

Accepted Manuscript

Logical Investigations on Assertion and Denial

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PII: S1570-8683(17)30063-0

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jal.2017.11.003>

Reference: JAL 480

To appear in: *Journal of Applied Logic*



Please cite this article in press as: M. Carrara et al., Logical Investigations on Assertion and Denial, *J. Appl. Log.* (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jal.2017.11.003>

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Logical Investigations on Assertion and Denial.

Editorial

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November 30, 2017

Suppose Anna disagrees with John as to whether Padua is North of Venice. John asserts that it is and Anna disagrees. Anna may express her disagreement with John by *asserting the negation* of what John said: Padua is *not* North of Venice. Whatever the exact details of one's account of disagreement are, a way for a speaker—Anna in our case—to disagree with another, John, is to *negate what the other is asserting*. In general one can argue that two speakers disagree only if they have *incompatible* beliefs, or perform speech acts that cannot be jointly correct. And a standard way to express that one has an *incompatible* belief with another is to *negate* the other's *assertion* as for Anna and John.

Question: Can Anna be a paraconsistent logician or a dialetheist – one who thinks there are sentences both true and false? No, she can't! If A is a *glut*, i.e. if it is both true and false, you cannot in general take assertions of both A and $\neg A$ to express *disagreement* (Priest 2006a,b). This directly follows from their conception of *negation*: they lack of exclusive negation (For a general background on this see Asenjo (1966), Asenjo and Tamburino (1975), Priest (1979), Beall (2009)). How to express disagreement in such a framework? An answer is that disagreement may still be expressed by *denying* what has been said. So, Anna may express her disagreement by *denying* that Padua is North of Venice. And a way of doing it is to introduce the notion of *denial of a sentence* or *rejection*, understood as a *speech act*, as clearly distinguished from the *acceptance of the negation of α* .

Assertion and denial are *incompatible* speech acts. Moreover, unlike paraconsistent negation, denial is considered as *exclusive*: A and $\neg A$ may both be true, but *you can't correctly assert and deny A* . In order to work, the assertion of $\neg A$ must not commit one to denying A : denial must be a *primitive speech act*, not reducible to the assertion of $\neg A$ (Parsons 1984). That is, a paraconsistent logician must reject, and reject, the right-to-left direction of the *classical theory of denial*: i.e. that *one correctly denies A if and only if one correctly asserts $\neg A$* .

The forerunner of this special issue for the *Journal of Applied Logic* was inspired by the above sketched ideas, put forward during a workshop held in Lecce — at the University of Salento (Italy) — on January 21 and 22, 2016 entitled: *How to Say 'Yes' or 'No': Logical Approaches to Modes of Assertion and Denial*. The workshop was organised by Massimiliano Carrara (University of Padua), Daniele Chiffi (University of Salento – Lecce) and Caterina Annese (ZEI, Lecce). A *book of abstracts* from the workshop is available (ISBN: 978-1-326-51692-5) and can be freely downloaded via Academia and Lulu (Carrara et al. (2016)). It is also available on the workshop webpage (<https://sites.google.com/site/howtosayyesorno/home/workshop>).

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