

DOI:10.14394/eidos.jpc.2019.0038

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## The Performative Aspects of Metaphor: The Metaphorization of Silence between Intentionality and Conventionality

### Abstract:

Metaphor, as is known, has been considered an expression of the creative approach of a subject to language and thinking. Metaphor enables the subject of cognition and action to establish meaning – the subject exercises semiosis not only by referring to the former convention and the situational context, but also by transforming it due to the distinct act of turning the metaphor into an instrument of expression. The innovative character of metaphor allows one to consider it in the context of performative theory, whereas its receptive, evocative character requires interpretation from the recipient. In both cases, metaphor in acts of communication, opens their participants towards specific expressions – performative expression in the case of individual semantic innovation, and receptive expression in the case of the interpretation of former metaphors. The specific example of silence, considered as a kind of metaphor within the frameworks of the performative theory, is the subject-matter of the paper. The basic question of the paper, referring to John L. Austin's speech act theory and to his followers, is related to the source of the aforementioned metaphorization – to what degree is it an intention of language users, and to what degree is it a language convention which allows one to combine words and establish new associations metaphorically? In his pragmatic concept of meaning, Austin stresses the role of the context of an utterance – the situational context may also enable the establishment of metaphor as a figure of speech that dynamizes and moves our thinking.

### Keywords:

metaphor, silence, performative theory, intention, convention, normativeness

## Preliminary Questions: Metaphors and Metaphorization

The specific example of silence, considered as a kind of metaphor within the frameworks of the performative theory, is the subject-matter of the paper. The basic question of the paper, referring to John L. Austin's speech act theory and to his followers, is related to the source of the aforementioned metaphorization – to what degree is it an intention of language users, and to what degree is it a language convention, which allows for the combination of words and the establishment of new associations metaphorically? This subject-matter requires a closer definition of the semantic aspects of metaphors and metaphorization.

In numerous philosophical conceptions, metaphor is considered as a certain linguistic figure that organizes reasoning. Additionally, metaphor is treated as a figure of language and reasoning that grants access to the truth regarding reality – either strictly objective reality, or the cultural reality of human beings, compiled of the objects of culture, of the mental and linguistic representations (the reality of culture created by the human being, endowed with an assortment of sense, and related to his cognitive capabilities, his specific equipment). Metaphor is taken as a source in regard to a concept – as a certain condition of truth contained within the concept, or as a certain apprehension of truth in reality that is supplemental to the concept. In the second case, metaphor is regarded as a figure of language that reveals concealed or yet invisible aspects of experience.<sup>1</sup> Among the modern conceptions highlighting the cognitive role of metaphor, one may list Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Mythologiques* or the theory of orientational and ontological metaphors proposed by cognitive linguists.

These differing views have a common point in their reference to Aristotle's<sup>2</sup> and Quintilian's<sup>3</sup> theses concerning metaphor as the transfer of meaning from one object of cognition to another (hence, i.a., the term "comparison" used in poetics). The transfer of meaning is based on the mutuality of certain features (the toughness of stone, to which the heart, which is tough as stone, is compared in the "heart of stone" metaphor). However, the metonymy, for example the synecdoche, is a "change of name," because one word is used instead of the other (primarily, the proper name replaces the general, or vice versa). Metaphor is the "transfer of sense" from a word or a group of words to a different utterance or a set of utterances. Such transfer is based on the analogy of meaning ascribed to both words, utterances (primarily connotation, therefore, an analogy of a certain feature, quality). Metaphor is much more abstract than comparison, therefore it should not feature this comparative character, and the word "as" does not occur here directly, but rather a metaphorical word appears instead of a different word. For example, instead of the word "sun," a "fireball" utterance is used.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, metonymy is the direct use of one word instead of the other in reference to colloquial, well known associations, and both utterances belong to the same "group of concepts," and are connected by the "relation of contact, coexistence or dependence."<sup>5</sup> In other words, they are connected by the partial resemblance of their content, whereas they differ in their scope of use (e.g., a proper name instead of a general name). In the analyses of colloquial speech, both metaphor and metonymy allow one to break the dominant posi-

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1) Cf. *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), *passim*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816802>.

2) Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. Leonardo Tarán and Dimitri Gutas (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2012), 21 1457b. See also Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, ed. and trans. Edward M. Cope and John E. Sandys (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.2 1404b–1505b, 3.4 1406b–1407a, 3.10–11 1410b–1413b.

3) Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, book VIII, in *The Orator's Education*, trans. Donald A. Russell, 5 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 2001), vol. 3.

4) Jean-Jacques Robrieux, *Les figures de style et de rhétorique* (Paris, Dunod, 1998), 21.

5) *Ibid.*, 28.

tion of logic and the logical primacy of names (as the basis of a logical proposition) in favor of grammar and rhetoric. One may add that references to rhetoric and the grammatical primacy of verbs were exactly those aspects highlighted by John L. Austin in his speech act theory.

Within the current research concerning metaphor, that exceeds the literary studies, a number of varied conceptions appear regarding the metaphorization of the colloquial language and of the scientific discourse. The scientific discourse places colloquial thinking as a starting point – it uses both logical argumentation and rhetorical figures that are typical for argumentation used in a colloquial language, for example, metaphor. The detailed analyses pertain to metaphor of the colloquial language, as well as its usage in the scientific language (particularly, in ontology and philosophy in general).<sup>6</sup> The point of reference is the Aristotelian definition of metaphor, which was contemporarily reinterpreted by:

- 1) linguists (Émile Benveniste,<sup>7</sup> among others, and cognitive linguists<sup>8</sup>) – the metaphorical sources of notions, the metaphor considered as the starting point of conceptualization;
- 2) literary and cultural studies – the application of metaphor in the various cultural messages linked to mythical thinking and reasoning and argumentation by analogy (i.a., Claude Lévi-Strauss<sup>9</sup> and Edmund Leach,<sup>10</sup>); and in particular by
- 3) philosophers who characterized a metaphorization process as a specific kind of thinking, one which conditions the regularity and systematicity of reasoning and imagining (Hans Blumenberg,<sup>11</sup> Paul Ricoeur,<sup>12</sup> Jacques Derrida<sup>13</sup>).

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6) We owe these studies to cognitive linguists, as well as to Hans Blumenberg who indicated the metaphorical sources of philosophical concepts (along with Émile Benveniste), among others, the metaphorical rooting of the concept of truth – the truth of being in Parmenides and the form of truth in Plato.

7) Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, I (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); the English translation: *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary E. Meek (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971).

8) Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). See also Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, *Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language*, in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 286–328.

9) Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss' four volumes of *Mythologiques*, published 1964–1971, for example, *Le cru et le cuit – Mythologiques*, vol. I (Paris: Plon, 1964); the English translations were published 1969–1981 as *Mythologiques – Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (1<sup>st</sup> edition: New York: Harper & Row; London: Jonathan Cape).

10) Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by which Symbols Are Connected* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511607684>.

11) Hans Blumenberg, “Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie,” *Archive für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 6 (1960): 5–142; reprinted: Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997); the English translation: *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca-New York: Cornell University Press & Cornell University Press Library, 2010).

12) Paul Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris, Seuil, 1975); the English translation: *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-0922.1976.tb00004.x>. See also Paul Ricoeur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” *Critical Inquiry* 5, no.1 (*Special Issue on Metaphor*) (Autumn, 1978): 143–159, <https://doi.org/10.1086/447977>; Paul Ricoeur, “Imagination et métaphore,” *Psychologie Médicale*, no. 14 (1982): 1883–1887.

13) Jacques Derrida, “La mythologie blanche,” *Poétique*, no. 5 (*Rhétorique et philosophie*) (1971): 1–52; reprinted: *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 247–324; the English translation: “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” trans. F. C. T. Moore, *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (*On Metaphor*) (Autumn, 1974): 5–74; next published in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–272, <https://doi.org/10.2307/468341>. See also Jacques Derrida's text *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, published in *Writing and Difference* (the English translation of *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris, Seuil, 1967), trans., with introduction by Alan Bass (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 351–370.

In the philosophical and linguistic state of research concerning metaphor, the scholars indicate several investigative traditions:

- 1) comparativist (the metaphorical comparison, the metaphor interpreted figuratively: i.a., Aristotle and Quintilian, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida),
- 2) of the “literal meaning” (the ordinary meaning of metaphor, given in the colloquial language: i.a., Donald Davidson<sup>14</sup>),
- 3) semantic (the “metaphorical meaning” – metaphors resulting from the interrelations between words and word meanings, for example an uttered sentence considered as a metaphor: i.a., Max Black<sup>15</sup> and Monroe Beardsley<sup>16</sup>),
- 4) of cognitive linguistics (the metaphorical arrangement of concepts or images, the imaginative and unconscious constructions of meaning, the “conceptual metaphor” and “cross-domain map”: i.a., Georg Lakoff and Mark Johnson),
- 5) pragmatic, especially important in respect of the Austinian performative theory (the metaphorical usage of words and phrases allows one to go beyond the literal meaning towards a different meaning; one and the same utterance may be interpreted both literally and metaphorically: i.a., Paul Grice<sup>17</sup> and John Searle,<sup>18</sup> also the contextualist research).

Studies pertaining to metaphor as a figure of colloquial language, thinking and scientific discourse have been developed since the beginning of the 1960s. However, the cognitive scholars – primarily George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in the book titled *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) – were interested in the metaphorical beginning of human cognition in general. In other words, they were interested in , the process of metaphorization<sup>19</sup> that occurs along with the apprehension of the cognitive results of experience (orientational and ontological metaphors), particularly the bodily conditions of metaphor creation (*embodied metaphors*).<sup>20</sup> As indicated by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach, Paul Ricoeur, and later by cognitive linguistics, metaphors are submitted to universalization and enter the scope of colloquial language and thinking. Therefore, one may speak not only about “wandering concepts” (also within the framework of the humanities and social sciences) but also about

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14) Donald Davidson, “What Metaphors Mean,” *Critical Inquiry* 5, no.1 (*Special Issue on Metaphor*) (Autumn, 1978): 31–47; reprinted in: Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 245–264, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199246297.003.0017>. See also: Michael Glanzberg, “Metaphor and Lexical Semantics,” *The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication*, vol. 3 (*A Figure of Speech*) (August, 2008), 13, <https://doi.org/10.4148/biyclc.v3i0.14>.

15) Max Black, “Metaphor,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55 (1954–1955): 273–94, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aristotelian/55.1.273>.

16) Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Metaphorical Twist,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 22, no. 3 (1962): 293–307, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2104415>.

17) Wayne A. Davis, *Implicature: Intention, Convention, and Principle in the Failure of Gricean Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511663796>.

18) John R. Searle, “Metaphor”, in *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 76–116, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511609213>.

19) The discussion regarding metaphorization included the works of Umberto Eco and Richard Rorty, as well as philosophers who consciously applied metaphor in their argumentation (Hannah Arendt and the poetical aspect of the language of philosophy, Jan Patočka and the musical metaphors in the characteristics of human life and political systems) – see bibliographical references.

20) In their conception of orientational metaphors, one may see inspiration coming from Blumenberg’s theses regarding the metaphorization of geometric symbols, which is accomplished in the language of philosophy – Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, chapter X *Geometric Symbolism and Metaphorics*, 115–131.

“wandering metaphors.” “Horizon” is an example of such metaphor.<sup>21</sup> However, *silence – considered to be a lack of a verbal act – is also submitted to metaphorization.*

On the other hand, Edmund Leach and Claude Lévi-Strauss presented metaphorization as individual acts of comparison, which are perpetuated due to the use of language and constitute certain figures of argumentation. Anthropologists would find metaphorization and metonymization at the source of reasoning by analogy, primarily characteristic for myth and mythology (as model-creating stories), and typical of colloquial thinking (e.g., fiction narratives, allowing for the adoption of a character as a role model and, to make choices analogous to those of the role model, expecting similar results). The conclusions of the anthropologists were related to the metaphor and metonymy applied in an intersemiotic translation, particularly to the connections of word, gesture and image. Such widely conceived metaphors relate primarily to other actions and it is an “as” of a different personal expression – it is, for example, silence as expressive of anger; in other words, we replace anger with ostentatious silence, the ostentation of which is to equal the expression of anger. However, the broad understanding of metonymy is an appearance of one sign instead of the other – a sign conceived in a broad multisemiotic cultural context. Metonymy appears in place of other words or gestures “as” something else; therefore, the metaphor (e.g., of silence), in some cases, is based on metonymy, which, in some sense, constitutes its condition (first, silence appears “instead,” “as” discontent, sadness or happiness, and only secondarily would its expressive character equal the unaccomplished expression regarding its degree, when the convention does not allow a loud expression of emotions). Metaphor allows one to refer to the intensity, the degree of concealed and directly unspoken opinion, aided by other concurrent signs – body gestures as quiet, silent performative acts that were described by Austin in his speech act theory.

Therefore, the studies pertaining to metaphor are broad, multidisciplinary, semiotic and semantic studies related to various culture rotations, various contexts and conventions. Various types of language utterances and other cultural messages were defined exactly within the framework of the above, with reference to terms such as “metaphor” and “metonymy.” Metaphor is the establishment of meaning by the subject of cognition and action, who performs semiosis not only by reference to the former and existing conventions, and to situational context, but also by reformulating it due to the resolute application of metaphor as an instrument of his/her own expression. One must highlight that, in this instance, metaphor appears not as one of many signs and gestures, but becomes an expressive object of the self-definition of the subject who, in that manner, refers to the external world and to oneself, establishing a new meaning in the practice of comparison and by the association of various recognized and already known elements. *The innovative character of metaphor allows one to examine it within the context of performative studies, whereas its receptive, evocative character requires interpretation from the recipient.* In both cases, metaphor in communicative acts opens their participants to specific expressions: 1) performative expression in terms of individual semiosis, and 2) receptive expression in terms of the interpretation of already established metaphors.

### Individual Intentions and Cultural Conventions in Austin’s Performative Theory

The issue of performativity – the communication actions that are, simultaneously, “doing” something – is mostly considered by linguists, within the context of linguistic pragmatics, as a specific (socially, culturally, politically) way of using language, as well as other systems of signs. *Performative actions – actions with*

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21) Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, chapter X *Geometric Symbolism and Metaphorics*, chapter VI *Organic and Mechanical Background Metaphorics*, 75–76; see also Eddo Evink, “Horizons of Expectation. Ricoeur, Derrida, Patočka,” *Studia Phaenomenologica*, no. 13 (2013): 297–323, <https://doi.org/10.7761/SP.13.297>.

*the use of a word, a visual sign, a gesture and a silence – aim to*, among others, establish a certain normative hierarchy anew, within culture. It is a transition from the descriptive or ascertaining character of language (descriptions) to valuation and evaluation (prescriptions), in other words, a transition from an ascertainment of a certain fact to its cultural establishment and assessment, that is, to ascribing to it a social, cultural status and value.

As is known, John L. Austin indicates and characterizes three types of performative speech acts, classified as locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions.<sup>22</sup> Austin makes a distinction between statements (descriptive and ascertaining utterances) and performative utterances (normative, prescriptive, imperatives). Speech acts may indicate the procedures of action directly (prescriptions, imperatives, provisions of law), or refer to already established conventional procedures, the conventions of acting. One must add that Austin distinguishes between speech acts as conventional acts, and speech acts that only refer to adopted conventions: “an act done as conforming to a convention.”<sup>23</sup> Simultaneously, Austin distinguishes between the convention of a statement and the situational context – a situation in which a given utterance occurs and it is “significant”: “the words used are to some extent to be ‘explained’ by the ‘context’ in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange.”<sup>24</sup> He focused his attention, among others, on the conventions that define the procedures of action, mainly efficient action. Similar to the majority of contemporary philosophers and linguists, Austin is considering these cultural conventions as rules of action – linguistic and non-linguistic, including the multitude of cultural contexts.<sup>25</sup>

Austin highlights that in culture “there must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect”<sup>26</sup> – conventional procedure, which we can easily recognize and “which we aim to apply by means of our utterance.”<sup>27</sup> For example, various verbal procedures, that is, enunciated utterances, “have a certain (conventional) force” in accordance with a conventional procedure.<sup>28</sup>

Austin asks, among others, how the individual intention is realized within a convention and examines what cultural rules authorize the subject *a priori* to perform this action, and how they legitimize *a posteriori* the subjective, intentional action. This way, Austin does not abandon the ethical consideration of intentions, but he focuses his research on the normative legitimacy of individual, varying acts of speech and action. At the same time, he asks in what way their performative efficiency owes to the conventions. One may say that Austin effects a detailed analysis of certain procedures of action acceptable or unacceptable within a given culture and its conventions. Moreover – he attempts to indicate, when and within which conventions, a subject may reformulate his/her own cultural normativeness (i.e., a state of norms) and legitimacy, referring to his/her own intention. Individual intention of an utterance and an action turns out to affect the very conditions of utterance and action. Then, the subject reformulates the conditions of his/her own performativity – the efficient action and influence within the society and its culture; conditions that – as Pierre Bourdieu would

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22) John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. James O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford & London: Oxford University Press, 1962), Lecture IX, 108–119. See also John L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, ed. James O. Urmson and Geoffrey J. Warnock, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford & London: Oxford University Press, 1970), text *Performative Utterances*, 233–252.

23) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lecture VIII, 105.

24) *Ibid.*, 100.

25) Cf. Roberet Stalnaker, *Context and Content: Essays on Intentionality in Speech and Thought* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198237073.001.0001>.

26) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lecture II, 14.

27) Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, text *Performative Utterances*, 237.

28) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lecture IX, 108.

put it – are the symbolic power. Austin's strict relation of intention and convention refers both to the speaker and the listener, the recipient of the utterance. According to Austin, the intention is expressed in that which is spoken – what and how (the content of the utterance and, e.g., intonation).

Therefore, Austin's theory refers to the intention as a certain motivation of the acting subject – to an intention that must be in accordance with the convention: with the social and cultural rules of acting, therefore, the normativeness and prescriptions (customary, moral, legal). However, Austin's conception of intention exceeds its volitional understanding towards phenomenology. Austin is considering utterances as certain linguistic phenomena (of the colloquial language) in combination with psychological phenomena; and in his book titled *Sense and Sensibilia*,<sup>29</sup> he links linguistics with phenomenologically considered perception. However, he was already referring to the concept of intention considered both volitionally and cognitively, that is, phenomenologically, earlier on. In Austin's performative theory of speech act, both variants of intention, that is, volitional and cognitive, are combined and intertwined. One must add that Peter Strawson was considering the relations of subjective intention and intersubjective conventions in Austin's speech act theory, highlighting the primacy of individual intentions.

One may say that *cultural normativeness* is strictly related to the rules accepted in a given culture, defined by Austin as "conventions" (particularly conventions of speaking as acting). Cultural normativeness and its rules are founded on colloquial thinking, typical of a given culture, and their certain consequence and supplement is an assortment of legal arrangements that are also a product of a given culture.

### Performative Theory and Silence

Eventually, John L. Austin acknowledged that performative acts are speech acts, however, along with other actions and behaviors of the subject, called non-verbal actions that constitute a certain state of the world, including body gestures, for example, indicative gestures, ostension, as well as gestures of negation and denial. According to Austin, these gestures would accompany linguistic utterances, along with other non-verbal actions meaningful in a given society and its culture, in the cultural and historical context. One must again highlight that Austin, in his theory of performative acts, assumes a certain intention of communicating specified senses and meanings by the subject of speech. Therefore, the intention of communication pertains to certain acts of expression. However, in contemporary linguistic and social theories, silence is also considered as an element of communication, which is associated with particular meanings related to semantic intentions, understood psychologically in the general sense, or, in the strict sense – phenomenologically. Hence, silence is apprehended, among others, as an act of social denial in discussion, the undermining of opponents' reason, a persuasive act in political and marketing communication.

One must add that according to Austin, the performative speech acts, in other words, verbal actions, but additionally, actions performed in reference to sign systems other than linguistic, are a confirmation or a re-establishment of the hierarchy of norms and values within culture: "The situation in the case of actions which are non-linguistic but similar to performative utterances in that they are the performance of a conventional action (here ritual or ceremonial)."<sup>30</sup> According to Austin, performative acts refer to a system of evaluation, to values and norms; however, they also determine the measure of these evaluations – norms and values. They accomplish this directly, assuming the form of imperative sentences, visual signs, which determine the proper or improper way of acting and conduct. However, they do it often indirectly under the form of decla-

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29) John L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, ed. Geoffrey J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

30) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lecture VI, 69.

rations, promises, vows, and commitments. One may find specific performative acts within diverse cultural rituals and manners of language using (e.g., mythical or historical narrative), but also in the renunciation of activities by individual and collective subjects. Austin indicated silence as an example of this specific performativity – the renunciation of activity.

Performatives, as accomplishing actions, complying with the cultural conditions of communication, are, therefore, primarily the “verbal acts,” but also other “non-verbal acts” as well as refraining from verbal communication, that is, silence. *Austin considers silence* primarily within the context of arrangements, known from political inquiries of John Locke concerning the “tacit consent,”<sup>31</sup> that is, silent or quiet agreement; therefore, it is related to silence as a manifestation of agreement concerning the established state of the society and the political institutions, as an expression of obedience, or as a show of favor to the opinions presented by others.<sup>32</sup> Locke acknowledges, as is known, the “right or liberty to” of “persons,” in other words, of the subjects of action, including the right to refusal. However, this right should be realized in action, and not due to abstaining from activity, which is – according to Locke – silence as abstaining from giving one’s own voice. Austin goes beyond such a conception of “tacit consent” and considers silence also as an act of going silent, therefore, as an act of waiving, refusal, that is, a manifestation of the lack of agreement dealing with dialogue – as an expression of the intention not to participate in the communication fully: “There are classic doubts about the possibility of tacit consent; here non-verbal performance occurs in an alternative form of performative act.”<sup>33</sup> Austin adopts a position that “the action may be performed in ways other than by a performative utterance, and in any case the circumstances, including other actions, must be appropriate.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, silence as performative non-verbal action must include communication conventions and situational contexts – the specific conventions of culture as well as socially and culturally varying situational contexts.

Austin considers silence in the illocutionary aspect, that is, as a certain performative action entailing consequences in the form of the future actions of the one who asks the question, and the one who, while responding, remains silent. However, silence may be supplemented by other non-verbal action, that is, a performative gesture, for example in a vote performed by raising hands. In this case, silence would be considered as a type of action, involved in the verbal context, and supplemented by non-verbal actions, as a type of performative action which – one must add – establishes or changes the state of the world.

One may indicate numerous aspects of silence as a performative act, referring the theses of Austin’s theory to other linguistic and semiotic conceptions. Maybe *the issue of silence would be the terminal issue of performative studies* – the issue that allows one to indicate a certain border between the performative and the non-performative in language and in communication. The silence of the speaking subject, the quietness in a communicative act, is largely considered to be the cessation of employing words that is simultaneously a certain communicative and sense-creating action, in the context of a given communicative situation. Expanding on Austin’s theses pertaining to the performative character of silence, one may indicate metaphorical aspects of silence that would be good examples of a metaphorical and, simultaneously, performative dynamization of thinking.

Referring to Austin’s performative theory, one may indicate examples of performative acts of silence as realizations of various cultural conventions well known in public life. These are, for example: 1) marches

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31) Ibid., Lecture IX, 118; cf. Paul Russell, “Locke on Express and Tacit Consent: Misinterpretations and Inconsistencies,” *Political Theory* 14, no. 2 (May, 1986): 291–306, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591786014002006>.

32) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lecture IX, 118–119.

33) Ibid., Lecture VI, 80, n.1.

34) Ibid., Lecture I, 9.



of silence – actions performed within the cultural (political) convention of public manifestations, 2) silent consumer consent, admitted as an approval within the frameworks of the aforementioned, sanctioning “tacit consent,” 3) the silent audience and the silent participants of a public event according to the convention which requires the speaker to be active, and the audience – to be passive (e.g., religious rituals). In the aforementioned cases, silence is a realization of a convention which requires the silent presence of the participants. Austin defines such types of performative acts as directly conventional acts, that is, acts that accomplish certain conventions. As already mentioned, Austin differentiates them from acts that only refer, or include certain conventions. As examples of such silent activities, one may present the silence of the audience when an ovation or an applause is expected, the silence of a politician, when “taking the floor” is expected, particularly during a press conference in the presence of journalists. It is clearly visible that in the aforementioned cases, silence is admitted not as action, but as a certain abstention from action; it is more like going silent rather than silence itself; however it might transform into a persistent silence (e.g., a lasting refusal of giving press interviews by a politician or a public person). One can easily notice that silence, as a realization of a cultural convention, is simultaneously a realization and a confirmation of an accepted normativeness, and it may also be norm-generating when the participant is expected to be silent and not voice his/her opinion (e.g., a silent acceptance of the opposition during a parliamentary debate). However, additionally, the silence of the second type, that is, referring solely to convention, may appear as norm-generating, primarily when it turns from a singular case of an individual usage of language (possible due to the right to use an utterance) and is transformed into a repeatable *usus*. Here, one should add that, in accordance with the linguistic theses concerning a language norm, *usus* as a singular use of a new utterance, or a new application of an existing utterance, may become universal, and then one may speak of the change of its status – a new utterance or a new application of the utterance is no longer a singular *usus*, but instead becomes the new norm.

A particular case of silence as a realization of a convention is the ritual silence, when rituals require the participants to remain silent. Eric W. Rothenbuhler mentions the “empty convention” that occurs for the purpose of “keeping appearances,” which was supposed to be a meaning-laden ritual, but it was not.<sup>35</sup> These words bring Austin’s performative theses to mind, as he wrote about the sincerity and insincerity of speech acts<sup>36</sup> and about playing acts instead of performing them. One may add that, in such fulfilment of a convention, substitutive so to speak, or, in terms of simply “playing a role,” silence appears to be helpful. It supplements both the empty convention as well as the dishonest public utterances, introducing, instead of the meanings of utterances – a silent emptiness of meaning. This emptiness of meaning, when silence becomes an element of communication, may seem as a plenitude of possible yet unuttered meanings. A silent subject, similar to the subject of an utterance, maintains a certain semantic intention. However, this intention is not related to an intentional utterance, but to an intentional silence, which cannot be easily ascribed with a particular meaning, even more with unambiguity. Instead of the recognition of the intention of the silent subject and its semantic filling by the recipients of the message, one is left with an ambiguity as a solution – an assumption concerning some plenitude of possible, however, unuttered meanings. A good example of such ritual silence is the abstention from speaking by a politician, when the ritual (e.g., parliamentary convention) leaves him with a choice between speaking and remaining silent, or the silence of the defendant in court, when he has a similar choice, or the silence of the creator, who limits himself to a statement that his work “speaks for itself.” All these types of silence can be found in the public life. However – as one may

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35) Eric W. Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), *passim*.

36) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lecture IV, 41.

clearly notice – they are partially motivated by cultural conventions and social norms commonly shared in the European culture.

Additionally, silence is regarded as a certain form of quietness, whereas quietness is often defined within the ontological context, as the silence of a being, as the quietness of an existing being that does not announce existence out loud, however, disposing presence here and now. Such comprehension of silence-quietness may be found in the philosophical theses of the phenomenology of being by Martin Heidegger as well as in Gilles Deleuze's transcendental empiricism theses. This ontological aspect of performative silence allows one to consider the existing being as a quiet being – a silent being and, therefore, one that is not a source of particular meanings or of a semantic intention. However, this being is considered as a source of certain meanings in a mysterious, so to speak, communication. The ethical aspect of performative silence allows one to consider the silence of a subject as an abstention from action, simultaneously, being a manifestation of a certain stance, an activity of ethical character. This aspect may be found in the very theses presented by Austin, because he writes about a moral aspect and the ethical consequences of promises and commitments.<sup>37</sup> The aesthetic aspect of silence may be indicated in the issues of the theory of performance, that is, theatre and visual arts which realize the postulates of the critical art that may be found in the works of Austin's followers. The three aforementioned aspects of silence, as realized in public life, sometimes combine: the ontological and ethical aspects are visible in the example of the participants of occupational strikes; the ethical aspect combined with the aesthetic aspect are typical for critical art, and contemporary theatre which is politically and ideologically engaged.

Another aspect of silence, admitted as a specific type of a performative act, is the political aspect. It is linked to the issue of law, as considered by John L. Austin – the legal regulations that include prescriptive and imperative performatives directly. It is mainly the political aspect of silence that is related to the examination of the silence of the subject as an abstention from action. It is easy to see that discussion in democracy requires both expressing one's voice and the ability to listen to others, that is, silence; it requires individual activity and a loud expression of views, but also – going silent. Referring to Austin's performative theory and his analyses of various acts of speech, one may say that in the case of a democracy, prescriptions should not assume the form of imperatives – imperative sentences. They should rather assume the form of orders or prohibitions that would be included within ascertaining sentences (“One must...”, “One should...”). For democracy as a political system, declarative sentences would be most proper as they are commitments or sentences that are affirmative regarding the subject of political life, particularly those that provide authorizations (e.g., the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*). According to Austin and Lyons, imperatives are a specific case of performative sentences, apart from declarative sentences which include an expression of the subject's will, for example, a declaration request. In the face of an imperative, there is no possibility of refusal of the subjects that realize the indicated actions. However, in terms of a declaration or a request, as performative acts, refusal is possible. The possibility of refusal is characteristic for the relation of the subject and the democratic institutions. Therefore, the participation of the subject in exercising democratic power is the active participation in formulating prescriptions, an individual and prospective approach to establishing law, which is always a certain project – a project of a life of a given community and its individuals. It is also a reactive and a retroactive arrangement of prescriptions, in accordance with the existing prescriptions, well-known and necessary to repeat in subsequent legal acts. Such reactive and retroactive character can be found in the silent acceptance of community and social arrangements, well known to the participants of all assemblies and gatherings, including the parliamentary and the judicial.

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37) Rothenbuhler, “Empty Convention,” in *Ritual Communication*, 31–32.

On the other hand, the subject of democratic institutions is a subject that refuses to perform certain actions and assumes a social role of a subject of exclusion. It is a subject that performs self-exclusion, refusing to participate in a discussion, whereas the participation in a discussion seems – paradoxically – the principal prescription of a democratic power. The retroactive and, particularly, the reactive subject negate the principal prescription of democracy; however, he simultaneously adopts the democratic privilege of refusal. This subject refuses conversation, a participation in a discussion, and his/her existence in a democratic order assumes a form of a performative act of silence – it is a protesting figure of a political life that exists, yet does not participate fully, or does not participate at all. Good examples of such participation are silent protest marches or the refusal of opposition parties to vote in the parliament. By abstaining from action, silently, among others, the distinction between Us and Them, that is, the authorities, is highlighted.

It is easy to notice that silence as an element of communication, particularly oral – when the convention requires active participation in a discussion and taking the floor – is episodic. One should distinguish between such silence and a silence as a certain deliberate strategy – a silence which occurs “instead” of an utterance, rather consequently than episodically (e.g., the silence of a defendant or a witness in court, the silence of a politician that consequently refuses to answer the journalists’ questions). Additionally, one should highlight and define “leaving something unsaid” as a certain consequent attitude of legal and political subjects. Joanna Kurczewska in her essay titled *Narody i przemilczenia*,<sup>38</sup> discusses leaving things unsaid as a more or less consequent attitude, related to contents which define the community and its culture (particularly the nation and national culture), as well as contents in mutual communication between communities and their cultures. Leaving something unsaid is related not only to contemporaneity, to what is current, but also to what is past. For example, some contents that are not present in archival documents are “left unsaid,” as it were.

Leaving something unsaid, similar to silence, appears to be an important element of social and cultural inclusions and exclusions, collective action, and primarily, individual decisions and actions. It is a characterization of leaving something unsaid in a micro-social, individualistic perspective which would be close to Austin’s speech act theory. One should add that according to Austin’s theses, individual and collective silence would be a confirmation of social and cultural integration – semiotic and semantic, because the act of speech – both episodic and consequent – fits the existing conventions and structures of communication; it confirms them in the semiotic and the semantic aspects (the primacy of the theory of “tacit consent” in the interpretation of the act of silence, as indicated by Austin).

My application of Austin’s theses to broadly comprehended cultural studies (particularly those studies dedicated to various forms of normativeness and normativity) is further motivated by Austin’s interest in legal and juridical language – that is, language which establishes not only rules of law, but also establishes those norms that have been assumed and declared in the natural language itself (in English). Finally, according to Austin, the individual performative acts appear to be the most efficient and instrumental when they affect the shaping of norms within social conventions, including cultural, linguistic and legal ones.

### Metaphorization of Silence – Conclusion

The continuators and followers of the Austinian performative theory found numerous varying inspirations in his works. The application of the speech act theory, reshaped by Austin’s followers into the conception of performative acts of the active, efficient subject, allows one to broadly employ his conceptions to examine the norm-generating actions of the participants of culture – to determine when and how a particular indi-

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38) Joanna Kurczewska, “Narody i przemilczenia,” *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki*, no. 4 (35) (2012): 485–504.

vidual, due to his/her own communicated intentions, influences the transformation of convention, rather than simply acting within the framework of previously established and accepted conventions. Eventually, according to Austin, the individual, performative acts would be the most effective and efficient when they influence a formation of norms within the social and cultural conventions, among others, linguistic and legal. Austin's depiction of the human individual as active, even when the individual refuses to act – brings Husserl's phenomenological presuppositions to mind, as they differentiate activity, passivity and receptivity combining the active and passive aspects. Austin considered the receptive reaction of the subject (e.g., to a given question) to be a receptive activity, even when silence, that is, the cessation to act, is the response. Can cessation be norm-creating? Or is it solely reactive, constituting only a receptive reaction, neither confirming nor denying directly the established previous norms? The cessation as the refusal to act, not only in the case of silence, is obviously an activity of the subject of social and cultural practices, moreover – it is a certain expression of the individual intention, which forces others to interpret the behavior of the individual. However, silence is mostly interpreted within the frameworks of previous, established and perpetuated conventions, as well as of the context of a given situation, because it is accompanied by non-linguistic “gestures,” for instance: facial expressions, bodily gestures and positions. As already mentioned, Austin admits, in his consistent presuppositions of anthropological activism, the cessation of action to be action itself. And therefore, silence from the sign of acceptance – different from John Locke's views – becomes the sign of the lack of acceptance, which reflects the colloquial term “meaningful silence” adequately.

Considering *the performative role of silence*, one may indicate the rhetorical, oratory role of repetition when silence is a repetitive rhetorical figure, applied instead of an utterance. Such silence considered as “insistent” is well known to lawyers within court walls, journalists who interview politicians to no result, petitioners who receive no response from officials, as well as to consumers who received no response to complaints. In all above cases, silence is a response given “instead.” However, in order to explain the communicative, rhetorical influence of silence, one cannot omit the reference to both grammar and logic, because silence appears “instead”: instead of an utterance in public discourse, instead of a voice that does not appear resulting in awkward silence, or instead of a written reply to a letter. This “instead” refers an individual person, who is interpreting silence, to something else – it allows, within a given convention, to, for example, ignore the voter who does not take the floor in an election meeting; however, it does not allow one to neglect the voter, who does not vote, who does not give voice during elections, or refuses to talk to a politician despite coming to the organized meeting. Similarly, it is difficult to neglect the silence of the audience after a play and the fact that the audience is leaving the theatre in silence.

What does silence mean then? One may say that silence shifts and moves meanings rather than conceals them. Silence appears as behavior, replacing other signs – *as a metonymy* replacing words and gestures that do not seem befitting within a given convention, despite, for example, when an acclaimed actor cannot remember his lines. Additionally, silence appears *as a metaphor*, that is, silence becomes a metaphor of other actions, it becomes “as” of a different personal expression – as anger, when the chairs are slamming in the theatre, when the members of parliament are leaving the halls ostentatiously, as a quietly expressed joy, when the convention does not allow for a loud laughter.

*Metaphorical silence* allows one to refer to the intensity, the degree of concealed and not directly expressed opinion, with the aid of other concurrent signs – body gestures as quiet, *silent performatives which Austin characterized*. One may easily notice that silence “instead” appears in situations when 1) silence is not conventional, and 2) when the convention allows or forces silence alternatively to an utterance (the defendant may stand mute, an individual may refuse to answer a question during an exam, during an interview the interviewed may refuse to answer a particular question).

To supplement the theses of Austin and of contemporary performative studies, one must add that the research concerning the semantics of silence was, at present, dominated by literary studies<sup>39</sup> and theoreticians of law.<sup>40</sup> However, they also encompass the issues of rhetoric and of the theory of communication. As it seems, *exactly in the case of treating silence as a metonymy, or a metaphor of other actions, such silence appears norm-creating* – it becomes a point of reference with unspecified semantics, a context with meaning given by the acting subjects. In other words, silence is open to interpretation, it is the establishment of meaning by the subject – of action and cessation at the same time, which gives meaning not only by reference to the previous established convention and the situational context, but also reformulates them due to resolute establishment of silence as an instrument of one's own expression. *Such treatment of silence is possible*, particularly, when, *within the frameworks of one situational context, numerous cultural conventions* are present. In other words – when the multiculturalism appears as a variety of normativeness, which can be seen clearly looking at the example of cultural and customary changes. One must highlight that in this case, performative silence appears as one of many signs and gestures; however, it becomes an object of reference. *It is important, as it is "instead" of something, and in this role – as a figure of metaphor and metonymy – it is subject to "universalization."* Performative silence does not pertain to everything; however, it may be instead of everything. One must add that, for the above reason, silence is often treated only as an ersatz of something else, and that opens the possibility of manipulation employed by the theory of communication, particularly in the areas of commercial and political marketing. Marketing interprets the silence of consumers and voters not in accordance with their own intentions and decisions, as it rarely enquires about them, but by ascribing to them the intentions needed at a given moment in political and economic communication.

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39) See for example, Gudrun M. Grabher and Ulrike Jessner, eds., *Semantics of Silences in Linguistics and Literature* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996); Pascale Hummel, "'Quand taire, c'est faire'... ou le silence performatif dans la poésie de Pindare," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, no. 3–4 (1997): 211–223.

40) See *Les Cahiers De Droit* (Université Laval) 56, no. 3–4 (*Le silence*) (September–December, 2015) – an issue of journal, concerning silence, e.g.: Sylvette Guillemard and Pierre Rainville, "Présentation: Le silence": 229–231, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1034450ar>; Stéphane Bernatchez, "Briser la loi du silence sur le silence de la loi: de l'interprétation sémantique à l'application pragmatique du droit": 233–255, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1034451ar>.

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