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Varieties of Uptake

There is a lively debate in philosophy of language concerning the determination of the illocutionary force of a speech act. The debate revolves around the notion of uptake and, more particularly, around the role played by the audience: many scholars consider the hearer's uptake necessary for the successful performance of an illocutionary act. A variety of theories has been put forward. According to Langton, the hearer's uptake determines *whether* a successful act has been performed (Langton 1993); according to Kukla, the hearer's uptake constitutes the *nature* of the act performed (Kukla 2014); according to McDonald, the illocutionary force of a speech act is the result of a process of *negotiation* between the hearer and the speaker (McDonald 2020; forth.). In my talk, I will show how the theories giving the audience a central role in fixing the illocutionary force of a speech act fall short. The topic will prove relevant not only for theoretical reasons, but also for social and political ones. In particular, it has a bearing on debates about pragmatic phenomena of conversational distortion, such as silencing and discursive injustice, where marginalized speakers have trouble performing particular speech acts that they are entitled to perform.