Intentional Mental States and Pragmatic Acts in the *Song of Solomon*

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Abstract

The Song of Solomon is a wisdom literature, but often liable to misreading and controversy because of its erotic language. Extant studies have focused on its structural and anthropological evaluations, while the philosophical and pragmatic perspectives that can enable clearer reading remain under-researched. This paper, therefore, investigates the intentional mental states and the pragmatic acts in the text through the instrumentality of Searle's theory of intentionality and Habermas' theory of communication respectively, with a view to validating the text as a manual of sexual love. The eight chapters in the Song of Solomon constituted the data, while the version of the Bible utilised was the New International Version. The content was subjected to qualitative philosophical and pragmatic analyses. Four intentional components were identified: intentional action, visual experience, visual perception and experience of acting. Intentional actions served as prior intentions, as well as eventuated into actions, while visual experience and perception functioned as channels of assigning sensual attributes, and equally triggered intentional actions and actions. Ten pragmatic acts were identified: requesting, promising, longing, inviting, adoring, describing, enquiring, worrying and loving. Intentional action underscored requesting, promising and longing; visual experience and perception delineated adoring, encouraging and praising acts; experience of acting distinguished worrying, pleading, inviting and loving pragmatic acts. Consequently, the high occurrence of erotic visual experiences that culminated into passionate amatory intentional actions cum actions evinced that the Song of Solomon is a mantra of behavioural and sexual guide for those in courtship and married couples.

Keywords: intentionality, sexual love, song of solomon, universal pragmatics

Introduction

The Song of Solomon is categorized under wisdom literature, together with Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. It is the fifth of the five poetical books in the Bible, and the 22nd book in the Old Testament. The language articulates the sexual beauty and the ecstatic joy associated with requited love in courtship and marriage. Hence it is the only song that is preserved out of the 1005 songs written by King Solomon, and it remains a puzzle in the Bible because of its graphic sexual articulation. Consequently, researchers have given diverse interpretations to it in order to justify its inclusion in the Bible. While some believe that the language is a metaphorical description of the relationship be-

tween God and the Israelites, even though God was not even mentioned once in the content, some still submit that the book shows the relations between Jesus Christ and the Church. Others argue that the text enunciates the amatory relationship between two ardent lovers, an argument which is in line with the submission of this paper. To that end, this study furthers this stance, as well as complements previous studies by adopting a pragmatic and philosophical interpretation of the text which existing studies have not adequately explored. The two lovers in the Song of Solomon are the Shulamite maiden and Solomon, while the other characters are the daughters of Jerusalem and the brothers of the Shulamite maiden.

Previous Studies and Statement of the Problem

The Song of Solomon has been analyzed from different perspectives, particularly the structural pattern, yet with varying findings, while the philosophical and pragmatic interpretations remain scanty. For instance, Exum (1973), Shea (1980), Webster (1982), Dorsey (2004), Garret (1993) and Davidson (2003) have explicated the structural alignment. Contrarily, Babajide (2007) focuses on the stylo-linguistic parallels of the graphological, lexical, phonological and syntactic features of the Song of Solomon and p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino*, and not the pragmatic significance. In contrast, Porter (1990) gives an exegetical appraisal of the Song of Solomon as a wisdom literature via historical critical methodology. On his own part, Boer (2007) examines the sociocultural relevance by focusing on the metaphorical expression, ecocriticism, and Marxism to defend the view that the text operates "an allocatory worldview," thereupon contrasting most literal readings that it is about human love and sex. Consequent upon the view that the Song of Solomon relates eroticism (Writ, 1990; Odionkhere, 2012), this paper negates Boer's (2007) standpoint because the metaphorical expressions depict sexual allusions.

Differently, Kauk's (2010) research authenticates Solomonic authorship, in addition to submitting that besides the shepherd, Solomon is also another character, but a minor one in the book. While this paper aligns with Kauk's (2010) view as regards the authorship of the book, it disavows the notion that aside from Solomon, the shepherd is also another character, for Solomon is also the same character as the shepherd (Dorsey, 2004; Boer, 2007; Odionkhere, 2012). Odionkhere (2012) identifies the speech acting of the interlocutors which consequently shows the sequencing of the illocutionary acts, thereby validating Solomon as still the shepherd referred to in the text. Nevertheless, Odionkhere (2012) neglects the analysis of the intentional mental state, and the nexus between intentionality and pragmatic acts which is

capable of further underlining the amatory viewpoint articulated in the Song of Solomon.

Thus, this paper conflates pragmatic and philosophical analyses of the Song of Solomon in order to present a robust and comprehensive analysis, besides authenticating the complementary relations between pragmatics and philosophy. Following this, the paper identifies the intentional mental states of the interlocutors and the pragmatic acts, and the nexus between both. The research draws insight for interpretation from Searle's (1983) theory of intentionality and Habermas' theory of communicative action.

Expected Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes to scholarly knowledge on the philosophy of mind and pragmatics by interpreting the intentional mental states of the interlocutors in the Song of Solomon and their speech acting. Additionally, the explication of the nexus between pragmatic acts and the intentional mental states of interactants validates the complementary relations between philosophy and pragmatics, and consequently highlights the content as a representation of sexual love, contrary to the submission of theologians that the book is about the relationship between God and the Jews. This paper complements previous studies because it provides philosophical interpretation yet to be examined in the Song of Solomon. As such, the paper should function as reference material for subsequent researches on its language, pragmatics and religious discourse.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theories of communicative action and of intentionality shall be considered.

Universal pragmatics: the theory of communicative action

Universal pragmatics seeks to explicate the universal features inherent in language use (Habermas, 1998). These features are wholly expressed in communicative action because it exploits a comprehensive use of the functions of language in relation to the social world of interlocutors, objective world of things and subjective world of interactants' feelings. Habermas (1998) describes these three worlds as domains of reality. External nature comes to the fore when a speaker demarcates himself/herself from a communicatory environment by presenting a proposition in the third person attitude of an observer, adopting a basic objectivating attitude towards an object or a state of affair. The speech act associated with external world is constative, thus assigning it truth validity, with an equivalent cognitive mode of communication, while the pragmatic function of the proposition is representation of fact. In contrast, social world manifests when a speaker adopts a performa-

tive attitude of a participant in a system of communication, while his/her attitude regarding the utterance is conformative attitude, and a parallel interactive mode of communication. The pragmatic act is defined as regulative, with a corresponding validity of rightness; while the function is the establishment of legitimate interpersonal relations. Differently put, internal nature phrases a speaker's subjectivity in the first-person attitude; hence the basic attitude is nonobjectivating, and a matching expressive pragmatic act, which functions as a disclosure of the speaker's subjectivity, raised with validity of truthfulness.

The Theory of Intentionality

Intentionality is the representational signification of mental states and events, and it is either directed at objects or state of affairs. Intentionality takes cognisance of the nature of intentional components of mental states, which can be visual perception, visual experience, intentional action and experience of acting (Searle, 1893). Additionally, Searle's theory evaluates the manner of presentation of mental states, which can either be representation or presentation, depending on the type of intentional component. The examination of an agent's proposition also demands that conditions of satisfaction of intentional components be met. The condition states that there should be a causal connection between intentional components and the objects or the represented state of affairs. Intentionality also evaluates the direction of fit, direction of causation, the nature of the self-reference of intentional component and the intentional state of the agent. Instances of intentional states are desire, expectation, belief, fear, hope, anxiety, pleasure and liking (Searle, 1983).

Methodology

Descriptive design was adopted for the elucidation of the sample data because it enabled content evaluation by allowing for categorizations, besides facilitating a correlative description of data. Song of Solomon comprises 117 verses, and all were subjected to content analysis, while the version utilized was the New International Version. Searle's (1983) theory of intentionality elucidates the intentional mental states, while Habermas' (1998) theory of communicative action interpreted the pragmatic acts of the interlocutors. The data were subjected to qualitative philosophical and pragmatic analyses.

Analysis and Discussions

Intentionality is concerned with the representation of the mental state of interlocutors, represented through the mind, language or picture (Searle, 1983). Four intentional components are identified in the Song of Solomon: intentional action, visual experience and perception, and experience of acting. While

intentional actions are demonstrations of requesting, longing and promising pragmatic acts, visual experience and perception exhibit adoring, describing and praising; whereas experience of acting depicts inviting, worrying and loving pragmatic acts. The following examples substantiate the findings:

Intentional action

Intentional action is the component of an intending action. It has a causal relation with experience of acting. These features are reflected in examples one and two.

Example one:

> Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for your love is more delightful than wine. Song 1:2

> Take me away with you let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers... 1:4

> Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. 2:5

The representer in example one is the Shulamite maiden, while the intentional component is intentional action as shown through the content: Let him kiss me...; Take me away...; Let the king bring me... and Strengthen me... The intentional state is desire, directed at Solomon, who is the intentional object, who is also expected to collaborate with the maiden to bring about the experience of acting represented in the intentional content in Example One because they are lovers, and it prompted a requesting pragmatic act in 1:2, clinching validity of rightness, in addition to necessitating the noted interactive mode of communication. The direction of causation is mind to the world, that is expressed in . . . for your love is more delightful than wine, reported in the form of a memory, hence it is representational acts, while the other propositions are presentation of mental acts because they are new state of affairs; thus the direction of fit for the utterances is world to mind. Though 1:2 functions as prior intention that occasioned the intentional action in 1:4, which also in turn serve as prior intention for 2:5; thus, it is a longing pragmatic act. The intentional state for the trio is still desire, corresponding with the longing pragmatic act identified in 2:5, while its object is still Solomon. Subsequently, the contents of the three verses evidenced that there is an intentional causation that eventuates in the eventual subsequent experience of acting represented in 5:1: "I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk." Consequently, the pragmatic

function for the intentional contents of the propositions is validation of erotic relationship.

Example two:

> All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him. *I will get up now and go about the city...; I will search for the one my heart loves.* So I looked for him but did not find him. 3:2

> Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. 7:11

> Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom- there I will give you my love. 7:12

> Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. 4:6

In Example Two, the represener in 3:2 is the Shulamite maiden, while the intentional state is desire as depicted in the content. The intentional content evinces that she longs to be with her lover: *All night long on my bed I looked*... hence she performs a promising speech act so as to ensure the fulfilment of her desire, which underscores the registered intentional action: *I will get up now*..., *I will search*... Direction of causation is mind-to world, which is particularly highlighted through the introductory utterance, reported in the form of a memory. There is a causative connection between the content in the intentional action exemplified in 2:5 in Example One and the optical stimuli expressed in *All night long on my bed I looked...*, hence it is also a longing pragmatic act, equally connected to the intentional action identified in *I will get up now . . .* through a promise; as such, the direction of fit is world-to-mind, thus the representation of the intentional component is via promising speech acting, raised with truthfulness validity, which defines the mode of presentation as representational mental state. Given this, the pragmatic function is a disclosure of the maiden's subjectivity, disclosed through expressive mode of communication. Also, the condition of satisfaction is validated through the expressive intentionality that shows that the Shulamite maiden and Solomon are lovers.

      The speaker in 7:11-12 is Solomon, while the intentional state is also desire, which is authenticated through a promising act: ...there I will give you my love. Consequently, in order to fulfil his desire, he performs an inviting act: Come my lover..., let us spend the night... and Let us go early..., which function as prior intentions to the articulated intentional action enunciated as

a promising speech act. The two speech acts performed by Solomon shows that the style of presentation is representation, as well as underpinned the direction of fit as world-to-mind. Equally, the prior intentions defined as inviting act operate as causality for the intentional action that is expressed as a promising act. Both speech actions are raised with validity of rightness because the interactants are lovers. The intentional state, desire, affirms the social world of lovers; hence Solomon adopts a performative attitude of a participant in a system of communication, and a tallying conformative attitude, thus defining the medium of language use as interactive. The pragmatic acts in 7:11 is inviting, requesting in 7:12 and promising in 4:6, and the central function of the three is to aid the realisation of intentional state (desire).

Visual Experience and Perception

Visual experience is an intentional component that describes events captured through sight, while visual perception relates intentionality perceived as a picture in the mind or represented by memory. Examples Three and Four illustrate both.

Example three:

How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves. 1:15

How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming! 1:16

You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, majestic as troops with banners. 6:4

How beautiful your sandaled feet, O prince's daughter! Your graceful legs are like jewels, the work of a craftsman's hands. 7:1

The intentional component in Example Three is visual experience, while there are two perceivers: Solomon and the Shulamite maiden who are lovers. The intentional content expounded on the physical beauty of both lovers, consequently authenticating the condition of satisfaction for the intentional component. The intentional state is loving, directed at the two lovers; and it maintains a parallel with adoring pragmatic act and a matching validity of rightness. The perceiver in 1:15, 6:4 and 7:1 is Solomon while the intentional object of the visual experience is the Shulamite, but in 1:6 she is the perceiver, while Solomon is the object. The causal link in the contents validates the sequencing of the pragmatic acts, which consequently defines the mode of language use as interactive. The utterances are presentational mental acts that represent their feelings for each other; as such the direction of fit is mind-to-world, the world of lovers. The presentational content is the same, and subsequently it ratifies the voluptuous relations between the lovers. The se-

quencing of the visual experience of the lovers equally enables a performative attitude of participants in a system of communication.

Example four:

O daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you – if you find my lover, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love. 5:8

How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others, that you charge us so? 5:9

My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. 5:10

His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. 5:11

His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. 5:12

Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you? 6:1

The perceiver in Example Four: 5:10-12 is the Shulamite maiden, while the object of the visual experience is her lover. 5:8 and 9 function as intentional causation for the visual perception articulated in subsequent verses. Following this, the visual perception serves as a response to the intending experience in 5:9; as such the intentional state verbalized in 5:10-12 is expectation, and it inspires an encouraging pragmatic act so that the intention in action and visual experience in 5:8 can come to realization: O daughters of Jerusalem, *I charge you – if you find my lover*, (visual experience) *what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love* (intentional action). On the basis of this, the object of the visual perception differs from the object of the intentional state, considering the significance of the intentional causation in Example Four; the object of the intentionality are the daughters of Jerusalem, who asked the Shulamite to tell them the reason they should inform her lover that she is "... faint with love" whenever they see him. The reason shows the causal relations between the intentional state and its object. The direction of fit is mind-to-world in Song 5:10-12, reported as a recollection, as such the propositions are representational mental acts. Equally, 5:9: "How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others, that you charge us so?" serves as intentional causation for the mental state of the maiden avowed in 5:10-16 (expectation), which in turn function as causality for intentional state of worry in 6:1, and a consequent enquiring pragmatic act: "Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you?" It follows that the mode of communication is interactive, also because the intentional state is object directed.

Experience of Acting

Experience of acting is a conscious experience; hence its component is intentional content.

Example five:

> Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go till I had brought him to my mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me. 3:4

> I went down to the grove of nut trees to look at the new growth in the valley, to see if the vines had budded or the pomegranates were in bloom. 6:11

The intentionality of the mental state in 3:4 is anxiety, which is certified by the causal relations phrased in the intentional action identified in 3:2: *I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares; I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him but did not find him*; and the visual experience in 3:3: *The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. "Have you seen the one my heart loves?"* Their contents affirm the intentional state of the Shulamite maiden in 3:4, as anxiety, consequently augmenting a causal connection between the propositions. To that end, the agent, the Shulamite performs an expressive worrying pragmatic act, synonymic with the intentional state of the action, anxiety, verifying the validity of truthfulness raised with the pragmatic act, and a matching expressive mode of language use. The intentional content is reported as a remembered event, which defines the direction of fit as mind-to world, as such, the presentation of the proposition is representation.

  The representer in 6:11 is Solomon, while the intentional state is petitioning, directed at the Shulamite, and a matching pleading pragmatic act, not only underscoring a conformative attitude but also a performative one and an equivalent interactive mode of communication. The presentational mental state is causally linked to the proposition in 3:1, a visual perception that is not fulfilled: *All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him; I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares; I will search for the one my heart loves* – an intentional action, which is fulfilled in a visual experience articulated in *So I looked for him but did not find him*, though futile effort.

Example Six:

> ...Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits. Song 4:16

> I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my

myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk. 5:1

His left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me. 8:3

I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers. Thus I have become in his eyes like one bringing contentment. 8:10

The agent in 4:16 is the Shulamite maiden, while the intentional state is desire, and its object is Solomon, with a resultant inviting pragmatic act; thus the proposition is a prior intention fulfilled in 5:1, 8:3 and 8:10 as consummation of sexual relationship as indicated by their intentional contents. Thus there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the propositions that represent prior intention, intentional action and the experience of action, hence the realization of the consummation pictured in 5:1. Consequently, the causative connection augments the conditions of satisfaction for the action, while the direction of causation is mind to world, presented as presentation of mental acts. The agent is Solomon, who responded to the inviting act through an expressive loving pragmatic act, thus defining the intentional state as pleasure: *I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.* The object of the intentional state is the maiden. Both the intentional state and the pragmatic act are further underlined by the Shulamite's utterance in 8:3 though represented through her mind, thus affording it an expressive mode of communication.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the intentional mental states and pragmatic acts in the *Song of Solomon* so as to advance the theme of sexual love splashed across all its pages, in addition to advancing the nexus between philosophy and pragmatics. Searle's theory of intentionality explicates the intentional mental states, while Habermas' theory of communicative action categorizes the pragmatic acts. Subsequently, the sequencing of the pragmatic acts distinctly underpinned the complementarity and the causal relations between the intentional components identified in the text: visual experience and perception, intentional action and experience of acting. Likewise, the identification and consequent elucidation of the pragmatic acts exhibit a corresponding complementation with the intentional components and mental states. For instance, intentional action distinguishes requesting, promising and longing pragmatic acts, while visual experience and perception underline adoring, encouraging, enquiring and praising. To that end, the examination affirms

that Song of Solomon is meant to educate the society on how to maintain good and sincere relationship in marriage and courtship.

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