Ludwig, 2020b, p. 46). It is required that the members share an intention to perform the communicative act.[35] His main example is groups chanting a sentence together. Picture, for example, a group welcoming a new member by shouting 'Welcome' in a a pre-planned manner. He requires them to "share an intention to represent themselves as all together being committed as members of the group to (for example) welcoming someone. Sharing an intention is a matter of each member of the group having a we-intention, an intention to do her part in their shared plan, and perhaps having certain beliefs about the conditions for success." (Ludwig, 2020b, p. 49). As part of the coordinated kind, we can also include cases of groups writing a document together, but (similar to Lackey), they must all participate together in producing the communicative piece and share an intention to communicate it.

The second kind is that involving authorised spokespersons (or spokesperson kind for short). Lackey's authority-based group assertion (ABGA) exemplifies it:

> ABGA: A group G asserts that p in the authority-based way if and only if that p belongs to a domain d, and a spokesperson(s) S (I) reasonably intends to convey the information that p in virtue of the communicable content of an individual act (or individual acts) of communication, (ii) has the authority to convey the information in d, and (iii) acts in this way in virtue of S's authority as a representative of G.
>
> (Lackey, 2021, pp. 149-150)

The main condition here is authority. She requires spokespersons to be authorised to convey what they say for it to be a group assertion. Similarly, Ludwig proposes that there are proxy group speech acts, characterised by proxies performing the utterance act for the group (Ludwig, 2020b, p. 47). For him, proxies are a kind of status role; they are defined by a set of constitutive rules that specify the function of the role and are dependent on a community accepting both the rules and the proxy (Ludwig, 2020b, pp.

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[35] Ludwig (2020b) understands shared or joint intentions as we-intentions. There are various analyses of we-intentions (Gilbert, 2013; Ludwig, 2016; Tuomela, 2005; among others). For Ludwig (2020b), individuals have we-intentions not just when they intend to do an action A but when they intend to represent themselves as being part of a group doing A.

51-54).[36] This means that for Ludwig, spokespersons depend on a community accepting they occupy the role, which is defined by some rules stating what the proxy can do.[37] Individuals can perform group assertions when they have the status role representing a group. As examples of spokesperson cases, picture the proxy of Coca-Cola Company asserting (3) or a representative for the UK government stating (4):

(3) Coca-Cola does not cause obesity.

(4) Shortages are not related to Brexit.

There are several substantial differences between Lackey's and Ludwig's accounts. For example, Ludwig explicitly considers what we may call *crowd assertions* (cases where groups of individuals make a collection of utterances by chanting the same thing at the same time) as group assertions, as long as they share an intention to represent themselves as part of the group. In contrast, it is unclear if Lackey considers them group assertions, although she could include them as CGA.[38] A group chanting P, is coordinating a set of individual actions and may reasonably intend to convey that P in virtue of those actions.[39] On the other hand, Lackey criticises Ludwig for requiring the proxy to be accepted by the community. She holds that a spokesperson can produce group assertions even if the community rejects her (Lackey, 2021, pp. 141-142). However, they share one crucial claim: that there are two kinds of group assertion that require to be accounted for separately –the shared-intentional coordination and the authorised spokespersons kind. Both Lackey (2018a, 2021) –with her CGA and ABGA— and Ludwig (2018, 2020b) –with his collective speech acts and group proxy speech acts— accept this. While these classifications are useful for handling the large variety of cases we have, I hold it is a mistake to take them as substantial conceptual distinctions regarding the nature of group assertion. To show this, in the next section, I argue that there are intermediate cases between coordination and spokespersons cases that previous proposals have failed to account for. This means that disjunctive accounts fail

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[36] Ludwig (2020b) follows Searle (1995) in his understanding of status roles.

[37] Chess pieces are examples of status roles. A queen is defined by rules that state its initial position and possible moves.

[38] We can easily imagine the castaways shouting at a boat in coordination instead of writing in the sand with their bodies.

[39] Distinguish this from cases where just by chance a collection of individuals shouted the same (like in example (1))

to provide necessary conditions for group assertion. Later, in section 3, I argue that they also failed to provide sufficient conditions.

2. Radically collaborative assertion

There is a kind of collaborative work where each group member produces a part of the work independently, and all the parts together form a single piece. Examples are some co-authored articles and long reports. Winsberg, Huebner, & Kukla (2014) call it '*radically collaborative research',* which is characterised by being decentralised, highly distributed among the group´s members, and interdisciplinary. The best example is climate research, but we can also find cases in biomedicine (Winsberg et al., 2014, pp. 17- 18). They offer detailed descriptions of real cases; here, it is enough to picture a case of a lengthy coauthored paper on climate change done by a multitude of scientists located worldwide, from different disciplines and no central authority. In their paper, we found the assertion that (5):

(5) Sea levels on the coast of Montevideo have risen by 5.098%.

Let´s call this case Lengthy Report. Now, *Radically collaborative research* produces assertions, like those found in Lengthy Report; I will call them *radically collaborative assertions* (or RCAs for short). They are assertions made in a collaborative, communicative piece where the group members divide the parts and work in them with little to no involvement from most other members.

I claim that some *radically collaborative assertions* are genuine cases of group assertions. There is intentional coordination, and some are published as part of coauthored work. Nonetheless, Lackey (2018a, 2021) holds that these are not group assertions but collections of individual assertions.

> This [coordinated group assertion] should be distinguished from a case where each member of a group writes different parts that together make up a single article, which is how some co-authored or collaborative work is done. Whereas the former is an instance of coordinated group assertion, the latter is merely a collection of individual assertions.
>
> (Lackey, 2021, p. 139)

As Lackey and some philosophers of science have noticed[40], a key issue in this and other cases of scientific assertion is responsibility and accountability: Who should be held liable for RCAs? Lackey would answer: the individual scientists, not the group. However, this is at odds with evidence from philosophy of science and her own epistemic responsibility arguments. Andersen & Wray (2023) show that evidence from retractions supports group rather than individual responsibility in science publications (irrespective of work distribution). In just 6% of honest mistake cases they reviewed, the group does not take responsibility and rather blames the mistake on a specific team member (Andersen & Wray, 2023, pp. 272-273). Moreover, in less than half of their misconduct cases, the group identifies a specific member responsible for the wrongdoing (Andersen & Wray, 2023, p. 274). Misconduct cases are exceptional in that they should be seen as cases of team members going rogue unless there is evidence of widespread misconduct. Of course, teams will not take responsibility for rogue members' actions, as rogue actors cannot claim the authority to represent the group. So, scientific groups tend to take responsibility as a whole for assertions made in coauthored papers, regardless of the distribution of the work. Only in misconduct cases do individuals have a higher probability of being signalled as responsible (as is proper). Andersen & Wray write: "...we have found that research teams tend to take responsibility for their papers when problems arise and they need to retract a paper." (2023, p. 277).

This coincides with *a priori* considerations regarding who is epistemically responsible for RCAs. Lackey (2021, pp. 158-163) argues that groups (and not individuals) are epistemically responsible for their spokesperson's assertions, and therefore, they are group, not individual, assertions. She uses the popular claim that assertions are governed by a special kind of epistemic normativity (as we discussed in Chapter 2). Regardless of how this normativity is best accounted for –with a norm (Garcia-Carpintero, 2004; Goldberg, 2015; Lackey, 2007; Weiner, 2005; Williamson, 2000, among many others) or with down-stream commitments (Brandom, 1983; MacFarlane, 2011)– it is enough if we accept that asserters are epistemically responsible for their assertions. Then, the speaker is that who is epistemically responsible for the assertion (Paterson, 2020). Picture a government for the UK government asserting (5)

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[40] See Andersen & Wray (2023), Habgood-Coote (2024) and Winsberg et al. (2014).

Shortages are not Brexit related. The government must respond to challenges to (5), irrespective of the spokesperson they use.

A priori considerations regarding who is epistemically responsible for RCAs support the idea that they are group assertions. We have already seen that scientific groups tend to take responsibility for their mistakes as groups rather than as individuals; this is not just a quirk of how current research groups work, their behaviour regarding retractions is in line with the nature of their work and practices. First, pieces like Lengthy Report have a strong collaborative nature. The group members cooperate to tell a unified story in a single piece. The whole story could not be told without the contributions of many individuals, and the individual parts can hardly be understood if not in relation to the whole piece; many of them would not make much sense individually, but they do in concert. Second, there is an agreement between the authors to publish it as a coauthored work, even with the understanding that there is no central authority, that there is a wide distribution of work and that individual team members will not (and probably cannot) review all parts of the piece in detail. This agreement amounts to the delegation of the authority to speak on behalf of the research group regarding their share of the work. So, many RCAs are such that they can only be epistemically supported by the group as a whole and not by specific individuals. In addition, it would be inappropriate for the group to distance itself from the work of its members (assuming they have not gone rogue). Therefore, some RCAs (those made by groups who decided to produce a unified co-authored piece) are group assertions.[41]

By saying that the group is responsible, I do not mean that all members are individually responsible for all parts of the group. As Winsberg et al. say, "In the age of radical collaboration, it is unrealistic to assume that each collaborator can take personal responsibility for the value-laden contributions and choices of each other collaborator." (Winsberg et al., 2014, p.22). The relationship between individual and group responsibility is tricky, and I do not have the space to account for it. However, the moral here is that when talking about mechanisms for detecting errors and making people

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[41] We could see some compilations or handbooks in which each member produces a chapter alone as *radically collaborative research* involving RCAs. These do not involve group assertions. Each chapter can be taken as a stand-alone piece, and the whole product is not co-authored. Importantly, the group cannot be seen as epistemically responsible for each part, but only the individual author.

accountable for them, in many cases, we should be looking at group-level practices to ensure groups behave properly and not embark on hunts for specific guilty individuals, as there may be no single one, or a few, who are specifically guilty.[42]

Why are they a problem for disjunctive accounts? Because RCAs do not fit their dual picture. On one hand, they involve coordination, but not in the same way as in the coordinated kind. For them, this kind requires the involvement of all the members in the production of the communicative vehicle and that they all intend (or have a shared intention) to express P with it.[43] If we focus on short statements like (5), the condition clearly does not apply. It was not produced by all the group members but by a few, if not a lone scientist in (let's say) Uruguay. Moreover, the group members could not intend to convey that P or share an intention to communicate it, given that many of them probably were unaware of that particular assertion and did not find themselves in a position to support it. If we were to focus on the whole paper and take it as a communicative vehicle, there is a sense in which all the members participated in its production; however, it is false that each member intended to assert the whole paper or that each one has a shared intention to assert it. The intention to assert the paper's content is distributed among the team members. So, they do not belong to the coordinated kind.

On the other hand, they involve authority to speak on behalf of the group, yet they do not involve spokespersons (or proxies) in the usual sense. We would be stretching the concept of "spokesperson" a lot if we were to say that all the research team members are spokespersons or proxies of the group. If we were to take all members participating in *radically collaborative research* as proxies for the group, then there is no distinction between a proxy and a group member. Acting as a proxy or spokesperson is different from being a group member. A spokesperson is a role a group member can play, but this does not mean that every member who performs a communicative action for a group is a proxy or a spokesperson. Then, RCAs are not spokesperson assertions.

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[42] Part of what is puzzling about *radically collaborative research,* as discussed by Winsberg et al., is that they often speak of the issue as if looking for specific individuals to make accountable or to be responsible for assuring the reliability of the research.

[43] See Lackey, 2021, p. 149; or Ludwig, 2020b, pp. 46-49.

In summary, some RCAs are genuine group assertions because the group is epistemically responsible for the claims.[44] Also, they pose a problem for disjunctive accounts of group assertion because they do not fit their dual view. Therefore, previous accounts do not provide necessary conditions for group assertion. In the next section, I argue that they also do not provide sufficient conditions due to their failure to distinguish between *group locutions* and *group illocutions*.

3. *Group locutions* and *illocutions*

Following Austin (1969), a *locution* is the act of uttering some words with meaning in a language. The mere act of saying the words 'Coca-Cola does not cause obesity' is a *locution*ary act. An *illocution* is the act made *by* uttering those words. By uttering 'Coca-Cola does not cause obesity', an assertion can be made. *Illocutions* are characterised by their *force* (the *assertoric force*, for example). Utterances with the same *force* can differ in content, and utterances with the same content can differ in *force*. The *force* of a speech act characterises the kind of action it is (an assertion, a question, an order, a demand, a promise, a supposition, etc.). *Locutions* are the mere actions of uttering words; they can be performed by individuals but also by groups. By '*group locution*', I refer to the *locutions* made by a group of individuals collaborating to perform the utterance. A group of individuals writing a sentence on an electronic document or a wall perform a group *locution*. However, the relevant sense to discuss group speech acts is the *illocutionary* sense. We are interested in cases where assertions belong (or are properly attributable) to groups, when groups are, therefore, responsible for those assertions. Our main concern here is not utterances and the way groups perform them but the group speech acts made in uttering. Hence, by *group illocutions,* I refer to *illocutions* attributable to groups (and not just performed by them).

Group locutions and *group illocutions* are independent of each other. The former can be performed without performing *group illocutions* and *vice versa*. Let us start with the first claim. Proxy assertions are made via a proxy, i.e., made by another agent on one's behalf. Nevertheless, groups can be proxies for individuals. For example:

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[44] It is worth noting that not all RCAs are group assertions. Some compilations and books are done this way: the group divides the parts of a large work and assigns them to different members.

> Propaganda: Take a politician who hires a small marketing agency to spread political propaganda around the city. The group members pay for spaces across the city and paint walls with his face saying (6), intending to communicate it as a group on their client's behalf:

> (6) I will fix the corruption in this town.

The group is a proxy for the politician, performing assertions in his name. These are not group assertions in a substantial way. The politician is epistemically responsible for (6), and the group, if challenged, should say that they were acting on his behalf and deny responsibility. The group wrote it, but they are not liable for the assertion.[45] They performed a *group locution* by writing (6) on a wall, but they performed a proxy assertion for an individual (an *individual illocution*). This is what I mean when I say that *group illocutions* are speech acts that belong (or are properly attributable) to a group and not just performed by them. (6) was performed by a group, but it is not a group assertion.

Previous accounts have not adequately distinguished *group locutions* and *illocutions*. Indeed, they would incorrectly characterise Propaganda as a group assertion of the coordinated kind. Recall that CGA was characterised by Lackey (2021, p.149) as assertions made by group members coordinating their actions while reasonably intending to convey that P in virtue of their acts. (6) was performed by a group coordinating their individual actions to convey that P and they reasonably intended to convey that P with their acts. Nevertheless, they did not assert in their name but in the name of the politician who hired them. Ludwig (2020b) has the same problem: when producing the utterance together, the group members had a shared intention to represent themselves as part of a group asserting (6). It is just that they were asserting on someone else's behalf.

Lackey and Ludwing incorrectly categorise Propaganda as a group assertion, failing to recognise that *group illocutions* do not always accompany *group locutions*. And *vice versa*, *group locutions* do not always accompany *group illocutions*. We have already noticed that individuals can speak for groups. In standard cases where spokespersons represent groups, they perform *individual locutions*; just one individual is involved in

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[45] Here I am assuming that they had permission from their customer, owners of the walls and proper authorities. So, we are not talking about possible responsibility for damages or vandalism.

performing the utterance. Nevertheless, spokespersons representing groups are performing *group illocutions*. When the spokesperson for the government asserts (5), she performs a group assertion. Therefore, the following statement is true:

> *Group Locution-illocution Independence Thesis*: Performances of *group locutions* and *group illocutions* are independent of each other.

Group locutions can perform *individual illocutions,* and *individual locutions* can be performed by *group illocutions*. But notice that we can perform group assertions with collections of *individual locutions*, too. Imagine that a legislative body is about to make some public announcement. Instead of choosing a spokesperson, they decide, as part of a political stunt, to stand together and shout at the same time (7):

(7) We stand together for this country.

This is a case of a collection of *individual locutions* and a *group illocution*.[46] This is, in my view, a clear case of group assertion. It has the markings of group action: coordination to produce the communicative action and shared intentions; it is natural to describe them as sharing the intention to communicate (7). We can say that the lawmakers are responsible for the assertion (7) as individuals. However, the group is also responsible; they are committing to (7) as a legislative body. It is compatible to say that both the legislative body as a group and the legislators as individuals are responsible for it. It is possible to perform *individual* and *group assertions* with the same utterance, just as it is possible to perform more than one speech act with the same utterance.

Previous accounts do not provide sufficient conditions for group assertion; they predict that all cases of shared-intentional coordination are group assertions, which is false. Groups can be proxies for individuals; group proxies exhibit shared-intentional coordination, even when they perform proxy assertions for individuals. This means they failed at distinguishing group from individual assertion. In S.3, I also showed that disjunctive accounts failed to provide necessary conditions for group assertion, given that they do not account for RCAs. What do these two things mean for our understanding

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[46] The collection of utterances can be taken as a single communicative act. This shows that the concept of "communicative act" is broader than *locution*. Both can be fruitfully employed to describe different dimensions of group communicative phenomena.

of group assertion? I believe this shows we should see the cases of group assertion as a continuum rather than as distinct kinds with different natures. On the one hand, there are unaccounted cases between the coordination and spokesperson cases (like RCAs).[47] On the other, neither coordination nor spokespersons are unique to group assertion (individual assertions can be performed through coordination and proxies). So, I propose to account for this continuum with a unified theory. Such a proposal should allow us to see group assertion as one kind of action instead of a cluster of ways of performing group assertions. This is what I do next.

4. The authority account of group assertion

In the last two sections, I presented my objections to previous accounts of group assertion. I concluded that they failed to account for all cases of group assertion and distinguish group from individual assertion. Here, I offer my positive proposal. The basic idea of my account is that what distinguishes group assertion from individual assertion is the authority to speak on behalf of a group. Many in the debate have spoken about authority regarding group assertion (Hughes, 1984; Ludwig, 2020a, 2020b; Lackey, 2021; Marsili, 2023). Appeal to authority has been central to speech act theory since Austin (1962). He is the first one to say that speakers require it to perform speech acts like baptism or marrying. For the former, you need authority over the object or person being baptised, and for the latter, you need authority as part of a church of government.[48] In these cases, speakers require a special kind of social standing. My proposal about what distinguishes group from individual assertion is analogous: those speaking require the authority to assert on behalf of a group.[49]

Several things need to be developed to transform this basic idea into a full account, but here is the condensed version of my authority account of group assertion:

The Authority Account of Group Assertion

A group G asserts that P only if:

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[47] There are other middle-ground cases that disjunctive accounts can explain but still show a combination between coordination and authorised spokespersons, like proxies reading statements prepared by the group.

[48] Ludwig (2020b) argues that marring is a group speech act that requires more than one person to perform: those who are getting married. This is a very interesting claim, but it is of no concern to us here.

[49] The account I defend is an inflationist view of group assertion.

I. A communicative act *A* that means that P is performed by one or more speakers, and at least one of them intends to express that P.

II. The speaker or speakers have and exercise the authority to assert for the group.

For the moment, these are just necessary conditions. Later, I will say what we need to add to make them necessary and sufficient conditions. Clause I. is a "catch-all" kind of condition. The idea is not so much to exclude cases but to allow the account to apply to the large range of cases discussed in this chapter (crowd, coordinated, proxy and *radically collaborative assertion*), and to capture the claim that the number of people performing the communicative act and the way to perform it are irrelevant to determining if something is a group assertion. Groups use very different ways to perform assertions: they coordinate to produce an utterance, they coordinate to divide a work into portions and work on those as individuals or as subgroups, they chant utterances as a crowd or appoint spokespersons to represent the group (among various combinations of these cases). But these are just ways to perform utterances, and all of them can produce group assertions.

Clause II does most of the heavy work when it comes to distinguishing genuine group assertions. The key concept is authority; it has many requirements that could be unpacked as further conditions for group assertion. For example, there are limits over the subject and the context where speakers can assert for the group. These are best seen as elements of what it means to be authorised rather than as separate conditions for group assertion. Now, some features of authority are of special importance, like how authority can be acquired and exercised, and the kind of agents who can wield it. In general, my view is that the form authority to assert takes depends on the group's practices and how it decides to communicate. A particularity of my account is that I claim that the authority to assert for the group can be used not just by individuals but also by the groups themselves. Groups may have explicit rules to grant authority, or they may give and exercise it more organically. They can have a spokesperson or speak for themselves. They may also completely disregard their official rules, in which case, their actual practice is more important than what they say governs their practices.

As our base case, individuals have, by default, the authority to speak for themselves.[50] But we do not have the authority to speak for a group by default, people need to come to certain agreements to make that happen. The obvious case of authority to speak for the group are spokespersons. Groups grant them authority in different ways. Some groups appoint them officially, and others have spokespersons appear organically. How this goes depends much on the kind of group and its practices. Institutions typically have official mechanisms, like being appointed by a board or a chief, being hired for the role, being the head of the institution, etc. On the other hand, unorganised groups depend more on what happens on the spot: an improvised vote, a momentary leader, etc.

However, being a spokesperson is not the only way to have the authority to speak for the group. Groups have different objectives and, correspondingly, different communicative needs. To meet those needs, groups adjust their communicative practices. Let's start with RCAs. They are assertions made in a collaborative, communicative piece where the group members divide the parts and work in them with little to no involvement from most other members. Groups have different reasons to work in this fashion. They may require experts from different disciplines or different regions of the world, which makes it difficult (or impossible) to review each other. Climate research is an example of this; it requires scientists from all over the world and from different disciplines to produce a comprehensive study. So, they decided to work in a decentralised and distributed manner. In my view, in these cases, group members have been given the authority to assert on behalf of the group over their portion of the work. To be able to assert for the group, the group must come to an agreement, and these groups have agreed to work individually to produce a unified co-authored piece. When distributing the parts of a work of this nature, they also distributed the authority to speak for the group.

Cases of coordinated assertion are particular in that, instead of giving authority to individuals, the group itself uses it. These cases were characterised by coordination to produce together the communicative action (recall the survivors coordinating to write "we need help" on the beach). The whole group crafts the message, and they all intend

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[50] They can lose it if, for example, they are intoxicated. Nevertheless, having it is the "default setting".

to convey it as a group. By agreeing to communicate a message as a group and for the group, they exercise the authority to speak for the group they form. It could be said that groups, just as individuals, have the authority to speak for themselves. However, that is not the case. Groups have different objectives, and not all aim to communicate. Among those that do, not all intend to communicate as groups and for the group. So, individuals must enter into an agreement to communicate as a group (or to grant someone the authority to represent them).[51]

In coordinated assertions, the authority is held by the group members as a collection and not as individuals. Someone may doubt that authority is something that collections of individuals may have, in contrast with individuals themselves having it. Still, there are straightforward cases of this: imagine a vault that requires a group of individuals to turn their keys simultaneously to open it. No single individual has the authority to open the vault; that is something they have, but only as a group. Lawmakers are also great examples of this. They have the authority to issue laws, but no single lawmaker can do it alone; they can only do it as a group. So, groups of individuals can have and exercise the authority to assert for the group without that authority being distributed among the members.

4.1 Distinguishing group from individual assertion

A central task of group assertion accounts is distinguishing genuine cases of group assertion from cases of individual assertion. Of particular importance is separating cases of groups being proxies of individuals (as we saw in S.4). Previous accounts have failed to distinguish these from genuine group assertions. However, even though groups perform them, they are not group assertions. In this section, I have explained how my account covers all cases of group assertion. Now, I will explain how it manages to exclude individual assertions and group proxies representing individuals.

Standard individual assertion cases are easily distinguished. As I said, the authority to assert for a group is not something we have by default. Individuals usually are not entitled to perform group assertions. What excludes those cases is that they do not have the authority to speak for the group. The next case is individual proxies

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[51] This covers coordinated cases of assertion, but also crowd cases (i.e. those where the group members produce a collection of utterances). When groups coordinate to chant something, they coordinated to produce a single communicative action, even if such action is made of a collection of utterances.

representing groups; they do have the authority to assert for the group, but we must distinguish between spokespersons speaking for the group and when they are just speaking for themselves. To do this, my account includes the requirement that they exercise the authority. For spokespersons, this just means that they must be acting as part of their role. Restrictions on such roles are not the same in every case. Some proxies are limited to reading a specific statement, while others can speak freely as long as they stay on the subject. There are also different restrictions on context: the spokesperson for a tobacco company probably needs an official setting like a press conference. Meanwhile, the head of a government probably can speak for her government in most scenarios. Whatever the case, spokespersons perform group assertions when they exercise the authority to assert for the group. Group proxies are not significantly different. They may have the authority to speak for the group, but when they act as proxies for someone else, they exercise the authority to speak for them. We can expect them to be governed by the rules that govern any proxy. So, the boundaries to what they can say as proxies are determined by how much authority they were given. Remember, for example, Propaganda. The advertising company had the authority to speak for the company, but they were not exercising it when representing their clients. The problem previous accounts had was that their explanations of coordination cases left the door open for all group proxies to be counted as making group assertions.

It is worth noting that, in my view, not all RCAs are group assertions. Consider handbooks or compilations in which different authors are asked to contribute a chapter for a book concerning a specialised topic. These can be seen as *radically collaborative research* involving RCAs since they are cases of decentralised and distributed research that produce a piece of work made of different parts that were produced individually. However, the nature of these cases is very different from cases like Lengthy Report. Each chapter is meant as a stand-alone piece, and the book is not presented as co-authored; rather, each chapter is attributed to a specific author.[52] In this kind of collaborative piece, the group did not award the authority to speak for the group to their

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[52] Some chapters can be co-authored, but those would involve group assertions attributable to their authors and not to the collection of authors who contributed to the book.

members. Evidence of this is that they pair each contribution to its author. They each intend to retain responsibility and ownership over their contributions.

4.2 Going rogue

The discussion about the limits of authority connects with the subject of group members going rogue. Speakers can exceed the authority they have been given and, therefore, fail to perform group assertions. The authority to assert for the group has some key elements that set its limits; context and subject are the central ones, but the list might be more extensive. I talked about these limits in relation to spokespersons, but given that, in my view, authority to speak for the group is not restricted to proxies, these limits extend to all those who wield this entitlement. For example, just as spokespersons go rogue, members of *radically collaborative research* can go rogue. Misconduct cases (like those discussed by Andersen & Wray (2023)) can be seen as examples of team members (not in the role of spokespersons) going rogue. Here, we must distinguish between individual team members participating in misconduct and research groups participating in misconduct. A team member who engages in misconduct is acting outside the authority he has been given. Research is governed by standards of good practice set by the discipline in question, and researchers accept to work under those rules. The authority to speak for the group is granted depending on the group's decisions and practices. If the group, in general, is following the principles for good research, then those principles set the limits for the authority. In contrast, if the group in general engages in misconduct, those principles cannot be said to be part of their practice and, therefore, cannot be said to limit the authority to speak on behalf of the group. In other words, if the misconduct is generalised, then it is part of the group's practices; it is no longer a case of rogue members but a case of a corrupt group. Team members are not abusing their authority but instead exercising it according to the group's practices.

4.3 *De facto* authority

The discussion about the limits of authority also raises questions about the kind of authority in place in my account. By its nature, authority probably has at least a normative dimension since it governs what speakers can and cannot do. However, the concept of authority here is descriptive (or *de facto*) in the sense that we are interested in accounting for all cases where groups, in fact, assert, not in cases where speakers

would be morally or politically legitimate in asserting for the group. So, my claim is that rogue members lose the authority to assert for the group and, therefore, fail to perform group assertions. In contrast, corrupt groups do perform group assertions and are therefore responsible for them as a group.

Now, in my view, authority can take many forms, yet there is always a minimum threshold of acceptance from the community that is required for it to exist. The authority to speak on behalf of a group is a social phenomenon; it requires at least some people to be willing to act as if such authority exists. This does not mean that audiences are in complete control over whether group assertions are performed, but it does mean that they cannot be performed if no one accepts (understood as at least willing to act as if) speakers have such authority. Lackey (2021) can be read as denying this. She presents an example of a sexist community where the chief of police designates a woman (Jane) as the spokesperson for the department. The community, in general, rejects Jane and refuses to take her as talking for the police just because she is a woman. Lackey claims, first, that Jane is the police spokesperson even if the community rejects her authority, and second, that she asserts on behalf of the police even if they do not take her actions as group assertions (Lackey, 2021, pp. 141-146). She holds that depriving Jane of the authority to be the spokesperson would be analogous to testimonial injustice (Lackey, 2021, p. 142).

Testimonial injustice must be taken seriously. However, there is a tension between this argument and a descriptive concept of authority (which she also accepts, see Lackey, 2021, p. 142). Testimonial injustice is a normative issue; it may inform us about whether Jane should have the authority, but it does not say anything about whether she, in fact, has it. Picture a king who inherited his throne; he might lawfully hold the authority to speak for his government, but there is a level of opposition where we might wonder if he is still the king anymore.[53]We have, by default, the authority to speak for ourselves, which is why an individual refusal is a refusal even if the audience fails to acknowledge it.

To answer if Jane, in fact, has the authority, we need to check whether the institution behind her is capable and willing to back her up as their spokesperson.

[53] This is something Lackey (2021, pp. 147-148) herself admits.

Authority is not just a matter of polling how many people in a community have an explicit positive attitude towards the authority figure. However, being officially appointed is also not enough. A group can have great mechanisms to appoint officials, but if those are not followed, they are irrelevant to the actual practices of the group. In her example, Lackey talks about a nearly universally sexist community. This very likely includes the police department itself. If the police department (and the rest of the community) is unwilling to act as if Jane is their spokesperson, it is hard to see how Jane can represent them even if she was lawfully appointed.

The upshot is this: while authority can be held against heavy opposition, authority and institutions require some level of acceptance. Institutions require to be inhabited to be alive. Uptake or a robust and explicit acceptance are not required for group assertion. However, it is required that enough people from the community are willing to act as if the speaker or speakers have the authority to assert for the group. The group itself has a key place here. If it backs those speaking for it, then the authority can be upheld despite the audience's opposition.

4.4 How to get sufficient conditions

The last issue left to discuss is making the account's necessary conditions into necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion. To do this, there is one challenge that needs to be addressed. Marsili (2023) argues against Lackey (2021) that her account does not distinguish between group assertion and other group speech acts. Both CGA and ABGA analyse group assertion as involving speakers with the intention to convey that P in virtue of their communicative actions. But assertion is not the only speech act that conveys propositions. So, it looks as if Lackey's account would classify most communicative actions as group assertions, from indirect forms of communication like implicatures to speech acts like suggestions, hypotheses, orders, etc. (Marsili, 2023, pp. 371-373). To solve this problem, Marsili proposes to combine Lackey's (2021) disjunctive account of group assertion with Tollefsen's (2020) commitment account of group assertion. Tollefsen (2020) examines four accounts of individual assertion and aims to find an account that can be extended to the group case. She holds that the commitment account (defended by Brandom (1983), MacFarlane (2011), Kukla & Lance (2009), among

others) is the only one that can be successfully extended to the group case. So, she proposes the following condition:

> For a group G to assert that p, G must be committed to the truth of p.

<div align="right">(Tollefsen, 2020, p. 339)</div>

While this seems to be a successful extension of the commitments account of assertion to the group case, it leaves several important issues open. Here, I argued that a central issue to consider when discussing group assertion is distinguishing it from individual assertion. And Tollefsen's account is silent regarding this question. Of course, someone can say that group assertion involves groups being committed to P, and individual assertion involves individuals being committed to P. But this is not very informative, as it does not explain why and when groups are committed. Why does an assertion performed by a spokesperson commit the group and not the individual? Lackey's account is better suited to answer this question. With a similar thought in mind, Marsili (2023) proposes to combine the proposals:

> (AC) A speaker S asserts that p iff (1) S utters an expression with content p, thereby (2) presenting p as true, and (3) undertaking assertoric commitment to p.

> (CAC) A group G makes a collective assertion that p iff the members of G coordinate individual acts a1, … an, so that they intentionally satisfy AC(1–3) together in virtue of these acts.

> PAC) A group G makes a proxy assertion iff a spokesperson(s) S(a) (1) utters an expression with content p, thereby (2) presenting p as true, and (3) undertaking assertoric commitment to p on G's behalf (b) S has the authority to undertake commitment to p on G's behalf, and undertakes commitment to p in virtue of that authority.

<div align="right">(Marsili, 2023, p. 374)</div>

Marsili's objection could apply to my account; it could be argued that it does not distinguish between assertion and other speech acts. As a short answer, I could say that I've been talking about the authority to *assert* on behalf of a group. A speaker (or speakers) could have the authority to assert but not to make promises, or the authority

to ask questions but not to give orders on behalf of the group. However, this seems unsatisfactory; while it is true that speakers could have restricted authority regarding the speech acts they can perform for a group, this answer is not particularly illuminating. There is a better answer, one that has to do with distinguishing different questions regarding group assertion (as I did in Chapter 1). One question is, "What distinguishes assertion from other speech acts?". The *force* question. Group assertion is a kind of assertion; it would not be strange to say that whatever distinguishes individual assertion from other individual speech acts should be what distinguishes group assertion from other group speech acts. If what distinguishes assertion from other speech acts is the same in the group and the individual case, something else should distinguish group from individual assertion. What distinguishes group from individual assertion is found in answering, "What does it take to perform a group assertion?". The *performance* question. And it seems plausible that Lackey[54] is interested in this last question. By contrast, Tollefsen seems interested in the *force* one (specifically, in extending *force* accounts to the group case). Evidence of the fact that these are different questions is that Marsili can combine Lackey's account with Tollefsen's account without any trouble.

My authority account is answering the *performance* question, and it is able to distinguish group from individual assertion. If we want necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion, we need to pair the authority account with an answer to the *force* question, like the commitments account of assertion:

> The Commitments-Authority Account of Group Assertion
>
> A group G asserts that P if and only if:

I. A communicative act *A* that means that P is performed by one or more speakers, and at least one of them intends to express that P.

II. The speaker or speakers have the authority to assert for the group and are acting in virtue of this authority.

III. By performing *A*, G is thereby committed to the truth of P.

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[54] There is much work done on what distinguishes assertion as a speech act, and Lackey knows this. This is why I think it is more fitting to read her as assuming that there is some account that distinguishes assertion from other speech acts; and that she is trying to distinguish group from individual assertion under this assumption.

The Commitments-Authority Account is my preferred answer for the moment. However, my account is compatible with other accounts of the *assertoric force*. While Tollefsen (2020) makes a compelling case for extending the commitments account, defenders of other accounts of assertion might disagree that their accounts do not apply to the group case. Although some details may need further discussion, my account makes extensions of other *force* accounts more straightforward:

The Attitudinal condition

III(a). The speaker(s) have the intention *i* that the audience believe that P (by their recognition of *i*).

The Rule condition

III(b). The speaker(s) should assert only if G knows that P / has a justified belief that P / P is reasonable to believe / P is true...

The Essential Effect condition

III(c). By performing *A*, G proposes to update the common ground with P.

These can be paired with the authority account.[55] Conditions III(a), (b) and (c) are modelled following the intentional account (inspired by Grice (1989)), the normative proposals (defended by Garcia-Carpintero (2004), Goldberg (2015) Lackey (2007), Weiner (2005), Williamson (2000), among many others) and the essential effect account (Stalnaker, 1999). They distinguish group assertion from other kinds of group speech acts. Meanwhile, condition II distinguishes group from individual assertion. It is a virtue of the Authority Account that it is easily paired with different views of what distinguishes assertion as a speech act.

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[55] My view has the virtue that the intentional accounts of *force* no longer have to say that any group members must have an *illocutionary* intention. Furthermore, inflationist accounts of group mental states like the one favoured in this dissertation (Chapter 6) should also solve the problem of requiring group members to know that P for G to know that P.

Summary

In this chapter, I have distinguished between group and individual assertion. In my view, what is distinctive of group assertion is a particular kind of entitlement: the authority to assert on behalf of the group. An assertion is attributable to a group if issued with this kind of authority. I argued that previous accounts of group assertion (Lackey (2018a, 2021), Ludwig (2020b), Marsili (2023), among others) have failed to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion. They fail to provide necessary conditions, for they hold that there are two kinds of group assertion (coordinated or proxy). However, some cases do not fit the dual picture most accounts assume. These are the *radically collaborative assertion* cases. Moreover, they do not provide sufficient conditions for group assertion because they do not distinguish between group *locutions* and group *illocutions*. By failing to notice this distinction, previous accounts cannot distinguish between individual and group assertion. More broadly, I have suggested that there are many ways in which groups perform communicative actions, e.g. by employing proxies or by coordinating. However, individual assertions can also involve proxies and coordination (e.g. Propaganda). Therefore, the different ways groups perform utterances are not central to group assertion. Instead, I propose we need a unified account for the continuum of group assertion cases. I hold that the authority to assert on behalf of the group is what distinguishes group assertion. My proposal allows us to see group assertion as one kind of action instead of a cluster of different communicative acts, as do previous accounts.

Chapter 4: Group Speech

We very commonly attribute speech to groups. Not just assertions, but a wide arrange of speech acts like promises, questions, orders, protests, requests, warnings, advice, hypotheses, demands, prohibitions, and so on. In the last Chapter, I discussed group assertion and offered a novel explanation: the authority account of group assertion. But, since groups do more than just assert, there is an interesting question about what distinguishes group and individual speech acts in general and not just group and individual assertions in particular. In this chapter, I argue that the authority account answers that question. I extend my account to all group speech acts and show that it distinguishes group speech acts (properly understood) from individual speech acts and speech acts merely performed by (but not attributable to) groups.

In support of my account, I show how the objections raised in the last chapter to disjunctive accounts of group assertion also extend to the general case of group speech acts. I argue that previous proposals do not account for all cases of group speech acts where the group divides the production of a communicative piece among its members (*Radically Coordinated Speech*[56]). Furthermore, the distinction between *group locutions* and *illocutions* cuts across all speech acts. Failure to notice this distinction caused previous accounts to mistake some individual speech acts for group speech acts. I argue that *group illocutions* are what we should properly call 'group speech acts'. My distinction shows that not all communicative acts performed by groups are group speech acts. However, they could still be considered actions groups perform with speech in a broader sense. In this chapter, I propose a new classification of this broader category that includes, but is not exhausted by, group speech acts —let us call it 'group communicative acts'.

In contrast with the last chapter, I invert the order of the presentation. Taking advantage of the reader's general knowledge of my view, I start with my positive proposal.

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[56]. These are the generalisation of *radically collaborative assertions*, assertions made within the kind of collaborative work where the group distributes parts of the work among its members.

The first few sections will gloss over what was discussed before to emphasise what is new. In section 1, I show how to extend the authority account to all group speech acts. Given how the account was designed, I argue that the extension is straightforward. In section 2, I present different ways in which groups perform their communicative actions and show how my account explains different cases. In sections 3 and 4, I extend my two objections against disjunctive accounts, showing that they generalise to all kinds of *illocutions*. In S.3, I argue that they do not provide sufficient conditions because they failed to notice the distinction between group *locutions* and *illocutions*. In S.4, I argue that they do not provide necessary conditions because they do not account for *radically coordinated speech* cases that are group speech acts. I use the last two sections to elaborate on my view of how we should understand the concept of group speech acts and my new proposed categorisation. In section 5, I discuss Ludwig's (2020) irreducibly collective speech acts and argue that they should be classified as a class of *illocutionary forces*, and not as a kind of group speech act. In section 6, I offer my own classification of "group communicative actions", which includes, but is not exhausted by, group speech acts.

1. The authority account of group speech acts

A large part of what I said in the last Chapter about group assertion generalises to all group speech acts. In this chapter, I invert the order of presentation: I start by summarising the account and then explaining how it applies to different cases. The authority account is based on a simple idea: that the authority to speak on behalf of a group is what distinguishes group from individual speech acts. This idea does not involve any feature specific to assertion. Furthermore, the core of the authority account of group assertion was a set of necessary conditions that were short of sufficient conditions because they did not individuate assertion specifically. Recall this breakdown of the account from the last chapter:

> The Authority Account of Group Assertion
>
> A group G asserts that P only if:

I.   A communicative act A that means that P is performed by one or more speakers, and at least one of them intends to express that P.

II.   The speaker or speakers have the authority to assert for the group and are acting in virtue of this authority.

These are just necessary conditions for group assertion. As we saw in the last chapter, they do not substantially differentiate assertion from other speech acts. To provide a specific account of group assertion, we need to add a condition to individuate the assertoric *force*. Then, the account could easily be generalised to provide an account of all group speech acts. The first condition simply involves a communicative act that means that P being performed by one or more speakers at least one of whom intends to express that P. But, expressing a proposition P is something that many speech acts do. Condition II specifically concerns a speaker's authority to assert for a group, and that a speaker has the authority to assert for a group does not logically imply the authority to make other speech acts such as promises, prohibitions, demands, etc. Indeed, it seems plausible that there are cases where the speaker(s) only have the authority to perform some, but not all, *illocutions* for a group. E.g. perhaps a government gives a group of climate change scientists the authority to make assertions on its behalf about the state of the climate, but not to make promises about what the government will do about it. Despite this, it seems that one could generalise the account by changing condition II to concern the authority to make speech acts of a variety of kinds. Then, one could provide an account of specific group speech acts by combining this authority account with a theory that individuates particular speech acts from others. For instance, we could pair a generalised version of the authority account with some theory that individuates assertion to provide an account of group assertions (this is what I did in the last chapter). Here, I provide the generalised version of the authority account.

In order to turn the authority account of group assertion presented above into a general account of group speech acts, we first need to adjust the first condition of the account. As currently stated, Condition I requires a proposition to be the content expressed, and arguably, not all speech acts express propositions. Questions are taken to express sets of propositions (Hamblin, 1973; Karttunen, 1977), for example. Moreover, speech acts like greetings may not express propositional contents. So, condition I needs to be generalised like this:

I(G).   A communicative act A that has some meaning under a language is performed by one or more speakers, and at least one of them intends to express that meaning.

Condition II can easily be extended by changing 'assertion' to 'speak', producing the general account of group speech acts:

> The Authority Account of Group Speech Acts
>
> A group G performs a group speech act if and only if[57]:

I. A communicative act A that has some meaning under a language is performed by one or more speakers, and at least one of them intends to express that meaning.

II. The speaker or speakers have the authority to speak for the group and are acting in virtue of this authority.

The authority account is not specific to any speech act. Rather, it aims to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the broader kind of group speech acts. What distinguishes group speech acts, according to my account, is authority; groups have the possibility to give authority to different actors in a given scenario. That a speaker or speakers have the authority to speak on behalf of a group is an arbitrary, self-perpetuating solution to a recurring coordination problem (see Lewis, 1969). We have the persistent need to engage with and as groups, and there are several actors who can be taken as speaking for groups and several ways in which groups can communicate. To interpret speech as attributable to a group when the speakers involved have the authority to speak for it is a way to solve this problem.

Individual speech acts can be seen as the base case: individuals have the authority to speak for themselves by default.[58] The group case takes this as its base, but as groups are, in a sense, more complex entities, they need some coordination to be formed and give that authority. As discussed in the last chapter, who can wield the authority to speak for a group and how it is given depends on the kind of group in question

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[57] The authority account of group assertion was only a set of necessary conditions because it required to be supplemented with something that individuates assertion. However, the general authority account does not need to distinguish between *illocutionary forces,* but to apply to all of them. So, it can be presented as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions.

[58] This does not mean that individuals always have this authority. Arguably, one loses the authority to speak for oneself when one is intoxicated enough or when one loses enough cognitive capacities. It might be the case that different speech acts have different thresholds for losing authority: I might not be able to consent when I am intoxicated, but I might still be able to assert what I believe. But this is a matter I will not address here.

and its practices. There are various mechanisms to grant authority and various kinds of agents who can wield it. I expect most of what I said about the concept of authority to extend to this general account since the discussion about authority did not use or presuppose anything specific to assertion. To flesh out this authority account of group speech, I will now apply it to different cases. This will allow me to draw out connections with the concept of authority previously discussed and address specific issues when necessary.

2. Ways to perform a group speech act

Groups perform many different speech acts and have many different ways to perform them. In some cases, the message is decided upon through deliberation, and in others, it is not; in some, the utterance is performed collaboratively, and in others, a designated spokesperson acts alone. In the last chapter, I argued that we should see these ways groups perform speech acts as a continuum and not as discrete kinds. Yet, it is still useful to highlight some points in the continuum to manage the data. Thus, roughly following existing categorisations we can distinguish between at least three different ways groups perform speech acts: *proxy speech*, *coordinated speech* and *crowd speech*.

Proxy speech cases are those involving someone acting in their role as spokesperson for the group. It is very common for organised or large groups, like institutions, governments and corporations, to employ spokespersons (which is probably why some theorists like Tollefsen (2020) talked about "institutional assertion" when referring to proxy cases). Groups using proxies do more than just assert. In recent years, we have heard governments promising to tackle inflation, corporations denying their products are unsafe, regimes warning each other not to escalate military conflicts, institutions apologising for mismanagement or states for historical atrocities, and others requesting help. In these cases, we often see a designated spokesperson speaking in the name of the group. Likewise, Langton (1993) spoke about individuals with the right authority to issue prohibitions (and other comparable speech acts). She talks about historical cases where minorities (black people in particular) were prohibited from using some services or entering some places. Some of these examples are best understood as group speech acts. Prohibitions to, for example, use public services or occupy positions

in public institutions, even if authority figures issue them, are best understood as prohibitions that the institutions are commanding, as those institutions enforce them, and many survive changes of leadership.

There are various ways for a group to grant authority to spokespersons, from traditional mechanisms like inheritance to democratic mechanisms like voting. Nevertheless, they all require, at minimum, that enough members of the relevant community behave as if the authority was granted. Now, all of these are arbitrary solutions to a coordination problem. But more than that, the choice of appointing a spokesperson is itself one among many arbitrary solutions. The group could have decided to write a document together or chant a message. Depending on the case, some options may be more practical than others, but we do not always choose the most practical solution (some conventions can be rather inconvenient!).

A second way groups perform speech acts is through coordination. *Coordinated speech* cases are those where the speakers coordinate to produce a piece of communication.[59] Research groups often work this way; they coordinate to produce their written or oral work. However, these groups do not just assert; they ask questions, make hypotheses and suggestions, give advice and warnings, etc. For example, scientific groups have warned about global warming and suggested ways to prevent a catastrophe. Aside from the coordination required for them to do the actual research, they also coordinate to produce the communicative pieces where they present their arguments, evidence and conclusions. Here, we can distinguish between the cases where the group members coordinated to produce the communicative piece altogether and cases where they coordinated to assign different parts of the work to each group member. We can call the first '*fully coordinated speech*', and the second '*radically collaborative speech*'.[60] The main difference between these two cases is that the former involves all group members in the production of the communication piece, while the latter distributes portions of the piece among the members.

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[59] Here, I defined coordinated speech acts more broadly than coordinated assertion. The latter, as defined by Lackey (2021) and Ludwig (2020), requires joint intention and involvement from all members to produce the communicative act. In contrast, *coordinated speech acts* require just some general form of coordination to produce the piece of communication. This is to include cases of RCA (see Chapter 3) and similar cases.

[60] What I call *radically collaborative assertions* (or RCAs) in the last chapter are cases of *radically collaborative speech*.

We can see some cases of groups performing the communicative act together as cases of *the group speaking for itself*. To be contrasted with a proxy speaking for the group. *Fully coordinated speech* (and *crowd speech*, detailed in the next paragraph) are plausible cases of a group speaking for itself. Just as individuals have the authority to speak for themselves, groups may exercise the authority to speak for themselves by coordinating. Like what the castaways from Lackey's (2021) example are doing when writing 'We need help' with their bodies. However, since groups can be proxies (e.g. Marriage Proposal or Propaganda[61]), groups can coordinate to *speak for someone else*. The difference is on whose authority they are acting. Groups can exercise the authority to speak for themselves or (if it was granted) the authority to speak for someone else. On the other hand, *radically collaborative speech* is a form of *coordinated speech* that is very close to proxy cases; it involves group members are authorised to speak for the group over their portion of the work (e.g. Lengthy Report[62]). Depending on what we take to be the unit of communication, these can be seen as the group speaking for itself or as someone speaking for the group. If the unit is small, like sentences or parts of the work, then it is the latter; if the unit is the whole work, it is the former.

In addition to proxy and coordinated group speech cases, we also include *crowd speech* cases; these are cases where we have a collection of individuals chanting something at the same time. Crowds and mobs tend to perform their speech acts in this way, so we can think of some protests and mass demonstrations as paradigmatic cases of *crowd speech acts*. However, there are also examples that do not involve political actions: Ludwig (2020), for instance, talks about a group chanting to welcome new members. In Chapter 5, I examine the case of protests and offer an account of them as speech acts (or at least of the subset of protests that are speech acts).[63] I also apply the account of group speech acts to be developed here to distinguish between individual and group protests.

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[61] In Marriage Proposal an individual hires a choir to propose to her partner, and in Propaganda a politician hires a company to write slogans in his name.

[62] This was the example of a climate research paper written by a decentralised research team that distributed the writing among its members.

[63] While paradigmatic protests are communicative actions, there might be grey cases of civil disobedience that we might consider protests, but that might not be actions of communication (like intentionally avoiding taxes or disobeying laws, but without the intention of making anyone aware of it).

Now, some may worry that *crowd speech* cases fall short of being group actions. I have a few things to say to address this worry. Some *crowd speech* cases exhibit high levels of coordination and joint intentionality, which are at least the markings of group actions. In addition, I do not claim that all *crowd speech* cases are group speech acts, the same way I do not claim that all c*oordinated* and *proxy speech* cases are group speech acts. Individuals can (and in fact do) use these same means to produce individual speech acts. Individuals can also appoint spokespersons to speak for them, so the proxy mechanism is not specially related to group speech acts. There are also cases of coordinated, collaborative work where each individual is taken as the sole author of their portion. Think of compilations where each chapter is written by independent authors, even if they worked together as members of a research group. Lastly, as I argued in the last chapter, groups can be proxies of individuals, so coordinated and crowd cases can produce individual speech acts.

My account can distinguish between genuine cases of group and individual speech acts, and, importantly, distinguish cases of groups speaking for themselves as opposed to acting as spokespersons for an individual or another group. Proxies, both group and individual, perform group speech acts only when they have the authority to speak on behalf of a group and act in virtue of that authority. Groups who coordinate to perform communicative actions do not always do it with the intention to speak for themselves; even if they have the authority to speak for the group, they do not always act in virtue of it. For something to be a group speech act, it is not relevant how the group decides to perform the communicative action. What makes it a group speech act (an *illocutionary* action that is attributable to a group, and not just performed by a group) is that the speakers have the authority to speak for a group and act in virtue of it. In the next section, I argue that other accounts cannot do this. They cannot distinguish between cases where groups are talking for themselves and cases where they talk for individuals, so they mistakenly treat some individual speech acts as group speech acts. Also, they do not account for the cases of *radically coordinated speech* that are group speech acts, so they do not account for all group speech acts. In other words, they do not provide necessary or sufficient conditions for group speech acts. To show this, in the next two sections, I generalise the objections that I presented in the last chapter.

3. *Group locutions* and *group illocutions* again

In the Last Chapter, I distinguished between group *locutions* and group *illocutions*. This distinction cuts across all kinds of speech acts. By 'group *locution*', I refer to the *locutions* made by a group of individuals; this is when individuals collaborate to perform the utterance of a sentence with meaning under a language.[64] A group *illocution*, on the other hand, is when the speech act made by a *locution* is attributable to a group and not just to individuals. In more Austinian terms, it is the act *in* saying something that is attributable to groups, and cannot just be attributed to one individual or distributed among a collection of individuals. It is defined in opposition to the mere act of uttering performed by a group. Examples of group *locutions* are a collection of people writing a sentence on a wall or forming a sentence with their bodies on a beach, a document written by a group where all the members participated in the production of every sentence, a group chanting a protest, etc. These can be contrasted with collections of individual *locutions*, like what happens when a goat enters a classroom and all inside shout 'There is a goat!' at the same time by chance. Examples of group *illocutions* are a research group asserting 'The vaccine is safe', a government promising 'We will fix inflation', a company denying 'Our products are not unsafe', an activist group demanding 'We need oil drilling to stop', a group of physicists asking 'Are quantum mechanical "spooky" effects possible?', an office greeting a new member by shouting 'Welcome to the office!', etc.

Just as Austin's original distinction between *locutions* and *illocutions*, my distinction applies to all speech acts. Nowadays, *illocutions* are what we call 'speech acts', even though there might be a sense in which *locutions* are speech actions (they

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[64] Austin uses two expressions to define *locution*: that it is the act *of* saying something (Austin, 1975, p. 95) and that it is (roughly) equivalent to uttering a sentence with sense and reference (Austin, 1975, p. 110). Philosophy of language professors often complain that Austin's distinctions were not completely clear, which may make my distinction muddy too. Depending on which definition we prefer, *crowd speech* cases might count as group *locutions*. If we take group *locutions* to be collective acts *of* saying something, then it seems natural that some *crowd* cases are group *locutions*. Some crowds with enough coordination are collectively doing the act of saying something. In contrast, if we consider group *locutions* equivalent to collectively performing an utterance with meaning, *crowd* cases are not group *locutions*, but collections of individual *locutions*, since each individual is performing its own utterance. I think this is a very interesting detail. For our purposes, either definition does the trick. Yet, I prefer the last way of making the distinction, as it cuts more neatly between *crowd* cases, which would involve collections of *locutions*, and *fully coordinated speech*, which involves group *locutions;* instead of putting all these cases in the same bag of group *locutions*.

are actions groups do with speech in a general sense). Assertions, questions, orders, demands, protests, warnings, advice, suggestions, requests, and so on are speech acts. So, if we are interested in group speech acts, we are interested in group *illocutions*, not in group *locutions*, even if there is a sense in which the last are group speech actions (and group actions more generally). Previous proposals have failed to notice this distinction and thought that all group *locutions* were group speech acts. Nevertheless, I argue that they are not by considering cases in which groups act as proxies for individuals.

Marriage Proposal: Imagine that I hire a company of performance artists to help me ask Margo to marry me. They write the question 'Will you marry me?' with their bodies in the street for her to see from the top of a building. We can correctly describe them as sharing an intention to represent themselves as altogether being committed as members of the group to asking a question. Moreover, there is a sense in which they are performing a group action, they are working together intentionally to ask the question. However, they are not doing it in the name of any group; they are doing it in my name. It is I, who is asking her to marry me, not the group. So, the illocutionary act of asking her to marry me is not a *group illocution*.

All kinds of analogous cases can be presented with different speech acts. A vigilante can hire a group of graffiti artists to write on a wall that he promises he will return. A politician can hire a firm of lawyers to craft a letter warning her opponents of legal consequences and ordering them to cease. Furthermore, individual speech acts can be performed with collections of individual *locutions*. A spouse can hire a choir to sing a song to his partner to apologise for his mistakes or to congratulate him on his birthday. What all of these cases share in common is that while the speech act was performed by the group, it is not attributable to the group. They can be described as cases where the groups are just doing what they were hired to do, without committing themselves to anything else. Whatever my partner's answer is an answer for me, the graffiti artists are not responsible for upholding the promise of the vigilante; the choir has nothing to apologise to the spouse for, etc. The speech acts were just performed by a group, in the sense that they performed the communicative action that counts as an individual speech act. But they did not do it for the group; they were representing someone else, an individual.

For whom is this distinction a problem? Basically, for anyone who proposes joint intentional collaboration is sufficient for the performance of a group speech act. Intentional and dual accounts of group speech acts make this mistake. Intentional accounts (like Hughes, 1984 and Tollefsen, 2009) roughly equate group speech acts with communicative actions involving a group *illocutionary* intention, which is understood as the group members sharing an intention to perform a speech act as a group. "There exists a group (G), this group has an illocutionary intention, and X conveys that illocutionary intention." (Hughes, 1984, p. 387). However, all of the former cases are examples of groups performing a communicative action with an *illocutionary* intention. The groups shared an intention to communicate something as a group, but in the name of an individual, and this applies to all kinds of *illocutions*.

Dual accounts have the same problem. In the last chapter, we saw dual accounts of group assertion, like Lackey's (2021) and Marsili's (2023). They hold that there are two kinds of group assertion: one based on authority and one based on shared intentional coordination. Ludwig (2020) presents a general dual account of group speech acts; he is committed to the claim that this classification includes all *illocutionary* actions. Their accounts are not equal and do not agree on all details. However, they share the claim that there is one kind characterised by authorised spokespersons; and a second one distinguished by group members coordinating to produce the communicative act, sharing an intention to perform the speech act as a group. "...the members of the group share an intention to represent themselves as all together being committed as members of the group to (for example) welcoming someone. Sharing an intention is a matter of each member of the group having a we-intention, an intention to do her part in their shared plan, and perhaps having certain beliefs about the conditions for success." (Ludwig, 2020, p. 49).[65] The problem for them is that groups who are proxies (as in my examples above) involve group members who share an intention to represent themselves as part of a group performing a speech act. However, they are not speaking for the group, but for someone else.

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[65] Ludwig talks about irreducibly collective speech acts, which may not involve an intention to represent themselves as part of a group, but they necessarily involve shared intentions. I discuss these in more detail in section 4.

As a response, someone could refine the kind of shared intention required so that the condition includes a shared intention to communicate as a group and for the group. This way, group proxies are not performing group speech acts. This answer would be unattractive for people like Ludwig. He believes that group speech acts are characterised by people acting in concert to communicate (Ludwig, 2020, p. 47). This kind of reply would accept that just acting in concert to communicate is not sufficient for group speech acts; we need a particular kind of acting in concert. But, more than that, this reply is missing the point. Neither proxies nor shared-intentional coordination are exclusive to group speech acts. We know that individuals can have proxies and perform individual speech acts. Additionally, now we know that groups can be proxies of individuals; these proxies perform speech acts in the name of an individual. They cannot be seen as group speech acts in a substantial sense. Instead, I suggest that it is better to see proxies and shared-intentional coordination as ways agents have to perform speech acts. Analogously, we do not distinguish between written and oral speech acts, so we should not distinguish between proxy and coordinated speech acts as kinds of group speech acts. To further this point, in the next section, I show that there are cases that do not fit the two kinds proposed by disjunctive accounts of group speech acts.

4. Radically collaborative speech

In the last chapter, I argued that *radically collaborative assertions p*resented a problem for disjunctive accounts of assertion because they are genuine group assertions that are neither spokesperson's assertions nor coordinated group assertions. RCAs are produced as part of *radically collaborative research,* characterised by being decentralised, highly distributed among the group´s members, and interdisciplinary research. This kind of research produces all kinds of speech acts, not just assertions. In this section, I first argue that the argument showing that RCAs are group speech acts can be extended to all *representatives*, which are the sub-class of speech acts (discussed in Chapter 2) that are defined by their relation with truth, like hypothesising, warning, swearing and advising (Searle, 1975; Turri, 2010). Different representatives commit the speaker to the truth of what was said to varying degrees. Then, I suggest a way to extend this argument to include all *illocutionary* actions. *Radically collaborative speech* present

a problem to general accounts of group speech acts just like RCAs do for accounts of group assertion.

Lackey (2021) argues that assertions performed by spokespersons representing groups are group assertions because the group is epistemically responsible for them. She appeals to the popular idea that assertions have some form of epistemic normativity. Regardless of which account of the epistemic normativity of assertion we prefer, we can extract a notion of epistemic responsibility according to which asserters are responsible for their assertions. However, assertion is not the only speech act that seems to be governed by epistemic norms. As we saw in Chapter 2, there is support for the idea that the subclass of *representatives* is governed by epistemic norms, given that they commit the speaker to the truth of what is said to varying degrees depending on the speech act. Now, *radically collaborative speech* includes more cases of speech acts than just assertions. Scientists and researchers, in general, perform all kinds of speech acts. Recall **Lengthy Report**: A group of scientists working on a long paper on climate change decides to distribute parts of the work among its members who belong to different disciplines and are located worldwide. The different experiences they have, and the data they can gather are required for the study they are doing. In this example, we can expect them to make not only assertions about what is the case but also warnings about the worst outcomes, advice about how to stop those scenarios from happening, hypotheses about some difficult details and so on.

Suppose this report is later published under the name of the special research group, and that people raise challenges against it (the report does not need to be incorrect to be challenged). Would it be appropriate for the research team to just unload all the epistemic responsibility to the member who produced the challenged part and claim no obligation to answer? I think it would not, as long as the scientist has not gone rogue. Even if specific members are best positioned to answer the objections, they do so as part of their role as group members, not as individual scientists. This argument depends not on anything specific to assertion, so it extends to any speech act that generates any epistemic responsibility, including at least the class of representatives. The evidence given by scientific retractions also supports this conclusion. Andersen & Wray (2023) show that scientific groups take responsibility for their mistakes as groups

in most cases. Only in misconduct cases is there a higher chance of the group blaming mistakes on specific individual culprits (Andersen & Wray, 2023, p. 274).

Can this reasoning be extended further? I believe there are reasons to believe that it can. Paterson (2020) develops the view that an agent is the speaker of an illocutionary action by virtue of being responsible (in the relevant way) for that action. She offers a concept of *illocutionary* responsibility, according to which a speaker's *illocutionary* responsibility depends on the conventions her community has about the specific speech act performed (Paterson, 2020, p. 64).[66] Her concept of *illocutionary* responsibility allows us to extend this sort of argument to all kinds of speech acts. Kukla & Lance's (2013) account also supports this sort of reasoning. As we saw in Chapter 1, they offer a general entitlements and commitments account of speech acts, according to which *illocutionary* forces are distinguished by the entitlements and commitments they generate. Even if speech acts are not distinguished by their normative structure, if we accept that *illocutions* require and generate entitlements and commitments, we can agree that there is a concept of *illocutionary* responsibility like the one developed by Paterson (2020). Both Paterson's (2020) and Kukla & Lance's (2013) accounts can be used to extend my argument concerning RCAs to all *radically collaborative speech acts*. All kinds of *illocutions* performed as part of *radically collaborative research* can be genuine group speech acts because a group is responsible for them.

Radically coordinated speech presents a problem for dual proposals. As we saw in Chapter 3, They hold that there are two kinds of group speech acts: coordinated speech acts (characterised by shared intentions) and proxy speech acts (characterised by spokespersons representing the group). But, as I argued there, *radically collaborative speech* does not fit into any of these categories. Since each portion was produced by group members working individually, they do not exhibit shared intentions to perform those speech acts. And they also do not involve proxies or spokespersons as commonly understood. So they find themselves in an uncomfortable middle ground between proxy

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[66] A discussion about if illocutionary responsibility only rests on conventions is a matter for another paper. But, there are reasons to believe this kind of responsibility can arise from other sources. For example, Williamson (2000) denies the norm of assertion is a convention. An Kukla & Lance's (2013) commitments account claims that speech acts are distinguished by the licences and commitments they issue, but that they are not necessarily intentional or conventional. Finally, we could also argue that some responsibilities arise from rational principles, like in Grice (1975).

speech acts and coordinated speech acts as defined by dual accounts like Ludwig's (2020).

With this, I conclude the extension of the group assertion view presented in the last chapter to all group speech acts. I passed quickly over some details to avoid repetition; those were discussed with more care in the previous chapter. Here, I hope to have offered new information about how the view looks once we take it as a general account of group speech acts. In that same line, in the next two sections, I want to expand on my view of group speech acts. To do this, I analyse Ludwig's taxonomy in more detail so I can compare it with my own classification. I am especially interested in his irreducibly collective speech acts. He claims that these are a sub-kind of special group speech acts that can only be performed by groups. This sub-kind presents an interesting challenge to my general view of group speech acts. So, I will say where I disagree and where the irreducible kind fits in my view by offering a rival classification at the end of this chapter.

5. Collective *illocutions*

Ludwig (2020) defends a dual account of group speech acts.He offers the following taxonomy:
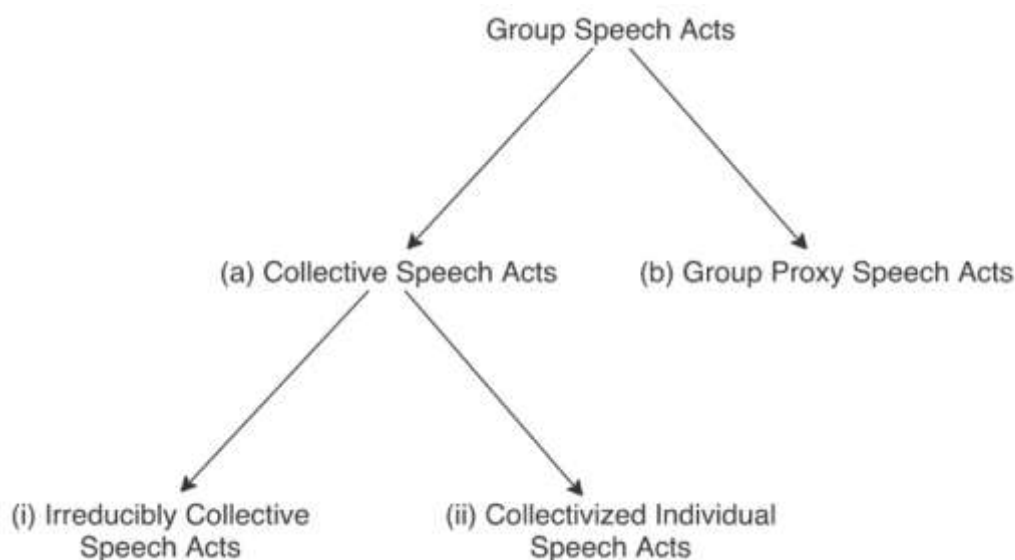
(Ludwig, 2020, p. 47)

This taxonomy has two main kinds of group speech acts and two sub-kinds. As a brief reminder, proxy group speech acts are those produced by an authorised spokesperson, and collective speech acts involve all the group participating at the time of production of the communicative act. The last is divided into two sub-kinds. The first, collectivised individual speech acts, are individual speech acts that are performed as a group (Ludwig, 2020, pp. 49-50). His main examples are cases where collections of individuals speak as a choir, which is what I call *crowd speech acts*.[67] The second, irreducibly, collective speech acts are particular *illocutionary* actions that, according to Ludwig, are characterised by a call-and-response pattern. He claims that agreeing, marrying, voting, and greeting are speech acts that always require shared intentions to be performed. While these have traditionally been taken to be individual speech acts, Ludwig argues that they are *illocutionary* actions that are necessarily performed by groups; in other words, they are never individual speech acts (Ludwig, 2019, pp. 47-49).

Throughout his work, Ludwig (2007, 2016, 2017, 2020) rejects the need for group agents to explain collective phenomena. Regarding group speech acts, he says that these are interesting only if we take them to be people acting in concert, and not actions performed by group agents (Ludwig, 2020, p. 46). In turn, he understands the idea of *people acting in concert* in terms of shared intentions. "Sharing an intention is a matter of each member of the group having a we-intention, an intention to do her part in their shared plan, and perhaps having certain beliefs about the conditions for success." (Ludwig, 2020, p. 49)[68] Interestingly, he explicitly takes both collective and proxy speech acts as involving shared intentionality. Collective speech acts involve it directly, as groups coordinate to act; in contrast, proxy group speech acts require it indirectly, as proxies are status roles that require shared intentions to exist. "They can serve their functions in the social transaction only by the players collectively accepting them as

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[67] Ludwig does not talk about cases of groups writing documents together, like in research. These seem to be collective speech acts, and they are clearly not irreducibly collective. When talking about collectivised individual speech acts, he puts a lot of emphasis on individuals speaking in unison, which is not what happens in research papers. I do not think he wants to deny that at least some collaborative documents involve group speech acts, but it is not completely clear where he would put them.
[68] There are some doubts about whether we can really make sense of the idea of an individual having the intention that a group do something (Tollefsen, 2015, pp. 50-66). These are sensible concerns, but I will not be following this line of objection.

having those roles. It is necessary and sufficient for this that their we-intentions directed toward their play have the same objects in the same roles." (Ludwig, 2020, p. 51).

How do Ludwig's categories fit in my discussion so far? In S.3, I use the example of a group acting as a proxy to argue that not all collective speech acts are group speech acts, and in S.4 2, I show that some *radically collaborative speech* cases are neither collective nor group proxy speech acts. Now, I discuss in detail Ludwig's irreducibly collective sub-kind. They are proposed as a special collection of *illocutionary forces*. According to Ludwig (2019), the category is defined by a call-and-response pattern. "The case of verbal greeting or saluting is an instance of a call and response pattern [...] Many familiar interchanges can be seen as instances of the call and response pattern. Marriage ceremonies are frequently call and response patterns..." (Ludwig, 2020, pp. 48-49). A call-and-response pattern is understood as a joint intentional action where one party initiates a linguistic exchange, and a second party must respond in a particular way (Ludwig, 2020, pp. 48-49).

There are a number of problems with Ludwig's notion of the irreducibly collective kind, which is why I ultimately argue it should be rejected. However, part of this notion is worth rescuing; a few of his examples suggest there is an interesting kind similar to what he describes. I start by showing why his approximation is wrong; then, I propose a better way to understand what I call '*collective illocutions*'. The first problem with his irreducibly collective kind is with their definition. They are supposed to be characterised by a call-and-response pattern. Nevertheless, this definition overgeneralises; just about any linguistic exchange exhibits this pattern. Questions are linguistic exchanges initiated by one party that asks for a specific kind of response; they ask for an answer. Orders demand to be fulfilled or rejected, the same with requests, demands and similar actions. Assertions (and other *representatives*) also ask to be accepted or challenged. To further this point, Kukla & Lance (2013, pp. 153-178) hold that all speech acts have a vocative call, which means that they structurally call for an answer. However, irreducibly collective speech acts were supposed to be a special kind of *illocutionary* act; Ludwig does not intend to make the claim that all speech acts are actually group speech acts. Instead, he is best read as saying that there is a special kind that is always collective. Yet, the call-and-response pattern is a too general trait of communication to pick out a kind of speech act. To communicate, in general, is to call for a response. So, it cannot

distinguish a particular kind of speech acts. On this same note, while it makes sense to believe that conversations are collective actions, it does not follow that all moves within a conversation are also collective actions. If we are having a conversation, it is something that we are doing; in contrast, if I assert (ask a question, make a request, etc.) within this conversation, it is not something that we are doing, even if you are supposed to respond in a particular way. This is supported by considerations regarding moral or epistemic responsibility: participating in a conversation does not make participants immediately morally or epistemically responsible for all the assertions (suggestions, requests, questions, etc.) made within this conversation.

This same problem extends to some of his examples. Greetings exhibit a call-and-response pattern, but they do not seem to be group speech acts in any substantial way. They may ask for a specific answer, but they definitely do not need it to be performed. Picture someone greeting a neighbour but being ignored by them. Maybe the action did not achieve its goal, but she did greet her neighbour. Saying that it did not would incorrectly put speech acts like greetings completely under the control of the audience. Additionally, if we were to say that just the fact that greetings call for a response makes them group speech acts, we would need to accept that every speech act is a group speech act, trivialising the distinction that we aim to provide. That speech act, say a greeting, asks for a specific response, is too weak a condition for it to be a group action. Ludwig (2020, p. 49) even suggests that promises may be considered irreducibly collective since they ask the promisee to decline or accept that the promiser gained an obligation. This example suffers from the same kind of problem I just talked about. Even if a promise is rejected, it does not mean that no promise was made, and the fact that it can be accepted or rejected does not mean that if I promise to be on time, it is something that we are doing.

Nonetheless, a few interesting examples provided by Ludwig motivate a better characterisation of irreducibly collective speech acts. There are three relatively good cases: voting, marrying and agreeing. Nevertheless, the first two are much more complicated than Ludwig suggests. Let us start with voting. Voting, in its ordinary sense, requires a community to agree to have a vote for the action to be possible. If there is no community that is at least willing to act as if there is an election, no votes can be cast. However, there is a sense of voting in which it is just an individual action. When Gaby

chooses a candidate, goes to the polls and casts her vote, it is something that she is doing. There is no 'we' in the specific action of Gaby voting, even if it requires as a precondition that there is a community holding elections. Many actions have social agreements as preconditions, but that does not make them collective actions, like Gaby following the convention of driving on the right or using a bill with an assigned value to buy groceries. So, there is an important sense in which voting is something individuals do individually. Nevertheless, I grant that there is another sense in which voting is something groups do. We say things like 'the people voted', 'the people elected', and 'the people decided' when talking about elections. In this sense, voting is something a group does, but in a very summative sense. It is true if and if only a majority voted for X. We can give these cases a deflationist reading, yet they seem to have a natural reading as collective actions. However, this is only possible if we separate the collective reading of voting from the individual reading.

Marrying may be a better example of an irreducibly collective kind. Interestingly, Ludwig and Austin describe it differently. Ludwig describes it as something that the couple is doing, while Austin describes it as something the priest is doing. In philosophy of language, we often take marrying as one particular kind of speech act, which might be misleading. Marrying is an institution; Austin's view that it requires a convention seems pretty on point. However, there are many marriage practices across cultures and times. In modern Western societies, it is very natural to see marrying as something the couple is doing since their acceptance is seen as the key part of the activity. Nevertheless, this might not be true of all cases across history or even across different societies.[69] So, there might be more complexity than we normally admit when discussing marriage as a speech act. Still, I can concede to Ludwig that there is one practice of marriage where it is required that the individuals involved jointly intend to get married for the action to be performed at all. This leads us to the way the irreducibly collective kind should be defined: as *illocutions* that can only be performed by collections of individuals.

Agreements are the best case to argue for the irreducibly collective kind. As communicative actions, they cannot be performed by speakers acting individually; they

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[69] This is not to say that all kinds of marriages are morally equivalent. A marriage practice may be incorrect, but that does not mean that marriages cannot be performed that way. Some people are incorrectly married against their will, which is not to say that no marriage was performed.

require a collection of individuals sharing an intention to collaborate. However, the call-and-response pattern does not explain what is special about this action. A potential agreement can be initiated by one party, and the second party must respond in a particular way, yet she has the option to accept or reject the deal. Structurally, an offer of an agreement asks for acceptance or rejection. However, a potential agreement that is rejected is not an agreement; the speech act is fulfilled if the offer is not accepted. There is no agreement if neither party involved does not agree. So, just because they have a call-and-response pattern does not make them special kinds of *illocutions*. What is distinctive of them is that they cannot be performed at all if there is no collection of individuals jointly intending to perform the action.

The central issue is whether these examples should be categorised as a kind of group speech act. I do not think they should; they are better understood as a kind of *illocutionary forces*.[70] First, something noticeable about Ludwig's taxonomy is that the irreducible kind is the only one that groups a particular set of *illocutions*. Group assertions, questions, demands, orders, requests, promises, etc., can be performed by proxies or groups coordinating to intentionally perform a communicative action. In his taxonomy, irreducibly collective speech acts are the only ones that involve a specific group of *illocutionary forces* and are not defined by the mechanism the group uses to communicate. This is a bit suspicious, and it puts them closer to classifications of *illocutionary forces* like the ones Austin and Searle did when talking about *representatives*, *directives* (orders, commands, requests, etc.), *expressives* (apologies, congratulations, greetings, etc.), and so on (Searle, 1975). Second, not all cases of irreducibly collective speech acts are properly attributable to groups. If Rodrigo and Carolina are getting married or making an agreement, this is an interaction between individuals; individuals get married, not a group gets married. Compare this to an agreement between governments to, for example, increase cooperation or stop climate change. The latter is an agreement between groups, and the former is a marriage between individuals. Then, I propose to distinguish between group speech acts *per se*, which should be understood as *illocutions* that are not just performed by groups but that

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[70] I do not mean that irreducibly collective speech acts are not group actions or group communicative actions, but only that they do not seem to belong to the group speech acts classification.

are attributable to groups and not just to individuals, and *collective illocutions*, which should be understood as illocutions that can only be performed by collections of agents. The former includes all sorts of *illocutions* when attributed to groups; the latter comprises a specific set of *illocutionary forces*: marrying, agreements and, maybe, voting (under a collective reading).

6. Group communicative actions

In this chapter, I argued that we should distinguish group speech acts from speech acts merely performed by groups. What we should properly call group speech acts are *group illocutions*, these are *illocutions* that are attributable to groups; not all *illocutions* performed by groups are attributable to groups. Propaganda and Marriage Proposal are examples of this; since groups can be proxies, they can perform individual illocutions. Then, not all *group locutions* are group speech acts. *Collective illocutions* are similar to *group locutions* in this respect. They are necessarily performed by groups, but they are not always clearly attributable to groups. This is why we should distinguish group speech acts (*group illocutions*) from both *collective illocutions* and *group locutions*. However, there is a broader sense in which all of these are actions groups do using speech speech, even if they are not group speech acts. Let's call them *'Group Communicative Actions'*; these are all actions groups do using speech understood in a broad sense so that they include both speech acts performed and attributable to groups:

Group Communicative Actions

Collections of locutions*	*Group Locutions*	*Group Illocutions*	*Collective Illocutions*

Group Communicative Actions include these four cases. They are all cases of actions groups do by using speech, even if they are not all attributable to a group. I distinguished between collections of locutions and g*roup locutions* since I take the latter to include only cases of an utterance produced by the group (e.g. Lackeys (2021) castaways example). Collections of *locutions* involve several utterances of the same statement (e.g. a protest); however, some of them can still be considered group actions if we distinguish cases of intentionally coordinated action from accidental cases of saying the

same. This is why I marked them with a *, to signal that not all collections of *locutions* should be considered. Besides these two, *group communicative actions* include *group illocutions* (the ones we should be properly called group speech acts) and *collective illocutions* (specific *illocutionary forces* necessarily performed by groups).

Finally, there is another notion that is related to group speech acts that I argue we should distinguish. Medina (2023) proposes that protests are always collective actions because they are group-constituting actions and constitutively polyphonic (Medina, 2023, p. 136). He understands group-constituting as protests having the potential to have echo and to be part of a chain of actions, and polyphonic as actions performed in concert (Medina, 2023, p. 137). He never uses the term 'group speech act', but he does say that protests are communicative acts (2023, p. 134), speech acts (2023, p. 164), collective acts (2023, p. 146), and plural actions (2023, p. 137). Plus, he debates with traditional accounts of speech acts like Austin's. So, the idea that they are group or collective speech acts, in a sense relevant to our discussion, is strongly suggested.

In the next chapter, I discuss the case of protests in more depth and explain in more detail why I disagree with Medina. In short, I argue that the notion of "group-constituting actions" is too weak to characterise why some speech acts are collective or group speech actions. Many actions have the potential to constitute groups, but that does not mean that they were produced by groups or that any group is responsible for them. So, the notion of group-constituting actions is an interesting concept related to groups and their use of language, but it should still be distinguished from group speech acts proper and *group communicative actions*.

Summary

The core of this chapter is my account of group speech acts. I argue that the authority account can be extended to distinguish all group speech acts. And that the arguments in favour of it also extend to all kinds of *illocutionary forces*. The main idea is simple: that group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak on behalf of a group. I argue that the authority account is superior to other proposals because it can distinguish between group *locutions* and group *illocutions*, and it can account for *radically collaborative speech* cases. More broadly, the account distinguishes speech acts that

are not just performed by groups, but that are attributable to groups and not just to individuals. Previous accounts (both disjunctive and intentional) failed to do it. To expand on my view, at the end of the chapter, I propose a new classification of actions groups do by using speech; I call these *Group Communicative Actions*. These include, but are not limited to, group speech acts properly understood. Group speech acts are *illocutions* that are attributable to groups (*group illocutions*) and should be distinguished from speech acts merely performed by groups (both *group locutions* and collections of *locutions*) and from *collective speech acts* (*illocutionary forces* that are necessarily performed by groups). All of these are *group communicative actions*, but not all are group speech acts. The authority account and the classification of *group communicative actions* should give us more clarity on the subject of collective communicative actions.

Chapter 5: Authority, Group Protests and Individual Protests

Protests are, among many things, a kind of communicative action. People who engage in protest aim to do things through communicative acts. However, we know that many acts of communication do more than just transmit information. They aim to do things like transform the public space, voice opposition, demand action, etc. Thus, I will argue that we can understand some protests as a kind of speech act. And among speech acts, protests are one emblematic of groups: Whether we are talking about combating climate change, inequality, or oppression, protests are frequently made by groups of people. In this chapter, I aim to provide an analysis of protest, both as what characterises it as a speech act and what differentiates the individual and group cases. In previous chapters, I proposed an account to distinguish between individual and group speech acts; here, I argue that it applies straightforwardly to the protest case: group protests are distinguished by the authority to speak for a group. This should help us elucidate some essential aspects of protests.

I claim that there are three *desiderata* that a full account of protest as a speech act must satisfy. First, protests have two elements: an expression of disapproval and a demand for change (Searle, 1975; Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b); a full account of protest should give a principled characterisation of these elements. Second, paradigmatic cases of protests are about justice, but not all protests are about justice (imagine some football fans protesting against the new shirt of their favourite team); let's call them *amoral* protests. Moreover, not all protests make just demands (xenophobic and racist protests, for example); let's call them *corrupt* protests. Protests that make unjust or immoral demands are *infelicitous* (borrowing Austin's terminology) since they are an abuse of the effort, but they are protests nonetheless. Then, a full account of protests must include the possibility of amoral and corrupt protests (and very likely explain the *infelicity* of corrupt cases). And third, there are individual protests (like individuals resigning or self-immolating in protest) and group protests (people marching on the

street, for example). A full account of protest must account for both and distinguish the group from the individual case.

My proposal has a negative and a positive part. First, I argue that existing accounts of protests as speech acts (Barnes, 2021; Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b; Medina, 2023) have failed to satisfy some of these *desiderata*. Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) recognise that they have to satisfy the first two; however, I argue that they failed to satisfy the first one: they do not correctly characterise protests as speech acts that express opposition. Against Barnes (2021), I claim that he provides only a partial account of protest since he does not account for cases of amoral protest, and he struggles with corrupt protests. And against Medina (2023), I argue that he failed at characterising protest as a group speech act.

As for my positive proposal, I offer a functional account of protests. I claim that their purpose determines their pragmatic structure (the inputs and outputs that define it as a speech act). Protests aim to express opposition and transform the public space, and this purpose determines their structure. I roughly follow Kukla & Lance's (2009) and Lance & Kukla's (2013) normative functionalism to characterise this pragmatic structure. However, my account departs from their proposal in that I argue that protest has non-normative entitlements, making my proposal only a functional account. Finally, I argue that what distinguishes individual and group protests is a particular kind of entitlement: the authority to speak in the name of a group, which can be owned and exercised by individuals and collections of individuals. My pragmatic approach to protests as speech acts should help us further understand their social and communicative dimensions.

The chapter's structure is as follows: In the first section, I motivate understanding protest as a speech act. They are essentially public communicative actions, so analysing them as speech acts is natural. In section two, I discuss previous accounts of protest. I use them to build my three *desiderata* and argue that they fail to satisfy them. In section three, I defend my own functional proposal of protest, and in section four, I distinguish between group and individual protests.

1. Are protests speech acts?

There have been some attempts at characterising protests as speech acts (Barnes, 2021; Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b; Medina, 2023). But we might wonder if protests are a speech act at all! After all, they do not always include the use of oral or written language: we can

protest with performance, by throwing paint at artworks, by blocking streets and highways, or by running through a football stadium. Furthermore, some even wonder if rioting can be a case of protest (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021a). I think there are good reasons to treat protests as speech acts and use the tools developed in pragmatics to gain understanding of them, or at least to develop an account for the subset of protests that are speech acts. Protests are essentially public communicative actions. It makes little sense to talk about a protest (in the ordinary sense) performed by someone alone in a room without an attempt to make people aware of it or about people protesting merely in their minds.[71] Protests are designed to address someone and inform them about deep dissatisfaction. So, they are essentially communicative actions. Furthermore, by design, they seek to do more than simply pass information to their addressee: they aim to impose obligations, force their target to act or recognise existing obligations.[72] This resonates with what speech acts are: Austin famously argued that we do things with words beyond simply passing information around. We make promises, marry, order, welcome, request, etc. Protests fit this picture naturally, which makes them great candidates for pragmatic analysis.

One may still object that protests may not involve the use of language. This is a fair objection, but this situation is common to a lot (if not most) paradigmatic cases of speech acts. We can make agreements by stretching our hands, marry by nodding our heads, order by pointing firmly with a finger, or assert by giving a thumbs up to answer a question. So, this makes them no different from other speech acts. They can be performed with language, and they are essentially communicative actions. Now, a full answer to this issue requires an answer to what a speech act is, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Just notice that any account of what a speech act is requires to account for the possibility of non-linguistic performances of speech acts. For our

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[71] In the blame literature, some (Smith, 2012) argue that blame is a kind of protest, and they try to account for the fact that we can blame in private, which would entail that we can protest in our heads. Like Chislenko (2019), one may wonder if they mean 'protest' in its normal sense and not a technical or broader concept of protest. But even if they do mean it in its ordinary sense, it is on them to prove that we can protest in private, not on us to prove otherwise, since the standard intuition is that protest is a public and eminently social action.

[72] I am going to use 'commitments' and 'obligations' interchangeably, as seems standard in functional normative literature (see Kukla & Lance, 2009; Lance & Kukla, 2013; Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b)

purposes, it is enough that the public communicative nature of protests makes it natural to take them as speech acts.

2. Some approaches to protest as a speech act

Philosophers like Barnes (2021), Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) and Medina (2023) have tried to give full or partial accounts of protests using pragmatic tools from the speech act debate. Although they offer interesting contributions to our understanding of protests, they have not provided a satisfactory account of protests as speech acts. In this section, I diagnose why they failed by appealing to my three *desiderata* of a successful account of protests as speech acts. 1) We need to account for the two elements of protest (that they express opposition and demand change); 2) we need to account for the possibility of incorrect protests and protests that are not about justice; 3) we need to account for both individual and group protests.

2.1 A first glance at protests as group speech acts

When we think about protest, many of the examples that come to mind include groups as their subject. Right now, we may think of the farmers' protests sparking all over Europe, the continuous protest against climate change all over the world, demonstrations in support of Palestine, civil resistance against the 'slow motion' coup in Guatemala and similar cases. In these examples, we have various kinds of groups with varying kinds of organisation and coordination engaging in protest. So, it is a prime example to look at under the group speech acts lens. Medina (2023), for example, claims that the power of protests as a speech act can only be understood if we take them as collective actions that empower the agents who perform them. More specifically, he claims that protests are:

a) Group-constituting

b) Self-empowering and agency-generating

c) Constitutively polyphonic.

By a) he means that those protesting form a collective subject by engaging in protest. By b) that by protesting, speakers amplify their communicative and epistemic capacities. And by c) that they are irreducibly heterogeneous. (Medina, 2023, pp. 136-137). In this work, I will focus on the first claim, that protests are group-constituting, since it is the

most relevant to discussing protests as group speech acts. Furthermore, this property is the most important, according to Medina. He writes: "The first and most important thing that a protest does is to constitute a protesting public. [...] a protest is a plural action in which a collective agent or public is formed by subjects appearing in public together and acting in concert..." (Medina, 2023, p. 140). People acting in concert is, without a doubt, the kind of thing people in the collective phenomena debate are interested in. To elaborate on what it is to be group-constituting, he coins two more concepts: 'chainability' and 'echoability'. "My concepts of chained action and echoability are used to explain the group-constituting power of protest." (Medina, 2023, p. 137). An action is chained if it is in line with other actions, i.e., if it continues or is continued by other actions. And it is echoable if it can be evoked and amplified by the actions of others. According to Medina, protests are chainable and echoable since they aim to create solidarity and foment political action. Commonly, protests follow other demonstrations to incite change and try to make the public engage. So, he claims that protests are group actions given that they are always, at least potentially, chainable and echoable.

Furthermore, notably for the characterisation of group and individual speech acts, he also claims that protests are always both individual and collective actions:

> On my view, a protest is always both an *individual* and a *collective act*: it is an act performed by interconnected actors in such a way that each individual performance or instance of the act cannot be understood in isolation because it already gestures toward the performance of others to which it is conceptually connected to be the kind of protest act that it is. A protest act is the performative reenactment of a gesture of resistance or dissent, performed in a particular context and echoing other such performances— in other words, it is a plural action composed of a performative chain of actions that echo one another.
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> (Medina, 2023, p. 146, my emphasis)

In Medina's account, protests are both individual and group actions. Individual because they are, at the bottom, produced by individual actions done by individual actors. And, more importantly, collective or group actions because they aim to be part of a larger movement and to be reproduced. That is, they are chainable and echoable, in Medina's terms. He recognises that not all protests succeed at producing echo or being part of a larger movement. That is why he says that they only need to be potentially chainable and echoable. For it is not in the protesters' power that their actions actually produce larger

social movements. As he says, "A protest act always prefigures a possible assembly of protesters; if only *counterfactually*, it brings together as a protesting public those who are willing to stand in solidarity with the protest act." (Medina, 2023, p. 142, my emphasis).

While Medina gives an interesting explanation of the social power of protest, he ultimately fails to give a principled explanation of it as a group (or individual) speech act. First, it would be hard to find somebody in the debate about collective actions who denies that group or collective actions are produced, at bottom, by the actions of individuals. To say that an action is an individual action when individual actors produce it is hardly informative! We could ignore this; it is not Medina's main point. His main point is that protests are, against what many may think, group actions. Nevertheless, he struggles to make this point the same way he struggles to make the point that protests are individual actions.

The account faces two big problems: first, being potentially chainable and echoable is insufficient for something to be a group action, and second, these properties do not clearly distinguish protest from other speech acts. That protests need only be *potentially* echoable and chainable to be group speech acts is too lax. Almost every action is potentially part of a chain of actions and has an echo. Furthermore, being chainable seems to be a general feature of communication. Conversations can naturally be seen as chains of communicative actions. For example, we assert, ask questions and give answers, linking each speech act with previous ones. But we do not consider speech acts made as part of a conversation group speech acts. The condition of being echoable suffers a similar problem. When we assert, it is common that we aim to convince people of a point of view that hopefully will get through to more people. To give a different example, if they are good, jokes are commonly repeated and passed along (they have echoes). But we do not consider all assertions or jokes group speech acts.

It could be argued that protests are not only potentially chainable and echoable, but that they aim to be chained and echoed. So, it would be constitutive of the act of protest that it aims to be part of chained action and produce an echo. Again, it seems to be a feature of acts of communication that they aim to be part of chains of communication. But not all speech acts are group speech acts. Moreover, it is probably false to say that protests aim at producing an echo. They aim to produce change. They

request that their target act on their demands. If their demands are fulfilled, there is no need for an echo. Echoes are just part of the strategy to force the target to act, not a constitutive part of protests as actions. Plus, the original problem remains: that they aim to be part of chained action and produce echo falls short of full group action. Assuming chainability and echoability are enough for something to be a group action, a protest can aim at them while failing to actually produce them.

Therefore, Medina's explanation of why protests are individual and group speech acts is not particularly illuminating. To better account for protests, we should acknowledge that, while protests are paradigmatically made by groups, they can be made by individuals acting alone and in their own name: a civil servant can resign in protest, an incarcerated person can start a hunger strike to draw attention to her situation, etc. To accurately account for protest, we need to explain why these cases are individual, and not group, speech acts, whilst they have social significance due to the kind of action they are. Having a social dimension does not amount to being a group action. Communication, in general, is a social phenomenon, but communicative acts, like speech acts, are not group actions just because they have an important social dimension or because they are linked with other actions. Also, importantly, individuals can protest in the name of groups: a government representative can resign from an international position following orders from her government, protesting in the name of the state she represents.

My proposal to account for protests as group speech acts is to pair an account of the *force* of protests with an account of what distinguishes group speech acts. In this thesis, I have developed the second; for the first one, I suggest a functional account of what distinguishes protests as speech acts. For a speech act that demands change, a view that distinguishes speech acts by the normative changes they make in the world looks pretty appropriate. Both Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) and Barnes (2021) recently offered an account along these lines. So, in the next section, I examine their accounts.

2.2 The entitlements and commitments of protests

Intuitively, we engage in protest when a wrong has occurred, we are not in a position to directly repair it and when those with the power to do something seem indifferent or unwilling to act. In those circumstances, we protest to express disapproval and demand

action. In Searle's words "...a protest involves both an expression of disapproval and a petition for change" (Searle 1975, p. 368). There are several ways we can try to capture this idea in a principled way. We could, for example, follow Austin and aim to provide some *felicity* conditions. This is the first thing Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) try to do. "we will argue that the speech act of protest can be understood as having a complex felicity condition stemming from the felicity conditions of making a specific kind of evaluative claim and a connected prescription." (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b, p. 179).

They account for the *felicity* conditions of protests with two norms:

1) "...protests constitutively aim at truth about what is unfair or unjust relative to some conception of what is fair or just that is presumed to overlap with the protest's audience."

2) "...protests also aim at the imposition of an obligation for their addressee to do something about the object of protest."

(Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b, p. 184).

Here, let's clarify a couple of these terms. By 'addressee', they mean the one to whom the protest is directed. For example, the addressee of a protest about climate change will be the government and industries; when protesting some policy, the addressee is the specific institution behind the policy, etc. The audience is not exhausted by the addressee; commonly, protests are meant to be heard by a wide audience. By 'object of protest', they mean the issue the protesters reject and aim to change, like bad policies or wrongdoings in general.

There are some puzzling things about the way Chrisman & Hubbs phrase their two conditions. Constitutive rule accounts and *felicity* conditions accounts are taken to be different kinds of proposals. Austin thought that *felicity* conditions were given by conventions, and some of these set the requirements for the action to be performed at all. In contrast, normative approaches like the constitutive rule approach intend to provide correctness conditions, meaning conditions that state if the action was appropriate or not. Breaking a correctness condition has the effect that the action was inappropriate, but not that it was not performed at all.[73] Furthermore, people like

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[73] For example, breaking the knowledge norm of assertion.

Williamson (2000) explicitly reject the idea that a constitutive rule is a convention. So, phrasing the *felicity* conditions of protest as involving norms is unnecessarily confusing.

We could spend more time discussing this account, but Chrisman & Hubbs themselves reject the *felicity* conditions approach in favour of a functional normative approach. They reject the first norm for two reasons: First, not all protests are about justice (we can protest some cosmetic changes for a football club). Second, an overlap between the protesters and the audience's sense of justice is not always required; we can protest even if we know the audience does not share the same sense of justice. (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b, p. 185). But these objections seem to be about the specific content of their first norm, not about anything general regarding a *felicity* conditions approach. The norm could be amended in terms of "wrongness" and "correctness" (which are broader concepts) instead of "justice" and "injustice". And we can drop the requirement of an overlap with the audience. So, the shift to a functional normative approach seems unfounded regarding the first norm.

Then, they present a challenge against the second norm. The worry is that to be *felicitous,* a protest has to impose obligations, but this requires authority. Therefore, protests would always be *infelicitous* since protesters lack authority and power relative to their addressee: "But if they lack control or authority, how could they impose obligations on the addressee of their protest?" (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b, p. 185). Let's call this the '*Authority challenge*'.

To solve these issues, they give an analysis not in terms of felicity conditions but in terms of Kukla & Lance's (2013) normative functionalism, which follows Brandom's (1983) idea of characterising speech acts by the entitlements and commitments they licence[74] on conversations. Kukla & Lance propose that speech acts are characterised by their normative structure, specifically, by their normative inputs and outputs. The inputs are the entitlements the speakers are required to have to perform a speech act correctly, and the outputs are the entitlements and commitments the action licenses and imposes. Both inputs and outputs can be agent-relative or agent-neutral. An input/output is agent-relative if the normative structure of the speech acts imposes commitments on specific agents or demands a certain specific standing from the

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[74] I use 'licences' and 'entitlements' as interchangeable.

speaker. It is agent-neutral when the structure does not require any specific agent (Kukla & Lance, 2013, pp. 16 - 18).

So, following Kukla & Lance, they use the tools of normative functionalism to characterise protests, i.e., they characterise protests in terms of the agent-relative or agent-neutral entitlements and commitments protests have as inputs and outputs.[75] Specifically, they aim to capture two elements that form the core of protests:

      i)   Protests are an expression of opposition.

      ii) Protests prescribe for redress.

Regarding i), Chrisman & Hubbs say that an expression of opposition, protests negatively evaluate the object of the protests. In normative functional terms, this can be seen as an agent-neutral entitlement to protest as input, assuming the object of the protest is actually bad or wrong, combined with an agent-neutral output that entitles others to negatively evaluate the object of the protest. We can see these elements in the following quote:

> More precisely, our suggestion is that the way protests negatively evaluate the object presumes a kind of entitlement that is general rather than particular. If the object of protest is in fact bad or wrong, then it is bad or wrong in a way that would entitle anyone to express opposition, not just people with some special normative status. [...] Moreover, the core normative output status of element (i) of a protest is also general. A protest seeks to entitle others to also negatively evaluate the object of protest, and this is an entitlement that does not depend on who in particular those others are.

> (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b, p. 188).

Regarding ii), they try to answer the *Authority* challenge. The worry was that a protest would be *felicitous* only if the protesters have the authority to impose obligations to the addressee. But the balance of power is always on the addressee's side. Their answer to this worry is rather puzzling. According to them, protesters must lack authority over the addressee, and the addressee must have the power to do what the protesters demand. "...the protester must not have authority, power, etc., over the addressee of the protest (at least with respect to the topic of the protest). It must be rather the addressee's prerogative, and not that of the protester, to do what is being prescribed." (Chrisman &

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[75] Chrisman & Hubbs use the term 'general' for agent-neutral and 'particular' for agent-relative.

Hubbs, 2021b, pp. 188,189). As for the output, protests impose an agent-relative commitment to the addressee. "On the output side, the normative statuses which are generated by the prescriptive element of a successful protest are particular, in the sense that they are obligations on particular people." (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b, pp. 189). A synthetic presentation of their normative proposal would look like this:

I) Neutral Input: Speakers have a general entitlement to negatively evaluate the object of the protest.
    Neutral Output: The speakers give the audience a general licence to negatively evaluate the object of the protest.
II) Relative Input: The speakers must not have authority over the addressee.
    Relative Output: The addressee gains the obligation to provide redress.

The entitlements and commitments view seems like a natural fit for the speech act of protest. When protesting, we make demands, which can naturally be seen as aiming to impose obligations on the address. So, I'm sympathetic to Chrisman & Hubbs's general approach to protests. Nevertheless, there are important problems with their proposal. They fail to account for i), that protests are expressions of opposition. First, according to them, protests have a neutral output in that the audience is licenced to negatively evaluate the object of the protest. But given that protests presuppose the very same licence (as input) to be performed, the output has no real effect in modifying the normative state of the world. The output that characterises i), according to them, is something that the audience already had, since it was already presupposed as input for the protest.

Chrisman & Hubbs do not offer a good characterisation of what it is to express opposition. Furthermore, II) is not without its problems. They raised a real concern against their conventional account: the worry that a protest would be *felicitous* only if the protesters have the authority to impose obligations to the addressee. But this challenge doesn't seem to be specific to *felicity* conditions. It is paradoxical in general that protests seek to impose obligations to the addressee while they require that protesters lack power or authority in comparison to the addressee. They answer that a better analysis is that protests require that the protesters have no authority over the addressee. But this does not solve the challenge. If anything, they double down on the problem. They say: "This

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suggests that protests are felicitous only if the protestor has authority to impose obligations, but then we raised the worry that it is puzzling how such authority could be enjoyed by protestors who, in order to protest at all, must lack authority over the people from whom they desire redress." (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b, pp. 188). This apparent paradox is not resolved by saying that speakers must not have authority over the addressee or by dropping the concept of *felicity*.

So, Chrisman & Hubbs leave us with no good way of characterising i) and a paradox to solve when characterising ii). Maybe we could appeal to other functional accounts. Barnes (2021) also offers a normative functional account following Kukla & Lance (2013). They propose seeing protests as second-personal calls, which are speech acts directed at a second person, calling her to give a specific uptake. And, according to Barnes, the pragmatic structure of protests is characterised by a presupposition of the moral authority of protesters as its input. "Protests invoke a demand— which presupposes the moral authority to do so..." (Barnes, 2021, p. 156). And by "revealing" such moral authority in comparison with the moral authority of their target as output. "...protest, [is] an act that fundamentally aims to reveal the moral authority of the protester." (Barnes, 2021, p. 156).

Barnes' account leaves out protests that are not about justice. As Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) point out, protests are not necessarily about justice. We can imagine the fanbase of a football club being angry because the management decided to modernise the shirt of the team. Let's assume that the new design is much better than the old one and that the management has no ill intentions; they are not doing it for profit or similar motivations. They just want to renovate a shirt that has remained unchanged for decades. Despite this, the fans feel a deep connection with the old shirt, so they gather in front of the stadium to protest the changes, and they demand that the team keep the old shirt. There is no injustice at issue, so it's hard to see how the protesters could have a better moral standing in relation to the management.

This is to be expected; Barnes does not seem to aim at providing a full account of protests. He has two main objectives: one, accounting for the uses of "Black lives matter" as protests, and two, rejecting the idea that Stanley's (2015) focus on content is enough to characterise the force of protests. Then, if I correctly interpreted Barnes, he just offers a partial account of protests. One that sadly cannot be extended to all cases

of protest. But, I completely agree with the idea that to account for protests, we need to explain it in pragmatic, not in semantic terms, since it does much more than just transmit information. Protesters demand change; with their actions, they aim to force their addressee to act.

2.3 *Desiderata* for an account of protests

Previous accounts of protests as speech acts fail to account for the phenomenon completely. But from their mistakes, we can formulate *desiderata* for a full account of protests. Medina (2023) treated protests as group speech acts. However, we noticed that there are both individual protests (protests that are only attributable to individuals) and protests that do seem to be group speech acts. The latter have some traditional markings of collective actions, like joint intentionality and coordination. In addition, protest can be attributed to institutional groups through the actions of their proxies. Medina correctly noticed that protests are paradigmatic examples of communicative actions performed by groups, but he failed to account for this fact and to notice that this is compatible with the fact that individual protests exist. So, the first *desiderata* is to account for both individual and group protests and explain what distinguishes them.

After discussing Medina (2023), we saw with Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) that protests involve two characteristics: an expression of opposition and a demand for change. But they failed to account for these elements. The pragmatic structure they proposed to characterise protests as expressing opposition has no real effect, and they failed to answer the *authority challenge*. A good characterisation of the second characteristic requires such an answer. Therefore, the second *desiderata* for a full account of protests is that we need to account for both elements of protesting. This requires a meaningful and principled explanation of both of them and an answer to the *authority challenge*.

Finally, with Barnes (2021), we noticed that there are amoral protests and corrupt protests. His partial account seemed tailored to explain the case of "Black lives mater", but it cannot be extended to account for these other two cases. Protests can be amoral or corrupt, but they are nevertheless protests. Although amoral protests may be *infelicitous* in a substantial way, they do not necessarily *misfire*. So, the third and final *desiderata* is that a full account of protests requires including the possibility of amoral

and corrupt protests. And, very likely, an explanation of the *infelicity* occurring when protests are corrupt.

In the next two sections, I provide an account that satisfies these *desiderata*. In Chapter 4, I proposed an account of what distinguishes group from individual speech acts. I believe that this account applies straightforwardly to the case of protest. The Authority Account of Group Speech Acts help us reveal some of the important features of protests. But first, we need to account for the *force* of protests. To do this, we need to provide an account that satisfies the second and first *desiderata*. This is why first (in section 3), I provide a functional account of the *force* of protests. In section 4, I combine this proposal with my Authority Account to provide a full account of protests, which allows my account to satisfy the third *desiderata*.

3. A functional account of the *force* of protests.

I favour a functional approach to protest. But there are other speech act theories that one may try to use to characterise the force of protests. It may be worth reviewing some of them and explaining why I am not going for one of them, especially since much of the literature on protest as a speech act leans towards Kukla and Lance's (2009) normative functional view but has not said much about other possible approaches.

One popular option is to characterise speech acts as having a specific communicative intention (a proposal inspired by Grice and initially proposed by Strawson(1964)). Now, it may be true that a particular communicative intention accompanies protests, but I doubt that this view explains the social and transformative dimensions of protests. Protests aim to transform the public space by making demands for action. They seek to obligate their addressees to act.[76] Communicative intentions are mental concepts that may be able to characterise the mental state of protesters, but they do not provide explanations about why the addressee would be obligated to act. The addressee may successfully interpret the communicative intention of the protesters, but understanding their intentions does not force the addressee to satisfy their desires. An intentional framework can explain the effects speech acts have by appealing to the context and the cooperation principle. On this view, speakers in a conversation generally

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[76] Whether it is by imposing a new obligation or by making them recognise a previous one.

assume that their interlocutors are cooperative, and interpret communicative intentions on this assumption. However, it seems that we engage in protest exactly because we assume that our interlocutors are not cooperative. Protests are a way to force an uncooperative addressee to act.[77]

A second option is to offer *felicity* conditions, like Chrisman & Hubbs's (2021b) first attempt. They rejected this approach, but as I said previously, I believe they don't give general reasons to abandon this kind of approach; they just give reasons to reject their own *felicity* conditions, which could be amended. So, a possible option would be to do just that: amend the conditions. However, there is a general problem with this approach. Protests do not seem to be defined by conventions. Austin stated that in his approach *felicity* conditions were determined by conventions. Marriage is a great example of this; there is an institution of marriage that is determined by social conventions. But protests are not conventional, not completely, at least. We may think that there are some paradigmatic ways of protesting, like people marching on the street. Yet, given that protests aim to force their addressee to act, they are disruptive by nature. And following very established patterns disable their potential effects. It is very common nowadays for governments to try to impose regulations and permits for protests. But, understandably, activists and the public often reject these attempts as they would render protests ineffective. So, by nature, protests seek to break established rules and conventions.[78] Which makes them unfit for a conventional approach.[79]

A third option would be to follow Williamson (2000) and provide constitutive rules for protests. Rules of the form "X should protest only if N", and offer meaningful candidates for N. This seems promising for some of the preconditions of protesting, like having moral authority (Barnes, 2021) or not being in a position of power (Chrisman & Hubbs, 2021b). For example:

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[77] Here, I mean 'cooperative' in the Gricean sense. Speakers protest when dialogue has failed (Barnes agrees here; see Barnes, 2021, p.147), either because the addressee rejects the speakers' demands or superficially accepts them but fails to act accordingly. I think it is reasonable to characterise such an addressee as not working to achieve a common goal.

[78] This supports the claim that rioting is a valid form of protest.

[79] We could say that the convention about protests is that they must be disruptive. But this seems to be more a practical necessity to achieve their desired goal than an arbitrary decision made by speakers.

S should protest about O to A only if S has the moral authority in relation to A about O.

S should protest about O to A only if S is not in a position of power in relation to A about O.

Where S is the speaker, O is the object of the protest, like climate change, and A is the addressee, the government, for example. This seems like a very promising way of capturing the standing required for protesting. The problem is that it does not capture the effect that protests aim to have. Demands aim to obligate the addressee to act. And, as long as the protest is not corrupt, it seems that there is some obligation on the addressee to provide redress. But is hard to capture this idea with Williamson style norms, which seem to be about what the speaker must satisfy to properly perform the action, not about the normative output of the speech act.

This is why I favour a functional approach to protests. I understand functions teleologically, where the function of x is what x is supposed to do, what it was selected for. This aligns closely with Millikan's (1989, 1998) idea of proper functions. Although I am sympathetic to her approach, I will not offer an evolutionary or historical story of how protests got their function (something she does for other cases). However, I am optimistic that such a story can be offered for protests, too. I will roughly follow Kukla & Lance (2009, 2013)[80] in their way of characterising the structure of the pragmatic function of speech acts. This structure is presented in terms of the entitlements and commitments protests have as inputs and outputs. However, I depart from their view in that I argue that not all entitlements have a normative nature.

3.1 A Teleo-Functional View of Protest

To account for protest, we need to account for the two elements of protest, but we also need to do this in a way that takes corrupt and amoral protests into account, and that is applicable to both groups and individuals. The two elements are:

     i)   Protests are an expression of opposition.

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[80] Their 2013 paper presents the authors as 'Lance and Kukla', and not the other way around as their book.

ii) Protests demand change.[81]

Let's address them in order. Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) characterise i) with a neutral entitlement to protest as input and as output, a licence for the audience to protest if the object of the protests was fair. But we saw that this is not substantial as an account of i) since it does not explain how expressing opposition changes the normative state of the world. I propose that expressing opposition about A in pragmatic structural terms involves the agent-neutral output of denying the audience the licence to present the speaker as having a positive or neutral attitude towards A. In practice, this means that protesters about oil drilling, for example, deny the government the possibility of saying or acting as if there was a consensus among their citizens that oil drilling is acceptable. This is pretty substantial since it means that some words and speech acts are rendered inappropriate by protests. This proposal is able to accommodate for amoral and corrupt protests. Fans protesting against a new shirt for their team deny the management the possibility of speaking and acting as if the fans like the changes. Even corrupt protests may force their governments to make terms with the fact that significant parts of the population hold questionable beliefs. Also, individual protests, like a government official resigning in protest, also deny the institution the possibility of representing themselves as having a united front.

Now, of course, we can expect this to be gradual; not all protests have their desired impact. A few protesters are not enough to deny consensus if most have a positive attitude towards the target. And a low-grade civil servant resigning does not have the same effect as a top-tier civil servant resigning. But we can expect these effects to be contextually determined, depending on the relative number of people when talking about group protests and the authority relative to the subject when concerned about individual protests. We can agree that in all cases, speakers deny the audience to take them as neutral, even if, in some cases, this fact is not very significant.

Regarding the input of an expression of opposition, they are probably agent-neutral. Expressing opposition is not something that requires some specific authority since one is speaking one's own mind. The problem with Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) is

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[81] Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) defend we should better say that they prescribe redress. It seems correct that they prescribe redress, but I fail to see a substantial difference between demanding change and prescribing redress.

that there should be some effective input or output characterising it, and they failed to provide such an explanation. Now we can characterise the pragmatic structure of i):[82]

Input (agent-neutral): generally, everyone is entitled to express dissent.

Output (agent-neutral): the audience is no longer entitled to represent the speaker as having a neutral or positive attitude towards the object of the protest.

This characterises the idea that protests are an expression of opposition. Now, let's account for the second element of protest:

ii) Protests demand change.

That protest includes a demand may be the most challenging aspect of the speech act, as demands seem to be themselves a complicated kind of imperative. And it would be useful to distinguish demands from other kinds of imperatives like orders, as well as from requests, and complaints. Protests do not order change, they seem to lack the authority to do so, but they certainly do more than just request change or complain. Plus, to account for ii), we must also answer the *authority challenge*: There was an apparent paradox in the idea that protesters place obligations onto their addressee, given that they lack power relative to their addressee.

Demands are closely related to orders. However, the former seems to be a weaker kind of imperative, both in terms of what they require as input and in terms of the strength of their output. Starting with the input, orders require that the speaker and the target have a relationship where the former has a role of authority over the latter. For example, the relationship between a parent and a child, a boss and her employee, a teacher and a student, a general and a soldier, etc. In general, it is inappropriate and probably *infelicitous* to issue an order if this is not the case. Demands do not seem to presuppose this kind of strong authority relationship. Picture a case of a kidnapper; he is in no position to give orders, but by threatening to harm a hostage, he created a standing that allows him to make demands. Protests seem to fit into this description; protesters are not in a position to order their addressee even if they have the moral high ground. So,

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[82] There is probably an important semantic element to expressing disapproval. Expressivism may offer a natural explanation for it. But the analysis that concerns us here is pragmatic, since we are interested in protest as a speech act.

demands generally do not require strong authority roles: we make demands in contexts in which we lack the standing to give orders.

Orders and demands are also different regarding their output. The former, if performed with the required authority, output obligations such that the target would act incorrectly if they disobey the order (as long as the order is not immoral) (Lance & Kukla, 2013). Demands, on the other hand, have a weaker output, one that is strongly dependent on the standing of the speaker. A protest with twenty participants may not bind the addressee to act, but one with half the population on the streets seems rather different. A kidnapper who lost all her hostages seems in no position to make demands; one with a hundred has much stronger standing. Importantly, the output of demands does not seem to be completely binding; in contrast with orders, there is more room to disobey. An addressee who does not comply with a demand may risk escalation, but he is not breaking any social rule, something that does happen when disobeying orders.

However, demands are stronger than both requests and complaints. Requests and complaints, in general, do not require any form of standing. Moreover, the output of requests leaves compliance completely in the hands of the addressee; there is no obligation from the addressee to satisfy a request. Additionally, complaints do not demand any kind of satisfaction: we may complain about the weather, but we do not expect anyone to do something about it. What does this mean for protests? First, they are not just requests or complaints; they seek to compel the addressee to fulfil them. Second, they are not completely binding as orders, and the force of their output is relative to the strength of their input, which is why protesters seek to strengthen their standing by summing efforts or threatening escalation.

Our discussion about standing is related to the *authority challenge*: the apparent enigma that successful placements of obligations seem to require authority or power, but protesters paradigmatically lack these in relation to their addressees (institutions, companies and governments). Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) go all the way to saying that protesters must lack authority over their addressee to perform protests at all (which may be true but is puzzling as an answer to the challenge). For example, it would be wrong for Macron to protest for agricultural reform. To solve it, one may argue that the paradox comes from a confusion between the authority over the addressee and the authority or power required to provide change. It is true that protesters lack the power to provide

redress and that the targets of protests are those with power. But that protesters are not those in positions of power and that they cannot provide the change they want directly or completely by themselves does not mean that they completely lack authority. Barnes (2021) could help us here. When protests are about justice, protesters presuppose they have the moral high ground relative to their addressee. So, protesters have a moral authority that their addressee forfeited by their inaction. But this kind of moral authority is not the only one protesters may have over their target. In general, governments and companies owe themselves to their citizens and consumers. Protesters have authority over their addressees through these relationships between institutions and the people who inhabit them. This also explains why football fans have authority over their clubs and can protest their actions even when there is no moral high ground in dispute.

Now, a second problem may arise here for a functional account. In many cases of protest (probably all of those that involve justice), the addressee already had an obligation to address the problems that are the object of protests. For example, governments and companies arguably already had the obligation to take steps to reduce or completely stop the climate crisis before people began to protest. So, how can protests place obligations that the addressees already had? Let's call this the '*previous obligations challenge*'. There are some possible options to answer this. We could say that protests do not create obligations but merely elicit or remind the addressee of previous ones. The problem with this answer is amoral protests. At least some of them do not have preexisting obligations that could be elicited. The management of a football club does not have the obligation to keep their shirt unchanged, within certain limits, it is completely appropriate for them to change their shirt. But, even if they didn't the fans have the right to dislike the new shirt and demand to keep the old one.

A second option would be to propose a different output for demands (or demands made by protests). For example, we could argue that protests output reasons, not obligations. Lance and Kukla (2013) already argue this for requests, they claim that requests have reasons as their outputs. We could follow this path. This could give us a solution to both the authority and the previous obligations challenges. It doesn't seem like we need too much authority to give reasons, so even protesters, with their relatively low amount of power, could give reasons to act and produce change. Furthermore, previous obligations wouldn't be a problem anymore, even if the addressee had reasons

to act, protesters could give them new ones. For example, governments and companies already had an obligation to deal with the climate crisis, but now they have more reasons to do it: appease the protesters and prevent further escalation. I see three problems with this kind of proposal. First, it doesn't capture the force of protest. Protests aim to force the addressee to act, but giving reasons is not the kind of thing we do to force someone to act. Reasons are strong enough to push someone in the right direction, but not to force them to do what is right. Second, reasons are the kind of thing we give in a discussion, but protesting is the kind of thing we do when talks have failed. Barnes (2021, p.147) agrees on this point when he quotes Boxill: "Typically, people protest when the time for argument and persuasion is past." (1976, p. 63-64). And third, protests give practical reasons, but as a secondary effect, not as what they aim to do. For example, imagine a criminal threatening someone to pay the "protection fee" or suffering the consequences. For sure, the addressee has practical reasons to pay; they want to keep their kneecaps intact, so it is in their practical interests to obey. But it would be wrong to think of threats as aiming to give practical reasons. These are more akin to *perlocutionary effects*, which are brought about by the speech act, but not constitutive effects of it. The same goes for protests and demands, they may give practical reasons, but as *perlocutionary effects*.

The case of sermons seems to support some of my arguments in the previous paragraph. Sermons seem to be a kind of strong advice, but not of protest. They aim to push people in the right direction, show them the right path, remind them of their duties, and get them to act correctly in general. It would be natural to see them as giving reasons and eliciting obligations, but not as creating new obligations. They are just telling or reminding people what they should do. And they are, in some senses, pretty similar to protests. They are public communicative actions, and they presuppose some form of authority. Sermons presuppose that the speaker has moral authority. But they differ in that sermons do not aim to force the addressee to act, it is still left to the conscience of the audience to make the right decision. Protest does not aim to give the addressee that space for choice.

This is why I believe obligations are the most plausible output for protest. But we could concede some space given that outputting completely new obligations in the face of previous obligations seems off. It seems that often, we protest precisely because we know that the addressee is not attending to his obligations. Lance & Kukla (2013) may

help here. They say that second-person calls create obligations between the speaker and the target of the speech act, not just neutral obligations. If I promise you something, I gain an obligation *to you*. In some instances, one may have a previous commitment to something, but that does not mean that the speech act does not create a commitment with its performance or that the speech act does not create commitments as the kind of action it is. For example, I may have a previous commitment to be on time, but if I promise you to be on time, now I'm *also* committed to be on time because of my promise. We could apply this to the case of protests. Lance & Kukla (2013) give good reasons to think that we can have more than one commitment or obligation to the same thing, it being arriving on time or stopping the climate crisis. But, as we said, protesters sometimes protest not because they want to impose a new obligation but precisely because they want to enforce a previous commitment. Then, what is the normative change produced by protests? The change seems to be roughly the one pointed out by Kukla and Lance: Now, the addressee must answer to the protesters. Now, the addressee must meet this obligation *to* the protesters. This does not mean that they have a new obligation to the protesters but that they should satisfy their obligations to answer the protest. It is due to the protest that now the addressee has to answer to the protesters.[83]

Now, we need to discuss the idea of "successful protests" (in normative, not pragmatic terms) since it is debatable whether all protests actually place obligations. Previously, I said that corrupt protests are somewhat *infelicitous* since we may reasonably resist saying that governments gain racist, xenophobic or sexist obligations through protests. However, they still are protests, they do not seem to be cases of *misfires*. It seems like we have two options: explaining why corrupt protests do not *misfire* even though they lack the characteristic output (the no-effect option), or claiming that corrupt protests in fact place obligations and deal with the unsavoury thesis that these are immoral obligations (the corrupt option).[84] The corrupt option may try to appeal

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[83] This is just for when the protests are demanding the addressee to meet just the previous obligations. We talked about cases where there are no previous obligations (amoral protests), but there are also cases where the protesters demand previous obligations to be met in a specific way. For example, to defund the police. It was true that the government had an obligation to make the police accountable and guarantee the safety of their citizens, but it may not be obvious that they had a previous obligation to defund the police.

[84] It is possible to argue that 'corrupt protests' are simply failed attempts at protesting. However, I believe this perspective is flawed: it contradicts the data, as we do describe corrupt protests as protests in

to the idea that obligations are ranked to take away weight to immoral obligations. The idea would be that corrupt protests output immoral obligations *to the protesters* (meaning that the addressee has an obligation to them), but governments and companies have other obligations (to solve climate change, to equality, etc.) that outrank the obligations imposed by the protest. While it seems right that these obligations outrank obligations created by corrupt protests, I have two worries with this answer: First, it takes away force to protest. If obligations outputted by protests are always outranked by previous obligations (when justice is involved), then protesting makes little difference; no matter if protests are corrupt or virtuous, there is always a higher norm that states how the addressee should act. And second, we must commit to the existence of immoral obligations.

We could then favour the no-effect option. We could argue that corrupt protest lacks their characteristic normative output because they do not satisfy their characteristic normative input. And they are protests nonetheless because normative conditions judge the correctness of the action, not if the action was performed at all. I argued that there is a relation between the authority requirement and the strength of the normative output. Requests have a weak normative output, and they require little to no authority. Orders require specific agent-relative authority, which grants them a strong normative output. Protest presupposes moral authority, which grants them a moderately strong normative output. However, as functions are defined, if the required input is not satisfied, the function does not yield the characteristic output. Corrupt protests do not have the required moral authority that protests presuppose. Protesters assume they have the moral high ground, but they can be wrong. Because of this, they fail to output obligations to their addressee. But this does not mean that they *misfire*; if they do not obtain on an occasion, this just means that the action was inappropriate (an *abuse*, borrowing Austin's terminology), not that it wasn't performed at all. Furthermore, this also explains part of the force of protests. Given that they require authority to be successful, this makes their produced obligations non-trivial. Not every protest places

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everyday conversations; and it may be an overly moralistic view of speech acts, suggesting that they must be morally correct to be considered protests at all.

obligations, and the ones that do have moral principles backing their output. The strength of their output is directly proportional to the strength of their input.

Yet, there is a problem with this answer. I previously argued that there are different kinds of authority relevant to protest: one is moral authority, but the other is a form of collective authority. For example, citizens have authority over their governments and consumers over their companies. I also argued that his authority explains why football fans can impose obligations to their clubs even when there is no moral high ground in dispute and no relevant moral principles or previous obligations or commitments to act. Arguably, if institutions owe themselves to the people, and the latter make demands, then the former are bound by those demands. Then, we end up with the unpalatable thesis of immoral obligations again.

This last argument seems convincing; a government cannot just disregard large chunks of its population, even if they are wrong. And not just because it could be materially impossible, but because it would be incorrect. A full answer here requires a conversation about the preponderance of political vs moral principles, which is more than I can do in this work, but I can offer two possible ways of defending my proposal. The first is an improved version of the corrupt option: moral principles and rights, like being equal under the law, not being discriminated in terms of gender, race or religion, a right to well-being and so on, rank higher than obligations outputted by protests made only with social or political authority. A second possible answer is to argue that immoral obligations simply do not exist; by breaking moral principles, corrupt protesters just failed at creating obligations. Both of these answers are plausible enough to uphold the proposal.

There is one last issue to cover before summarising the proposal. As we saw with Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b), protesters are required to be in an imbalance of power relative to their addressee. This does not mean that they do not have authority, but there is an *infelicity* in protest made by those with power. Governments, corporations and their leaders cannot protest about those things that they can and should correct themselves. This negative condition should be included as part of an account of protest. But, interestingly, this does not seem to be a normative condition. As we discussed, normative conditions are about the propriety or correctness of the action, not about whether the action is performed at all. Of course, we could say that it is incorrect for

Macron to protest against taxing farmers more, but more than that, I believe we would say that he simply cannot; he could attempt to protest, but his actions would simply *misfire*. The same would apply to "private protesting"; in the ordinary sense of 'protest', speakers simply cannot protest privately or in their heads. Protesting is essentially public; it requires public recognition to be performed at all.[85] Speakers may try to protest privately, but their actions *misfire*. This is something that cannot be accommodated by Lance & Kukla's (2013, 2009) functional normative view, as they hold that inputs and outputs are normatively characterised, and breaking them does not imply *misfires* (although sometimes they do speak as if this was the case). The conditions regarding the imbalance of power and publicity are *performance* conditions: they specify what the action has to meet to be performed at all. And they should be included as part of an account of protest. I believe that they can be included as part of a functional account, but not as part of a *normative* functional account of protest. These two conditions are determined by the purpose of protesting; protests aim at expressing opposition and forcing an uncooperative powerful addressee to act; this function requires imbalance and publicity to be performed.[86]

Now, we are in a position to summarise the proposal. Protest aims at expressing opposition and demanding change, and this determines its functional pragmatic structure that we characterise in terms of entitlements and commitments. Some of these are normative, and some are *performative*. In general, everyone has the entitlement to express opposition, but demands require authority as input, which can be moral or social. The strength of the authority input determines the strength of the output: the obligations placed by demands. Virtuous protests back their demands with moral authority, which confers them normative strength. Corrupt protests lack moral authority, which at least diminishes their normative output and, at worst, eliminates it. Protests

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[85] By this I do not mean that it requires uptake, that it must be recognized as a protest by the audience. The audience may fail to recognize it as a protest, and it still can be a protest. But the action needs to be public, It needs to happen in a social context.

[86] Previously I argued that we should distinguish between *force* and *performance* accounts. This does not mean that they are always completely independent, the *force* of a particular speech act may be characterised by its specific *performance* conditions, but this does not entail that all speech acts are distinguished by their *performance* conditions. There is room for overlap between *force* and *performance* accounts.

also take away the licence to present protesters as neutral or positive towards the object of the protest.

The pragmatic structure of protest:

1. (Performance condition, Imbalance): Protesters must lack power relative to their addressee.

2. (Performance condition, publicity): Protests must be public.[87]

3. (Agent-relative input): Protests should have moral or collective authority regarding the object of the protest.

4. (Agent-neutral output): The audience is no longer entitled to represent the speaker(s) as having a neutral or positive attitude towards the object of the protest.

5. (Agent-relative output): Protests place obligations on their addressee *to the protesters* relative to the strength of their authority in IV.

Conditions 1 to 3 are inputs required to achieve the normative output of protests, but only 3 is a normative condition; 1 and 2 are performance conditions. Conditions 4 and 5 are also normative, and they describe the normative output of protests, what would be achieved if a protest is successful.

4. Protests as group speech acts

There is one last issue for this work: the distinction between individual and group protests. In previous chapters, I argued that group speech acts are distinguished by a particular kind of entitlement: the authority to speak on behalf of a group. This proposal applies straightforwardly to the protest case. As with other speech acts, protest can be performed by individuals. Picture, on one hand, a civil servant resigning in protest to the policies of her institution or a lone activist chained to a tree in protest of climate change. However, protests are emblematic of groups; mass demonstrations are among the first things to come to mind when talking about protests. Furthermore, as with other speech acts, group protests can be performed by proxies: picture the representative from the UK giving a twelve-hour speech to the UN to protest the war on Gaza or resigning from a

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[87] The publicity condition can be seen as a contextual condition, many speech acts require a specific context to be performed; the context of protests must be social.

committee in protest of inaction. Given that the possibility of chained action is not enough to make one protest a group action, we need to distinguish individual protests (like the lone civil servant) from group protests (like mass demonstrations or groups protesting via proxy). Thankfully, I already have an account that can do this work: group protests are those where the speakers have the authority to speak on behalf of a group. Furthermore, in my view, such authority can be held and exercised by collections of individuals and not just by spokespersons, so groups of protesters can have and wield this entitlement by virtue of the coordinated actions they engage in as members of the group.

So far, I have talked about the authority required to protest and how it relates to the obligations it places. For example, I have discussed how moral authority plays a role in determining the propriety of protests: Immoral protests are, in my view, *abuses*. However, I have also talked about collective authority, which may look similar to the authority to speak on behalf of a group. They are closely related, but they play different explanatory roles in my account. On one hand, collective authority plays the role of explaining the strength of protests. In my account of protests, the strength of the output is related to the strength of the input. Banding together as groups is a way to strengthen our standing. However, even small groups can perform group protests. Ten activists chanting in the city centre can perform a group protest, even if it does not succeed in placing any obligation on the government. They are exercising their authority to protest on behalf of a group, even if their collective authority relative to the object of the protest is not significant. This illustrates the two different roles authority can play in my account: one is in explaining the strength and propriety of a protest, and the other is in distinguishing when it is a group protest. By coordinating to act as groups, we can gain the authority to speak as a group and the authority to impose obligations on our addressee, but we must be clear that these are two different things that do not necessarily come together.

Finally, with these clarifications in place, I can present my account of group protests:

The Functional-Authority Account of Group Protests

A group G protests about *O* if and only if one or more speakers perform communicative act *A,* and *A* has the following structure:

Input	Output
I. The speaker or speakers have the authority to speak on behalf of the group and act in virtue of this authority.	V. The audience is no longer entitled to represent the group as having a neutral or positive attitude towards the object of the protest *O*.
II. The speakers must lack power relative to their addressee.	
III. *A* is public.	VI. *A* places an obligation on their addressee *to the protesters* relative to the strength of their authority in IV.
IV. Speakers have (social or moral) authority regarding *O*.	

Summary

I have argued that there are three *desiderata* that an account of protest must satisfy. First, protests are communicative actions that we frequently perform as groups, an account of protests must account for what is special about group protests. Second, it must explain the two elements of protest: that it is an expression of opposition and a demand for change. And third, it must allow the possibility of amoral and corrupt protests, and explain the *infelicity* of the latter. I argued that previous proposals failed at satisfying these *desiderata*. Medina (2023) fails at characterising protest as a group speech act. His proposal is too permissive, it would count almost all if not all) speech acts as group speech acts. Chrisman & Hubbs (2021b) failed to account for the two elements of protest. Their proposal to understand what is to express opposition is not substantial enough and they failed to answer their *authority challenge*. Barnes (2021) gives only a partial account since his proposal does not allow for the possibility of amoral and corrupt protests. Then, I argue that a functional approach is the most promising to tackle the case of protest. It allows us to characterise the normative effects of protesting, explaining the force it has. While other approaches (the intentional, conventional and constitutive rule approaches views) don't seem optimal for this task or don't fit the case of protest accurately.

Protests are public actions where the speakers lack power relative to their addressee. I argue that these should be included as conditions for protesting; however, these are not normative but performance conditions, and they are requisites for protests to achieve their purpose. My functional account claims that expressing opposition denies the audience to represent the speaker as having a neutral or positive attitude towards the object of the protest. This is a substantial move since it makes some speech acts improper to be made after the protest. I also claim that demanding action presupposes authority to place obligations on the addressee *to the protesters*. This can be either moral or collective authority. When there is a dispute for the moral high ground, if protesters lack the moral authority, they are making an *abuse* of the action. When there is no moral dispute, then collective authority is enough to place obligations on the addressee. Finally, I argue that what distinguishes group protests is the authority to speak on behalf of a group. Not all protests are group speech acts, and, as with other speech acts, groups can protest by banding their members together or via proxy. What makes them group speech acts is that they are performed with the right kind of entitlement. Groups can have collective authority over the addressee, which explains the special force they have to place obligations.

Chapter 6: From Group Speech Acts Inflationism to Group Mental States Inflationism

In the last two chapters, I offered an inflationary account of group assertion (Chapter 3) and a generalisation of that account to all group speech acts (Chapter 4). In this chapter, I argue that group belief inflationism, the thesis that a group can believe P even if none of its members do, follows from group assertion inflationism, the thesis that a group can assert even if none of its members do. More specifically, I hold that Lackey-style group assertion inflationism entails group belief externalism, the thesis that the vehicle of the group's belief can be outside of the group[88], in external spokespersons, for example. This form of externalism is incompatible with the deflationist claim that it is necessary for group belief that at least some group members hold that mental state. I argue that functionalism, an inflationist view, can capture this form of externalism. Finally, I also claim that the same case can be presented in support of group intention inflationism.[89] So, against what some in the debate defend (Lackey, 2021), we cannot hold both group speech acts inflationism and group mental states deflationism.

In the current debate, what I call 'inflationism' about group belief is commonly known as 'non-summativism'. It contrasts with summativism, which claims that group beliefs are "a sum" of the beliefs of its members. When talking about group belief, I will use 'inflationism' and 'non-summativism' interchangeably; what I want to highlight by using 'inflationism' is the relationship between the mental and linguistic cases.[90] Lackey (2021) argues in favour of group assertion inflationism, but at the same time, she holds that group lies and bullshit present a problem for non-summative accounts of belief, so

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[88] Which can be contrasted with content or semantic externalism, the claim that the content of a belief is determined outside of the agent (see Putnam, 1975; Burge, 1979).

[89] The claim that a group can intend to A even if no group member intended to A.

[90] 'Summativism' and 'Non-summativism' are the standard terminology regarding the debate over group mental states; however, Lackey (2021) uses the terms 'deflationism' and 'inflationsim' to refer to the analogous thesis in the group speech act case. To connect the group mental and speech cases, I decided to keep both terminologies. Additionally, the summative metaphor does seem to work well with speech acts, as it would be infelicitous to say, for example, that group assertion is a sum of the assertions of the group members.

she proposes what can be seen as a form of 'neo-summativism', according to which is necessary (but not sufficient) that some group members believe P for the group to believe P. Against her, I argue that group lies and bullshit present a problem for the deflationist necessary condition. I hold that external spokespersons can lie and bullshit about P on behalf of a group, even if the group members have no belief (or intention to deceive) about P. I will call these *external lies* and *bullshit*. I argue that we cannot accurately account for group lies and bullshit and distinguish them and sincere group assertion without accepting group belief externalism.

My group belief vehicle externalism is analogous to the extended mind view (Clark & Chalmers, 1998).[91] This view says that not all mental states are located inside the person who has them. Clark & Chalmers claim that the mental state's external vehicle (a sentence in a notebook, for example) can play the functional role of a normal belief. Here, I hold that external spokespersons' beliefs can play the functional role of group belief in the group's cognitive system. So, people external to the group can be the vehicle of the group's belief.

The structure of the chapter goes like this: In section 1, I present an overview of group belief inflationism and deflationism. In section 2, I present the Externalist Argument, which takes Lackey-style group assertion inflationism as premise and concludes group belief externalism and inflationism. I present an example (the case of *external lies*) to illustrate and support this argument. In section 3, I defend the argument from three possible replies: that spokespersons are part of the group, that *external lies* are actually cases of group bullshit, and an attempt to block the argument using different accounts of lying. In section 4, I expand on the externalist claim and defend my group belief externalism from some traditional objections to the extended mind view. I argue that traditional objections do not apply to, and therefore do not threaten, group mental states externalism. In section 5, I argue that group belief functionalism can distinguish sincere group assertion, group lies and group bullshit. I am especially interested in showing that it can distinguish between sincere group assertions, *external lies* and

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[91] The extended mind view and non-summativism have been connected in the past. Wegner (1995) and Wegner et al. (1991) have argued that through interaction, larger and more complex memory systems can form. More recently (Harris et al. (2011) show that intimate couples can produce a richer recollection of a past event than they could do as individuals. Bird (2010) has also made the connection when discussing a social notion of scientific knowledge.

external bullshit. Finally, in section 6, I show that an analogous argument can be presented favouring group intention inflationism and externalism.

1. Summativism vs non-summativism

Summativism (or deflationism) about group belief is the view that a group believes P if and only if its members believe P. There are at least two versions of this view: strong and weak. Strong summativism requires most (or all) members to believe that P, while weak summativism only requires that some members do. Strong summativism can only correctly describe groups with horizontal organisation, meaning those where most members equally engage in deliberation and decision-making processes. However, in more vertical groups, where the structure is more like a chain of command, most members will not be relevant (or at least not as relevant) for deliberation or decision-making. Many groups, especially institutions and corporations, tend to be organised this way. This is why weak summativism is a more plausible explanation of group belief.

On the other hand, we have group belief inflationism or non-summativism, according to which it is neither necessary nor sufficient that any member believes that P for the group to believe that P. Against its necessity, inflationists have presented counterexamples to deflationism like juries, boards, and other kinds of groups deliberate to agree on an official position P; but they choose P based on practical reasons, interests or rules specific to the group, even though P is not believed by any (or most) of them (see Gilbert, 1989; Tollefsen, 2007, 2009; Bird, 2010). Take a jury that decides to acquit a defendant even though they believe she is guilty because they have to ignore specific evidence, or a board that puts a worker for promotion even though they do not believe he deserves it, but they do it because of a combination of personal interests and convictions. It has also been argued that it is not sufficient because group members can, by chance, coincide in believing something that is completely irrelevant for the group. For instance, let's say that the same jury members believe that doner kebab is the best food ever. This seems to be insufficient to ascribe the jury, as a group, the belief that doner kebab is the best food ever (see Gilbert, 1989; Schmitt, 1994).

Lackey (2021) argues against belief inflationism that it cannot correctly account for group lies and bullshit.[92] She has two objections: first, that it cannot distinguish between sincere group assertions and lies, and second, that it cannot distinguish between sincere group assertions and bullshit. Her general worry is that non-summative accounts put the group beliefs under the intentional control of group members, so the group's official position always coincides with what the group says, making it almost impossible to distinguish when a group is sincerely asserting as opposed to lying or bullshiting. As a target, she has two kinds of non-summative views in mind: joint acceptance accounts (Gilbert, 1989, 2002, 2004; Tuomela, 1992; and Tollefsen, 2007, 2009) and aggregation procedure accounts (List, 2005 and List & Pettit 2004). The central claim of joint acceptance accounts is that a group believes that P when its members accept that P. But, commonly, they add some further conditions, like group members acting as part of a role accepted by all parties and common knowledge that this is the case (see Tuomela, 1992, pp. 295–296).[93] Aggregation procedure accounts are harder to describe succinctly. They answer how a group can form a belief P based on the views of its members, but instead of aggregating their views in P directly, the idea is to aggregate their views of a set of premises that entail P. So, for example, if they want to decide on who is the best candidate for hiring, they could vote on a set of questions regarding the desired qualifications; they would answer if the candidate, for example, has experience, good management skills, maths knowledge, etc. They also decide on an aggregation procedure; there are many of these. They could decide to hire if and only if the candidate has only positive votes on all the questions or if she has at least 80%, etc.

Against these inflationist accounts, she presents two counterexamples. The first of these is supposed to show that they cannot distinguish sincere assertion from lying:

> Tobacco Company: Philip Morris, one of the largest tobacco companies in the world, is aware of the massive amounts of scientific evidence revealing not only the addictiveness of smoking, but also the links it has with lung cancer and heart disease. While the members of the board of directors of the company believe this conclusion, they all jointly agree that, because of what

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[92] Lackey is following Frankfurt's (2005) definition of bullshit, which he defines as a statement made with disregard for the truth, which he contrasts with lies; lying requires the speaker to at least believe that what is stated is false. The bullshiter has no interest in facts.

[93] Tuomela also uses the notion of "operative members", this would be those group members relevant for determining the beliefs content (see Tuomela, 1992).

is at stake financially, the official position of Philip Morris is that smoking is neither highly addictive nor detrimental to one's health, which is then published in all of their advertising materials.

(Lackey, 2021, p. 30)

Tobacco company is an intuitive case of a group lie; however, joint acceptance accounts would classify it as a sincere assertion since the group jointly accepts that smoking is not detrimental to health. The case against aggregation procedures is more complicated but roughly the same. Instead of deciding directly on the conclusion, they vote on a set of premises, for example, separately voting on the question if there is evidence linking smoking with cancer, emphysema, heart problems, addictiveness, etc. If they vote that it is not linked to these problems, then they conclude that smoking is safe. Nevertheless, they can cast their votes not on the merit of the evidence but based on their personal interests, so they can vote that there is no relation to these problems even if the evidence in front of them supports the opposite. Again, it seems like the company is lying, but aggregation procedures accounts would predict that the group believes what is being asserted.

Lackey's second example is supposed to show that inflationist accounts of group belief cannot distinguish sincere assertion from bullshit. She presents it as follows:

Oil Company: After the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, BP began spraying dispersants in the clean-up process that have been widely criticized by environmental groups for their level of toxicity. In response to this outcry, the executive management team of BP convened and its members jointly accepted that the dispersants being used are safe and pose no threat to the environment, a view that was then made public through all of the major media outlets. It turns out that BP's executive management team arrived at his view with an utter disregard for the truth—it simply served their purpose of financial and reputational preservation.

(Lackey, 2021, p. 33)

Oil company is an intuitive case of group bullshit in Frankfurt's (2005) sense: They asserted without regard for the truth, instead of something they believed to be false. Nevertheless, joint commitment accounts would take it as a case of sincere assertion. An analogous case can be built against aggregation procedure accounts; instead of deciding directly on the conclusion that there is a threat to the environment, they vote on a set of premises that entail this conclusion. But in this case, they review no evidence; they simply have no interest in the truth, and they vote on the premises so that they can

conclude that there is no environmental threat. Then, Lackey (2021) concludes that neither joint acceptance nor aggregation procedures can account for group lies and bullshit, as they would systematically misclassify them as sincere assertions.

To avoid these problems, Lackey proposes what can be seen as a kind of 'neo-summativism'; according to it, it is necessary but not sufficient for group belief that some group members believe that P. The idea is that this constraint would take group belief out of the intentional control of the group members, given that it is not enough that they all commit to P for the group to believe P. However, she claims that it is not sufficient for group belief, for she is concerned that group members who believe something on a mutually inconsistent basis would have a state inappropriate for epistemic evaluation and deliberation. For example, picture a board that is hiring a new member for the department; they all endorse Jason, but half of them do it because they believe he is a good candidate and the other half because they believe he is not —they are secretly disgruntled and plan to bring the institution down (see Lackey, 2021, pp. 41-47). So, she adds a further condition to avoid this scenario, landing on the following account:

> Group Agent Account: A group, G, believes that p if and only if: (1) there is a significant percentage of G's operative members who believe that p, and (2) are such that adding together the bases of their beliefs that p yields a belief set that is not substantively incoherent.
>
> (Lackey, 2021, p. 48-49)

However, as Brown (2024) points out, Lackey's objections are less telling against other forms of inflationism such as functionalism. Functionalism holds that mental states are defined by the place they occupy in our cognition, i.e., how they relate to inputs, outputs and other states. In this view, something is a belief if it plays the right role in the system. Functionalism about group mental states has been defended by philosophers like Bird (2014), Strohmaier (2020) and Brown (2024). Functionalism is distinct from interpretativism, the view that if we can make sense of another being's behaviour by ascribing intentions, we should put non-intentional explanations aside and take it as an intentional agent. Interpretativism about group mental states has been championed by List & Pettit (2011) and Tollefsen (2015).

Brown argues that functionalism can answer these counterexamples since it does not put group beliefs in the intentional control of the group members, so functionalism does not have the consequence that group beliefs always coincide with the group's official position (Brown, 2024, pp. 78-79). While aggregation procedures can be combined with functionalism, these are different and independent proposals (Brown, 2024, pp. 70-71). Functionalism is a view about what it is for a group to have a belief, while judgment aggregation is an account of how the group forms a belief based on the views of its members.

Further, Brown argues that inflationism could bite the bullet and accept that groups believe what they say in cases like Tobacco Company and Oil Company (Brown, 2024, pp. 79-80). She states that part of the reason we might care about distinguishing sincere group assertions from lies and bullshit is due to ascribing moral and legal responsibility, but that we could still hold groups responsible in Lackey's cases even if we do not say they lied or bullshited. The argument is that even if groups believed what they said, they were not blamelessly ignorant: in Tobacco Company, for example, the company had a lot of evidence to the effect that smoking is dangerous.

In reply, I do not believe that functionalism or other non-summative accounts should bite this bullet for three reasons. First, there are other reasons we care about distinguishing group sincere assertions from group lies and bullshit. We care about distinguishing different kinds of actions and different kinds of deception that can be performed with speech. Sincere assertions, lies and bullshit seem to be different kinds of communicative actions. just as it would be problematic to classify these three actions as the same at the individual level, it would be incorrect to do it at the group level. Second, it would be problematic for functionalism, in particular, if it were to classify all three as sincere group assertions. Functionalism defines mental states in terms of their relations, so belief is partially defined by its relation to sincere assertions, lies and bullshit. Whether we take these three to be complex states or outputs, belief has a different relation with each one of them. If a functional explanation cannot distinguish between sincere assertions, lies and bullshit, it is not correctly characterising the role of group belief. Finally, even if, in these cases, we were able to ascribe moral and legal responsibility to companies due to their blameworthy ignorance, I wonder if we could ascribe the correct sort of responsibility without differentiating group lies, group bullshit

and blameworthy ignorance. Even if these three are moral wrongdoings, they are not the same kind of wrongdoing and may deserve different legal penalties. Therefore, distinguishing them is central to correctly ascribing responsibility to groups, even if we are not forced to view them as blameless if we do not distinguish sincere group assertions, lies and bullshit.

In this chapter, I also support a functionalist account of group belief since it is a good candidate for accommodating group belief externalism. I argue that, contrary to what Lackey initially thought, group lies and bullshit are a problem for deflationism. In particular, they are a problem for anyone who holds the following claim:

> Deflationist Necessity: A group G believes P only if some members of G believe P.

Both summativism and Lackey's neo-summativism are committed to this deflationist thesis. From now on, when I talk about group belief deflationism, I refer to proposals committed to Deflationist Necessity. In what follows, I argue that deception is a problem for deflationism; I contend that the case of *external lies* shows that groups can lie about P and, therefore, believe that not P, even if no group member believes that not P.

2. From group assertion inflationism to group belief externalism and inflationism

Lackey (2021) argues that group lies pose a challenge for inflationism about group belief; contrary to that, I hold that they are problematic for deflationism because they connect group speech act inflationism to group belief externalism and group belief inflationism. In the case of group lies, Lackey's defence of group assertion inflationism supports group belief externalism and inflationism. In support of the former, she gives the following argument, supported by examples:

Group Assertion Inflationist Argument
1. Spokesperson S representing group G can perform group assertions.
2. S is not necessarily part of the group.

Therefore, groups can assert even if no group members asserted.

As we saw in Chapter 3, to defend 1, Lackey uses the popular idea that assertion is governed by some epistemic normativity. In short, some spokespersons' assertions are group assertions because the group is epistemically responsible for them. To strengthen this point, Paterson (2020) develops the view that an agent is the speaker of an illocutionary action by virtue of being responsible (in the relevant way) for that action. Regarding 2, it is very common for groups to appoint independent contractors for specific tasks, and spokesperson is one common role delegated to external workers. Furthermore, Lackey also compellingly argues that spokespersons have what she called 'the autonomy of the spokesperson', which means that people representing a group have a range of action free from group oversight and without going rogue (Lackey, 2021, pp.148-149).

However, assertion is not the only communicative action that spokespersons can perform in the name of groups; they can also lie for them. So, it is not farfetched that they lie without the group members knowing and, importantly, going rogue. To see this, let's start with a definition of lying; there are many accounts of lies, and there is no universally accepted definition. For the moment, we can work with the traditional definition of lying:

TDL: A speaker S lies if and only if:

1. (Statement Clause): S states that P.

2. (Belief Clause): S believes that P is false.

3. (Intention Clause): S has the intention to deceive about P.

There are many candidates to replace the traditional account; I will talk more about them in S3.3. TDL can be extended to groups in the following fashion:

TDLG: A group G lies if and only if:

1. (Statement Group Clause): G states that P.

2. (Belief Group Clause): G believes that P is false.

3. (Intention Group Clause): G has the intention to deceive about P

My case for group belief externalism and inflationism builds on the Group Assertion Inflationist Argument and the spokesperson's autonomy. The core idea is that groups can give authority to external spokespersons to lie on their behalf over matters the group

members hold no belief. The case for group belief externalism and inflationism goes as follows:

Externalist Argument

1. Spokesperson S can lie about P on behalf of group G (perform a group lie).
2. 1 is possible even if S is not a member of the group.
3. 1 is possible even if no group member believes P is false.
4. 1 is possible without S going rogue.[94]
5. If G lies about P, G believes that P. (From TDLG).

Therefore, it is possible for a group to believe P even if no group member believes P is false.

Lackey's defence of group assertion inflationism supports the case for group belief externalism and inflationism. The only thing that we need now is an example that illustrates and supports this argument.

2.1 *External lies*

The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons: Philip Morris is entering the vaping market. They are aware of the backlash they received from lying about the relationship between smoking and cancer and are also unsure about the safety of their vaping products. However, profits are still the top priority for the board, and the vaping market is growing fast. So, they decided to hire the firm HHM to handle the evidence on their products' safety, communicate with the public, and guide the company through the appropriate measures to follow regarding this issue. Insiders know that HHM has a shady reputation for handling problematic cases for big companies and putting profit as a top priority, while also being highly efficient and detailed in their work. Philip Morris's board was well aware of this when they decided to hire the firm, giving them full authority on the issue (allowing them to claim ignorance). HHM finds a problematic relationship between vaping and some new respiratory diseases. Yet, they tell the public that vaping and Philip Morris vaping products are safe. They also give Philip Morris middle management

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[94] Some premises between 1-4 may be implied by other premises, but it is worth making them explicit.

extensive "advice" on how to handle the evidence, their production and distribution, to the effect that they conceal the problematic pieces. Philip Morris´s middle managers, knowing that the board has given HHM authority over the matter, follow the advice without knowing in detail the effects of their concealing actions.[95]

Philip Morris is lying when their spokespersons asserted that vaping and their products are safe. The spokespersons knew there was a relationship between vaping using their products and some new respiratory conditions. Furthermore, the spokespersons are not going rogue; it is by design that they are in a position to lie for the group. They were given full authority over the matter, with all parties fully knowing that this was a possible outcome. Yet, the board does not believe that vaping or its products are unsafe; they have no knowledge of the evidence, which was left for HHM to handle. They may suspect that it is not true, but for all they know, it could very well be true. Moreover, given the novelty of the respiratory conditions and their lack of expertise in medicine, they could hardly have a belief about the relationship between vaping and these new diseases. Plus, the beliefs of the spokespersons played a role in the actions of the groups. The concealing efforts of the group were carefully directed by HHM's advice. Many could have suspected something fishy was going on, but the spokespersons were the only ones with detailed evidence and knowledge.

The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons is an example of what I call *External lies*: these are group lies performed by someone external to the group, in representation of the group and with the authority to do it. They present both an example of group belief externalism and a counterexample to group belief deflationism; Philip Morris lied when HHM asserted vaping and their products were safe, but no member of Philip Morris believes they are not. The vehicle for the group's belief is not inside the group but in its spokespersons. It's their beliefs that led the group to lie and what drove the group's concealing actions (combined, of course, with the overall board's

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[95] I designed the scenario with a group as a proxy. As I argued in Chapter 3, groups can also be proxies. For our purposes, it is irrelevant if the proxy is a group or just an individual. It can be said that all or most members (or operative members) of HHM believe vaping is unsafe and on the same basis, so HHM counts as believing P is false in a summative sense. The example can also be modified to include just an individual spokesperson instead of a group. However, it seemed more natural to describe a company hiring a team of lawyers as spokespersons instead of just one.

approval of this kind of practice and the profit-driven culture present both in the company and HHM). Philip Morris's actions cannot be explained without appealing to their spokespersons' beliefs and to the system created by the board to produce exactly this kind of outcome. Thus, we should accept group belief inflationism and externalism, as it is the only way to account for these cases.

3. Replies

Some may still want to hold on to deflationism, or maybe the reader still holds some queries. In the following sub-sections, I will address some possible replies to my argument and use them to expand on my view. I see three main possible replies to the externalist argument: one, that spokespersons are actually part of the group; two, that The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons is actually a case of group bullshit; and three, appealing to a different definition of lying to block the argument. I argue that none of these are good replies.

3.1 Are spokespersons part of the group?

Some may have the intuition that we should deny companies the possibility of claiming that external contractors like HHM are not part of the group. Philip Morris was lying precisely because HHM was part of the group. I think that people with this intuition have their hearts in the right place, yet this is not true of our current social practices. It is worth noting that this is not an option for Lackey (2021) since it is part of her argument for group assertion inflationism that spokespersons are not necessarily part of the group. This claim may even amount to denying group assertion inflationism, unless one holds it on independent grounds. More importantly, I think it is just a social fact that some agents performing group functions are considered external to the group. What I describe is closely related to what has been called 'subcontracting', the practice of big companies hiring a second party to operate some of their functions. It is not the same practice, as subcontracting is partially characterised by the exploitation of subcontracted workers. This is not representative of cases where companies hire big firms for lots of money, which is the kind of situation described in The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons. What is present in both cases is the use of external mechanisms to shield groups against accountability. Part of the discussion is how to prevent groups from escaping accountability when using external mechanisms. One way would be to deny

them the mechanisms; like what would be proposed in this reply. The main problem is, again, that these practices are currently standard. It is permitted that groups employ external agents to perform some of their functions (and spokesperson or legal representative are very common ones for groups to delegate). We could break theory from practice or from "folk metaphysics" and say that spokespersons are group members in a technical metaphysical sense. I think it would be problematic to break our theorising of groups from how they are understood in practice. We risk coining terms that do not describe how we behave. In practice, it is common for spokespersons like the one described not to be considered part of the group. So, we would end up with a notion of membership that does not reflect how we speak or act. The upshot of my argument is that we do not need to do this kind of metaphysical gymnastics to ascribe responsibility to groups abusing external mechanisms. They can be held responsible for external agents lying or doing shenanigans on their behalf.

3.2 *External bullshit*

A second possible reply is that The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons is not a case of lying, but a case of bullshit. More specifically, the answer would be that the spokespersons (HHM) are lying, while Philip Morris itself is just bullshiting.[96] The difference between lying and bullshiting, according to Frankfurt (2005), is that the liar must at least believe she knows the truth, while the bullshiter does not care for the truth. So, it could be argued that the board of Philip Morris did not believe that vaping or their products were unsafe, but they did show a disregard for the truth; they did not care to look at the evidence themselves, and they hired a shady firm to represent them to distance themselves from the assertions and evidence. In these circumstances, the group was bullshiting, not lying. Yet, HHM is lying; they did know that what they were saying was false. This reply allows the deflationist to preserve her necessity thesis since the group belief would be determined by the beliefs of the group members. At the same

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[96] Lackey (2021) holds the view that when a spokesperson represents a group, any assertion she makes is just a group assertion and never an individual assertion. While I believe it is possible that this is true in some cases, I also believe it is perfectly possible that there are cases where both the spokesperson and the group are asserting. There are many cases were intuitively both the group and the spokesperson are epistemically responsible for the assertion. The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons is one of them, but cases of leaders speaking for their group are also like this. We probably want to hold accountable both the group and the leader personally.

time, it keeps group assertion inflationism, making them compatible, as Lackey (2021) holds.

I do not dispute that HHM is lying; it can be the case that both the spokesperson and the group lie in a specific scenario. Imagine the leader of a government lying about how scrapping taxes is best for everyone. We would say both the person (the leader) and the institution (the government) lied.[97] So, our dispute here is about whether we should attribute the lie to the represented group and not just to the spokespersons. I believe that *external lies* exist since it was not by luck, but by design, that the spokespersons were in a position to lie for the group without the group members' knowledge. It would be rather convenient for groups if they could avoid lying just by setting things this way. Furthermore, we can present a second counterexample to deflationism, but this time using bullshit:

> The Lazy Hands-Off Group and The Lazy Shady Spokespersons: Everything is almost just as before; Philip Morris is interested in the vaping market. The difference is that they are less interested in detail and care. They hire a different firm; they go for SG. They (SG) conduct no research, they are bullshit artists, they do not care about the truth, they know they will say whatever they need to defend the company (and the board knows their reputation). They are addressed by the media; a careful journalist knows about some independent research showing a relationship between vaping and some new respiratory diseases. She asks SG about it. They answer that vaping and Philip Morris products are safe, without knowing (or caring) if it is true or false.

The Lazy version of the counterexample is a case of what I call *external bullshit*. SG does not know if what they are saying is true, and they do not care. But they have been given authority by Philip Morris's board; they designed this exact kind of situation. *External lies* and *bullshit* are substantively different. They involve different attitudes: the liar is interested in misrepresenting the world in a particular way (Frankfurt, 2005, pp. 51-52).

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[97] It is also possible that only a group is lying in some scenarios. If the government spokesperson is reading a statement she does not know to be false but that the officials do believe is false, she would not be lying, but the group would (cf. Lackey, 2021, 159-160).

HHM wants to convince the public that vaping is safe and the board is actually concerned with vaping safety. In contrast, the bullshiter is only interested in misrepresenting herself, as she does not care about the facts (Frankfurt, 2005, pp. 52-53). For all he knows, he could be saying the truth. Philip Morris is like this in the Lazy version; SG do not know or care if they are telling the truth and are not concerned with convincing the public that vaping is safe. Instead, they just want to convince the public that Philip Morris believes it is safe. HHM also wants that, but not just that. Moreover, bullshiting is, in a sense, easier. The liar wants to introduce a specific falsehood (that vaping is safe, for example), which requires some precision. The bullshiter is less constrained, as he is not concerned with the truth or falsity of the proposition expressed or any other related proposition, so he has more freedom to manoeuvre (Frankfurt, 2005, pp. 52-53). This describes the difference between HHM and SG; the latter has more room to say whatever is required and is not constrained by evidence. Importantly, the differences between HHM's and SG's situation are by the board's design; it is not fortuitous that the spokespersons act differently and have different attitudes, but they were deliberately chosen because of their reputation. Philip Morris set up different systems and situations in the original and the Lazy version

If we were to say that The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons is a case of group bullshit, we lack the resources to distinguish between *external lies* and *external bullshit*. This is even more problematic for Lackey, as she holds that spokespersons only perform assertions in the name of the represented group. "...when spokespersons are speaking on behalf of groups that they represent, they are not themselves asserting anything at all, a conclusion that is clearly supported by noticing that what they say does not have any of the paradigmatic features of assertion." (Lackey, 2021, p. 159). So, the resource of distinguishing between the deceptive action performed by the group and the one performed by the spokesperson is not available to her. Here I want to insist that SG is bullshiting in the name of Philip Morris, just as HHM is lying on their behalf, because it is not by chance, but by design, that they are in a position to bullshit for the group. Philip Morris gave their spokespersons authority to speak for them knowing very well the kind of actions that were on the table, so they should not be allowed to say that only their spokespersons are responsible for their malice.

There is also a positive argument for why *external lies* are an example of lying and why groups can lie even when the group members have no knowledge about it. This has to do with the fact that groups can delegate some of their functions to agents outside of the group. Lackey (2021) argues in favour of an inflationary account of assertion, claiming that agents who do not belong to a group can assert on behalf of the group. If this is correct, and I think it is, then groups can assert even if no member asserted. In The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons, the group not only gave the authority to assert to the spokespersons, but it also gave them general authority to decide how the group is going to operate regarding the evidence. This naturally translates as the group giving authority to an outside agent over a certain set of beliefs and attitudes of the group. Which gives the spokespersons full authority to lie on behalf of the group. Lackey claims that while it is possible to delegate functions like asserting, we cannot delegate functions like believing (Lackey, 2021, pp. 161-162). While this is intuitively true for individuals[98] (as I cannot ask someone else to believe for me even if I can ask her to speak for me), it is much less clear for groups. Groups are not agents in a physically or biologically constrained sense. It is much less obvious that their beliefs have to be located within their brains or something similar. Group and individual cognition need not be identical, so a more robust argument than an analogy with the individual case would be required to defend the opposite. My argument for externalism can be put this way: if groups can allow external agents to assert, bullshit, lie and perform other speech acts for them, and these communicative actions are defined by the mental states that accompany them, it should be possible or groups to allow external agents to be the vehicle for those mental states.

Last, we could adapt the original hands-off example and the lazy version of it to show that the deflationist is not only incapable of distinguishing external lies from external bullshiting, but also sincere group assertions from group lies or bullshit. To see this, imagine the following variant of the scenario: the members of the board of Philip Morris independently come to believe that vaping is safe, but on a very weak basis, and without ever discussing it with other members. They think: 'It is just steam; it has to be

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[98] Even this can be challenged. It is not rare to hear people saying, 'You are the expert; I believe whatever you say about it'.

safe!'. They have doubts; after all, they have not read any hard data, but again, it is just steam, they think. So, when their spokespersons announced it was safe, they felt relieved. Therefore, both the original and the Lazy version are examples of sincere assertion, according to the deflationist. Lackey's (2021) account of group belief requires a significant percentage of the group members to believe P on a non-conflicting basis. The board members believe vaping is safe on the same weak basis, so her account predicts *external lies* and *bullshit* are cases of sincere assertion. Yet, this is not a case of group sincere assertion. For, the group transferred authority over the matter to someone else, and the members belief that vaping is safe was completely irrelevant to the group's actions. They did not express this belief to others on the board or, more importantly, used it to guide any of the group's actions. What they did was set up a situation where the spokespersons had control over the official position of the company. So, *external lies* and *bullshit* cannot be considered cases of sincere assertion. Therefore, deflationism is not just incapable of distinguishing *external lies* from *external bullshit*, but also sincere group assertions from those two.[99] This is an important point since one of Lackey's main arguments for her neo-summative account of group belief and against inflationist accounts of group belief is that inflationist accounts cannot distinguish cases of sincere group assertion from lies and bullshit. But, now we see to the contrary that a full consideration of group lies and bullshiting in fact favours an inflationary position.

3.3 Other accounts of lies

The last option would be to try to block the externalist argument with a different definition of lying.[100] There are many challenges to the traditional definition, so there are more than enough independent reasons to opt for a different account. Some objections are against the sufficiency of the traditional definition. They argue that the traditional definition needs further necessary conditions to provide jointly sufficient conditions. For example, it has been proposed that lying requires that (F) P is false (Coleman & Kay, 1981, p.28), (BT) The speaker has the intention that the addressee believes that the statement is

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[99] Pettigrew (2021) has a similar argument. He argues that there are cases of group lies where Lackey's account would predict the group has no belief, due to believing on inconsistent basis.

[100] Again, it is worth noting that this does not seem an option for Lackey. She offers her own account of lying (Lackey, 2013, 2021), which includes both the belief clause and an intention to be deceptive to the addressee about P.

believed to be true (Faulkner, 2007, p.537) or (A) The speaker asserts P (not just states P) (Chisholm & Feehan, 1977; Faulkner, 2007; Simpson, 1992). Merely sufficiency objections against the traditional account will not be enough to block the argument; as long as the definition includes the belief clause the argument follows. What the deflationist needs are necessity objections. Among those, two are relevant to this discussion: objections to the effect that the belief clause is not necessary and objections to the effect that the intention clause is not necessary.[101]

It has been argued that it is possible to lie with believed-to-be-false implicatures of true statements (Meibauer, 2011; Wiegmann et al., 2022), with other forms of indirect communication like irony (Simpson, 1992). However, objections regarding indirect forms of communication do not threaten the belief clause. They do not so much target the idea that the liar does not believe that P is false, but rather, they are more concerned with the way P is conveyed. They claim that the believed-to-be-false proposition can be conveyed indirectly (via implicatures or irony) and still count as a lie. So, lying with indirect forms of communication involves cases where one does believe that the conveyed proposition is false. So, if lying were to be defined including a clause similar to "conveying the proposition P while believing P is false", we can still infer Philip Morris believes P is false from the fact that the group is lying, since what is asserted is part of what is conveyed. The example could also be modified to state that the spokespersons ironically say, 'Of course, vaping is unsafe!' or to implicate that vaping is safe. So, the fact that the proposition is communicated indirectly is not a problem for my argument.[102]

The externalist argument can be blocked only if the definition of lies does not require the speaker to have a belief about what is communicated. There are a couple of views like this in the market. Bok (1978) and Carson (2006) provide accounts that do not require the liar to believe he is saying something false. For Bok, lying is any form of intentionally deceptive statement (Bok, 1978, p. 13). Davidson also claims that it is possible to lie with truthful statements made with the intention to deceive (see Davidson,

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[101] Other necessity objections are not relevant here. For instance, objections against the statement clause. Smith (2004), for example, argues that any form of deceptive behaviour intended to provide false information or deprive of true information is a lie.

[102] It has also been argued that argued that we can lie with promises (Marsili, 2016), presuppositions (Viebahn, 2020), or arguments (Sorensen, 2017). But these claims do not threaten the belief condition. Instead, they are directed against the different claim that lying requires assertion.

2004, p. 208). Carson (2006, p. 298) claims that it is sufficient that the statement is not believed to be true or is believed to be probably false. Similarly, Shiffrin (2014, p. 13) claimed that "Agnostics about the truth of their assertions who nonetheless assert them without qualification tell lies". It could be argued that accounts that reject the belief clause risk erasing the distinction between lying, bullshiting and other kinds of deception. I already discussed (at the end of S1 and in S3.2) why the distinction between lies and bullshit is important. However, the real problem for deflationism is that the option of appealing to accounts of lying that reject the belief clause does nothing more than change one form of externalism for another. So far, I have been focusing on group belief externalism. However, an analogous argument can be presented that favours group intention externalism. HHM intended to deceive about the relationship between vaping and some new respiratory conditions, while the board could not have this intention since they knew nothing about the new diseases. I develop this argument in more detail in section 6. For the moment, it is enough to notice that while there are definitions of lying that reject the belief clause and others that reject the intention clause (see Sorensen, 2007)[103], there are no accounts that reject both. So, at most, appealing to other accounts of lies changes group belief externalism for group intention externalism. And that is assuming we take the expensive step of rejecting the belief clause.

4. The group extended mind hypothesis

The extended mind is the view that not all mental states are located inside the individual. Clark & Chalmers (1998) provided the central argument for this form of externalism. They ask us to picture Otto; he suffers from Alzheimer's disease. To facilitate his life, Otto carries a notebook with him, where he writes down any piece of useful information. One day, he hears about an exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art. He writes down the museum's address: the Museum is on 53rd Street. Later, when Otto goes to the museum, he checks his notes to guide his travel. Clark & Chalmers (1998, pp. 12-16) argue that the sentence in the notebook should be regarded as Otto's belief. They argue that what is written in his notebook plays the functional role of a belief. His notebook allows him to

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[103] Using the case of bald-faced lies, Sorensen (2007) argues that it is possible to lie without the intention to deceive since the bald-faced liar cannot expect to deceive an addressee he knows to know that what is said is false.

navigate the world. If we want to explain Otto's actions, we appeal to Otto's belief that the museum is on 53rd Street, which is located in his notebook. They describe these cases as cases where "the human organism is linked with an external entity in a two-way interaction, creating a coupled system that can be seen as a cognitive system in its own right." (Clark & Chalmers, 1998, p.8). My group belief externalism is analogous to their extended mind thesis. Philip Morris's belief is located in their spokespersons, outside of the group. Philip Morris and HHM are conected in such a way, regarding the issue of vaping, that they form a cognitive system. Group beliefs can be located outside of the group.[104]

The extended mind view is not without its detractors. However, group mental states externalism can escape all traditional objections. For example, Ludwig (2015) argues that the view overgenerates. If Otto's notebook can qualify as his beliefs, why not the answers in Google? Or all Wikipedia? Clark & Chalmers (1998, p.17) pre-emptively answer this kind of objection by appealing to Otto's close relationship with his notebook: his notebook is a constant in his life, it is easily available, he automatically endorses what is inside, and it has been previously endorsed. My reply in the group case is pretty similar, but note that the problem is much smaller in my case, to begin with. Philip Morris does not interact with an inanimate object but grants authority to an agent over specific group functions, so the question 'Where does it stop?' is not salient. Also, having one agent perform group functions is not a problem since this is just how groups work. That being said, I can also establish some criteria to delimit the boundaries of external group beliefs. The way to do it is, as in Otto's case, to appeal to the closeness between Philip Morris and HHM. The spokespersons have been endorsed or, more properly, have been granted authority over some specific functions for the company. This authority does not always have to be official and explicit. In many cases, authority is granted tacitly, so we are bound to have grey areas. But any theorising about groups needs to deal with this kind of issue.

It has also been argued against the extended mind view that Otto's notebook fails to have *underived intentionality* (Fodor, 2009). The objection goes like this: Intentionality

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[104] It is worth noting that group vehicle externalism is not committed to the idea that group mental states are free-floating. My proposal is compatible with the thesis that group mental states supervene upon individual mental states and facts.

is the hallmark of the mental, which means that mental states are about things; they have content. Intentionality is derived when it originates from another source, traditionally from mental states. The intentionality that sentences or drawings have is derived; they owe their intentionality to our mental states. Otto's notebook (or the sentences inside) has only derived intentionality, so it cannot be a mental state. This objection does not apply to my view, as the external vehicle of the group's belief is not an inert object with only derived intentionality. Philip Morris spokespersons are themselves agents with underived intentionality, so they have all the required hallmarks of the mental (just as any internal spokesperson would).[105] Someone could argue that HHM does not have "underived group intentionality", as their group intentionality is derived from the group. However, this would be a very suspicious kind of view. First, it would require an unpalatable kind of supercharged group mental states' realism, as they would have to claim that there is something like underived group intentionality. Second, we would need an explanation of how group mental states exhibit this sort of intentionality when acting alone but as part of the group. For example, how the beliefs of a group with a board of just one person exhibit group underived intentionality.

5. Functionalism

My view is not predicated on functionalism. The externalist argument was not that HHM´s belief is Philips Morris's belief (or a group belief) because it plays the functional role of the group's belief.[106] This argument would assume functionalism about group belief, which would beg the question against Lackey; instead, I argue that if we want to explain external lies and bullshit, we need to accept group belief externalism. However, my position can be enhanced by appealing to functionalism; *external lies* and *bullshit* can be explained by looking at the functional role of belief. Functionalism is the view that mental states are defined by their relationship to inputs, outputs, and other states. In this view, something is a belief if it plays the belief role in the system. Bird (2014), Strohmaier

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[105] I do not mean that spokespersons have content, but that they what is required to have representations with content.
[106] The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons is functional-friendly, but does not assume functionalism. Part of the example includes the idea that HHM's beliefs guide the group's actions, while the board's belief does not. This is functional-friendly, but does not assume functionalism, as any view of group belief should be able to explain why one explains the group's actions and the other does not.

(2020), and Brown (2024) have championed group mental states functionalism.[107] Here, I offer an explanation on the same line as them. I do not intend to give a new or a full functional theory of group belief. The only thing I need is to show that functionalism can distinguish between sincere assertion, lies and bullshit, and, more importantly, between sincere assertion, *external lies* and *bullshit*. So, in this section, I offer a functionalist explanation of the role of group belief in these cases, explaining how group belief has a different relation to sincere assertion, lying and bullshiting.

One may think that the distinction I am looking for is too subtle and that functionalism is not fine-grained enough to capture it since the behaviour of a liar and a bullshiter are very similar. What the functionalist needs is to find the functional differences between believing P is false and having a disregard for the truth, i.e., explaining this difference in terms of their inputs, outputs and relationship with other states. Frankfurt (2005) offers us a headstart on this. Bullshiting involves a different attitude: lying involves an intention to misrepresent the world, while bullshiting only involves an intention to misrepresent the speaker. Also, the liar must believe that he knows the truth, while the bullshiter does not care for the truth. This difference in attitude could be translated as a difference in how the liar and the bullshiter mental state relates to other states. The liar desires the addressee not to find out the truth. HHM desires that the public does not find out that vaping is unsafe. Meanwhile, the bullshiter does not care about this; she only desires that the addressee does not find out the truth about her mental state. SG does not want the public to find out they do not know and do not care about vaping safety. This distinguishes between lies and bullshit in terms of their relation to desire.

Additionally, the fact that the liar believes he knows the truth can be translated into a difference in relation to Philip Morris's inputs and outputs. The liar is trying to introduce a specific falsehood into the addressee's belief system; the belief that he

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[107] Brown (2024, p. 67) suggests functionalism can provide a unified account of belief since it is already a popular account of individual belief. I am happy to accept this, although I am not so optimistic. Some may take my argument to be a *reductio* on inflationary views of group phenomena as it forces us to embrace externalism (similar to Block's (1978) *reductio* on functionalism). This is not my intention when presenting my argument; I believe the externalism I defend is true. So, I am happy to say that individual and group beliefs are not exactly the same kind of thing. Group beliefs are an interesting phenomenon in their own right. Individual functionalism and vehicle externalism are friendly to my view, but I am not committed to their truth.

knows the truth informs how he acts. Philip Morris concealed some evidence and disguised its production in a way that made it look favourable to the public; what informed and guided these actions was HHM's knowledge about the evidence that supported the idea that vaping is not safe. The bullshiter, who does not believe she knows the truth and does not care about it, lacks the tools required to display this kind of detailed behaviour. When SG is the spokesperson of Philip Morris, the group does not engage in detailed concealment of evidence since they do not have the tools to do this. Then, Philip Morris produces different outputs when believing P is false in *external lies* and when lacking a belief about P in *external bullshit*.

Furthermore, we can also show a difference in how they relate to inputs. A careful review of the evidence is beyond the bullshiter's interest, which is why Philip Morris lacks solid evidence when SG is the spokesperson. On the other hand, when HHM represents the group, there is a detailed review of the evidence. This exhibits another characteristic of belief: it is out of our intentional control. After reviewing evidence carefully, we cannot just decide what we want to believe. A belief can be formed even if it conflicts with our previously held beliefs. Like a person forming a belief after seeing evidence of a cheating partner. After carefully considering evidence, it is hard to bullshit instead of lying since one would have formed a belief based on the evidence. So, Philip Morris has a different relation with its inputs when the spokespersons lied instead of bullshiting.

Here, I showed how Philip Morris's belief that P is false in *external lies* shows a different functional profile than their disregard for the truth in *external bullshit*. Their belief that P is false and their lack of belief shows different inputs and outputs and, arguably, a different relation with other states (as we could argue that the desire not to be caught in a lie also fuelled Phillip Morris's concealing actions). This shows that we can functionally distinguish between *external lies* and *bullshit*. The same sort of explanation can be used to distinguish group lies, bullshit and sincere assertions in general.

However, there is one case that is worth considering regarding the distinction between sincere group assertion and lies: imagine that Philip Morris's board is looking at the evidence themselves, and this time, they believe the evidence supports the idea that vaping and their products are safe (and we can assume it is true just for the sake of argument). But they also believe that a careless reader might be misled into thinking that it is not, in fact, safe. So, they decide to conceal the evidence, just as in my previous case,

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even if it is supposed to be on their side. Can the functionalist find a functional difference between these cases? I believe so, as functionalism defines states not only by the agent's behaviour but also by the relationship between the state and other states. In this case, their belief is not related to the desire that the public does not find out they are lying, but to the desire they do not find the misleading evidence.

We can also explain Lackey's Tobacco and Oil Company. The former presented a problem for joint acceptance accounts (and other similar inflationist accounts) because PM's members jointly accepted that smoking was safe, which meant that PM believed what they said according to joint acceptance accounts, and contrary to our intuitions. Functionalism can say that PM believed that what they said was false: PM had access to the evidence that smoking was harmful, and they did not have any reasons to doubt that evidence. The state of the group was linked to their evidence in the way belief is related to evidence. In contrast, in Oil Company, and BP's members' official position was that their actions were harmless for the environment, but they had no evidence to support their statement (and did not care about getting it). By how PM's and BP's states relate to their evidence and desires, it is reasonable to say that PM believed smoking to be unsafe and BP had a disregard for the truth about their actions in the Gulf of Mexico.

Finally, functionalism about group belief can also explain cases where the group is lying even though the spokesperson believes what she is saying. Lackey (2021) presents a case where the group misleads the spokesperson into believing that P, although they know it is false. The spokesperson then sincerely asserts P to the public. Intuitively, the group is lying even though the spokesperson believes that P is true. The spokesperson's belief has a role in explaining why she said what she said, but it has no role in the group's actions. What explains why they deceived the spokesperson and other similar actions like concealing evidence (from the representative and the public) is that the group members believed P was false. Ultimately, the board's beliefs plus the deceit explains why the spokesperson asserted P and the group's actions. All of this shows that we can offer reasonable functional explanations of all cases of group lies and bullshit (including *external lies* and *bullshit*), and distinguish them from sincere group assertion.

6. Group intention externalism

So far, I have focused on group belief and argued in favour of group belief vehicle externalism. However, the same argument can be presented in favour of group intention externalism. Let's say HHM asserts there is no relationship between vaping and new respiratory conditions. In The Hands-Off Group and The Shady Spokespersons, the members of Philip Morris had no intention of deceiving about the relationship between vaping and new respiratory diseases. They simply had no knowledge of the existence of these new conditions, so they could not have an intention regarding them. HHM, on the other hand, knows about these conditions and their problematic connection with vaping, and they had an intention to deceive the public about it. And their intention is required to explain Philip Morris's actions. So, we can offer the following argument in favour of group intention externalism and inflationism:

> Externalist Argument (Group Intentions Version)
> 1. Spokesperson S can lie about P on behalf of group G,
> 2. S is not necessarily part of the group.
> 3. 1 is possible even if no group member intends to deceive about P.
> 4. 1 is possible without S going rogue.
> 5. If S lies, G intends to deceive about P. (From 1, 4 and TLG).

Therefore, it is possible for a group to intend to deceive about P even if no group member intended to deceive about P.

As a reply, it could be argued that the members of Philip Morris did intend to deceive; after all, they hired a firm with a shady reputation and designed a situation in which it was likely that their spokespersons would lie for them if required. So, they had general deceitful intentions. However, there is a difference between having a general intention to deceive and having the specific intention to deceive about P. The members of Philip Morris had the former but they did not have the specific intention to lie about P, which is required for lying. Thus, without an inflationary and externalist account of group intention, we cannot accommodate the plausible claim that Philip Morris lies through the actions of HHM.

To reinforce this, we can consider a case in which an individual has a general intention to deceive but still does not lie when asserting. For example, imagine we are

having a discussion about important family matters; I intend to deceive you about most of what we have said: it is to my benefit that you have false beliefs regarding the issue of our conversation, so I widely misrepresent the scenario. Taking a break from the conversation, you point out that it is a beautiful day; jokingly, I say it is not even though it is obvious that it is. The weather is immaterial to our conversation, so I do not intend or expect to mislead you in any way regarding that issue. While I have lied during our conversation, it cannot be said that I lied in this respect. Similarly, PM's members' general intention to deceive is insufficient to say the group is lying. It explains why they hired HHM and acted in coordination with them, but to fully explain why the assertion performed by HHM is PM's group lie requires that we take the external spokespersons' intentions into the picture.

Summary

In this chapter, I argued in favour of group mental states vehicle externalism and group mental states inflationism. Vehicle externalism is the claim that the group's mental states can be located outside of the group, which is incompatible with the deflationist claim that a necessary condition for a group to have mental state A is that some of its group members have state A. I argued that external spokespersons (proxies that are not group members) can be the vehicle for the group's beliefs, and that the beliefs of the representative can play the role of group belief. I argued group mental states externalism and inflationism follow from group speech acts inflationism. If it is possible for external proxies to assert, lie and bullshit on behalf of a group, and group lies require groups to believe P is false and have an intention to deceive about P, then it is also possible for external proxies to believe and have intentions about P on behalf of a group. I favoured group mental states functionalism, as it can enhance my view and account for the cases of *external lies* and *bullshit*. These are cases where the external spokespersons lie or bullshit on behalf of a group, even if the group members have no beliefs or intentions about P. I argued that while *external lies* and *bullshit* present a problem for deflationism (this is to both summativism and Lackey´s (2021) neo-summativism), functionalism about group mental states, an inflationist view, can explain and distinguish all cases of sincere group assertion, lies and bullshit. Then, I conclude that we should endorse functionalism, vehicle externalism and inflationism about group mental states.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I have offered a comprehensive study of group speech acts, group communicative actions and their relationship to group mental states like group belief and intention. In order of generality, in this dissertation, I offered the following developments:

1. Clarification about the nature of this debate. It is best understood as concerning the question of what it takes to perform a group speech act, rather than what distinguishes the *force* of different group speech acts. Until now, philosophers have not been explicit regarding which of these two questions the debate is about.

2. A detailed account of the notion of group speech acts as *illocutions* that are not just performed by groups but attributable to them and not just to individuals. By contrast, most philosophers in the debate have included all communicative acts performed by groups as group speech acts.

3. A new classification of the kinds of actions groups do with speech (*group communicative actions*). This classification includes *group illocutions* (those that should properly be called group speech acts), *group locutions* (utterances performed by groups) and *collective illocutions* (*illocutionary forces* that are necessarily made by groups to be performed at all). In the past, classifications of group speech acts were proposed, but they failed to provide meaningful distinctions regarding the nature of group speech acts.

4. Insight into the relation between group speech acts and group mental states. I argued that group speech acts inflationism entails group mental states inflationism. By contrast, influential accounts in the debate have claimed that the former and the denial of the latter were compatible.

5. Novel inflationist accounts of group assertion and group speech acts: on my account, these are distinguished from individual assertion and individual speech acts by speakers having and exercising the authority to speak on behalf of a group. This authority account can be combined with different accounts of the *force* of assertion to produce necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion. By contrast, previous accounts have failed to account for all instances of group speech acts and failed to distinguish group and

individual speech acts properly. My account is able to explain group speech acts as a unified class rather than a cluster of ways to perform communicative actions.

6. Extensions of different epistemic arguments to provide explanations beyond just assertion. I defend the use of epistemic arguments in the group debate even despite holding that assertion is not distinguished from other speech acts by its epistemic normativity.

7. A novel functional account of protests. Here, I showed that the authority account distinguished between individual and group protests. Previous proposals failed to account for all cases of protests and distinguish group from individual protests.

Now, with more detail and in order of appearance, the contributions of each chapter were the following:

In Chapter 1, I offered a map of the views in the group speech act debate. I proposed distinguishing views on two axes. The first axis separates between three families: joint intentional accounts, disjunctive accounts, and authority accounts. Each one of these shares a family resemblance to one of the views in the traditional speech acts debate. Joint intentional accounts distinguish group speech acts in terms of group members having a joint locutionary intention to communicate (Hughes, 1984; Tollefsen, 2009). Disjunctive accounts hold that there are two kinds of group speech acts: coordinated speech acts –characterised by joint intentional coordination— and authority speech acts –characterised by spokespersons representing a group— (Lackey, 2021; Ludwig, 2020; Marsili, 2023). By contrast to these well-known accounts in the literature, I instead defend and authority account, which holds that group speech acts are characterised by the authority to speak on behalf of a group. I see this view as a kind of conventional view (or at least a close relative) since it explains speech acts in terms of social relations and practices and not primarily in terms of mental states or normative properties.

The second axis distinguishes performance and force accounts. Most of the literature on group speech acts has neglected this distinction. *Performance accounts* answer the question, what does it take to perform a speech act at all?. By contrast, *force accounts* answer the question, what distinguishes the force of different group speech

acts? I claim that the question central to the group speech act debate is "What does it take to perform a group speech act?".

In Chapter 2, I discussed the popular thesis that assertion is governed by epistemic norms. I defended the claim that a context-sensitive norm is best suited to account for the epistemic normativity of assertion since it can account for a wider range of cases than invariant norms. I favoured Goldberg's (2010) context-sensitive approach, although I disagree with him on a crucial point: I reject the claim that his norm can distinguish assertion from other speech acts. In other words, I rejected the idea that an epistemic norm can account for the *illocutionary force* of assertion. The context-sensitive nature of the norm of assertion is supported by the fact that a plurality of cases have been offered proving that assertion is sometimes proper under conditions weaker than knowledge, and sometimes it is only proper if conditions stronger than knowledge are met. Goldberg's theory can account for many of these cases and, importantly, those showing that proper assertability requires something stronger than knowledge in some contexts. The problem for him is that the very same cases can be shown to support the claim that *representatives* (the wider class of speech acts defined by their relationship with truth) are also governed by a context-sensitive epistemic norm. I propose to see this as a virtue of Goldberg's account and not as a hindrance. I claim that his norm is better seen as akin to a general epistemic principle governing the class of *representatives*.

This discussion is beneficial for the dissertation in three key ways. First, it informs my analysis of group assertion in Chapter 3. Second, one might initially believe that arguments that ascribe assertions to groups by appeal to epistemic norms (Lackey (2021), Peterson (2020), and myself in chapters 3 and 4) presuppose a normative account of the assertoric *force*; I reject this idea in this chapter. It is enough for those arguments if we accept that assertion is governed by epistemic norms, even if those norms do not distinguish it from other speech acts. And third, just as the idea that epistemic norms govern assertion can be used to ascribe assertions to groups, in Chapter 4, I use the claim that epistemic norms also govern *representatives* to extend the responsibility argument to this broader class of speech acts.

In Chapter 3, I defend a novel account of group assertion. I propose a necessary condition that distinguishes between group and individual assertion: a collection of speakers performs a group assertion only if they have and exercise the authority to speak

on behalf of a group. To make this into a necessary and sufficient condition for group assertion, we need to add a clause that distinguishes assertion from other *illocutionary forces*. The commitments account offers us a way to do this, as shown by Tollefsen (2020) and Marsili (2023). However, a virtue of the authority account is that it can be paired with other accounts of the *force* of assertion to produce a full account of group assertion. Since I agree with the commitments account of assertion, I take group assertion to be the action of a group undertaking an assertoric commitment to P by a collection of speakers uttering P with the authority to speak for the group.

I argue that the authority account outperforms established rival accounts from Lackey (2018, 2020), Ludwig (2020), and Marsili (2023), among others. I argue that they have failed to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for group assertion. They do not provide necessary conditions, for they fail to account for *radically collaborative assertion* cases, which do not fit their distinctive view of assertion. They do not provide sufficient conditions for group assertion, because they do not properly distinguish between group *locutions* and group *illocutions*. By failing to notice this distinction, previous accounts cannot properly distinguish between individual and group assertion.

More broadly, I have suggested that there are many ways in which groups perform the utterances with which they perform their assertions, e.g. by employing proxies or by coordinating. But individual assertions can also involve proxies and coordination (e.g. my example, Propaganda). Therefore, the different ways in which groups perform utterances are not central to group assertion. Instead, I propose that the authority to assert on behalf of the group is what distinguishes group assertion. There are many ways to acquire authority and many different recipients of such authority. My proposal allows us to see group assertion as one kind of action instead of a cluster of different communicative acts, as do previous accounts.

In Chapter 4, I argue that the authority account, and the arguments I offered in favour of it in Chapter 3 can be extended to all group speech acts. The main idea is simple: that group speech acts are distinguished by the authority to speak on behalf of a group. I argue that the authority account is superior to other proposals because it can distinguish between group *locutions* and group *illocutions*, and it can account for those *radically collaborative speech* cases that are group speech acts. The distinction between group *locutions* and group *illocution* cuts across all speech acts, so failing to notice it

presents a general problem for previous accounts of group speech acts (whether disjunctive or intentional), and not just for those that try to account for group assertion. Furthermore, assertion is not the only speech act governed by epistemic standards (as seen in Chapter 2). So, epistemic arguments can be used to hold that groups are epistemically responsible for many instances of *radically collaborative speech*.

My authority account distinguishes *group illocutions* —*illocutions* that are not just made by groups but attributable to them and not just to individuals— which is what should be properly called group speech acts. These should be distinguished from other communicative actions groups can perform with speech: mere utterances performed by groups (group *locutions*), collections of utterances (collections of *locutions*) and *illocutionary* actions that must be made by collections of individuals to be performed at all (*collective illocutions*). These four together (*group illocutions, group locutions*, collections of *locutions* and c*ollective illocutions*) are part of what I call *group communicative actions*: actions groups perform using speech in a broad sense.

In Chapter 5, I defend a novel account of protests and group protests. I argued that there are three desiderata that an account of protest must satisfy. First, protests are communicative actions that we frequently perform as groups; an account of protests must account for what is special about group protests. Second, it must explain the two elements of protest: that it is an expression of opposition and a demand for change. Third, it must allow for the possibility of amoral and corrupt protests and explain the *infelicity* of the latter. I argued that previous proposals failed to satisfy these desiderata. Then, I argued that a functional approach is the most promising way to satisfy these desiderata. It allows us to characterise the normative effects of protesting, explaining its social transformative value. Other approaches (the intentional, conventional, and constitutive norm approaches) do not seem optimal for this task or do not fit the case of protest accurately.

On my functional account, protests require as input that the speakers lack power relative to their addressee. This is not a normative condition but a performative one required for protests to be performed at all. On my account, expressing opposition denies the audience the ability to represent the speaker as having a neutral or positive attitude towards the object of the protest. This is a substantial move since it makes it so that some speech acts cannot be appropriately made after the expressed opposition. I

also claim that demanding action presupposes authority to place an obligation *to the protesters*. This can be either moral or collective authority. When there is a dispute over the moral high ground, if protesters lack moral authority, they abuse the action. When there is no moral dispute, collective authority is enough to place obligations on the addressee. Finally, I argue that what distinguishes group protests is the authority to speak on behalf of a group. Not all protests are group speech acts. And, as with other speech acts, groups can protest by banding their members together or via proxy. What makes them group speech acts is that they are performed with the right kind of entitlement.

While the first part of the thesis defends several inflationist accounts of group speech acts (chapters 3, 4 and 5) in Chapter 6, I extract a conclusion for group mental states. Here, I argued that group mental states vehicle externalism and inflationism follow from group speech acts inflationism. Group belief vehicle externalism is the claim that a group's mental states can be located outside of the group, which is incompatible with the deflationist claim that a necessary condition for a group to have mental state A is that some of its group members have state A. I claim that external spokespersons (proxies that are not group members) can be the vehicle of the group's beliefs, and that the beliefs of the representative can play the functional role of group belief. This goes against Lackey (2021), who defends an inflationist account of group assertion and a deflationist account of group belief. In short, my argument is that if it is possible for external proxies to assert, lie and bullshit on behalf of a group, and group lies require groups to believe P is false and have an intention to deceive about P, then it is also possible for external proxies to believe and have intentions on behalf of a group. In this chapter, I favoured group mental states functionalism, as I show that it can enhance my externalist view and account for the cases of *external lies* and *bullshit* –cases where external spokespersons lie or bullshit on behalf of a group despite the group members lacking beliefs or intentions about P. I argued that while *external lies* and *bullshit* present a problem for deflationism (including both traditional summativism and Lackey´s (2021) neo-summativism), functionalism about group mental states, an inflationist view, can explain and distinguish all cases of sincere group assertion, lies and bullshit. I conclude that we should endorse inflationism about both group speech acts and group mental states.

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