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TITLE OF PRESENTATION WITH SHORT ABSTRACT:
Against the Asymmetry Thesis of Intentionalism

Abstract: Contrary to conventionalism, intentionalism takes (most) illocutionary acts (e.g., apologizing) to be determined by the intentions of speakers (e.g., intending the audience to believe that he is welcomed...), instead of conventions (e.g., "sorry" is the conventional device for greeting). However, what is the proportion of illocutionary acts determined by intentions to those determined by conventions? Intentionalism often subscribes to what I call "the asymmetry thesis": most illocutionary acts are performed by expressing intentions, and only a few exceptions like knighting and excommunicating are determined by conventions. I will raise two arguments against the asymmetry thesis. First, speakers in certain settings can be coerced to perform most illocutionary acts, even though they do not intend the audience to form corresponding beliefs. Second, most illocutionary acts can be performed in an anonymous setting that removes all contextual information of the speaker's intentions. Therefore, conventional illocutionary acts have a much larger proportion; for almost all illocutionary acts, if they can be performed by intentions, they can also be performed by conventions. Finally, I will show that intentionalists embrace the asymmetry thesis because they have only considered "explicit conventions." The asymmetry thesis fails because most illocutionary acts can be determined by "implicit conventions."