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Full-On Stating

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Abstract: What distinguishes full-on stating a proposition from merely communicating it? For instance, what distinguishes claiming/asserting/saying that one has never smoked crack cocaine from merely implying/conveying/hinting this? The enormous literature on 'assertion' provides many approaches to distinguishing stating from, say, asking and commanding: only the former aims at truth; only the former expresses one's belief; etc. But this leaves my question unanswered, since in merely communicating a proposition one also aims at truth, expresses a belief, etc.

My aim is not to criticize extant accounts of the state-versus-merely-convey contrast, but rather to draw on clues from Dummett, functional linguistics and moral theory, to offer a novel one. The main idea is that full-on stating is distinctively conventionalized in a way that conversationally implicating, hinting, giving to understand, etc, are not. Specifically, full-on stating is constitutively tied to a particular conventional, linguistic, function-bearing device, the declarative sentence. To full-on state that p is to hit that 'target speech act' which owes its existence to that special-purpose device. It is therefore also to make one's action lie-prone. Nonetheless, once that *sui generis* target is there to be aimed for, a person may reach it without using the special-purpose tool—e.g. one may full-on state using a mere word or phrase, or coded hand signals, or semaphore.

I end by considering several philosophical implications of this means of capturing the contrast.

1. The Question

What is the role of convention versus intention in speech acts? How does use relate to meaning? Does linguistic form connect closely to linguistic function? Do declarative sentences have some kind of primacy in language? Can the pervasiveness of pragmatics threaten the Gricean contrast between 'what is said' and what is merely conveyed? What norms specifically govern assertion? Is the latter a linguistically constituted phenomenon? How is lying different from misleading?

At the nexus of these varied questions sits **Q**, my focus here: *What distinguishes full-on stating a proposition from merely communicating it*? For instance, to lift two infamous examples from the headlines, what distinguishes straight-up stating that you

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have never once smoked crack cocaine from merely conveying that thought? And what distinguishes stating that you did not engage in sex acts with an intern from merely implying it?

Though 'full-on stating' and 'merely communicating' are not straightforwardly terms of ordinary parlance, I use them to capture an everyday, ordinary, common-sense distinction. Another way to bring out the distinction is to contrast two broad classes of speakings:

> **A.** Asserting, affirming, claiming, telling, stating, saying, declaring, avowing, professing;
> **B.** Giving to understand, implying, conveying, intimating, insinuating, hinting.

I will asking about the difference between the sort of speakings in the A-class and those in the B-class. There are, I think, widespread intuitions about clear cases on both sides of the divide. Drawing on those, I hope to discover what underlies the 'clearly stating' cases, and what underlies the 'clearly just communicating' cases. (Maybe this will eventually help categorize various puzzling, in-between cases, into the A- or B-class.)[1]

To clarify **Q** still further, allow me to rehearse (very briefly and very crudely) some familiar non-answers. There are various well-known strategies for distinguishing stating from, say, asking and commanding:

1. What Is It to Full-On State?

  a) Truth/Information

   i) Stating has word to world direction of fit;
   ii) In stating, one aims at truth;
   iii) Statings are *prima facie* informative;

  b) Mental States

   i) Stating is the outward sign of judgment;
   ii) Stating is the overt expression of belief;
   iii) In stating, the speaker represents herself as (justifiably?) believing such-and-such;
   iv) In stating, the speaker intends to induce a belief in some audience, intending that that the audience's recognition of said intention should serve as their grounds for coming to have the belief, and so on;

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[1] A further word about nomenclature. I opt for the phrase 'full-on stating' rather than more familiar locutions such as 'assertion' and 'what is said' because the latter have become philosophical terms of art. As a result, arguments about 'what assertion really is' or 'what is strictly said' can be frustratingly stipulative—and intuitions can, nowadays, be too easily clouded by theoretical commitments. The danger is less, I think, with plain-old terms like 'state'. This is also why I highlight a list, 'A-class speakings', of related notions. For more on this terminological thicket, see Camp, 2007.

    c) Possibilities

      i) Stating may change the set of jointly agreed upon possibilities;
      ii) Stating may update the conversational score;
      iii) In stating, some new proposition may come to be jointly presupposed;

    d) Norms

      i) Stating creates new normative commitments and entitlements, such as: having to withdraw or defend the statement if challenged; being at least partially responsible for actions taken on the basis of the statement; being permitted to infer things from the statement made; etc.
      ii) A stating can stand as a reason, but also requires reasons;
      iii) Stating is subject to various norms, such as that the stated content be true, believed, justified, reasonable, certain, known, or what-have-you.[2]

These are, all of them, important ideas. In fact, several will do work for me below. Patently however, as presented, none adequately addresses the question I am posing: none of them captures the contrast between straight-up and full-bore claiming to have, e.g., never smoked crack and merely conveying that you have not. Taking each in its turn, merely conveying that *p* has word-to-world direction of fit. (In fact, so does conjecturing that *p* and even assuming for the sake of argument that *p*.) To modify an example from Grice (1975), if someone asks me where Andy is, and I reply 'Andy's car is parked at Betty's house', I merely convey the thought that Andy himself is at Betty's house. Yet what I convey is supposed to fit how the world is, rather than the other way around. Similarly, what I thereby convey aims at truth, is *prima facie* informative, and is a sign of my judgment about Andy's whereabouts. In so speaking, I express my belief that Andy is at Betty's house, and represent myself as believing this. In addition, I intend to induce the belief, and intend that intention to be recognized, and so on in familiar Grice-inspired fashion. What I merely convey excludes ever so many possibilities about where Andy is located, may change the conversational score, etc. If one of my hearers challenges me, and says 'How do you know that Andy is at Betty's?' I am beholden to withdraw what I have communicated, provide evidence for it, or what-have-you. (One way to 'withdraw it' is to insist that one didn't mean, let alone say, that Andy himself was at the house. Such ready deniability can be the point of merely conveying.) Finally, I ought not convey that Andy is at Betty's if it isn't true, or if I don't believe it. (Is it permissible to merely convey a proposition without believing-with-justification in its truth? Is it permissible to

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[2] Views *very roughly* along these lines—usually phrased in terms of 'assertion' rather than 'stating'—can be traced, respectively, to: Anscombe, 1963, and Searle, 1975; Dummett, 1973; Frege, 1918; Pagin, 2011; Fodor, 1978, Searle, 1969, and Williams, 2002; Davidson, 1984; Bach and Harnish, 1979, and Grice, 1957; Lewis, 1979, and Stalnaker, 1978; Brandom, 1983, 1994, and MacFarlane, 2005; Williamson, 1996, 2000. For very valuable overviews, see Brown and Cappelen, 2011; Jary, 2010; MacFarlane, 2011; and Pagin, 2014.

merely convey a proposition without knowing that it's true? Theorists will disagree. However, insofar as a theorist accepts that a person should not state a proposition unless she *VP*s it, that theorist will surely find herself agreeing that a person should not 'merely pragmatically convey' a proposition unless she *VP*s it. That is, one's take on stating ought to parallel one's take on hinting, conversationally implicating, etc.) [3]

Another way to phrase **Q**, then, is this: How must (1 a-d) be spelled out or supplemented if one is to distinguish full-on stating from merely communicating?

2. Three Important Caveats

Before presenting my answer, several important caveats are in order. All pertain to what I am and am not trying to achieve.

My aim in the present article is not critical: where I mention authors, it is to give credit where I think it due. Instead, I have a positive end, namely to place a novel option on the table and to consider some of its implications. Related to this, in what follows I will play fast-and-loose with exegesis. (I already have.) There is unquestionably room for a paper—or more plausibly, a book—which catalogues with scrupulous scholarly care, e.g. all the ways that (1 a-d) have been, or could be, elaborated by their proponents, in order to give a satisfactory answer to **Q**. But the reader will not find that here.

A second caveat. My aim is to contrast the A-class from the B-class. There are various features which the A-class actions have in common and which the B-class actions lack, and I am interested in identifying what those are. There are also inter-esting and subtle differences among the A-class actions, but I will not explore them. Equally for the B-class: hinting is not exactly the same as conversationally implicat-ing, but I will not attempt to explicate such differences here. Note too that my aim is not to put every kind of content into its proper class, and analyze the differences among them all. I thus happily grant that there are aspects of speech act content which don't naturally fit under either A or B. My classification is emphatically not exhaustive. For instance, in saying 'The patient is suffering from recurrent emesis' (as opposed to 'keeps barfing'), one doesn't state *I am speaking in a medical register*,

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[3] It may seem easy to distinguish hinting and the rest from full-on stating, because there is no proposition meant with hints and intimations; and in conversational implicature, there is at best a vague proposition, or an indeterminate class of propositions. (Consider what the alleged determinate proposition might be in Grice's (1975, p. 24) famous 'He likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet'.) In reply, I do want to acknowledge that some hints, intimations, etc., do not have propositional content, and that some implicatures are indeterminate. However, *pace* Lepore and Stone (2015), not all are like this: lots of conversational implicatures and insinuations have determinate propositional content. (For instance, the very example of someone inquiring where Andy is, and the reply 'Andy's car is parked at Betty's house': here the thought that Andy is at Betty's house is determinate yet merely conveyed.) Coming at it from the other direction, as Buchanan (2010, 2013) has insightfully stressed, not all claims/statements/etc. have precise, determinate contents: one can state that *many boys are tall enough* or that *each dish is almost ready*.

but one needn't pragmatically convey it either. (That would depend upon why one choose those words.) Compare also the difference between 'Tu fumes' and 'Vous fumez' in French: the level of formality with which the hearer is addressed need be neither stated nor speaker-meant, but in some sense it alters the content of the act. Consider too semantic presupposition and conventional implicature. In saying 'John, a car salesman, stopped smoking and will thus live longer' one does not merely pragmatically convey that John is a car salesman and erstwhile smoker; and one does not merely pragmatically convey that living longer is a consequence of breaking a smoking habit. Yet, arguably, one doesn't state these things. It is not my aim here to distinguish A-class speakings from these latter cases either. I will have something helpful to say, but mysteries will remain. Finally, while my account will rely on certain observations about what the A-class and B-class have in common—below, I will label it 'quasi-stating'—there remains an outstanding issue on that front which I won't take a stand on: whether, like merely conveying, stating is inevitably a kind of audience-directed communication. Obviously there are full-on statings that do not communicate *successfully*. But does one even need to intend to communicate, in order to state? Is Gricean meaning$_{NN}$ required? For instance, if a dinner guest says under her breath, in a foreign tongue, that she dislikes kale, is that a statement—even though she not only fails to communicate her thought, but didn't even intend to do so? What about a note to oneself in a secret code—is that a stating? These are hard cases, and are best addressed in light of well-developed theory.

My final caveat about aims is this. I don't wish to be arguing about the right *label* for the contrast between the A-class (including full-on stating) and the B-class (including merely communicating). I do think that some of the simple labels which suggest themselves are unhappy. For instance, it may be said that full-on stating is inevitably overt, direct, non-inferential, or explicit, but these all strike me as inapt. Because of the ubiquity of pragmatic determinants of literal speech act content, examples of which appear in Section V, and because of the direct processing of non-literal contents in metaphor and indirect speech acts, features along the lines of directness, explicitness and overtness are, none of them, necessary and sufficient for stating. (See Carston, 2002, and Wearing, 2006 for the general line of argument.) Other labels do come closer to the mark: full-on stating is literal or semantic; full-on statings pertain to 'at-issue' or 'main point' content, and are 'genuine illocutionary acts'. However, and this is the final caveat, I will not rest content with pinpointing the right vocabulary. To agree on that is not yet to answer **Q**, unless we know what exactly is meant thereby.

I hope I have made clear what my question is, and what it is not. The game-plan for the remainder of the article is this. I will introduce half a dozen clues from three sources. I will then stitch them together to provide a positive answer to **Q**. My positive answer, in postage stamp form, will be this. Full-on stating is (α) a *sui generis* speech act constitutively tied to a special-purpose linguistic tool. To say this, however, is not to give necessary and sufficient conditions for full-blown stating, in terms of that function-endowed tool. Indeed, and turning to an equally important hallmark, because (β) full-on stating is characterized by a kind of normative failing

specific to it, it is a methodological wrong-turn to look for those sorts of necessary and sufficient conditions. These twin features—i.e. being constitutively dependent upon the special-purpose device and carrying a novel kind of 'normative risk'—are shared by all the actions in the A-class and by none of the actions in the B-class. I end by clarifying my answer still further by flagging several of its philosophical implications.

3. Clues from Three Sources

A. Dummett

My first clues come from Michael Dummett. His most important contribution was that full-on stating—his preferred locution was 'assertion', but it is clear that his quarry was the same as mine—is a conventional activity. In particular, he maintained that it essentially involves the use of a certain kind of conventional linguistic expression, in conventionally specified circumstances. More specifically, at the time of his landmark *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, Dummett seems to have held that when the requisite circumstances were present, it was necessary and sufficient for full-on stating to use a declarative sentence. (What one stated would then be the contextually-completed content of that sentence.) He wrote: '… assertion consists in the (deliberate) utterance of a sentence which, by its form and context, is recognized as being used according to a certain general convention' (Dummett, 1973, p. 311).

Forty years on, this seems wrong. On the one hand, using a declarative sentence appears insufficient because, as Davidson (1979) powerfully urged, one can always rig things so that the 'conventionally-specified circumstances' obtain, a declarative sentence is used, but something non-conventional about the context voids the speech act. As he suggests, usage can always outstrip convention. For instance, an actor may utter on the stage: 'This is not part of the performance. There really is a fire! Seriously!' But the non-conventional circumstances may fix it that this is not stated. (Though see Green, 1997, and Jary, 2010, for potential subtle counterexamples to Davidson's very sweeping dictum.) More generally, Davidson argues that one simply could not create a sign whose use would immediately and automatically suffice for bringing the conventional conditions into effect, because every joker and storyteller would immediately avail themselves of it. On the other hand, using a declarative sentence appears unnecessary because of sub-sentential speech: a person may use a plain-old word or phrase (as opposed, crucially, to an elliptical sentence) and thereby full-on state. For instance, a salesman could speak the bare phrase 'Driven only 10,000 km' about a salient car and thereby lie (Stainton, 1996, 2006; Saul, 2013). Other examples include using 'John's father' to say who that is, and 'From Spain' to make a claim about the origin of a displayed letter. The former is a nominal phrase, the latter a prepositional phrase. Neither are 'sentences'—except in the unhelpful sense of being useable to perform statements. It also seems that there are non-linguistic conventional signs that would

permit full-on stating: non-verbal gestures, coded hand signals of the sort used by soldiers, semaphore, logical notation, etc. Consider too the use of expressions which blend words and structures from more than one language: e.g. something with Hidatsa's Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word-order, but containing a couple of Spanish words, and no mood-marking clause-final particle −*c*. It could, I think, be used to full-on state—but is such a thing genuinely a declarative sentence? (See Merchant, 2010, for more on both particle −*c* and asserting non-linguistically.) This example highlights another pressing issue for Dummett, namely how to individuate the declarative mood. What binds declarative sentences as a class are not formal features, either within a language, or especially across languages. Even within English, surface SVO order is not a constant in declaratives (as witnessed by 'John, I like'); and, as illustrated by Hidatsa, SVO order is definitely not a hallmark of declaratives cross-linguistically.[4] Nor will it do to say: 'The declaratives are exactly the ones used to state', both because declarative sentences are neither necessary nor sufficient for that; and because one would then be identifying the declarative mood in terms of stating, only to individuate stating in terms of the declarative mood.

Nonetheless, in moving towards an answer to **Q**, there are twin lessons that I take away from Dummett. The first is positive. Full-on stating *is* conventional to an extent that mere conveying is not. It is no coincidence that the other means of full-on stating that I identified—code-switching blends, coded hand signals, semaphore, etc.—involved conventional symbol systems. Equally, it is no coincidence that the verbs in class B are not illocutionary speech act verbs, while the ones in class A are: 'I hereby hint', 'I hereby insinuate', 'I hereby imply' and 'I hereby merely convey' are bizarre. What's more, the contrast between the two does indeed have something to do with a constituting linguistic device, specifically the declarative sentence. The second lesson is negative. The methodological misstep of *Frege: Philosophy of Language* was trying to identify—in terms of things like formative-used and contextual circumstances—the necessary and sufficient conditions for stating, that is, the conditions for any given token utterance being a full-blown statement. Better, say I, to give an analysis of the action-kind stating, treating separately the issue of the precise means whereby that sort of action may be achieved. (Compare: what it is to get married, versus the sundry ways whereby one can do it.)[5]

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[4] Compare how one individuates the bishop in chess. It isn't by shape, since bishops can exhibit quite varied and stylized forms. What binds them all as a class is, rather, a shared functional role: bishops move diagonally; they can travel multiple squares at one go; at the outset, they flank the king and queen; etc. The analogous point is that, though declaratives within a language will of course exhibit some characteristic 'grammatical form'—just as all four bishops in a given chess set will be identifiable by something about their 'shape'—this form cannot be what a sentence's 'declarativity' consists in.

[5] Dummett himself acknowledged this distinction in later work. See his 1993 paper 'Mood, force, and convention'. Pagin (2014) contrasts, in a similar vein, 'deep properties of assertion', which pertain to what action a person making an assertion essentially performs, from 'surface properties of assertion', which pertain to 'the properties by which we can tell whether an utterance is an assertion …'

B. Speech Act Theory and Functional Linguistics

The second source of clues is speech act theory and functional linguistics.

Clue number one here is captured by the familiar slogan that linguistic expressions are tools.[6] Popular as the 'words–as–tools' slogan is, it remains difficult to say, in a philosophically satisfying way, exactly what it is for a word or sentence to have a function. Adequately doing so is, in fact, much more challenging than answering **Q** itself. I will thus have to rest content with offering a series of examples, and with some remarks about how a linguistic expression may come to have a function.

Consider 'Hello'. It is regularly used to greet. More than that, however, its function is to perform that action. That is what 'Hello' is for. Similarly for 'Welcome to my home'. It is a 'specialized tool' designed to facilitate admitting someone to a dwelling. And a lullaby is a song whose purpose is to put a baby to sleep. Notice a pattern. It isn't genuinely historical/temporal, but the metaphor of 'first this and then this' can bring it out. There is a kind of action which needs doing, and which can be done in a variety of ways; a special device is created for performing the action, which makes it easier and more efficient to carry it out; that device then not only is used to perform the action, it thereby has the function of doing so. (It's worth mentioning in passing that this pattern is not specific to linguistic devices. For example, showing respect and deference is an important act; creating the bow and curtsy makes it easier to perform it. Thus bows and curtsies are also 'special-purpose devices' in the sense I am reaching for.)

There are two obvious variants on the pattern, and on the origins of linguistic-tools-with-functions. One is fairly straightforward. This is where a group jointly stipulates, explicitly agrees, that such-and-such sound will be used to achieve such-and-such effect. This happens rarely, but think of the practice of creating safe words: if the participants agree beforehand that anyone saying 'Jamaica' means that the role-playing game must stop, 'Jamaica' now has this function. Their agreement endows it. A much more common source of teleology, but one which is poorly understood, is linguistic evolution: a formative gets

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[6] Reminding the reader that I mention authors to praise rather than bury, the analogy between words and tools can be found in philosophers as diverse as J.L. Austin, Robert Brandom, John Dewey, J.G. Herder, Thomas Reid, Robert Stalnaker, and the later Wittgenstein. Among linguists, it is present among functionalists generally, and in the work of Simon Dik, Michael Gregory, Michael Halliday, and André Martinet in particular. (Both lists could, of course, be greatly expanded.) As a 'by the way', I myself am not committed to treating all linguistic meaning in terms of the tools analogy. I find use-theoretic meanings useful for understanding (matrix) illocutionary force and phatic expressions such as 'Hello': meaning and use are tightly intertwined therein, and worries about unlimited productivity are not in play. However, in my view, a more traditional truth-conditional semantics is appropriate to capture the differences among, say, 'Every boy from Spain sang', 'Several smokers on the bus won the lottery' and 'My dog urinated on the Clinton's lawn'. To say merely that these are 'different tools' affords no insight whatever. See Stainton, 1999, for discussion.

introduced, whether by a novel coinage or by borrowing from another tongue; its use survives and expands because of its efficiency/usefulness; it fights off competitor expressions; etc.

The second clue from these quarters can be brought out by considering a crucial difference between the 'Hello'/'Welcome to my home' examples on the one hand and the lullaby example on the other. In the former cases, no new activity is birthed. In neither case is there something *sui generis* and constituted by the special-purpose device. One merely has a more efficient means of doing the same old thing, i.e. greeting and admitting to a dwelling. Not so with lullabies. With the introduction of special-purpose songs, there comes to exist a contrast between merely croon-ing softly in order to put an infant to sleep, and full-on singing a lullaby. What the introduction of such a special-purpose device can do, in other words, is to estab-lish a contrast between some ur-action and its full-on, conventionally constituted cousin. Embracing a well-worn analogy with full-on stating, consider promising. A person *A* purposely inducing another *B* to rely on *A* to do something is one thing. But inducing-to-rely-on is not the same thing as promising properly so called. For example, suppose *B* needs a ride to San Francisco. If *A* says, 'I am heading to San Francisco tomorrow and have a spare seat', *A* may thereby purposely lead *B* to rely on him for a lift. But *A* has not promised anything. In contrast, if *A* says, 'I promise to take you to San Francisco tomorrow', something additional has been achieved. How does the latter arise? Goes my idea, there comes to be a special-purpose device whose job—whose conventionally-specified function—is inducing-to-rely-on. And once that device exists, there comes to exist a contrast between full-on promising and merely inducing-to-rely-on. (Or something like that. I don't wish here to enter into a debate about whether this is the right account of promising. It is only the analogy, the parallel structure, which matters.)

The main insight can equally be expressed with some technical terms. I will say that there are *language transcendent* actions and also *linguistically constituted* actions. An (equally well-worn) comparison with games is useful for explaining these terms. In fashioning a new game, the creator may introduce actions which simply could not have been performed antecedently. It's not as if making spades trump would have been merely very difficult prior to the invention of bridge and related trick-taking games. Thus making spades trump is not game-transcendent, but is rather game-constituted.[7] Coming back to language, greeting and admitting

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[7] Religious practice furnishes, along similar lines, a host of conventionally-constituted actions. Consider praying the rosary. There is a special purpose device for this task, namely rosary beads. One fingers the beads, saying a 'Hail Mary' for each of the small beads, and then the 'Lord's Prayer' for the large bead. This tool yields a *sui generis* action, partly constituted by this special tool for praying. To anticipate, however, once the *sui generis* practice of praying the rosary exists, it is not the case that deploying an actual Rosary is either necessary or sufficient. For instance, during the persecution of Catholics in the 1600s in Ireland, the Paidrin Beag was used to pray the Rosary instead; and presumably a devout believer stranded on a desert island could collect ten small shells and one large conch, and use those to full-on pray the rosary. (Think also of

someone to your home are, in my sense, language transcendent. (As these examples may suggest, an action can be 'language transcendent' in my specialized sense even if it could not exist outside a linguistic community, say for nomological reasons.) Singing lullabies and promising are, in sharp contrast, linguistically constituted. Specifically, they owe their existence to special-purpose tools.

Let us apply these clues from functional linguistics and speech act theory to **Q**. Consonant with the general pattern, there is a kind of language transcendent action that needs doing, which I hereby dub 'quasi-stating'. There are various ways of thinking about this activity, all serving equally well for my present purposes:

2. Candidates for Quasi-Stating

   a) giving information;
   b) revealing one's beliefs;
   c) modifying the shared possibility space;
   d) becoming subject to a logico-epistemic norm.

(Look back at (1) on the article's second page, to fill in various sub-options.) Quasi-stating is what the actions in the A- and the B-class have in common. Quasi-stating, even if it may not pre-exist language, is not constituted by language. My suggestion, however, is that with the 'arrival' of a special-purpose device, the declarative mood, stating proper comes to exist. And full-on stating *is* linguistically constituted. As with lullabies, the function-endowed tool constitutively creates a contrast between the ur-action and the *sui generis* one.

Why should the introduction of a special-purpose device for quasi-stating give rise to a new kind of *sui generis* action? My inchoate suspicion is that those who appeal to the overtness, explicitness, etc., of full-on stating are not wholly wrong to do so. To repeat, it isn't true that all token statings exhibit these features. (For instance, as I will shortly stress, one can state of a specific place that it is raining *there* by saying 'It's raining', though I do not accept that the place is 'explicitly present'.) On the other hand, stating is the *kind* of action which can be done overtly and explicitly, precisely because there is a corresponding tool. Not so hinting, intimating, merely giving to understand, etc.: it would be oxymoronic to have an explicit, overt tool for such actions. What's more, when one performs action X using the function-endowed tool for doing so, it becomes harder to say: 'Well, I didn't really mean to do X at all'. As a result, the potential for sanctions and public opprobrium are increased: the introduction of the declarative raises the normative stakes.[8] Thus, for instance, the

hymn singing. Such an activity cannot pre-exist the composition and adoption of hymns. And yet, a group of adults who never learned any actual hymns could sing Kansas' 'Dust in the Wind' at a friend's funeral. Mightn't that count as singing a hymn?)

[8] Not coincidentally, I think, another signature of such *sui generis* actions is that special devices for cancellation/retraction may come into being. Things being complicated enough as they stand, I will set that aside here. See MacFarlane, 2011.

existence of a sentence like 'I have never once smoked crack cocaine', whose job is to inform, express belief, or what-have-you, brings a new 'normative risk' into play.

This takes me to the final clue.

C. Moral Theory

It is a hallmark of new *sui generis* conventionally-constituted actions of the sort just mooted that a new kind of failure may come into existence with them. When promising properly speaking emerges, so does the possibility of breaking a promise: to promise is a fresh kind of act, and to break one is a fresh kind of failing. Where marriage exists, as opposed to mere conjugal living, so does the possibility of adultery. Similarly, when betting arises, so does the possibility of reneging on the bet. When you promise, marry or bet, but then fail to come through in the relevant way, you do something special; there is a deeper and larger failure; a different (more serious?) norm applies. It is of the essence of having really pulled off the new action, and not just the pre-conventional ur-action, that this new failing is in the offing. That is the final clue to answering **Q**.

In the case of full-on stating, the corresponding special failure is lying[9] (cf. Dummett. 1973, p. 356). One can mislead by merely conveying, but one cannot lie thereby. Indeed, this special failure is unique to the A-class speakings: only if one asserts/claims/states/avows/affirms/declares, etc., can one lie. None of the actions in the B-class can be lies. (Thus recall an argument that was given for taking my non-sentential cases to be statings, namely that the car salesman did not merely mislead, but lied to the potential buyer about how far the car had been driven. And if challenged about whether uses of non-linguistic signs—gestures, semaphore, etc.—could really rise to the level of statings, the same criterion could be brought to bear. The witness lied on the stand with his hand gesture, so he did not merely convey that things occurred in such-and-such fashion, he full-on stated that they did.) What's more, precisely where it is hard to tell whether someone has genuinely stated, it will be hard to tell whether their action was genuinely lie-prone. Returning to the infamous example with which I began, given that 'sexual relations' in a legal setting applies strictly only to intercourse, it has been hotly contested whether President Bill Clinton, in uttering the sentence 'I did not have sexual relations with that woman' during a television interview, merely misled or lied. This is indeed a hard case, and maybe not just epistemically. It suggests that there may be no sharp line between cases of lying and cases of merely misleading. Far from posing a problem for my suggestion, however, I take it to be strong evidence for a deep connection: those who think Clinton lied, think he full-on stated; those who think he merely

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[9] For present purposes, I remain agnostic on the ethical status of lies: Are they *per se* bad? Is lying always, or ever, ethically worse than misleading? What matters here is the strong parallelism between stating/merely conveying on the one hand and lying/merely misleading on the other. Again, see Saul, 2013. By the way, I obviously don't mean to suggest that the only way a full-on statement may fail is by being a lie. Being poorly evidenced, for instance, is also a failing. That latter failing, however, is shared with the B-class speakings, whereas being lie-prone is not.

misled the audience, think he merely conveyed; and those who are unsure whether he lied, are unsure whether he stated.[10]

There is an obvious problem with this final clue. If one asks what the difference is between lying and misleading, the immediate answer will be (something like): in lying one must full-on state something (which one takes to be false, with deceptive intent, etc.) We thus have a rather tight circle, or maybe even a single Janus-faced action-type. Nonetheless, emphasizing the connection to lying is essential. It drives home, as I will stress immediately below, that full-on stating has a special forensic status. Equally, it connects the distinction between the A-class and the B-class to things like different sanctions, moral attitudes, etc., so that it becomes clear why that contrast matters.

One last thought, before connecting all the dots. Being lie-prone seems to be a sufficient condition for full-on stating. Why not, then, rest content with that as an answer to **Q**? I see the attraction of this idea. Nonetheless, I resist it. My reason is that I conceive of being lie-prone as a consequence of being a full-on statement. And I think of the normative category *lie* as owing its existence to that of an (intimately related) kind of action. Hence I don't want to analyze the cause in terms of the effect, even if they are as tightly intertwined as I take them to be. An analogy may help here. Though only promises are subject to the failing of promise-breaking, and only marriages are subject to the failing of adultery, it would nonetheless be philosophically unsatisfying to individuate promises in terms of promising-breaking, and marriage in terms of adultery. That's because promise-breaking owes its existence to promising, rather than vice versa. Similarly for adultery and marriage. And similarly for full-on stating and lying. Coming at it another way, one of the things I want to understand is: What undergirds the contrast between the A-class and B-class speakings? And the observation that only the former are correlated with being lie-prone does not adequately address this question.

4. The Positive View: Tying the Clues Together

To sum up so far, I have been addressing **Q**: What distinguishes full-on stating a proposition from merely communicating it? Towards addressing it, I have presented

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[10] Michaelson (2016, this issue) has also recently stressed, as a speech act theoretic test, the importance of being lie-prone. Though his view complements mine to a high degree, I find myself parting company with him in two important ways. First, he deploys terminology which I find misleading, saying that being lie-prone tests for 'semantic content'. See Ezcurdia and Stainton, 2013 for why this choice of words is very problematic. Relatedly, and sounding a more substantive note, Michaelson seems to suppose that one can judge of a sentence whether it is lie-prone. He says, for instance, that neither 'France is hexagonal' nor 'Chocolate is tasty', even when uttered sincerely, can be used to lie. To my mind, because background facts about the world and speakers' intentions play such a far-ranging a role, it won't do to single out expression types, or even expression types relative to a set of contextual parameters, as lie-prone or not. (To my mind, this is like trying to classify *sentence types* in terms of whether they can be clever quips, insightful rebuttals, cuttingly ironic, etc.)

five clues from Michael Dummett, speech act theory/functional linguistics, and moral theory:

- Full-on stating is conventional;
- It is constitutively tied to the declarative mood, but not in the sense that using a declarative sentence is either necessary or sufficient for stating;
- Languages contain tools with functions, and the declarative mood is one such tool;
- The existence of such tools may underwrite the existence of *sui generis* conventionally-constituted actions, including full-on stating;
- Such actions often exhibit normative failures specific to them, including in this instance being lie-prone.

It should be fairly clear how the clues cohere. Just in case, however, I present a (manifestly historically false) 'just so' story. **i)** Prior to the existence of full-on stating, there was quasi-stating, a language-transcendent action of, say, sharing information, expressing beliefs, etc. **ii)** It proved convenient and efficient to have a conventional linguistic tool specifically for quasi-stating, so the declarative mood came to be. **iii)** When that function-bearing device arose, it birthed a new *sui generis* conventionally-constituted kind of action, full-on stating. **iv)** That novel speech act brought in its wake a novel way in which an agent may fail, namely he may lie. Put in terms of another metaphor, a new kind of 'target' arose, such that one who hits it can go morally wrong in a new way. **v)** Finally, clever and creative people found ways to achieve the *sui generis* action, full-on stating, without using the job-laden device—thereby nonetheless incurring the new sort of 'normative risk', i.e. opening themselves up to the novel means of failing, the one unique to the A-class actions, lying.

The resulting answer to **Q**, in light of this, is: full-on stating is that *sui generis* action which is constitutively tied to: (α) the special-purpose tool for quasi-stating, the declarative mood and (β) the specific moral failing of being lie-prone. However, while being lie-prone is necessary and sufficient for being a token full-on stating, the use of a declarative sentence is not.

Consider, finally, how this answer overcomes the problems which plagued Dummett's initial account. Recall that it faced two. Declarative sentences are neither necessary nor sufficient for stating; and it was unclear how to individuate the declarative mood in a non-circular way. Regarding the first problem, the solution is built right into the positive story: offering necessary and sufficient conditions is simply not in the offing. What's more, by embracing the idea that declarative sentences are tools with functions, one can defensibly divorce a satisfying analysis of full-on stating from providing objective criteria for sorting token acts with respect to their statementhood. This is merely a consequence of a general feature of tools: e.g. it can be perfectly reasonable to individuate the action of hammering in terms of a tool with a function, but to admit that not all hammer-uses will be hammer-ings, and not all hammerings will be done using hammers. Or, to revert to a much closer analogy, the device 'I promise' is neither necessary nor sufficient for pulling

off a promise. One can produce these words in the wrong circumstances, and not promise; and one can promise by other means. (These strike me as potential examples of the latter. *A* says 'I need you to promise that you will drive me to San Francisco tomorrow'. *B* might reply with any of the following and thereby promise: 'You can 100% count on me'; 'There is absolutely no need to worry'; 'I'm the most reliable chauffeur you'll ever meet'.) Nonetheless, one can explicate the *sui generis* action of promising in terms of the verb 'to promise', and the ur-action it serves to fulfill.

Thinking back to Dummett's second problem, my proposal is this: filling in from (2) one's preferred way of conceiving of the task to be achieved, any linguistic device which has the *function* of achieving said action is a declarative. To repeat, it is essential that the view is not: declaratives are those expressions which are used to full-on state. Some are not so used; and some of the things so used are not declarative sentences.[11] Allow me to stress equally, since this is easy to miss, that the declarative sentence is not a tool *for full-on stating*. It is a tool for something along the lines of (2a), (2b), (2c) or (2d). (Thereby is a vicious circle avoided.) Importantly, this proposal obviates the need to find a single formal correlate that identifies the declarative mood, whether across languages or within them. If English has, say, half a dozen grammatical forms which share this function, then it has half a dozen kinds of declarative mood. So be it.

5. Four Implications

It may help explain my view further to revisit some of the issues mentioned at the outset, and which motivate my interest in **Q**.

One implication of borrowing heavily from Dummett is that the declarative sentence really does have a certain primacy when it comes to understanding full-on stating in particular and the A-class in general. The (very limited) primacy amounts to this: those non-standard means of hitting the properly assertoric 'target', which I have emphasized in previous publications, are parasitic on the use of the standard special-purpose device. The latter *constitutively creates* the 'target'; hence, without the standard device, there is nothing there to hit. Coming at the point another way, in a speech community with no standard device for quasi-stating (i.e. no declaratives)—something which is admittedly very hard to imagine, given the extraordinary usefulness of such a tool—there would be no such contrast as

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[11] Brandom (1994) toys with the idea that the declaratives are those formatives which are typically used to assert. This is closer to the truth, and merits recognition. Still, I prefer my own formulation, because plain-old phrases such as 'From Spain', 'John's father', 'Nice dress', etc., are *quite typically* used to make statements, but are nonetheless not sentences in any helpful sense—not syntactically, not in terms of their logico-semantic Montagovian type, and not even in terms of 'their linguistic function'.

1 *merely conveying versus full-on stating*. Thus in such a community, the very idea of
2 non-sentential stating lacks a clear sense.

3   Another implication arises from placing normative differences, i.e. being
4 lie-prone, center-stage. Doing so affords another strategy for rescuing the contrast
5 between full-on stating and merely pragmatically conveying, in the face of familiar
6 and recalcitrant empirical obstacles. I take Grice's (1975) contrast between what is
7 said and what is merely implicated to remain of central importance. At the same
8 time, his rough and ready characterization of the former in terms of disambiguated
9 expression meaning and assignment of referents to context sensitive expressions
10 simply does not correspond to our intuitions about what is stated/asserted/claimed.
11 The examples are familiar and legion. As John Perry noted, 'It's raining' can be
12 used to full-on state that it is raining here, but the location of the rain does not
13 seem to be afforded by either an ambiguity in 'rain' or a context-sensitive 'slot'
14 for location. François Récanati pointed out that 'I have had breakfast' can be
15 used to full-on state that I have had breakfast today. Dan Sperber and Deirdre
16 Wilson noted that a sentence like 'Randy's painting was ruined' can be used to
17 full-on state that the painting which Randy owned was ruined. And, as Charles
18 Travis stressed, 'The leaf is green' can be used to full-on state that it is painted
19 green. In these and literally dozens of other cases, the result of disambiguation and
20 saturation of context-sensitive slots need not be what is intuitively stated. (Again,
21 see Carston, 2002, for an exceptionally penetrating overview.) Over the last thirty
22 years or so, and in light of such cases, linguists and philosophers have attempted
23 to modify Grice's original proposal. Many of us, however, have begun to see these
24 attempts as a litany of valiant failures. (Saul, 2013, is a very valuable survey. See also
25 Borg, 2016.) This can make one pessimistic that it is possible to specify, in terms
26 of mental representations, physical context and linguistic formatives, conditions
27 which are necessary and sufficient for performing a full-on statement; and that,
28 in its turn, might make one skeptical about the original distinction. No such
29 pessimistic conclusion follows, however, if one grants that full-on stating should be
30 conceived of forensically. One shouldn't expect to find a physico–psycho–linguistic
31 correlate of actions so individuated. (Compare, for instance, trying to characterize
32 the one constant syntactico-semantic and psychological correlate of: perjured court
33 testimony; a legitimate sales contract; a successful marriage ceremony; a sincere
34 promise.) The misstep of the pessimist, who feels the temptation to abandon
35 Grice's distinction, lies in looking for such an exceptionless correlate in the first
36 place. Full-on stating is simply not that kind of thing. To put the point in terms
37 of disciplines, it may be that full-on stating is not a kind that a naturalistic the-
38 ory of linguistic meaning and communication requires: arguably, e.g., cognitive
39 psychologists and descriptive semanticists can eschew the entire notion, and with
40 it the contrast between the A– and B–classes. This realization notwithstanding,
41 the distinction should not be wholly eliminated because of its central place in a
42 norm-oriented theory of speech acts, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, forensic
43 linguistics, etc.

This latter observation is intimately related to a third implication, namely how one can tell whether a full-on statement has been made. For very general reasons familiar since Hume, knowledge of 'purely descriptive facts' (which, for the sake of argument, I will take linguistico-psychological facts to be) doesn't yield knowledge of normative ones. One cannot know an 'ought'-fact on the basis solely of 'is'-facts. But on the view here proposed, to know whether a full-on statement has taken place is to know, among other things, whether a certain quite specific normative upshot is in place—specifically, whether the action is lie-prone. This is uncomfortable, but it is ubiquitous: to repeat, it isn't a point specifically about stating/claiming or promising, but holds also for illocutionary actions generally, such as whether a ship actually got named, whether a bet or a marriage was genuinely undertaken, etc. I hasten to add that skepticism does not follow. My point is not that which linguistic expressions are used, what the physical context is, what the interlocutors' mental attitudes are, etc., provide no clue about whether a full-on statement took place. That would be absurd. It's that the former kind of facts do not entail the latter. Put concretely: an observer could install herself in a room for half an hour, note all linguistic expressions used, time, location, what's being pointed at, and so on, yet not know whether the speaker *S* full-on stated anything (and if so what), because there could be defeaters in the 'deep' background. What's more, it bears stressing that people typically do know lots of normative facts. And speakers can intend to full-on state, intending thereby its specific moral entrainments. (Just as, once the acts of promising or betting are in place, one can intend to perform those very acts.) So, given the right normative knowledge, one can definitely come to know whether a full-blown statement has been made. To put the main point another way, while we can rescue Grice's 'say-implicate' contrast by construing it forensically, there will arise implications for how one can tell whether an agent has full-on stated.

Finally, if my view of full-on stating/claiming is correct, at least some of the mass of recent work in epistemology—especially, e.g., on norms of assertion—may have been slightly misdirected. (I say 'may' because it's possible that participants in these debates are using 'assertion' in a technical way—just as, for example, 'testimony' is unquestionably used as a term of art in epistemology.) Insofar as the disputants intend to be addressing assertion in the ordinary sense of full-on stating, it would seem that they have focused on the wrong thing. What really matters, for at least some of this tangle of issues, is not really stating *per se*, but quasi-stating, i.e. what the A-class and B-class speakings share—or anyway, what the fully propositional ones share. Full-on stating is, I have insisted, *ethically* quite special; but philosophers may need to reflect further upon how *epistemically* special it is. (Similarly for metaphysics and logic: for instance, if one wishes to reduce truth to some kind of performance, one shouldn't select full-on stating/claiming/asserting; truth arises much more broadly. And entailments do not only hold among full-blown-stated contents. For example, what is conversationally implicated by 'Andy's car is parked at Betty's house' has them. These otherwise obvious facts are obscured by the bad terminological habit of equating truth conditions with 'what is said'.)

6. Concluding Remarks

I end by underscoring what I have and have not done. I introduced and elaborated upon a question, namely **Q**. My answer, to phrase things another way, is that full-on stating is distinctively conventionalized in a way that conversationally implicating, hinting, giving to understand, etc., are not. Specifically, full-on stating is constitutively tied to a particular conventional, linguistic, function-bearing device, the declarative sentence. To full-on state that *p* is to hit the target which owes its existence to that special-purpose device. It is therefore also to make one's action lie-prone. Nonetheless, once that *sui generis* 'target action' is there to be aimed for, a person may reach it without using the special-purpose tool—e.g. one may full-on state using a mere word or phrase. (And one may equally use a declarative and fail to perform the corresponding action, e.g. in a joke or a play.) Full-on stating is thus multiply analogous to 'promising that *p* is true': both are *sui generis* actions with a failing specific to them; both are tied to a specific conventional device; and in neither case does an analysis of the action itself demand an account of the various ways a particular person might manage to perform it.

As for what I haven't done, I have not shown that other views, including (1a.i) through (1d.iii), must fail to provide alternative satisfactory answers to **Q**; instead, I have offered a novel account of full-on stating, and sketched some of its implications. I have not explained the differences among the speakings within the A-class, nor how the actions within the B-class differ. I have not given an exhaustive taxonomy of speakings into my two classes, since some contents—use-theoretic meanings (such as register), semantic presuppositions, conventional implicatures, etc.—seem to fall into neither. (Notice in particular that, while all three fail to satisfy one of the hallmarks of stating, namely being lie-prone, they all involve conventional features of sentences.) Nor, most egregiously, have I said what exactly it is for a 'special purpose linguistic device to have a function'. Instead, I merely offered some examples and some hand-waving remarks about how linguistic forms might acquire functions. All of these, however, are topics for another day. Maybe not even that.

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