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ABSTRACT
Radical self-silencing is a particular variety of speech act disablement where the subject silences themselves, whether knowingly or not, because of their own faults or deficiencies. The paper starts with some concrete cases and preparatory comments to help orient and motivate the investigation. It then offers a summary analysis, drawing on a small number of basic concepts to identify its five individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions and discriminating their two basic forms, 'internalist' and 'externalist'. The paper then explicates and defends what has been proposed, where the most salient and pressing objections concern the use of two basic concepts: 'uptake' and 'silencing'. Finally, the paper gives a longer-term motivation for deepening our understanding of radical self-silencing, what it is, and what it implies.

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1. Cases of radical self-silencing

We are sometimes silenced by others. We sometimes silence ourselves because of others' faults or deficiencies. And there is a third possibility which has received less attention: we sometimes silence ourselves, whether knowingly or not, because of our own faults or deficiencies. Call this peculiarly deep form 'radical self-silencing'. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to the phenomenon and to propose ways of understanding it, beginning with some illustrative cases and brief comments to help orient and motivate the investigation (section 1), then identifying the basic concepts necessary to construct an analysis that helps clarify the variety of simple and complex cases (section 2), and finally exploring and defending the core elements of that analysis (sections 3–4).

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Self-silencing of any sort is easy to overlook; by its nature, it leaves very few traces. And evidence of *radical* self-silencing is particularly scarce, since it is only a single individual who is immediately involved. But once we know what to look for – and we shall start with two dramatic illustrative cases to help get to that point – we may notice that it occurs quite frequently in ordinary life. These cases are also designed to draw attention to relevant socio-political implications. But we should not set the parameters of radical self-silencing too closely by them. As we shall see, they differ from each other and from other cases in interesting respects, though they belong to the general category of radical self-silencing.

1.1 Two Talks

This is a fictional story but prompted by the experiences of Diana Oughton in Chichicastenango, Guatemala in 1963–1965 (Powers 1971, 30–54).

You take up the opportunity to work abroad in a poor community for two years on an International Aid programme. At the end of your service, you are given two opportunities to give talks summarising what you have learned about the community, one before the community itself and one back at home. You have a great deal to say in your talk back at home. Living and working in this community, you have become increasingly aware that you belong in your homelife to a privileged group in a deeply unjust society and you want urgently to share that knowledge. But you significantly truncate this talk about the community when addressing the community itself.

This is not because it would be redundant to say things that the community already knows; everyone accepts that this is to be expected and welcomes it as a testament to the value of shared experience. And it is not because you actually have doubts about what you will say to the audience at home. You are a conscientious person, aware of deficiencies in your initial understanding of the community's situation, which you have worked hard to overcome, but you recognise that many must remain; so in both talks, you restrict what you say to views you feel able to demonstrate and justify.

It is because when the community faces you, you become aware of how much you still need to discover in order to recognise all that its members are doing in saying what they say. Hence what you feel able to demonstrate and justify before the community, about their own

situation, is significantly less. And so to them, you give a much-reduced version of the talk you will give at home, withholding certain views and silencing yourself with respect to them.

1.2 News conference

This is also a fictional story but prompted by the involvement of Ivan Cooper MP in the events of 30th January 1972, 'Bloody Sunday' (Pringle and Jacobson 2000).

You are a civil rights activist in a deeply unjust society with a lifelong commitment to non-violent protest. The authorities have dabbled in duplicity and bad faith in the past but recently allowed the military to kill many fellow protesters. This persuades you that they have settled into a course for the future which will kill off the civil rights movement. You are lost for an alternative. Some of your colleagues are taking up the armed struggle. Though you do not consider doing the same, you feel ill-equipped to reproach them, particularly those who are experiencing greater injustice than you. At a news conference, you are asked for your view on the use of violence, and after sincere reflection what you find yourself wanting to say is 'I condemn violence but it is sometimes justified'. However, you make a conscious decision not to utter this sentence, not to give your view on the issue, and instead firmly change the subject.

You deliberately silence yourself, refuse others the opportunity to know what view you hold when they have specifically asked for it. This is not because you think the sentence you would have uttered is a false or inaccurate representation of your view; to the contrary, after further sincere reflection, you remain convinced that it captures your view as precisely and unambiguously as possible. Nor is it because you do not know what to think on the issue; you have a view and this sentence captures it. And it is not because you fear that saying this would be liable to being misunderstood or misused by others, on whichever side; though that would certainly be a legitimate concern, it is something you are used to, given long experience in the public eye, and you are prepared to accept and deal with the consequences.

It is for a much deeper reason that, though the sentence itself is consistent, you believe the speech act you would be trying to perform in uttering it would be undermined by contradiction: given the context and your involvement in it, your uttering this sentence would in effect be both your condemning violence and your commending it. And you take this as indicative, that what is moving you to utter precisely this

sentence is that you are conflicted. So you silence yourself and change the subject. You do so because of a combination of failure and success that you rightly regard yourself as partly responsible for: that you are conflicted but also that you are sufficiently self-aware to appreciate this and decide how to act in consequence.

1.3 Commentary

In *Two Talks*, you silence yourself because of a perceived disparity between your own situation and that of your audience, one that manifests as a fault or deficiency in yourself in relation to relevant speech acts: you know you are not recognising what members of this community are doing much of the time in saying what they say.

In *News Conference*, the compromising issue is an inner conflict between condemning and commending, but this also manifests as a fault or deficiency in relation to relevant speech acts: in this case, there is no speech act to be recognised because of the contradiction between the elements of the sentence to be uttered, one being violence-condemning and the other violence-commending.

In further cases of radical self-silencing, the inner conflict will turn on different types of speech act: between asserting that p and asserting that not-p, for example, as in the situation where Einstein implies that what Heisenberg would have said, had he not silenced himself, is that we can observe the path of electrons in a cloud chamber but there are no electron paths (1971, 62–9).

In all these cases, the person may well be aware of the compromising issues which manifest as a fault or deficiency. But there is another whole sub-category of cases which we must also recognise where the subject is not aware of the compromising issues, or where what awareness they do have does not lead them to give up the attempt.

J.L. Austin's observations on the requirements of promising prompt an example (Austin 1975, 54): someone whose utterance amounts to both undertaking something and refusing to undertake it will have achieved neither and thus silenced their attempt at promise-making, regardless of whether they believe they have made the attempt.

Still, more cases can be conceived by considering the kinds of inner conflict that funded Freud's investigations and which express themselves as a contradiction between speech-act-elements of which the speaker may be unaware: between welcoming something and rejecting it, for example, or between mourning something and rejoicing over it.

1.4 Orientation and motivation

As is becoming obvious, radical self-silencing is a complex phenomenon whose elements we need to disentangle if we are to fully understand it. It is also a contentious phenomenon which raises issues with considerable room for disagreement about even the most basic matters. And thirdly, these issues are of potential interest to ongoing work on the theory of speech acts and its application to social and political issues.

This gives us three different kinds of reason to launch a specifically philosophical investigation. Doing some conceptual work helps us configure radical self-silencing more clearly, improving our ability to identify and distinguish it when it does occur, and ensuring that what evidence we do have can be recognised as such, so that it is neither routinely ignored nor wrongly subsumed under other forms, but figures in its proper place within the overall geography of silencing. This in turn helps us disentangle some discussions in border areas. That is the immediate motivation for producing and engaging with the analysis that follows. There is a longer-term motivation which we shall only be able to appreciate in the final section, once the fundamental analysis has been established.

This analysis builds on some of the literature on illocutionary silencing deriving from Rae Langton (1993) and Jennifer Hornsby (1993; Hornsby and Langton 1998), including arguments I have defended elsewhere which will be cited and summarised to avoid unnecessary repetition. The investigation will be more general and abstract than some of this literature, focusing on the preliminary work of individuating and clarifying radical self-silencing, and postponing deeper work on the socio-political implications to a future occasion.

2. Analysis of radical self-silencing

2.1 Basic concepts and analysis

We have been working with a rough notion of radical self-silencing: that it occurs whenever we silence ourselves, whether knowingly or not, because of our own faults or deficiencies in relation to relevant speech acts. To provide a more precise analysis, we need first to define the following basic concepts.

By *silencing* we mean forms of speech act disablement: a person is rendered unable to perform the speech acts they might otherwise perform.

In *illocutionary* silencing, a person is rendered unable to perform the illocutionary acts they might otherwise perform.

Illocutionary acts are identifiable by their *force* which we name explicitly when saying, for example, 'I warn' (condemn, describe, assert, order, request, approve, refuse, welcome, promise, object, etc). These acts thus go beyond merely saying anything at all, but stop short of the effects of these acts, which may themselves be acts. For example, A's warning B, which is illocutionary, may have the effect of A's dissuading B, which is not.

By *uptake* we mean recognising the illocutionary force of a speech act; that the speaker's 'I warn' has the force of warning, for example, when it has.

By *faults or deficiencies in relation to uptake* we mean the broad notion of 'not getting uptake right' which includes but is not limited to the narrow case of 'getting uptake wrong', by being mistaken about it for example (Oderberg 2022). It includes outright failures, greater or lesser deficiencies, weaknesses, compromised states or conditions or events, and other forms of non-competence.

By *proximately responsible* we mean being the closest or most immediate cause.

Using these concepts, and based on the observations we have made in investigating *Two Talks* and *News Conference*, we can propose the following analysis for further explication and defence: radical self-silencing is a kind of speech act disablement which is illocutionary in nature where a person is unable to perform the speech act they might otherwise perform, they are proximately responsible for rendering themselves unable to perform it, and what explains their responsibility are their own faults or deficiencies in relation to the uptake of relevant speech acts.

2.2 Recognising something

Uptake plays a key role here, and it is understood here as 'recognising the illocutionary force of a speech act', so the first task is to clarify what is meant by *recognising something*.

As I use the phrase, recognising something is a mental phenomenon. It is an achievement. Moreover, recognising something is factive: what is recognised must be what it is recognised to be. There can be no false recognising (and hence no false uptake), any more than there can be false knowledge.

Recognising something is a way of identifying it. We recognise something often but not necessarily by its defining properties. I may recognise

your speech act as having the force of a warning by your tone of voice, for example, and this is evidently not a defining property of that force. So we should distinguish between recognition *of* features, which is our focus, from recognition *by* features, which merely sheds light on that focus (Urmson 1956, 272).

Recognising something is dependent on noticing it: we cannot recognise the illocutionary force of a speech act if we have not noticed it. But the dependency is evidently one-way: we can notice what we have not recognised precisely because we have not identified what we noticed.

Recognising something is a sort of realising: that the illocutionary force of a speech act is that of warning, for example. So recognising something is not merely passive, not something that is simply done to us. This will be significant later, when we come to distinguish the present use of 'uptake' from its alternatives. It is tempting but wrong to make that distinction by claiming that the present use is passive.

Recognising something often comes at the time it is presented, but not necessarily always (pace Urmson 1956, 260; White 1964, 58). One can recognise the force of a complex speech act by working it out after it has been delivered, for example.

Recognising something, like the illocutionary force of a speech act, is an achievement that we sometimes work towards. And the working towards it is an activity we are engaged in, something we can put effort into getting better at. But recognising itself need not depend on a struggle; it can be or become effortless, easy, and immediate. When it takes time to achieve, progress towards it may be intermittent even if recognising itself is not.

To summarise: we are using 'uptake' to mean recognising the illocutionary force of a speech act, which makes 'uptake' a factive success term for a mental phenomenon that is a way of identifying something, dependent on noticing it, a kind of realising that is not merely passive though it can be effortless, and is not to be confused with whatever struggles are sometimes necessary to achieve it.

This introduces the basic concepts we shall need for the analysis. More will be said to defend my use of each in the following sections – particularly 'uptake' (section 3) and 'silencing' (section 4) since they are often used differently in the literature and I need to defend my use – but this will suffice for present purposes. Since the focus is on illocutionary silencing, we will often drop the full phrase; unless context indicates otherwise, silencing means illocutionary silencing.

2.3 Non-self-silencing

The second task is to see whether and how the analysis clarifies the contrast between radical self-silencing and other forms of silencing.

Self-silencing shares some formal aspects with the silencing identified by Langton (1993) and Hornsby (1993; Hornsby and Langton 1998). But the silencing they depict is one where other people silence the person attempting to perform an illocutionary act. The person themselves is not proximately responsible. In all varieties of self-silencing, by contrast, it is the person who might otherwise have performed the speech act who is proximately responsible, rendering themselves unable to perform it. In many cases, it will be their decision not to attempt it which makes them proximately responsible. The silencer and the silence – the 'Who' and the 'Whom' of the silencing – are one and the same. In some cases, but not all, this will be self-censorship: the person makes a deliberate decision to censor themselves, a decision not to attempt to say what they might otherwise have said.

To appreciate the contrast, it helps to draw an analogy with Hegel's allegorical depiction of the education of consciousness as a fight to the death between *Herr* and *Knecht* (Hegel 1977, 104–19). In orthodox interpretations, what Hegel means by this story is a struggle for recognition between different individuals (e.g. Taylor 1975, 153–5; Beiser 2005, 185–90; Brandom 2019, 313–62). By contrast, in heterodox interpretations, Hegel presents this struggle for recognition as occurring within a single person (Kelly 1966) individual (Flay 1984) or self-consciousness (McDowell 2003). In a similar way, the focus of more familiar investigations into silencing is the interpersonal kind of struggle for recognition, where what plays the key role are failures in the struggle to get other people to recognise fundamental aspects of a person's speech acts. By contrast, the focus of the present investigation into radical self-silencing is an intrapersonal struggle for recognition, occurring within the same single person or individual or self-consciousness. Here, more specifically, it is failures in the individual's attempt to recognise fundamental aspects of their own speech acts (*News Conference*) or those of others (*Two Talks*) which play the key role.

2.4 Simple self-silencing

Radical self-silencing differs from the less thorough-going kind, which we can call 'simple' self-silencing, where it is the faults or deficiencies of *other*

people which explain why the person renders themselves unable to perform the speech act – for example, the actual or expected failure of others to recognise its illocutionary force. In the radical variety, by contrast, it is the person's *own* faults or deficiencies which explain their rendering themselves unable to perform the act – for example, the perceived disparity between your own situation and that of your audience in *Two Talks* and the inner conflict between the illocutionary acts of condemning and commending in *News Conference*.

Kristie Dotson (2011) has portrayed some aspects of what we are calling 'simple self-silencing'. Her concern is with the epistemology of testimony and she draws on Elizabeth Fricker (1994; 1995); Edward Craig (1999), Paul Faulkner (2000) and Miranda Fricker (2007) to identify a form of 'testimonial' silencing. Her attention is on anticipation. She describes situations in which a subject estimates their audience's 'testimonial competence' as low, by which she means their ability to appreciate, understand and value the subject's testimony at its worth. In consequence, the subject in her cases 'capitulates' by 'smothering' and 'truncating' what they say, ensuring that it only contains content for which their audience does have testimonial competence (2011, 244). These kinds of illocutionary self-disablement result in self-censorship: the person is proximately responsible for rendering themselves unable to perform the illocutionary acts they might otherwise perform – by deciding not to attempt to perform them – because they believe that other people would fail to recognise the illocutionary force of those acts.

Notice that those who acknowledge such cases might but need not endorse the uptake claim as formulated by J. L. Austin: 'the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of *uptake*', which takes 'uptake' to mean the uptake of others (Austin 1975, 117; de Gaynesford 2011a). If they do, they can offer a particularly strong reason for the subject to self-censor: that where uptake-failure occurs, the person could not even *perform* the illocutionary act they might otherwise attempt; anticipating such failure, the person does not attempt it. If they do not, they can offer a weaker but no less sufficient reason to self-censor: that although the subject might succeed in performing the illocutionary act where uptake-failure is anticipated, there is still no point in their attempting it, because the person could not *communicate* – i.e. make others aware of – the act they nevertheless perform; anticipating this, the person does not attempt it.

Dotson's picture of simple self-silencing focuses on cases of the *expected* failure of other people in relation to uptake. But we ought

also to consider cases of the *actual* failure of other people. The speaker whose attempts to perform an illocutionary act meet with the failure of others to recognise their illocutionary force may silence themselves by no longer attempting such acts before those others. We can call these 'weariness' cases, by contrast with Dotson's anticipation cases. These cases still belong to the simple category because it is the failure of others which explains why the person renders themselves unable to perform the speech acts in question. In radical self-silencing, by contrast, it is failures of the subject which explain the speech act disablement.

2.5 Radical self-silencing: Two Talks

Radical self-silencing also has its own varieties, as is evident from the differences already noted between *Two Talks* and *News Conference*. Focusing on each in turn, we can try to identify what unifies them as belonging to the same category and see whether this conforms to the proposed analysis of radical self-silencing.

Two Talks turns on a perceived disparity between your own situation and that of your audience, the community in which you have been dwelling. You estimate your own knowledge and awareness as low, by comparison with that of this community. And what leads you to this estimation is specifically your awareness of faults in relation to your uptake of their speech acts: you realise you are often unable to recognise what exact illocutionary acts they are trying to perform. So you do not attempt some of the illocutionary acts you will perform when you give the talk back at home. You silence yourself even though you believe that your audience would have the competence to recognise the illocutionary force of the acts you silence (another respect in which this case differs from simple self-silencing).

Notoriously, a subject's low estimation of their own testimonial competence before a particular audience is often very far from justified. Where this is so, the radical self-silencing that results will manifest particular forms of injustice. But sometimes this low comparative estimation is fully justified, and what is more, others (sometimes everyone) concerned is aware of this. *Two Talks* is an example of this. You are vividly aware that your own experience of the injustices which you are talking about is mild or rare compared with the deep and constant injustice suffered by your audience. Here a voluntary illocutionary self-silencing may be a perfectly correct and justified response.

Note that such justified voluntary self-silencing is fully consistent with the concept of silencing as it is being used here: a form of (specifically illocutionary) speech act disablement, where a person is rendered unable to perform the (specifically illocutionary) speech acts they might otherwise perform. There is no requirement on this general concept that every instance of silencing be wrongful. The usage is well-motivated and defensible as I shall argue (section 4), but it obliges us to be cautious in drawing implications from this analysis.

2.6 Radical self-silencing: News Conference

News Conference differs from Two Talks because here it is your failure in relation to recognising the illocutionary force of your own speech acts – failures of self-uptake – which explain the speech act disablement. This is nevertheless also a variety of self-silencing because you are proximately responsible for rendering yourself unable to perform the speech act: the 'Who' and 'Whom' of silencing are one and the same, the silencer and silencee. It is just that what explains the self-silencing is that you fail at self-uptake: the 'Who' and 'Whom' of silencing are one and the same because the 'Who' and 'Whom' of uptake-failure are also one and the same.

These failures can be expected or actual, just as with simple self-silencing, and this will give rise to different cases of radical self-silencing. There are anticipation-cases, as in *News Conference*, where you expect failures in self-uptake and thus decide not even to attempt an illocutionary act. And there are weariness-cases where the speaker's attempts at an illocutionary act have been so frequently frustrated by failures in their self-uptake that they no longer attempt them. These are what we shall identify as cases of 'internalist' form. There are also cases of 'externalist' form, where the speaker is without awareness of their failures of self-uptake, or makes the attempt despite whatever awareness they do have of these failures.

Notice again that those who acknowledge cases of radical self-silencing might but need not endorse a suitably modified version of Austin's uptake claim (1975, 117; Moran 2018, 136): that the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of *self-uptake*. If they do, they can offer the same strong reason for the speaker to self-censor in cases of internalist form: that were self-uptake-failure to occur, the speaker could not even *perform* the illocutionary act they might otherwise attempt; anticipating such failure, the speaker does not attempt it. If they do not, they can offer a weaker but no less sufficient reason to self-censor

in such cases: that although the speaker might succeed in performing the illocutionary act where self-uptake-failure occurs, there would be no point in their attempting it because the speaker could not be aware of having performed the act they nevertheless perform; anticipating this, the speaker does not attempt it.

Radical self-silencing in the particular form exemplified by *News Conference* is the combination of self-silencing with failure of self-uptake. There can be radical self-silencing without failure of self-uptake, as in *Two Talks*. And we may suspect there can be converse cases, of failure of self-uptake without self-silencing. But this is a controversial conclusion that depends on subsidiary issues that we need not resolve to appreciate the analysis.

Testimonial competence may play a decisive role in cases which combine self-silencing with failure of self-uptake and thus share a basic form with *News Conference*. You might rate your testimonial competence as low in itself, without comparing it with that of any intended audience of your potential illocutionary act. And this might manifest in failures of self-uptake rather than (actual or expected) failures of uptake by others. For example, the fact that you think you lack testimonial competence may be internally related to your being confused or conflicted about the illocutionary force of the speech act you might otherwise perform, which would explain why you do not attempt it.

2.7 Analysis of radical self-silencing

Summarising these attempts to individuate, clarify and then unify, we arrive at the full form of the proposed analysis – where conditions (i)–(v) are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for radical self-silencing:

(i) it is silencing: a kind of speech act disablement, where a person is unable to perform the speech act they might otherwise perform;
(ii) it is illocutionary silencing: the disablement is illocutionary in nature: the person is unable to perform the illocutionary act they might otherwise perform;
(iii) it is uptake-related silencing: it is failure to recognise the illocutionary force of the relevant speech act which explains why the person is unable to perform a speech act;
(iv) it is self-silencing: the person who might otherwise have performed the speech act is proximately responsible for rendering themselves unable to perform it – for example, by deciding not to attempt it;

(v) it is uptake-related self-silencing: it is the person's own failure at recognising the illocutionary force of the relevant speech act which explains why they are proximately responsible for rendering themselves unable to perform a speech act.

This analysis covers cases like *Two Talks* where the phrase 'relevant speech act' in (iii) and (v) refers to those made by members of the community in which you have been dwelling, and cases like *News Conference* where the phrase refers to the speech act you yourself would have performed had you uttered the sentence you choose not to utter.

Note that this analysis has an intentionally adaptable form: as we shall appreciate and explore (section 3), theorists who use 'uptake' to mean different things can still adopt its basic form and most of its content.

2.8 Internalist and externalist forms

This analysis gives us the means to differentiate more deeply between externalist and internalist forms of radical self-silencing. The distinction depends on one's awareness in relation to condition (iii) and the particular role it plays in relation to conditions (iv) and (v).

Internalist radical self-silencing: the person is aware of their failures in relation to recognising the illocutionary force of the relevant speech act, and this awareness plays a significant role in explaining why they are proximately responsible for rendering themselves unable to perform a speech act.

News Conference is an example of the internalist form. You fail to recognise the illocutionary force of the speech act you might otherwise have performed because there is no such illocutionary force to be recognised: the determinate sentence which accurately captures your view is consistent but lacks an illocutionary force because of the contradiction between its force-elements, one being violence-condemning and the other violence-commending. Uttering the sentence would similarly fail to constitute an illocutionary act, since such acts cannot be contradictory (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 161–2). You are aware of this, and that is why you do not attempt it, making you proximately responsible for the silencing.

Externalist radical self-silencing: the person is either (a) not aware of their failures in relation to recognising the illocutionary force of the relevant speech act or (b) their awareness of this does not lead them to decide not to attempt a speech act.

We can adapt *News Conference* so that it has this externalist form instead. Suppose persons A and B are in the same conflicted situation as you and similarly prompted to utter the same determinate sentence which accurately captures their view, but A is wholly unaware that contradiction deprives it of illocutionary force and B is only partly aware of this. Both A and B produce the utterance anyway, attempting to perform an illocutionary act that is in fact contradictory. (B may make the attempt precisely to become more aware of the compromised condition of which they are only partly aware, following a familiar impulse phrased by W.H. Auden and others: 'how do I know what I think until I see what I say?' Auden 1962, 22.)

Given the contradiction between condemning and commending violence, this is not an illocutionary act that A or B are able to perform: one can *attempt* to perform something that turns out to be contradictory, but illocutionary acts cannot be contradictory. What makes both A and B proximately responsible for being unable to perform it – as B may partly realise even if A does not – is that they make their attempt using a sentence whose illocutionary force they do not recognise. And they do not recognise it for the now-familiar reason that, given the contradiction between its violence-condemning and violence-commending force-elements, there is no such illocutionary force to be recognised.

3. Explicating the analysis: uptake issues

This analysis of radical self-silencing is subject to challenge from several directions. What stimulates these challenges are often differences of position in the literature on illocutionary silencing deriving from Hornsby (1993; Hornsby and Langton 1998) and Langton (1993), so we will address these. Some challenges turn out to be calls for clarification, which I shall try to provide. Others remain objections despite such an explanation, and from these, I shall try to defend the analysis.

The deepest challenge focuses on the use of uptake to mean 'recognising the illocutionary force of a speech act'. The same label is being used with an ever-proliferating variety of meanings in the literature on illocutionary silencing. What justifies present usage, so I shall argue, is that it enables us to construct an analysis of radical self-silencing which confronts and accounts for the full extent of possible cases, including those that are harder to configure for ourselves. The argument is involved, so I shall first sketch its three main premises and then defend these premises in detail.

(a) 'Uptake' is being used in various ways and given different meanings by different theorists in the literature. (b) Our basic analysis is designed to be adaptable so that these different theorists can still use it: we can plug in these different meanings – into conditions (iii) and (v)—and still leave the form and the rest of the content of the analysis in place. But (c) adopting our usage forces us to confront the most difficult cases – the deepest and most internal – so as to develop the means to configure the full range. Hence it is better to retain the analysis as presented here in its full form, rather than plugging in alternative meanings for 'uptake'.

Two preliminary comments. To appreciate this argument, it is not necessary to isolate every actual and possible alternative meaning for 'uptake' in the literature; it is sufficient to establish the range of such meanings and the major structural lines that separate them, and then investigate the most representative cases. Second, the argument focuses on what we require to pursue the present analysis of radical self-silencing. There may be other reasons to prefer using one meaning of 'uptake' to another, including deep theoretical considerations which justify one option over another, but we are bracketing-off all such considerations here.

3.1 'Uptake' is used with a range of meanings

It was once the fashion to use 'uptake' to mean something essentially receptive: to understand or recognise something, for example. This is in accord with Austin's short and notoriously difficult description of uptake, where he associates it with 'bringing about the understanding of the meaning and the force of the locution' (1975, 117).

Receptivity-based uses divide, depending on their 'focus', on what it is one must be receptive to. The plainest option is to make the focus the illocutionary force of a speech act. This is the option we have explicated and adopted for the present analysis (dependent on de Gaynesford 2011a; 2018; a point of agreement with Moran 2018, 134–7).

Some make the focus instead the communication intention of the speaker (e.g. Strawson 1964; Searle 1969; Bach and Harnish 1979; and followed also by the sceptical Alston 2000). This essentially deepens the notion of uptake by situating it as the conjunction of an Austinian theory of speech acts and a Gricean theory of the pragmatics of communication (de Gaynesford 2011a; Longworth 2019). It is attractive to those

who think each theory can thus make up for the deficiencies of the other. It is an option that was adopted in some early work on illocutionary silencing (e.g. Hornsby 1995).

A third alternative that also figured in early work here (e.g. Langton 1993) and continues to be adopted in various forms (e.g. McGowan 2009; Caponetto 2021) is to make the focus of receptivity the set of conventions associated with different kinds of illocutionary act, including those which stipulate what an utterance must satisfy if the relevant act is to be performed.

All such receptivity-based uses of 'uptake' contrast with uses which make it mean something essentially reactive: responding in a particular way for example (Sbisà 2009; Kukla 2014). We should avoid describing this as a contrast between 'passive' and 'active' usage respectively, since as we argued above, recognising something is receptivity-based but not passive. Austin's blessing is claimed for response-based uses also (Sbisà 2009), though with more of a squeeze perhaps. These uses are also playing a role in the literature on illocutionary silencing (e.g. Tirrell 2019).

Response-based uses divide, depending on what form the responses are to take and how extensive they must be. Some identify 'uptake' with something whose securing brings about 'social agreement', agreeing upon what the utterance has brought about, for example, which can itself be tacit (e.g. Sbisà 2009, 45; 49–50 who is explicit about this). This is less demanding, at least if it means that uptake may but need not be manifest in subsequent behaviour.

Others use 'uptake' to mean 'enacted recognition' of the normative impact of the utterance, the changes it makes on 'social space' (e.g. Kukla 2014, 444). The requirement of enactment makes it response- rather than receptivity-based, despite the role given to recognition. This is more demanding, at least if enactment makes it necessary for there to be a manifestation of this recognition in subsequent behaviour.

Enactment uses may themselves divide into stronger or weaker forms, depending on how manifest or salient something must be to count as such.

3.2 The basic analysis is adaptable by design

Recall that the form and content of our basic analysis of radical self-silencing is as follows: (i) it is a kind of speech act disablement which (ii) is illocutionary in nature where (iii) faults in relation to uptake explain why the person is unable to perform the speech act they might otherwise perform,

(iv) this person is proximately responsible for rendering themselves unable to perform it, and (v) what explains their proximate responsibility are their faults in relation to uptake.

All this remains in place, whatever meaning we plug in for 'uptake'. So the form and the rest of the content of the basic analysis remains the same. Indeed, the analysis was designed to enable this adaptability, so that theorists with very different ideas of what we should mean by 'uptake' can still use the basic analysis.

The full analysis presented above (section 2) took the basic analysis and plugged in the plainest receptivity-based meaning for 'uptake'. On this analysis, what 'faults in relation to uptake' means in conditions (iii) and (v) is.

- *[Plain]* failure to recognise the illocutionary force of the relevant speech act

Using the same basic form, we get different full analyses by plugging in these alternative definitions of uptake-failure, which we have identified as being representative of the range of usage:

- *[C-Intention]* failure to recognise the communication intention of the speaker in relation to the relevant illocutionary act
- *[Convention]* failure to recognise the convention-based satisfaction conditions on the relevant illocutionary act
- *[Agreement]* failure to agree upon what performing the relevant illocutionary act would bring about
- *[Enactment]* failure to enact recognition of the normative changes that performing the relevant illocutionary act would bring about

3.3 Preference for the present full analysis

Plugging in these different meanings will produce viable full analyses of radical self-silencing, let us assume. But we adopted *Plain* to provide the full analysis (section 2) for a reason: because it is the one analysis which meets a particularly important requirement.

We want to develop the means to configure the full range of cases of radical self-silencing, including the most difficult and deep cases of uptake-failure. Which use of 'uptake' forces us to confront such cases? Our use, which makes *Plain* the definition of uptake-failure. This is because recognising the illocutionary force of one's own speech act is hardest of all to fail at, and hence hardest to understand and configure.

It is being the deepest and most internal failure which makes it so hard to fail at. Contrast it with the alternatives provided by other uses of 'uptake': failing to *enact* a recognition (*Enactment*); failing to recognise conditions on *successful performance* of an act (*Convention*); failing to recognise the *communication* intentions of the speaker (*C-Intention*). In all these alternatives, the location of the failure – marked in italics – is something comparatively 'outer', an extra task to achieve once the 'inner' recognition has already taken place. And it is comparatively easy to fail at these extra tasks once the 'inner' recognition is in place: to fail to enact it, or to fulfil all the external conditions on its successful performance, or to communicate it to others. Easier to achieve and correspondingly easier to understand and configure.

So adopting these alternatives would not oblige us to confront the full range of cases that *Plain* forces us to confront. Nor would it require us to develop the means to configure them as our full analysis did (section 2), finding a way to distinguish cases even at the deepest level, between externalist and internalist kinds. That is the general justification for preferring to build the full analysis of radical self-silencing on our definition of uptake (recognising the illocutionary force of a speech act) and uptake-failure (*Plain*).

There is a limited justification also, defended elsewhere: 'recognising the illocutionary force of a speech act' gets closest to what J.L. Austin meant by 'uptake' (de Gaynesford 2011a), it names a necessary condition on the successful performance of some but not all speech acts (de Gaynesford 2011a; 2018), it should not be reduced to a communicative notion (de Gaynesford 2018), and it helps not only explain but resolve what lies at the roots of the ancient struggle between philosophy and poetry (de Gaynesford 2010a; 2010b; 2011b; 2013a; 2013b; 2016; 2017). Explaining and resolving this struggle means getting to grips with the issue at its deepest, most intractable level, where the poet is also a philosopher so that the strife is internal, whether in self-conscious but repressed form (e.g. Eliot 1964) or in openly reflective form (e.g. Denise Riley 2000). So the present analysis of radical self-silencing can help us appreciate this.

4. Defending the analysis: silencing issues

The next most important challenge to the analysis of radical self-silencing focuses on its understanding of silencing and hence self-silencing.

The best way to get a lively sense for what is at issue here is to raise problem cases that seem hard or impossible to accept. In that spirit, we

should ask of this analysis whether it means that a person might undergo radical self-silencing even if.

- the person is not wrongfully deprived of the ability to perform the speech act
- there are considerable benefits of this silencing, including to this person
- the benefits of this silencing, including to this person, outweigh the harms
- this is a one-off event; it is not systematic in any relevant sense
- this is not a systemic event; its occurrence does not depend in a relevant way on specific social or political or economic structures

The answer to all these questions is in the affirmative, with some subsidiary qualifications. Some will find this hard or impossible to accept, for reasons we shall appreciate. These reasons generate specific challenges to the analysis, which in turn encourage us to explain and defend it.

Different uses of 'Silencing'

'Silencing' tends to be used in a narrow way in the literature on illocutionary silencing, a usage that seems to derive in part from Catharine MacKinnon (1987, 181–95). In narrow usage, it means a disablement that is specifically systemic, or systematic, or harmful, or wrongful, or culpable, or some combination of some or all of these (e.g. Langton 1993; Hornsby and Langton 1998; Bird 2002; Saul 2006; Bianchi 2008; Maitra 2009; 2012; Tanesini 2019).

It is particularly telling that those who question the conclusions drawn by familiar uptake-related arguments, like Saul, nevertheless adopt the narrow usage (Saul 2006). Indeed, this usage is adopted by those who reject key aspects of those arguments themselves, like Maitra, who claims that for all they show, it is actually *perlocutionary* acts that disadvantaged speakers are unable to perform, not illocutionary acts (Maitra 2009; for dissent, see de Gaynesford 2018, 81–2). Even those who develop a thoroughly contrastive conception of silencing, like Miranda Fricker, nevertheless adopt the narrow usage to do so (Fricker 2007, 129–46; for dissent, see de Gaynesford 2018, 81–5).

By contrast, the analysis I have proposed of radical self-silencing uses 'silencing' in the broad way of ordinary and other philosophical usage, where we commonly say that beauty silences us, or that we are silenced by a sense of shame, or that an impressive person or act silences us, and where philosophers say that features of a situation which would be 'vocal'

for a merely continent person are 'silenced' for the practically wise person (McDowell 1978, 90) or that the difficulty of philosophy or reality 'unhinges' us as speaking animals so that it silences us (Diamond 2008, 43–89).

The analysis focuses on *illocutionary* silencing, of course. But that simply means that over this broad field of silencing, we pick out the cases which concern illocutionary acts.

4.1 Broad usage

These examples of ordinary and other philosophical usage give a sense of things, but we need to be clearer about 'broad usage'. What does it mean, imply and implicate?

In broad usage, silencing means a disablement: the person is unable to perform the speech acts they might otherwise perform. So it is more severe than, say, being merely *impaired* in one's ability to perform such acts, even significantly (e.g. Tanesini 2019, 750), where this is nevertheless consistent with one's performing them.

Saying someone is silenced implicates a greater or lesser degree of the dramatic – as we sometimes say in such cases, 'I was robbed of speech' – χσlνσΣταρτwhich calls for comment. But neither broad usage in general nor my analysis in particular implies that silencing of itself is wrongful or that the one responsible is culpable.

There may be a harm in being silenced, but this usage and the analysis allow instances where to have spoken would have been more harmful. Indeed, as in these examples, an instance of silencing may overall be beneficial: experiencing deeper perception or helpful contemplation, recognising the importance of exercising due care in speech, being forced to rethink attitudes, and so on.

Neither broad usage nor my analysis implies that silencing of itself must be a regularity, still less a systematic regularity. As in many of these examples, an instance of silencing may be a one-off. And neither broad usage nor the analysis implies that silencing of itself must be systemic or otherwise dependent on specific social or political or economic structures. As in many of these examples, an instance of silencing may occur independently of such structures. Some may occur because the person who might otherwise have performed a speech act is overcome by excitement or sudden distress or another kind of emotional episode. Others may occur because the speech act which the speaker attempts depends on the uptake of an audience which has innocently misunderstood, or has failed to hear, or has made itself absent.

4.2 Broad vs narrow usage

Having marked the differences in broad and narrow usage and explained in detail how I am using 'silencing', two questions arise. Why does the literature depart from the broad usage prevalent in common and philosophical talk, adopting the narrow usage instead? And why does my analysis revert to the broad usage?

There is a historical explanation for the literature's departure which helps make clear why narrow usage is both legitimate and efficient for particular purposes. What originally and essentially interested Langton and Hornsby was not the phenomenon of illocutionary silencing tout court, but how we might use it to identify specifically systemic, systematic, harmful, wrongful and often culpable features of pornography that tend otherwise to be overlooked. So there was no immediate call to consider cases of illocutionary silencing where these features are not present, and hence adopting the narrow usage was both justifiable and economical.

The literature since then has expanded greatly to analyse many other problematic forms of speech. But where the aim remains focused on identifying cases of illocutionary silencing which present some or all these features, the narrow usage has also remained legitimate and efficient. It is, after all, a narrow but not minute usage. Even if we restrict the span to the conjunction of the limiting features – a speech act disablement that is systemic and systematic and harmful and wrongful and culpable – that still admits of a whole range of cases, from the most abysmal examples of racist and sexist and classist oppression, to much less grievous examples that are nevertheless significant in their own spheres, like the treatment of poets by philosophers and of philosophers by poets (de Gaynesford 2017).

Our present aim, however, is to analyse the phenomenon of radical self-silencing tout court. There may be cases which are neither systemic, nor systematic, nor harmful, nor wrongful nor culpable. Since we should not rule them out a priori, we must revert to broad usage. Hence, for our particular purposes, narrow usage is neither legitimate nor justifiable.

4.3 Benefits of broad usage

And there are considerable benefits to reverting to broad usage. If we restrict silencing to the narrow option, it limits the attention to a history of infamy. If we revert to broad usage instead, we can still focus on that history but we are not confined to it because, unlike the

narrow option, it allows us to speak of silencing as a means to do good. And we ought to be encouraged to develop this option, to sharpen silencing as a means to act positively, because it may enable us to achieve progressive solutions – to undermine attempts at subordinating speech as in pornography cases (de Gaynesford 2009, 488–90), or to encourage a voluntary illocutionary self-silencing among speakers when they correctly judge their testimonial competence to be very low in comparison with that of their audience as in the *Two Talks* case, or to self-silence in order to direct attention and prominence to other witnesses, as when Heisenberg mentions running into political trouble in Germany in 1937 but says 'I shall pass over it, because many of my friends had to suffer so much worse' (1971, 166).

Moreover, broad usage enables us to draw on a correspondingly wide area of evidence. As already noted (section 1), self-silencing leaves few traces, so we need whatever evidence we can get to individuate it.

And finally, broad usage enables us to keep the discussion within what philosophy itself can determine. The narrow usage necessarily extends the discussion: if silencing implies something systemic or systematic, we cannot determine what counts as such without considerable empirical work in subjects far beyond philosophy. As we remarked at the start, feeding investigation in these further subjects may be the ultimate goal of philosophical work on silencing, but the present investigation is preliminary and ought not to constrict itself in this way.

4.4 Triviality objection

An objection may have formed against the analysis of radical self-silencing: that since it follows common usage in using a concept which is applicable to an individual who experiences a relatively minor form of speech act disablement on a single occasion, it must trivialise – underestimate, play down, make light of – the injustice experienced by others, including people who belong to groups who have historically suffered constant and major forms of speech act disablement.

But this does not follow, any more than this does: that since an analysis of mental states follows common usage in using a concept—'pain'—which is applicable to a person who experiences a relatively minor and temporary discomfort, it must trivialise the agony experienced by others, including those who belong to a group which suffers serious long-term pain.

Philosophical analysis gives reasons why it is useful to have the use of 'pain' as a broad concept, and I have given reasons to justify the

usefulness of 'silencing' as a broad concept. If trivialising is ever a threat, we can anticipate it by introducing additional qualifying concepts to distinguish between levels and intensities. This is precisely what we have just done for both 'pain' and 'silencing', introducing the qualifying terms 'minor' and 'temporary' and their contraries 'constant', 'long-term', 'serious' and 'major'.

5. Conclusion and further questions

This paper has proposed an analysis of radical self-silencing as a particular variety of speech act disablement for which the speaker is proximally responsible in failing to recognise the illocutionary force of the relevant speech acts (section 2). This analysis is controversial in two main areas: its focus on a peculiarly deep and inner concept of uptake (section 3), balanced by its use of a peculiarly broad concept of silencing (section 4). Both choices have been justified on grounds we can now unify: that they provide a frame for the analysis which embraces the widest range of cases whilst obliging us to go deeply enough to explain what accounts for the most difficult of them.

Further difficult questions to which the analysis gives rise include the following. Might a person *not* undergo radical self-silencing even if they do not achieve self-uptake with their speech act? Or if they do not achieve any uptake (including that of others) with their speech act? Can there be failure of self-uptake without self-silencing? Can there be forms of radical self-silencing which are equivalents of 'blocking' speech acts (Langton 2018; Kukla 2014; Navarro-Reyes 2010; 2014; Sbisà 2001; Caponetto 2018; Tanesini 2019; McDonald 2021) where it is not the audience but the speaker who 'changes a past utterance from the unactualised way it would have been, to the way it actually is' (Langton 2018, 156)? We lack space to discuss these questions here, but using arguments presented in previous work (de Gaynesford 2011a; 2018), I would answer them all in the affirmative.

The immediate motivation, noted at the start, was to help make sense of a particularly difficult and convoluted phenomenon which necessarily leaves few traces. But there is a longer-term motivation, raised by the title, and which we are now in a position to appreciate. 'Who Whom?' is Lenin's slogan, as recorded by Trotsky (1926, 18). It invokes that confluence of agency, power and interest which the literature on illocutionary silencing has established from the first as the ultimate target for discussion. The present investigation has been preliminary, and hence necessarily more

general and abstract. Our focus has been on clarifying what it might mean for the 'Who' and 'Whom' of silencing to be identical. But the underlying aim is to be of service to subsequent attempts to use this material, drawing specific and concrete implications for issues of ethics and justice.

Lenin's slogan helps mark out one way to go. Raymond Geuss argues that we should understand what Lenin meant by expanding it: it is about who does what, to whom, for whose benefit (Geuss 2008, 23–30). These are questions to which the present inquiry lends itself. But to guide further work into the areas it exposes, we ought to expand the slogan still further: it is equally about who suffers or otherwise undergoes what, from whom, for whose benefit. And these are questions for which the present inquiry is particularly apt. For in most cases of failure of self-uptake, debilitating confusion or conflict plays a key role. And the slogan prompts us to ask what it would be helpful to know in any such case: for whose benefit might this be?

We know that efforts to keep others silenced are particularly effective socio-politically if it can be turned into self-silencing, and that it is, therefore, to be particularly guarded against. It would be more effective still if it could be turned into *radical* self-silencing. So it is worthwhile seeking out such cases and explaining how some people suffer from it and why others benefit from it, with an eye – wherever the phenomenon manifests injustice – to finding ways of ending or at least curtailing it. But to do this in a sufficiently rigorous way, we would need to have an analysis of radical self-silencing to deploy, one that gives us a clear idea of what to look out for, and where exactly to find evidence of the phenomenon. And that is what I hope to have provided here.[1]

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