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Asserting

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No sort of speech act is as important for philosophers to understand as assertion. Assertion of declarative sentences is the form of cognitive discourse, and is the fundamental activity in which linguistic meaningfulness is manifested. The question we address here is

> What is it that we are *doing* when we assert, claim, or declare something?

Until a century ago the closest philosophical approach to an answer to such a question was to be found in theories of *judgment*. Judging, in Kant's usage, for instance, was a kind of internal asserting—though philosophers of this period would have said rather that asserting is merely the outward, visible sign of an inward, invisible act of judging.[1] The theory of judgment was an attempt to account for acts or episodes of embracing or acknowledging a sentence as true. Like asserting, judging as an episode contrasts with believing, which was understood as a persistent disposition to make certain judgments.

This problematic achieved its modern form with Frege's demonstration of a fatal flaw in the strategy of classical theories of judgment. The traditional account understood judging as predicating, representing, or classifying something *as* something. The trick was then to tell a story about what sort of mental activity such taking or classifying might be. Frege pointed out that this approach founders on the *un*asserted predications occurring in negations or as antecedents of asserted conditionals. The sentence

'Saturn is larger than Mars'

has the logical form of a predication. In the conditional

'If Saturn is larger than Mars, then it is larger than Mercury'

however, though the same predication occurs, it is not asserted that Saturn is larger than Mars. Why could it not be claimed that the same predication does *not* occur in the conditional? Because if the sentence were *not* a predication when occurring as the antecedent of a conditional, but remained one as a free-standing sentence, then we would be equivocating when we argue by *modus ponens* from *p* and *if p then q* to *q*. For this argument depends on the identity of content of *p* in its two occurrences.

The point is a familiar one, but it is worth delineating with some care. The objection is *not* another way of pointing out the logical inadequacy of the old-fashioned subject-predicate analysis of sentences. It will not help the traditional judgment theorist to add n-adic relations and to make the switch to Fregean function-argument analysis with higher-order operators such as quantifiers. For the mistake is to confuse the logical compounding operators (such as predication) which we appeal to analytically to explicate the content which is judg*ed*, with the activity of judg*ing*. What the argument from sentential compounding shows is that predicating and judging or asserting are two different *kinds* of 'activity.' The sense in which we act in constructing sentences by applying operators to sentential components is in principle insufficient to explain what we do when we assert the sentences so constructed.[2]

The only positive view about judging which Frege explicitly expresses in his earliest work is that it consists in acknowledging, recognizing, or affirming a sentence as *true*. This is clearly right as far as it goes. To transform this leading idea into a theory requires an account of what it is to *take* a sentence to be true, and so what it is to put a sentence forward as fit to be taken true by others.

The later Frege presents a theory of the required sort. Saying that

> . . . judgements can be regarded as advances from a thought to a truth value.

he assimilates asserting a sentence to issuing an identity claim (what he called a recognition statement) of the form

Snow is white = The True.

That is, he uses the notion of the True as a recognizable object to reduce all assertion to assertions of identities. He clearly cannot repeat this analysis for all identity statements on pain of an infinite regress. He must give an independent account of the assertion of identities which does *not* appeal to recognizing *them* as names of the True.

He does so, analyzing asserting an identity statement on the basis of the *inferences* it licenses. In particular, in asserting an identity one licenses as truth preserving inter-substitution of the terms of that identity. I regard the suggestion that asserting be explained in terms of inferring as the key to a correct understanding of assertion, and will pursue that suggestion in what follows. On the other hand, the privileged place of identity sentences in Frege's scheme is one central expression of his semantic assimilation of sentences to names, a strategy which no longer seems promising.

One way to disentangle the inferential insight from the reduction to identities is to return to the *Begriffsschrift*, written before Frege had achieved, and then become hypnotized by, his remarkable analysis of identity. The project of that work is to develop a formal language adequate to capture the conceptual contents or roles of ordinary sentences. Conceptual roles are defined as inference potentials.[3] The primary tool Frege employs is what we may call his *semantic principle*, namely that good inferences never proceed from premises which are true to conclusions which are not true. Truth is introduced as a technical auxiliary notion whose role is to help codify those inferences (see [1]).

Unfortunately, Frege takes his semantic principle to be not only a *necessary* condition of good inference, but a *sufficient* condition as well. As a result of this move, the only device available for making inferential practices explicit is the truth-functional conditional. And the consequence of this impoverished armamentarium is that the *Begriffsschrift* falls short of its aim of codifying the material inferences[4] which give actual sentences their significance, capturing only purely *formal* inferences, and expressing the conceptual roles only of purely *logical* vocabulary.[5]

In the context of this project, however, we can see that when the younger Frege glosses asserting as putting a sentence forward *as true*, the phrase has the sense of 'putting the sentence forward as one from which it is appropriate to make inferences.'[6] That is, asserting is issuing an inference license. Since inferring is drawing a conclusion, such an inference license amounts to a warrant for further assertions, specifically assertions of those sentences which can appropriately be inferred from the sentence originally asserted.[7]

The same conclusion can be reached by pressing another natural way of thinking about asserting, a construal in terms of the communicational function of presenting a sentence as *information*. In mathematical information theory, the information content of a signal is not an intrinsic property of the signal itself. That content is rather a relation between the signal and a set of antecedently possible performances on the part of the recipient, in the context of a set of rules or practices

restricting the set of performances which are still appropriate as responses once the signal is received. Thus a message, the appropriate response to which is to bet a number less than five on the roulette wheel, conveys more information than one which permits play on numbers less than eighteen. For sentential signals, the possible responses can be thought of as assertions the audience might make. The asserted sentence warrants the audience to assert just those sentences which may appropriately be inferred from the original claim.[8] To put a sentence forward as information is thus to present it as fodder for inferences leading to further assertions.

What is it that makes an inference appropriate or not? One explanatory strategy, familiar from the later Frege, Russell, Carnap, and Tarski, begins with objective reference relations between terms and things, and predicates and sets of things, and determines for each sentence a set of truth conditions as its representational content according to set-theoretic containment relations among the denotations of its components. An inference is then correct just in case the truth conditions of its conclusion are a subset of the truth conditions of its premises. On this line, inferences are to be appraised in terms of their faithfulness to the objective reality that determines which sets of representations are correctly inferrable from which others.

Another approach, which we may identify with Dewey and the later Wittgenstein, begins with inference conceived as a social practice, whose component performances must answer originally not to an objective reality but to communal norms. Here the appropriateness of an inference consists entirely in what the community whose inferential practices are in question is willing to approve, that is to treat or respond to as in accord with their practices. Following this second line of thought, it is the normative order of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations inherent in communal practice which we interrogate for an account of asserting. The authorizing of inferences, that is of further assertions, which is our first clue about assertion is to be understood as part of the social practical significance of an assertive performance. In the usual sense, one asserts that the circumstances expressed by a declarative sentence obtain. But one can also assert one's authority or rights. This broader normative usage will be invoked here to explain the narrower linguistic one.

The speech act of asserting arises in a particular, socially instituted, autonomous structure of responsibility and authority. In asserting a sentence one both commits oneself to it and endorses it. The dimension of endorsement is that which we indicated in a preliminary fashion in terms of the function of an asserting as licensing or authorizing further assertions. But without some independent grasp of what social significance must be bestowed on a performance for it to be an asserting,

invoking the warranting of further assertions merely takes us around in a rather small circle. It is the second dimension, of assertional *commitment*, which permits a larger horizon.

So far the function of assertion has been described as that of making sentences available as premises in inferences. The end result of inference is a further assertion (the conclusion), to which one becomes *entitled* in virtue of the premises. Putting a sentence forward in the public arena *as* true or *as* information is something *one* interlocutor can do to make that sentence available for *others* to use in becoming entitled to assert further sentences. But we only understand the role of assertions as warrants insofar as we know what the social significance of the difference between warranted and unwarranted assertions is.

Ordinarily the relation of an authorizing event to the performances it licenses requires at least that in the context of that event performances become socially appropriate which otherwise would not be. Thus purchasing a ticket entitles one to take a seat in the theatre, which it would be inappropriate to do without the ticket. This observation presents a dilemma. If asserting a sentence is not a performance requiring prior authorization, then we cannot understand the function of assertion as inferentially licensing further assertions. On the other hand, if asserting is a performance requiring authorization, how does one become entitled to the original licensing assertion? It is this question which is addressed by an account of the dimension of *commitment* characteristic of asserting. In asserting a claim one not only authorizes further assertions, but commits oneself to vindicate the original claim, showing that one is entitled to make it. Failure to defend one's entitlement to an assertion voids its social significance as inferential warrant for further assertions. It is only assertions one is entitled to make that can serve to entitle others to its inferential consequences. Endorsement is empty unless the commitment can be defended.

One of the original senses of 'assert' in its broader normative use is as meaning to defend, champion, or justify, as in Milton's famous expression of his intent in *Paradise Lost*

> That to the highth of this great Argument I may assert Eternal Providence, and Justifie the wayes of God to men.

This use suggests taking the commitment involved in asserting to be the undertaking of *justificatory responsibility* for what is claimed.[9] In asserting a sentence, one not only licenses further assertions on the part of others, but commits oneself to justifying the original claim. The responsibility in question is of the sort Baier calls 'task-responsibility' ([4]: 49-84), requiring the performance of a task of some kind for its fulfillment. Specifically, one undertakes the conditional task responsibility to

justify the claim if challenged. The conditional qualification is important. Our social practices, as Wittgenstein emphasized, treat performances as appropriate and in accord with those practices until and unless some specific question is raised about them. Assertions are treated as in order, that is, as warranted, until challenged. Responding to such a challenge consists in producing further assertions whose contents are appropriately inferentially related to the original one. Each justifying consists of further assertings, which may themselves be challenged and stand in need of further justification. There is no point fixed in advance at which such a regress of demands for justification and for justification of the justification need end.[10]

Inference is thus the root notion from which are ellaborated both the justificatory responsibility one commits oneself to in asserting, and the assertion license issued thereby. The conceptual role played by the original claim in the social practices of the community is determined by what further assertions that community would accept as appropriate justifications of it, and what assertions they would take it to license or justify.

If an assertion stands unchallenged, or when challenged is appropriately justified, then it has the social force of an inference or assertion license. We can now be more specific about the sense in which such an assertion authorizes further assertions. An assertion in force licenses others to re-assert the original claim (and to assert its immediate consequences) *deferring to the author of the original assertion the justificatory responsibility which would otherwise thereby be undertaken*. That A's assertion of p has the social significance of authorizing B's re-assertion of p consists in the social appropriateness of B's deferring to A the responsibility to respond to justificatory challenges regarding B's claim. B's justificatory responsibility is discharged by the invocation of A's authority, upon which B has exercised his right to rely. Further challenges are appropriately addressed to A rather than B.

If A is challenged concerning his assertion and fails to provide an appropriate set of justifying assertions, the socially constitutive consequence is to deprive his assertion of the authorizing force which it otherwise would have had. That is, insofar as A fails to discharge the justificatory responsibility undertaken in his original assertion, others are deprived of the option of deferring to A justificatory responsibility for their assertions of claims which follow from what A asserted. A's authority is undermined by the justificatory failure, and others must take responsibility for their own assertings of sentences otherwise inferrable from the content of A's remark. This combination of *personal* authority (justification by deference to the authority of another interlocutor) and *content-based authority* (justification by assertion of other

sentences from which the asserted content can appropriately be inferred) is characteristic of asserting as a doing.

There are cases in which it is inappropriate to issue a justificatory challenge to an assertor, due to a special socially conferred privilege or authority.[11] Also, a speaker may cheerfully admit that no justification is possible of his claim, and yet insist on asserting it. In neither instance of what we may call 'bare assertions' need this failure to shoulder the usual justificatory burden impugn the status of their utterances as assertions. So the previous remarks require some qualification. But notice that there is reason to treat these cases as derivative from or parasitic on a paradigm in which justificatory responsibility is undertaken as a matter of course. For what is the force of these bare assertions in the mouths of a tribal Deity or religious enthusiast? It is that others may take their word for the truth of what is asserted—others have the speaker's warrant to rely on what has been asserted as a premise for inference. And this dimension of authority makes sense only if such authority can be appealed to to justify otherwise impermissible utterances. Thus even bare assertion presupposes a context in which the *audience* consists of assertors and inferers who *do* undertake justificatory responsibility for their remarks.[12] So bare assertion is a special case, made possible by the more fundamental assertions exhibiting both the dimension of responsibility and that of authority.

The structure so far described is fundamental in another regard as well. In general one incurs a justificatory responsibility whenever one departs from a socially recognized norm or practice (this is what Baier calls "responsibility in the sense of answerability" [1]). Satisfying the demands of this sort of responsibility is justifying one's conduct. Doing so is producing assertions which stand in a special relation (not in general inferential) to the conduct in question. Assertional practices are thus presupposed by any system of social practices rich enough to exhibit even a limited requirement of answerability. Although one can be answerable for assertings as for any other doings, (e.g., for their being rude, impolitic, or ungracious) the conditional justificatory task responsibility undertaken in assertion must not be confused with responsibility in the sense of answerability, which it makes possible.[13]

By being caught up in assertional practices with the dual structure of authority and responsibility, sentences acquire a content in the sense of an inferential-justificatory role. Understanding a sentence as used by a community ('grasping' its inferential-justificatory role) is being able to tell what counts as a justification of it, and in what justifications it plays the part of a premise. Failure to understand a sentence in this sense disqualifies one from asserting it. It is for this reason that a parrot trained reliably to say "It's getting warmer" only as the temperature

climbs past 80 degrees never succeeds in asserting that it is getting warmer. However well the bird's responsive dispositions to produce this report match our own, it is incompetent as an assertor. The parrot cannot tell justifications of his remark from arguments against it, and cannot discriminate the further assertions which would thereby be licensed from those incompatible with what it has said.[14] As we grant socially the sorts of responsibility and authority characteristic of adulthood only gradually and in proportion to a child's mastery of the demands and the skills required to fulfill those demands, so it is with assertion. According to our conventions, the utterance of a declarative sentence under normal cirucmstances claims for itself the social status of an assertion. But we accord this status to the utterances of children, madmen, and foreigners only to the degree we take them to understand the inferential relations within which the responsibility and authority of asserting arise.

In the ideal *Sprachspiele* of assertion as here delineated, the social significance of each performance is determined by how the community does or would respond to it. Not having mastered these practices, the parrot and the infant do not understand the significances performances can have according to them. Whether or not one claim justifies another, for example, is not determined by some objective semantic content or relations the sentences have and which the community must try to live up to or reflect in their social practices of recognizing some claims as justifying others. Rather, a justification is whatever the community treats as one—whatever its members will let assertors get away with. It is from the communal responsive dispositions to recognize some claims as justifying others that the sentences involved first acquire their semantic contents, which will in turn determine their compounding potentials, paradigmatically their behavior as antecedents of conditionals. The meanings do not determine the appropriate inferences, but what inferences are socially appropriate determines the meanings of the sentences involved in those inferences.

What makes a performance a *move* in such a social behavioral system or game is then how it is appropriate, according to the community, to respond to it. For them to respond to it in a certain way is what it is for a community to *take* a performance *as* having a certain significance (for instance to be a justified assertion). The social roles performances can be taken as playing are accordingly defined and individuated by the communal *responses* appropriate to performances of that type. For instance, a performance is a violation of *tabu* in a totemistic society just in case the tribe would under suitable circumstances respond to it by punishment of the offending performer, attempts at expiation, etc. Of course the responsive dispositions which partition the space of possible performances into social significance equivalence

classes or co-appropriateness classes may themselves be required to be performances with some *other* social significance, hence defined by some *further* responsive disposition. Thus in Football a referee confers the social status "Offsides" on a performance by responding to it in a special way. That special response gets its significance in turn from *its* being appropriately responded to on the part of other officials by their imposition of a 5-yard penalty.[15]

The genesis of social significance from responsive recognitive dispositions may be illustrated for the case of asserting by considering the epistemologically crucial distinction between justification and truth. What is ontologically distinctive about the categories of significance induced by social practice is that performances have exactly the significance the community takes them to have. There is no difference for these kinds of things between *being* a K (a breaking of a *tabu*, a play run offsides, an unjustified asserting) and being treated as such by the community.[16] Accordingly, justification and truth will be distinguished within the asserting game just in case *taking* a claim to be true and *taking* it to be justified are socially discriminable responses.

What is it for one community member to *take* the remark of another to be justified? (Either because no justificatory challenge need be issued, or after such a challenge has been responded to with further assertions?) It is for the respondent to recognize the inferential authority of the original remark. This recognition in turn consists in the respondent's disposition to accept as legitimate deferrals of justificatory responsibility to the original assertor. Acknowledging such deferrals is simply accepting as just*ified* those further claims which would be just*ifiable* if the original claim is premised. So to take one claim as justified is to be disposed to take as justified the claims which may appropriately be inferred from it. Thus whether or not a claim is (taken as) justified only has consequences for whether other claims are (taken as) justified,[17] for this is what the constitutive recognition of the *authority* of the original assertion consist in.

If taking a claim as justified is being prepared to recognize the conclusions of appropriate inferences from it as justified, what is it to take the claim as true? It is to be prepared to assert that claim, and the conclusions of appropriate inferences from it, *oneself*. The social difference between justification and truth is the perspectival difference between those endorsements on the part of others one is prepared to admit as authorized or permitted, and those endorsements one is oneself prepared to undertake. Thus to admit another's remark as justified while not taking it to be *true* is to admit that the other has followed the rules of the asserting game and is entitled to his commitment and endorsement, that is, that his claim follows appropriately from other assertions he is similarly entitled to make, while not being

prepared to make that endorsement or accept its consequences oneself. The difference is that between commitments one recognizes as legitimate on the part of others, and one's own commitments. I may be willing to accept as justified your claim that there is a candle in front of you, given your information. Yet if I accept, as you do not, that there is a mirror in front of you, I will not be prepared to endorse your claim as *true*, that is to make inferences from it myself. Though there may be complete communal agreement about which claims justify which others, such agreement does not preclude significant differences between community members with regard to which sentences each is willing to endorse and undertake a commitment to.[18]

The social practices governing the asserting game permit four different kinds of "move." First, one may utter a declarative sentence which has the significance of an assertion, that is, counts as undertaking justificatory responsibility and as issuing an inference license. Such assertions can function either as premises or as conclusions of inferences. Second, one may demand a justification of some claim from another interlocutor. Third, one may defer justificatory responsibility for a claim to another. Finally, one may recognize a claim as (having been) justified. To do so is to acknowledge the legitimacy of its authority over other assertions, that is, its availability to others as a premise in justifying further assertions.

In these terms we can understand what it is to attribute commitment to a certain claim to another interlocutor. To make this move is to be disposed to recognize as appropriate others' deferrals to that interlocutor of justificatory responsibility for the claim. Accepting such deferrals may in turn be understood as recognizing the deferred claim as available as a premise for further justifications, with the provision that the one to whom responsibility is deferred must not have failed appropriately to respond to a demand for justification of that claim.

Each interlocutor keeps *score* for himself and for others, in the form of attributed commitments. Making a move in the assertion game can change this score. Each speaker has, to begin with, a *basic repertoire* consisting of those sentences he or she is currently prepared to authorize and explicitly to undertake justificatory responsibility for, that is, to assert. From the point of view of other speakers, however, there is also an *extended* repertoire consisting of all those sentences others are prepared to *take* that individual as committed to. In general the speaker need not be aware of all that he or she has become socially committed to in virtue of the commitments explicitly undertaken. For in being prepared to issue a certain claim one becomes committed to its consequences as well, whether one realizes what all of these are or not. This is why a threshhold mastery of inferential relations is required for one to be admitted as a player in the first place. These dual repertoires

of commitments and endorsements stand in, as discursive scores (a form of social sentential property involving its own rights and responsibilities toward the sentences "owned"), for the traditional notion of belief. The basic repertoires correspond to beliefs in the sense in which we only believe that we believe we believe. The extended repertoires correspond to beliefs in the sense in which we believe the consequences of our beliefs (i.e., are committed to these) whether we know what they are or not.

At the outset assertion was described as the form of cognitive discourse. Cognitive discourse consists of *knowledge-claims*. The status of knowledge-claim as such purports to have is that of expressing an appropriately justified true belief. The account of the social practices governing asserting has provided specific interpretations of what is involved in putting forward a sentence as justified, as true, and as the expression of a belief (understood as either explicit or implicit commitment). In keeping with the social practice approach, instead of explaining what knowledge *is*, the present account explains what it is to *take* a claim as justified, as true, and as the expression of a belief or commitment.

According to this account, asserting a sentence cannot be understood simply as offering to present a justificatory defense of it if challenged. For one cannot understand the undertaking of justificatory responsibility apart from the recognition of inferential authority, which in turn is explained in terms of the *deferral* of justificatory responsibility from one interlocutor to another. Defending a claim only has a point if successfully defended claims license others to rely upon their authority in defending further claims. This point is most evident in the case of bare assertions, which involve no offer to defend a claim, operating solely as licenses authorizing inferences to further claims. Emphasizing the conditional offer to justify, to the exclusion of the aspects of authority and deferral, would leave a treatment of asserting unable to explain the crucial distinction between taking a claim to be justified and taking it to be *true*—what Heidegger might have called 'the epistemological difference.' For the difference is precisely that between treating a performance as successfully discharging a task responsibility and accepting the authority of a licensing performance. The dimension of interpersonal inferential authority is thus essential to the status of assertions as putative knowledge claims and as public information, their cognitive and communicative roles.

By way of conclusion, it is interesting to compare this story with the most powerful contemporary account of asserting which avoids the pitfalls enumerated at the opening of this paper. Grice's early work on meaning suggests an interpretation of asserting a sentence as uttering the sentence with the intention of bringing one's audience to hold the

belief expressed by that sentence, in virtue of their recognition of that very intention. For the social behaviorist, who contends that the notions of belief and of intention must ultimately be explained in terms of the social practices governing assertion, such an account is backwards. But there is something intuitively correct about it, and so it is useful to see the sense in which the social practice story merely transposes the Gricean approach into a social key. The effect of successful assertion on the audience is not taken to be belief, but commitment. It is not the intention of the speaker which matters in the first instance, but the social authority of his remark. It is not the speaker's *intention* which brings about the desired effect, but the social *convention* or practice governing his remark. On both views the speaker puts forward his claim as one which has the significance of authorizing commitment to that claim on the part of others. The difference lies in whether the locus of authority and of commitment is viewed as internal and psychological or as constituted by public social practice.

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NOTES

[1]Dummett concludes the useful discussion of asserting in his Frege book (to which the present account is much indebted): "We have opposed throughout the view of assertion as the expression of an interior act of judgement; judgement rather is the interiorization of the external act of assertion. The reason for viewing the two this way round is that a conventional act can be described, without circularity, as the expression of a mental state of act only if there exist non-conventional ways of expressing it . . . " ([7]: 362).

[2]"Whereas a procedure has an *effect,* a function has a *value.*"

[3]Section 3 of the *Begriffsschrift* (BGS) says of the contents of two judgments "[If] the consequences derivable from the first, when it is combined with certain other judgements always follow also from the second when it is combined with these same judgements. . . [then] I call that part of the content that is the *same* in both the *conceptual content.*"

[4]I.e., content-sensitive inferences.

[5]The preface to the BGS describes the expressive project as ultimately including the conceptual contents of sentences of arithmetic, geometry, chemistry, and physics,

though of BGS itself he says ". . . I confined myself for the time being to expressing relations that are independent of the particular characteristics of objects," (that is, to purely formal or logical contents). In comparing BGS with other systems, Frege complains: "In contrast, Boole's symbolic logic only represents the *formal* part of the language," whereas "Right from the start I had in mind the *expression of a content* not a *calculus* restricted to pure logic" ([7]: 12-13).

[6]See for instance Frege's first logic, as reprinted in [7]: "The goal of scientific endeavor is *truth*. Inwardly to *recognize something as true* is to make a judgement, and to give expression to this judgement is to make an assertion" (p. 2). "Logic is concerned only with those grounds of judgement which are truths. To make a judgement because we are cognisant of other truths as providing a justification for it is known as *inferring*" (p. 3). "The task of logic being what it is, it follows that we must turn our backs on anything that is not necessary for setting up the laws of inference" (p. 5).

[7]The practical scope of an assertion is then indicated by the audience to whom such warrant extends. A declarative sentence uttered by an actor on stage licenses inferences in the desired sense only for other characters, not for those watching the play.

[8]We leave aside the important question of how we distinguish inferences from the *content* of the claiming (what is claimed) from inferences from the claiming of that content. The latter we ignore throughout as pragmatic inferences (e.g., "To be so rude to her, Peter must be very angry with the doctor.") whose possibility must be understood in terms of the primary semantic-inferential practices investigated here.

[9]Compare Searle ([9]: 96), who treats an assertion as "an undertaking to the effect that p." The present account explains what is undertaken, and explicates the "effect" here invoked (see note 2).

[10]Of course it need not always be appropriate to issue a justificatory challenge. Non-inferential reports concerning the immediate environment are presumed to be in order unless the challenger can suggest some special reason why the speaker might have failed in this case to make the report any competent speaker ought to make (e.g., because of bad light or hidden mirrors, etc.). So justificatory challenges can in some circumstances *themselves* stand in need of justification.

[11]This category will include not only the Pope's speaking *ex cathedra* on matters of faith and morals, but other institutionalized categories such as sincere first-person avowals.

[12]A discussion of reports would, I believe, require the consideration of a special kind of bare assertion. When a report is challenged, one may respond by exhibiting the reported situation, saying to the challenger in effect "Look for yourself." This may be thought of as deferring justificatory responsibility to a *world assertor*. The reported situations are then thought of as bare assertions uttered by the world. This special sort of assertion involves only authority, and cannot itself be further queried for justification. The world's authority in these matters is, like all authority, constituted by its social recognition, that is by the fact that members of the linguistic community accept deferrals of justificatory responsibility to the world assertor. Seeing the reportable world as in this way consisting of assertings which are reported by being overheard combined the early Wittgenstein's conviction that the world consists of facts, not of things, with the later Wittgenstein's assimilation of non-inferential reporting to *reading* a text. Nothing in the present account of asserting in general depends upon this idiosyncratic construal of reports, however.

[13]Nor, as Baier makes clear, must we confuse either of these categories with responsibility in the sense of liability to punishment. Presumably this sort of responsibility is more primitive than answerability, since behavior shaping by negatively reinforcing socially inappropriate performances seems to be a fundamental mechanism for training new community members to the point at which they can be entrusted with specific task responsibilities, become assertors, and become answerable for their deviations.

[14]See [10], especially sections 12-20. The present account of assertion is largely a footnote to Sellars' seminal discussion of the dimension of endorsement.

[15]If the responses defining *each* kind of significance a performance can have in some social behavioral system are in this sense themselves performances whose significance is constituted by how they can appropriately be responded to (rather than by objectively definable responses such as cutting one's throat), we may call the system of social

practices *autonomous*. See [3]. The inferential-justificatory system of practices comprised by asserting is autonomous in this sense.

[16]Compare this sort of social-responsive incorrigibility with the Cartesian variety investigated by Rorty in [8].

[17]This autonomy of significance of justification is merely a particular case of the general fact that whether or not one performance is socially appropriate according to some social practice matters only for the appropriateness of further performances. Seat-taking in the theatre is appropriate only if preceded by an appropriate ticket-purchasing. From the interpretation of a bit of behavior as governed by a particular social practice, one can draw conclusions about what performances would be appropriate, but not about which will occur. For a discussion of this feature of social practice aimed at the question of is-ought reducibility, see [3].

[18]For the purposes of the simplified exposition of this paper, we have assumed throughout that the community is at one with respect to the *inference* they accept as appropriate, and have investigated the sorts of authority and responsibility which can give rise to an assertional structure of endorsements and commitments according to those inferential relations. The real world is more complicated, however. As Quine emphasizes in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," which inferences one is prepared to accept depends upon what sentences one is prepared to assert and hence has available as auxiliary hypotheses. The present account can be extended to admit not only perspectival commitments but perspectival recognitions of the appropriateness of justifications and inferences, but doing so introduces complications beyond the scope of the present work.