The appealing power of dogwhistles: a new speech-act theoretic approach

Schuurman, Suzanne

The appealing power of dogwhistles: A new speech-act theoretic approach

Research master thesis
ResMa Linguistics
Leiden University
Suzanne Schuurman s2279754
First reader: Prof. Dr. M. Terkourafi
Second reader: Dr. H. Jansen
16-07-2024

Abstract

Harmful speech has evolved into more strategic mechanisms enabling speakers to implicitly spread controversial ideas without facing backlash. One such mechanism is through so-called dogwhistles. While there has been growing awareness of the potentially harmful consequences of dogwhistles, it is still unclear what dogwhistles exactly are and how they work. In order to combat the pernicious power of dogwhistles, we need to have a proper understanding of what we are dealing with first. Whereas previous work has mainly focused on the expressions used by speakers as dogwhistles, I proposes a new speech-act theoretic account of dogwhistles, shifting the focus to the actions performed by speakers when using such expressions. This thesis sets out to formulate a theoretically sound conceptualization of dogwhistles, as well as account for the processes through which dogwhistles convey meaning. As will become clear, however, dogwhistles are a tricky phenomenon that cannot be adequately accounted for from a speaker-centric perspective on meaning. In this thesis, I will therefore introduce a new class of appellative speech acts, whose meanings are co-contributed by the hearer. Using this theoretical framework, I define dogwhistles as an appellative speech act with the illocutionary force of simultaneously appealing to multiple ideologically diverse audiences in their own right.

Keywords: Dogwhistles, Speech Act Theory, meaning in communication, pragmatics-argumentation interface, appeal

Table of contents

1. Introduction 4
   1.1 A history of dogwhistles 5
   1.2 The disputed concept of dogwhistles 7
   1.3 The current study 8
2. Dogwhistles as vehicles of hidden meanings: some previous accounts 10
   2.1 Conventionalist approaches 10
   2.2 Social meaning approaches 12
   2.3 Inferentialist approaches 16
   2.4 Reconsidering dogwhistles: from the vehicle to the action 20
3. Dogwhistles and Speech Act Theory 22
   3.1 Insights into traditional Speech Act Theory 22
   3.2 Beyond illocutionary acts 25
   3.3 Covert dogwhistles as perlocutionary acts 27
   3.4 Overt dogwhistles as illocutionary acts 29
   3.5 Rethinking dogwhistles as polylogical acts 31
4. Towards a new class of speech acts: appellative acts 34
   4.1 The current status of appeal in Speech Act Theory 35
   4.2 Appellative acts as illocutionary acts 40
   4.3 Indirect appellative acts 42
   4.4 Felicity conditions of appellative acts 44
   4.5 Appellative acts at the pragmatics-argumentation interface 46
5. Towards a new speech-act theoretic approach to dogwhistles 53
   5.1 Dogwhistle contexts 55
   5.2 Expressing psychological states and attributing speaker's intentions 58
   5.3 Propositional content 62
   5.4 Semantic content 63
   5.5 Felicity conditions of dogwhistles 67
6. Conclusion 70
   6.1 Research questions 70
   6.2 Implications 71
   6.3 Suggestions for future research 72
7. References 75

The appealing power of dogwhistles: A new speech-act theoretic approach

1. Introduction

In today's polarized society, the words we use receive more attention than ever before. Our language norms are changing with the increased awareness of societal issues such as institutionalized racism, gender inequality, and religious oppression. Marginalized groups especially, have been calling out words and expressions that are (potentially) hurtful to them, and what we often see is that such expressions slowly become unacceptable to use. While many see the 'cancelling' of hurtful language as a positive thing, others have criticized this 'woke' culture for imposing the right to free speech. But as language norms change, so do communicative mechanisms. New ways arise to say potentially controversial things without facing criticism. One such mechanism is through so-called *dogwhistles*.

The term 'dogwhistle' draws upon the working of an actual dogwhistle: it produces a sound that only some can hear, leaving others in the dark. Dogwhistles are commonly understood as expressions that secretly convey controversial meanings to a particular 'in-group' audience, while the 'out-group' audience hears a neutral message. A well-defined example in the literature is the expression *inner cities*, which is considered a racist dogwhistle in American English, used to criticize African Americans, who typically make up the majority population in these areas (e.g. Saul, 2018; Henderson & McCready, 2019). During a 2014 radio interview, U.S. Representative Paul Ryan said (1):

(1) We have got this tailspin of culture, in our *inner cities* in particular, of men not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working or learning the value and the culture of work.
(Henderson & McCready, 2019: 223)

Ryan's choice of words was quickly condemned by his opposition as a "thinly veiled racial attack" (NBC, 2014). Although he did not specifically mention race, it was obvious to some that Ryan was talking about African Americans, stereotyping them as unmotivated and lazy. While Ryan later regretted his choice of words, he denied the racism allegations by claiming that he was not "implicating the culture of one community – but of society as a whole", arguing that American society has not done enough to fight poverty (Kopan, 2014). The seemingly neutral choice of words thus allows speakers to plausibly deny dogwhistle accusations.

Scholars have noted that, due to their plausible deniability, dogwhistles are especially difficult to counteract, making them powerful tools that can lead to serious political and societal consequences. Santana (2021: 387) expresses his concern about dogwhistles as "their use in political discourse harms marginalized members of society, undermines effective democratic discourse, and divides us against each other". Goodin and Saward (2005) argue that dogwhistles undermine democratic mandates, as they cover up politicians' true standpoints, deceiving citizens into voting for them without being transparent about what they are actually voting for.

Furthermore, using dogwhistles can allow speakers to slowly but surely normalize violating social norms of equality (Saul, 2019), leading harmful consequences such as increased resentment towards marginalized groups. Dogwhistles are thus seen as a threat to democratic society, sparking academic interest in this phenomenon, which started out in the field of political science, where scholars have been mainly interested in what kind of effects they have on the course of politics.

1.1 A history of dogwhistles

The term 'dogwhistle' was popularized in Australian politics around the 1996 elections, when John Howard, leader of the Liberal party sparked controversy through his language (Soutphommasane, 2009) The term was recorded as early as 1997 in a New Zealand newspaper:

> (2) Labor's spokesman on aboriginal affairs has already accused Mr. Howard of "dog-whistle politics"—in rejecting a race election, he actually sent a high-pitched signal to those attuned to hear it.
> (Barett, 2006: 90)

Given the tensions between Aboriginal Australians and white Australians, race had always been a sensitive subject in Australian politics. While Howard was often quite outspoken on race in his early career, he "became more subtle in his public statements about matters concerning race" as his career progressed (Soutphommasane, 2009: 18). Expressions such as *un-Australian*, and *Australian values*, and *mainstream Australia* were often dubbed dogwhistles in the media, as these subtly conveyed the idea white Australians were superior to racial minorities. Hindess (2014) argues, however, that the term 'dogwhistle' quickly became obsolete, as Howard's opponents started to accuse him of dogwhistling for nearly everything he said (see also Soutphomassane, 2008: 19).

While the term 'dogwhistle' had not settled into politics until the late twentieth century, Haney-López (2014) argues that the United States' history of dogwhistles goes as far back as the early 1960's. With the increased pressure on American society from the Civil Rights Movement, outright racism became less and less acceptable, while racial tensions increased in the Southern states. Mendelberg (2001) explains that Southern politicians had to adopt a more subtle style to adhere to the new social norms of racial equality, whilst still sympathizing with Southern pro-segregation sentiment. Instead of explicitly defending pro-segregation policies, politicians started talking about more abstract policies which would mostly hurt African Americans without this being obvious. Phrases such as *busing*, *states' rights*, and *law and order* became more effective to get support for pro-segregation policies, as those with racial resentment would understand that these policies were intended to specifically undermine the rights of African Americans. Haney-López (2014: 16) characterized this as "a kind of soft porn racism in which fear and hate could be mobilized without mentioning race itself except to deny one is racist".

While these dogwhistles were designed to resonate clearly with profound racists, Haney-López (2014: 36) also observed that politicians often used even more subtle dogwhistle techniques that appealed to white Americans who did not "affirmatively favor[] discriminating against minorities". Without ostensibly violating

the new norms of racial equality, politicians found a clever way to get support for racist messages by appealing to suppressed racist sentiment entertained by white Americans (Mendelberg, 2001: 111). By talking about *welfare cheats*, *illegal aliens*, and *terrorists*, politicians invoked subconscious racist stereotypes in white Americans, leading them to believe that they were talking about objective societal problems which did not necessarily have anything to do with race. This audience thus felt justified in their concerns without realizing that those concerns were actually rooted in their own subconscious racism. In this sense, even the 'dogs' cannot hear the 'whistle', but are mobilized by it, nonetheless.

Although dogwhistles are most often talked about in combination with racism, their use is not restricted to racial discourse. It became clear that dogwhistles can be used to hide any kind of (political) controversy during George W. Bush's presidency in the beginning of this century. Albertson (2015) points out that Bush frequently made use of religious dogwhistles to secretly appeal to evangelical Christians, whose political views were seen as radically conservative by many (see Miller, 2014; Kidd, 2019). As a result of the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v Wade* to protect abortion rights, Miller (2014) notes that evangelical Christians grew more unhappy with politics. As identity and politics became more entangled, many evangelical Christians felt that they were not being heard enough in politics, until Bush ran for office in 2000 (Appiah, 2016). Early on, Bush realized that the magnitude of this previously politically withdrawn base would be decisive in his political career, and thus set out to mobilize these voters (Malloy, 2009). Openly endorsing evangelicalism, however, could cost Bush a large portion of his non-evangelical constituency. Bush's speech writers admitted that they therefore often purposefully used phrases that specifically appealed to evangelicals, while going unnoticed by secular audiences (Kuo, 2006; Fineman, 2003).

Bush's use of the phrase *wonder-working power* in the 2003 State of the Union address (3), and his reference to Dred Scott in a 2004 presidential debate (4),[1] are now known as paradigm examples of dogwhistles:

(3) Yet there's power, *wonder-working power*, in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people
(Cooperman, 2004)

(4) Another example would be the *Dred Scott case*, which is where judges, years ago, said that the Constitution allowed slavery because of personal property rights. That's a personal opinion. That's not what the Constitution says.
(Noah, 2004)

Originating from an evangelical hymn, the phrase *wonder-working power* was seen as a subtle wink to evangelical Christians, letting them know Bush was one of them

[1] Dred Scott was a slave in the 19th century who sued his master for his freedom after visiting the Northern states where slavery was already outlawed (Ehrlich, 1974). The Supreme Court ruled that slaves could not be seen as citizens of the US, and thus were regarded as property of slave masters by the Constitution. Scott could not file for his freedom because his master had the right to his 'property'.

(Kirkpatrick, 2004).[2] The Dred Scott-reference was seen as a way of indirectly expressing opposition to abortion rights, since evangelicals often compared the Supreme Court's decision in this case to the decision in *Roe v Wade* (Miller, 2014). In Dred Scott's case, the Supreme Court denied personhood for black people due to personal property rights, and in *Roe v Wade*, it was ruled that fetuses held no legal status, thereby allowing abortion rights (Hull & Hoffer, 2010). As awareness of women's rights to bodily autonomy rose, it became increasingly unacceptable to explicitly criticize *Roe vs. Wade*, which led to opposing Dred Scott becoming an anti-abortion dogwhistle, "shorthand for opposing *Roe v. Wade*" (Kirkpatrick, 2004). These two dogwhistles will be discussed in more detail in section 2.3.

1.2 The disputed concept of dogwhistles

While using dogwhistles in politics has thus long been popular, their conceptualization did not receive close attention until recently. After the term 'dogwhistle' nearly disappeared due to excessive use in Australian politics earlier this century, it was revived around the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, when Donald Trump ran for office (Shapiro, 2020). With the rise of digital media, citizens could now participate in political discourse, which led to Trump getting frequently accused of using racist dogwhistles. His calling Mexican immigrants *illegal aliens* or advocating to be the *law-and-order* president were frequently labelled as dogwhistles in the media (Tilley, 2020). At the same time, however, many people argued that Trump's racial appeals were not subtle like dogwhistles at all, and therefore argued that he traded in the dogwhistles for full-blown "dog-screams" (Kaufman, 2016) or "steam whistles" (Cohen, 2019). This created uncertainty about what dogwhistles actually are, and even led some to argue that the term had become obsolete again (Knibbs, 2017).

What further complicated the conceptualization of dogwhistles, is that the term 'dogwhistle' was now also frequently used for non-linguistic phenomena on social media. For instance, the internet meme Pepe the Frog, see Figure 1, became known as a code for antisemitism (Nelson, 2016; Moshin, 2018). This meme has been uncovered as a dogwhistle that is used by members of the alt-right movement in order to find each other on the internet without outsiders realizing this (). Furthermore, the use of certain symbols on social media, such as triple brackets around the names of Jewish people, or the numbers 14 and 88,[3] have also been exposed as antisemitic dogwhistles that function as a secret signal to reach out to likeminded people (Weimann & Am, 2020; Bhat & Klein, 2020). Digital media thus enabled people to use the term 'dogwhistle' more freely, leading to over-application of the label. This has created uncertainty about whether everything that is called a dogwhistle should actually be considered as such.

[2] The hymn in question is called "There is power in the blood" (Jones, 1899).
[3] The number 14 refers to the fourteen words "we must secure the existence of our people and a future for our white children", and 88 stands for HH 'Heil Hitler', as H is the eight letter of the alphabet (Bhat & Klein, 2020: 7).

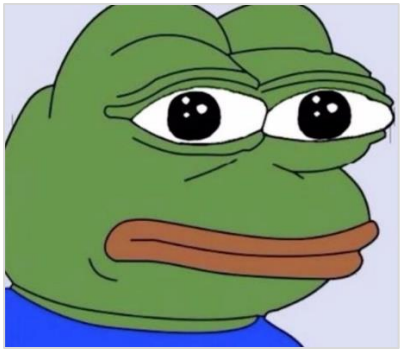

Figure 1: Online cartoon Pepe the Frog (BBC News, 2016)[4]

Not only did the concept of dogwhistles become challenged due the extensive use of the term, the increase of dogwhistle accusations and denials also further complicated things. Since digital media allowed people to more freely accuse others of using dogwhistles, this has often led to heated debates about freedom of speech, taking the existence of dogwhistles into question altogether. For instance, when accused of using racist dogwhistles, linguist Steven Pinker commented: "[d]og-whistling is an intriguing exegetical technique in which you can claim that anyone says anything" (Friedersdorf, 2020). Pinker argued that dogwhistles are 'hallucinations' of the accusers, and 'woke' attempts to 'cancel' others who think differently by attributing wrong meanings to their words. Hindess (2014), too, condemns the idea of a dogwhistle, as he argues that accusing others of dogwhistling is in itself a rhetorical ploy; by making the charge of dogwhistling, the accuser implicitly comments on the credibility and integrity of the accused. While one one cannot prove what the speaker intended, accusing them of dogwhistling can nevertheless attack their character, leading to the inevitable conclusion that not everything that is called a dogwhistle may actually be one. Furthermore, since dogwhistle accusations are plausibly deniable, the concept of dogwhistles is fragile. It is unclear what dogwhistles really are, and whether they truly exist.

1.3 The current study

The increased media awareness of dogwhistles made two things clear: 1) dogwhistles allow controversial ideas to be more easily spread and accepted, which could lead to serious societal consequences, and 2) we have no clear idea of what dogwhistles actually are. In order to understand why dogwhistles are so powerful, and how we can prevent their consequences, it is crucial to understand what they are and how they work. Within linguistics, scholars set out to bring clarity to the concept of dogwhistles by exploring the mechanisms through which dogwhistles are able to express a 'hidden' controversial meaning that is only audible to some, leaving others to just understand a neutral meaning. Unfortunately, since linguistic scholarship on dogwhistles is yet quite novel, there is currently no consensus on this matter. This has led to diverse accounts of dogwhistles, ranging from expressions that carry conventional implicatures (Stanley, 2015), to perlocutionary speech acts (Saul, 2018).

[4] This image was taken from an online news article from BBC News https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37493165

It is thus yet unclear what kind of linguistic phenomena dogwhistles are, and how they express their meaning.

While much uncertainty still exists in the study of dogwhistles, all scholars have agreed so far on plausible deniability being the most powerful, or even the most important feature of dogwhistles. Because of this, it is especially difficult to account for them, as mainstream pragmatic theories of meaning in communication prioritize the speaker's intentions. This makes dogwhistles a somewhat mysterious phenomenon calling for an alternative perspective on how meaning is generated.

In this thesis, I aim to develop a theoretically sound account of dogwhistles, centered around the following research questions:

1. **How can dogwhistles be best conceptualized as a linguistic phenomenon?**
2. **How do dogwhistles convey meaning?**

As I will show, providing adequate answers to these questions requires shifting the focus away from the expressions that speakers use, which previous scholars have been mainly concerned with, to the actions that speakers perform by using them. Specifically, I take a speech-act theoretic approach, conceptualizing dogwhistles as a kind of speech act whereby speakers appeal to two different audiences simultaneously. This, however, has some implications for Speech Act Theory, which I address by proposing a new class of speech acts: *appellative acts*.

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents a literature review of previous accounts which conceptualize dogwhistles as a kind of expression that somehow conveys a hidden meaning. This exposition will show that dogwhistles are better thought of as a kind of speech action. In chapter 3, I discuss two previous accounts of dogwhistles which conceptualize them as a kind of speech act. In order to do so, the chapter first begins by laying out some core notions of traditional Speech Act Theory, as well as some later developments. This chapter will make clear that, although dogwhistles should be considered a kind of speech act, they cannot be accounted for by traditional Speech Act Theory. This motivates my proposal of a new class of appellative acts as an extension to Speech Act Theory, which is presented in chapter 4. This new class of speech acts offers the theoretical framework necessary for a novel account of dogwhistles, which will be presented in chapter 5. Finally, in the conclusion, I will address the significance of my account and make some suggestions for future research.

2. Dogwhistles as vehicles of hidden meanings: some previous accounts

While political scientists were the first to be concerned with the grave consequences that (successful) dogwhistles may have, dogwhistles have become prominent under linguists and philosophers of language as well in recent years. To explain and prevent their consequences, linguists took an interest into the workings of dogwhistles. One thing that most scholars agree on, is that, due to their plausible deniability, dogwhistles do not appear to have any identifiable features. In fact, the ideal dogwhistle should blend in with 'ordinary' language in order to not be audible to everyone (Quaranto, 2022). This means that dogwhistles cannot, by default, be predicted by any formal features (i.e. morphological or phonological oddities), nor do they belong to any specific semantic class of expressions. In theory, any expression could be used as a dogwhistle in the right context, which suggests that dogwhistles operate primarily on the level of pragmatics. Pragmatics is concerned with meaning, but unlike semantics, "[p]ragmatics does not investigate the static meaning that only exists in words and phrases, but rather the context-specific meaning of actions" (Niu, 2023: 67).

Beyond this point, however, there is little agreement on how dogwhistles express their 'hidden' meaning. Whereas some argue that dogwhistles do so in a more-or-less 'standard' Gricean way (i.e. through conventional or conversational implicatures, see Grice, 1975), others contend that there are other, social, aspects involved in the meaning of dogwhistles. Yet another approach advocates identifying dogwhistles as a kind of speech act. There is thus a division between approaches that conceptualize dogwhistles as the vehicles for meaning, i.e. the *whistle*, and approaches that conceptualize them as the *action of blowing the whistle*. In this thesis, I endorse the latter approach and will present my own speech-act theoretic account of dogwhistles in chapter 5.

The current chapter presents a critical overview of previous linguistic accounts that define dogwhistles as the vehicle for hidden meanings. This will show that these approaches fail to account for the complexities of dogwhistles, which motivates adopting a speech-act theoretic approach. That being said, each of the scholars being discussed have made significant contributions to the study of dogwhistles. My aim is therefore not to condemn these accounts altogether, but rather to argue that the issues raised by these accounts suggest that we need to focus more on the conceptualization of dogwhistles before attempting to explain their mechanisms. The literature discussed is grouped based on what kind of approach is taken on how dogwhistles convey their meaning, which includes conventionalist approaches (3.1), social meaning approaches (3.2), and inferentialist approaches (3.3)

2.1 Conventionalist approaches

When Paul Ryan criticized the poor work-ethic in the inner cities of the U.S. (example (1)), his words were quickly condemned as a "thinly veiled racial attack" by fellow representative Barbara Lee (NBC, 2014), subsequently becoming a notorious example of a dogwhistle. While Ryan often took a critical stance on issues such as poverty and unemployment, his use of the phrase *inner cities* in particular made it

clear to others that he was primarily criticizing African American neighborhoods. What is it that caused this exact expression to be identified as a dogwhistle, and not any other expressions that Ryan may have used when discussing these topics? To answer this question, we may first look at the lexeme itself. Is the connection between the expression and the hidden meaning conventional or circumstantial?

Stanley (2015) argues that the meaning of dogwhistles is indeed conventional.[5] He distinguishes between the at-issue content and the not-at-issue content of utterances, and states that the dogwhistle meaning is part of the latter. For *inner cities*, Stanley observes that this expression is often used to refer to African American neighborhoods, as the main population in these areas is African American. Due to frequent association with problematic social images and negative stereotypes, Stanley argues that this expression has acquired a racist not-at-issue meaning:

(5) We have got this tailspin of culture, in our *inner cities* in particular, …
At-issue content: in the areas near the center of a city
Not-at-issue content: people in African American neighborhoods are lazy

The at-issue content is up for discussion; it is asserted by the speaker and can therefore be challenged by the hearer. This is the truth-conditional meaning of the utterance (or part of Grice's 'what is said'). The not-at-issue content, however, is directly added to the common ground between speaker and hearer, without the hearer being able to challenge or reject it. According to Stanley, it is therefore not part of the expression's truth-conditional meaning, but conventional nonetheless, suggesting that dogwhistles are expressions that convey a hidden meaning through conventional implicature (see Grice, 1975).

Stanley regards dogwhistles as a hate speech device, similar to slurs, which have been indeed analyzed as conventional implicatures before (see Potts, 2007; Whiting, 2013). While the expressions commonly identified as dogwhistles may indeed have been often associated with certain social images, a conventional implicature approach is incompatible with dogwhistles, as conventional implicatures are non-detachable from the words. They are part of the expression's semantics, which results in speakers being unable to deny or cancel the implicature without contradiction. Speakers can thus not 'hide' this meaning, which is at odds with dogwhistles as these are supposed to be plausibly deniable. For *inner cities*, for instance, it is obvious that one can use this phrase in a neutral sense, without intending to criticize African Americans. One may argue, however, that the convention could only exist among one particular social group, but this would mean that speakers belonging to that group could never use or even interpret dogwhistle expressions in their neutral sense. However, even someone with racial resentment towards African Americans could use *inner cities* in a purely descriptive sense and interpret it as such when used by someone outside of that group.

[5] Stanley does not use the term 'dogwhistles', but rather speaks of 'code words'.

To maintain plausible deniability, therefore, the dogwhistle meaning cannot be part of the expression's conventional meaning.[6] Stanley's conventional implicature approach is thus incompatible with dogwhistles, which other scholars have argued as well (Henderson & McCready, 2019; Khoo, 2017). Despite this critique, Stanley's account provides insight into the social significance of dogwhistles, as he claims that they tell something about the identity, and in particular the ideology, of the speaker and of their audience. This social aspect has come to play a big role in the accounts proposed by later scholars.

2.2 Social meaning approaches

While conventional implicatures are not the answer to dogwhistles, Lo Guercio and Caso (2022) insist that the meaning of dogwhistles can sometimes be conventional, nonetheless. They argue that dogwhistles are not a homogeneous phenomenon, and therefore distinguish three classes: conventional, implicature-based, and perlocutionary. For reasons of brevity, I will only discuss their class of conventional dogwhistles, as their other two classes are similar to the accounts proposed by Saul (2018), which will be discussed in 2.3 and 3.3. Lo Guercio and Caso's conventional dogwhistles are different from Stanley's in the sense that they argue that the type of meaning they express is different. They argue that this type of dogwhistle signals a social perspective, rather than communicate an extra proposition, like Gricean implicatures do. They illustrate this with the phrase *big pharma*, which, according to them, signals an anti-vaxx perspective to hearers belonging to the anti-vaxx community:

> (6) By the same token, being "tested" and "reviewed" by agencies tied to *big pharma* and the chemical industry is also problematic.
> *At-issue content*: big pharmaceutical companies
> *Not-at-issue content*: the speaker occupies an anti-vaxxer perspective
> (Lo Guercio & Caso, 2022: 15)

Lo Guercio and Caso argue that the anti-vaxx perspective is adopted in the conventional, not-at-issue meaning of *big pharma*, yet this convention is only in force for the anti-vaxx audience. The authors claim that speakers perform, "by means of a single token of 'big pharma,' two different, simultaneous utterances [sic], one directed to anti-vaxxers, (…), another directed to those in the dark regarding the anti-vaxxer convention" (p.16).[7] They suggest that this can be seen as a kind of dialectal difference. For those unfamiliar with the 'dogwhistle dialect', the authors claim that only the referential convention is available, leaving them unable to derive the anti-vaxx perspective. The authors claim that this view allows plausible deniability, as the speaker "can claim [they were] conforming only to the uncontroversial, referential convention" (p.24)

[6] As I will argue in 5.5, expressions that are frequently identified as dogwhistles may indeed eventually become conventionalized. But once this happens, the expression will no longer serve as a dogwhistle; at this point it is a *dead dogwhistle*.

[7] Lo Guercio and Caso speak here of two distinct utterances produced by one and the same token. In pragmatic theory, however, 'utterance' is commonly understood as the physical event of producing speech, associated with one token. Speakers can therefore not produce two utterances with one token, as there has only been one physical speech activity.

The approach of Lo Guercio and Caso has a clear advantage over Stanley's, as it provides an explanation for why the hidden meaning is unavailable to the general audience. However, I doubt that what they describe as a conventional dogwhistle should actually be considered a dogwhistle. The authors describe this class of dogwhistles as a kind of social marker, much like any kind of sociolinguistic variation, which explains why only 'in-group' hearers recognize the expression and any meanings conveyed by it. The dogwhistle meaning is part of the in-group's dialect and is therefore considered conventional within that group. Although they make a compelling argument, I disagree that a social marker can do the job of a dogwhistle. According to Salmon (2022), social meaning has many dimensions and shades, some more obvious than others. Some sociolinguistic variants are clearly noticeable, such as, for instance, the variation between *-ing* and *-in'* in American English. Especially for lexical variants, however, Salmon argues that the social meaning is highly enregistered, as lexical variation is often clearly recognizable, even for people outside the sociolinguistic community. According to Salmon, this social meaning, although non-propositional, can be considered a conventional implicature, nonetheless. As Lo Guercio and Caso conceptualize conventional dogwhistles as lexical expressions signaling some kind of social meaning, their account suggests that this meaning is conveyed through conventional implicature, which, as we saw above, is incompatible with dogwhistles. Lo Guercio and Caso's account of conventional dogwhistles relies on the unstable assumption that out-group hearers are never able to catch on to the dogwhistle meaning, due to them not being part of the linguistic community in which the dogwhistle convention is in force. However, this would mean that one could dogwhistle by speaking in another language that some hearers are unfamiliar with, which is an entirely different phenomenon (see Quaranto, 2022; Mascitti, 2023).

One might object to my critique of Lo Guercio and Caso's account by arguing that the expression used by the speaker is well-calculated and can therefore indeed pass under the radar of the out-group audience. Besides this being a naïve assumption, their only example (*big pharma*) appears unable to do so, as it lacks neutrality. While there may indeed exist a convention within the anti-vaxx community to use this phrase in order to indicate skepticism or critique towards the pharmaceutical industry, the phrase does not appear to be used in any conventional way to solely refer to big pharmaceutical companies in a neutral sense. In fact, the phrase was specifically designed in protest to these companies, accusing them of abuse of power (Palmer, 2023). More generally, the construction 'big + Noun' seems to be a productive formula, used to express critique of large, powerful industries. Phrases such as *big tech*, *big tobacco*, *big oil*, *big data*, etc. are used in similar ways as *big pharma* is (see e.g. Gioia, 2024; Law, 2023 for the use of such phrases). The derogatory aspect of *big pharma* thus seems to be an inherent part of the expression's semantics; it lacks neutrality to be solely used as a purely referential term.[8] There is thus no referential convention in force at all when using such phrases, meaning that

[8] One way to test this is by determining whether it is possible to use the term in a non-derogatory context, or whether it is also used by speakers who do not have any negative attitudes towards the industry predicated by the construction. Although this requires further research, it appears highly unlikely.

speakers do not have a neutral meaning to fall back on when challenged. Lo Guercio and Caso's account attempts to escape this criticism under the naïve assumption that speakers will not be challenged since the out-group audience is not familiar with the dogwhistle dialect, such that there is no true plausible deniability involved.[9] As the authors do not provide any other examples to support their arguments, their account does not provide a satisfactory analysis of dogwhistles.

Another account of dogwhistles in which social meaning plays a role is offered by Henderson and McCready (2018; 2019). Just like Lo Guercio and Caso (2022), they claim that dogwhistles are used to communicate social meaning regarding the speaker's persona. Whereas Lo Guercio and Caso consider this to be the objective of only one particular subtype of dogwhistles, Henderson and McCready argue that this is the primary function of all dogwhistles. They distinguish between two types of dogwhistles: *identifying* dogwhistles and *enriching* dogwhistles (2019). By default, they consider all dogwhistles to be of the former type, which function to signal the speaker's social persona (7), whereas dogwhistles of the latter type communicate an additional message as well, derived as a kind of pragmatic enrichment, enabled by the recovery of the signaled persona (8):

(7) By the same token, being "tested" and "reviewed" by agencies tied to *big pharma* and the chemical industry is also problematic.
Speaker's persona: anti-vaxxer

(8) We have got this tailspin of culture, in our *inner cities* in particular, of men not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working or learning the value and the culture of work.
Speaker's persona: cryptoracist
Pragmatic enrichment: because S is racist, *inner cities* can be enriched/altered to mean 'African American neighborhoods'
(Adapted from Henderson & McCready, 2018; 2019)

In their account, Henderson and McCready draw upon Burnett's (2017) Social Signaling Games, in which speakers choose the sociolinguistic variant that has the biggest payoff in regard to their goals. Speakers consider the makeup of their audience and strategically choose a variant from a set of possible alternatives that will signal a persona that best helps the speaker achieve their goals. In the case of (7), the authors argue that the speaker wants to signal an anti-vaxx persona to identify with the anti-vaxx community, as well as keep the out-group audience happy as much as possible. According to the authors, the phrase *big pharma* has the biggest payoff in regard to both objectives, since they argue only a small portion of the out-group will understand the dogwhistle, while going unnoticed by the majority.

The authors explain that the anti-vaxx persona is derived by the in-group audience through an inferential process, in which they utilize their prior knowledge of the speaker's identity and of the expression's associations. Once the persona is derived, it may trigger further inferences enriching or altering the speaker's message,

[9] It is my understanding that Lo Guercio and Caso analyse *big pharma* similar to slurs. Although there is a referential aspect to slurs, people generally do not wish to use these without disparaging the referent of the term.

as is shown in (8). The out-group majority, on the other hand, does not have the prior knowledge to retrieve the persona signaled by the expression, and will therefore not derive any further messages either. A small portion of the out-group may be aware of the associated persona, and is therefore not satisfied with the speaker's message, but through careful consideration, the speaker still concluded that using the dogwhistle has the biggest payoff.

Unlike Stanley (2015) and Lo Guercio and Caso (2022), Henderson and McCready argue that the social meaning (i.e. persona) communicated by dogwhistles is not part of the expression's conventional meaning, as it is derived through inference. However, they fail to convincingly explain how exactly hearers derives the signaled persona and possible additional messages. The authors only argue that the in-group is somehow able to retrieve the signaled persona together with their prior knowledge of the social aspects of the expression and the speaker's background. This suggests one of two scenarios. In the first scenario, the in-group audience is aware that the speaker has, for example, expressed racist attitudes towards African Americans in the past. Upon uttering (8), the audience uses this prior knowledge to conclude that the speaker intended to signal a racist persona, which leads to the enrichment of *inner cities* to 'African American neighborhoods'. In the second scenario, the in-group audience is aware of the expression's associations with racist attitudes, and therefore concludes that the speaker is signaling a racist persona. In this scenario, they recover the speaker's persona through the enrichment, rather than the other way around.

In the first scenario, it appears that dogwhistles need not signal a certain persona, as the in-group can retrieve the additional message based on their prior knowledge of the speaker alone; the speaker's persona is already known to them. In the second scenario, the hearer may not have any prior knowledge of the speaker's persona, but through their use of *inner cities*, the hearer infers that they are signaling a racist persona, as they are aware of the racist associations of the expression. Henderson and McCready's account thus creates a paradox: either dogwhistles need not necessarily signal a certain persona, or the persona is signaled as part of the expression's conventional meaning, which the authors strictly oppose. Furthermore, they do not explain why their account of dogwhistles maintains plausible deniability, since their account rests on the same assumption as Lo Guercio and Caso's, that is, that the speaker expects the out-group audience to be unable to derive the dogwhistle meaning, and therefore need not worry about denying it. Even if they out-group does hear the dogwhistle, the authors claim that the speaker has already taken this into account, but still decided that the payoff was bigger than the loss. Again, this hardly captures the secretive aspect of dogwhistles.

While social factors do seem to play a role in the hidden meaning of dogwhistles, I doubt that dogwhistles are always used by speakers to signal their persona. In fact, in most cases, dogwhistles appear to be used by public figures whose identity is already known by the audience at large. Although further empirical evidence is needed to support this claim, looking at dogwhistle accusations, we find that these tend to target speakers who have already been previously accused of being part of a certain social group, such as John Howard and Donald Trump, as highlighted in the introduction. In fact, in Bush's case, his persona as a devout evangelical Christian

had long been public knowledge as he had written about his religious experiences in his memoir published in 1999 (Bush, 1999). He did not need to signal the persona of an evangelical Christian with his dogwhistles in (3) and (4), as this was already relatively common knowledge. Dogwhistles thus do not appear to be used by speakers solely to signal their persona to a particular audience. Instead of focusing too much on the social associations of the particular expressions, other scholars have therefore taken a more inferentialist approach, concentrating on contextual factors that play a role in deriving the hidden meaning of dogwhistles.

2.3 Inferentialist approaches

As the previously discussed approaches to dogwhistles have indicated, dogwhistles cannot be adequately analyzed by focusing too much on the connection between the lexeme and the dogwhistle meaning. Others have therefore approached dogwhistles as a context-based phenomenon, taking the view that their hidden meaning results from an inferential process triggered by contextual cues. Saul (2018) distinguishes two classes of dogwhistles: overt and covert. Here, I focus on the former, as the latter will be discussed later in 3.3. Saul argues that overt dogwhistles are intended to be recognized as intended by the in-group audience; there is thus a reflexivity of speaker intentions. This means that Saul's class of overt dogwhistles involves a Gricean sense of speaker-intended meaning (see Grice, 1957). Rather than through conventional implicature, Saul suggests that the hidden meaning of overt dogwhistles is expressed through conversational implicature. Conversational implicatures are inferred using Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP henceforth), which subsumes four maxims describing principles underlying rational communicative behavior. They are not tied to any particular word or phrase, but rather to the utterance as a whole.

Saul exemplifies this with Bush's Dred Scott-reference, see (4), as she argues that Bush conversationally implicated that he opposes abortion. Saul suggests that this implicature is 'calculated' by the in-group (i.e. evangelicals) as follows:

> (9) "He's stating his opposition to Dred Scott. But everyone opposes Dred Scott, and that's not relevant to the question he was being asked. He must be trying to convey something else—that he is opposed to abortion, like those other people who talk about Dred Scott"
> (Saul, 2018: 343)

In Saul's view, since by the time of Bush's utterance most people already disregarded the Court's ruling in this case, his answer was a violation of the Maxim of Relation (i.e "be relevant"; Grice, 1975: 27).[10] Under the assumption that Bush was still upholding the CP, the audience drew inferences concluding why Bush's answer was relevant after all. According to Saul, those who were aware of the parallels between Scott's case and abortion legislature, i.e. the evangelical audience, were able to infer that Bush's mentioning of Dred Scott was intended as an expression of his opposition to abortion. The non-evangelical audience, on the other hand, was most likely not aware

[10] Although Saul suggests that the Dred Scott-reference violated the Maxim of Relation, according to her reasoning, it can also be considered a violation of the Maxim of Quantity, "Make your contribution as informative as required" (Grice, 1975: 26). If stating your opposition to Scott is indeed redundant, Bush's utterance is not very informative since everyone already shares this view.

of the connection between Dred Scott and abortion, and therefore did not derive this implicature.

Saul's contextual approach has a clear advantage over conventionalist approaches, as it explains why the dogwhistle meaning is detachable from the expressions; one could refer to Dred Scott without communicating anything about abortion. However, her analysis of overt dogwhistles as violations of the maxims of the CP appears inaccurate. She suggests that the implicature is triggered by the Maxim of Relation, as opposing Dred Scott is redundant since everyone already agrees on this. If this were true, meaning that everyone in the audience (both evangelicals and non-evangelicals) opposed the Supreme Court's decision, everyone should have realized that Bush violated a maxim of the CP. This should lead to both audiences deriving an implicature to render the utterance relevant, albeit two different ones. We can see how the evangelical audience may be able to do so in (9), but it is yet unclear how the non-evangelical audience does so. Although Saul does not comment on this, one may suggest that, whereas the evangelicals hear the anti-abortion whistle, the non-evangelical audience infers that Bush redundantly mentioned Dred Scott to express his opposition to racism, or to advocate for equality. However, by looking at the larger context of Bush's utterance (10) Bush already makes this rather explicit:

(10) I would pick somebody who would not allow their personal opinion to get in the way of the law. I would pick somebody who would strictly interpret the Constitution of the United States. (…) Another example would be the *Dred Scott case*, which is where judges, years ago, said that the Constitution allowed slavery because of personal property rights. That's a personal opinion. That's not what the Constitution says. The Constitution of the United States says we're all—you know, it doesn't say that. <u>It doesn't speak to the equality of America. And so, I would pick people that would be strict constructionists.</u>
(for the transcript of the debate see CPD, 2004)

Bush made sure his reference to Dred Scott was relevant within the context in which it was found; it served as an example for his answer to the question what kind of Supreme Court he would appoint if elected as president. There thus seems to be no clear violation of the Maxim of Relation, which means that Saul's explanation that hearers derive the hidden dogwhistle meaning through a CP-guided inferential process is implausible.

In Saul's defense, one might argue that relevance is relative, and that a single example is not enough to disregard her argument. Let's therefore consider another example of hers: Bush's *wonder-working power*, see (3). In her analysis of this dogwhistle, Saul (2018: 363) argues that the phrase "functions […] like the exploitation of a little-known ambiguity", thereby suggesting it is a deliberate violation of the second Maxim of Manner ("avoid ambiguity"; Grice, 1975: 27) in order to communicate the implicature that he is an evangelical Christian. While I agree that vague, abstract terms like 'wonder' and 'power' could trigger hearers to evaluate what the speaker exactly meant by these, a violation of Grice's maxims fails to explain why

the phrase was considered to communicate a message only audible to the evangelical audience. The utterance took place in the context of American politics, where it is considered common practice to openly preach Christian values and make religious appeals (Domke & Coe, 2007). Bush, too, did not shy away from making his Christian faith known to his fellow Americans, long before his utterance in (3). In light of this, even if the audience did regard *wonder-working power* as a Manner-violation, we should imagine the inferential process to go somewhat as follows:

(11) What did Bush mean when he said *wonder-working power*? Given that he is a devout Christian, and that Christianity has always been openly embraced in politics, Bush must have been talking about the power of faith/God/Christ/…

Although these inferences appear plausible, this still does not explain why only the evangelical audience got a hidden message others could not hear, since a violation of the manner-Maxim should trigger the inferences in (11) for all audiences. Interestingly, Saul (2018: 363) herself argues that non-evangelicals would most likely disregard the phrase as "an ordinary piece of fluffy political boilerplate, which passes without notice". This suggests that they would not even consider Bush's utterance as a violation of any maxim, and therefore do not undergo any inferential process like (11). Could it then be that only the evangelical audience saw this as an ambiguous expression, triggering a CP-guided process to infer its meaning? This seems unlikely since the evangelical audience was already familiar with the expression's origins as a lyric from an evangelical hymn, see footnote 2. To them, Bush's utterance would probably not initially sound uncooperative due to ambiguity. In fact, if speakers truly want to keep something hidden from their audience, they will likely avoid drawing attention to their utterance by violating a maxim of the CP.

The view that dogwhistles convey their hidden meaning through conversational implicature thus does not adequately explain why different audiences derive different meanings. This is because Gricean implicatures are derived through inferences regarding the speaker's intentions, thereby neglecting the hearer's role in the interpretation. Since dogwhistles convey different meanings to different audiences, perhaps there should be more focus on the hearer. Such an account has already been proposed by Khoo (2017),[11] who argues that the inferences triggered by dogwhistles are based on hearers' own pre-existing beliefs and attitudes, rather than on a set of general principles for rational communicative behavior. Khoo (2017: 50) assumes the following workout schema by which the hidden meaning of dogwhistles is derived:

(12) **Explicit Statement**: x is C.
Existing Belief: If something is C, then it is R.
Inferred: x is R

Hearers use their own pre-existing beliefs about the things mentioned by the speaker, to infer – either consciously or subconsciously – any additional meanings. Obviously,

[11] Khoo speaks of 'code words' rather than dogwhistles

not every hearer has the same pre-existing beliefs, which explains why not every hearer is able to derive the dogwhistle meaning.

Khoo (2017: 47) illustrates how this works for *inner cities*, claiming that hearers with the pre-existing belief that inner cities are "mostly populated by poor African Americans", will make further racial inferences. When the expression is embedded in a negative context, like in Ryan's utterance in (1), hearers with this pre-existing belief infer that Ryan communicated something racist along the lines of African Americans being lazy because they are unemployed. Hearers who do not have such beliefs, do not make this inference. Therefore, Khoo argues that dogwhistle expressions do not encode any additional meanings but rather have coded effects, i.e. triggering additional inferences in hearers with certain pre-existing beliefs. It is therefore not so much about the language itself, but rather about the hearers.

While Khoo observes that in many cases, speakers intentionally use carefully designed dogwhistles to exploit their audience's pre-existing beliefs, triggering additional inferences without being held accountable for it, he also acknowledges that the inferences drawn by hearers are not always part of the speaker's intentions. The speaker could have been unaware that their utterance triggered additional inferences leading to controversial interpretations of what they said. Khoo's account therefore suggests that, unlike the previously discussed approaches, the meaning of dogwhistles concerns the hearer's assumptions just as much as the speaker's intentions, or maybe even more. In fact, he argues that "nothing in the account depends on the [speaker] *meaning* (B) by saying (A)" (p.48). This is why dogwhistles are plausibly deniable; involving the hearer in the construction of meaning relieves the speaker of being solely responsible for any controversial meanings generated. This puts Khoo's account at a clear advantage over the previously discussed ones, as it explains why dogwhistles are so pernicious and easy to hide. Furthermore, since dogwhistles communicate different messages to different audiences, we cannot just consider what the speaker does to accomplish this, but also what it is that makes these audiences attuned to certain messages.

Khoo's theory does, however, raise one possible issue: obscurity of the expression. Khoo states that the inferences are triggered by the expression's semantic content in the given context and are not necessarily the result of the specific lexeme itself. This leads to the assumption that using similar expressions (e.g. *inner cities* vs *city centers*) will bring about similar effects (i.e. additional inferences), as their semantic content is roughly the same. Various other scholars, however, have pointed to empirical evidence that appears to prove otherwise, possibly putting Khoo's account at risk. Quaranto (2022), for example, points out that Winter (2006) found white Americans to be less supportive of *welfare* programs than of *social security* programs, suggesting that the latter expression does not function as a dogwhistle. Furthermore, Albertson (2015) found that the phrase *wonder-working power* is more effective in persuading both religious and non-religious audiences, compared to the phrase *power*. Lastly, Hurwitz and Peffley (2005) found that white Americans with racial resentment indicated feeling more sympathy for stronger

punitive policies when exposed to the phrase 'violent *inner city* criminals', as compared to 'violent criminals'.[12]

Based on these studies, one may be inclined to think that the meaning-inferences triggered by dogwhistles are dependent on the use of specific expressions, thereby disproving Khoo's theory which predicts that similar expressions will yield similar effects. Khoo (2017: 50) is aware of this (potential) pitfall but argues that this merely suggests that supplementation to his theory is needed. As I will argue later on, I suggest that the supplementation that Khoo calls for should be reconceptualizing dogwhistles as speech acts, shifting the focus from the expressions used to the actions speakers perform by using them.

2.4 Reconsidering dogwhistles: from the vehicle to the action

The issue that still needs to be addressed is the empirical evidence pointing to the apparent importance of the specific expressions used by speakers as dogwhistles. Various scholars have expressed concern about Khoo's theory due to the possible counterevidence provided by empirical research. However, the limited empirical evidence that such studies provide is based on expressions that had already widely been considered dogwhistles by the time these studies took place. The effects that these studies found to be caused by these expressions may therefore already have been conventionalized.[13] The results of these studies therefore do not accurately say something about the true nature of dogwhistles. Unfortunately, as Lo Guercio and Caso (2022: 15) have also acknowledged, empirical research on dogwhistles faces the methodological limitation of only being able to test dogwhistles that have been already discovered and are thus no longer in use as dogwhistles, as their once hidden meaning cannot be hidden anymore. We might therefore not truly be able to find out whether semantically similar expressions are equally as effective as established dogwhistle expressions, such as *inner cities*, *welfare*, *wonder-working power*, etc. At the same time, however, this tells us something about the nature of dogwhistles. If dogwhistles can 'expire' over time, meaning that their meaning becomes known to the linguistic community at large, then perhaps the whole idea of a dogwhistle is less concerned with the specific expressions used by speakers, but more concerned with the circumstances that enabled these being used as dogwhistles.

While it might seem counterintuitive to shift the focus away from the expressions used, the fact that most previous accounts fail to provide an adequate theory of dogwhistles suggests that this is necessary. Instead of thinking of dogwhistles as the vehicle for hidden meanings, i.e. the *whistle*, perhaps they are better thought of as the *action* of blowing the whistle, producing different understandings in different audiences. In this thesis, I will propose a speech-act theoretic account of dogwhistles wherein I conceptualize them as a type of communicative act. Following Khoo (2017),

[12] Note that Hurwitz and Peffley's study did not test semantically similar expressions, as they were exclusively interested in the effects of racial priming. Nonetheless, scholars of dogwhistles have often cited this study to argue in favor of the significance of the expressions.

[13] In fact, Winter (2006) claims that "welfare" is associated with blackness, suggesting that it is already a conventional aspect of the expression's meaning. If so, in this study, the term "welfare" did not truly function as a dogwhistle, but rather as a semantic prime.

I will put more focus on the pre-existing beliefs of the hearers, to explain how dogwhistles can produce different meanings for different (sets of) hearers.

3. Dogwhistles and Speech Act Theory

According to Speech Act Theory (Austin 1975, Searle, 1969; 1979), using language is not just a matter of transferring information, but also of performing acts to bring about changes in the world. Whereas previous scholars have viewed dogwhistles as *the means* used to perform such an act, in my view, dogwhistles can be better explained as *a type of act* themselves. Although I am not the first to define dogwhistles as a speech act (see i.a. Lo Guercio & Caso, 2022; Witten, 2008), a full-blown speech-act theoretic account of dogwhistles has not yet been offered. Only Saul (2018) and Mascitti (2023) have taken a first step in this direction. Before presenting my own account in the following chapters, I will discuss these accounts of dogwhistles as speech acts in the current chapter. First, however, I will briefly lay out the core ideas of traditional Speech Act Theory as developed by J.L. Austin (1911-1960) and J.R. Searle (1932-) in 3.1, as well as some important later developments within Speech Act Theory in 3.2. Following this, I will discuss the accounts of Saul in 3.3. and Mascitti in 3.4. Lastly, in 3.5, I will motivate my own approach to dogwhistles as a speech act.

3.1 Insights into traditional Speech Act Theory

For a long time, language was studied from the perspective that it was a representation of thought, used primarily to describe the world. Philosophers of language grew uneasy with this, including Austin, who named this the "descriptive fallacy" (Austin, 1975: 3). Austin observed that language is not only used to *represent* the state of affairs, but also to *influence* it. He argued that language has a performative function; speakers can bring about real-life consequences by uttering words. This is what he termed *speech acts*. While Austin started off with the assumption that speech acts can be identified through the use of performative verbs (e.g. *promise, apologize, declare*), he quickly acknowledged that utterances need not include such verbs to qualify as a speech act. This motivated Austin to separate speech acts into three separate acts:

1. **Locutionary act**: "the act of saying something" (p.94)
2. **Illocutionary act**: "the performance of an act in saying something" (p.99)
3. **Perlocutionary act**: "what we bring about or achieve by saying something" (p.109)

According to Austin, by performing a speech act, speakers simultaneously perform these three separate acts. To illustrate, uttering the words 'Don't go in there!' is a locutionary act. In saying this, the speaker performs the illocutionary act of warning the hearer, by which they performed the perlocutionary act of preventing the hearer from going somewhere.

A crucial aspect of the successful performance of speech acts is securing uptake (Austin, 1975: 109); speakers must make sure that hearers recognize the illocutionary act that they intended to perform. If the speaker wishes to warn the hearer about an imminent danger by saying 'Don't go in there!', the hearer must recognize the speaker's intention to warn them, for if they do not recognize this, they may mistake the speaker's utterance for another act, e.g. forbidding. The hearer's faulty uptake could drastically change the perlocutionary effects caused by the

speaker's utterance. Furthermore, Austin realized that speech acts must meet a number of other conditions in order to be 'happily' (or, felicitously) performed. For instance, to felicitously apologize, speakers must be sincere in their feelings of remorse, and in order to felicitously pronounce someone guilty, speakers must have the right authority to do so (i.e. be a judge). According to Austin, infelicities could either result in the illocutionary act still being performed but void, that is, without the intended perlocutionary effects following, or in only the locutionary act being performed without thereby accomplishing the intended illocutionary act (Austin, 1975: 15).

Whereas Austin's felicity conditions described what must be in order for speakers to achieve their intended perlocutionary effects, this view changed when Searle (1969; 1979) further developed Speech Act Theory (henceforth SAT). Austin's account of speech acts consisted in the performance of all three separate acts, but Searle shifted the focus to the illocutionary act exclusively. He identified speech acts with illocutionary acts, as he observed that when we talk about speech acts, we are really talking about the illocutionary acts (apologizing, thanking, etc.). In order for speakers to felicitously perform such acts, they need not produce the intended perlocutionary effects, or even intend to perform any perlocutionary act at all. To thank someone, for instance, speakers need not thereby wish to bring about any change in the state of affairs. Instead, Searle (1986) argued, by performing speech acts, all that speakers do is produce a certain *illocutionary effect* in the hearer, that is, they produce an understanding which "consists in the knowledge of the conditions on the speech act being performed by the speaker" (p.211). Searle thus adapted Austin's view of felicity conditions from rules that *regulate* speech acts, to rules that *constitute* speech acts. A speech act only comes into existence when all felicity conditions are met.

While each act has its own unique set of conditions, Searle distinguished four categories of felicity conditions: the propositional content, preparatory, essential, and sincerity conditions. The propositional content condition expresses what the utterance needs to predicate, e.g. a past act of the speaker for the speech act of apologizing. The preparatory conditions state what must be presupposed, i.e. what the speaker and/or hearer must be capable or aware of in order for the speech act to be performed. For instance, in order to apologize for something, there must be something that the speaker has done to apologize for. The essential condition ensures that the speaker and the hearer mutually recognize that the speaker intended to perform the current illocutionary act. In other words, they must recognize that the speaker's utterance counts as an undertaking performing the intended act. Finally, the sincerity condition states which psychological state the speaker must be in, to felicitously perform the act.

Psychological states (or mental states) are generally considered to be internal states of mind such as beliefs, intentions, desires, emotions, etc. (Goldman, 2006; Young & Tsoi, 2013). Searle considered the sincerity conditions as one of the most crucial aspects of speech acts, as he argued that performing speech acts constitutes in expressing a psychological state. One cannot perform a speech act of a certain type without having a corresponding psychological state. A promise is not a promise without intending to keep it, an apology is not an apology without feeling remorse,

and an assertion is not an assertion without believing it. For Searle, the expressed psychological state served as the basis for distinguishing between different types of speech acts. He proposed a taxonomy of speech acts consisting of five classes: *representatives, commissives, directives, expressives,* and *declarations* (Searle, 1979). Representative acts express the speaker's state of belief towards the propositional content of the utterance. Commissives express a psychological state of intent to perform the action described in the propositional content, and directives express the speaker's desire to get the hearer to perform the action. Declarative acts are special, as they do not express any psychological state of the speaker; the changes speakers wish to bring about with these acts do not require the hearer's recognition of the speaker's psychological state.[14] Finally, for expressive acts, the speaker's psychological state is unspecified. Speech acts in this class are typically considered to express states of emotion or affection (e.g. thanking, apologizing).

While Searle viewed speech acts as expressions of the speaker's psychological state, this is not the sole defining feature of speech acts, for if this were the case, all speech acts should be considered expressive acts (Falkenberg, 1990). Another key dimension that therefore shaped Searle's taxonomy is the *illocutionary point* of speech acts. Speech acts can be distinguished from one another based on what the speaker wants to achieve. Importantly, this is not about what perlocutionary effects the speaker wants to bring out, but rather the illocutionary effects, i.e. what they want the hearer to understand from their utterance. For instance, with representative acts, the speaker does not just want the hearer to recognize that they expressed a state of belief but also that the speaker commits themselves to the truth of the expressed proposition. A last defining feature that shaped Searle's taxonomy is the *direction of fit* of speech acts, that is, whether the speaker wants the words to fit (describe or adjust to) the world, or vice versa. Considering these three dimensions, Searle proposed the following taxonomy of speech acts (Table 1):

Speech act type	Expressed psychological state	Direction of fit	Illocutionary point
Representatives (e.g. asserting, describing)	Belief	The words fit the 'outside' world	To commit the speaker to the truth
Commissives (e.g. promising, threatening)	Intention	The world will fit the words	To commit the speaker to a future act
Directives (e.g. ordering, requesting)	Desire	The world will fit the words	To get the hearer to perform a future act
Expressives (e.g. apologizing, thanking)	Various	The words fit the speaker's 'internal' world	To express the speaker's psychological state
Declarations (e.g. baptizing, marrying)	None	The words change the world	To bring about a change in the world upon uttering

Table 1: Searle's (1979) taxonomy of speech acts

[14] According to Searle (1989), declaratives are the only true class of performative acts, since these directly bring about a change into the state of affairs. For his other classes, the felicitous performance of such acts do not require bringing about perlocutionary effects.

Individual speech acts can be defined by their unique *illocutionary force*, which can be considered a refined notion of the illocutionary point. For example, a promise has the illocutionary force of committing the speaker to doing a future act in the interest of the hearer, as opposed to a threat, which has the force of committing them to doing a future act that is undesirable to the hearer. The illocutionary force of an act comprises its illocutionary point, propositional content conditions, preparatory conditions, sincerity conditions, the degree of strength of its illocutionary point (e.g. 'I believe' is stronger than 'I think'), and the degree of strength of its sincerity conditions (e.g. 'I beg' expresses a stronger desire than 'I request') (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985: 20). The essential condition of speech acts does not influence their illocutionary force. Instead, this condition merely states that an utterance is mutually recognized by the speaker and hearer as expressing a certain illocutionary force (cf. Austin's 'uptake'). In order to meet this condition, the speaker must intend to produce an utterance with a certain illocutionary force and must intend for the hearer to recognize this intention. The speaker's intentions must thus be *reflexive* (Bach, 2006). Speech acts can only be felicitously performed when there is a reflexivity of the speaker's intentions.

Speakers can make their intentions recognizable to hearers through the use of *illocutionary force indicating devices* (Searle, 1969: 30), which are linguistic devices conventionally associated with a certain illocutionary force, such as performative verbs, sentence types, intonation patterns, etc. For example, the adverb *please* is typically considered to indicate the illocutionary force of a request. Speakers are not required, however, to use indicating devices in order to express a certain illocutionary force, as such devices merely indicate the force; they do not guarantee it. When speakers do use such devices, they perform the illocutionary act directly. Illocutionary acts can also be performed indirectly, that is, when "one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another" (Searle, 1979: 31). For example, a speaker can indirectly request the hearer to close the window by directly stating that it is getting cold. In such cases, contextual cues should guide the hearer to draw the right inferences regarding the speaker's intended illocutionary force. Only once the hearer recognizes that the speaker intended their utterance to be recognized as a request, the speech act of requesting becomes felicitous.

3.2 Beyond illocutionary acts

Searle focused almost exclusively on the illocutionary act, regarding the perlocutionary act peripheral to speech acts, since "[t]he intention of achieving a perlocutionary effect is not essential to the illocutionary act" (Sbisà, 2009: 235). While the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention ensures that the illocutionary act has been felicitously performed, it does not guarantee that the intended perlocutionary act is performed successfully as well. Perlocutionary acts are successful when something actually changes in the state of affairs, or in the psychological state of the hearer. Examples of such acts are persuading, flattering, declaring, etc. While the hearer may successfully recognize, for example, the speaker's illocutionary act of threatening the hearer, it does not automatically follow that the hearer is affected by this, i.e. that they feel intimidated. Furthermore, Searle argued that "perlocutionary acts, unlike illocutionary acts, are not essentially

linguistic, for it is possible to achieve perlocutionary effects without performing any speech act at all" (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985: 12). People can bring about changes without using language at all, but more importantly, perlocutionary effects can be achieved without the felicitous performance of an illocutionary act. For example, the hearer's faulty uptake of the speaker's illocutionary force could lead to perlocutionary effects that the speaker did not intend. Even with a felicitous illocutionary act, the speaker might produce unforeseen perlocutionary effects that they did not want to produce. Unlike illocutionary acts, perlocutionary acts are therefore not entirely within the speaker's control, which is why Searlean SAT lent little attention to the level of the perlocution.

Yet, people generally engage in communication to achieve certain real-world effects. While SAT prioritizes the role of illocutionary acts in this, in reality, it can sometimes be more effective for speakers to achieve certain effects without making their intentions recognizable to the hearer. Bach and Harnish (1979: 97) define such acts as *collateral acts*, which range from kidding and mimicking to lying and deceiving. In cases of deception, speakers want to achieve certain perlocutionary goals which could otherwise not be readily achieved with illocutionary acts. For example, wanting to avoid being arrested, a suspect of a crime might lie to the police about their alibi, saying "I was at home last night". This utterance appears to express the illocutionary force of an assertion; however, the speaker failed to meet the sincerity condition of believing the proposition, as they know that it is untrue, but did not want the police officer to recognize this. In performing collateral acts, the speaker's desire to achieve certain perlocutionary effects overrides the idealized need for cooperative communication by means of illocutionary acts.

Langton (2018) also observes that real-life communication does not always follow the rules of the ideal models of communication in which speakers are always transparent about their communicative intentions. She introduces the concept of *backdoor speech acts* which are "low profile speech acts, enabled by presuppositions and their ilk, that tend to win by default" (Langton, 2018: 146).[15] She illustrates this with the supposed words of encouragement from a football supporter to a male football player (p.145), see (13):

(13) Get on with it, Laurie, you great girl!

Langton argues that the speaker has performed the *front-door* speech act of urging the player to play better, as well as expressing frustration. At the same time, they performed several backdoor speech acts, such as legitimizing a discriminatory norm that sees femininity as inferior to masculinity. This backdoor act, as opposed to the front-door act, tends to go unnoticed by the hearers, due to its presuppositional nature, which may cause hearers to (subconsciously) accommodate the implicit information. Backdoor acts tend to succeed because they 'sneakily' add information to the common ground through presuppositions (or possibly other mechanisms, see

[15] With the expression "and their ilk", Langton (p.146 note 13) that backdoor speech acts may be achieved through all kinds of mechanisms, not limited to presuppositions. However, in her paper, Langton focusses on presuppositions to illustrate how these can blocked. Since the notion of backdoor speech acts is still highly undefined, Langton is aware of the possibility of backdoor speech acts being governed by different mechanisms as well (e.g. implicature, insinuation).

footnote 14). Langton argues that this can be prevented by actively challenging the presupposed information. For example, a hearer can prevent the presupposition in (12) from being accommodated by others in the audience by responding to the speaker with 'What's wrong with girls?'. This will make the others aware of the speaker's backdoor intention and may prevent the act from succeeding.

While Langton's backdoor speech acts resemble Bach and Harnish's collateral acts, Langton maintains that backdoor acts are illocutionary acts, whereas Bach and Harnisch argue that collateral acts or not illocutionary due to their lack of reflexive intentions. Even though backdoor acts do not require hearers' active uptake of the speaker's act, Langton argues that they become felicitous by default, "by implicitly conforming to certain requirements of a conversational game in question" (Lewiński, 2022: 6709). As long as the speaker does not say something that goes directly against the presumptions of the communicative activity, hearers will (subconsciously) accommodate the information expressed (i.e. presupposed, insinuated, implied, etc.) by the backdoor act. Since Langton focusses specifically on presuppositional acts, she explains that these backdoor acts can be successful because hearers generally presume that speakers build upon the existing common ground between them by presupposing mutually agreed-upon information. Backdoor speech acts exploit this presumption, as they presuppose things that may not exist in the common ground at all. As long as the speaker does not make this too obvious, the hearer "passively lets that presupposition pass; (…) supplying uptake" (Langton, 2018: 158).

Lewiński (2022) argues that, while traditional SAT requires the hearer's active uptake for illocutionary acts to become felicitous, Langton's account of back-door speech acts suggests that we should also accept a weaker sense of illocutions, such that hearers' passive uptake can be sufficient for certain acts to become felicitous. This can help us better understand and analyze "the strategic design of utterances by speakers as well as interpretative strategies of (various) hearers" in more complex forms of real-life communication (Lewiński, 2022: 6712). A more flexible notion of illocution may better explain how meaning comes about in certain phenomena that do not solely rely on hearers actively recognizing the speaker's overt intentions, such as dogwhistles, and may even open up the possibility of an entirely new class of speech acts. This will become especially clear in the following chapters. In the remainder of the current chapter, I discuss two previous speech-act theoretic accounts of dogwhistles: Saul's (2018) account of covert dogwhistles as perlocutionary acts, and Mascitti's (2023) account of overt dogwhistles as speech acts that change the communicative role of the audiences.

3.3 Covert dogwhistles as perlocutionary acts

As pointed out in 2.3, Saul (2018) distinguishes overt dogwhistles from covert ones, as the former are intended to be recognized by the target audience, whereas the latter are not. Due to the apparent reflexive intentions involved in overt dogwhistles, Saul analyzes these as expressions that express meaning through conversational implicature. Covert dogwhistles, on the other hand, are more complicated, as Saul argues that these are not even meant to be recognized by the very audience that they target. As such, this kind of dogwhistle is not so much used to communicate a hidden message, but rather to achieve certain perlocutionary effects without making this

intention recognizable to the audience. Saul defines covert dogwhistles as *covert perlocutionary acts*, which will succeed as long as the audience does not recognize the speaker's perlocutionary intention (p.377), placing them among Bach and Harnish's (1979) collateral acts.

Covert dogwhistles, according to Saul (2018: 380), are acts by which speakers cause the audience to "make decisions on the basis of reasons that they would reject if they became aware of them". She illustrates this with *inner cities* (example (1)), which she describes as a covert dogwhistle that brings the audience's pre-existing subconscious racial bias to salience, in order to influence their decision-making. The act will only fail if the audience is made aware of the speaker's attempt to mobilize them through racism, as this would require them to face the fact that they harbor racist attitudes themselves. According to Saul, *inner cities* does not stand code for anything racist, instead, it triggers the audience to bring race into the question as a result of their own racial bias. As such, Saul considers covert dogwhistles as a racial priming method, which is "an increase in the effect of racial stereotypes, fears, and resentments, leading to increased opposition to racial policies […] and to greater support for the candidate who conveys the message" (Mendelberg, 2001: 12).

While Saul conceptualizes covert dogwhistles as a type of act, she still puts the main focus on the expressions themselves. She argues that, by using expressions such as *inner cities*, speakers perform the perlocutionary act bringing to salience pre-existing racist attitudes, thereby achieving a range of other perlocutionary effects, but she lends little consideration to why these expressions cause such effects. The lack of an illocutionary act suggests that the perlocutionary act is directly enabled by the locutionary act (i.e. the expression), which, in turn, suggests that there is some kind of convention between the expression and the racist attitudes. While it may not be a propositional meaning that is conventionally associated with the expression, Saul's account suggests that certain words are conventionally associated with certain perlocutionary effects.[16] Although I am inclined to agree with Saul that dogwhistles are speech acts that invoke hearers' pre-existing, she does not offer any explanation other than this being caused by the expressions themselves. This leads to the same issues related to the conventionalization of meaning that were raised by Stanley's (2015) and Lo Guercio and Caso's (2022) account (see 2.1 and 2.2). Saul's account fails to explain why certain expressions are not always used as dogwhistles. It is therefore not sufficient to account for dogwhistles on the level of the perlocution only, despite what Saul explicitly argues.

Another issue of Saul's account is that it views dogwhistles as acts that only affect one particular audience. Since she defines dogwhistles as perlocutionary acts that invoke pre-existing attitudes, this suggests that speakers are only interested in influencing the audience that has such pre-existing attitudes. Saul (2019) identifies three audiences that speakers are faced with when using covert racist dogwhistles: the non-racists, the unconflicted racists, and the conflicted racially resentful. This latter group consists of people who would not openly admit to being racist but have a

[16] On this view, we might consider that, just like there are linguistic devices that indicate the illocutionary force of an utterance, there exist devices that indicate the perlocutionary force of the utterance.

(subconscious) racist bias regardless. If the speaker wants to get support for an explicitly racist message, they will obviously have no difficulty getting it from the unconflicted racists, but the non-racists and the conflicted audience would not accept this, because it violates the norm of racial equality. Therefore, Saul argues, the most strategic option is to use a covert racist dogwhistle, as this will cause the conflicted audience to be influenced by their own bias, without them realizing it. This is not necessary to mobilize the racist audience, since their racial prejudices are already salient. Moreover, the speaker's dogwhistle has no effect on the non-racist audience, as they have no racist bias to be brought to salience. This suggests that covert dogwhistling only directly targets the conflicted resentful audience, while other audiences are treated as mere overhearers, whom the speaker is not interested in mobilizing.

I object to this view, as this would lead to the conclusion that speakers can dogwhistle in front of a homogeneous audience, consisting of conflicted resentful people only. If this were the case, the idea of a dogwhistle would be void, as there would only be one audience to hear, or rather not hear, the whistle. As such, dogwhistles are not well enough distinguished from other acts of deception or manipulation, in which speakers want to keep their communicative intentions hidden from their one and only audience. Although speakers are likely indeed interested in giving the conflicted audience a nudge in their direction, I doubt that this is all that speakers are concerned with when dogwhistling. The point of a dogwhistle, in my view, is to get as much support as possible from different audiences, by producing different understandings that are favorable to each of them. My objection to viewing dogwhistles as speech acts only meant for one particular subset of the audience will become clearer after discussing Mascitti's (2023) account of overt dogwhistles.

3.4 Overt dogwhistles as illocutionary acts

Whereas Saul's account of dogwhistles as speech acts applies to covert dogwhistles, Mascitti (2023) offers one for overt dogwhistles. Just like Saul, Mascitti suggests that dogwhistles truly only target and affect one audience. In fact, he claims that dogwhistles are speech acts whose point is to divide the audience, as he defines them as "acts designed to change the conversational role of a subset of the audience, from participant to overhearer, without making it public knowledge" (p.33). According to Mascitti, when a speaker performs a dogwhistle, the general audience (i.e. the non-targeted audience) is no longer considered an addressed participant in the conversation. This happens because the speaker's utterance can only be truly understood by those who share sufficient common ground with the speaker. Whereas previous accounts have considered dogwhistles as expressions that lend themselves to two (or more) interpretations, or meanings, Mascitti argues that there is only one true meaning: the speaker's meaning. For instance, according to Mascitti (2023: 25), Bush only intended *wonder-working power* to mean 'the power of Christ', which is common within evangelicalism. As such, he claims that speakers only intend to produce an illocutionary effect (i.e. an understanding) in the addressed targeted group, whereby they demote the non-targeted audience to an overhearing audience.

According to Mascitti, overt dogwhistles can be considered illocutionary acts since uptake is only required from the targeted audience. Since the non-targeted

audience is now only an overhearing audience, Mascitti claims that the speaker has no primary responsibilities to design their utterances with this audience in mind, and therefore does not bear reflexive intentions towards them. This means that their uptake is not required for the act to become felicitous. However, since the speaker did not inform this audience about this role change, they are deceived into believing that the speaker still directly addressed them. This leads to them deriving other meanings believed to be intended by the speaker, even though, as Mascitti (2023: 23) states, “there is no second coded meaning at all”. Bush’s non-evangelical audience might have believed that he intended *wonder-working power* as a poetic expression, although Mascitti argues that Bush truly only meant it as an evangelical expression to refer to the power of Christ. The non-targeted audience was thus deceived by Bush, as he made it as if he still wanted to produce an illocutionary effect in them.

While Mascitti’s account is truly unique, it appears to contradict itself. Mascitti argues that dogwhistles can be considered a form of disguisement, as speakers disguise their true meaning from the non-targeted audience. As opposed to concealment, which entails that the non-targeted audience is aware that the speaker is hiding something from them (e.g. by speaking in a language unknown to this audience), disguisement entails that the speaker hides something from them without their knowledge (Mascitti, 2023: 18). Speakers can disguise their message from the untargeted audience by deceiving them into thinking that they share enough common ground with the speaker to be able to recognize their intention. This requires speakers: “1) to get the addressee and side participants, if any, to recognize her intended meaning; 2) to conceal the same meaning from overhearers and 3) to get overhearers to think that she means something else (that is related to open common ground information)” (p.20).

This is contradictory because, as Mascitti describes it, speakers who perform dogwhistles, *qua* forms of disguisement, do appear to take the non-targeted audience into consideration when designing their utterances. In other words, speakers do intend to produce some illocutionary effect, albeit a different one, in the non-targeted audience, although Mascitti (2023: 27) maintains that speakers bear no reflexive intentions towards this audience. If the speaker does not have any intentions towards the non-targeted audience, why would they go through the trouble of cleverly designing their utterance such that it generates a plausible meaning for them? This suggests that speakers do actually have multiple meaning intentions, for if they only had one intention towards the targeted audience, concealing this from the non-targeted audience would be sufficient as disguisement would not be necessary. It rather seems that speakers intend the non-targeted audience to recognize whatever they inferred as intended by the speaker. In a way, this could mean that any alternative interpretation derived by the non-targeted audience is speaker-meant after all. This in turn suggests that, despite what Mascitti claims, speakers do want to achieve illocutionary effects in the non-targeted audience, making them a targeted audience after all, which leads the suggestion that dogwhistles are single speech acts which produce different illocutionary effects.

3.5 Rethinking dogwhistles as polylogical acts

Even though Mascitti and Saul both define dogwhistles in terms of the actions speakers perform by them, their accounts still face some important issues. The root of these issues, as well as of the issues in the previous accounts discussed in chapter 2, appears to be the exclusive focus on the 'targeted' groups. All these previous accounts have focused on how the targeted group is able to interpret, or is affected by the speaker's hidden message. There has not been enough attention paid to the 'non-targeted' audience, i.e. what their significance is and how they interpret the speaker's utterance. This is a result of previous scholars being too invested in finding out *how* dogwhistles work, taking for granted *why* speakers use dogwhistles in the first place. All previous accounts suggest that speakers use dogwhistles amidst multiple audiences, to secretly communicate a controversial message to a specific sub-audience, hence assuming that speakers are only interested in influencing this audience. However, an important question that has gotten little consideration so far is *why speakers want different audiences to reach different interpretations of their utterance*. Speakers do not just dogwhistle for the sake of dogwhistling. What do they want to achieve with this?

When looking at the larger context in which dogwhistles are attested, it often, if not always, appears that speakers try to gain support for something. Sayeed et al. (2024: 10) point out that the ideal context for dogwhistles is an "electoral competitive context, [in which] parties aiming for government positions have an incentive to convince wide groups of (diverse) voters that the party represents their political preferences in order to maximize voter support". In other words, they argue that speakers stand to gain most from dogwhistling in contexts with different audiences wherein they want to achieve something which requires as much support as possible. More generally, dogwhistles thus appear to be used in *polylogical* argumentative contexts. The term polylogue refers to argumentative encounters which "arise whenever different speakers take up and discuss more than two positions (standpoints) at a time" (Lewiński & Aakhuis, 2013: 162). In such situations, the speaker acknowledges multiple hearers or audiences with diverse positions.[17] To achieve their goal of gaining as much support as possible, it seems implausible that speakers in these situations are truly interested in only targeting and influencing one particular audience.[18] Instead, these multiple audiences, if not all, are just as

[17] This does not mean that all argumentative activities involving more than two parties are considered polylogues. Dialogical argumentation can also involve a speaker and a large audience, consisting of multiple hearers. However, in such cases, this audience is considered to entertain one collective position on the issue discussed (Lewiński & Aakhuis, 2013)

[18] Consider for instance the context of Bush's Dred Scott reference, which occurred in a presidential debate leading up to the 2004 elections. As discussed in 1.1, evangelical Christians made up a significant percentage of the electorate and had been previously mostly withdrawn from politics. Making sure to mobilize these voters, was therefore highly important for Bush's chances of winning (Miller, 2014; Malloy, 2009). Nonetheless, Bush could not have won with their support alone; he needed to gain support from other voters as well. In fact, the outcome of the previous elections in 2000 showed that Bush already had the votes of an overwhelming majority of the evangelicals (see PRC, 2004). Considering this, why would Bush need to specifically target the evangelicals, as opposed to any other audience? Instead, he had to gain the support of other audiences as well.

important to the speaker's goal. When there is a lot at stake, speakers will try to take anything they can get.

Zarefsky (2008) argues that the presence of multiple diverse audiences (or as he calls it, a 'heterogeneous audience') is typical of political argumentation. While it is difficult for speakers to align their standpoints with those espoused by all the different audiences, a strategic arguer will still "tr[y] to appeal to these multiple personalities at the same time" (p.320). According to Killingsworth (2005: 253), to appeal to an audience means "to promote agreement of harmony, to smooth waters between author and audience or any two positions". This is exactly what I believe speakers do when dogwhistling; they attempt to persuade different audiences to accept their standpoint by *appealing* to them, i.e. by showing these different audiences that this standpoint is actually already in line with their prior beliefs, desires, etc., even though these priors may differ for each audience. Dogwhistles can therefore be understood as polylogical appeals.

This can be illustrated with Bush's reference to Dred Scott (see 1.1), which occurred in a presidential debate leading up to the 2004 elections. In this stretch of the discourse, Bush was asked what kind of Supreme Court he would appoint if elected as president, which he answered by illustrating what kind of judge he would not pick, i.e. like the one in Dred Scott's case. Previous scholars have argued that, with this reference, Bush secretly appealed to those audience members who saw a parallel between the court's decision in Scott's case and abortion legislature. In other words: previous scholars suggest that Bush appealed to an audience who took a negative stance towards the Dred Scott case due to its pro-abortion implications (which most have identified with the evangelical audience). Such a view, however, does not do justice to the rhetorical potential of this reference. Bush did not just appeal to the audience which was unhappy with the court's decision because of their anti-abortion stance, he appealed to *all* audiences who were discontent with the court's decision in Dred Scott's case, regardless of the underlying reasons. This also includes non-evangelical audiences who were upset with the court because it was racist.[19] If so, Bush strategically appealed to a much larger percentage of the electorate, eventually leading to electoral success. On this view, dogwhistling is not a matter of flattering one audience without alienating the other, it is a matter of flattering both audiences in their own right.

Importantly, what I have described here so far agrees with the observations made by previous scholars (Saul, 2018; Khoo, 2017; Mascitti, 2023) that dogwhistling appears to exploit hearers' pre-existing beliefs, attitudes, etc., i.e. psychological states, to achieve certain perlocutionary effects. However, whereas previous scholars have suggested that these effects are only intended to occur for a particular audience with certain pre-existing psychological states, I believe that speakers also intend for this to happen with different audiences who have different psychological states. In dogwhistling, speakers thus appeal to multiple audiences simultaneously, intending to produce different illocutionary effects. Therefore, I conceptualize dogwhistles as

[19] This does not imply that opposing abortion, or being an evangelical, and opposing racism are incompatible. It is only meant to show that referencing Dred Scott appealed to different audiences with different main concerns regarding the court's decision in this case.

polylogical speech acts whereby speakers appeal to multiple audiences simultaneously, in an attempt to achieve their ultimate goal, that is, to persuade as many people as possible. In speech-act theoretic terms, I will argue that dogwhistles are speech acts that (indirectly) express multiple psychological states, not of the speaker, but of the various hearers, in order to bring about perlocutionary effects (i.e. persuade others).

What I am describing here does not fit within any category of speech acts according to Searle's traditional taxonomy (see 3.1). In the next chapter, I propose a new class of speech acts to which dogwhistles belong, *appellative acts*, and develop an account of this class within Speech Act Theory. This will provide the theoretical framework for my account of dogwhistles as speech acts, which will be presented in chapter 5.

4. Towards a new class of speech acts: *appellative acts*

What does it mean to appeal to someone? Killingsworth (2005: 1) observes that, in ordinary language, the term 'appeal' can mean two things: "to *plead* one's case", and "to *please*". On the one hand, I can, for instance, make an appeal to the university's board of examiners to request an extension of a deadline. On the other hand, I can find something – a movie, a book, a speech, etc. – appealing, because it reflects some of my own interests or values. When we talk about what it means for someone to *appeal to* someone, however, these two meanings seem to intertwine. When a speaker appeals to a hearer, they are not simply pleading for something, nor simply pleasing them. Instead, they are doing both: *pleading* by *pleasing*. In other words, to appeal to someone means to get them to do or believe something, with reasons based on things they value. For example, during a house showing, a real estate agent may appeal to a potential buyer who is a climate activist, by stressing the sustainability of the house, saying 'The entire roof is covered with solar panels'. To the climate activist, this utterance no longer merely functions as a simple description of the house, but also as a kind of pledge that their own values are reflected in the house, and possibly espoused by the speaker as well. How is it possible that the utterance suddenly means so much more?

Appeal in both senses (pleading and pleasing) is typically discussed in argumentation scholarship, as it is often considered a rhetorical means to enhance the speaker's chances of persuasive success. Appeal creates meaningful reasons for hearers to accept the speaker's standpoint. In linguistics, however, only the pleading-aspect of appeal is given attention to. Mainstream theories of pragmatics (i.e. Gricean pragmatics and Searlean SAT) view meaning as emanating from the speaker's intentions, i.e. what the speaker wants to produce in the hearer with their utterance, what they want to achieve with their utterance, etc. The pleasing-aspect of appeal is merely considered a by-product of communication, rather than a kind of communicative behavior itself. Speakers may take into account the hearer when designing their utterances, but according to these theories, it is ultimately the speaker who is responsible for the meaning; the hearer merely interprets and evaluates it.

In contrast to these mainstream views, Hansen and Terkourafi (2023) indicate that there is a growing interest within pragmatics in taking the role of the hearer, and their beliefs, assumptions, etc., into consideration when accounting for meaning in communication. From the perspective that communicative behavior inherits meaning from its real-world consequences, the role of the hearer is just as important (Hansen & Terkourafi, 2023: 103). It matters not only what the speaker intends by producing an utterance, but also how the hearer interprets it. This view requires taking into account what effect the hearer's beliefs, desires, values, etc. have on their interpretation of the speaker's utterance, and ultimately how this co-constitutes meaning alongside the speaker's intentions. Since the concept of appeal (as a duality of pleading and pleasing) takes into account both the speaker's intentions and the hearer's beliefs, values, etc., this seems to me a fruitful addition to pragmatic theory, and, as I will argue, a necessary one for dogwhistles.

In the current chapter, I will provide a speech-act theoretic account of appeal, and ultimately propose a new class of speech acts: the class of *appellative acts*.[20] Whereas traditional SAT claims that speech acts express the speaker's psychological state in order to produce illocutionary effects, I will argue that appellative acts do so by expressing the hearer's psychological state instead.[21] With this framework in place, I will be able to account for dogwhistles in the following chapter. This chapter starts by reviewing how appeal is currently incorporated in SAT, in 4.1. Following this, I introduce appeal as a class of illocutionary acts in 4.2. Section 4.3 is concerned with indirect appellative acts, and in 4.4 I propose the felicity conditions of this new class of illocutionary acts. Lastly, in 4.5 I identify appellative acts as a phenomenon at the pragmatics-argumentation interface and explain how hearers derive meaning from these acts.

4.1 The current status of appeal in Speech Act Theory

According to SAT, people use language to perform actions, and thereby possibly bring about changes in the state of affairs. Speech acts say something about the speaker's intentions, beliefs, desires, etc.; they express the speaker's psychological state, in order to produce some effect in the hearer. While the pleading aspect of appeal is therefore clearly incorporated in SAT, especially in the class of directive speech acts which express the speaker's state of desire (see 3.1), the pleasing aspect is not so much part of this. At a minimum, appeal is reflected in the preparatory conditions of speech acts, as these sometimes state which psychological state the hearer must have, as far as the speaker knows, to felicitously perform the intended act. For example, the preparatory conditions of assertions require the hearer not yet being aware of the information expressed by the speaker, and for promises, the preparatory conditions state that the hearer wants the speaker to do the act they commit themselves to doing (Searle, 1969).

While SAT does incorporate the hearer's psychological state in the preparatory conditions of speech acts, it is not central to the meaning of speech acts. This is the result of the common fallacy within SAT that performing speech acts requires speakers to communicate new information to the hearer. According to Searle, the successful performance of a speech act relies on producing an illocutionary effect in the hearer, i.e. producing an understanding (see 3.1). While Searle himself does not comment much on what this looks like, within cognitive psychology, understanding is considered "the connection and recognition of connections between various pieces of knowledge" (van Camp, 2014: 96). It appears that SAT assumes that, in order to

[20] The term *appellative* is inspired by Sinha (1988), who draws upon Karl Bühler's (1990) *Organon*-model of language. According to Bühler, language simultaneously fulfills three function: *representing* states of affairs, *expressing* the speaker's internal state, and *appealing* to the recipient's behavior. While Bühler's appellative function was mainly concerned with the pleading-aspect of appeal, Sinha (1988: 186-187) argues that the appellative function of language also involves "subjecting the audience (and the speaker) to that which [] they are already subject to". In other words, the appellative function of languages involves both the pleading and the pleasing aspect of appeal.

[21] 'Expressing the hearer's psychological state' should be understood as giving voice to, or reflecting the hearer's psychological state in the speaker's utterance.

produce an understanding in the hearer, speakers must provide new information allowing them to make connections that they otherwise would not make.[22]

Acknowledging this fallacy, Searle (1969: 80 note 1) states that in some cases "we should say that the speaker 'appeals to' or 'invokes' a proposition" already known by the hearer in order to produce an illocutionary effect. This is clearest in cases in which speakers want to remind the hearer of something they were previously aware of, see (14):

(14) a. Don't forget you have an appointment tomorrow.
b. Remember the good old days when we were in high school?

However, in cases like this, we can reason that the speaker addresses information that the hearer had already forgotten, or that was not currently activated in their memory, such that the information was still in a sense new to the hearer. In fact, Searle and Vanderveken (2005: 127) explain that the speech act of reminding the hearer of something is practically the same as asserting, whose illocutionary force is to commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition assumed to be yet unknown to the hearer. So, although the proposition expressed concerns information that the hearer previously had access to, the speech act still communicates new information.

In certain cases, however, speech acts express propositional content that the hearer is actively aware of, therefore which is not new at all. Speakers may want to reiterate something the hearer previously said for clarity's sake, or repeat the information given by the hearer in an emotional outcry, see (15):

(15) a. You said we had to hand in the homework on Monday, right?
b. You actually reported him to the police?!

It is true that in these cases, the speaker does not communicate any new, or inactive, propositional content to the hearer. Nonetheless, these utterances still express new information. According to Searle, the expression of the speaker's psychological state is the basis for producing illocutionary effects. Since it is typically assumed that the hearer is yet unaware of the speaker's psychological state, this still constitutes new information. Although the propositional content in the utterances in (15) is already active in the hearer, the psychological state that the speaker expresses each time is new information to them. The question in (15a) expresses the speaker's desire to know the answer, and the exclamation in (15b) expresses the speaker's surprise towards the proposition that the hearer just informed them about. In order to understand what the speaker meant with these utterances, the hearer must recognize what psychological state is expressed.

[22] Alternatively, according to Relevance Theory (see Sperber & Wilson, 1995), old information can be used to achieve cognitive effects. Relevance Theory argues that communication consists in achieving positive cognitive effects through the presumption of optimal relevance. Cognitive effects include strengthening previously held assumptions, cancelling or revising previously held assumptions, or deriving new assumptions. Sometimes old information can be the most relevant way to achieve a certain cognitive effect. Nonetheless, Relevance Theory also argues that new information is typically more relevant than old information (Sperber & Wilson, 1995: 48), thereby assuming that speakers must supply new information to the hearer in order to achieve the most positive cognitive effects.

So even though speech acts can express propositional information that is not new to the hearer, according to Searle, they must still express new information regarding the speaker's psychological state in order to produce illocutionary effects. However, considering that understanding means to connect pieces of information, or recognize the connections between pieces of information, this does not always require new information. People may already possess the necessary bits of information, but not yet recognize the connection between them. Consider the following excerpt from a Dutch parliamentary debate about the controversy surrounding a sex education program for elementary schools:

(16) Van Baarle: (…) My question to the minister is: What is the minister going to do with the concerns of all these parents who say, "I am scared at this moment to send my child to school"?

Minister Wiersma: (…) <u>You want children to grow up safely, also at school</u>. It is therefore important that you learn about boundaries from a young age (…)

(*Plenaire verslagen*, 2023, my own translation)

In this encounter, member of parliament Van Baarle expressed shared concerns towards the appropriateness of the program, ultimately arguing for a revision, or even its removal from the curriculum. The minister of education, on the other hand, took a position in favor of the program, and defended this with the argumentation in (16). The underlined utterance does not appear to express information regarding Wiersma's own psychological state. Rather, it expresses the psychological state of his audience (i.e. Van Baarle and concerned citizens), that is, the desire that children grow up safely. This is meant to serve as (part of) an argument in favor of allowing the program in the curriculum. With this utterance, Wiersma *appealed* to the audience by attributing a psychological state of desire to them, to get them to understand his support of the program.

Appeals are especially common in argumentative discourse in which the speaker defends a prescriptive standpoint, that is, a standpoint that "recommends a certain course of action" (van Eemeren, 2010: 20).[23] Such contexts are also defined as *practical argumentation*. In practical argumentation, the acceptability of the speaker's standpoint strongly depends on "the aspirations and values of the audience for the argument" (Bench-Capon et al., 2007: 42). Speakers therefore often appeal to a psychological state of the audience to convince them of the acceptability of their standpoint, ultimately persuading them to follow up on the recommended action. Sinha (1988: 176) defines a subtype of practical argumentation, *ideological persuasion*, as "a discursive form which seeks to secure the consent of an audience to a proposition, or set of propositions, whose premises or presupposed grounds are

[23] While Van Eemeren's conceptualization of prescriptive standpoints suggests that such standpoints recommend a physical action, it is my contention that the recommended action can also be a mental action, such as believing the hearer (*you should believe what I say*). Although this blurs the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive standpoints, which make an epistemic claim about the state of affairs (Van Eemeren, 2010), there is still a difference between these two types of standpoints. In prescriptive standpoints, it is still more about the action of following up on the speaker's recommendation, rather than about finding the objective truth.

supplied, not by the speaker, but by the audience themselves".[24] He argues that the process of ideological persuasion does not just involve performing acts in order to affect the hearer's psychological state (i.e. persuade them), but it also involves performing acts that "creat[e] and sustain[] a readiness to be persuaded" (p.184). This is done by appealing to the audience. In order to argue what is best for the hearer to do, it is rhetorically strategic to do so by giving voice to what they already believe or value. So, at least in practical argumentation, speakers can persuade their audience by using the audience's own pre-existing psychological states as arguments, as exemplified in (16).

It is unclear, however, what is the status of appeal in SAT. Since they do not express any information regarding the speaker's psychological state, what kind of speech act do such utterances then perform? Consider another simplified example in (17)[25]:

(17) a. You are a real animal lover.
b. So you should go vegan.

The speaker addresses the hearer's state of affection towards animals to argue that they should go vegan. While SAT acknowledges the performative function of the utterance in (17b) as a suggestion or incitement expressing the speaker's state of desire that the hearer go vegan, the performativity of the utterance in (17a) in Searle's taxonomy is unclear. Should the utterance be considered performative in its own right, or is it merely a part of the act followed by it?

Since appeal is inherently an argumentative phenomenon, we might consult van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1982) account of arguing as a speech act. Whereas Searle traditionally views speech acts as having a one-to-one relationship between utterance and illocution, van Eemeren and Grootendorst argue that argumentation is a more complex speech act, consisting of a constellation of utterances. Speakers perform the act of arguing in order to get the hearer to accept their standpoint. Since they expect that the hearer will not blindly accept this standpoint, they produce a constellation of utterances expressing arguments which they expect the hearer will accept. If successful, this will eventually lead the hearer to accept the speaker's standpoint. Together, these utterances constitute the complex speech act of arguing. According to the authors, the utterances expressing the arguments can be considered the preparatory conditions of the act of arguing. Nonetheless, while van Eemeren and Grootendorst claim that multiple utterances can constitute a single complex illocutionary act, they maintain that every utterance still expresses its own illocutionary force. An assertion, for example, used as an argument still has its own function of committing the speaker to the truth (or acceptability) of the expressed proposition. When arguing, speakers make assertions in order to get the hearer to accept the proposition of the assertion, which in turn serves as a reason for them to accept the speaker's standpoint. If speakers were not interested in getting the hearer to accept the asserted proposition, it would be irrelevant to the argumentation. Van

[24] Although Sinha specifically talks about ideological persuasion, his arguments also apply to practical argumentation in general.
[25] All examples not attributed to a source are my own.

Eemeren and Grootendorst thus acknowledge that each utterance still serves its own purpose in the complex act of arguing. The illocutionary acts performed at the level of individual utterances are meant to generate perlocutionary effects which, in turn, make it more likely that the overall perlocutionary goal of convincing the hearer of the speaker's standpoint is achieved. So, this suggests that, when appeals are used in argumentation, they could still perform an act on their own.

The question remains what kind of act this is; what do speakers do when appealing to hearers, and what effects do they aim to bring about? As I have argued, speakers appeal to the hearer by expressing the hearer's pre-existing psychological state. This means that they express information that is already available to the hearer. We may therefore consider appeals as presuppositions. According to Stalnaker (1970: 279), to presuppose something is "to take its truth for granted, and to assume that others involved in the context do the same". Once a presupposition is made explicit, however, Sbisà (1999: 507) argues that the truth of the proposition can be challenged by the hearer and is therefore no longer taken for granted. According to her, the presupposition then just becomes an assertion, which commits the speaker to the truth of the proposition. Following this, we might consider that appeals have an illocutionary force similar to assertions. However, appeals differ from assertions in that they predicate something regarding the hearer's psychological state, rather than some general state of affairs. While speakers can commit themselves to the truth of any proposition regarding the latter, it would be odd that they can claim commitment over a proposition related to the hearer's psychological state. Unless the speaker is a highly skilled gaslighter,[26] they cannot claim anything about the hearer's own psychological state that the hearer does not already know about. So even though appeals can be considered as explicit presuppositions content-wise, they do not have the illocutionary force of an assertion.

Furthermore, I object to viewing appeals simply as presuppositions since they do not serve the same communicative function, even though they express presupposed information. Certain presuppositions are required for communication to be possible between interlocutors, which means that interlocutors must share enough common ground in order to produce an understanding in the hearer. García-Carpintero (2018) therefore considers presupposition as a kind of ancillary speech act, which is required for the felicitous performance of another primary speech act. Upon this view, presuppositional acts explicate the primary act's preparatory conditions. This, however, is not necessarily true of appeals. While appeals are used in support of another speech act like arguing, they are hardly ever mandatory for the felicitous performance of that act. There are countless other ways in which speakers can attempt to get the hearer to accept their standpoint. In (17), for example, instead of bringing up the hearer's affection towards animals, the speaker could have

[26] Gaslighting is roughly defined as "a form of psychological manipulation, the effect of which induces doubt in a target's understanding of reality" (Podosky, 2021: 208). Gaslighting someone could therefore be considered attributing a psychological state to the hearer that they do not have. In non-manipulatory situations, speakers would not knowingly attribute a false psychological state to the hearer. Sincerity should therefore be a preparatory condition of appeals, which I will show in 4.4. In my account, gaslighting can therefore be considered an infelicitous appellative act.

defended their standpoint for going vegan with logical evidence, e.g. the fact that the meat industry damages the environment. Therefore, appeals should not be considered ancillary speech acts like presuppositional acts.

Appeals do not simply express presupposed information regarding the hearer's psychological state, they *emphasize* it. Speakers do not use appeals to enable the felicitous performance of another speech act in order to produce an understanding in the hearer, they want to produce an understanding in the hearer *by virtue of* the appeal. By appealing to the hearer, speakers thus produce an illocutionary effect in the hearer by virtue of getting them to establish connections between bits of information they already possess. Rather than expressing information regarding the speaker's psychological state, appealing to the hearer thus involves expressing information regarding their psychological state. This makes up a species of speech acts on its own, one that is currently not reflected in SAT. Therefore, I propose an entirely new class of speech acts: *appellative acts*.

4.2 Appellative acts as illocutionary acts

The illocutionary point of the class of appellative acts is to express the hearer's psychological state. This can be seen as the counterpart of Searle's class of expressive acts, which have the illocutionary point of expressing the speaker's psychological state (see 3.1), thereby completing the symmetry in Searle's taxonomy of speech acts. However, whereas the expressed psychological state in expressives is typically considered to be of an emotional or affective nature, as the states of belief, intention and desire are already expressed by representative, commissive, and directive acts respectively (see 3.1), appellative acts may express any of these states of the hearer.[27]

Searle's class of expressive acts stands out from his other classes in that they do not make clear what kind of real-world consequences the speaker aims to bring about. They have no direction of fit; they do not aim to have the world match the words, or vice versa. Whereas, for instance, the performance of a directive act such as ordering (e.g. 'Open the door') makes it evident to the hearer what the speaker is aiming to achieve, this is not the case for expressive acts, as their sole illocutionary point is to express the speaker's psychological state. In turn, however, it seems that expressives are almost always used in order to achieve some perlocutionary effects pertaining to the social dynamics between the speaker and the hearer (Norrick, 1978). Expressive acts "normally have a social function of making things go better in our relations with one another" (Fotion, 2000: 50). Expressives are not performed in order to bring about a clear or immediate change in the state of affairs; instead, they are typically performed in order to bring about certain long-term consequences in the social relations between speaker and hearer, i.e. to create, repair, change, etc. the

[27] I say this because it is possible to use various psychological states as an appeal:
- You should do X because you believe Y
- You should do X because you want Y
- You should do X because you already intended to do Y
- You should do X because you feel Y

Perhaps different subtypes of appellative acts can be distinguished based on which psychological state is expressed, but this requires future research.

social dynamics. The same goes for the class of appellative acts I am proposing here, as utterances expressing an appeal do not (yet) tell the hearer what the speaker aims to achieve. The difference between expressives and appellatives, however, is that, whereas expressives have a social function, appellatives have an *argumentative* function. Their performance aims to affect (e.g. maintain, unite, polarize, etc.) the argumentative relationship between the interlocutors.

According to Searle, what makes a speech act an illocutionary act is the recognition of speaker intentions. Felicitous speech acts need to be intended by the speaker as such and intended to be recognized by the hearer as intended as such. A request is only a request because the speaker produced an utterance intended as a request, and the hearer recognized that the speaker intended that the utterance count as request. The same should be expected for appellative acts. As I have argued, appellatives express the hearer's psychological state. However, not all utterances expressing the hearer's state are appellative acts; the examples in (15) are instead intended and recognized as a directive (question) and an expressive (exclamation). For an expression of the hearer's psychological state to count as an appellative act, it must be intended and recognized as such. What is needed for appellatives to express reflexive intentions, so they may classify as illocutionary acts? The answer is their communicative context of practical argumentation.

Mey (2011: 171) states: "not only are speech acts situated *in* a context; the context itself situates the speech acts, it creates them, as it were". Speech acts only become felicitous when certain contextual parameters are in order. Recall that practical argumentation is a type of discourse in which speakers recommend a course of action for the hearer to take. A rational hearer will ask themselves 'Why should I, specifically, do what the speaker says?'. This puts the onus on the speaker to show that their reasons for the recommended action are in line with the hearer's interests, beliefs, etc. (Kauffeld, 1997; Poggi, 2005; Walton, 2009); they must appeal to the hearer. Appeal is thus typically reflexively intended by the speaker when engaging in practical argumentation. If the speaker fails to, or does not want to appeal to the audience, the reasons provided for the hearer to pursue the action predicated by the standpoint are solely based on the speaker's interests. The standpoint becomes an order, rather than a recommendation, due to the lack of advocacy on behalf of the hearer.[28]

From the perspective of the hearer, assuming that the speaker is interested in defending their prescriptive standpoint with reasonable arguments, they will expect that the speaker intends to advance argumentation on behalf of the hearer's interests. There is thus a *presumption of appeal* in practical argumentation. This is what allows hearers to recognize an expression of their psychological state as an appellative act, rather than an assertion or a presupposition. In contexts where there is no such

[28] Let me illustrate this with a typical parent-child interactions, in which the parent tells the child eat their vegetables. The parent can either say "You need to eat your carrots *because I say so*", or "You need to eat your carrots *because they will make you strong*". In the first case, the parent is solely exerting their authority over the child; there is nothing in it for the child (unless, of course, they really want to keep their parents happy). In the latter, the parent provides a reason why the child should eat the vegetables, for their own sake. It is not an order, but rather a recommendation; the action is presented as beneficial to the child as well.

presumption, utterances expressing the hearer's state will not count as an appellative act. When situated in a different context, the same utterance may express a different illocutionary force, see (18):

(18) a. *Context: Speaker tries to convince the hearer to go vegan.*
'You should go vegan because you are a real animal lover'
[appellative act]
b. *Context: The speaker realizes that the hearer owns over twenty cats when entering their house.*
'Wow, you are a real animal lover' [expressive act]

So long as utterances such as (18) are situated in a communicative context of practical argumentation, as in (a), they count as appellative acts, since speakers intend them as such, and hearers recognize them as such. Appellatives thus rely on reflexive intentions, classifying them as a type of illocutionary act. This reflexivity of intentions also allows appellative acts to be performed indirectly.

4.3 Indirect appellative acts

So far, I have illustrated my arguments about appellative acts with direct appeals ('You want children to grow up safely', 'You are a real animal lover'). These can be easily recognized by e.g. the use of the second person pronoun 'you', as well as verbs that are conventionally associated with a certain psychological state, e.g. 'want', 'love', etc. Such devices can be considered illocutionary force indicators. However, more often than not, when we say that someone appeals to the hearer, there is not a direct reference to their psychological state. Instead, something can appeal to someone simply because it addresses something that they value (Killingsworth, 2005). Consider the example in (19):

(19) You should go vegan because the meat industry damages the environment.

For a climate activist, this argument would be appealing, not because the speaker directly referred to their state of concern for the environment, but because they provided a reason that takes this state into account, implicitly giving voice to the hearer's psychological state. The speaker thus indirectly appealed to the hearer.

As I have argued, appellative acts express presupposed information regarding the hearer's psychological state. However, this does not mean that appellative utterances may *only* express information that the hearer already possesses. As pointed out in 4.1, the term 'information' is not limited to the propositional content of utterances, but applies to any kind of information regarding the expression of psychological states, e.g. belief, desire, intention, emotion, etc. Utterances can therefore express new and known information simultaneously. The hearer may not have been previously aware of the proposition expressed by the underlined segment in (19), which means that the utterance directly expresses the illocutionary force of an assertion. However, if the speaker specifically mentioned the environment knowing the hearer's state of concern for this, they indirectly performed an appellative act as well; the hearer's psychological state of concern for the environment is thereby

also indirectly expressed.[29] If the hearer recognizes the speaker's intention to appeal to them, the utterance will count as an indirect appellative act. Whereas direct appellative acts, like (17a), solely express information that is priorly accepted by the hearer, indirect appellative acts can also express new propositions that must be accommodated by hearers for the appellative speech act to be successful. Nonetheless, as I will show in 4.5, an understanding of such utterances is still produced by virtue of the hearer's own psychological state, rather than the speaker's, thus ultimately counting as an appellative act rather than an assertive act. So not everything that the speaker says needs to be priorly accepted by the hearer, for if this were the case, communication would be redundant. Yet, in the ideal rhetorical situation, everything the speaker says (whether new or old information) should appeal to the hearer, in order to maximize the chance of persuasive success.

Indirect appellative acts may be quite difficult to recognize, as they look like plain assertions on the surface. How is the hearer to know that the speaker primarily intended (19) to count as an appeal rather than an assertion? As I have argued in the previous section, the reflexivity of intentions for appellative acts is enabled by the presumption of appeal in the communicative context of practical argumentation. Note, however, that because of this presumption, the hearer's uptake may not need to be as salient as traditional SAT had in mind. Searle and Austin both argued that felicitous speech acts require the hearer's active uptake, i.e. active recognition of the speaker's reflexive intention. Later scholars, however, have claimed that this is not always necessary. Sbisà (2009: 49) argues that "uptake need not be present in an explicit linguistic form, or as a full-fledged thought in the mind of the addressee", when uptake is held by default, that is, when speakers conform to the communicative presumptions of the context (see also Lewiński, 2021: 6709). As appeal is presumed by hearers in practical argumentation, the uptake of an appellative act may be presumed as well, rather than actively secured. As long as the speaker's communicative behavior is in line with what is expected in the communicative context, certain speech acts will become felicitous by default.[30] Presumed uptake is exactly, according to Langton (2018, see 3.2), what speakers exploit when performing backdoor speech acts. As I will argue in the next chapter, the presumption of appeal in dogwhistles classifies them as a kind of backdoor speech act.

As I have shown, appellative acts are speech acts which are distinct from any other class in Searle's (1979) taxonomy, as they produce illocutionary effects in the hearer by virtue of their own psychological state. Since they still involve the hearer's recognition of the speaker's reflexive intention (or uptake), albeit less salient than what Searle and Austin initially imagined, I have argued that appellative acts can be classified as illocutionary acts. Therefore, I am proposing the class of appellative acts

[29] We might consider indirect appellative acts to have a weaker illocutionary force than direct appellatives.

[30] Although presumptions are strong tendencies, they are defeasible (Moldovan, 2016). The presumption may be defeated prior to the performance of an appellative act, if the hearer already expects that the speaker's arguments will not appeal to them. For example, a feminist hearer will likely assume that the words of a known misogynist will not appeal to them, even before uttering them. In such cases, the presumption of appeal no longer stands, which means that the appellative act cannot become felicitous by default for that audience, and instead requires their active uptake.

as a legitimate extension of Speech Act Theory. In what follows, I will identify the felicity conditions of this class, and afterwards, I will spend some time explaining how illocutionary effects are achieved with appellative acts.

4.4 Felicity conditions of appellative acts

Since speech acts are constituted by their rules, I will lay out the felicity conditions for appellative acts in this section. Note that these conditions will be rather general, as I am talking about an entire class of acts, rather than an individual illocutionary act. For each act in this class, the felicity conditions will need to be further specified.

Starting with the propositional content condition. As I have argued, appellative acts require a practical argumentative context, in which the speaker defends a prescriptive standpoint, i.e. recommends that the hearer take a certain course of action. Appellative acts express the hearer's psychological state, which serves as (part of) an argument for this standpoint, i.e. a reason for accepting the conclusion of the speaker's argument. While the reason is the hearer's own psychological state, this is only part of the propositional content of direct appellative acts ('You are a real animal lover'). For indirect appellative acts, the proposition may express any state of affairs towards which the hearer has a psychological state. From this, they can infer that the reason for accepting the speaker's standpoint is their own psychological state ('The meat industry damages the environment' > state of concern). The propositional content of appellatives may thus express either the hearer's psychological state, or any state of affairs, e.g. a fact, value, event, etc. The propositional content condition is thus as follows:

(20) Any proposition *p*

For specific acts in the class of appellatives, this condition can be narrowed down, as I will show for dogwhistles in the next chapter.

The preparatory conditions should specify what contextual parameters need to be in place for an utterance to count as performing an appellative act, in the sense of both pleading to and pleasing the audience. As I have argued, this requires a context of practical argumentation, as in such contexts, speakers intend to, and are expected to, provide reasons for the hearer to accept their standpoint (pleading) based on the hearer's own pre-existing beliefs, values, etc. (pleasing). In order to appeal, it should thus be presupposed that the speaker wants the hearer to follow up on the action described in their standpoint (which is not part of the appellative act). Furthermore, the preparatory conditions should state that both speaker and hearer presume that the proposition constitutes a relevant reason for following up on the speaker's recommended course of action,[31] and that this reason reflects (either directly or

[31] When making a prudent decision regarding the speaker's standpoint, the hearer expects that the psychological state on which the speaker based their argument is relevant to the recommended action. If the psychological state is irrelevant, then the argument is not appealing, even though the hearer might indeed possess the state. For instance, a speaker may say "You should learn the piano *because you love candy*", and the hearer may indeed love candy, but that is irrelevant to the standpoint. The appeal might be true, but the argument is unappealing. This would count as an infelicitous appellative act.

indirectly) a pre-existing psychological state of the hearer. These conditions are thus as follows:

(21) a. S wants H to follow up on a recommended course of action *A*
b. S believes *p* constitutes a relevant reason *R* for doing *A*
c. S believes *R* reflects H's psychological state *PS*
d. H expects (a-c)

Condition (21d) captures the presumption of appeal that is in force in the context of practical argumentation. If the interlocutors are not situated in a context wherein the hearer does not expect the speaker to appeal to them, an appellative act cannot be performed. Note that conditions (20a-c) predicate something about the speaker's psychological state, which is usually reflected in the sincerity conditions of speech acts (Searle, 1979). Since I have argued that the illocutionary point of appellative acts is to express information regarding the hearer's psychological state, the speaker's belief that the hearer does, in fact, have the expressed psychological state is presupposed. The speaker's psychological state is therefore only part of the preparatory conditions, and not the sincerity conditions. Nonetheless, we might say that if condition (20c) is not met, the speaker insincerely appealed to the hearer.

Instead, the sincerity conditions specify what psychological state the hearer must have in order for the act to count as an appellative act. The hearer must have the psychological state that the speaker intended to express. If the hearer in (17) turns out to hate animals, even though the speaker sincerely thought that they loved animals, the appellative act is infelicitous. The sincerity condition of appellative acts thus describes the hearer's psychological state, rather than the speaker's:[32]

(22) H has the *PS* intended by S

If this condition is satisfied, the speaker's sincerity in (20c) is too; it would be unlikely that the speaker did not believe that the hearer has the psychological state they expressed, and yet intended their utterance to be an appellative.

Lastly, the essential conditions specify that the utterance counts as an appellative act. These conditions should state that the utterance counts as an appeal in both senses of pleading and pleasing, i.e. it counts as an expression of the hearer's psychological state (pleasing) serving as a reason for accepting the speaker's standpoint (pleading). The essential condition requires the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention. As I have stated in 4.2, the hearer's uptake for appellatives is presumed in practical argumentative contexts. This means that the hearer will most likely not scrutinize the speaker's utterance to consider whether it actually reflects

[32] The term 'sincerity condition' is not a good name for appellative acts, as it suggests that hearer's can be insincere regarding the speaker's utterance, or that the speaker has agency over the hearer's psychological state. Perhaps the terms 'veracity' or 'accuracy' better reflect this category of felicity conditions. However, I wanted to stick to Searle's format of felicity conditions. According to Searle, the expressed psychological state is internal to the performance of illocutionary acts; "successful performances of illocutionary acts necessarily involve the expression of the psychological state specified by the sincerity conditions of that type of act" (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985: 18). For appellatives, this is still the case, only now the psychological state is the hearer's, not the speaker's. Therefore, I will stick to the term 'sincerity condition', even though the speaker has no agency over the fulfillment of this condition.

their psychological state accurately; they will typically trust that the speaker adheres to the presumptions of the communicative context. Obviously, however, not everything the speaker says will be accepted as an expression of the hearer's psychological state. If the speaker's utterance expresses something that clearly contradicts the hearer's psychological state, they will not recognize it as the performance of an appellative act. For instance, if the speaker uses a racist slur to convince a non-racist hearer to do something, the hearer will actively reject the speech act as an appellative one, since racist slurs are conventionally associated with racist beliefs. So long as the speaker refrains from saying or implicating something that does not reflect any of the hearer's pre-existing psychological states, or clearly clashes with one, the presumption of appeal remains in place, causing appellative acts to be recognized as such by default. The essential condition for appellatives is thus as follows:

(23) S's utterance counts as an appellative act when:
   a. S's utterance constitutes an expression of H's PS
   b. S's utterance constitutes a reason doing A

For an overview of the felicity conditions of the class of appellative acts, see Table 2. These general conditions will need to be further specified for individual speech acts in the class of appellative acts.

Felicity conditions	Specifications
Propositional content	Any proposition *p*
Preparatory	a. S wants H to follow up on a recommended course of action *A* b. S believes *p* constitutes a relevant reason *R* for doing *A* c. S believes *R* reflects H's psychological state *PS* d. H expects (a) and (b)
Sincerity	H has the *PS* intended by S
Essential	Counts as an appellative act: a. S's utterance constitutes an expression of H's *PS* b. S's utterance constitutes a reason for doing *A*

Table 2: The felicity conditions for the class of appellative speech acts

Using this framework for appellative speech acts, I will define dogwhistles as an appellative act which expresses multiple psychological states attributed to the different audiences addressed by the speaker. But first I will explain in the following section how appellative acts produce illocutionary effects in the hearer, and thus ultimately how they produce meaning. This requires going back to the argumentative origins of appellative acts.

4.5 Appellative acts at the pragmatics-argumentation interface

As I have shown, appellative speech acts are enabled by argumentative contexts in which a prescriptive standpoint is (expected to be) defended. Therefore, we should consider appellative acts as a phenomenon at the pragmatics-argumentation interface. The relationship between language and argumentation has more often than not been viewed as one-sided, as argumentation theory appears to receive more influence from pragmatic theory than the other way around (Oswald, 2023). This is

because pragmatic theory provides us with insight into communicative practices in general, which can aid our understanding of argumentative practices as a subtype of communication. This does not necessarily work the other way around, however, as insights into the dynamics of argumentation do not always tell us something about the dynamics of communication in general. However, as I aim to show here, the argumentative phenomenon of appeal can, and should, indeed be incorporated into pragmatic theory. In order to clarify this, I will dedicate this section to showing the argumentative nature of appeals, and how their meaning is derived.

As I have argued, the information expressed by appellative acts, i.e. the audience's psychological state, serves as part of an argument for the speaker's standpoint. Using the audience's psychological state as an element of persuasion can be considered as *pathos*, which is a mode of persuasion "in which psychological or emotional factors are used to influence others" (Huber & Snider, 2006: 177). Pathos is typically considered a rhetorical means whereby the speaker influences the hearer's decision-making by bringing them into a certain state of mind. For instance, by evoking anger, the hearer may make a decision in favor of the speaker's standpoint which they would not have made had they not been angry. Pathos is thus often viewed as a tool for *influencing* others, but not necessarily for *convincing* others, as this often requires reasonable, substantial evidence. Most argumentation scholars therefore prioritize the use of logical evidence as the basis for reasonable argumentation (see e.g. Braet, 1992; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992). Nonetheless, in certain contexts, the audience's psychological state can constitute a rational argument for the speaker's standpoint. Brinton (1988) distinguishes between *invoking* and *evoking* an emotion (or more generally, a psychological state). The latter involves bringing the hearer into a certain state of mind to influence their decision-making, whereas the former involves pointing to a certain state of mind they already have, as justifiable grounds for action. Invoking certain values, beliefs, or even emotions is not unusual in contexts of practical argumentation, as speakers try to get the audience to follow up on their recommended action, which can be "more readily be achieved by using an existing system of value (that of the audience) to define the proposed behavior" (Douglas, 1980: 17). Appeals can thus make up reasonable argumentation after all under certain circumstances.

While I have argued that appellative acts are used to defend the speaker's standpoint, the expressed proposition alone does not constitute an entire argument. For instance, in (17), the fact that the hearer loves animals does not automatically lead to the speaker's conclusion that they should go vegan. The same applies to the fact that the meat industry damages the environment in example (19). There is a missing premise in these arguments that hearers need to infer in order to construct an acceptable argument. Appeals thus make up a form of argumentation consisting of missing (or implicit) elements, otherwise known as *enthymematic argumentation* (Walton, 2008: 361). In order to fully understand the meaning of an appeal, hearers must therefore supply the missing premise. An important question that needs to be answered is how do hearers reach the missing premise of enthymemes?

Enthymemes were traditionally considered to be a kind of deductive syllogism (Raymond, 1984; Wynn-Palmer, 1996), whereby the missing premise is a linking

premise, creating a logically valid relation between the terms in the explicit premise and the conclusion. For instance, if a speaker says '*p* therefore *q*', the hearer must infer the premise 'if *p* then *q*' to render the argument valid. Such linking premises are intentionally left out because, for instance, the speaker knows that they are common knowledge that the hearer can be expected to possess, or because they know that the hearer can easily derive them as conversational implicatures (Walton, 2001). As such, the missing premise can be considered part of the speaker's intentions (Young, 2015: 334).[33] Many modern argumentation scholars, however, have criticized the view of enthymemes as deductive syllogisms, since real-life arguments more often than not do not appear to be intended by the speaker nor reconstructed by the hearer as syllogistic arguments, especially in practical argumentation. According to Paglieri and Woods (2009: 484), in the interpretation of enthymemes, hearers tend to infer the missing premise by using their own background knowledge, rather than going through a Gricean process of "attributing intentions and beliefs to the arguer". Instead of recovering a premise that is intentionally omitted by the speaker, it appears that enthymemes often require listeners to supply a premise of their own (Fredal, 2020). This means that the speaker's argument depends on the hearer creating a relevant link between the expressed premise and the speaker's standpoint, which need not be a syllogistic linking premise, and can even be multiple premises.

While some have argued that hearers supply a premise based on (semi-)universal truths and opinions accessible as common knowledge (e.g. Raymond, 1984), others have argued that the missing premise is often of a more psychological or affective nature, that is, a belief, emotion, value, desire, etc., unique to the addressed hearer (e.g. Miller & Bee, 1974; Green, 1980). Wynn-Palmer (1996) advocates for a social-interactive perspective of the enthymeme, which views enthymemes as the result of "the evolution and growth of an author's abilities to empathize with the audience, to consider different viewpoints, and to negotiate opposing views" (p.vi). She argues that speakers design their enthymemes carefully through a deep understanding of their audience, so that they can be completed with premises originating from the audience's own value system. Bitzer (1959) even goes so far as to argue that enthymemes are arguments that *cannot* be completed by the speaker themselves. Instead, he views enthymemes as a cooperative act, in which both speaker and hearer contribute to the argument, i.e. supply premises. This results in a self-persuasive enthymeme, as "the audience itself helps construct the proofs by which it is persuaded" (p. 408). Not only is this a highly effective method of persuading others, it also creates unity between speaker and hearer, as they both contribute to the meaning of the argument. The audience supplies a premise (or multiple ones) based on their own psychological state, which complements the speaker's premise, and ultimately leads to their conclusion.

[33] According to this, the argumentation in (17) can be reconstructed as follows:

1. You should go vegan
1.1 Because you are a real animal lover
(1.1b) (and if you love animals, you should go vegan)

It is highly unlikely, however, that a speaker would intend this argumentation scheme, as this, although logically valid, would not be considered a reasonable argument for going vegan.

Note that the supplied premises do not necessarily constitute logical argumentation, but instead form an argument that is good enough to persuade the particular hearer who supplied them. Enthymemes are nonetheless considered “an instrument of rational persuasion”, as they require the audience to supply premises that are reasonable for them to support the speaker’s conclusion (Bitzer, 1959: 409). This is not meant to suggest, however, that hearers will always actively participate in the enthymematic act by consciously inferring premises. Instead, Fredal (2020: 50) suggests that this likely often happens “tacitly and automatically, without conscious awareness”, meaning that the hearers themselves may not even always be aware of what it is that persuaded them, yet it is something that came from them. Hearers may supply a number of premises that are unique for them and cannot be always entirely predicted by the speaker beforehand. While this could lead to the meaning of an enthymeme becoming void because it “can mean whatever we decide it means” (Lloyd, 2013: 734), many scholars have argued that enthymemes are carefully constructed, limiting the number of possible arguments created by them (e.g. Smith, 2007; Green, 1980), e.g. through a careful selection of topics addressed in the explicit premises, or the use of stylistic devices that may steer the hearer towards a certain inferential path. Furthermore, Paglieri and Woods (2009) emphasize that hearers reconstruct enthymemes in the most plausible way, i.e. in ways that (could) still preserve the speaker’s intentions (p.485). This means that hearers most often do not interpret enthymemes in ways that the speaker likely never intended, because this would be irrelevant and lead to a flawed argument, which would not benefit the hearer in any way. In this sense, although the speaker’s intentions may not always specify what premises the hearer should supply, the supplied premises must still be plausibly attributable to the speaker’s intentions.

Appellative acts can be considered enthymemes because they invite the audience to supply premises based on their own psychological states. Of course, in direct appellatives, the speaker’s premise already expresses a psychological state of the hearer, but the hearer still provides their own additional premises to create a rational link between their own psychological state and the speaker’s argument. In indirect appellatives, the hearer first supplies a premise that reflects their own psychological state. Consider how the two arguments for going vegan could be completed by the hearer (hearer’s premises are in brackets):

(24) a. You should go vegan.
b. because you love animals.
c. (I wouldn’t want to hurt animals)
d. (If being not vegan hurts animals then perhaps I should go vegan)

(25) a. You should go vegan.
b. because the meat industry damages the environment.
c. (I care a lot about the environment)
d. (I wouldn’t want to support industries that damage the environment)
e. (If not being vegan supports the meat industry and thereby damages the environment, then perhaps I should go vegan)

Note that hearers may supply all kinds of premises that are even more specific to their individual beliefs, desires, etc. While these examples are quite straightforward,

as it is clear what psychological states these appeals express, and thus what premises could be drawn by hearers with these states, real-life enthymemes are often much more subtle, allowing multiple argumentation schemes to be formed. Jackson's (2006: 616) postmodernist view of the enthymeme "allow[s] for more than one premise to be supplied by individuals […] in order to make multiple meanings". Sometimes, enthymemes can be carefully constructed in ways that invoke different values simultaneously, and therefore allow different premises to be supplied, leading to different interpretations of the speaker's argument. This point will become clearer in my discussion on dogwhistles in the next chapter.

Enthymemes are highly effective for two reasons. On the one hand, they give the hearer a sense of agency over their own actions. Allowing the hearer to provide their own reasons for the speaker's conclusion gives them "the impression that this conclusion is [their] own and not suggested by someone else" (Nettel & Roque, 2011: 63). In this sense, the speaker honors, or even identifies with, the hearer's positive face,[34] as it shows that the hearer's values, beliefs, etc. are reasonable grounds for their proposed action (see Brown & Levinson, 1987). On the other hand, enthymemes create a kind of moral obligation for the hearer to follow up on the speaker's standpoint, for they would otherwise contradict their own values. This can be clearly seen in the arguments above, as the speaker makes it as if one cannot love animals, or care for the environment without being vegan. Fredal (2020: 102) argues that enthymemes have this powerful dichotomous quality because they reduce the argumentative situation to a binary system. In (24), the enthymeme boils down to 'if you love animals, you should go vegan, otherwise you do not really love animals'. The speaker presents the hearer with possible damage to their positive face, as they suggest that the hearer would be inconsistent with themselves if they fail to do what the speaker says.

Even in ancient rhetoric, enthymemes have always held a special status in argumentation theory, as they rely on rhetoric rather than logic. Whereas deductive syllogisms provide logical proof, enthymemes provide *rhetorical* proof (Miller & Bee, 1972, p.201); the evidence they provide for the speaker's conclusion is the argument itself. As such, enthymemes constitute both the method of persuasion, as well as the substance of persuasion. This clearly parallels appealing to the hearer, as described at the beginning of this chapter. Speakers aim to persuade the hearer, not just by appealing (i.e. pleading) to them, but *by virtue of* that appeal (i.e. pleasing). The use of enthymemes in practical argumentation can thus be understood in pragmatic terms as the performance of an appellative speech act.

What I have aimed to show here is that argumentation theory can, and should, complement pragmatic theory. I have shown that appeal, as an inherently argumentative phenomenon, can supplement SAT, as it can be considered a type of speech act. This has further implications for our current understanding of how meaning is generated. Since appellative acts can be seen as enthymemes, which are

[34] According to Politeness Theory, people are constantly concerned with maintaining face in conversation. Brown and Levinson (1987: 311) define 'positive face' as "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality'. As they argue, people generally want their personality, i.e. their desires, values, goals, etc. to be endorsed by others as well.

constructed by both speaker and hearer, this suggests that the hearer, and their stock of pre-existing beliefs, desires, intentions, etc., play a larger role in meaning in communication than what mainstream pragmatic theories have thus far suggested.

Searle (1969: 46) argues that meaning is derived by hearers from their recognition of the speaker's intentions to produce an illocutionary effect, that is, to produce understanding through the felicitous performance of an illocutionary act. On the one hand, this recognition can be achieved with conventional devices that indicate a certain illocutionary force, but on the other hand, this recognition can be achieved through an inferential process when such devices are lacking. Such inferences are called *pragmatic inferences* and are typically considered to be guided by Grice's Cooperative Principle (Oswald et al., 2020: 2). With such inferences, hearers 'calculate' what the speaker must have meant by considering what they know about the speaker, and about the communicative context in general. In argumentation, for instance, if a speaker says '*p* therefore *q*', the hearer must infer the proposition 'if *p* then *q*' to correctly interpret what the speaker meant, and therefore, this implicit proposition becomes part of the utterance meaning. Oswald et al. (2020) distinguish pragmatic inferences from *argumentative inferences*, as the former include inferences about the meaning of the speaker's argument, whereas the latter include inferences about the hearer's evaluation of the speaker's argument, that is, whether or not they consider their interpretation of the speaker's argument as a justification for the conclusion. These inferences concern the hearer's own values, beliefs, etc. towards the speaker's argument, and are typically considered as a product of the interpretation, i.e. a perlocutionary effect. As I have shown for enthymemes, however, inferences concerning the hearer's own psychological state can actually be *part of* the argument, and thus part of the meaning.[35] These are required to achieve an illocutionary effect, i.e. to understand the speaker's utterance. This suggests that illocutionary acts, or meaning in general, do not always involve only the speaker's intentions.

One may argue, however, that, since appellative acts only occur in argumentative discourse, this cannot say something about meaning in communication in general. While I have indeed talked about the context of practical argumentation, it is important to note that practical arguments can be found in virtually every kind of discourse. The interlocutors need not be situated in a full-fledged argumentative activity (e.g. debates, legal proceedings, etc.) in order to perform appellative acts. Practical argumentation may arise in the smallest instances in ordinary language,[36] e.g. when asking a friend what to wear, or recommending them to watch a new movie. Argumentation is very much a part of communication in general, and therefore, the processes through which hearers interpret speakers' arguments can contribute to our understanding of how meaning is derived in general.

[35] Note here that, although they are part of the interpretation, they simultaneously lead to an evaluation. This is why enthymemes are considered as rhetorical proof, as the hearer's evaluation simultaneously functions as the evidence for the speaker's standpoint.

[36] Ducrot (2009) even goes so far to claim that argumentation can be found in all aspects of language, as he famously claims that all utterances have an argumentative orientation.

This is especially important for phenomena such as dogwhistles, whose meaning cannot be accounted for by the speaker's intentions, as I have shown in previous chapters. As I have argued, instead of thinking of dogwhistles as expressions with hidden meanings that speakers want some hearers to recognize, they should be considered a kind of speech act, whereby speakers appeal to multiple audiences simultaneously, inviting them to contribute to the meaning of the utterance. In the following chapter, I illustrate how the theoretical framework of appellative acts sketched here can provide a satisfactory analysis of dogwhistles as a communicative phenomenon.

5. Towards a new speech-act theoretic approach to dogwhistles

The aim of this thesis is to propose a theoretically sound analysis of dogwhistles. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, previous accounts have raised various issues. Some accounts have conceptualized dogwhistles as a kind of expression which somehow conveys a hidden speaker-intended meaning, only accessible to a particular subset of the audience (i.e. through conventional or conversational implicature, see Stanley, 2015; Lo Guercio & Caso, 2022; Saul, 2018). My criticisms in chapter 2, however, have made clear that such approaches do not provide adequate answers to questions such as why alleged dogwhistle expressions are not always used as dogwhistles, and what makes it so that only some hearers are able to 'hear' the dogwhistle. I have therefore suggested that the focus should be shifted from the expressions used by speakers to the action they perform when uttering them. While some scholars (Saul, 2018; Mascitti, 2023) have already proposed accounts of dogwhistles in which they are defined as speech acts, I have pointed out in chapter 3 that these accounts still face serious issues. According to Saul's account of covert dogwhistles as perlocutionary acts, certain expressions trigger certain perlocutionary effects. I, however, oppose this, as this still suggests that there is a conventionalization of (perlocutionary) meaning, which again, fails to explain why speakers could use dogwhistle expressions without dogwhistling. Mascitti, in his analysis of overt dogwhistles, claims that speakers just have one intended meaning that is only accessible to a particular audience who shares enough common ground with the speaker. Any meanings derived by other audiences, Mascitti argues, are merely disguises, and not truly meant by the speaker. My issue with this approach is that it suggests speakers are only interested in achieving something with one particular audience, which does not seem to be the case when considering the larger communicative context in which speakers use dogwhistles.

The root of the issues in all these previous accounts is, in my view, that they have been more concerned with *how* dogwhistles work, taking for granted *why* people use them in the first place. This has led to the assumption that speakers use dogwhistles in order to target and influence only one specific subset of the audience, by secretly communicating a favorable meaning to them, while the general audience just derives a neutral meaning. However, as I have argued, dogwhistles are used in polylogical argumentative contexts, in which speakers typically have a rhetorical goal to gain the support of as many people as possible. From this perspective, it makes more sense that dogwhistles simultaneously target multiple audiences, in order to maximize persuasive success. As such, dogwhistles should be seen as a kind communicative act whereby speakers appeal to different audiences with one and the same move. Within the framework of appellative acts developed in the previous chapter, this can be explained as expressing multiple psychological states with one speech act, each corresponding to a different audience. As I have argued, appellative acts are interpreted by hearers as enthymematic arguments, which means that hearers reach an interpretation through inferences regarding their own beliefs, values, desires, etc. rather than the speaker's. In the case of dogwhistles, whereby the speaker appeals to multiple audiences, the different meanings of dogwhistles can be explained by the fact that these different audiences have different psychological states that they base their interpretation on. This interpretation of the speaker's

utterance then serves as an argument that supports the speaker's standpoint. And since hearers co-constructed the argument, it has great persuasive power, making dogwhistles so pernicious.

This argumentative quality of dogwhistles has been neglected in previous literature, as scholars have mostly focused on isolated utterances, rather than the larger discourse context.[37] If we look at frequently discussed dogwhistles, we can see that these are indeed used as (part of) an argument in a polylogical context of practical argumentation. For instance, Bush's Dred Scott-reference (see (4)) was used in a presidential debate, wherein he aimed to persuade the entire nation to vote for him. In this stretch of the debate, Bush defended his standpoint on what kind of Supreme Court should be elected, by arguing that one like in Dred Scott's case would be undesirable. It was up to the audience, however, to complete the argument by inferring why *they* would deem it undesirable (i.e. because of their stance on racism or abortion), and hence why they would support Bush's argument. Similarly, when Paul Ryan used the phrase *inner cities* (see (1)), he motivated his policy proposals regarding poverty in the U.S. in a 2014 radio interview (Caldwell, 2014). This situation too, is a polylogical argumentative context, as he was aiming to get support for his policies on a national scale,[38] thereby addressing various audiences. Furthermore, in light of the upcoming 2014 House elections (Ballotpedia, 2014), the radio interview was likely part of Ryan's campaign, trying to convince people reelect him. In the specific utterance, Ryan was justifying his plans to tackle poverty by arguing that unemployment is a cultural problem, especially in inner cities. Again, it was up to the audience themselves to infer why it was a cultural problem, i.e. because the residents of those areas are lazy, or, as Ryan himself later claimed, because American society as a whole has not done enough to prevent unemployment (Coppins, 2014).

The multiple meanings of dogwhistles are thus not the result of little-known semantic polysemy of certain expressions, or of the inability of certain audiences to derive certain implicatures due to a lack of sufficient common ground with the speaker, but rather a result of *argumentative ambiguity*. Argumentative ambiguity can be understood as the possibility of a premise to be plausibly inserted into multiple argumentation schemes, presenting multiple positions towards the argumentative issue at hand (Koniak & Cwalina, 2021). Due to the enthymematic nature of appellative acts, one utterance can express a premise to which different hearers may add different premises that reflect their own psychological states, resulting in different argument schemes, and thus different interpretations of the speaker's utterance. When intentionally producing an argumentatively ambiguous utterance, the speaker performs a *polylogical appellative act*.

In this chapter, I provide a speech-act theoretic account of dogwhistles as polylogical appellative acts. In 5.1, I consider the contextual parameters that dogwhistles require, followed in 5.2 by the requirements of the psychological states

[37] One exception to this statement is Kirk (2016), as he defines dogwhistles as *ideological enthymemes*. In his paper, however, Kirk focuses on ideological enthymemes in general, spending little attention to dogwhistles in particular.

[38] Ryan published his policy proposals shortly after the radio interview in a national report on poverty in the U.S. (Prokop, 2014).

that dogwhistles express. This then allows me to identify the propositional content requirements in 5.3. In 5.4., I will account for the semantic properties of dogwhistles. Taken jointly, these conditions allow me to formulate the felicity conditions of the speech act of dogwhistling in 5.5, thereby providing a complete overview of my account of dogwhistles as a speech act.

5.1 Dogwhistle contexts

Appellative acts, or enthymemes in general, may yield multiple interpretations in a variety of contexts, but not in all contexts will this be considered a dogwhistle. Since dogwhistles are typically considered manipulative and controversial in nature, I will consider in this section in what context polylogical appellative acts may become manipulative and therefore count as dogwhistles. This requires looking at the goals that the speaker and their audiences have within the communicative context. In this section, I will consider three discourse types (advertising, scientific enquiry, political argumentation)[39] in order to demarcate the type of context dogwhistles require.

While the notion of appellative acts is obviously new, I have argued that they function as enthymematic arguments. Enthymemes occur in all kinds of discourse in which multiple audiences are addressed. In the context of advertising, for instance, the use of enthymemes could certainly benefit the speaker (i.e. advertiser), whose goal is to get as many people as possible to buy the advertised product or service. According to Mata (2001: 4-5), "the nature of enthymemes allows for varying, though similar, interpretations based on the different life experiences of the individual understanding the enthymeme and realizing through an advertisement a meaningful connection between its elements". She argues that the use of enthymemes causes hearers to reach an interpretation of the ad based on their own individual values, beliefs, etc., which makes it more compelling to buy the advertised product or service. This gives the potential consumers the feeling that by buying the product, they are not only helping the advertiser achieve their goal, but they are actually helping themselves achieve a personal goal as well, which may differ for each hearer (Poggi, 2005). This can be illustrated with Nike's 2012 ad campaign featuring the tagline "Find your greatness" (see Tom Crimmins, 2012), which can be interpreted as an argument for purchasing Nike products (i.e. 'buy Nike products to find your greatness'). This can be considered a polylogical enthymeme as it can be completed with all kinds of premises, depending on the different ideas that different hearers may have about what 'greatness' is.[40] For instance, one person's greatness may be to become so good at soccer that they can play for the national team one day, while another's may be to achieve their weight goal. The ad thus appealed to various audiences in their own right, resulting in different interpretations of the argument.

---

[39] Scientific enquiry is first and foremost considered as theoretical argumentation, in which standpoints predicate something about the current state of affairs, and are therefore defended by objective, logically valid arguments (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1988). Nonetheless, scientific discourse also involves practical argumentation, as it involves practical judgments on how to go forward within the disciplinary field, i.e. in terms of conceptualizations, paradigms, methodologies, etc. (Craig, 1996)

[40] This is also clearly reflected in the ad campaign, as it included multiple ads featuring diverse groups of people, varying in age, ethnicity, gender, physical build, etc., engaged with a variety of sports and physical activities. See https://medium.com/@ychoi4857/the-beauty-of-nikes-find-your-greatness-campaign-79c99204e200 for a detailed breakdown of the ad campaign.

We would probably not, however, consider such enthymemes as dogwhistles, because the messages they promote are not necessarily controversial. This can be explained by the relationship between the goals of the different audiences. As I said, the advertiser has the goal to persuade as many people as possible to buy the advertised product or service. The hearers, on the other hand, have to consider whether or not buying this will help them in any way achieve a personal goal (Nan, 2008; Poggi, 2005). While different hearers may have different goals, they could essentially all achieve them; if one hearer achieves their goal by buying the product, this will likely not intervene with the goals of another hearer. This results in hearers not being put off upon realizing that the ad can be interpreted in different ways by others. In Nike's ad, for instance, the ambitious soccer player will likely not be deterred from buying Nike's products upon realizing that the ad also appealed to the viewer who wants to lose weight. In fact, the recipients of ads are typically aware of their argumentative ambiguity, since it the goal of advertising to persuade as many people as possible is common knowledge (Wojtaszek, 2016: 79). Moreover, this may even put the brand at an advantage in certain cases, as it could show that their products or services are applicable to a large amount of people, and thereby emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, which is often positively evaluated (Berg & Liljedal, 2023; Wilkie et al., 2023). This type of polylogical enthymeme thus constitutes a type of appellative act different from dogwhistles, which I will name *inclusive polylogical appeals*.

This suggests that dogwhistles require a context in which there exists a tension between the goals of the various audiences. A type of discourse that could fit this description is scientific theoretical discourse (see Metag & Schäfer, 2018; Star & Griesemer, 1989). Crick (2004) argues that in scientific inquiry, authors often address various audiences with each their own philosophical beliefs about science, natural phenomena, etc. Therefore, besides providing logical evidence to convince people, Crick argues, authors must also often appeal to their audiences' beliefs, values, etc. which they do by using enthymemes. As an example, Crick discusses Charles Darwin's use of enthymemes in *On the Origin of Species*. In the discussion of the evolution of the vertebrates' eye, Crick (2004: 31) observes that Darwin "does not explicitly account for the causes of change, but relies instead upon the ability of his audience to imagine some process, or some *force*, that brings about such progressive variations". According to Crick, this was especially persuasive because it allowed Darwin's arguments to be interpreted in ways that embraced audiences' own beliefs about what is responsible for the creation of species; "Christians can assume a divine creator, pagans can identify the guiding spirit inherent in nature, and non-believers can envision a random collision of particles in space" (p.32). Considering that in Darwin's time, beliefs about the creation and evolution of species were highly polarized, Darwin presented his work in such a way that it could still appeal to various audiences with alternative pre-existing beliefs.

In the context of scientific enquiry, the author's goal is producing an understanding in the public of some scientific phenomenon, ultimately having their theoretical insights accepted by the (scientific) community. The audience's goal is to gain a better understanding of a scientific phenomenon. To produce an understanding and get their theory accepted, it is often not sufficient for the speaker (i.e. author) to

only present facts; they must also relate those facts to the pre-existing beliefs, values, etc. of the audience in order to make them receptive to these new facts (Laudan, 1986; Cooper, 2014). However, different audiences each have different pre-existing beliefs, values, etc., resulting in a tension between these audiences, such that their goals may be incompatible with each other. Nonetheless, speakers can resolve this tension by using enthymemes to appeal to these different audiences in their own right, like Darwin did. Enthymemes can give voice to the diverse viewpoints entertained by each audience, yet still "satisfy the informational requirements of each of them" (Star & Griesemer, 1989: 393). In this way, each audience can still achieve their goal of reaching an understanding that is compatible with their pre-existing values. Even though audiences may reach different interpretations, there seems to be no manipulation going on here, like in dogwhistles. An explanation for this is that the use of enthymemes in this context is not aimed at actively hiding one interpretation that the speaker does not want others to know about. Instead, it seems that the speaker does not particularly favor one interpretation over another but leaves the possible interpretations indeterminate. Upon realizing that another audience interpreted the speaker's arguments differently, the audience may simply think that the other audience is wrong, without letting it affect their own understanding. So, although there is a tension between audiences in the context of scientific enquiry, it is resolvable. There is no manipulation involved here, which makes this kind of polylogical appellative act distinct from dogwhistles.

So what makes it so that polylogical appeals become manipulative when audiences become aware of their argumentative ambiguity, and thus count as dogwhistles? The answer to this question lies within the achievability of the goals of different hearers. If one hearer achieves their goal, but this prevents another hearer from achieving theirs, it becomes problematic when they find out that the speaker appealed to the goals of both hearers. The tension must thus be unsolvable, unlike in scientific discourse. This is characteristic of political discourse when speakers are faced with multiple ideologically diverse audiences (Zarefsky, 2019). In this sort of context, speakers typically have the goal of implementing their ideological standpoints into politics (i.e. by getting elected, or by passing a legislative policy), and therefore need to gain as much support as possible from various audiences. The audience, on the other hand, generally has the goal of having their ideological standpoints reflected in politics (Myers, 1999). They thus have to consider whether supporting the speaker will help them achieve that goal. In other words, they have to consider whether the speaker shares similar ideological standpoints. While the concept of ideology is highly complex, there is general consensus that ideologies are prescriptive and epistemic belief systems "about how society ought to be structured, […] and how people ought to behave" (Zmigrod, 2022: 1073). The ideological goals of one audience therefore also concern those of other audiences, since the implementation of a certain ideology into politics affects society at large.

When audiences have opposing ideological views, they may not always both be able to achieve their goals. For example, if a politician proposes an anti-abortion policy, this will enable pro-lifers to achieve their goal of seeing their ideology reflected in politics but for pro-choice advocates, this goal is no longer achievable. So there is a tension between the different audiences that speakers face in political

argumentation, a tension that cannot be truly resolved. According to Zarefsky (2019: 248) successful political arguments must appeal to the values and presumptions of competing audiences, but "undisguised appeals to ideology often will not succeed in gaining the adherence of a public-sphere audience that transcends ideological boundaries". Speakers may therefore resort to dogwhistling, in a manipulative attempt to convince different audiences that the speaker endorses each of their ideological goals, since they derive different meanings of the speaker's utterance based on their own ideology. Because of this, it becomes controversial when hearers realize that the speaker also appealed to an audience with a different ideology that is incompatible with their own. For example, when Bush referenced Dred Scott (see 1.1), many people were upset when they realized that criticizing the Supreme Court's decision in that case could also be motivated from an anti-abortion perspective next to an anti-racism perspective.

So dogwhistles are polylogical appellative acts which occur in contexts of political argumentation, where there is an unsolvable tension between multiple ideologically diverse audiences. It is important to note that the speaker in such contexts should be someone who has some power to exert influence over the faith of others.[41] Power to exert influence does not necessarily mean the kind of direct political power that a politician might have. People can also have indirect influence on the course of politics, e.g. by influencing the political views of a large amount of people. The speaker may therefore be, for instance, a politician or a highly influential public figure who can reach a large number of potential voters. If the speaker has no such power, they cannot help hearers to achieve their ideological goals in the first place. Situations in which neither the speaker nor the hearers could gain something, would not merit the use of dogwhistles. Political argumentation thus usually refers to large-scale communicative activities that occur in the public sphere (Zarefsky, 2008). This need not necessarily be prototypical political argumentative discourses such as election speeches or debates, but can also include less formal discourses such as interviews, social media posts, etc.

This demarcation of the contextual requirements for dogwhistles will be especially important for the formulation of their felicity conditions in 5.5. Furthermore, this communicative context also narrows down the psychological states that dogwhistles may express, as well as their propositional and semantic content, which I consider in the following sections.

5.2 Expressing psychological states and attributing speaker's intentions

While I have argued that appellative acts in general may express any psychological state belonging to the hearer (see 4.2), this needs to be narrowed down for dogwhistles. Since dogwhistles occur in political argumentation, wherein speakers

[41] Fredal (2020) argues that the use of enthymemes in general are most beneficial in such contexts. He observes that enthymemes are more effective, and therefore more common, in contexts that "involve a consequential situation that is misleading, ambiguous, or confusing – that is, one whose proper interpretation matters and is open to question. Future decisions or actions and outcomes will depend on how the situation is understood. (…) Enthymizing is especially valuable in adversarial narratives because these accounts' interpretations are contested, inherently ambiguous, and highly consequential." (p.158)

aim to convince hearers of their ideological standpoints, they do so by producing an understanding in the hearer that supports the hearer's own ideology. This means that dogwhistles do not just express any psychological state, but rather psychological states that are determined by ideology. Since ideologies are belief systems based on a person's ideal view of society, ideologically-determined psychological states (henceforth ideological states) are typically beliefs, attitudes, desires, values, etc. regarding societal issues and practices, such as war, abortion, euthanasia, immigration, etc. (van Dijk, 2013: 179). A person with a feminist ideology, for instance, has a psychological state of desire for men and women to have equal rights and opportunities, and a person with a white-supremacist ideology has a psychological state of resentment towards people of color.

Dogwhistles appeal to multiple ideologically diverse audiences simultaneously. This does not mean, however, that speakers can only use dogwhistles to appeal to multiple audiences in political argumentation. As Zarefsky (2008: 323) argues, even in a highly polarized society, there is still overlap in the ideologies of the different audiences that speakers face. Speakers may appeal to these different audiences by looking for a common denominator among them, that is, an ideological state which all audiences share. This can be illustrated with an excerpt from a 2004 U.S. presidential debate, in which Bush defends his military interventions in foreign states to free them from terrorist regimes:

(26) We will fight the terrorists around the world so we do not have to face them here at home. (…) By being steadfast and resolute and strong, by keeping our word, by supporting our troops, we can achieve the peace we all want
(CPD, 2004)

Within the context of a presidential debate, Bush obviously addressed a wide range of audiences with different ideologies. Nonetheless, it can be presumed that, despite the crucial ideological tension between various audiences, they all share a common desire for peace. So in order to appeal to all audiences, Bush expressed this commonly shared psychological state, which creates a sense of unity among the audiences. Although this does constitute an appellative act targeted at multiple audiences simultaneously, it would hardly be considered a dogwhistle, as there seems to be no manipulation involved. This is because it only expresses one psychological state; it would not be problematic for one audience to become aware that this also appeals to another audience. I will name this type of polylogical appellative act a *universal polylogical appeal*. Dogwhistles, on the other hand, appeal to multiple audiences *separately*, by expressing distinct ideological states. They rely on their enthymematic nature to produce an understanding in the various hearers that confirms their own ideology, without subjecting all hearers to a shared ideology or identity. While (26) unites, dogwhistles divide.

Dogwhistles thus express multiple ideological states, making them an indirect polylogical appellative act. This can be illustrated with Bush's Dred Scott-reference, which can be considered a dogwhistle that expresses two ideological states: 1) the anti-racist belief that every human being should deserve the same rights, and 2) the

anti-abortion belief that fetuses are human beings, and should therefore also get the same rights. By dogwhistling, the speaker thus expresses two different ideological states with one utterance. Importantly, although the different states are presumed by the speaker to be entertained by different audiences, they are not incompatible with each other. Being against abortion does not imply being a racist, and being against racism does not imply supporting abortion. Moreover, it would be practically impossible to express two contradicting psychological states with one utterance, for this would be infelicitous.[42] While the expressed states are not incompatible with one another, however, the speaker likely expects that a substantive amount of hearers from one audience may take offense at the ideological state entertained by the other audience. The speaker thus wants to prevent the audience from realizing that the utterance also expressed another ideological state. This is why dogwhistles are manipulative.

Another point to take into consideration regarding the audiences' ideological states expressed by dogwhistles, is whether the speaker also has these states. Recall that appellative acts function as enthymematic arguments, whereby the speaker produces an understanding in the hearer based on the hearer's own supplied premises which reflect their own psychological states. From my discussion of appellative acts in the previous chapter, it is clear that the speaker need not necessarily share the psychological state that they attribute to the hearer. In the vegan-example, see (17), where the speaker expresses the hearer's affection for animals to argue that they should go vegan, the speaker does not necessarily need to share this affection in order to convince the hearer. The speaker themselves may not like animals at all, but nonetheless considers having affection for animals as justifiable grounds for the proposed action. As long as the expressed psychological state is one that the hearer indeed has and constitutes an acceptable reason to follow up on the standpoint, it does not matter whether the speaker shares this state. This is also true for the inclusive polylogical appeals, like the one in the Nike ad (see 5.1).

For dogwhistles, however, this is different, due to the goals of political argumentation. Since hearers in political argumentation need to consider whether the speaker can help them achieve their ideological goals, the hearer needs to believe that the speaker shares the same ideological state expressed in the appeal in order to be persuaded. There is thus not only the presumption of appeal in political argumentation, but also the presumption that the appeal is mutual between the hearer and speaker. As long as this presumption is in place, the dogwhistle can become felicitous. This presumption can be defeated, however, by prior knowledge of the speaker's ideology. Consider for instance, if the Dred Scott-reference in (2) had been uttered by a known pro-choice activist. The anti-abortion audience would then likely not believe that this speaker's own motivations for voicing criticism of the Supreme

[42] It would not be felicitous to express both racist and non-racist beliefs with one utterance without being contradictory. For instance, saying "all [racial slur] deserve the same rights as us whites" would be contradictory for both audiences. A clear racist would not want people from other races to be considered equal to them, and a non-racist would not use a racial slur, as this dehumanizes the people that are referred to by it (Jeshion, 2013). Utterances like these may occur only in ironic situations, such as stand-up comedy, but then the appeal would be insincere. Speakers would hardly use such utterances in a legitimate attempt to persuade both audiences, as they would be unsuccessful.

Court's decision had anything to do with opposing abortion. Even though this audience could interpret it in that way, the defeated presumption of mutual appeal prevents them from actually attributing that ideological state to the speaker. While hearers in this audience may still be appealed to by the underlying anti-racism state, the utterance no longer functions as a dogwhistle, since the speaker did not intend to express multiple ideological states. As long as there are no prior indications that the speaker does not have the ideological state that the hearer believes is expressed by the utterance, the hearer will likely presume that the speaker does have the state they derived, causing the dogwhistle to become felicitous. The speaker's sincerity is thus presupposed.

Note that the speaker's intention to appeal to the hearer is presumed and therefore need not be actively recognized; the hearer only needs to recognize that the utterance counts as an appellative act (see 4.2), thereby presupposing that the speaker intends to appeal to them. In the case of dogwhistles, this applies for each individual hearer. However, this does not mean that the speaker's intention is not necessary to perform the act of dogwhistling. If the speaker does not intend to produce an utterance which expresses two different ideological states, they have not performed the act of dogwhistling. Still, they may unintentionally trigger the same perlocutionary consequences as a felicitous dogwhistle would. Of course, it is hard to determine whether the speaker intentionally dogwhistled. Can speakers always know beforehand how their arguments will be interpreted? In large-scale political argumentation, the answer is likely no, which lends them plausible deniability.

This does not mean, however, that dogwhistlers can be let off the hook by simply claiming they did not intend to communicate certain meanings. Assuming the audience is rational, they will only yield interpretations of the speaker's arguments that are plausible, considering their knowledge of the speaker, as well as other relevant (socio-)contextual factors.[43] Paglieri and Woods (2011) argue that, although enthymemes are not necessarily interpreted through attributing intentions to the speaker (see 4.5), hearers still consider whether their interpretation could be plausibly attributed to the speaker's utterance. In the case of Bush's Dred Scott-reference, for instance, the anti-abortion interpretation can be plausibly attributed to Bush's utterance knowing that he is a devout Christian who had frequently voiced his opposition to abortion, even within the same debate prior to this reference (see CPD, 2004), the anti-abortion interpretation becomes highly plausible.

From the speaker's perspective, although they may not foresee all the ideological interpretations their utterance could yield, it is their responsibility to "curb the undesired argumentative potential" of their utterances (Mohammed, 2019: 820). In political argumentation in the public sphere, speakers must take into consideration that there are hearers among the audience with different ideologies that they

[43] This also ties in with Hansen and Terkourafi's (2023) conception of Hearer's Meaning as an alternative to speaker's meaning. They argue that Hearer's Meaning is derived from six other sources besides their assumptions (if any) regarding the speaker's intentions. Nonetheless, they emphasize that their model does not warrant that "anything goes" (p.113), as some of the sources still depend on strong regularities of language use which limits the possible interpretations hearers can derive. Furthermore, the number of plausible interpretations is also constrained by hearers' assumptions about the speaker's identity and their social relationship.

themselves may not support. While they may still want or need the support of those hearers, if they do not want to be attributed their ideological views, they should avoid saying things that could be interpreted as an appeal to these ideological views. If they fail to do so and the presumption of mutual appeal is in place, hearers can plausibly attribute their own ideological state to the speaker and assume that the speaker intended this. Although we can never be entirely sure about the speaker's intentions, we should be able to assume the speaker's awareness of the argumentative potential of their utterances, especially in the public sphere of socio-political argumentation (Mohammed, 2019). Dogwhistling thus not only lends the speaker plausible deniability, but also lends the audience plausible attribution.

5.3 Propositional content

As I have argued, dogwhistles are polylogical appellative acts which express multiple ideologically-determined psychological states. In order for an utterance to count as a dogwhistle, it should express a certain ideologically-colored propositional content which can reflect these different states. As I have already mentioned earlier, ideological states predicate one's views on social issues, practices, figures, etc. (e.g. war, abortion, immigration). Ideological propositions must therefore also predicate such topics. It is not sufficient, however, to just mention a social phenomenon in the propositional content of the utterance, for otherwise people would be dogwhistling all the time, but instead, the proposition must express an ideologically-colored representation of said phenomenon. Seliger (2019: 1) claims that "it is generally agreed that ideologies contain unverified and unverifiable propositions". Ideological propositions thus do not just factually describe some state of affairs, but rather express an evaluative representation of it (van Dijk, 2011: 388). Consider for instance the propositions 'Women are paid less then men' versus 'Women should be paid less then men'. While the first proposition may trigger ideological evaluations of the content (i.e. whether we agree with it or not), the latter proposition actually expresses an ideological state, i.e. the belief that men and women are not equal. This can be recognized by the deontic modal *should*, which expresses a subjective, prescriptive stance towards the propositional content (Badran, 2002).

For dogwhistles, the expressed proposition should be able to express multiple ideological states, which means that the ideological representation should be able to be supported by at least two different ideologies. This is clear in Bush's reference of Dred Scott (see (4)). Roughly reconstructed, Bush communicated the proposition 'The Supreme Court's decision in Dred Scott's case was unacceptable'. He did not just mention the Court's decision in this case, but he criticized it, i.e. he gave a negative representation of it, whereby Bush expressed a certain ideological view on what is (un)desirable for society. This proposition, however, does not exclusively exist in one particular ideology; different ideologies may have different underlying motivations for criticizing the Supreme Court's decision in Dred Scott's case. Within the context of political argumentation, the audience will seek to interpret the utterance from their own ideology, which results Bush's propositional representation of Dred Scott's case being interpreted as a critique of racism by some, as well as a critique of abortion by others.

The propositional requirement of dogwhistles is thus that the proposition must predicate an ideological representation of a social topic. This requirement truly explains why the use of certain expressions constitutes a dogwhistle in some cases, but not in others. Previous scholars have mostly argued that the use of particular expressions allows speakers to produce certain meanings that not all audiences can 'hear'. For instance, the term *inner cities* have been typically considered a dogwhistle which somehow conveys racist beliefs (see chapter 2). However, in my view, the interpretative flexibility of dogwhistles is not enabled by the use of certain expressions, but rather of the ideological representation of the referents of such expressions. To illustrate this, compare Paul Ryan's use of *inner cities* in (1), repeated here as (27), with another similar situation in which this phrase was used, namely by Al Gore in a 1996 vice-presidential debate, as shown in (28):

(27) We have got this tailspin of culture, in our *inner cities* in particular, of men not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working or learning the value and the culture of hard work. So there's a cultural problem that has to be dealt with. Everyone has got to get involved.

(28) *Context: Gore defends his standpoint that federal government Affirmative Action programs should be continued*.[44]
We ought to be very proud in our country, as most Americans are, that we've made tremendous progress, but we ought to recognize that we have more work to do. Now, the first thing that we are trying to do is to create a million new jobs in the *inner cities* of this country, with tax credits for employers who hire people who are now unemployed.

Although both Ryan's and Gore's utterances predicate something about problems with employment in inner cities, only Ryan's use in (27) can be considered a dogwhistle. This is because he gave an evaluative representation of unemployment in inner cities (i.e. that it is a cultural problem) whereas Gore only mentioned his plans to improve inner city employment, without evaluating it in any way. Of course, hearers may consult their own ideological values to consider whether or not they agree with Gore, but they do not need to take their own ideology into consideration in order to reach an interpretation of his utterance. Ryan's utterance, on the other hand, expresses an ideological proposition, which can express various ideological states: 1) the racist belief that African Americans, as the major population in inner cities, are lazy, or 2) as Ryan himself later claimed, the belief that American society as a whole has not done enough to overcome unemployment (Coppins, 2014). This thus results in different interpretations of the utterance. Without this evaluative requirement on the propositional content of the utterance, expressions cannot function as dogwhistles.

5.4 Semantic content

As I have already argued in chapter 2, the expressions used by speakers are not the most important aspect of dogwhistles; it is rather the performance of an act that best explains what dogwhistles are. The propositional representation of a certain term, or

[44] Affirmative action programs are "laws, policies, guidelines, and government-mandated and government-sanctioned administrative practices, including those of private institutions, intended to end and correct the effects of a specific form of discrimination" (Feinberg, 2009: 272)

rather its referent, allows utterances to function as dogwhistles, expressing various ideological states. In this section, I identify some more semantic constraints on dogwhistles. Furthermore, using the proposed speech-act theoretic approach, I am able to explain why certain dogwhistle expressions have caused previous scholars, as well as laypeople, to identify dogwhistles with these expressions. Ultimately, I argue against such semantic-oriented approaches and motivate why my speech-act theoretic approach offers a better tool to analyze and identify dogwhistles.

As I have mentioned before, one thing that all scholars have agreed on so far is that dogwhistles hide behind neutral language, causing them to go unnoticed by some audiences. From my speech-act theoretic approach, the use of neutral expressions can be explained by the fact that dogwhistles express multiple ideological states. Speakers cannot dogwhistle by using expressions that are conventionally associated with one particular ideology. When a certain ideological view has become conventionalized in the expression, or when the expression originated in one particular ideology, e.g. racial slurs or terms like 'pro-choice' or 'pro-life', etc., it becomes obvious to hearers that the speaker explicitly appeals to audiences with that ideology when using such expressions. Explicit appeals to a certain ideology may prevent hearers with different ideologies from recognizing the speaker's utterance as an appeal to them as well. This explains why the phrase *big pharma*, as discussed in 2.2., cannot be eligible as a dogwhistle, since the anti-vaxx perspective cannot be separated from the expression; it is conventionalized. Using such phrases is different from dogwhistling, as this does not produce different understandings in different hearers based on their own ideology. Instead, conventionalized expressions already make it clear from what ideology the appeal should be interpreted. In the case of *big pharma*, this is an anti-vaxx ideology. While hearers who support vaccination may not always be put off altogether by the speaker's utterance, they are not appealed to either.

Zarefsky (2019) argues that, instead of using explicit appeals to one particular audience, speakers in political argumentation often use certain symbols or expressions that can appeal to all audiences. He calls these *condensation symbols*, which are verbal or visual symbols towards which people will react similarly, "although they may do so for different reasons" (Zarefsky, 2008: 324). In other words, the meaning of these symbols is shaped by hearers' own ideologies. Zarefsky exemplifies this with the symbol of a national flag, which can symbolize many different ideological values (e.g. patriotism, nostalgia, pride, citizenship, etc.), and thus yield many different interpretations. The use of such symbols is most obvious in inclusive polylogical appeals, like the word *greatness* in the Nike ad (see 5.1). The phrase 'find your greatness' can be interpreted in various ways, based on one's own ideas about what constitutes 'greatness'. Such condensation symbols can be considered *semantically indeterminate*, which is "an irreducible multiplicity of meanings" (Ceccarelli, 1998: 398). Semantic indeterminacy is caused by the lack of an objective truth-value, i.e. an objective interpretation that is the same for all language users (Montminy, 2011). Polylogical appeals may therefore purposefully exploit semantically indeterminate language.

Dogwhistling, however, is not a matter of 'anything goes', as speakers specifically seek to appeal to certain audiences by expressing certain ideological states. In fact, in the context of political argumentation, it is often considered undesirable for speakers to be ideologically indeterminate and thereby allow any ideological state to be attributed to their utterances, as this blurs the speaker's own ideological values, which creates uncertainty.[45] Sayeed et al. (2024: 11) argue that "dogwhistles provide the potential to gain political support by exploiting the inherent ambiguity in human language, yet avoiding a sense of uncertainty". Dogwhistles thus present multiple, but not unlimited, meanings. Speakers can therefore not use semantically indeterminate expressions when dogwhistling unless they narrow down the possible interpretations through the ideological representation expressed in the propositional content of the utterance.

Dogwhistles thus hardly have any semantic constraints, which means that speakers can dogwhistle using all kinds of expressions. Because of this, as already argued in 2.4, I believe that the use of certain expressions is not the most important aspect of dogwhistles. Rather, following Khoo (2017), I suspect that semantically similar phrases could be equally effective as dogwhistles. In the case of Ryan's utterance in (1), for example, why should only *inner cities* enable a racist interpretation and not *city centers*? The speech-act theoretic account offered here does not attribute any significance to the semantic choices of speakers besides the few constraints described above, as the different interpretations of dogwhistles are a result of the argumentative ambiguity of the ideological representations expressed in the propositional content of the utterance. However, the expressions used in frequently discussed dogwhistles (e.g. *inner cities, welfare, Dred Scott*) cannot be ignored altogether. In the remainder of this section, I explain why these expressions have been picked out as dogwhistles, and ultimately why we cannot solely rely on speakers using such expressions in order to identify dogwhistles.

Previous scholars have mostly conceptualized dogwhistles as vehicles for hidden meanings, arguing that by using certain expressions, speakers are able to express some kind of additional meaning (i.e. conventional, social, or conversational) due to frequent association between the expression and certain contexts only the 'in-group' is aware of. I have argued, however, that dogwhistles cannot be adequately conceptualized as such, but rather as communicative acts. Saul (2018) already proposed this, but she focused on the perlocutionary act of priming certain reactions by bringing pre-existing attitudes to salience, without explaining why certain expressions enable this (see 3.3). Treating dogwhistles as illocutionary acts, as proposed here, can help explain this. While Saul does not clarify why certain expressions trigger certain perlocutionary effects, her account suggests that this might be a result of *semantic prosody*. Semantic prosody refers to the "consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates" (Louw, 1993: 157). If a word or phrase is often used in combination with negative expressions, it will acquire a negative connotation, even when used outside of negative contexts. Hauser and Schwarz (2023) found that semantically prosodic expressions cause evaluative

[45] Medvic (2013) argues that, although citizens want to see their own values reflected in politicians, this is generally considered undesirable when they appear unprincipled in their own ideological values.

priming effects, that is, evaluative inferences towards the meaning of the word or utterance, which, in turn, can bring about further perlocutionary effects. Considering this, we can explain that the phrase *inner cities* may have acquired racist connotations due to frequent use in racist contexts, causing pre-existing racist attitudes to be brought to salience and thereby priming racist reactions. This could adequately explain Saul's account of covert dogwhistles as perlocutionary effects which only affect the audience that holds pre-existing beliefs congruent with the prosodic connotations. However, even with the notion of semantic prosody, her account fails to explain why expressions only sometimes trigger these effects, and are thus only sometimes used as dogwhistles, but not always. This is why we need the level of the illocution.

Semantic prosody triggers additional inferences that serve to evaluate the meaning of the utterance, i.e. inferences about one's own beliefs, desires, etc., and may occur whenever semantically prosodic expressions are used. However, not every time a prosodic expression is used, does it function as (part of) a dogwhistle. The term *inner cities*, for instance, can also be used in a purely descriptive sense, even within the context of political argumentation, as Gore's utterance in (28) illustrated. This is because Gore's utterance did not express a negative ideological representation of inner cities, unlike Ryan's utterance in (1). Even though the prosody may still trigger those evaluative inferences, they do not become part of the meaning in Gore's utterance. As explained in 4.5, evaluative inferences can, however, become part of the hearer's interpretation of the speaker's utterance when it makes up an enthymematic argument in the context of practical argumentation. In those contexts, there is a presumption of appeal, which means that the hearer will expect that the meaning of the speaker's utterance reflects a psychological state of the hearer themselves. When this presumption is in place, the hearer's evaluative inferences actually become part of their interpretation, and no longer merely function as an evaluation of the utterance's meaning. The evaluative inferences triggered by the semantic prosody of certain terms therefore only become part of the meaning when hearers with congruent beliefs recognize the speaker's intention to appeal to them on the basis of these beliefs. This was not true of Gore's use of *inner cities* in (28), as he did not express any ideological representation of inner cities, and certainly not one that is compatible with racist beliefs. The evaluative inferences triggered by the prosody only serve to evaluate Gore's utterance, i.e. to consider whether one agrees with Gore's plans to improve inner city employment. If the hearer indeed has the racist beliefs connoted with the expression, they will likely oppose Gore's plans.

Importantly, however, I do not believe that dogwhistling requires expressions with such prosodic features: their use may simply make it easier for hearers to recognize the utterance as an appeal without much cognitive effort. Had Ryan used a term without a racist semantic prosody, such as *city centers*, I believe that so-inclined hearers could still interpret it the same way; the prosodic term could simply get them there faster without much conscious inferencing. This is especially useful when speakers do not want the hearer to become aware that they are appealed to by a racist belief, as they would otherwise oppose the speaker's message, as Saul argues for covert dogwhistles.

Additionally, since the semantic prosody of expressions may also be known to hearers without congruent beliefs, I do not that dogwhistling is dependent on the use of such expressions. Hearers can, for instance, know that the term *inner cities* is often used in racist contexts without being racists themselves. When such hearers become aware of the speaker's exploiting the semantic prosody for appellative purposes, they may not feel appealed to anymore by the speaker, causing the dogwhistle to become infelicitous. If the semantic prosody becomes so widespread that the majority of hearers without such beliefs are aware of it, the expression will no longer be effective for dogwhistling. This may eventually lead to the dogwhistle meaning becoming conventionalized in the expression. Semantic prosody can thus be considered a pre-conventionalization stage. Again, however, I do not believe that speakers can only dogwhistle by using semantically prosodic expressions. Rather, such expressions simply make the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention to appeal to them easier. Semantic prosody thus only helps account for the significance of the expressions commonly identified as dogwhistles, but it does not define what dogwhistles are. It merely serves as a retrospective diagnostic to identify possible instances of dogwhistling.

5.5 Felicity conditions of dogwhistles

Having identified all the relevant aspects of dogwhistles as a polylogical appellative speech act, I can formulate the felicity conditions of this act. Consider again the felicity conditions of appellative acts in general that I have formulated in 4.5:

Felicity conditions	Specifications
Propositional content	Any proposition *p*
Preparatory	a. S wants H to follow up on a recommended course of action *A* b. S believes *p* constitutes a relevant reason *R* for doing *A* c. S believes *R* reflects H's psychological state *PS* d. H expects (a) and (b)
Sincerity	H has the *PS* intended by S
Essential	Counts as an appellative act: a. S's utterance constitutes an expression of H's *PS* b. S's utterance constitutes a reason for doing *A*

Table 2: The felicity conditions for the class of appellative speech acts

Starting with the propositional content, this condition for dogwhistles should state that the proposition expresses an ideological representation of a social phenomenon. As reflected in the preparatory conditions, this representation counts as (part of) a reason for accepting the speaker's standpoint, that is, to follow up on the action the speaker wishes the hearer to take (e.g. 'vote for me', 'accept this policy', etc.). For dogwhistles, the preparatory condition in (c) must be adapted to state that the speaker believes the ideological representation expressed in the propositional content to reflect multiple ideological states belonging to different hearers (e.g. both an anti-abortion and an anti-racism state). An additional preparatory condition for dogwhistles is that the utterance takes place in the context of political argumentation, that is, a polylogical context wherein the speaker addresses multiple hearers who espouse different ideologies. Furthermore, as argued in 5.2, in such contexts there is not just a

presumption of appeal, but a presumption of mutual appeal. The condition in (d) must therefore specify that the hearer expects that the speaker not only expresses the hearer's ideological state, but also that the speaker entertains this state themselves. Finally, due to the ideological tension between audiences in political argumentation, see 5.1, the speaker does not want hearers to realize that their utterance expresses different ideological states. Another preparatory condition should thus be that the speaker is aware of this tension, and believes, or intends, that it is not obvious to hearers that the ideological representation expressed in the propositional content reflects other ideological states that hearers do not entertain. This is the speaker's manipulative intention that characterizes dogwhistles.

Crucially, the plurality of appeals is only intended by the speaker, while hearers need only recognize the speaker's appeal *to them*. This is because of the presumptions of practical argumentation, wherein hearers expect the speaker to appeal to them in order to persuade them. Because of this presumption, hearers need not spend much effort interpreting the possible meaning(s) of the speaker's utterance, with the result that dogwhistles can become felicitous by default once the hearer recognizes the speaker's appeal to them. This makes dogwhistles a kind of backdoor speech act (Langton, 2018; see 3.2).[46] This recognition, whether passive or active, requires hearers to have one of the ideological states the speaker intended to express. This defines the sincerity condition. Finally, the essential conditions only state that the speaker's utterance counts as an appeal to the hearer, which is satisfied as long as the speaker does not say or implicate anything that clearly contradicts the hearer's ideological views. Because of this, dogwhistles typically involve neutral language, as argued in 5.5.

Taken all together, I propose the felicity conditions formulated below in Table 3. Note that these felicity conditions apply to both overt and covert dogwhistles, as in both cases, the dogwhistle expresses a 'controversial' ideological state of one of the audiences being appealed to. Only in the case of covert dogwhistles, this audience does not consciously recognize that they are appealed to by this particular ideological state, even though they have this state. This is what Saul argues for *inner cities*, as some members of the audience may subconsciously hold racist beliefs, but do not want to realize that they are being appealed to on the merits of these beliefs.

Felicity conditions	**Specifications**
Propositional content	An ideological representation of a social phenomenon
Preparatory	a. S addresses multiple H's with different ideologies (political argumentation) b. S wants all H's to follow up on a recommended course of action *A* (practical argumentation)

[46] As aforementioned in footnote 14, while Langton focusses in her paper on backdoor speech acts that function by 'sneakily' adding presuppositions to the common ground, she also acknowledges the possibility of backdoor speech acts being achieved by other mechanisms (Langton, 2018: 146, note 13). Although dogwhistles do not add information to the common ground as presuppositions, they still appear to be backdoor, as they implicitly communicate (harmful) things without making it obvious to (all) hearers. The mechanism through which this happens is invoking pre-existing psychological states in the hearer, resulting in active uptake not being necessary and thereby allowing other interpretations to pass without notice.

	c. S believes *p* constitutes a relevant reason *R* for doing *A* (argumentative function) d. S believes *R* reflects multiple ideological states *iS* of different hearers (iS_1 for H_1, iS_2 for H_2 etc.) (interpretative flexibility) e. H expects *R* to reflect their *iS* and that S also has this *iS* f. (presumption of mutual appeal) g. S is aware that if some H's become aware of (d), this may discourage them from doing *A* (audience tension) h. S therefore believes *p* does not make (d) and (g) obvious to H (manipulation)
Sincerity	H_1 has iS_1, H_2 has iS_2, etc.
Essential	a. S's utterance constitutes an expression of H's *iS* b. S's utterance constitutes a reason for doing *A*

Table 3: The felicity conditions of the speech act of dogwhistling

Summing up, I have offered a speech-act theoretic account of dogwhistles in this chapter, conceptualizing them as polylogical appellative acts with the illocutionary force of simultaneously appealing to ideologically diverse audiences in their own right. Through the expression of multiple ideological states belonging to each of these audiences, speakers produce different illocutionary effects, resulting in different interpretations of their utterance. Instead of centralizing the expressions used by speakers, I have offered a broader analysis of dogwhistles as a speech act, taking into account also the larger communicative context, the expression of psychological states, and the propositional content. This has resulted in the felicity conditions formulated above. The novel approach to dogwhistles proposed in this thesis helps us better understand the dynamics of dogwhistles, and can make it easier to identify them.

As many scholars have anticipated, dogwhistling may occur more frequently than we think, hiding in plain sight behind perfectly neutral language. I have therefore argued against an approach to dogwhistles that focusses exclusively on the expressions used by speakers, like those taken by previous scholars. As I have shown in this chapter, the only real condition on the semantic content of dogwhistles is that they cannot involve expressions in which a certain ideological state is conventionalized. Besides this, speakers can, in theory, dogwhistle by using any kind of language. We therefore need something else other than the semantic content to go on in order to define and justifiably identify dogwhistles. The speech-act theoretic account I have proposed here offers this tool. While we will always be limited in not knowing for sure how speakers intend something, or how the audience may interpret it, as this requires the skill of mindreading which humans are not equipped with (yet), knowledge of the aforementioned felicity conditions of dogwhistles can help make an educated guess. The insights offered here will hopefully contribute to efforts combatting the pernicious power of dogwhistles.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Research questions

In this thesis, I have presented a new account of dogwhistles as a linguistic phenomenon. My main research questions were the following:

1. **How can dogwhistles be best conceptualized as a linguistic phenomenon?**
2. **How do dogwhistles convey meaning?**

In regard to the first question, I have argued in chapter 2 that dogwhistles cannot be adequately conceptualized as vehicles for hidden meanings, despite what previous scholars have mostly done. I have instead advocated for a speech-act theoretic approach that focuses on the action performed by speakers, and their motivations behind this. By looking more closely at the broader communicative context of dogwhistles, which has been neglected so far, it has become clear why speakers resort to dogwhistling. Whereas previous accounts rest upon the assumption that speakers use dogwhistles in order to secretly send hidden messages to a controversial audience without alienating the general audience, I have argued that, due to the context of political argumentation, speakers actually appear to dogwhistle in order gain as much support as possible from all audiences. Considering this, I have argued that, by dogwhistling, speakers appeal to multiple audiences simultaneously. Outlining a new class of appellative speech acts in chapter 4, I have argued that dogwhistles are best conceptualized as a polylogical appellative act with the illocutionary force of simultaneously appealing to multiple ideologically diverse audiences in their own right.

With respect to the second research question, I have argued in chapter 4 that appellative acts convey meaning through their expression of the hearer's psychological state, rather than the speaker's. Like enthymematic arguments, appellative acts invite the audience to co-contribute to the meaning of the speaker's utterance. Having conceptualized dogwhistles as a polylogical appellative act, they appear to express a kind of chameleonic meaning designed to change per addressee (or per audience), depending on their own pre-existing ideology. By expressing multiple ideologically-determined psychological states belonging to different audiences, speakers produce different illocutionary effects in each audience, resulting in different meanings being attributed to the speaker's utterance. Importantly, to convey such meanings, certain conditions must be met. The speaker's utterance must be part of a practical argument, situated in a context of political argumentation. Furthermore, the propositional content must express an ideological representation of a certain social phenomenon, which can be supported by multiple ideologies, but for different reasons. When these conditions are in place, speakers can carefully design their utterances such that they will yield different interpretations.

As this account has made clear, the meaning of dogwhistles does not rely solely on the speaker's intentions, which has been central in mainstream pragmatic theories of meaning in communication so far. Instead, I have argued that the hearer's own pre-existing beliefs, desires, values, etc. are just as important to the meaning of

dogwhistles. This situates my account of dogwhistles among the growing trend within the field of pragmatics of taking into consideration the role of the hearer when accounting for meaning (Hansen & Terkourafi, 2023). This more dynamic conception of meaning helps us better explain how complex communicative phenomena such as dogwhistles work, and how we can hold speakers accountable for spreading controversial beliefs through the use of such phenomena. So far, most scholars have stressed that dogwhistles are especially tricky due to them being plausibly deniable. Speakers appear to get away with dogwhistling by claiming that they did not intend to communicate anything controversial. When approaching meaning from a strict speaker-intention perspective, they can indeed not be held accountable for allegedly dogwhistling, as others cannot prove what the speaker's intentions are. However, in actual communication, different hearers frequently interpret things in different ways. Obviously, this is not always something speakers can control, but with the specific conditions I have laid out in the previous chapter, it becomes clear that designing dogwhistles takes a certain amount of consideration. When all conditions appear to be met, and the speaker did nothing to prevent hearers from reaching controversial interpretations, we can plausibly attribute these interpretations back to the speaker as their intended meaning. Even though dogwhistles hide behind neutral language, speakers cannot always fall back on plausible deniability when plausible attribution is more likely. Especially in the public context of political argumentation, speakers must be aware of the ideological diversity of their audience and take precautions to avoid being attributed undesirable meanings. As a last resort, Mohammed (2019: 820) writes: "when one fails to anticipate and curb the undesired argumentative potential of one's [arguments], one ought to clarify and apologise".

6.2 Implications

While the account of dogwhistles developed in this thesis provides novel insights into the dynamics of dogwhistles, an important implication is that it drastically narrows down the concept of a dogwhistle. I realize I may have strayed from the strict metaphor of a dogwhistle but for good reason. Not everything that has been called a dogwhistle in the literature, as well as in non-scholarly discourse, can be considered one and the same phenomenon. For instance, I have not mentioned the so-called non-linguistic dogwhistles that I addressed in 1.2, such as the internet meme Pepe the Frog, or the numbers 14 and 88. While these indeed produce a 'sound' only audible to some people, I consider this a different mechanism from dogwhistles, motivated by different goals. Posting such coded symbols on social media, for instance, is typically done to easily identify like-minded individuals (i.e. followers of the alt-right movement), without really communicating anything to an out-group. Such coded symbols, but also phrases like *big pharma* (see 2.2) merely conceal one's true message from an untargeted audience, which is similar to speaking in a different language only the targeted audience is familiar with (cf. Quaranto, 2022; Mascitti, 2023). Dogwhistling, on the other hand, actually involves communicating something to different audiences as well, not just to the audience the speaker identifies with the most. These phenomena are thus governed by different mechanisms and cannot be captured by one theoretical account. While these phenomena may actually be closer to the metaphor of a dogwhistle, my intuition is that when we talk about dogwhistles, we usually consider speakers to be sending different, yet intelligible, messages to

multiple audiences. Perhaps a two-tone whistle makes up for a better metaphor. If we were to try to capture everything that people describe as a dogwhistle under one theoretical concept, this would be too general and not have any practical use. Importantly, however, these so-called non-linguistic dogwhistles, as well as other 'one-tone' whistles such as *big pharma*, still merit future research, as these can also have harmful consequences.

Another limitation of this thesis is that everything I have presented here is strictly theoretical. While I hope to have motivated my arguments well enough, empirical research is necessary to confirm these. For one, experimental evidence is needed to confirm how audiences actually interpret dogwhistles, and whether they are aware of the possibility of other interpretations. Furthermore, a more in-depth analysis of real-life dogwhistles is needed to provide more insight into the contextual characteristics of dogwhistles. This includes, for instance, focusing more on the audience composition, the speaker's background, their ideological preferences, the goals of the discourse, background information about the topics discussed, etc. When such features are paid closer attention to, we will get a better understanding of the workings of dogwhistles and the meanings they express. This may eventually lead to the possibility of discovering certain trends in dogwhistle practices that can be identified based on certain features.

A last limitation of this account of dogwhistles is that it is based on only a limited amount of data. A larger dataset of dogwhistles is needed to confirm whether the theoretical findings listed in this study are generalizable to dogwhistle practices at large. This also calls for expanding the study of dogwhistles to languages other than English, in order to find out whether different languages use the same or different linguistic strategies for appealing to different audiences, e.g. whether speakers have more or less freedom in their formulation choices. With a larger and more diverse dataset of dogwhistles, the conditions of dogwhistles formulated in this thesis can be refined, resulting in a better understanding of dogwhistles. Notwithstanding these limitations, this thesis has offered plenty novel insights, not only into dogwhistles, but also into Speech Act Theory and more generally, into meaning in communication.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

The account of dogwhistles proposed here, as well as the introduction of a new class of appellative speech acts, raise ample opportunities for future research. Firstly, using my refined definition of dogwhistles, dogwhistles can be more easily identified and studied. As such, a larger dataset of dogwhistles can be built, which will ultimately enhance our understanding of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the dynamics of dogwhistle accusations and denials can also be more closely studied, as the account offered here points to various directions regarding the relevant aspects of dogwhistles (i.e. context, propositional content, semantic content). This can help provide criteria for deciding when dogwhistle accusations and denials are justifiable or not. Ultimately, this can have important practical implications, as enhancing our understanding of dogwhistle practices (including accusations and denials) can help not only to prevent their harmful consequences, but also to prevent unjustified accusations of dogwhistles which only lead to further polarization. This would be a fruitful area for future work.

Furthermore, this account of dogwhistles can be applied to different languages as well as different political environments, broadening the scope of the study of dogwhistles. Comparative research on dogwhistles by different speakers in different contexts may reveal more specific conditions of dogwhistling. For instance, an intriguing question that may be explored is whether different political systems influence the ways in which speakers can dogwhistle? Intuitively, in a two-party system such as the U.S., politicians may be more restricted in their linguistic choices to dogwhistle than in a multi-party system like The Netherlands, since the audiences speakers address in two-party systems likely show greater ideological diversity due to the limited political competition. A presidential candidate in the U.S., for instance, directs their arguments to an audience that comprises the entire nation, exhibiting all kinds of ideological diversity. In multi-party systems, on the other hand, the audiences of politicians may be less diverse, as there are more political competitors that represent other parts of the political spectrum. A right-wing politician in a multi-party system, for example, may still address a number of ideologically diverse audiences, but these audiences are likely all located somewhere between the middle and the far-right end of the political spectrum, and are therefore closer to each other in terms of their ideological views. The politician will likely be less inclined to tailor their arguments such that they appeal to audiences with more left-wing ideologies as well, as there are multiple political competitors that those audiences are rather drawn to. Further work on dogwhistles could focus on identifying whether such contextual factors influence the speaker's semantic choices when dogwhistling.

Another possibility for future research concerns experimental psycholinguistic research. As previous scholars have often noted, the main methodological limitation of the study of dogwhistles is that we are only able to experimentally study dogwhistles that have already been exposed, and are thus no longer in use as true dogwhistles. With the account of dogwhistles provided in this thesis, however, we can 'design' hypothetical dogwhistles, or at least polylogical appeals, and test how hearers actually interpret these in real time. This will provide more insight into the interpretative strategies hearers employ when processing dogwhistles. Moreover, by designing hypothetical dogwhistles, experimental research can also reveal how people actually respond to dogwhistles as they would in real time, resulting in a better understanding of the (intensity of) real-world consequences of dogwhistles.

Furthermore, my proposal of a new class of appellative speech acts engenders a fruitful area for future research. For one, future studies can be directed at identifying different types of appellative acts. Can we, for instance, distinguish appellatives based on which kind of psychological states of the hearer they express? Is there a difference in the illocutionary force of acts that express a belief as opposed to an emotion? In which communicative contexts are certain types of appellative acts situated? Exploring such questions can contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic processes behind meaning generation in appellative acts. Moreover, the framework of appellative acts developed in this thesis can be used to account for other communicative phenomena that have not yet received much attention within Speech Act Theory. As I have already mentioned in chapter 4 footnote 25, the act of gaslighting may be considered an infelicitous appellative act whereby speakers attempt to get hearers to doubt their own the beliefs by wrongly attributing them a

psychological state (Podosky, 2021). Since the interpretation of appellative acts relies on the hearer's own pre-existing beliefs, it would be interesting to further investigate how speakers can exploit this mechanism for the manipulative purposes of gaslighting.

Finally, another direction for future work is exploring the linguistic realizations of appellative speech acts in various languages. Are there certain grammatical or constructional structures that are typically used in appellative acts? Can we identify illocutionary force indicating devices for speech acts in the class of appellative acts? Interestingly, in recent work, Ramberdiyeva et al. (2024) identify a number of linguistic means that reflect the appellative function in the English language: "imperatives, vocatives, the use of first- and second-person plural verbs, and phatic an emotive language structures" (p.8). Moreover, earlier work on the expression of appeal in Japanese, found that speakers often use positive politeness strategies to appeal to hearers, such as expressing doubt to signal consideration to the hearer, or leaving things unexpressed to signal a sense of equality or familiarity between the interlocutors (Maynard, 1990). Integrating such insights with the speech-act theoretic account of appeal offered in this thesis can help further develop the notion of appellative acts and enhance our understanding of the appellative function of language in general, as well as its cross-linguistic realizations.

To conclude, the novel insights I have offered on dogwhistles, as well as appellative acts, provide ample new directions for studying meaning in communication. Most importantly, by shifting the focus from the speaker's communicative intentions in the generation of meaning, to the role of the hearer, I have advocated for a more dynamic theoretical construct of meaning in communication. Hopefully, this will become more widely implemented in the field of pragmatics.

7. References

Albertson, B. (2015). Dog-Whistle politics: Multivocal communication and religious appeals. Political Behavior, 37(1), 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-013-9265-x

Austin, J. (1975). How to do things with words. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198245537.001.0001

Bach, K. (2006). Speech acts and pragmatics [Wiley Online Library]. In M. Devitt & R. Hanley (Eds.), The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language (pp. 147–167). Blackwell Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470757031.ch8

Bach, K., & Harnish, R. M. (1979). Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts. M.I.T. Press.

Badran, D. (2002). Ideology through modality in discourse analysis [Dissertation, University of Nottingham]. https://laur.lau.edu.lb:8443/xmlui/handle/10725/7449

Ballotpedia. (2014). United States House of Representatives elections in Wisconsin, 2014 - Ballotpedia. https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_House_of_Representatives_elections_in_Wisconsin,_2014

Barrett, G. (2006). The Official Dictionary of Unofficial English: a crunk omnibus for thrillionaires and bampots for the ecozoic age. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL3430445M/The_official_dictionary_of_unofficial_English

BBC News. (2016, September 28). Pepe the Frog meme branded a “hate symbol.” https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37493165

Bench-Capon, T. J., Doutre, S., & Dunne, P. E. (2007). Audiences in argumentation frameworks. Artificial Intelligence, 171(1), 42–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.artint.2006.10.013

Berg, H., & Liljedal, K. T. (2023). Why casting older female models is good for advertising. Journal of Advertising Research, 63(1), 61–80. https://doi.org/10.2501/jar-2023-001

Bhat, P., & Klein, O. (2020). Covert hate speech: white nationalists and dog whistle communication on Twitter. In Springer eBooks (pp. 151–172). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41421-4_7

Bitzer, L. F. (1959). Aristotle’s enthymeme revisited. The Quarterly Journal of Speech/Quarterly Journal of Speech, 45(4), 399–408. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335635909382374

Braet, A. C. (1992). Ethos, pathos and logos in Aristotle’s Rhetoric: A re-examination. Argumentation, 6(3), 307–320. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00154696

Brinton, A. (1988). Cicero's use of historical examples in moral argument. Philosophy & Rhetoric, 21(3), 169–184. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237549. Accessed 16 July 2024.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness. https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511813085

Bühler, K. (1990). Theory of language: The Representational Function of Language (D. F. Goodwin, Trans.; 1st ed., Vol. 25). John Benjamins Publishing.

Burnett, H. (2017). Sociolinguistic interaction and identity construction: The view from game-theoretic pragmatics. Journal of Sociolinguistics, 21(2), 238–271. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12229

Bush, G. W. (1999). A charge to keep. https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA52811837

Caldwell, L. A. (2014, March 13). Ryan's anti-poverty push has produced more problems than solutions. CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/13/politics/ryan-poverty-backlash/index.html

Ceccarelli, L. (1998). Polysemy: Multiple meanings in rhetorical criticism. The Quarterly Journal of Speech/Quarterly Journal of Speech, 84(4), 395–415. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639809384229

Cohen, M. A. (2019, July 19). Trump has turned the racial dog whistle into a steam whistle. BostonGlobe.com. https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2019/07/19/trump-has-turned-racial-dog-whistle-into-steam-whistle/oxjaxnNaShQmLg71sHCsSK/story.html

Cooper, L. N. (2014). Science and human experience: Values, Culture and the Mind. Cambridge University Press.

Cooperman, A. (2004, December 11). Bush's References to God Defended by Speechwriter. Washington Post. Retrieved February 21, 2024, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/12/12/bushs-references-to-god-defended-by-speechwriter/f6ac2618-b7e2-433e-bc76-0894e5ef6807/

Coppins, M. (2014, March 13). Paul Ryan Says His Controversial Comments About Inner-City Poor Were "Inarticulate." BuzzFeed News. https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/mckaycoppins/paul-ryan-says-his-controversial-comments-about-inner-city-p

CPD. (2004, October 8). Commision of Presidential Debates: October 8, 2004 Debate transcript. https://www.debates.org/voter-education/debate-transcripts/october-8-2004-debate-transcript/

Craig, R. T. (1996). Practical-theoritical argumentation. Argumentation, 10(4), 461–474. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00142979

Crick, N. (2004). Conquering our Imagination: thought experiments and enthymemes in scientific argument on JSTOR. Philosophy & Rhetoric, 37(1), 21–41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40238168

Domke, D., & Coe, K. (2007). The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America. Oxford University Press.

Douglas, W. (1980). Value appeals and the need for audience support: A rules perspective [Dissertation]. University of Houston.

Falkenberg, G. (1990). Searle on sincerity. In A. Burkhardt (Ed.), Speech Acts, Meaning and Intentions (pp. 129–146). De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110859485.129

Feinberg, W. (2009). Affirmative action. In H. LaFollette (Ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Practical Ethics (pp. 272–299). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199284238.003.0012

Fineman, H. (2010, March 14). Bush And God. Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/bush-and-god-132561

Fotion, N. (2000). John Searle (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315710846

Fredal, J. (2020). The Enthymeme: Syllogism, reasoning, and narrative in ancient Greek rhetoric. Pennsylvania State University Press. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/73982

Friedersdorf, C. (2020, July 21). Steven Pinker will be just fine. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/steven-pinker-will-be-just-fine/614323/

García-Carpintero, M. (2018). On the Nature of Presupposition: A Normative Speech Act Account. Erkenntnis, 85(2), 269–293. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-018-0027-3

Gioia, T. (2024, April 28). 30% of Children Ages 5-7 Are on TikTok. The Honest Broker. https://www.honest-broker.com/p/30-of-children-ages-5-7-are-on-tiktok

Goldman, A. I. (2006). Simulating minds: The Philosophy, Psychology, and Neuroscience of Mindreading [Google Books]. Oxford University Press.

Goodin, R. E., & Saward, M. (2005). Dog whistles and Democratic mandates. Political Quarterly, 76(4), 471–476. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923x.2005.00708.x

Green, L. D. (1980). Enthymemic invention and structural prediction. College English, 41(6), 623. https://doi.org/10.2307/375907

Grice, H. P. (1957). Meaning. The Philosophical Review, 66(3), 377. https://doi.org/10.2307/2182440

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In BRILL eBooks (pp. 41–58). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004368811_003

Haney-López, I. F. (2014). Dog Whistle Politics: How coded racial appeals have reinvented racism and wrecked the middle class. https://lawcat.berkeley.edu/record/1126547

Hansen, M. M., & Terkourafi, M. (2023). We need to talk about Hearer's Meaning! Journal of Pragmatics, 208, 99–114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.02.015

Hauser, D. J., & Schwarz, N. (2023). Semantic prosody: How neutral words with collocational Positivity/Negativity color evaluative judgments. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 32(2), 98–104. https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214221127978

Henderson, R., & McCready, E. (2018). How dogwhistles work. In Lecture notes in computer science (pp. 231–240). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93794-6_16

Henderson, R., & McCready, E. (2019). Dogwhistles and the At-Issue/Non-At-Issue distinction. In BRILL eBooks (pp. 222–245). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004393127_010

Hindess, B. (2014). Whistling the dog. In J. Uhr & R. Walter (Eds.), Studies in Australian Political Rhetoric (pp. 143-154–154). https://doi.org/10.22459/sapr.09.2014.07

Hull, N. E. H., & Hoffer, P. C. (2010). Roe v. Wade: The Abortion Rights Controversy in American History.

Hurwitz, J., & Peffley, M. (2005). Playing the race card in the Post-Willie Horton era: The Impact of racialized code words on support for Punitive Crime Policy. Public Opinion Quarterly, 69(1), 99–112. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfi004

Jeshion, R. (2013). Expressivism and the offensiveness of slurs. Philosophical Perspectives, 27(1), 231–259. https://doi.org/10.1111/phpe.12027

Jones, L. E. (1899). There is power in the blood [Video]. Hymnary.org. https://hymnary.org/text/would_you_be_free_from_the_burden_jones

Jonsen, A. R., & Toulmin, S. E. (1988). The Abuse of Casuistry: A history of Moral Reasoning. https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA87066089

Kauffeld, F. J. (1998). Presumptions and the distribution of argumentative burdens in acts of proposing and accusing. Argumentation, 12, 245–266.

Kaufman, S. E. (2016, March 21). Conservative S.E. Cupp on Trump: That's not a "dog-whistle"; you hear, those are "dog screams." Salon. Retrieved February 25, 2024, from https://www.salon.com/2016/03/21/conservative_s_e_cupp_on_trump_thats_not_a_dog_whistle_you_hear_those_are_dog_screams/

Khoo, J. (2017). Code words in political discourse. Philosophical Topics, 45(2), 33–64. https://doi.org/10.5840/philtopics201745213

Kidd, T. S. (2019). Who is an evangelical?: The history of a movement in crisis. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL28725980M/Who_Is_an_Evangelical

Killingsworth, M. J. (2005). Appeals in Modern Rhetoric: an ordinary language approach. Southern Illinois University Press. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/46850

Kirk, J. W. (2016). Mitt Romney in Denver. Journal of Argumentation in Context, 5(3), 227–248. https://doi.org/10.1075/jaic.5.3.01kir

Kirkpatrick, D. D. (2004, October 17). Speaking in the Tongue of Evangelicals. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/17/weekinreview/speaking-in-the-tongue-of-evangelicals.html?searchResultPosition=1

Knibbs, K. (2017, September 29). How Modern Politics Have Morphed the Meaning of “Dog Whistle.” The Ringer. https://www.theringer.com/2017/9/29/16385388/lexicon-dog-whistle

Koniak, P., & Cwalina, W. (2021). Does it pay to avoid speaking straight about controversial issues? Impact of argumentative ambiguity on the perception of the speaker. Journal of Communication Management, 26(1), 84–97. https://doi.org/10.1108/jcom-11-2020-0154

Kopan, T. (2014, March 13). Ryan: Comments were “inarticulate.” POLITICO. https://www.politico.com/story/2014/03/paul-ryan-poverty-comments-were-inarticulate-104637

Kuo, J. (2006). Tempting Faith: An inside story of political seduction. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA80603328

Langton, R. (2018). Blocking as counter-speech. In D. Fogal, D. W. Harris, & M. Mossi (Eds.), New work on speech acts (pp. 144–164). Oxford University Press eBooks. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198738831.003.0013

Laudan, L. (1984). Science and Values: The aims of science and their role in scientific debate. In University of California Press eBooks (1st ed.). University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520908116

Law, M. (2023, April 11). The new oil: how the world became driven by Big Data. Technology Magazine. https://technologymagazine.com/articles/the-new-oil-how-the-world-became-driven-by-big-data

Lewiński, M. (2021). Illocutionary pluralism. Synthese, 199(3–4), 6687–6714. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-021-03087-7

Lewiński, M., & Aakhus, M. (2013). Argumentative Polylogues in a dialectical Framework: A methodological inquiry. Argumentation, 28(2), 161–185. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-013-9307-x

Lloyd, K. (2013). Reinterpreting Enthymemes to include the Nonverbal. JAC, 33(3/4), 732–749. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43854576

Lo Guercio, N., & Caso, R. (2022). An account of overt intentional dogwhistling. Synthese, 200(3). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-022-03511-6

Louw, W. E. (1993). Irony in the text or insincerity in the writer? — The diagnostic potential of semantic prosodies. In M. Bakers, G. Francis, & E. Tognini-Bonelli (Eds.), Text and Technology: In honour of John Sinclair (p. 157). John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/z.64.11lou

Malloy, J. (2009). Bush/Harper? Canadian and American Evangelical Politics Compared. American Review of Canadian Studies, 39(4), 352–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/02722010903319079

Mascitti, M. (2023). Dogwhistles and Audience Design: a new definition. Manuscrito, 46(3). https://doi.org/10.1590/0100-6045.2023.v46n3.mm

Mata, E. (2000). Enthymemes in magazine advertisements: An analysis of Oneida silverware ads from 1900 to 1990. [Dissertation]. Florida Atlantic University.

Maynard, S. K. (1990). Expression of appeal in the utterance design of Japanese conversational language. Journal of Japanese Linguistics, 12(1), 87–114. https://doi.org/10.1515/jjl-1990-0108

Medvic, S. K. (2012). In defense of politicians: The expectations trap and its threat to democracy. Routledge. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB12368866

Mendelberg, T. (2001). The race card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400889181

Metag, J., & Schäfer, M. S. (2018). Audience segments in environmental and science Communication: recent findings and future perspectives. Environmental Communication, 12(8), 995–1004. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2018.1521542

Mey, J. L. (2011). Speech acts in context. In Pragmatics & beyond. New series (pp. 171–180). https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.209.11mey

Miller, A. B., & Bee, J. D. (1974). Enthymemes: body and soul. In H. Barett (Ed.), Rhetoric of the People (pp. 39–55). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004656123_007

Miller, S. P. (2014). The Age of Evangelicalism. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199777952.001.0001

Mohammed, D. (2018). Standing Standpoints and Argumentative Associates: What is at Stake in a Public Political Argument? Argumentation, 33(3), 307–322. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-018-9473-y

Mohammed, D. (2019). Managing Argumentative Potential in the Networked Public Sphere: The Anti-#MeToo Manifesto as a Case in Point. Proceedings of the Ninth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation, 813–822.

Moldovan, A. (2016). Presumptions in communication. Studia Humana, 5(3), 104–117. https://doi.org/10.1515/sh-2016-0019

Montminy, M. (2011). Indeterminacy, incompleteness, indecision, and other semantic phenomena. Canadian Journal of Philosophy, 41(1), 73–98. https://doi.org/10.1353/cjp.2011.0001

Moshin, J. (2018). Hello Darkness: Antisemitism and rhetorical silence in the “Trump era.” Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric, 8(1/2), 26-43–43. https://openurl.ebsco.com/EPDB%3Agcd%3A11%3A28435211/detailv2?sid=ebsco%3Aplink%3Ascholar&id=ebsco%3Agcd%3A128600333&crl=c

Myers, F. (1999). Political argumentation and the composite audience: A case study. The Quarterly Journal of Speech/Quarterly Journal of Speech, 85(1), 55–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639909384241

Nan, X. (2008). The Pursuit of Self-Regulatory Goals: How Counterfactual Thinking Influences advertising Persuasiveness. Journal of Advertising, 37(1), 17–27. https://doi.org/10.2753/joa0091-3367370102

NBC. (2014, March 20). Ryan confronted over “Inner Cities” remarks in tense exchange. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/paul-ryan-confronted-over-inner-cities-remark-tense-exchange-n57636

Nelson, L. (2016, September 28). Why the Anti-Defamation League just put the Pepe the Frog meme on its hate symbols list. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2016/9/21/12893656/pepe-frog-donald-trump

Nettel, A. L., & Roque, G. (2011). Persuasive argumentation versus manipulation. Argumentation, 26(1), 55–69. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-011-9241-8

Niu, M. (2023). The Origin and Development of Pragmatics as a Study of Meaning: Semiotic Perspective. Language and Semiotic Studies, 9(1), 54–78. https://doi.org/10.1515/lass-2023-0002

Noah, T. (2004, October 11). Why Bush opposes Dred Scott. Slate Magazine. https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2004/10/why-bush-opposes-dred-scott.html

Norrick, N. R. (1978). Expressive illocutionary acts. Journal of Pragmatics, 2(3), 277–291. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(78)90005-x

Oswald, S. (2023). Pragmatics for argumentation. Journal of Pragmatics, 203, 144–156. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.12.001

Oswald, S., Greco, S., Miecznikowski, J., Pollaroli, C., & Rocci, A. (2020). Argumentation and meaning. Journal of Argumentation in Context, 9(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1075/jaic.00005.osw

Paglieri, F., & Woods, J. (2009). Enthymematic parsimony. Synthese, 178(3), 461–501. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-009-9652-3

Paglieri, F., & Woods, J. (2011). Enthymemes: From Reconstruction to understanding. Argumentation, 25(2), 127–139. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-011-9203-1

Palmer, P. R. (2023, June 6). The Origin of the Term “Big Pharma.” Paul R Palmer. Retrieved March 31, 2024, from https://paulrpalmer.com/blogs/the-origin-of-the-term-big-pharma

Plenaire verslagen. (2023, March 21). Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal. Retrieved May 28, 2024, from https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2022-2023/63

Podosky, P. C. (2021). Gaslighting, First- and Second-Order. Hypatia, 36(1), 207–227. https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2020.54

Poggi, I. (2005). The goals of persuasion. Pragmatics & Cognition, 13(2), 297–335. https://doi.org/10.1075/pc.13.2.04pog

Potts, C. (2007). The expressive dimension. Theoretical Linguistics, 33(2). https://doi.org/10.1515/tl.2007.011

PRC. (2004, December 6). Religion and the Presidential Vote | Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy. Retrieved March 1, 2024, from https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2004/12/06/religion-and-the-presidential-vote/

Prokop, A. (2014, July 24). Here’s Paul Ryan’s new antipoverty plan. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2014/7/24/5933221/heres-paul-ryans-new-antipoverty-plan

Quaranto, A. (2022). Dog whistles, covertly coded speech, and the practices that enable them. Synthese, 200(4). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-022-03791-y

Ramberdiyeva, G., Dildabekova, A., Abikenova, Z., Karabayeva, L., & Zhuasbaeva, A. (2024). The functional and semantic category of appeal as a linguistic tool in political propaganda texts (in the example of the English language). International Journal for the Semiotics of Law. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-024-10115-5

Raymond, J. C. (1984). Enthymemes, examples, and rhetorical method. In R. J. Connors, L. S. Ede, & A. A. Lunsford (Eds.), Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modem Discourse. (pp. 140–151). Southern Illinois University Press.

Salmon, W. (2022). Social markers and dimensions of meaning. Journal of Pragmatics, 192, 98–115. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.02.014

Santana, C. (2021). What’s wrong with dogwhistles. Journal of Social Philosophy, 53(3), 387–403. https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12409

Saul, J. (2018). Dogwhistles, political manipulation, and philosophy of language. In D. Fogal, D. W. Harris, & M. Moss (Eds.), New work on speech acts. Oxford University Press eBooks. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198738831.003.0013

Saul, J. (2019). What is Happening to Our Norms Against Racist Speech? Supplement to the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society/Supplementary

Volume - Aristotelian Society, 93(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1093/arisup/akz001

Sayeed, A., Breitholtz, E., Cooper, R., Lindgren, E., Rettenegger, G., & Rönnerstrand, B. (2024). The utility of (political) dogwhistles – a life cycle perspective. Journal of Language and Politics. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.23047.say

Sbisà, M. (1999). Ideology and the persuasive use of presupposition. In J. Verschueren (Ed.), Language and ideology. Selected papers from the 6th International Pragmatics Conference. (Vol. 1, pp. 492–507). International Pragmatics Association. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192844125.003.0004

Sbisà, M. (2009). Speech act theory. In J. Verschueren & J. O. Östman (Eds.), Key Notions for Pragmatics (pp. 229–244). John Benjamins Publishing Company. http://digital.casalini.it/9789027289438

Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech Acts: An essay in the Philosophy of Language. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139173438

Searle, J. R. (1979). Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511609213

Searle, J. R. (1986). Meaning, communication, and representation [Google Books]. In R. E. Grandy & Warner (Eds.), Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends (pp. 209–226). Oxford University Press. https://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=sHWK4Lz37sAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA209&dq=searle+illocutionary+effect+1986&ots=Trx9t-M2Yv&sig=S-chyMGNo1MBaV6VXNf0RjMUDJ0&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

Searle, J. R., & Vanderveken, D. (1985a). Speech acts and illocutionary logic. In D. Vanderveken (Ed.), Logic, Thought and Action (Vol. 2, pp. 109–132). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3167-x_5

Searle, J. R., & Vanderveken, D. (1985b). Foundations of illocutionary logic. Cambridge University Press. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA00609083

Seliger, M. (2019). Ideology and politics (Vol. 52). Routledge. https://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=Fve-DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT12&dq=seliger+ideology&ots=uBW839aavq&sig=QNdTURrfo81OHosRHqAIZYu_Dog&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=seliger%20ideology&f=false

Shapiro, A. R. (2020, August 21). The racist roots of the dog whistle. Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/08/21/racist-roots-dog-whistle/

Sinha, C. (1989). Appealing Rhetorics: Ideology and Argumentation. In Norms in Argumentation (Vol. 8, pp. 179–194). https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110877175-014

Smith, V. J. (2007). Aristotle's classical enthymeme and the visual Argumentation of the Twenty-First Century. Argumentation and Advocacy, 43(3–4), 114–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/00028533.2007.11821667

Snider, A., & Huber, R. (2006). Influencing through argument. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA76193299

Soutphommasane, T. (2009). Reclaiming Patriotism: Nation-Building for Australian Progressives [Internet Archive]. https://archive.org/details/reclaimingpatrio0000sout/page/32/mode/2up

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). Relevance: Communication and cognition (2nd ed.). Blackwell.

Stalnaker, R. C. (1970). Pragmatics. Synthese, 22, 272–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00413603

Stanley, J. (2015). How propaganda works. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400865802

Star, S. L., & Griesemer, J. R. (1989). Institutional Ecology, `Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. Social Studies of Science, 19(3), 387–420. https://doi.org/10.1177/030631289019003001

Tilley, B. P. (2020). "I am the law and Order candidate": A content analysis of Donald Trump's Race-Baiting dog whistles in the 2016 presidential campaign. Psychology, 11(12), 1941–1974. https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2020.1112123

Tom Crimmins. (2012, August 18). Nike: Find Your Greatness [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved July 11, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYP9AGtLvRg

Van Camp, W. (2014). Explaining understanding (or understanding explanation). European Journal for Philosophy of Science, 4(1), 95–114. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13194-013-0077-y

Van Dijk, T. (2011). Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. In SAGE Publications Ltd eBooks (2nd ed.). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446289068

Van Dijk, T. A. (2013). Ideology and discourse. In M. Freeden, L. T. Sargent, & M. Stears (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies (1st ed., pp. 175–196). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199585977.013.007

Van Eemeren, F. (2010). Strategic maneuvering in argumentative discourse: Extending the Pragma-Dialectical theory of argumentation (1st ed., Vol. 2). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Van Eemeren, F. H., & Grootendorst, R. (1982). The speech acts of arguing and convincing in externalized discussions. Journal of Pragmatics, 6(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(82)90036-4

Van Eemeren, F. H., & Grootendorst, R. (1992). Argumentation, communication, and fallacies: A Pragma-dialectical Perspective (1st ed.). Routledge.

Walton, D. N. (2001). Enthymemes, common knowledge, and plausible inference. Philosophy & Rhetoric, 34(2), 93–112. https://doi.org/10.1353/par.2001.0010

Walton, D. N. (2008). The three bases for the enthymeme: A dialogical theory. Journal of Applied Logic/Journal of Applied Logic (Online), 6(3), 361–379. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jal.2007.06.002

Weimann, G. W., & Am, A. B. (2020). Digital Dog Whistles: The New Online Language of Extremism. International Journal of Security Studies, 2(1). https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=ijoss

Whiting, D. (2013). It's not what you said, it's the way you said it: slurs and conventional implicatures. Analytic Philosophy, 54(3), 364–377. https://doi.org/10.1111/phib.12024

Wilkie, D. C. H., Burgess, A. J., Mirzaei, A., & Dolan, R. M. (2023). Inclusivity in Advertising: A Typology Framework for understanding consumer reactions. Journal of Advertising, 52(5), 721–738. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2023.2255252

Winter, N. J. G. (2006). Beyond Welfare: Framing and the racialization of white opinion on social security. American Journal of Political Science, 50(2), 400–420. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00191.x

Witten, K. (2008). Dogwhistle Politics: the new pitch of an old narrative [Unpublished manuscript, San Francisco State University]. https://www.academia.edu/42929858/Dogwhistle_Politics_the_New_Pitch_of_an_Old_Narrative

Wojtaszek, A. (2016). Multimodal integration in the perception of press advertisements within the Dynamic Model of Meaning. Lodz Papers in Pragmatics, 12(1). https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2016-0005

Wynn-Palmer, M. J. (1996). An enthymeme as a platform for understanding audience values [Dissertation]. University of Oklahoma.

Young, L., & Tsoi, L. (2013). When mental states matter, when they don't, and what that means for morality. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 7(8), 585–604. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12044

Young, S. L. (2015). Running like a man, sitting like a girl: Visual Enthymeme and the case of Caster Semenya. Women's Studies in Communication, 38(3), 331–350. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2015.1046623

Zarefsky, D. (2008). Strategic maneuvering in political argumentation. Argumentation, 22(3), 317–330. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-008-9096-9

Zarefsky, D. (2019). The practice of argumentation. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139540926

Zmigrod, L. (2022). A Psychology of Ideology: Unpacking the psychological structure of ideological thinking. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 17(4), 1072–1092. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916211044140