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THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS INNER LIFE IN AUSTIN'S THEORY OF THE PERFORMATIVE ACTS

Abstract. The theory of performative acts of John Austin's survived enough critics and modifications with some marginalization this author in philosophy. This article proposes to rethink the main ideas of John Austin through the perspective of the integral role individual with his abundance of inner life that has especial value in Austin's theory of performative acts. The article offers detailed analyses of Austin's main texts and through them reflect on two applications of this theory in the area of the cultural anthropology and Bible studies. This comparison will show how attentive preserving the authentic intention of the author can influence the right or wrong interpretation of speech act in this area.

Keywords: language; performative acts; speech acts; locution; illocution; perlocution; individual; inner life; social relations.

1. INTRODUCTION

We deal with words every day. We think through the words and act according to what we think, that's why the creation the word is human acting. The words are not simple labels through which we can be familiar with things of the world, they can be loaded with trust or of betrayal revealing the world of our inner life of intentions and feelings in relation to other persons. The famous linguistic turn in philosophy which had a place in the twentieth century was an attentive revision to clarifying the sense of the words through simplifying the using of them, avoiding conceptual ambiguity, exaggerated generality, and sensibility to the context of using the meaning of the words. But here can be another trap when is offset attention from being to language or analyses of words, but without considering the individual. This article

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proposes to look at this problem through John Austin's approach in which "to *say* something is to *do* something."¹ The performative aspect of his theory is not only how to find some general rules for exclusive problems, but to bring attention also to the responsibility for our words and acts in our vulnerable communicative world. This research will concentrate on the question of how Austin's theory of performative acts helps to exit beyond some linguistic theory and expands the vision on man and his inner life and relation with others, how the words he can change the world. I try to show how his theory despite criticism and some stereotypes is very holistic and can be successfully applied in a different sphere. The success of a performative acts depends a lot on his right understanding of the basic principles. In this article, I compare two modes of such application to cultural anthropology and the Biblical studies showing how the wrong understanding of this theory leads to the wrong interpretation of the reality of human actions.

2. WORDS—WORLDS

Today many philosophers consider Austin's thoughts obsolete and put them on a margin of the history of philosophy. Someone considers that his approach is unfinished they consider that: "Austin's work broke much ground, but it shied away from precision"² for that reason the theory of performative act is more accepted through the reception of his followers such as Searle, Grice or Strawson. Another criticism is related to his little interest in metaphysics, someone is convinced that Austin avoids metaphysics and gives a preference only to the analysis of ordinary language. This criticism is inappropriate for several reasons, Austin wrote little, a huge part of his works is a reconstruction of notes from his students that gives an impression of incompleteness. But who ever is familiar with his texts can recognize the clearness of his ideas where any improvement or overbuild cannot cancel the foundation which is already prepared by him. The reason Austin addressed the theme of language is not only interest of language itself, some commentators indicate two reasons: the first is concerned Austin's understanding language like the "central part of human activity"; and the second is that

¹ John Langshaw Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 12.

² Anita Avramides, "Intention and Convention," in *A companion to the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Bob Hale, Crispin Wright (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 68.

“the study of language is an aide” for better understanding other important topics including philosophy.³ Regarding his relation to metaphysics, Austin in his text “*A Plea for Excuses*” mentioned that for him phenomena (being) is not less important than the word. He writes:

When we examine what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* at words (‘or meanings, whatever they may be’) but also at the realities we use the words to talk about: we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of, though not as the final arbiter of, the phenomena. For this reason I think it might be better to use, for this way of doing philosophy, some less misleading name than those given above—for instance, ‘linguistic phenomenology, only that is rather mouthful.’⁴

The idea of “linguistic phenomenology” reveals the influence of Husserl and the primordial importance of phenomena. Here the Husserlian principale “go back to ‘things themselves’” becomes for Austin some return from words to the world.⁵ For him, the words such as “real” or “truth” and some others are like some “tools” which:

as a minimum we should use clean tools: we should know what we mean and what we do not, and we must forearm ourselves against the traps that language sets us. [...] words are not [...] facts or things we need therefore to prise them off the world, to hold them apart from and against it, so that we can realize their inadequacies and arbitrariness, and can relook at the world without blinkers.⁶

These preliminary clarifications are important to understand not only the reason of Austian’s critics and in some way his marginalization, but also a necessary precondition for his theory of performative acts. The recent rereading of his texts shows the enormous impact of his ideas despite the depreciation of his work.

Clearness of the words, according to Austin, helps us to look at the world without obstacles. Attention to ordinary language for Austin is a proper way

³ Guy Longworth, *John Langshaw Austin: The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/austin-jl/>.

⁴ John Langshaw Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, 3 rd. ed., ed. by James O. Urmson, Geoffrey J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 182.

⁵ Simon Glendinning, “Unmasking the Tradition,” in *The Philosophy of J.L. Austin*, ed. by Martin Gustafsson, Richard Sørli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 48.

⁶ John Langshaw Austin, “A Plea for excuses,” in *Philosophical Papers*, 181–182.

to grasp an authentic and primordial sense of meaning. In his work *Sense and Sensibilia* he reflects about the word ‘real’ and notes: “ ‘Real’ is an absolutely *normal* word, with nothing new-fangled or technical or highly specialized on it. It is, that is to say, already firmly established in, and very frequently used in, the ordinary language we all use every day. [...] Philosophers often seem to think that they can just ‘assign’ any meaning whatever to any word; and so no doubt, in an absolutely trivial sense, they can.”⁷ For him it is important to not to load the words beyond their proper meaning in ordinary language. He pays attention to the strange tendency especially in philosophy to artificial exaggeration in this. The words, as we have seen, should not complicate access to the phenomena, to the world. This is a necessary precondition to avoid betrayal by words, but it will be also completely wrong to consider Austin like a philosopher who is interested only in words and their right or wrong using in “ordinary language.” He argues for this case:

It is worth bearing in mind, too, the general rule that we must not expect to find simple labels for complicated cases. If a mistake results in an accident, it will not do to ask whether ‘it’ was an accident or a mistake, or to demand some briefer description of ‘it’. Here the natural economy of language operates: if the words already available for simple cases suffice in combination to describe a complicated case, there will be need for special reasons before a special new words is invented for the complication. Besides, however well-equipped our language, it can never be forearmed against all possible cases that may arise and call for description: fact is richer than diction.⁸

It’s also wrong to consider Austin as someone who prefers a pragmatic approach to language, he tries to mention how some problems could be solved not only in practice but theorizing where every practice is grounded. It is not difficult to see that for Austin the world with his fact is more polyhedral than our labeling with words, he is sensitive for both word and world.⁹

3. INTERIORITY

Another key for better understanding the theory of performative act is attention to the individual. Austin here is very clear, in reality, the performa-

⁷ John Langshaw Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 62.

⁸ Austin, “A Plea for excuses,” 195.

⁹ Longworth, “John Langshaw Austin.”

tive act as such is impossible without mere attention to the inner life of a person, his intentions and feelings. He raises a simple question that is at the same time fundamental, how we can understand another person? It always will be “our” impression or “our believing what the man says about his own feelings. [...] Why believe him? [...] Why believe him ever? [...] What ‘justification’ is there for supposing that there is another mind communicating with you at all? How can you know what it would be like for another mind to feel anything, and so how can you understand it?”¹⁰ It seems that realization of this intention – understanding the other person is doomed to defeat, how reveals this Austin it is unjust to measure another person by proper standard. According to Austin we can misunderstand our proper feeling when we give them wrong or not exact descriptions. But there must be some closeness that permits one to believe in the other person, trust, make a promise and keep it, all this requires discernment and openness to inner life in the other person. The reality of the inner life is a hidden part of man that becomes visible only by acts, not even through words. Austin admits that

‘believing in other persons’ is an essential part of the act of communicating, an act which we all constantly perform. It is as much an irreducible part of our experience as, say, giving promises, or playing competitive games or even sensing colored patches. We can state certain advantages of such performances, and we can elaborate rules of a kind for their ‘rational’ conduct (as the Law Courts and historians and psychologists work out the rules for accepting testimony). But there is no ‘justification’ for our doing them as such.¹¹

In our desire to understand other people sometimes it can go beyond the words, but sometimes it is only words on which we can rely when we want to build trust and confidence. Austin was convinced that: “It is fundamental in talking (as in other matters) that we are entitled to trust others, except in so far as there is some concrete reasons to distrust them. Believing persons, accepting testimony, is the, or one main, point of talking.”¹² Seems it is an inevitable perspective on which we are permanently involved like humans and a perspective through which become more humans. It is impossible to neglect inner perspective, believing the speaker is essentially a part of the communicative act.

¹⁰ John Langshaw Austin, “Other Minds,” in *Philosophical Papers*, 114–115.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 115.

¹² *Ibidem*, 82.

Austin elaborates some sort of epistemology of testimony that can be realized on two dimensions: one based on words and another on actions. The man also can be in two roles: who recognize testimony and in a role the one who testifies. It is also true that a witness can be a fragile mediator between truth and another person. In this case epistemology of testimony presuppose that the idea of testimony is based on our knowledge and verifying of something. Austin argues that: “If I know I can’t be wrong” that’s why for him seems:

You are prohibited from saying ‘I know it is so, but I may be wrong’, just as you are prohibited from saying ‘I promise I will, but I may fail’. If you are aware you may be mistaken, you ought not say you know, just as, if you are aware you may break your word, you have no business to promise. [...] It is naturally *always* possible (‘humanly’ possible) that I may be mistaken or may break my word, but that by itself is no bar against using the expressions ‘I know’ and ‘I promise’ as we do in fact use them.¹³

Here he continued classical epistemological approach to knowledge like justifying true belief where truth is a necessary condition to call knowledge properly knowledge and differentiate it from opinion. He builds some parallels between the act of knowing and promising, but they are not analogous in his famous analysis between “I know” and “I promise” only the last can be considered like a speech act when “knowing” is a state.¹⁴ But in two cases Austin admits that it is important “if I say I promise, you are *entitled* to act on it, whether or not you choose to do so. If I have said I know or I promise, you insult me in a special way by refusing to accept it.”¹⁵ Here we approach another side of his reflection on how promises, testimony, and other speech acts construct our everyday communicative reality, how the power of word influences our acts, the feelings of responsibility. Austin is conscious of the imperfection and insincerity of intentions through which can be betrayal the words and human relations, but he differentiates the possibility of imperfection and mistakes to which we all are capable of intentional breaking the word with distractive consequences.

First, we pass to analyses of the nature of performative acts with all preconditions mentioned above it necessary to remember that formulation

¹³ Ibidem, 98.

¹⁴ Benjamin McMyler, “Believing what the Man Says about His Own Feelings,” in *The Philosophy of J.L. Austin*, 120–121.

¹⁵ Austin, “Other Minds,” 100.

“I promise” works like a formula, that sometimes don’t need some extra explanation, but if we are obliged to give one’s word include responsibility from my part value of the interpersonal relations. In the performative act of promising implicitly present my contact with the world of other persons even, how to mentioned it Austin, it is difficult to understand it.

4. PERFORMATIVE ACTS—SPEECH ACTS

The idea of speech acts appeared before 1955 and was fixed mostly in *How to do things with words*. This text was reconstructed from the notes of Austin’s students, which explains why some ideas are not developed enough and need some extra explanation. Austin re-direct the attention of philosophers from the pragmatic and declarative ways of using language to something that builds the relationship between persons and we have seen how important is the inner life of a person and some moral side of the act. In philosophical tradition, speech act is well known for its three-partial construction: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Generalizing, the locutionary act is the most approximate with language in the syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical way of utterance; the illocutionary act is properly something new that Austin added, at this level he indicated needs to classify and explain verbs that signified some act in a moment of speech; and perlocutionary act is about the effect on the audience.

According to Austin some misunderstandings that concern the problematic nature of many utterances that produce “nonsense,” in reality, didn’t see by grammarians and only sometimes “incidentally” by philosophers.¹⁶ For example, he admits that some statements exist that: “a) they do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constate anything at all, are not ‘true or false’; and b) the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something.”¹⁷ Here Austin reveals that it is not sufficient only describing some acts, but doing, performs them. The words have the power to realize acting. That’s why Austin needs to introduce the new term ‘performance’ which is related with ‘action’ and “indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action.”¹⁸ The words help us to perform some act, but according to Austin, it

¹⁶ Austin, *How to do Things*, 4.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 5.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 6.

doesn't mean that we can realize some act only through the words. It depends also on appropriate circumstances he notes:

[...] it is always necessary that the *circumstances* in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, *appropriate*, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should *also* perform certain other *actions*, whether 'physical' or 'mental' actions or even acts of uttering further words. Thus, for naming the ship, it is essential that I should be the person appointed to name her, for (Christian) marrying, it is essential that I should not be already married with a wife living, sane and undivorced, and so on: for a bet to have been made, it is generally necessary for the offer of the bet to have been accepted by a taker (who must have done something, such as to say 'Done'), and it is hardly a gift if I *say* 'I give it you' but never hand it over.¹⁹

Austin's claim is to show that spoken word has a value and should be treated 'seriously', in performative act included oblige, " 'I promise to...' obliges me—puts on record my spiritual assumption of a spiritual shackle."²⁰ The Performative act like promising could be considered like "spiritual act," even more "accuracy and morality alike are on the side of the plain saying that our word is our bond."²¹ But Austin assumes that we could dare false promises or just void, "given in bad faith." That's why for him it is clear that real promising should have a "certain intention" for keeping a word. Can we consider an act of promising false when we cannot keep our word? Austin has an answer for a situation when "something goes wrong" he doesn't consider such acts as false, but "unhappy." He writes: "And for this reason we call the doctrine of *the things that can be and go wrong* on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of the *Infelicities*."²² This is a condition for avoiding this unhappy situation, first of all, he added the necessity of "conventional procedure" which include "certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances," "particular procedure invoked," "correctly," "completely"²³ But if "unhappy" situation just happens means that it was a case of "abuse of the procedure" which he calls also "misfires."²⁴ The philosopher insisted that act is done even it is void, we did anything even without wait-

¹⁹ Ibidem, 8–9.

²⁰ Ibidem, 10.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem, 14.

²³ Ibidem, 14–15.

²⁴ Ibidem, 16.

ing for effect, “‘without effect’ does not here mean ‘without consequences, results, effects’.”²⁵

Austin distinguish *explicit* and *implicit* performatives, which means “highly significant and unambiguous expression such as ‘I bet’, ‘I promise’, ‘I bequeath’.”²⁶ When a performative act has inappropriate conditions he proposes some distinction on “a matter of incapacity” and “wrong type, kind” invocation, for the example: “we must distinguish the cases of a clergyman baptizing the wrong baby with the right name or baptizing a baby “‘Albert’ instead of ‘Alfred’, from those of saying ‘I baptize this infant 2704.”²⁷ The first case we have example of “a matter of incapacity,” then in the second, “wrong kind or type.” We can wait for an ideal performative act that corresponds to all necessary conditions and rules, but it’s impossible to embrace every particular situation which goes out her common margins.

In Lecture IV Austin tries an approach to performative act in another way not from an external form of procedure, but from an internal perspective which include: feelings, thoughts and intentions. This perspective is crucial because [it] determines how sincere or insincere could be the performative act. He uses very eloquent examples like: “‘I congratulate you’, said when I did not feel at all pleased, perhaps even was annoyed”; “‘I advise you to’, said when I do not think it would be the course most expedient for you”; “‘I promise’, said when I do not intend to do what I promise.”²⁸ Here it is necessarily distinct mistake and misunderstanding from an act that is intentionally bad. Austin writes: “It should be noted that mistake will not in general make an act *void*, though it may make it *excusable*.”²⁹ The sincere intention is based on the hierarchy of values of a person, appeal to her moral consciousness, even if some mistake could be possible, the right intention is a guide to right responsible acting. This moral aspect of the performative act is often neglected especially when the theory of performative act is applicable to other areas of research. Attention to the person as like moral and rational agent of performative act is conserved in Austin’s theory unlike other theories of the philosophy of language. Sometimes philosophers react to Austin’s theory of speech acts criticizing his approach to truth. But for Austin this problem is deeper, he had not hidden the human capacity to

²⁵ Ibidem, 17.

²⁶ Ibidem, 32.

²⁷ Ibidem, 34–35.

²⁸ Ibidem, 40.

²⁹ Ibidem, 42.

perform acts insincerely which he calls “infelicitous.” This doesn’t mean that he relativized his approach to truth as such, but rather want to mention that sometimes we cannot avoid the fact of human weakness.

The essence of the performative act is reflected in the phrase “[to] say something is to do something”³⁰ when the part corresponding to what we say he more precisely analyzes in speech acts. Speech act has its own inconspicuous construction that consists of three parts: locution is distinguished to the phonetic act, the phatic act, and the rhetic act, they all together represent one integral speech act. The phonetic act, according to Austin is “the act of uttering certain noises,” when the phatic and the rhetic is “the uttering of certain vocables or words, [...] and using this vocables with a certain more-or-less definite sense and reference.”³¹ In reality, we don’t analyze every time this tree parts when we make some speech act, but this distinction in a hidden way indicate on intonation which we use, a right word from vocabulary and his right sense of using in a particular case. Philosopher also admits:

Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them; and we may than say, thinking of this, that the speaker has performed an act in the nomenclature of which reference is made either, only obliquely, or even, not at all, to the performance of the locutionary or illocutionary act. We shall call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a *perlocutionary* act or *perlocution*.³²

Progressing on his explanation Austin admits that before performing an illocutionary act it is obvious that is necessary to give attention to the locutionary act, we cannot congratulate someone if we don’t pay attention to certain words. In the locutionary act with his three-partial structure philosopher see the importance of “meaning,” why we chose these proper words and not another, with the meaning we put in them; if the illocutionary act is present, how he calls this, “certain force” which means when the word is oriented to some act; and the perlocutionary act is about some result, achieving appropriate effect by *saying*.³³ All this could be described that we have an

³⁰ Ibidem, 12.

³¹ Ibidem, 95.

³² Ibidem, 101.

³³ Ibidem, 120.

articulation of intention through appropriate words that have the ability to force the urge to act and the effect of words become the act.

The declarative nature of the performative act is always inserted in some conventional social reality where the people understand the meaning of uttering words, their obligations and responsibility of *doing*. For Austin, the illocutionary act is just conventional. Certainly, any conventional act is based and guided by some rules convenient by social customs or practices which are implicit in daily behavior. Uttering “I promise” or “I apologize” suppose some effect on doing, certain “performance” and not fixing the fact that has a “constative” or “descriptive” nature. That’s why in performative act[s] [an] essential part is this force of uttering words and the producing effect on the audience, which could be accompanied by some additional aspects like fear or encouragement.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The theory of speech acts influenced different areas of the everyday life of man, it is an integral part also of his cultural practices. For example, we can find the implication of the theory of speech acts in jurisprudence, in religious context from Bible study to witchcraft, from linguistic studies to anthropology and psychology and this list could be prolonged. Needless to say that not always reception of this theory corresponds to the authentic intention of its author, superficial understanding and interpretation lead to absolutely wrong conclusions. In this part of article, we try to analyze how different ways of application theory of speech acts could lead to the wrong and reductionist understanding of human nature, or conversely, give a certain prolific application in Bible studies with a possibility of right interpretation of some difficult passages.

We start with the example of analyses such applications is done by Michelle Rosaldo (1940–1981), a well-known researcher in the areas of social, linguistic and psychological anthropology, feminism and gender studies, her works mainly were devoted to studies of the Ilongot tribe in the Philippines. In her article “*The things we do with words: Ilongot speech act and speech act theory in philosophy*” she criticizes Austin’s theory. She writes:

Speech acts theorists seek to comprehend the fact that to talk about the word ‘out there’ will of necessity involve not only propositions to be judged for truth, but

something more: communicative intention. The meanings carried by our words must thus depend not just on what we say, but who we are and what we hope our interlocutors to know. Yet in focusing on the ways “intentions” are embodied in all acts of speech, speech act theorists have failed to grapple with some of the more exciting implications of their work. They think of “doing things with words” as the achievement of autonomous selves, whose deeds are not significantly constrained by the relationships and expectations that define their local world. [...] I claim, the theory fails because it does not comprehend the sociality of individuals who use its “rules” and “resources” to act. [...] it fails because it construes action independent of its reflexive status both as consequence and cause of human social forms.³⁴

The main critiques here are addressed to two different approaches, first of all, it seems that for Rosaldo different cultures means different anthropology, from that the theory of speech act fails because it is oriented only for western culture and exclude the others which possibly have another set of “rules” of interaction between the persons. Secondly, she wants to show that in the Ilongot tribe the priority of social role and community dimension predominate individual “intentions.” From this seems that human being has lacked in development of his inner individual life and imagine himself mainly through collective, social relations. Such interpretation limits understanding of human nature because if all attention is brought on external social relations then is canceling individual thoughts and intentions, personal responsibility for the words, the principle of sincerity in promises etc., also the spiritual level of being a person is canceled.

Rosaldo absolutely convinced that theory of speech acts could work only for western culture which implicitly presupposes personal intentions of the speaker, their sincerity, truthfulness or falseness which is not appropriate for the tribe. She:

[...] if most Western linguists have been primarily impressed with language as a “resource” that can represent the world (and the individual can then “use” as a tool to argue, promise, criticize or lie), the Ilongot case points toward a rather different view of speech and meaning. For them, words are not made to “represent” objective truth, because all truth is relative to the relationships and experiences of those who claim to “know.” [...] For Ilongots, I think it is relations, not intentions, that come first.³⁵

³⁴ Michelle Z. Rosaldo, “The Things We Do with Words: Ilongot Speech Acts and Speech Act Theory in Philosophy,” *Language in Society* 11(1982)2: 204.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 210.

Now we can see that here appears another problem if we presuppose that the certain person thinks of himself by the category of the “community” and the “relationships” the question which rises who is responsible for the truthfulness of performative act the abstract community or individual? In her argumentation, she underlines the priority of “social and cultural context” from which rise our individual intention or meaning and not vice versa³⁶ this is the completely Marxist idea that it is not the consciousness of man determine their being, but social being determines the consciousness of man. She criticizes in a drastic way that in the performative act is neglected context and exaggerated attention to the meanings of words. For her: “Linguistic action is construed much less in terms of “where” and “how” than of just “what” is said and “why.” She also criticizes Austin and Searle for their exclusive attention to individual and his proper worldview, she writes that they: “tend overwhelmingly to view familiar acts of speech not primarily like social facts, but as the embodiments of universal goals, beliefs, and needs to be possessed by individuated speakers.”³⁷ It means that the man is completely determined by certain socials roles and the less we pay attention to his inner and individual life, his needs, intention, and feelings it will be better for all.

In his texts Austin often underlines that for him performative act is a social and conventional act, but at the same time it does not cancel the individual as such, and sincerity of intention is important for truthfulness and realization of speech act. Rosaldo wants to introduce some kind of speech act like “social facts,” but without essential human elements, something neutral and without attention to consequences. Such an approach made the margins of the performative acts relative and absolutely not obligatory. If we analyze the performative act of promising, here is implicitly included obliged force to keep a word. She argued that for example an act of “promising” is something alien in the Ilongots culture that is the possibility to rethinking what “promising” is exactly, maybe it is something formal like saying to someone “greetings” just only because we must say this, suggests Rosaldo. The most intriguing conclusion that was made by this anthropologist is that we need another way to understand speech act on a cross-cultural level what is true, but in the particular case of the Ilongot’s tribe it’s because we can note some “lack” of “our notion of an inner self continuous through time.”³⁸ Then she also: “Ilongots do not think in terms of inner ‘feelings’ [...] but rather of

³⁶ Ibidem, 211.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Ibidem, 218.

social context [...] Ilongots do not see their inmost “hearts” as constant cause, independent of their acts, they have no reasons to “commit” themselves to future deeds, or feel somehow guilt-stricken on in need of an account when subsequent actions prove their earlier expressions false.”³⁹ This idea corresponds to the postmodern concept of the subject which is completely deconstructed, it is “*la mort du sujet*” in the words of Michelle Foucault. Such interpretation is not represented in the integral human self like a source of inner life but rather considered as the construct of different social roles. She also notes the absence of interest in sincerity and truth in the Ilongot’s tribe, which contradicts the definition what is knowledge and human rationality as such. From this very reductionist view on a human being, we can see the basis of critiques of speech acts. She sharply concludes: “We need not dwell on men like Searle and Austin if what we really want to know is how real people, not philosophers, manage to “do their things” with words.”⁴⁰

There is another perspective on how the theory of speech act can be applied successfully and here we enter into the field of Biblical studies. It is not very common practice to use philosophical theories in the interpretation of the Bible, but we cannot deny the fact that the words of the Bible create the powerful perlocutionary effect on the reader in his life. I want to address to the research of Eugene Botha which in his article “Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation” that underlines that theory of speech act works in a fruitful way in Bible studies. He indicates that:

It was increasingly realized that language and words are not neutral carriers of meaning, but actually have effects and achieve. People can indeed *do* things with words. This is even more significant if one takes the nature of biblical texts into consideration: these texts were not intended to be literary products; they were pragmatic, created in a real life situation with a view to persuade, to change attitudes, to get people to do things and to act in a specific way.⁴¹

Thus indications show us two important moments: 1) Biblical text cannot be considered as an ordinary type of literature, because here meaning of words has a direct and practical influence and it is a goal (change life, change attitude, change the way of thinking etc.); and 2) that theory of

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, 227.

⁴¹ Eugene Botha, “Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” *Neotestamentica* 41 (2007), 2: 276.

speech acts is applicable not only in the interaction between people in some real situation but also from text to readers in long time distance.

Botha also mentioned that more often in our time's exegetes of the Bible redirect to the theory of speech acts, Donald Evans (1963) one of Austin's students was the first who apply this theory to biblical studies.⁴² The application of this theory can be revealed in two ways, firstly we can see realizing performative act in a text which we interpret for example, John 4:16 or Matthew 28:7–8; secondly, when the word is directed to the reader with an intention to apply in his life Matthew 7:1 or when the text itself became as speech act 1John 1:6,8,10. For the Bible studies is important of speech context, attention to "who is speaking, in what manner, under which circumstances, to whom and why"⁴³ of course this has clarified the *intention* of the speaker and truthfulness of message.

For example in the passage of John 4:16 which Botha describes as enough difficult passage for interpretation included in all conversation John 4: 4–30 we have some conversation, Jesus, with the Samaritan woman, but properly in John 4:16 is visible abruptly turn of Jesus words, "the strange twist"⁴⁴ which has huge illocutionary force end effect on the life of this woman, words that did things. The interpretations here received different vectors, but what is true is that it is not just a conversation about some water of which Jesus is requesting of the woman which is noted in verses before and also it is not about irony and rudeness of words of Jesus on the direction to the lifestyle of this woman. According to Botha:

[...] the relationship between Him [Jesus] and woman has been changing from two strangers meeting at a well, to that of an individual person holding authority over the other. It is only that kind of relationship that will allow for such an abrupt command. The felicity conditions for commands dictate that the one giving the command must be in superior position and must have the right. The person in the inferior position must also recognize this authority. The Samaritan woman clearly allows this change in roles and her subsequent utterances indicate that she has accepted that Jesus is indeed in a superior/authoritative position. These rules have slowly but surely been established so far by the use of the language. This is the reason why the woman does not question Jesus right to give command, but

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ Ibidem, 278.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 285.

merely responds and explains why she is unable to do so. His words had an effect. Words can indeed do things!⁴⁵ ([7] Botha, 286–287).

The author of this note demonstrates that the conversation is completely changed when Jesus readdress it on the *individual* level and when the words touch immediately the *inner* life of the Samaritan woman. There are a lot of different versions of the interpretation of this passage which are concentrated on a marital theme or testing faith of Samaritan woman, Jesus's omniscience, or even recognizing the real gifter of the water, but all these different perspectives do not explain sharply changing conversation which makes a powerful performative act. Doing interpretation of verse 4:16 in light of the theory speech act we can embrace in the same time two important levels: the first one, when the theory of speech acts is the useful tool for right interpretation and a better understanding of the text; and the second one, is a performative effect of this text on a reader in the ordinary life.

These two examples of application of the theory of the speech acts in different areas such as anthropology or Bible studies is a good example how important it is to conserve authentic meanings that the author has invested in it. The uniqueness of Austin's theory is preserving this deeper internal dimension of the man which expressed in certain words and acts independently from national, race, cultural differences. Our world often builds on the rupture between words and acts or words without acts, but we are quite surprised when sometimes in our life acts speaks more than the words themselves. It seems that Austin, through his theory, tries to renovate this harmony in our vulnerable and broken communicative world. He returns the value of the word which is act, that means we can change the world with a word.

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⁴⁵ Botha, "Speech Act Theory," 286–287.

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ROLA JEDNOSTKI I JEJ ŻYCIA WEWNĘTRZNEGO W TEORII AKTÓW PERFORMATYWNYCH AUSTINA

Streszczenie

Teoria aktów performatywnych Johna Austina przetrwała wystarczająco dużo krytyki i modyfikacji z pewną marginalizacją tego autora w filozofii. Niniejszy artykuł proponuje ponowne przemyślenie głównych idei Johna Austina z perspektywy integralnej roli jednostki z jej bogactwem życia wewnętrznego, która ma szczególną wartość w teorii aktów performatywnych. Artykuł zawiera szczegółowe analizy głównych tekstów Austina, a za ich pośrednictwem refleksję nad dwoma zastosowaniami tej teorii w obszarze antropologii kulturowej i studiów biblijnych. Porównanie to pokaże, jak uważne zachowanie autentycznej intencji autora może wpłynąć na właściwą lub błędną interpretację aktu mowy w tym zakresie.

Słowa kluczowe: język; akty performatywne; akty mowy; mowa; illokucja; perlokucja; życie indywidualne; wewnętrzne; relacje społeczne.