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How to Conclude Practical Argument in a Multi-Party Debate: A Speech Act Analysis

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In this paper I analyse various speech acts which can conclude a practical argument in a multi-party debate (*argumentative polylogue*). To this end, I offer a detailed scheme of practical argument suitable for an external pragmatic account (rather than internal cognitive). Speech acts concluding practical argument – promises, vows, advice, proposals, and others – differ chiefly depending on the agent of action (me, us, you, them) and the conclusion's illocutionary strength.

KEYWORDS: argumentative polylogue, illocution, practical argument, practical reasoning, Searle, speech acts

1. INTRODUCTION

Practical reasoning and theoretical reasoning are typically defined as, respectively, reasoning about what to do and about what to believe. Yet, the innocent "about" might be quite misleading here, and in a dual sense. The distinction does not in fact pertain to the *content* of the *premises* which we are reasoning about, such as when we reason (whether practically or theoretically) "about" the elections in Poland or the corruption in FIFA. Rather, it refers to the *function* of the *conclusion* of reasoning. We thus reason "about" what we conclude we should do about the elections or what we conclude we can believe about FIFA. In this straightforward functionalist approach, the analysis of the function of the conclusion of reasoning is, by definition, crucial. This is my task for this paper. In what follows, I will scrutinise the ways we can conclude our practical arguments in a public debate, especially a multi-party debate (*polylogue*). To this end, I will employ the basic framework of the speech act theory.

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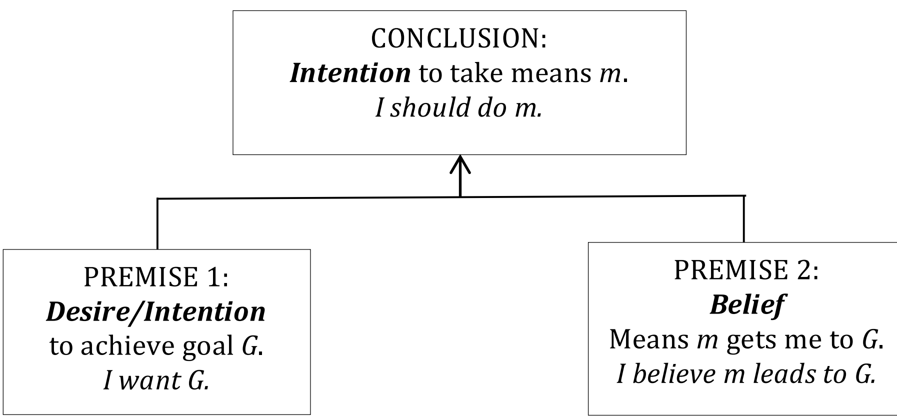
2. WHAT CONCLUDES PRACTICAL REASON

2.1 Attitudes or acts of a reasoning agent

Philosophical accounts of practical reasoning (henceforth: PR) are still dominated by a first-person perspective of a single reasoning agent – rather than by a communicative approach grounded in the theory of argument (Habermas, 1984).[1] Accordingly, the philosophical discussion over how to conclude PR revolves around the issue of the nature of the propositional attitude, or intentional state, which properly concludes PR. The conclusion is a result of reasoning from other states (premises) such as desires/intentions and beliefs (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The basic scheme of practical reasoning



According to Searle, there is "a bewildering variety" of accounts of the elements of PR: they can be "desires, intentions, fiats, imperatives, norms, *noemata*, actions" (2001, p. 242) – and many of these can feature as PR's conclusions. From the weakest to the strongest conclusion, one can recognise the following continuum:

- disposition to act (*pro-attitude, secondary desire*)
- decision to act (*prior intention*)
- intention to act (*intention-in-action*)
- action itself

[1] There are, of course, important nuances: internal first-person approaches (e.g., Pollock, 1995), cannot be equated with external first-person approaches (Searle, 2001), which in turn are different from external communicative approaches (Grice, 1957; see Searle, 2014).

The crucial difference of opinion exists between those who think action itself is the proper conclusion of PR (Aristotle, *EN*; Searle, 2001, p. 136) and those who think this is ridiculous, for reasoning is limited to propositional entities and cannot extend beyond them – therefore an intention to act is as far as we can get (e.g., Broome, 2013).

Clearly, we are dealing here with a single reasoning agent pondering over the right course of action for her to take. This would be perfectly fine if the extrapolation from the simplest unit of individual reasoning to various forms of collective reasoning was warranted. But it seems it is not. According to David Hitchcock (2002), an individualistic approach is at risk of producing a "solipsistic, egoistic and unsocial" understanding of PR. Referring to Pollock's (1995) account of PR where the basic scheme of *Beliefs*, *Desires* and *Intentions* is supplemented by a reasoning agent's *Likings*, Hitchcock describes it as solipsistic, since "there is no provision for verbal input from, or verbal output to, other autonomous rational agents, still less for back-and-forth discussion, whether argumentative or non-argumentative" (2002, p. 254). Further, "it is egoistic, in that the function of the entire system is to make the world more to the liking of that system itself" (2002, p. 254). As a result, "nothing [...] permits rational criticism" (2002, p. 255) of an agent's hierarchy of desires and likings. Finally, the "model is unsocial, in that his [Pollock's] rational agent does not (and cannot) belong to any groups of autonomous rational agents with governance structures for making decisions about the actions of the group" (2002, p. 255). As Hitchcock concludes, "[a] comprehensive theory of good practical reasoning would have to remedy all three of these lacks" (2002, p. 255).

2.2 The speech act of proposal

A good starting point towards such a remedy is a shift in the agent of the conclusion from an individual "I" to plural "we". In this case, crucially, the conclusion of PR – "so *I* should do *m*" – would be reformulated to "so let *us* do *m*".[2] This shifts the focus away from *the internal propositional attitude of intention* to *the externalised speech act of proposal*.[3]

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[2] In Walton's formulation, the conclusion of PR in "multi-agent deliberation" is a "practical ought-statement": *We* ought to do it (2006, p. 204).

[3] Notice, though, that Broome, somewhat inconsistently, also speaks of speech acts which the reasoner performs to herself: "the speech-act you perform is the act of expressing an attitude of yours" (Broome, 2013, p. 253). As we know from the Speech Act Theory, speech acts do much more than just express (propositional) attitudes, such as intentions and desires. Most importantly,

Accordingly, the analyses of proposals have attracted much attention in argumentation theory (Aakhus, 2006; Ihnen Jory, forth.; Kauffeld, 1998; Walton, 2006).

Importantly, proposals straightforwardly connect PR to an argumentative activity of deliberation, a link stressed since Aristotle (see Dascal, 2005). Aakhus analyses proposals in deliberation as speech acts located between Searle's (1969, 1975) *commissives* (such as promises) and *directives* (such as requests) (see Table 1). Commissives are about future acts of the Speaker who, in performing the speech act, commits her/himself to this act ("I will clean the room tomorrow"). Directives are about future acts of the Hearer, whom the speaker wants to get to do something ("Clean the room tomorrow, will you?"). Proposals concern future acts of *both* the Speaker and the Hearer, and their illocutionary point is "to enlist H[earer] in mutually bringing about [act] A" (Aakhus, 2006, p. 406). They would thus be typically expressed by constructions such as "Let's (clean the room tomorrow)!" or "How about we (clean the room tomorrow)?"

According to Aakhus, "[w]hen proposing, a speaker puts forward a future act that requires a joint performance by the speaker and hearer" (2006, p. 405) and, additionally, "the speaker frames the proposed actions as mutually beneficial" (2006, p. 404). In this way, proposing is a speech act through which the conclusion of PR is put forward for consideration in the argumentative activity of deliberation: "A proposer (P) puts forward the proposal in part to get agreement but also to test for doubts and objections [...] that may in turn help P design a more acceptable proposal" (Aakhus, 2006, p. 406). Therefore, proposing belongs to this kind of illocutionary acts in which "speakers necessarily or typically incur probative burdens", that is, "a speaker cannot, other things being equal, responsibly dismiss an addressee's demands for proof" (Kauffeld, 1998, p. 247). What follows is that felicitous proposals concern actions which are: 1) communicated and open for discussion, thus surely not solipsistic; 2) mutually beneficial rather than purely egoistic; 3) jointly performed, and therefore social. In this way, the analysis of proposals addresses all three concerns regarding individualistic approaches to PR identified by Hitchcock. However, as I will argue below – even if a paradigmatic case – a proposal is only one of the possible speech acts which can convey the conclusions of PR.

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they are communicative, rather than purely mental, acts which therefore always involve at least two parties: the Speaker and the Hearer.

Table 1: The felicity conditions for requesting, proposing, and promising (Aakhus, 2006, p. 406)

Act	Request (Searle, 1969)	**Propose**	Promise (Searle, 1969)
Propositional Content	Future act A of H.	**Future act A of H+S.**	Future act A of S.
Preparatory Condition	H is able to do A. S believes H is able to do A. It is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the normal course of events of his own accord.	**H and S are able to contribute to the accomplishment of A.** **It is not obvious to both S and H that either S or H can do A of their own accord in the normal course of events.** **That A will leave neither S nor H worse off than not doing A.**	S is able to do A. S believes S is able to do A. It is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events of his own accord.
Sincerity Condition	S wants H to do A.	**S believes A will mutually benefit H and S or that if it benefits S it will leave H no worse off.**	S intends that in uttering to do A he is under the obligation to do A.
Essential Condition	Counts as an attempt to get H to do A.	**Counts as an attempt to enlist H in mutually bring-ing about A.**	Counts as an attempt to commit S to do A.

2.3 Proviso: Any speech act can conclude PR

All speech acts, including argumentative speech acts, are, well, acts. They are intentionally performed human acts, based on some kind of linguistic, cultural and societal conventions (Austin, 1962; Strawson, 1964; Searle, 1969). As such, while they may be performed without profound deliberation – think of common expressives such as “Ouch!” or

"Sorry!" – speech acts typically result from some prior judgment. That is, we need to practically reason, inside of us, to perform this and no other speech act in this very situation. In any communicative activity, we thus constantly conclude our internal deliberations with a conclusion "I should say X now" or "I should perform speech act of the kind Y (apologise, deny, object to, approve)." In this respect, there is similar PR behind commissive speech acts such as "So I shall catch the 2:30 train to London" and assertions such as "So the cat is on the mat."

In Searle's worlds:

> There is thus a sense in which all reasoning is practical, because it all issues in doing something. In the case of theoretical reason, the doing is typically a matter of accepting a conclusion or hypothesis on the basis of argument or evidence. Theoretical reason is, thus, a special case of practical reason. (Searle, 2001, pp. 90-91)

For Searle, this is the consequence of all speech acts being acts which in their very performance bring about certain commitments on the speaker. And a commitment to defend the truth of a "theoretical" statement is not so much different from a "practical" commitment to fulfil a promise or offer: in both cases, when prompted, one has to produce "argument or evidence." Already for Austin (1962), the fundamental initial distinction between "constatives" and "performatives" eventually collapses in the realm of various illocutionary *acts* defined through their "happiness conditions." Quite tellingly, pragma-dialecticians face a similar complication. While the speech acts of accepting and non-accepting a standpoint at the confrontation stage of a critical discussion are consistently classified as commissives (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, pp. 101-102; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, pp. 64-65), "the negative variants of the commissives are themselves strictly speaking to be regarded as assertives rather than commissives" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 65, n. 46).

In empirically-oriented studies, the behind-the-scenes working of PR in argumentative activities has been well documented by Hample (2005; Hample, Paglieri, & Na, 2011), Paglieri (2013), and others. In general, forms of instrumental or strategic PR, characterised by a cost-benefit analysis of what and how efficiently one can achieve with a given argumentative contribution, have been identified. Arguers decide to perform and edit their arguments based on considerations such as chance of success, identity and relation management, negative and positive politeness, situational appropriateness, as well as truth and relevance of their arguments (Hample, 2005, Ch. 4). While these results have not been cast in the language of PR about what to do, they clearly can be.

To conclude, there is PR behind performance of any speech act, including assertives and all argumentative speech acts. This, however, is different from analysing the speech acts presented as conclusions of one's practical reasoning – which, when publicly performed, can better be called practical argumentation (henceforth: PA). Concluding that "Aristotle could well have written *Rhetoric* all by himself" requires very different supporting arguments than the conclusion "let's employ Aristotle."

3. DETAILED SCHEME OF PRACTICAL ARGUMENTATION

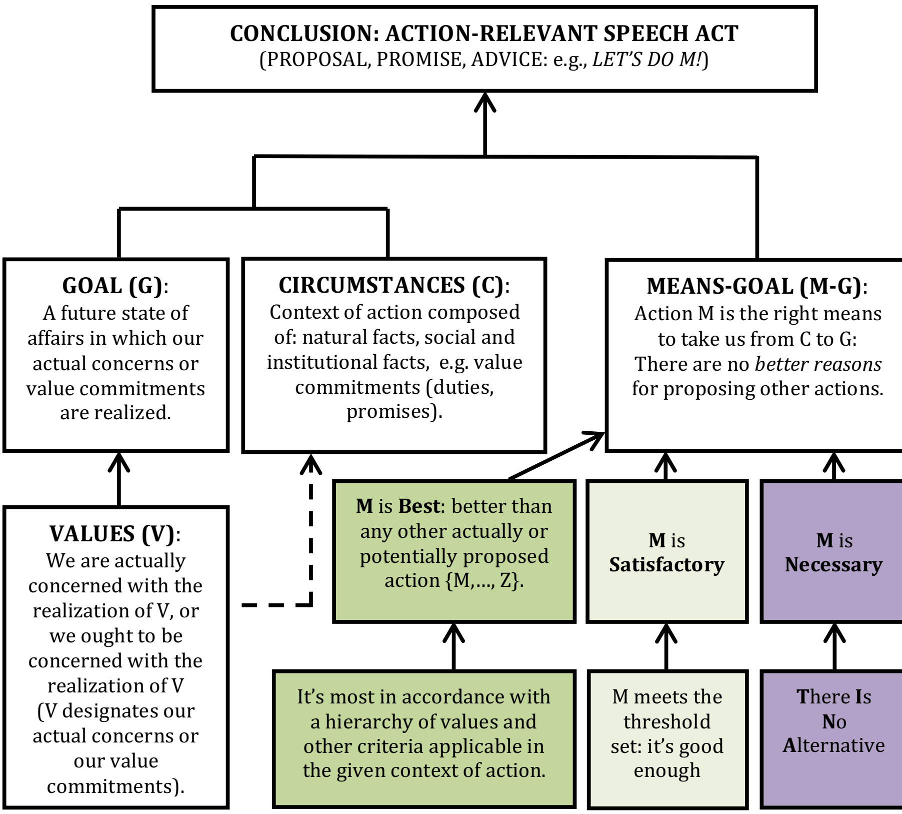
Before examining the various forms of conclusion of PA, it seems necessary to understand what PA in general consists of. The scheme of PA presented in Figure 2 stems from a rich literature on practical argument in philosophy, Artificial Intelligence, and argumentation theory (see Lewiński, 2014, for a more detailed discussion). In particular, it is derived from a recent comprehensive account of PA by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012). While referring to their work for an in-depth analysis of all the premises constituting the scheme (*Circumstances*, *Goal*, *Values*), I will briefly mention five basic advantages of the scheme, focussing further on the last one: the speech acts which can conclude PA.

First, the scheme shapes the framework of relevance for (multi-party) deliberation. Typically, different parties argue for the contextual betterness of their proposals for action {M, N, O… Z} (see the "M is Best" box). Their deliberation develops then as an *argumentative polylogue* (Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014) along the lines of possible disagreements over the various elements of the structure (basic premises, inference rules and contextual criteria).

Second, the scheme distinguishes between context-independent and context-dependent elements of PA. Its basic general structure (as per Fairclough & Fairclough: all the white boxes in Figure 2) remains constant, while contextual criteria for choosing "the right means" (below the diagram) fluctuate.

Third, the scheme clarifies the notion of the means-goal premise. This premise is grounded in one of the three basic inference licences warranting the choice of "the right means" taking us from the current (unwelcome) *Circumstances* to the (desired) *Goals*. We can thus warrant our conclusions by claiming either that the means are necessary, or that they are satisfactory (good enough), or that they are the best among all the possible alternatives (see Lewiński, 2015, for a detailed analysis).

Figure 2: The scheme of Practical Argumentation



Derived from: Fairclough & Fairclough (2012)

Possible, contextually-determined decision criteria:

- direct or indirect costs and benefits (negative and beneficial consequences / side effects)
- opportunity costs
- practical feasibility
- ethical, moral, or legal implications
- likelihood of realization or of success
- conformance with other goals or strategies, their timing, duration, or location

(derived from: McBurney, Hitchcock, & Parsons, 2007, p. 99)

Fourth, it provides a new account of how to criticise and evaluate PA. It clearly demarcates the attacks on the main premises (Circumstances, Goals, Values, Means-Goals), from those concerning context-dependent decision criteria, and from criticisms of the inference licences related to the type of inferential step made (necessary, satisfactory, or the best means) (see Lewiński, 2015).

Fifth, the scheme defines its conclusion in terms of a class of action-relevant speech acts, thus pointing to a "unity in diversity" of what we can argue for in PA.

I will now apply this scheme to the analysis of an actual case of complex practical argumentation and then discuss in detail the last point.

4. CASE STUDY: KEEP IT IN THE GROUND

On the 16th of March 2015, the British newspaper *The Guardian* launched a media campaign to divest (dis-invest) from fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. The campaign was entitled "Keep it in the ground" and included, at its start, a very short petition, a "note from Alan Rusbridger, [*The Guardian's*] editor-in-chief", a "full story" in which Rusbridger presents an elaborate argument for the petition, as well as other multi-media materials (videos, frequently asked questions, interviews, reportage) related to the dangers of our massive continuing reliance on fossil fuels.[4]

Let me start with a little note on the very slogan of the campaign: "Keep it in the ground." As an utterance in an imperative mood, it seems to be addressed to others, as a directive speech act (request? command? plea?). However, given the nature of such campaigns, and the immediate contextual and co-textual information, it can be better understood as elided "(*We* should) keep it in the ground" or, even better, "(Let *us*) keep it to the ground" – by analogy with "(Let's) give peace a chance" and other such slogans. Here, the addressee – the agent of PA – is the inclusive we.

In what follows, I focus on Rusbridger's "full story" entitled: "The argument for divesting from fossil fuels is becoming overwhelming."[5] This "story" or "argument" – in fact, a well-structured complex argument – is introduced with the following lead:

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[4] See *http://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2015/mar/16/keep-it-in-the-ground-guardian-climate-change-campaign*.

[5] See *http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/16/argument-divesting-fossil-fuels-overwhelming-climate-change?CMP=share_btn_tw*. All following quotations are from this source.

> As progressive institutions, the Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust should commit to taking their money out of the companies that are driving global warming, says the Guardian's editor-in-chief as he launches our climate campaign.

As is appropriate for a journalistic article, it starts with a conclusion. Here, it is clearly a conclusion of a PA – that some agents (the Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust) "should" undertake certain actions ("should commit to taking their money out of the companies that are driving global warming").

According to Rusbridger, "[t]here are two arguments in favour of moving money out of the biggest and most aggressive fossil fuel companies – one moral, the other financial." In saying this, he explicitly refers to two basic types of PR recognised in philosophy: on the one hand, *moral* or *value-based* reasoning, and on the other hand, *instrumental*, *prudential*, *strategic* or *means-end* reasoning (Gauthier, 1963; see Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Walton, 2007). The moral argument is analogous to "the push to pull money out of tobacco, arms, apartheid South Africa – or even slavery." Investing big money in the fossil fuel business, even if profitable, is *per se* a bad thing to do – just like making money from arms or slave trade is. The chief value in the fossil fuel argument is generational justice, that is, "concern for future generations": through our current recklessness, we are burdening the future generations with all the negative consequences of climate change. *The Guardian's* financial (or "pragmatic") argument is, interestingly, much more profoundly argued for, likely with the view towards the target agents of change, financial managers. This argument is best summarised in a quote from the Bank of England's deputy head of supervision for banks and insurance companies, Paul Fisher: "As the world increasingly limits carbon emissions, and moves to alternative energy sources, investments in fossil fuels – a growing financial market in recent decades – may take a huge hit." That is to say, those who do not care about the moral implications of climate change *per se*, or even do not believe in it at all, might be driven out of further investment by a prudential risk-assessment.

The "Keep it in the ground" campaign – as is appropriate for any other campaign – has a precise target: managers of endowments, investment and pension funds and, very specifically, the Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust. It is clear in the text, though, that the problems of climate change policies and energy models based on fossil fuels have a number of other relevant stakeholders. All of them can potentially be the target of the campaign, the addressees of its arguments and, eventually, the agents of the conclusion of the argument. Rusbridger mentions that at first *The Guardian* thought of addressing "governments" and "politicians" in general ("MPs, presidents, prime ministers and members of congress") – but political action on climate change has proven far from satisfying: "the people who represent us around the UN negotiating tables have moved inches, not miles." That's why *The Guardian* decided to address the above-mentioned big institutional investors instead. Another stakeholder in the "story" are the scientists, here endowed with authority and treated with reverence: "If only science were enough […] finance will eventually have to surrender to physics […] the physics is unarguable." Of course, the general public is another crucial stakeholder; here, it is divided into present and future generations, with the responsibilities laid on those who can decide and act now. Finally, there are the fossil-fuel companies' directors, who – by the logic of global capitalistic economy – are compelled to "behaviour that is overwhelmingly driven by short-term returns."

We can pretty straightforwardly reconstruct the complex structure of PA from Rusbridger's argument. The current *Circumstance* is that of a climate change crisis caused by the overreliance on fossil fuels. This premise is briefly stated in the very first sentence of the piece: "The world has much more coal, oil and gas in the ground than it can safely burn." To address, or at least attenuate, this crisis we need to strive for a concrete *Goal*: "80% of the known coal reserves will have to stay underground, along with half the gas and a third of the oil reserves." Attaining this goal is necessary "if we and our children are to have a reasonable chance of living stable and secure lives 30 or so years from now." In general, the main *Values* and duties underlying the entire argument are "concern for future generations," "the protection of the public," "human health and science." But which means can be conducive to reaching this *Goal* and embodying the *Values*? As already mentioned, in *The Guardian's* view the best action to take ("the best" *Means-Goal* premise) is to directly call to divest from major fossil fuel companies – rather than, for instance, "campaigning for a paragraph to be inserted into the negotiating text at the UN climate talks in Paris this December." Appropriately for deliberations, different options are thus considered and one is chosen as *the* option.

Finally, let us look at the *Conclusions* of the argument. These are explicitly indicated with the "so" connective:

> So we ask that the Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust commit now to divesting from the top 200 fossil fuel

> companies within five years. And that they immediately freeze any new investment in the same companies.

This, however, is not the only conclusion of the text: "We will, of course, suggest that the Guardian Media Group does the same, and keeps you informed about its own deliberations and decisions." Finally, the readers are requested to act on the argument too: "Please sign, retweet and generally spread news about the petition."

Shortly, we have here a rather motley assortment of conclusions, at least when compared to a typical first-person-singular conclusion of most PR, as examined in philosophy ("so I shall take the 2:30 train to London"). What can be done about it?

5. CONCLUSIONS AS SPEECH ACTS

I will argue that a speech act approach can bring about the required level of nuance to our understanding of the conclusions of PA. Luckily, one does not need to argue for a theoretical adequacy of using speech act theory in argumentation studies. This is a job done back in the 1980s – and ever since validated and extended (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984; Jacobs, 1989; Jacobs & Jackson, 1983; Snoeck Henkemans, 2014). With this background, we can ask a more detailed question: Which speech acts "convey" or "express" the conclusion of practical reasoning externalised in a text, that is, of practical argumentation?

As a preliminary, consider Searle's claim that "to function in deliberation a reason must be for a type of action, it must be for the agent, and it must be known to the agent" (2001, p. 99). PA, being public, takes care of the last condition all by itself: the reasons are openly presented so – as long as the "normal input and output conditions" for communication obtain (Searle, 1969, p. 57) – they are known to the agent. What remains to be analysed are the type of action and the type of agent that practical argumentation is "for."

Here, Fairclough & Fairclough's work is again very relevant. For them, the conclusion of PA has the form: "Claim for action: Agent (presumably) ought to do A." In their discussion of this point (2012, pp. 45-46), the Faircloughs notice that the first-person-singular analyses of PR opportunistically conceal the fact that the arguer and the agent of action are not always the same. We can, and often do, argue practically with someone else's action in the conclusion ("All things considered, the best thing to do now is for you to go and apologise"). Shortly, the philosophers' *agent-self* (Searle, 2001, p. 99), can be a self different than the arguer-self.

The scope of the claim for action is further complicated by formulations such as "ought to" or "should." These are notoriously ambiguous – if not semantically, then surely pragmatically. In everyday spoken language we manage this ambiguity very well trough skilful, even if unconscious, use of prosody and contextual information. Compare:

> You should *just* let him go – a friendly suggested advice.
> You should let him go *please* – an appeal or entreaty.
> You should let him go *right now* – a command.
>
> (Note that in spoken discourse, the illocutionary force equivalent to "just," "please," and "right now" can be conveyed solely by prosodic elements, such as rising/falling intonation or accent.)

Even in such simple examples the pragmatic analysis of expressions such as "should" leaves the notion of a "claim for action" largely underspecified. The analysis in the previous section likewise identified that, quite tellingly, *The Guardian* editors conclude their arguments with varied "claims for actions" by agents other than themselves. What exactly can this "claim" be?

In pragma-dialectics, all conclusions of argumentation can be reconstructed in terms of an assertive speech act of advancing a standpoint with its own set of felicity conditions such as the need to defend its propositional content with arguments, when challenged to do so (Houtlosser, 2002). This speech act, however, is defined at the level of "normatively" reconstructed, dialectically relevant moves in a critical discussion. In actual argumentation, at the level of "naïve" interpretations of speakers themselves, standpoints can be expressed through a variety of other conventional speech acts (see van Eemeren et al., 1993; Jacobs, 1989).

As analysed above, in the case of the conclusion of PA, the speech act of *proposal* has been considered a paradigm case (Aakhus, 2006; Ihnen Jory, forth.; Kauffeld, 1998; Walton, 2006). Proposals are speech acts located between *commissives* (such as promises) and *directives* (such as requests). Due to this peculiarity they belong – next to bets, offers and bids – to a class of speech acts inescapably requiring an action of *both* the speaker and the hearer. Taken together, commissives, directives, and their hybrids (such as proposals or offers) form a class of what I will call *action-relevant speech acts* (see Table 2) – in opposition to assertives (representatives), expressives and declarations. Action-relevant speech acts are characterised by their world-to-words direction of fit (Searle, 1975),[6] as their point is to get an agent (whether "I", "you", or "we") to perform an action that will bring the world into a state captured in the intentional content of the speech act. (By contrast, the goal of assertive speech acts with the words-to-world direction of fit is to capture in their content some existing state of the world.)[7] Naturally, so to speak, it is exactly speech acts with an "upward" (world-to-words, world-to-mind) direction of fit that PR is "about." Given their different direction of fit, the similarity between practical and theoretical reason breaks:

> The difference between theoretical and practical reason is in the direction of fit of the conclusion: mind-to-world, in the case of drawing a conclusion from evidence or premises, and world-to-mind, in the case of forming a decision and hence an intention on the basis of considerations. (Searle, 2001, p. 91)

Now, the elements of the class of action-relevant speech acts can be distinguished, as discussed above, along two dimensions: (1) their primary agent: the speaker, the hearer[8], or both; and (2) their illocutionary strength, ranging from the cancellable and nearly off-record to fully endorsed and on-record (see Jacobs & Jackson, 1983). Together, these two axes create an ordered matrix of "claims for action" – or speech acts which can conclude PA (see Table 2).

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[6] This, of course, has not escaped Searle's attention: "Since the direction of fit is the same for commissives and directives, it would give us a more elegant taxonomy if we could show that they are really members of the same category. I am unable to do this [...] and am left with the inelegant solution of two separate categories with the same direction of fit" (1975, p. 356). See also Searle, 2001, passim.

[7] Note that for Searle (1975) expressives have no direction of fit at all, while declarations have dual direction: both words-to-world and world-to-words.

[8] For the current purposes, it is inconsequential to carefully distinguish between the directly addressed Hearer ("you") and some potential, indirect Hearers, such as third parties ("s/he", "they"). These differences do not affect the analysis proposed here – they do, however, play a significant role in understanding how speech acts function in a multi-party context (Clark & Carlson, 1982; Levinson, 1988; Lewiński, 2013).

Table 2: Action-relevant speech acts as conclusions of practical argumentation

Strength / **Agent**	Weak (suggesting)	Neutral (committed)	Strong (solemn)
I / We (exclusive) *commissive*	Announcement (of intent)	Promise	Vow, Oath
You / Them *Directive*	Recommend-ation, Advice	Request, Appeal	Order, Call, Demand, Plea, Entreaty
We (inclusive) *commissive/directive*	Invitation	Proposal, Offer	Joint Pledge, Joint Guarantee

What is common to these various action-relevant speech acts is, of course, that they can all be complemented with the phrase "to do A": "I promise to do A," "I advise you to do A," "we guarantee to do A." Their strength – here divided for illustrative purposes into three levels – can quite straightforwardly be grasped by our ordinary intuitions: "I've thought about it a lot and: maybe we can go and apologise? / let's go and apologise / we must go and apologise."

Given these distinctions, we can now more precisely characterise the explicit conclusions of *The Guardian's* campaign: First, its very title – "Keep it in the ground" – in the interpretation suggested above, takes as an agent the *inclusive we*. It is, in terms of speech acts, a joint *proposal* or *pledge*: neutral-to-strong combination of a directive (you should) and a commissive (we should too). Second, the main conclusion is addressed to "them" – the Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust – and explicitly identified as a "call," a strong directive speech act. Third, "[we] the Guardian Media Group" – the *exclusive we* (us) – concludes the argument with an announcement (of intent) or "suggestion," a weak commissive speech act. Finally, "you," "the readers," are requested to spread the news. This is a conclusion expressed through a directive speech act, of a rather neutral force (it is neither only suggested nor strongly required or called for).

6. CONCLUSION ABOUT CONCLUSIONS

The most common formulation of the conclusion of practical argument contains the somewhat enigmatic, if not frightening, expression "I should" / "I ought to" perform a certain action. In this way, PR ends with something like a moral obligation or imperative. This, in the words of Searle, leads to "an unhealthy obsession with something called 'ethics' and 'morality'" and might explain why "the authors are seldom really interested in reasons for action, and are too eager to get to their favorite subject of ethics" (2001, p. 182). For Searle, reasons for action and their conclusions are best understood not through some external ethical systems containing moral obligations we should fulfil, but rather through "the human ability to create, through the use of language, a *public* set of commitments" (2001, p. 183, emphasis original). This set consists of the consequences of various speech acts we perform as a result of our practical argumentation. It is therefore the analysis of such speech acts which can illuminate the conclusions and consequences of our *public* practical argumentation. What I offered here is hardly more than a simple matrix ordered by the agent of the action and the illocutionary force of a speech act. Even this simple matrix, however, can help us better understand what practical argumentation is "about," that is, "why" or "what for" we argue practically. We argue to issue various speech acts: from innocuous private announcements and suggestions to strong commands and solemn joint pledges. This happens in ordinary, typically highly complex communicative situations with multiple speakers and hearers – in *polylogues*, that is (Lewiński, 2014). Further careful analysis of all such speech acts, in their natural context, with their respective felicity conditions and further consequences, can sharpen our understanding of practical argument.

Therefore, we should do it.

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What About Perlocution?
Commentary on Lewiński's How to Conclude Practical Argument in a Multi-Party Debate

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1. INTRODUCTION

There have traditionally been two broad avenues of research in linguistics, which carry over, to a fair extent, to the linguistically-oriented study of verbal communication. One of them encompasses data-driven approaches and builds on meticulous and fine-grained analyses of natural interaction in order to identify context-specific patterns of communicative *behaviour*. Many of these approaches (ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and interactionist approaches more generally, see e.g., Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff et al., 1977; Hutchby & Woofitt, 1988) emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in reaction to formal and abstract models of language analysis, and have made their scholarly endeavour all about the data: analysis primes over theoretical generalisation, which is often not the chief concern of such accounts. The other direction of research inherits its epistemology from logic and analytical philosophy, which share a concern for formalism, and has traditionally offered moderate to radical reductionist accounts. The idea, in this approach, is to establish, in essentialist terms, descriptively and explanatorily adequate scientific models of language (the Chomskyan tradition in generative syntax is a prime example of this type of research, which also extends to contemporary models in semantics, phonology, morphology and the philosophy of language). Somewhat divided in two, the linguistics research map seemed to offer two quite clearly delineated options, as each tradition was in its own place. And then pragmatics came along.

While Charles Morris is usually credited for the birth of pragmatic research, the study of language in use truly came forward in analytic circles with Austin, Searle and Grice's pioneering work in speech act theory and the study of rational principles of communication (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Grice, 1975, 1989). Speech act theoretic input paved the way for the analysis of communication as action – since

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saying came to be also construed as *doing*. Data-driven approaches in pragmatics saw an opportunity to hop on the P-train (i.e., the performative train), and kept on analysing language from a contextual perspective, now with improved systematicity, taking advantage of developing speech act classifications. As to formal approaches, they hopped on the I-train instead (i.e. implicature train), and were eager to pursue their forefathers' work on meaning by adding yet another layer to it, building on Searle's notion of indirectness and Grice's model of implicature – contemporary pragmatic research on meaning is thus largely devoted to the analysis of the different components of meaning.

Today, any piece of research on any aspect of communication that mentions the word *context* can roughly qualify as pragmatic research. A quick look at the programme of every biennial edition of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) conference – which usually features 5 to 6 days of talks with more than 10 parallel sessions – reveals that a large number of researchers investigating extremely different things all operate under the umbrella of pragmatics, since they all address various aspects of communication accounting for the complexity of human verbal exchanges.[1] So 60 years or so after the William James lectures (both Austin's and Grice's), pragmatics still very much looks like the waste-basket Mey (2001, p. 21) and Bar-Hillel (1971, p. 404) mention – at least judging by the internal disparity of all work conducted in the discipline.

However, in the past 10 years or so, increasingly more pragmatic work explores the juncture of both trends and tries to bring both of them together in an attempt to offer at the same time description- and theory-friendly accounts. I believe Lewiński's is an example.

In the remainder of this commentary I discuss, from a methodological and epistemological perspective, how I think Lewiński's analysis contributes to mutually strengthening both trends in pragmatics into one consistent model and how his proposal specifically highlights and rests on the pragmatic notion of perlocution, which pragmaticians have nearly systematically ignored in their accounts.

2. LEWIŃSKI'S PROPOSAL: A STEP CLOSER TO ECOLOGICAL VALIDITY

Lewiński's paper is an inquiry into the nature and function of the speech

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[1] See for example this year's (2015) programme of the conference at the University of Antwerp: *http://ipra.ua.ac.be/download.aspx?c=.CONFERENCE14&n=1476&ct=1476&e=15315*.

acts that can count as proper conclusions in patterns of practical argumentation (PA) which draws on speech act theory and pragma-dialectics. This proposal is at the same time descriptively and theoretically fertile. From a descriptive perspective, it offers a very detailed functional typology of the speech acts that may be used (and how they may be used) to verbalise conclusions in practical argumentation. On the theoretical front, analytical categories are functionally justified and Lewiński provides a model with enough generalising power to cover the variety of speech acts potentially involved in the phenomenon he is tackling, i.e., conclusions in PA patterns. In a nutshell, Lewiński offers a theoretically-grounded accurate description of argumentative reality.

This proposal is representative, I believe, of a trend in pragmatic research (construed broadly) that is now gaining momentum and which reaches over to cover experimental research as well. This trend strives for *ecological validity*, in that it purposefully tries to achieve descriptively and explanatorily adequate accounts of communicative phenomena. In this particular case, Lewiński's account of conclusions in PA fulfils in my opinion these goals on several counts.

First, Lewiński adopts a sufficiently broad and unrestricted conception of communication, which by definition is a social phenomenon taking place between at least 2 parties who exchange information and react to each other's messages within a set of specific circumstances (i.e., a context). While this conception seems like a basic minimal requisite for doing research on communication, Lewiński offers more than just that as his framework is tailored to capture communicative complexity. By shifting the perspective from conclusions formulated as "I should do P" to conclusions formulated with the plural "we should do P," the framework puts agency at its core: agents provide reasons, evaluate reasons, but also perform actions based on reasons or are led to reject the performance of actions based on reasons, through argumentative discussion. The incorporation of dialogism (or polylogism, as Lewiński would probably have it) as a feature of the units of analysis is precisely meant to achieve a fuller and more comprehensive account of communication: only by considering as part of the whole communicative process that (i) utterances are designed by people to have an effect on other people (utterances – and many times their effects – are intentional), (ii) utterances trigger a range of different (re)actions, (iii) speakers are free to (re)act by engaging in further communication, and that (iv) actions are relevant in the theorisation of meaning (as they signal the completeness of a verbal exchange), can we pretend to provide an adequate account of communicative exchanges. In this framework, agents, actions and reactions are given proper consideration, and this has implications for more theoretical aspects of how communicative exchanges should ideally be construed in terms of intention recognition and fulfilment. To sum up, the first advantage of this speech act analysis is its attention to the complexity of verbal exchanges, action-wise and agent-wise.

Second, it provides an exhaustive matrix of all the different speech acts that may conclude practical argumentation. In this respect, the account surveys all the speech acts that may actually be used by participants according to two criteria: their primary agent, i.e., who is responsible for performing the action that is predicated in the speech act, and their illocutionary strength, which could also be interpreted as a scale of commitment to the illocutionary force of the speech act. The strength of the framework, on this very issue, is to incorporate both the perspective of the speaker and that of the addressee into the model. As a consequence, descriptive power is increased, since the nature and function of speech acts functioning as conclusions of PA can exhaustively be assessed through consideration of all parties taking part to the communicative exchange. Furthermore, the typology offered here overcomes the difficulties faced by approaches which refrain from generalising and provides an interesting option to systematise the analysis of talk in interaction.

Third, and in connection with the first two advantages, the model introduced here goes beyond the interaction between propositions and offers a hands-on theoretical kit to approach natural data. Many pragmatic approaches are interested in what happens in terms of meaning at the level of propositional (and sometimes non-propositional) content, without taking into account that those propositions are taken up by their addressees – and this does play a role in the communicative process. Of course, you don't necessarily need to consider the entirety of cognitive and behavioural efforts both parties incur in communication to explain how it works;[2] however, only when you do can you aspire to provide a full account of communication, since, as shown by Lewiński, the identification and felicitousness of speech acts may have to take into account their perlocutionary success (see section 3 below).

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[2] For example, Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) does not consider cooperation to be a notion that is required to explain how communication works, since mere coordination suffices – the speaker's and the hearer's behaviour happen to dovetail in communication, but that does not mean that both interlocutors cooperate, in the Gricean sense (see Allott, 2007 for a rationale for this).

For those three reasons, I believe that Lewiński's proposal gets us one step closer to a more *ecologically friendly* account of conclusions in PA. His analysis of the "Keep it in the ground" case study convincingly shows that in order to describe and reconstruct argumentative discourse in a way that does justice to the data, such a framework is advisable: it takes into account both (re)actions and agents (as producers, recipients and evaluators of speech acts), both production and reception, both illocution and perlocution. Also, it assesses speech acts and their *consequences*, which, most importantly, opens up new directions for rethinking the very notion of speech act felicity, as we shall see next.

3. SPEECH ACT FELICITY, ILLOCUTION, PERLOCUTION AND PA

In order to assess Lewiński's contribution in light of speech act theory, let us first recall what Austin says about perlocution:

> Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them (...). We shall call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a perlocutionary act or perlocution. (Austin, 1962, p. 101)

Traditionally, perlocution was left out of the study of meaning, as the actual occurrence of such a consequence, in principle, is independent from the success of the illocutionary act. Austin's first example of perlocution was persuasion; one can urge or advise someone (not) to do something (illocutionary act) and fail or succeed in persuading them to comply (perlocutionary act), but whether the latter is the case or not is irrelevant to whether the speaker has effectively urged or advised her interlocutor to (not) do something. One can understand without complying, which is an indication that, crucially, the success of communication requires comprehension but not compliance. Accordingly, Austin sharply distinguishes illocution from perlocution: "[w]e have then to draw the line between an action we do (here an illocution) and its consequence" (1962, p. 110). This is precisely because understanding is distinct from cooperating – in the perlocutionary sense (see also Attardo, 1997). As far as simple speech acts are concerned, perlocution is a non-necessary, optional, consequence of meaning, and its non-satisfaction is no threat to the success of communication – again, construed only as a successful exchange of meaning.

And yet, coming back to Austin's quote, what about cases where the consequence of an illocution is precisely an action (that someone else might be asked to perform)? This is, chiefly, what PA is about, especially if, like Aristotle, Searle and most probably Lewiński, we consider that actions are part of the conclusion of PA and join "those who think action itself is the proper conclusion of PR" (Lewiński, 2016, p. 405). This is where the story becomes complicated, as at least two problems related to the potential role of perlocution in speech act felicity emerge – and these have not been discussed by Lewiński:

- do we consider that the felicity of a speech act (i.e., speech acts akin to proposals in the case of PA) rests on its recognition/identification by the addressee or on its actual ability to trigger the desired effect in the communicative exchange?
- while there is no question that illocution is crucial to characterise the felicity of speech acts, isn't PA THE particular case where perlocution is important, if not necessary, to the success of the speech act?

In other words, is the speech act successful when we understand it, or when we comply with it? In the case of PA, the constraints set by its argumentative nature can be thought to make a case for the latter.

The question, here, is therefore that of speech act felicity,[3] and takes us back to the original Austinian distinction. Even if the idea that illocution is the driving force behind speech act performance in communication remains quite uncontroversial, it seems that PA poses some challenges for speech act theory, and this is mostly due to the fact that these speech acts are used argumentatively and consequently cannot be dealt with exclusively at the propositional and illocutionary levels.

Any speech-act-theoretic account of argumentation needs to consider the speech act itself, but also its *consequences* because of the dialogic (or polylogic) nature of argumentation. It is hard to consider

[3] One could also relate this discussion to Vanderveken's distinction between the success and the satisfaction of a speech act (the author thanks Scott Jacobs, personal communication, for pointing this out). Here, speech act felicity is related to the notion of satisfaction: "Elementary illocutionary acts with a propositional content (…) are satisfied *only if* their propositional content represents correctly how things are (…) in the world" (Vanderveken, 1990, p. 132).

that any argumentative speech act is felicitous until it has been appropriately responded to (that is, accepted, called into question or refuted). In the case of PA, Lewiński claims that the conclusion is effectively a claim for action ("we should do X"), and in doing so gives some credit to the idea that the performance of the action expressed in those claims – or at least the performance of an argumentatively-relevant action connected to that action – should be considered at least partly as the natural conclusion of PA. From the perspective of speech act theory, the very point of these claims for action is to go beyond the informative demands of the exchange and, crucially, to make sure that they are acted upon,[4] which are features that need to be accounted for in the theoretical model. Consequently, Lewiński's model seems to be compatible with the idea that in order to analyse PA, we need to consider their perlocutionary consequences, as these encompass the argumentative moves triggered in reaction to the propositional content of the conclusion and, to that extent at least, determine how well the speech act fares in the communicative exchange.

4. CONCLUSION

So where does that leave us? It seems that the nature of PA conclusions, in speech act-theoretic terms, requires the analyst to consider illocution and perlocution together. This warrants a complex analysis that probably needs to extend felicity conditions to capture not only the commitments incurred by the speaker, but also the ones incurred by the addressee in his reaction. That is, while the felicity of the speech acts categorised in table 2 (Lewiński, 2016, p. 417) to a large extent depends on their proper recognition by the addressee, there are grounds to assume that it might also partly depend on the speech act's perlocutionary import. What those perlocutionary aspects amount to precisely remains to be seen; are they restricted to compliance? Or can they take the shape of any other argumentatively relevant move (refutation, request for clarification, requalification, etc.)? This might be a direction of research that would take Lewiński's original proposal farther in a speech act-theoretic account of PA.

[4] This is why Lewiński, in line with Fairclough & Fairclough (2012), considers that PA conclusions are "action-relevant speech acts".

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