

Chapter 4

REHABILITATION OF PERFORMATIVES

There goes with performatives a certain peculiarity to which we have already drawn attention. The peculiarity lies in that their identity as a sub-class of utterances vis-a-vis constatives is compromised by a philosopher who affirms it himself and, further, that the denial and affirmation are phases of a continuous process of thinking. But this historical fact, howsoever interesting, is of little, if any at all, theoretical relevance. A doctrine, if valid, remains so, irrespective of whether one who propounds it holds on to it or disowns it. A doctrine or theory, as a body of propositions, depends for its logical survival or acceptability, on its own inherent worth : the attitude of its author, the changes and fluctuations in it, does not have any role in the matter. Our object in saying this is to make one point clear. The point is that Austin's ^{denial} ~~critique~~ of the performative-constative distinction does not adversely affect the logical strength of the performative's identity, if it really has any; which means that our projected rehabilitation of performatives in this chapter, would not be redundant if it is not by itself a logically impossible task.

One more point deserves to be reemphasised before we get into our business. The concept of performative is not one such that its significance is exhausted just within itself. It has been indicated at the very outset that it has far reaching implications on certain very fundamental philosophical issues. It seems to provide, in the eyes of many, a new and useful model for understanding, among other things, the concepts of knowledge and truth. It has, in this sense, the potentiality of a highly constructive and elucidatory role to play. And this, by itself, may, perhaps, be said to count as some form of justification for admitting performatives as a distinct sub-class of utterances. However, in saying so, we have no intention to suggest that this justification is strong enough to sustain the identity of performatives against anything that may go against it. What we want to say is just that disowning the performatives will have to be a cautious process, that is to say, we should not, in any circumstances, surrender the identity of performatives, unless there are compelling reasons for doing so. This, again, should not be misconstrued as a suggestion being made by us to any such effect as that the case of performatives as a distinct sub-class of utterances should be entertained and upheld on purely pragmatic considerations and independently of

theoretically good reasons. Admitting performatives is to involve as much caution as rejecting them. In either case precipitancy and prejudices are two major dangers to be carefully avoided.

Vindication of performatives is not going to be any simple and easy job.

There indeed are philosophers who are critical of the notion of performatives. The objections they have raised against it need not be brushed aside as insignificant. What, however, makes the situation really serious is Austin turning against himself. So, what should get priority and should occupy us presently is to save Austin from himself, that is to say, we have to examine the grounds which have led him to compromise their identity. This job, as is understandable, will assume two forms.

First, we have to consider to what extent, if at all, Austin's failure to find out a universal and absolute criterion for distinguishing performatives from constatives may count as a ground which is strong enough for denying identity to performatives.

Second, we have to consider whether the notion of speech-acts which in Austin emerges out of his performative-constative distinction tends, as is supposed, to liquidate the latter, or is incompatible with the notion of performatives.

Let us take up first, problems pertaining to the criterion.

I

Austin examines a number of grammatical features with the hope of finding in them a criterion for identifying the performatives. But when is a particular grammatical feature to be treated as providing a suitable criterion? Obviously, it has to satisfy at least two conditions, namely,

(1) it must be such as is shared by all performatives, in other words, it must characterise all of them; and

(2) it must be such as is exclusive to performatives, that is to say, it must not characterise any constative whatsoever. And Austin does not seem to have any additional condition in mind when he talks of the grammatical criterion of a performative and engages himself in search for it.

The grammatical points examined by Austin in course of his search for a criterion are quite a few. For example, as we remember, that the subject of the performatory utterance is to be in the first person singular, that the verb is to be in the present indefinite tense, and that the utterance is in the indicative mood and in the active voice. And, as we have further seen, none of these marks, on examination, is eventually found to fulfil the stipulated requirements of a criterion. We need not question the findings of Austin, howsoever discouraging they may be. We may well afford to assume that Austin has made no mistake in his findings. However, what seems pertinent to ask is, what the findings amount to? Does the failure of the grammatical marks to satisfy the criterion-conditions tend to neutralise the performative-constative antithesis? Is it mandatory for us to be in possession of a criterion so that we may be entitled to uphold the identity of performatives? Let us investigate these matters and, for that purpose, make an assessment of the extent and nature of the failure of the grammatical marks.

It may be noted that the examples of utterances which are selected by Austin to demonstrate the failure of the grammatical criteria are utterances like, say, 'Passengers are warned to cross the track by bridge only', 'Notice is

hereby given that trespassers will be prosecuted', and so on. Judged in the light of the marks initially laid down by Austin, these may appear to one as non-standard performatives or as utterances which fall on the border-line between performatives and constatives. This is not very untrue. However, there is one point on which Austin is far from explicit. The point is whether we can say that the criteria work well in the case of what might be treated as standard instances of performatives, e.g., 'I promise...', 'I agree...', 'I name...', 'I bet...'. Such instances of performatives do indeed satisfy all the grammatical conditions stipulated by Austin, i.e. they are all utterances in the indicative mood and active voice, each of them has for its subject the first person singular pronoun and, finally, the verb is in the present indefinite tense.

Notwithstanding that, even in such cases of standard performatives the grammatical marks cannot live up to the requirement of the criteria of performatives, the reason being that they are not exclusive to performatives, i.e., they do not satisfy the second condition above. Indeed, there are endless cases of constatives which also exhibit the same grammatical marks. Compare, e.g. 'I sing', 'I walk', 'I cook', 'I dance', and such like.

It is quite plain that in saying all this we

have not denied that grammatical criteria, as alleged, fail to isolate performatives; on the contrary, what we have done is only reconfirm and highlight the alleged failure. As a matter of fact, an attempt to discover in the grammatical features of a performative its identifying mark, we think, is destined to fail. Austin's search for grammatical criteria for performatives has been in this sense, purely a misadventure, an idea totally misconceived. One would wonder why Austin has not been aware of this, and why he has been after a grammatical criterion at all.

Note one particular point. Performatives have been called by Austin a sub-class of 'masqu^erad^ers' among constatives. But what is the point of calling them so, in other words, what is it on account of which ~~they~~ appear to masqu^erade as constatives? Obviously, the grammatical features which they share in common with constatives. Thus, in calling performatives 'masqu^erad^ers', it is already committed by Austin that they are indistinguishable from the constatives at the grammatical level. Now note another thing. What, really, Austin does when he looks for a possible grammatical criterion with the hope of delimiting performatives from constatives? Unmistakably, he presumes

that there possibly be something in the grammatical plane by which performatives can be distinguished from constatives. Thus Austin proceeds from a pair⁹ of opposite commitments which tends, naturally, to vitiate his search for grammatical criteria to the extent of almost making it pointless. To assume that performatives have a grammatically identifying mark of their own is to make a misnomer of the phrase 'masqueraders'^e. What, however, is far more serious is that the very problem of defining the antithesis between performatives and constatives turns out to be a pseudo-problem on account of it. What is it for which it^t becomes meaningful to initiate the search of a criterion for demarcating performatives from constatives? The answer, obviously, is that the two sub-classes of utterances are grammatically non-distinguishable, which, in turn, tends to produce the impression that they are also non-distinguishable otherwise, that is, at the level of their semantic functioning. Thus what gives sense to the problem of how to distinguish performatives from constatives is the presupposition that they are grammatically not distinguishable. Whatever, tends, in any way, to grant that grammar can separate the two types of utterances tends by that to undermine the relevance of the problem, in other words, to dissolve it.

Let us take up the consideration of the grammatical criteria a step forward and to a deeper level. Suppose that there is a grammatical criterion of the kind wanted by Austin. We would like to ask, how far is the criterion helpful towards the justification of the possible distinction between performatives and constatives? One thing is very significant. What is it that is purported to be said in someone's saying that performatives and constatives are two different sub-classes of utterances? The answer is plainly this. What is said is not that the two types of utterances are governed by different grammatical rules. But that the semantic or logical functioning of one type of utterance is not the same as that of the other. Now, the question that calls for consideration is whether there is any such correlation between the grammar and the semantics of an utterance, so that, difference or similarity of two utterances in respect of the former may be said to provide a conclusive basis for saying that there is ^a corresponding difference or similarity between them in respect of the latter. It cannot be denied that in some cases a certain particular semantical functioning of a certain particular utterance goes with a certain particular grammatical peculiarity of the utterance. Take for example, the utterance, 'Please, shut the door'.

It is supposed to function as a device^c for making a request to somebody, and the grammatical peculiarity which goes with it is its being a sentence in the imperative mood. Take a second sentence, say, 'What's the time now?', the function of the utterance of which in language is to ask somebody a question, and grammatically it is usually framed into the interrogative sentence form. A third example, 'I am not crazy'. Grammatically, it is a sentence in the indicative mood, the semantic purpose of its utterance being to convey a certain information to a certain hearer.

Notice that in each case of the three utterances cited above, the relation between its grammatical form and its characteristic semantical functioning is purely conventional. In none of the instances is the grammar of the sentence, more precisely, the mood in which it is cast, built in its semantics; and it is in that sense inessential to the latter. To illustrate the point. Take, the utterance, 'Please, shut the door'. You may recast it, without altering its semantic functioning, in alternative grammatical forms, e.g., 'Will you please shut the door', which is a sentence in the interrogative mood, or 'I want you to shut the door', a sentence in the indicative mood. Take, next, the sentence,

'What is the time now'? Without any prejudice to its semantic functioning, we can reformulate this sentence in the interrogative mood well into imperative or indicative mood, e.g., 'Please tell me the time now', or 'I want you to tell me the time now'. Finally, take the sentence, 'I am not crazy'. The indicative form of the sentence is not at all essential to its semantic functioning, i.e., to convey to a hearer the information that the speaker is not crazy. The same function can be done also by a sentence in the interrogative mood, e.g., 'Am I crazy?'

From the three sentences we have just analysed, it would appear that grammar, howsoever intimately connected it may supposed to be with the functioning of a sentence, is not absolutely essential to it. This is in a way admitted by Austin himself,¹ and while writing on the matter Mats Furberg remarks, 'The mood of an utterance helps us to recognise it as a statement. But it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition'.² In the light of this, it becomes clear that grammar or mood does not provide the appropriate basis for the explanation of why any sub-class of utterances happens to have the same functioning in language; nor it is of any help towards explaining why different sub-classes of utterances perform the different jobs they do. And this amounts to a

position to the effect that to look for the basis for a sub-class of utterances in their grammatical marks is to search for it in the wrong place. In searching for the identifying mark of the performatives, in other words, of a universal and absolute criterion which may be said to distinguish them from constatives, in the range of the grammatical features of the two types of utterances, Austin had misled himself into scanning a wrong place. His search has failed, and there has been nothing unnatural about it; it has been in a sense, inevitable. We may sum up the position by quoting a few lines from Warnock which are as follows :

{ The distinguishing features [of
 { Performatives] is extra-linguistic.

{ It is accordingly not surprising
 { that, when Austin raised the question
 { of a 'grammatical' criterion for
 { performativeness, he found that
 { there was not one; what needs
 { explaining is why he should even
 { have toyed with the idea that
 { there might be ...³

Commenting on whether there is a reliable grammatical

criterion Warnock says in the same vein :

... although he [Austin] comes correctly to the conclusion that there is not, he does not say explicitly, as I think he could and should have done, that there is absolutely no reason to think that there might have been.⁴

II

Austin's search for a grammatical mark which could be used as a criterion to demarcate performatives from constatives fails to produce the desired result. Whichever grammatical feature he has selected and tried is vitiated by numerous counter-examples. We have seen that. But what accounts for this failure ? We have no doubt offered some answer to this. However, there is an alternative explanation which should not be by-passed without any mention. The explanation comes from Jarold Katz who in recent years has made an attempt at providing a characteristic explication of the notion of performatives. The explanation may be summed up as follows.

According to Katz, the cause of Austin's failure with the grammatical criteria does not lie in grammar as such. It lies, on the other hand, in the particular notion of grammar which he has had to work with. This grammar^a is the 'traditional, surface-oriented grammar'.⁵ It has its limitation on account of which it is incapable of yielding any purely grammatical criterion for the performative. This grammar^a is confined to questions about the 'use of language, with the consequence that Austin framed the constative~~/~~ *performative distinction as a thesis about performances~~/~~, thereby making it vulnerable to counter-examples'.⁶

Continuing Katz says, '...such counter-examples are beside the point when the distinction is framed as a thesis about competence',⁷ that is to say, when we~~/~~... ~~move~~ from syntax to semantics, and from traditional taxonomic grammar to contemporary transformational grammar...'⁸ In the event of such a shift, Katz says, we shall be in a position '... to construct a version of the "first-person singular, present-tense indicative, active-sentence" criterion that is not subject to Austin's exceptions or others like them'.⁹ /Katz's attempt to restore performatives isⁿ the way he does so has no doubt some novelty about it. Yet, it tends to give rise to certain misgivings in our mind, so that we do not find

it safe to accept it with any sense of finality.

Katz attributes Austin's failure to find a grammatical criterion for performatives to the traditional surface-oriented grammar^g and the syntactical aspect of language within the framework of which Austin works. In that he is not perhaps very unjustified. Understanding language calls for, if we may say so, a total approach, that is to say, taking into account both the syntax and semantics by which it is governed. Which means one who approaches language with its syntax alone in mind commits a sin against language. Now, if it is correct to accuse Austin - as has been done by Katz - of not having gone beyond the precincts of syntax in dealing with the performative—constative distinction, then Katz has also to be accused of having committed the same sin in the opposite way. For, his precise proposal, as we have mentioned, is to confine the investigation of the performative-constative distinction to their semantical feature. Viewed in this way, Katz's attempt to 'save Austin from Austin' may, perhaps, be said to turn out to be a case in which what is needed is to save Austin from Katz.

In trying to rehabilitate performatives Katz

reconstructs the notion in the light of the notion of competence derived from contemporary transformational grammar^a. But this leaves us with certain doubts in our mind. It cannot, perhaps, be ruled out that the process of reconstruction of performatives in terms of competence, in other words, that of placing it in a new framework, i.e., that of transformational grammar will not, in fact, dilute the original nature of the performative and strip it of those virtues because of which it is considered, as we do, philosophically useful.

III

Our quest for the identity of performatives is now to be taken a step forward to a level, which, in a sense, is considered more important by us. According to Austin's original insight performatives are to be distinguished from constatives, at the semantic plane, i.e., in terms of their respective semantic values. To be explicit, performatives are to be treated as vehicles of what is called by Austin happiness or unhappiness as opposed to constatives which count as vehicles of truth or falsity; a performative is either happy or unhappy and not true or false; while, contrarily,

a constative is true or false and not happy or unhappy. But the hope of this being the identifying mark of performatives, in other words, a universal and absolute criterion of the performative-constative distinction, as we have seen, is abandoned by Austin, during his process of rethinking, in the face of some counter-examples. Austin discovers a number of performatory utterances which, he thinks, can be treated as truth-valuable, and, contrarily, he also discovers some examples of constatives, which may well be said to have happiness-value. However, one thing may be noticed. The failure of the truth-value or happiness-value criterion for the performative-constative distinction, is, perhaps, less extensive than the failure of the grammatical criterion. Even if the failure be taken as genuine, it seems to leave the vast range of typical constatives and that of typical performatives unaffected. Whatever harm the failure may be supposed to have caused is confined to a relatively small cross-section of performatives and constatives. The alleged failure is, in fact, marginal, so that it would be a bit going too far to use it as a ground for surrendering a concept as valuable as that of performative. To deny that performatives have an identity of their own just because, on occasions, they assume truth-value,

characteristic of constatives, is to build on a datum, a conclusion, which is far larger than it.

Assuming that performatives do in cases share the truth-value of a constative, there is one point which may make one feel that the matter should not be taken too seriously. No utterance, we suppose, is such that it cannot be said to assume, even in a peripheral way, some features of utterances belonging to other classes. Take for example, the utterance, 'This is a wonderful sight'. Even though, grammatically, it belongs to the sub-class of indicative sentences, it contains an imperative feature which is not too implicit. There is, in it, a suggestion to the effect, 'Look at the sight'. Another example. Take the interrogative sentence, 'Am I not a human being'? The obvious purport of this sentence is a statement which is embodied in the indicative sentence, 'I am a human being'.

No utterance, in the wider territory of utterances is an insulated occurrence. There cannot be any denying that at its core, it contains features distinctive of its own sub-class. But that does not debar it from assuming, at its periphery, some features of utterances belonging to other

sub-classes. This does not impair its identity. There is nothing unnatural, or incongruous, if it so happens, that in a marginal sense, some performatives exhibit the logical characteristics of constatives, and some constatives those of performatives. The overlapping in respect of characteristics at an outer layer, does not do away with the class differences between them. They may well belong to different sub-classes. Take a simple analogy which, we hope, will illustrate the point. A statement may contain the features of an imperative, while the features of an imperative may be contained in an interrogative. That is a fact. But despite that nothing comes in our way to treat statements, imperatives and interrogatives as constituting distinct sub-classes of sentences.

So far we have argued that the dualism of performatives and constatives need not be given up, even if it is assumed to be a fact that in certain cases performatives take truth-value and constatives take happiness-value. Some degree of criss-crossing in respect of their semantic value, we have argued, may well go with the contrast between performatives and constatives. Anyway, to strengthen our argument, it would be worthwhile to consider, at a basic

plane, at least one thing, namely, whether performatives can be said to be true or false exactly in the sense in which a typical constative is said to be so.

To begin with a relatively minor logical point which appears somewhat incongruous to us. Instances of performatives supposedly admitting truth and falsity are cited by Austin explicitly with the object of assimilating them to constatives or statements. This would make one feel that the basis of reading statements in performatives is their supposed possession of truth-value. But according to the theory of truth-bearer to which Austin himself is firmly committed, it is statement alone which is primarily true.¹⁰ So performatives, if they are to be treated as constatives should be so done independently of the reference to truth-value. To make their supposed possession of truth-value a ground for their being treated as statements appears to be making a fallacious move.

To show how performatives ⁿ acquire truth-value our actual linguistic practices may acquire truth-value Austin speaks of 'I warn...', 'I apologise...', etc. as true or false. ~~But he seems to be missing one point which is that a 'promise' or an 'apology', etc. as true or false.~~ But he seems to be missing one point which is that a 'promise' or an 'apology', when called true or

false, is not true or false in the sense in which a constative or statement is. Substantially, the same point is brought to our notice by Katz when he says :

...expressions like "true promises", "true apology", and so on, are not semantically ambiguous. They have no sense corresponding to the sense of "true statement", but have only a sense in which "true" means "sincere".¹¹

The point is followed up and further elaborated by Katz in his article "Literal Meaning and Logical Theory", where he writes :

It is false to claim that sentences like "I hereby apologise for not phoning you", "I wish you a happy birth day", "I congratulate you on your elegant solution", etc. are true or false on their standard, literal uses. The falsehood of such claims is reflected in the fact that sentences like "Bernard's apology for not phoning is true" are quite absurd — unless, of

course, they are taken, as they are not intended to be taken, to mean" ... rings true" (false apologies are not false in the truth-value sense, but are simply insincere apologies, like false promises).¹¹

Presumably, having anticipated this type of objection Austin, as we have quoted above, maintains a position to the effect that truth and falsity "do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of right or proper thing to say".¹³ But this amounts to expanding the scope of the meaning of 'true' and 'false' to such an extent that the normal meaning of the two words, which is more or less definite, becomes totally blurred; in other words, 'true' or 'false' for Austin comes to cover so many things that it ceases to refer to anything in particular at all.

One last objection. An important reason for which Austin makes the performative-constative distinction is that it would, he hopes, account for why it is that it makes no sense to attribute truth or falsity to performatives, that is to say, why it is that, while it makes sense to say ' "I thanked you" is true, ' it does not make sense to say ' "I thank you"

'is true'. Now, to deny the performative-constative distinction, or to compromise the logical identity of the performatives would, naturally, leave this particular fact of linguistic usage without any explanation.

IV

The most basic idea Austin has in mind at the time he introduces the notion of performatives is that performatives, unlike constatives or other type of utterances, happen to present ^{instances} in which, on his observation, to say something amounts to doing something. This basic idea should naturally, as it actually does, figure importantly in the course of his revised thinking on the identifying mark of performatives, in other words, on his required criterion for the initial performative-constative distinction. And, as we have already noted, the outcome proves again disappointing. For, it is noted by Austin that there is a sense in which all utterances which include constatives, can be viewed as instances in which also saying something may be said to count as doing something. Thus the particular feature which is originally supposed to be exclusive to performatives and may, on that ground, be said to constitute the identifying

mark of performatives cannot any longer be said to be confined to performatives. It sheds its supposedly regional character and goes beyond the bounds of performatives to function as a common character of all utterances. This new discovery on the part of Austin has been an important event, not only for himself but also for philosophy in general. It has brought into picture a new concept, namely, the concept of speech-acts, and this is in no way less important than the concept of performatives.

Speech-act is indeed an extremely fertile concept with far-reaching implications. There can be hardly any doubt on this point. What would conclusively bear it out is the fact of the extensive and constructive interest it has aroused in philosophers and linguists¹⁴ since Austin. Anyway, speech-act is not going to be any direct concern of ours. What is of importance for us to be concerned with is to take account of its implications, if there really is any, on the idea of the performative-constative distinction.

Austin's own views on this matter is already well-known to us. He finds in the doctrine of speech-act the collapse of the performative-constative distinction.

What we need, perhaps, is a more
 general theory of this speech-acts,
 and in this theory our Constative-
 -Performative antithesis will
 scarcely survive.¹⁵

We have already quoted Austin saying this. Commenting on
 the conclusion it embodies Chisolm¹⁶ and Black¹⁷ have
 accused Austin of having despaired of the performative-
 -constative distinction too readily. We find good
 reasons to agree with them on this point. The conclusion,
 we do think, is a product of precipitancy in some sense; it
 is far from intelligible to us. We do not find any basis
 whatever for supposing that there is any incompatibility
 between the notion of speech-act and that of performative-
 -constative distinction; so we do not understand how
 acceptance of the former may make it obligatory for one to
 abandon the latter. The two concepts are not unrelated or
 discontinuous. That is true. But neither do they cross
 each other's way and so may go together without adversely
 affecting each other. The same insight is expressed by
 G.J. Warnock when he says :

There is nothing that this new thought [Speech-act], so to speak, requires us to give up; we are simply moving on to something else.¹⁹

Continuing, Warnock further says :

... thus to observe that there is, and to embark on the investigation of, the general topic of the things speakers standardly do in speaking has no tendency at all to show that the foregoing attempt to isolate a sub-class of performative utterances has 'broken down'; we may think we have moved on from that to something more general and interesting, but we have also moved on to something quite different.¹⁹

To elaborate the position. Consider first what may be called a matter of principle. If two classes be such that they are subsumable under a wider class, it does not follow

that their class-difference would disappear, in other words, that they would cease to be two different classes. If it were otherwise, we could not have spoken of differences among certain sub-classes which, normally, we do not deny. Take for example, statements, imperatives, questions and such like. We distinguish them, even though they are subsumable under a wider class, namely, utterances or sentences. In the same way, even if it be granted that the class of utterances called performatives and the class of utterances called constatives can both be assimilated in the wider class of speech-act, that will not produce any adverse effect on their identity as classes, that is to say, they will well remain two different sub-classes. To suppose otherwise would amount to the position that we are prepared to give up also the class-differences between statements, requests, interrogatives and so on. For, according to Austin, these are also varieties of speech-acts as much as performatives and constatives.

³
 If amenability of two classes to assimilation under a third wider class any good ground whatever for saying that the two classes are devoid of any identity of their own? If it were so, then Austin, as far as we

understand, could not have spoken of performatives and constatives as two sub-classes of utterances; which means that his eventual denial that they are genuine sub-classes, or that there is any real antithesis between them would be pointless. For, in using the expressions 'performatory utterances' and 'constative utterances' Austin unmistakably suggests that he has already subsumed ~~them~~ as species of the wider class of utterances.

There is indeed nothing in Austin's concept of speech-act which may be said to suggest that performatives is a bogus class, or that the antithesis between performatives and constatives with which Austin so enthusiastically starts breaks down on account of it. In supposing that the concept of speech-act marks the end of the performative-constative distinction, Austin has only misled himself. Showing that performatives and constatives can both be viewed as speech-acts has no tendency to dissolve their dichotomy; what it tends to do is only to confirm an innocuous position to the effect that, in addition to their feature as utterances, they have another feature, namely, as speech-acts.

~~It~~ may not be out of place to mention here one particular point, which may not appear altogether uninteresting

to one. The point is this. Austin, as we know, distinguishes three major varieties of speech-acts, namely, locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. In normal circumstances, all the three acts are involved in issuing an utterance, say e.g., 'There is a dangerous bull around' to a hearer. The locutionary act, in this case, consists in saying 'There is a dangerous bull around', the illocutionary act in telling (warning, informing, etc.) the hearer that there is a dangerous bull around, and the perlocutionary act in producing a certain effect (frightening, cautioning, etc.) on the hearer. Now the point to which we would like to call attention is that while subsuming performatives and constatives to speech-acts, Austin does not say anything clearly about which of the acts (or whether all of them) correspond to performatives and which to constatives. There is perhaps nothing very mysterious about this; for, perhaps, there is no correspondence of the kind at all. And this, we think, may be supposed to provide a ground for maintaining that performatives and speech-acts are two very separate concepts, the latter having nothing to necessitate the rejection of the farmer.

V

Our central contention above has been that there is no incompatibility between the concept of speech-acts and that of performatives; the two concepts, though not unrelated, are, in fact two separate concepts; which means to admit speech-acts does not make it logically mandatory for Austin to deny the identity of performatives or their distinction from constatives. However, our vindication of performatives calls for at least one more thing to be done. It is the consideration of what appears to many as one of Austin's major reasons for rejecting the performative-constative contrast. The major reason happens to arise from the peculiarity of such phrases as 'I state...', 'I maintain...', etc. Thus, take for example, Max Black who, in his article, 'Austin on Performatives' says :

The recalcitrance of 'I state...' and 'I maintain...' is one of Austin's main reasons for rejecting the original distinction between constatives and performatives as ultimately unsatisfactory.²⁰

In the same vein, another writer, Christopher Olsen says,

A major stumbling-block to finding
a clear cut distinction between
performatives and constatives is
that an utterance which begins
'I state that...'²² seems to be a
performative ...²⁴

In view of this, consideration of the phrase 'I state
that...'²² and its like has assumed a special importance
with a number of philosophers who happened to have taken
some interest in Austin's doctrine of performatives. Max
Black and Olsen apart, such philosophers include, among
others, David Holdcroft,²² ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{and} Jane Heal.²³

Austin likens the expressions 'I state that...'
and the like to those that are paradigmatically performative,
and in so doing he would appear inclined to assimilate them
to performatives.²⁴ That is true. Yet, interestingly
enough, he is not, perhaps, altogether without doubt on
this point. For, at times he speaks of it also as a
classic example of a constative utterance.

The classic example of constative utterance is the one where you say 'I state that...'²⁵

What makes Austin feel that 'I state that...' is a performative? The obvious reason is its supposed analogy to performatives like 'I promise', 'I beg', etc. in one particular point. The point is that when someone says 'I state...' he is to be taken as doing the act of stating just as when someone says 'I promise' or 'I beg' he is taken to be doing respectively the act of promising or that of betting.

Now, the points for us to consider are these. How deep is the analogy? Are there also disanalogies between 'I state...' and a typical performative? If so, are the disanalogies such as to make the supposed analogy ineffectual?

The man who says 'I state...' is, of course, stating, just as a man who says 'I promise' (in appropriate circumstances) is promising. But if this analogy between 'I state...' and 'I promise' is taken to be so crucial as to

justify the expression 'I state...' being classed as a performative then, as has been suggested by Max Black, Austin should abandon his original concept of performative and redefine it in a new way which is as follows :

An utterance of the form

X [Such and such] is said to be performative_P, when used in specified circumstances, if and only if its so being used counts as a case of the speaker's thereby X-ing.²⁶

Whenever anyone says anything, there is always something that he therein does. But this 'doing something' is certainly not enough to make what he says, an example of performative. One thing must be there. That is, indeed, most essential. It is that the utterance in question must be a part of some non-linguistic conventional procedure in order that it may count as a performative. The expression 'I state...' is only a verbal device for making explicit what one is doing in saying something. But when someone utters a performative, he says something

which counts as doing something by convention which is non-linguistic. If this be admitted, then it becomes irresistible that the expression 'I state that P' must be very significantly dissimilar to expressions like 'I promise', 'I bet', etc. As has been rightly remarked by Warnock, 'The idea of saying something which, by convention, counts as doing such and such, and the idea of saying something in which the words make explicit in a particular way what one is doing are really completely different ideas...' 27

Row? Unlike 'I state...' in which doing something is governed at best by linguistic and semantic convention, uttering a performative is governed, over and above, by a non-linguistic or extra-linguistic convention. This point is elaborately developed by David Holdcroft, in his article, 'Performatives and Statements'. 28

Austin, we think, has misjudged the role of the expression 'I ^tstate...' in an utterance such as 'I state that the earth is round'. He had taken it far more seriously than he should have. And this is what accounts for why a constative having lost its identity as a constative has simulated as a performative. There is little in 'I state' on which, we suppose, ^hmust can be built. We do not, normally,

use expressions like 'I state that the earth is round'. The expression 'The earth is round' suffices for conveying the information we want to do. 'I state' is added only on certain occasions to do some extra-logical job, e.g., for the purpose of emphasis and such like. 'I state' in the utterance 'I state that the earth is round' does not add any new information over and above what is already contained in the expression 'The earth is round'. The conditions that determine the truth of the two sentences are the same, so that it would not be wrong at all if 'I state' is considered as logically superfluous. Hence, in judging a constative utterance in the light of what is just a logically superfluous part of it, Austin, may well be said to have only misjudged it.

VI

Austin's search for a criterion of the kind which might ensure the non-overlapping of performatives and constatives do^{es} not yield any success; and, as we have seen, that has been his reason for giving up the notion of performatives as a class of utterances distinct from constatives. But the reason is far from convincing. We have argued to this effect. What, however, we want now to

do is to discuss a basic issue which is : whether a universal and absolute criterion is at all necessary for upholding the identity of a certain class. Suppose that there are some subclasses such that their differences are intuitively clear; or that the differences like that between performatives and constatives are in a position to play some useful philosophical role. Should we, in such cases, abandon the differences solely on the ground that the sub-classes, on occasions, tend to overlap, or that there is no absolute criterion to provide a safeguard against the overlapping ? In other words, should the non-availability of a universal criterion be a conclusive ground for doing away with the sub-classes ?

In our opinion, mutual non-overlapping is not any such universal or necessary condition as the sub-classes are supposed to fulfil. Certain degree of overlapping may well be there among the species of a class. This has been pointed out by Collingwood in his Essay on Philosophical Method.²⁹

A rigid bias against non-overlapping, according to Collingwood, has its origin in the traditional text-book doctrine of logical classification being taken too seriously. The condition of strict non-overlapping as laid down by the

text-book is well fulfilled by species of a class in science and mathematics; classes that concern science and mathematics are, in principle, such that they can yield mutually exclusive or non-overlapping sub-classes. However, there is a vast area outside science and mathematics where sub-classes do overlap without impairing their identity as sub-classes.

This, Collingwood thinks, occurs specially in philosophy not only as a matter of fact, but also as a matter of principle. He lists numerous examples. To mention a few : division of thought into overlapping sub-classes of judgement and inference, of judgement into negative and affirmative, of actions into expedient, pleasant and right,³⁰ and so on.

Philosophers' obsession with a universal and necessary criterion which is supposed to ensure mutually exclusive and non-overlapping sub-classes becomes in many cases a source of disappointment for them. For quite often they come across such sub-classes or concepts which are unavoidable and yet are such that they cannot be shown to be mutually exclusive or non-overlapping by any fixed criterion. We have cited some examples of sub-classes of this kind from Collingwood. A more glaring example, is, perhaps, the division of sentences into analytic and

synthetic which hails from Kant. The criterion which is usually supposed to divide sentences into the two sub-classes is whether or not the meaning of the predicate term of a sentence is contained in its subject term. In the former case the sentence becomes analytic and in the latter synthetic. But as has been noticed by Austin himself the application of the criterion gives rise to overlapping in certain cases : we come across sentences which may be called ^{both} analytic and synthetic. The examples of such sentences to which Austin specially draws our attention are, 'This noise exists',³¹ 'What is good ought to exist'.³²

Finally, we would like to mention a point substantially borrowed from J.R.Searle. The point is this. A criterion or a model has doubtless a value of its own. But if it is such that it cannot do justice to sub-classes the difference between which is intuitively clear, it is not the sub-classes but the criterion or model that should be abandoned. To quote Searle :

Any appeal to criterion presupposes the adequacy of the criterion and that adequacy can only be established by testing the criterion against examples ...

I do not, of course, intend these remarks to belittle the search for criteria as an enterprise. Indeed, I think — properly construed — such attempts to find criteria for our concepts are in fact attempts to explicate our concepts, which I take to be one of the central tasks of philosophy. My only point ... is that where certain preferred models of explication fail to account for certain concepts it is the models which must go, not the concepts. ■ 33

Now, if we judge the failure of the various criteria employed by Austin to justify the performative-constative distinction in the light of the above observation of Searle's, the conclusion that tends, naturally, to follow is that it is the criterion 'which must go', not the concept of performatives as distinct from that of constatives.