

PERFORMATIVES, KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

Manjulika Ghosh  
Department of Philosophy  
North Bengal University.

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Manjulika Ghosh

TELEPHONES 558220  
550396

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD  
GOLDEN THRESHOLD  
HYDERABAD 500 001, INDIA

15 May 1987

Supervisor's Certificate

Certified that the thesis entitled Performatives, Knowledge and Truth submitted by Mrs. Manjulika Ghose has been written under my supervision and that it embodies the result of bona fide research work.

I recommend that the thesis be considered for evaluation.

*M. Chakravarty* 15.5.87

M. Chakravarty,  
Professor of Philosophy,  
University of Hyderabad.

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## ABSTRACT

Discovery of performatives is a major achievement of J.L.Austin's. It is also an event of considerable importance in philosophy. Accordingly, we have considered it worthwhile to institute an essay on this particular type of utterances.

Despite elaboration, the notion of performatives, we think, has not attained sufficient clarity. What, however, has made the situation specially confusing is the attempt on the part of Austin himself to reject the notion. In this background, we have tried (a) to produce an account of the nature and importance of performatives (vide Chapters 1 and 2), (b) to summarise the main objections to this class of utterances (vide Chapter 3), and (c) to restore performatives to their original identity (vide Chapter 4).

The notion of performatives tends to throw new light on a number of basic philosophical problems, especially, the problem of knowledge and that of truth. In Chapters 5 and 7, we are respectively concerned with these two problems.

Chapter 6 which is a critique of descriptivist

account of knowledge is intended to strengthen our position in Chapter 5.

In recent years, some philosophers and linguists, who happen to realise the potentiality of performatives, have tried to fortify the notion by recasting it in terms of a number of concepts derived from the generative grammar of Chomsky. However, we have felt no need to switch over to this new framework of concepts. In fact, we are not sure whether in this new territory the original virtues of performatives will not be diluted. The framework we have confined ourselves to is substantially the same as Austin's.



C O N T E N T S

	Page
Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	iii
Chapter 1    Introduction	1
Chapter 2    Performative-Constative : The Distinction	13
Chapter 3    The Vanishing Distinction	39
Chapter 4    Rehabilitation of Performatives	61
Chapter 5    Performatives and Knowledge	100
Chapter 6    A Note On The Descriptivist Alternative	130
Chapter 7    Performatives and Truth	147
Notes and References.	171
Select Bibliography.	186

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of performatives as distinguished from statements or constatives, we are told by Warnock,<sup>1</sup> was conceived by Austin in 1939, though it was first made use of by him seven years later, that is, when he wrote his famous article 'Other Minds'. However, it could come in the philosophical limelight and trigger off widespread interest only about a decade later, in 1955 when he delivered his William James Lectures.<sup>2</sup> These lectures were followed up by two articles, namely, 'Performative Utterances' (1956)<sup>3</sup> and 'Performative-Constative' (1958).<sup>4</sup>

#### I

The discovery of performatives as a class of utterances distinct from constatives is an important event by itself. What, however, is more important is that it has come to influence in various ways our philosophical thinking in recent times. Writing in

1956 about Austin's preoccupation with performative utterances Warnock observes :

This territory has proved remarkably fruitful, and its exploitation powerfully disruptive of prejudices about the working of language... it provides a model, almost a pilot project for a kind of inquiry into the realities of speech and language which seems likely to be long pursued and extensively developed : Nor is there any doubt that a number of wholly traditional problems in philosophy have been illuminated in the course of, or as an effect of this kind of inquiry.<sup>5</sup>

Judging by some of the important philosophical developments that have taken place during the last three decades, we are surely in a position to say now that there was no overstatement in Warnock's observation. The concept of performatives has indeed enabled philosophers to see many of the matters that concern them in a new way.

## II

(a) The first thing that deserves to be mentioned is language, particularly, the sector of it, which is comprised of what grammarians call sentences in the indicative mood. Since Austin's identification of performatives, in the range of indicative sentences, philosophers (and linguists) have been led to give a second thought on their traditional concept of language. The picture of language, in their eyes today, is no longer just the same as it was before. The remark can be corroborated by reference to the works of quite a number of philosophers and linguists with philosophical orientation. In saying so we have specially in mind the recent work of Jarold Katz, his book entitled Propositional Structure and Illocutionary Force<sup>6</sup> in which he has taken considerable interest in refining the concept of performatives in the light of a number of notions derived from the generative grammar of Chomsky, specially, the notion of competence.

(b) Indicative sentences apart, there is a further sector of language in which one would find the concept of performatives being used of late as a tool for analysis and interpretation. This sector of language contains what is called questions by us. Questions have semantic properties apparently not quite similar to those of other

linguistic entities. These properties call for explanation and, for that purpose, what has been sought for is a suitable analysis of questions. The analysis suggested has assumed a number of forms. We shall, however, mention three. The first one which comes primarily from Katz and Postal<sup>7</sup> consists in analysing questions in terms of what is called 'Q-morphem' by them, i.e., a phrase such as 'I request that you answer'. The second analysis is proposed mainly by Hintikka<sup>8</sup> and Aqvist<sup>9</sup>. It consists in looking upon questions as epistemic requests, and then, in analysing them in terms of some such suitable epistemic operators as, e.g., 'Bring about that I know', 'I want to know', 'Let it be so that I know', and the like. But the particular analysis of questions which invokes the model of performatives is the one which is suggested by Jarold Saddock.<sup>10</sup> It is an attempt at showing that questions are dominated by sentences containing such verbs as are similar to the performative verb 'ask'.

(c) However, to realise the most significant impact of performatives on language one is to go beyond the bounds of language in any particular grammatical mood or even

language as such and turn to language as it is used by us in talking about the world, that is to say, to what is called speech. In the philosophy of language, as it stands today, theory of speech occupies a position comparable in respect of importance, perhaps only to the theory of meaning; and a crucial linguistic use of performatives lies, if one may say so, in the fact that it has been the source of a most effective tool for our understanding speech. The tool we are referring to is Austin's idea of speech as an act. The concept of speech-act since Austin has, in fact, been so extensively used by philosophers and linguists in their reflection that the importance of its role in understanding language can hardly be overstated. And it is not hard to see that the concept of speech-act in Austin emerges out of his concept of performatives, it may well be said to be only an extension of the latter.

Thus performatives, in fact, have served to pave the way to speech-acts. Viewed this way, it may not sound as an overstatement if one says that the doctrine of performatives has not proved far less revolutionary than the theory of meaning<sup>11</sup> proffered by the logical positivists in the early thirties of this century.

## III

We have mentioned above some of the implications of performatives on language. In a sense, there is not too much in them which might appear too extraordinary. We may pass on to the implications of performatives on certain matters which happen to fall outside the precincts of language. That would, in a way, be more interesting.

(a) The first such matter is the concept of evidence in jurisprudence. According to the usual law, a report of what someone has said is not admissible as an evidence, since it might only be hearsay. But in the light of the characteristic of a performative as an alleged mode of action,<sup>12</sup> this traditional concept of evidence may well call for a revision. That is to say, in the light of the notion of performative, a report of what someone else has said would deserve to count as an evidence if what has been said is a performative utterance. As mentioned by Austin, 'In the American law of evidence, a report of what someone else said is admitted as evidence if what is said is an utterance of our performative kind : because this is regarded as a report not so much of something he said as which would be hearsay and not

admissible as evidence, but rather as something he did, an action of his'.<sup>13</sup>

Anyway, this particular implication of the performative, that is, its implication on the notion of evidence in jurisprudence though not uninteresting, is, we think, a relatively minor matter and would not for that reason be pursued by us. What is uppermost in our mind is its implications on two most fundamental epistemic concepts, namely, knowledge and truth which as already indicated, will be taken up for consideration by us. Performatives, it is claimed, tend to provide an extremely useful model for explicating these two concepts. We are not in a position at the moment to commit anything about the justifiability or otherwise of this claim. But one thing is clear. It would certainly not be a matter of any mean importance, if the claim turns out eventually to be justified, even partially.

(b) The basic questions about knowledge and truth, as one knows, are respectively : 'What is knowledge?' and 'What is truth?' Traditional inquiry into these two questions has been conducted along two lines. The first proceeds having taken the words 'knowledge'



and 'truth' in their extension, that is to say, having understood them in the sense of the range of true propositions. This line of inquiry, as is easily understandable, reduces the investigation of knowledge and truth into that of true propositions. It is not a conceptual inquiry into knowledge and truth in the true sense of the term; rather it becomes a different inquiry, namely, an inquiry into the nature of true propositions.

The second line of inquiry, on the other hand, apparently having taken the words 'knowledge' and 'truth' as names of things in some sense, presumes that there exists certain entities corresponding to them; and then proceeds to ascertain a priori whether these entities are to be categorized as substance, or as relation, or in some other way. To state the matter in the words of Austin :

We approach [them] cap and categories  
in hand : we ask ourselves whether  
Truth [or Knowledge] is a substance, ...  
or a quality, or a relation....<sup>14</sup>

though philosophers, as Austin says, '... should take something more nearly their own size to strain at'.<sup>15</sup> 'What

needs discussing rather is the use, or certain uses of the word [S] 'true' [and 'to know'].<sup>16</sup>

Now, for those philosophers today who are inclined to share the above line of thinking, inquiry into knowledge and truth has naturally come to assume, among other things, the form of explaining certain crucial uses of the verb 'to know' and those of the word 'true'.

As far as the verb 'to know' is concerned, the particular use which is considered crucial and is, on that ground, widely discussed is the use of it in the location 'I know'. In the same way, the particular use of the word 'true' which appears crucial to some - we have P.F. Strawson,<sup>17</sup> among others, in mind — is the use of it in the context of a conversation, for example, someone saying 'True', 'That's true' and the like on someone else's saying, say, 'Might is right'.

Thus, according to a certain philosophical culture today, inquiry into knowledge and truth reduces itself to an inquiry into how best to interpret the utterances 'I know' and 'That's true'. As regards the former, what is usually done is to model its interpretation

after that of such descriptive sentences as, for example, 'I sing', 'I dance', 'I believe', and so on. Each such sentence being a report on a certain state of affairs, it is supposed that the utterance 'I know' also must purport to describe certain state of affairs. Likewise, the latter, that is, 'True' or 'That's true', is cast after the model of such descriptive sentences as 'The rose is red', 'The earth is round', and so on. Which means just as 'red' in the sentence, 'The rose is red' and 'round' in the sentence 'The earth is round' designate some characteristics respectively of the rose and the earth, so the word 'true' in the sentence 'That's true', it is thought, is to function as a characteristic of the statement for which the word 'That' stands for.

In this way, we have in recent philosophy, various versions of a descriptivist account of knowledge<sup>18</sup> and truth. But there are a good many philosophers who do not react favourably to the descriptivist account; they find in it serious short-comings. We need not commit anything at this juncture as to whether these philosophers have been right or wrong. We shall have occasion to discuss the matter elaborately at a later stage. Anyway, one thing is plain. It is that for these anti-descriptivist

philosophers, it has become naturally mandatory to find a suitable alternative to descriptivism, a way out of it. Now, performatives assume considerable value in the eyes of such philosophers in the sense that they tend to provide a way to overcome descriptivism and its alleged inadequacies. That is to say, some philosophers have found it possible to assimilate the expressions 'I know' and 'That's true' to the class of utterances called performatives. As for instance, as is well known, the function of 'I know' in language has been likened by Austin to that of 'I promise', an utterance which is paradigmatically performative.<sup>19</sup> And this approach has not been without sympathisers among post-Austinean philosophers.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, as is well known, the function which expressions like 'That's true' is supposed to perform in language is modelled by P.F. Strawson<sup>21</sup> after those locutions like 'I agree', another example of utterance which is paradigmatically performative.

We shall desist from making any hasty and ad hoc assessment of the merits and demerits of these

performatory analyses of 'I know' and 'That's true' at this stage. To do so would be undesirable. And not also necessary, for, we have reserved at a later stage two chapters<sup>22</sup> specifically meant for this purpose.

## Chapter 2

### PERFORMATIVE-CONSTATIVE : THE DISTINCTION

The object of this Chapter is to rearticulate the main points of the distinction between the utterances classed as performatives and those called constatives. Commenting on this distinction Walter Cerf<sup>1</sup> says that it is 'Austin's hallmark' comparable to Ryle's 'ghost in the machine' and Wittgenstein's 'language games'. He also calls it as 'Classical' in philosophical literature comparable to Kant's distinction between synthetic and analytic judgements. And there is, we think, hardly any element of untruth in this description.

As already mentioned, the idea of the distinction was first conceived by Austin in the late thirties. However, its elaboration did not become available to us till he delivered his first four William James Lectures. In carrying our proposed rearticulation, we shall depend primarily on the materials contained in these four lectures. This, however, does not mean that the two subsequent writings on Performatives by Austin, namely, 'Performative Utterances' and 'Performative-Constative' will not assume any usefulness for us. In fact, whenever required, shall

we shall fall back on the materials contained in them.

## I

One convenient, though apparently a bit too simple, way to define the distinction between performatives and constatives is to say that it is the distinction between the kind of utterances as exemplified by, say, 'I promise', 'I admit', 'I apologise', 'I propose' and their like, on the one hand, and the kind of utterances as exemplified by, say, 'I walk', 'I swim', 'I sing', 'Sugar is sweet' and their like, on the other. The utterances are all alike at the grammatical level in the sense that they are all sentences in the indicative mood. And this grammatical similarity had for long continued to produce certain unfortunate effects. Philosophers who are prone to take the grammatical similarity too seriously or with a sense of finality were misled to think that the two types of utterances were also otherwise homogeneous. As a matter of fact, until Austin's discovery, it did not occur to them that similarity of the two kinds of sentences, in respect of their grammatical form, might be deceptive in the sense

that it concealed some deeper difference between them, that is to say, difference in their logic or functioning in language.

## II

But how could Austin come to discover that there was a difference between the two types of utterances ? The circumstances that led to the discovery are truly interesting, so that it would be worthwhile to describe them in some detail.

One thing that may be mentioned about the discovery is that there is not much that is accidental about it. In a sense, it may well be regarded only as a natural consequence of certain characteristic developments in the twentieth century philosophy.

One major function of our linguistic communication is to convey information or to describe a particular state of affairs. This is universally admitted. And there are also sentences specifically earmarked for this purpose. These are sentences in the indicative mood. So far as their semantic status is concerned the indicative

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sentences, we suppose, cannot make any special claim to superiority over sentences in other grammatical moods, specially, the imperatives and interrogatives. Such a position is very much in conformity with that held by the grammarians; while those who have Wittgenstein's language games in mind, may, also speak of some kind of philosophical justification in its favour. But whatever may be the position in theory, in the actual function of logicians and philosophers, indicative sentences have come to occupy a relatively dominant position. Consider, what a logician's business is. One way to answer this which, we suppose, would not be incorrect, is to say that his business is to explore the interrelations among various types of sentences. Yet, ever since Aristotle, in actual practice, what the logician has done in doing his job, is to explore mainly the relations among indicative sentences. Normally, sentences of other grammatical varieties have not enjoyed the privilege of getting much more than a logician's marginal attention.

But what, exactly, may be said to account for the peculiar lopsidedness of logic, the logician's excessive predilection for the indicatives? This is, no doubt, an important and interesting problem by itself. But we cannot,

naturally, get entangled in its investigation in the present context. Yet, if a minor digression is permitted, we shall make a brief explanatory remark on the point.

The root of the indicative tradition in logic lies in Aristotle himself, we mean in his commitment as a logician in practice. Aristotle was not unaware of the semantic importance of non-indicative sentences. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, in his actual logical practice he confined his interest almost entirely to the exploration of relation among indicative sentences. But how come the tradition set up by Aristotle so long ago still continues to remain substantially unchanged, despite all the revolutionary changes that have taken place in logic in recent times? One probable explanation is that hidden inside the revolutionary exterior of the recent logic, there lies, if we may say so, a dominant streak of conservatism. The conservatism consists in a kind of strong attachment of the logicians to their familiar indicative-oriented theory of the logical form reinforced by what may perhaps be called lack of boldness on their part to approach a new territory of language without that familiar theory.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, indicative sentences have always assumed, in practice, a relatively favoured position in the eyes of philosophers and logicians. What, however, is notable is that in recent philosophy a new dimension has been added to this situation.

Some sort of self-consciousness is characteristic of modern philosophy. This is well-known. But for a few decades now, this self-consciousness has assumed a peculiar form and an unprecedented degree of acuteness. As a result, a basic concern of philosophy, these days, has been philosophy itself and, as a part of that, language, which is the vehicle of philosophical thinking. ~~Language, in other words, the problems about thinking.~~ Language, in other words, the problems about it for a twentieth century philosopher have become a matter of very serious concern. This phenomenon is often referred to as 'linguistic turn' in philosophy. One very natural consequence of this linguistic turn is the massive interest philosophers have taken in the various modes of speech, specially the indicative sentences. The indicative sentences have come in for a widespread and intensive scrutiny. And the discovery of the performatives as distinguished from the constatives, one may say, is one

consequence of this development.

But the question arises : how, exactly, has the study of indicatives led to the identification of the performatives as a distinct sub-class of utterances ? Since the process is not too obvious, it may not be out of place to provide a brief account of it.

One way to begin this job is to note the peculiarities of the following selected specimens of indicative sentences :

- (a) A green apple is sour.
- (b) A green apple is sweet.
- (c) There is no apple in the outermost planet.
- (d) God is present everywhere.
- (e) Philosophical wisdom is rectangular.

The first thing to be noted about them is that they are grammatically correct, and in that sense they are immune from objection. Besides, as is normally expected of an indicative sentence, each of them purports to contain a claim to convey information about some supposed fact.

But what is it, one will ask that may be said to confirm whether or not, the information-claim is valid ? The matter is important in the sense that on it would depend the meaningfulness or otherwise of these sentences. So, to find out a means for checking up the validity of the information-claim becomes an important problem for the philosopher.

Sentence (e) presents no difficulty. Being palpably absurd, its information-claim can be summarily dismissed as spurious. But when one comes to sentences (a)-(d), things cease to be easy-going. None of these sentences is absurd or self-contradictory and, so, it cannot be declared as meaningless on that ground. To judge them philosophers are required to find some alternative criterion. However, it would be enough, for our purpose, to take into account only the one which, as we know, became specially conspicuous in recent philosophy. This criterion is suggested by the logical positivists and is known as 'Verifiability Criterion'. In the language of one of its best exponent the criterion may be formulated thus :

.... we say that a sentence is  
factually significant to any

given person, if, and only if, he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express; that is, if he knows what observation would lead him, under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true or reject as being false.<sup>3</sup>

Judging by this criterion the sentences (a)-(c) are all meaningful, because, as required, each can be known to be true or false by a certain specific mode of observation. The truth of (a) is a matter of common experience and so is the falsity of (b). But what about (c), 'There is no apple in the outermost planet'? As we have no means at our disposal for actual access to the outermost planet, we are not in a position to check up with the help of actual observation whether it is true or false. Notwithstanding that, (c) is meaningful in the sense that one can specify possible experiences by which the truth or falsity of the proposition contained in it can be checked up.

However, in the case of (d), 'God is present everywhere', the situation is altogether different. Here,

we cannot speak of or imagine any possible experience which might be said to prove or disprove the information it purports to convey to us. To illustrate the position. Suppose someone says, 'Mrs. so-and-so is in her kitchen'. Relevant experiences are readily available to ascertain whether it is true or false. For example, I may get into Mrs. so-and-so's kitchen and see her there, or I may hear her shouting at her maid-servant, and so on. But I have no such means for knowing whether or not it is true that God is in the Kitchen, or elsewhere, let alone everywhere. So, according to the criterion of verifiability, (d) and all sentences of its kind are to be treated as examples of meaningless sentences. It may be noted that to say that they are meaningless, is just to say that they are meaningless, that is to say, they can neither be called true nor can they be called false. To count as true or false, an indicative sentence must already be meaningful; that is a basic requirement.

Verifiability as a criterion of sentential meaningfulness, as one knows, has been very widely and intensively discussed in the course of the last few decades. It would be out of place to go into the details of the matter. Yet, we may well make a passing reference

to one point about it. For, one thing, there is nothing in the principle itself for which its validity can be taken for granted. It has in fact, quite a few serious limitations, and these are not only highlighted by its opponents, but often admitted by its exponents themselves. Despite that, the principle has not been, in a sense, without considerable impact. It was, as we know, intended by the logical positivists to eliminate or purify the legacy of the wayward metaphysics. And this mission has been considerably successful, in the sense that, even though philosophy has not been purged of all metaphysics just on account of this principle, one will hardly come across today any significant metaphysical work done in the grand old style, that is, the kind of metaphysics which provoked the violent reaction of the logical positivists.

However, it did not take too long to realise, even for philosophers not committed against the principle of verifiability, that some degree of caution was necessary in the use of the principle. It was widely felt that there were dangers in the unrestricted or indiscriminate application of it. The source from which this sense of danger arose is the discovery of certain characteristic



instances of utterances in language. What is peculiar about these utterances is that, even though they are grammatically in the indicative mood and bear some kind of reference to facts, they make no claim at all to say anything or to convey any information about facts. Such sentences, naturally, cannot be described as true or false or as provable or disprovable or in similar other terms. In short, they are outside the scope of epistemic characterisation, in other words, to use any expression of epistemic appraisal and, for that matter, 'verifiable' or 'unverifiable' in regard to them would be totally inappropriate.

Austin uses the name 'masqueraders'<sup>4</sup> to designate such utterances. Some sub-classes of such masqueraders, as is mentioned by Austin himself<sup>5</sup>, have already been identified in philosophy since Kant. One major such sub-class is the class of ethical sentences. Ethical sentences have the form of a statement by which they produce the illusion of being themselves statements. But it has been commonly held that they are "either not intended at all, or only intended in part, to record or impart a straightforward information about facts".<sup>6</sup> Now the class of utterances isolated by Austin and named

'performatives' is just one such sub-class of 'masqueraders'.  
 Language is not in dearth of the examples of performatives.  
 There indeed are many. We have already mentioned some. Let  
 us add a few more which seem to be specially favoured by  
 Austin :<sup>7</sup>

- (E.a.). 'I do' (said at the time of marriage)
- (E.b.). 'I name this ship Queen Elizabeth'.
- (E.d.). 'I bet six pence it will rain to-morrow'.

### III

What is peculiar about sentences of the kind (E.a.) - (E.d.) so that Austin is led to assign them to a special sub-class under a special name ? Wherein do they differ from constatives ? This is doubtless the most important thing to explain.

The explanation may well begin with the examination of a typical constative, say, for example, 'Eat ice-cream'. What, possibly, may be my intention in uttering it ? Well, the intention may be more than one, depending on the context of the utterance. However,

one thing which is very plain is that, irrespective of the nature of the context, the basic purpose of my uttering it is to let the hearer know that I perform the particular action, that is, that I eat ice-cream. The statement I make may be true; it may also be false. Nevertheless, it has to be either true or false, in so far as it is meaningful. What, however, is most important to note is that in making the utterance I do not perform the particular action of which it is the report, that is, to eat the ice-cream. Eating the ice-cream is a non-linguistic act in the sense that it is independent of any utterance. One can very well eat an ice-cream while saying that he is doing so, as also silently, without saying anything whatsoever. Uttering or non-uttering the sentence 'I eat ice-cream' makes no difference to my act of eating an ice-cream.

Contrast this analysis of a constative with that of any of the performatives listed above. Each of these performatives involves, no doubt, a number of constatives, that is, particularly those which constitute its presuppositions. Take, (E.a.), 'I do'. Its presuppositions include such constatives, as, for example, 'The person who makes the utterance is the appointed bride-groom', 'There is an appointed

bride', 'There is an appropriate ceremony', and the like. In the same way, (E.b.), 'I name the ship Queen Elizabeth' contains among its presuppositions such constatives, as, for example, 'The person who makes the utterance is authorised to do the naming', 'There is a ship to be so named', and so on. Despite all this, it is to be noted neither (E.a.) nor (E.b.) is itself a constative, that is to say, a report on or a description of any incident or any state of affair or of any action; and this implies that neither can meaningfully be called true or false, provable or unprovable, and the like. As a matter of fact, the two utterances, (E.a.) and (E.b.) are ways of doing two actions, the actions respectively are, marrying and betting. That is to say, in saying 'I do', the bridegroom does not describe his marriage, nor does he tell others that he is marrying; what he does instead is the act of marrying itself. Similarly, in uttering (E.b.), the person who makes the utterance does not convey the information to others that he is naming the ship; what he does is to perform the act of naming itself. To sum up the matter in Austin's own language : '... they [performatives] do not "describe" or "report" or "constate anything at all, are not "true" or "false"; and the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as "just" saying something'.<sup>8</sup>

## IV

But the non-descriptive or performatory analysis of (E.a.) and (E.b.) and such other utterances, that is, their analysis as species of actions, is likely to be viewed with suspicion. Austin is fully aware of this possibility. Referring to (E.a.) he says, "... one might protest, perhaps even with some alarm, that I seem to be suggesting that marrying is simply saying a few words, that just saying a few words is marrying".<sup>9</sup> Hence, to remove the suspicion, he naturally rushes to provide clarification. What are the causes that arouse suspicion ?

According to Austin, the first thing that arouses suspicion is the fact that, 'In many cases, it is possible to perform an act of exactly the same kind not by uttering words, whether written or spoken, but in some other way'.<sup>10</sup> Take, for example, marriage which may be performed non-verbally, just by, say, exchanging garlands or rings or in similar other ways. It is not necessary that the bride-groom should say 'I do'.

Austin does not deny that this may be the case. True, in some cases, marriage may be performed in a way which does not involve the utterance 'I do' or anything

of the kind. But that does not go against the performatory character of the utterance 'I do'. For, it is also true that, normally, marriage is performed by saying 'I do' or by some other utterance of the kind and there is nothing to disprove that in such cases the utterance functions as an action itself and not as a description of the action.

A second minor thing which arouses suspicion is this. It may be the case that the person who marries utters the performative 'I do'. But that normally is not the only thing he does. Marriage may involve more sentences uttered by the person who marries and also by others. Besides the verbal acts of making utterances there also are non-verbal acts, e.g., entertaining guests, holding feasts, performing religious rituals and such like.

Here, again, there is nothing that goes against the performatory character of the utterance 'I do'. It may be the case that marriage is not a matter of saying 'I do' alone and that many other verbal and non-verbal elements are involved in it. But how does this tend to disprove that in saying 'I do' one is not reporting on the act of marriage but is performing the act itself ?

Let us now come to what, in Austin's opinion, the major cause that tends to withhold us from accepting the position that in saying 'I do' one is not describing anything but is performing the act of marriage itself.

It is true that when one says 'I do' at the time of marriage, one must say so seriously; that is to say, one must not make the utterance by way of 'joking' or by way of 'writing a poem'. But we appear to be led by our habits of thought to take the seriousness that goes with the utterance 'I do' far too seriously. One thing to be noted. We are used to attaching a considerable degree of moral significance to such acts as marriage; while at the same time we generally look down upon verbal utterances with a sense of triviality. So, presumably, to do some justice to the moral significance of acts like marrying, we interpret the seriousness accompanying the utterance of 'I do' in the sense of having a mental state or performing an 'inward spiritual act'; and then suppose that utterances like 'I do' are to function as the reports or descriptions of such acts. As an example of this presumed duality of an utterance like 'I do' and the mental state which it is supposed to be a description of, Austin

quotes Hypolytus who says, 'My tongue swore to, but my heart did not'.<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not the unwitnessable 'inward spiritual act' is a fact or a myth is debatable. But it would be out of place to go into that. What we are required is just to note that the assumption of the 'inward spiritual act' is inspired by moral consideration, though, ironically enough, it is morality itself which, on occasions, is endangered on account of it. Thus, as has been pointed out by Austin, it provides '... Hyppolytus with a let-out, the bigamist with an excuse for his "I do" and an Welsher with a defence for his "I bet".<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, '... excess of profundity, or rather solemnity, ... paves the way for immorality'.<sup>13</sup> Morality is safer on the assumption of the 'spiritual act' being kept out. 'Accuracy and morality alike' says Austin, 'are on the side of the plain saying that our ward is our bond'.<sup>14</sup>

V

{ A constative, we know, is either true or false : truth-value is its basic semantic value. But performatives, as we have already remarked, is different from constatives



in this very important respect. That is to say, truth-value is foreign to them. In other words, no performative can admit of characterisation in terms of truth and falsity. To say of a performative, e.g., 'I do' or 'I bet', that it is true or that it is false is perhaps not far less outrageous than to say that love is rectangular or round. But then in denying that performatives can assume any truth-value, Austin makes himself naturally answerable on one important point. The point is : How, then, to characterise a performative ? Alternately, what are to constitute its logical values ? In answer, he uses two expressions, namely, 'happy' and 'unhappy'. That is to say, according to Austin, a performative is to be called either happy or unhappy.

But this gives rise to the question : When is it that a performative is to be called happy and when unhappy ? According to Austin, that would depend upon whether or not the performative satisfies certain specific conditions. The conditions as formulated by Austin are as follows :

- (A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain

persons in certain circumstances,  
and further,

(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked,

(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) completely.

(A.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend to conduct themselves, and further

(A.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.<sup>15</sup>

The types of unhappiness, also called infelicities, that correspond to the violation of conditions (A.1)-(B.2) are called by the general name 'misfire'; while those arising from the violation of (A.1)-(A.2) are called 'abuses'.

Between these two sub-classes of unhappiness or infelicities, there is a vital difference. An unhappy performative, if it happens to be an instance of misfire, becomes 'null and void' or without effect; that is to say, one who utters the particular performative will not be under any obligation on account of it. The situation is otherwise in case of abuses. If the performative happens to be an instance of abuse, it becomes exposed to criticism on account of 'insincerity' or 'breach of commitment'. The particular performative does not become void or ineffectual; the person who utters it remains bound to it.

Abuses may arise from the violation of (A.1) and also from (A.2). Accordingly, they admit of two types. The former is named "insincerity" by Austin and latter "breach of commitment".<sup>15</sup>

Misfires may be due to the violation of

conditions (A.1) and (A.2) on the one hand, and (B.1) and (B.2) on the other. Accordingly, we have two types of misfires : the first is called 'misinvocation' and the second 'misexecution'.

Austin has no specific name for the particular kind of misinvocation which corresponds to the violation of (A.1); it may be exemplified by the performative, say, 'I congratulate you', being uttered to a light-post. The misinvocation that arises from the violation of (A.2), however, has a specific name. It is called 'misapplication', its example being the performative, 'I inaugurate the seminar' being uttered by someone who is not supposed to inaugurate.

In the same way, misexecutions may assume two forms according as they arise from the violation of (B.1) or (B.2). In the first case, Austin uses the name 'flaw' to designate the particular misexecution. It may be exemplified by the utterance of 'I do', say, by a friend of the bridegroom instead of by the bridegroom himself. In the second case, we have the name 'hitch' for the particular kind of misexecution. It arises from the utterance of the performative 'I do' in the context of a marriage proceedings which exclude, say, the priest, the required religious rituals, and so on.

Let us now instantiate the two types of abuses distinguished by Austin, namely, 'insincerity' and 'breach of commitment'. Insincerity arises in that particular case where while saying 'I promise to buy you a pearl necklace' the speaker in his mind has no intention to do so. Whereas there is breach of commitment in that particular case in which, even though the speaker says 'I promise to buy you a pearl necklace' with the full intention of buying the necklace, ~~with the full intention of buying the necklace,~~ he fails to keep his promise because of certain unforeseen difficulties.

## VI

Three points should be considered about Austin's doctrine of infelicities.

(1) The infelicities or the ways of being unhappy, according to Austin, are not mutually exclusive, that is to say, a particular performative which may be guilty of one particular infelicity may also be guilty of another particular infelicity at the same time. Likewise, the same performative can be viewed alternately as an instance of one infelicity and also as an instance of

another, the choice being arbitrary. All this may be illustrated by reference to the examples of misapplication and flaw cited above. The particular misapplication we have mentioned may well be treated as a case of flaw; while the particular case of flaw may well count also as a case of hitch.

(2) A performative has two dimensions. On the one hand, it is an utterance, while, on the other, it is an action. Which means it is exposed to criticism in terms of those epithets by which we criticise an utterance, as for example, obscure, exaggerated, ungrammatical, irrelevant, and so on. At the same time, one may also call it motivated, unnecessary, ineffective, accidental and so on, that is, expressions by which we criticise an action.

From this bi-dimensional character of a performative and from the fact that it is, on that account, open to criticism from two sides, one thing follows, which is that the infelicities listed by Austin are not exhaustive.

(3) Even though, the infelicities go with the

performatives, the infelicities are not confined to the performatives. The scope of their application may well extend beyond the range of performatives, e.g. to religions, ceremonial and other rituals.

. . . . .

## Chapter 3

### THE VANISHING DISTINCTION

Austin develops the distinction between performatives and constatives, as we have noticed, with considerable patience and assiduity. Initially, there is hardly any doubt in his mind about the validity of the distinction : he is pretty sure about it. However, as a result of continued preoccupation with the distinction, this initial sense of sureness disappears, yielding place to a sense of skepticism; and this skepticism, interestingly enough, snowballs progressively to such a magnitude that eventually he thinks it obligatory to abandon the distinction saying, "Perhaps, indeed, there is no great distinction between statements and performatory utterances".<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing too unusual in a philosopher discarding a view at one time upheld by him. Sometimes it really so happens. But in the case of Austin giving up his favoured performative-constative antithesis, there is, as has been aptly pointed out by L.W. Forguson,<sup>2</sup> some *uniqueness*; ~~the~~ uniqueness consists in that the development of the antithesis and its rejection are parts of a continuous process and done 'within the compass of the same work.'



In this chapter, our business is going to be to explore the grounds for Austin's rejection of the performative - constative distinction; while in the next chapter we shall undertake an examination of how far the grounds are genuine and the rejection justified.

## I

Austin's reexamination of his performative-constative distinction begins with a comparison between (a) the relation of performatives, say, 'I apologise', 'I promise', etc. to the facts that I am apologizing or promising and (b) the relation of constatives, say, e.g., 'I am running', 'I am singing', etc. to the facts that I am running or singing. Interestingly enough, the outcome of this comparison proves encouraging in the sense that it tends, in a way, to confirm the performative-constative distinction. Consider, 'I apologise' or 'I promise'. The facts corresponding to them, i.e., the facts of my apologising or my promising are to count as facts on proviso that 'I apologise' or 'I promise' turn out to be happy. That is to say, the facthood of the facts in the case of performatives depends on the happiness of the performatives. The picture in the case of the relation of constatives like

'I am running', 'I am singing', etc. to the facts corresponding to them, is, on the other hand, just the opposite. Here, the facts do not assume facthood on account of the truth of the constatives. On the contrary, it is the facts which make the constatives true, in other words, truth of the constatives depends on the facts corresponding to them.

## II

A true constative stands in relation to a fact on account of which it is true. The fact in relation to which a performative stands becomes so on account of the happiness of it.

Relation to facts apart, a constative also stands in relation to other constatives; and likewise, a performative, even though it is not itself a constative, stands in relation to certain constatives. Now, a comparison of performatives and constatives in respect of these relations, unlike the comparison above, does not appear on Austin's analysis to confirm the performative-constative distinction, but tends, on the contrary, rather to weaken it. The comparison reveals a parallelism between the two types of

utterances in at least three very important ways which are illustrated as follows.

(a) Take, for example, my statement, 'The cat is on the mat', which implies, 'I believe that the cat is on the mat'. Seen in this light, the statement 'The cat is on the mat but I don't believe it' would obviously be outrageous : we are debarred from saying so. But the question is : what is it that is wrong with it ? It is not self-contradictory, firstly, because the statements 'The cat is on the mat' and 'I do not believe it' are perfectly compatible, and, secondly, because '... it is not the case that my not believing that the cat is on the mat implies that the cat is not on the mat'.<sup>4</sup>

Neither can we say that it is meaningless in the way a class of sentences like 'Love is rectangular' is so. What vitiates it is that it is a case of insincerity comparable<sup>ap</sup> to that which vitiates the performative 'I promise... but I do not intend' or 'I bet... but I have no intention to pay'. Thus, shared insincerity of the same nature tends to remove the cleavage between performatives and constatives in some cases as these.<sup>5</sup>

(b) Let us take, for example, the constative 'John's children are bold'. It presupposes that John has children. Now, imagine someone saying 'John's children are bold, when, in actuality, John has no children. The statement is not in order, which is plain. But what makes it so? Certainly, it cannot count as a false statement; for, as has been said by Austin, '... it is devoid of reference; reference is necessary for truth or falsehood'.<sup>6</sup> Nor, again, it is '... like a "meaningless sentence", ungrammatical, incomplete, mumbo-jumbo & c.'<sup>7</sup>

We dismiss the statement by saying that the question does not arise, or that the utterance is void. Thus, we get the concept of a statement being void, which in turn gives the statement a second meeting-point with the performative. For, as we have seen before, a performative also becomes void in the same sense. E.g., the performative 'I do' when the maker of the utterance is not the appointed bridegroom, or 'I declare the convocation open' when the utterer is not the person authorised for making the declaration.

(c) Finally, take 'I promise' and the utterance 'I ought'. The former implies the latter, so that to say that I promise but I ought not, will not be in order. But

what makes it so ? The answer lies in its resemblance to the statement 'The flower is red and it is not red'. The statement is self-contradictory and so is the performative.

### III

A comparative exploration of the various relations in which performatives stand to constatives and those in which constatives stand among themselves tend to show that there is resemblance between performatives and constatives in at least three respects. The resemblance need not be considered as so serious as to provide a conclusive ground for straightway giving up the performative-constative distinction. But neither is it, on the other hand, such that it can be lightly brushed aside as inconsequential. All that the resemblance can justly be supposed to do is to provide a good ground for a doubt to such effect as to whether there really is a basic difference between performatives and constatives. The doubt, in turn, makes Austin to look for a source of reassurance. And the search for reassurance, as we can see, assumes for Austin the form of a search for a universal and absolute criterion, i.e. a criterion such that it would enable him to distinguish every performative from any constative whatever.

Where may one hope to find such a criterion ? The plausible places to look for it would be the grammar, logic and vocabulary by which performatives, in their capacity as sentences are governed.

## IV

Consider the standard examples of performatives mentioned above. They would appear to possess in common a number of grammatical features, e.g., each being a sentence in the indicative mood and in the active voice, each containing as its subject the pronoun in the first person singular and the verb in the present indefinite tense. Can any one or each of these grammatical features be said to provide the criterion Austin is in need of, in other words, can it be said that any or each of them is exclusive to performatives and does not ever mark constatives ? To his dismay, Austin comes across numerous counter-examples which tend to falsify the possibility. Let us ~~illustrate~~ illustrate these.

(a) To start with mood, can we say that performatives are confined to sentences in the indicative mood ? It is not hard to find that we cannot. Firstly,

on occasions it may well take the form of a sentence in the interrogative mood. E.g., 'How do you do?' which, though a sentence in the interrogative mood, does not express any query to be answered, but functions in language, we may well say, as a substitute for such performative utterances, as for example, 'I greet you', 'I welcome you' - and the like. In the same way, at times, a sentence in the imperative mood also may function indistinguishably from a performative. Take, for example, the performative, 'I order you to leave the room', which may well be replaced by the utterance, 'Leave the room', without any change in its import. Austin is fully aware of this when he says, '... we have to recognize that mood... break [S] down as absolute criterion'.<sup>8</sup> Continuing he further says, 'Mood will not do, for I may order you to turn right by saying, not "I order you to turn right", but simply "Turn right"; I may give you permission to go by saying simply "You may go"; and instead of "I advise" [or 'recommend'] you to turn right" I may say "I should turn to the right if I were you".<sup>9</sup>

What perhaps is more interesting is that in certain contexts, performatives may not explicitly assume the form of sentences at all, let alone sentences in the indicative mood, e.g., expressions like 'Thanks',

'congratulations', etc. which may be expanded respectively to 'I thank you', 'I congratulate you', which are typical examples of performatives.

(b) Exceptions to the grammatical criterion of the subject being in the first person singular are not also hard to find. Certain obvious examples are there. E.g., utterances like 'We promise...', 'We agree...' and so on. Such utterances apart, there also are examples of utterances which, although they are performative in their import, do not involve the first person singular at all as the subject. Examples of such utterances as mentioned by Austin<sup>10</sup> are as follows :

1. 'You are hereby authorised to pay...'
2. 'Passengers are warned to cross the track by the bridge only'.
3. 'Notice is hereby given that trespassers will be prosecuted'.

(c) These utterances, being all in the ~~active~~ <sup>Passive</sup> voice, it may be noted, serve an additional purpose, namely, to function as counter-examples for the criterion of the utterance being in the active voice.



Thus the criterion of verbs in the 'present indicative active' and that of subject in the 'first person singular' fail to do the job they are supposed to do. The odds against the two criteria are quite a few and also pretty obvious. What, then, might be said to explain Austin's initial favouratism for them? The answer in Austin's own words is this :

.... the idea of a performative utterance was that it was to be.... the performance of an action. Actions can only be performed by persons, and obviously in our cases the utterer must be the performer : hence our justifiable feeling... in favour of 'first person'...; moreover, if in uttering one is acting, he must be doing something — hence our perhaps ill-expressed favouring of the grammatical present and grammatical active of the verb.<sup>11</sup>

The 'I' who is doing the action... come [s] essentially into the picture. An advantage of the first person singular present indicative form...

is that this implicit feature  
of the speech-situation is  
made explicit.<sup>12</sup>

## v

Thus none of the grammatical features which were initially supposed by Austin to delimit the range of performatives is ultimately found on closer examination to prove equal to its job, i.e., to provide any universal and absolute criterion of the performatives. Austin, therefore, falls back on vocabulary with the hope of finding such a criterion. That is to say, he undertakes an inquiry into whether there are some characteristic expressions by which performatives can be marked off from constatives. The expressions he takes into account are such as 'off-side', 'liable', 'authorised', 'dangerous', 'promise', 'guilty', etc. The reason for the selection of these particular expressions is, according to Austin, that they are 'linked in origin' with certain verbs which he calls 'explicit performative verbs',<sup>13</sup> e.g., 'pronounce', 'declare', 'undertake', etc.

But this move to get at the required criterion in

the range of the selected words and their like also turns out to be elusive. For, in the first place, as has been pointed out by Austin, we may get the performative without the selective words. In place of 'dangerous corner' we may well say 'corner', and in place of 'dangerous bull' we may say 'bull'. Likewise, in place of 'You are ordered to shut the door' we may simply say 'you will shut the door', and in place of 'I promise to be present on your birthday' one may just say, 'I shall be present on your birthday'. Contrarily, there are examples of utterances which are not performatives, even though the selected words occur in them. A few examples. In cricket someone from the spectators' gallery shouting 'It was over' or someone other than the judge saying 'you were guilty' or 'you are guilty', and the like. Again, in such utterances as 'you promised to come on my birthday', 'you authorised me to receive the money, we do not have instances of performative utterances despite the occurrence of words like 'promise', 'authorise', etc. Because, obviously, in making those utterances I do not make any promise or perform any act of authorisation, but only give a report on the incident of your saying 'I promise' or 'I authorise'.

Let us have a word on the claim of the word 'hereby' in our vocabulary to provide a criterion for

distinguishing performatives from constatives. Austin formulates the possibility in such words as, 'If we ask ourselves, as sometimes we may, whether the given utterance... is performative or constative, we may settle the question by asking whether it would be possible to insert in it the word 'hereby' or some equivalent'.<sup>14</sup>

Austin rejects the possibility on two grounds. One : The 'hereby' - formula is too formal for ordinary purposes. Two : Its occurrence cannot be the distinctive mark of a performative, because on occasions, we may also say 'I hereby state such and such' or 'I hereby question such and such'.

## VI

The search, at the level of grammar and vocabulary for a universal and absolute criterion, which might provide a basis for isolating performatives from constatives does not yield any encouraging results for Austin. He, therefore, switches over to what may be called the logical features of performatives and constatives in his pursuit of such a criterion.

One such criterion is readily available. As we remember, it is initially supposed by Austin that truth and falsity which characterise constatives are not possessed by performatives; on the other hand, while performatives are logically characterisable as happy or unhappy, constatives are not so characterised. The criterion tends to have limited applicability. But the problem for Austin is to see whether it can be generalised into a universal criterion. Are we in a position to say that truth or falsity is exclusive to constatives, so that performatives can never admit of appraisals in terms of them? In the same way, can we say that happiness or unhappiness is exclusive to performatives, so that no constative can be called happy or unhappy?

On a survey of our linguistic practices Austin comes across, disappointingly enough, numerous counter-examples on both these scores. That is to say, he identifies instances of performatives which tend to collect truth-value; and in the same way, he finds examples of constatives which tend to share the infelicities of performatives.

(a) Let us first, following Austin, mention some of those performatives which appear in his eyes, to be

characterisable as true or false, more or less in the same sense as a constative.

(i) To start with the particular example of Austin's, 'I warn you that the bull is about to charge'. This is a typical performative. But how to criticise it when it turns out to be the case that there is no bull around, or that the bull is not about <sup>to</sup> the charge? We should not call it void on account of any of the infelicities that infect a performative, nor is it correct to call it insincere '... we should feel much more inclined', according to Austin, 'to say the warning was false... as with a statement'.<sup>16</sup>

(ii) Secondly, to take the class of performatives called Verdictives by Austin. Examples: 'I declare him guilty', 'I estimate the value of the diamond', 'I pronounce that the batsman is out', etc. We characterise them by using such adverbs as 'rightly', 'wrongly', 'correctly', 'incorrectly', etc., but these adverbs are applied also to characterise statements.

(iii) The same holds good with another class of performatives called exercitives by Austin. Exercitives are

exemplified by those utterance by which we give 'decision in favour of or against a certain course of action ...'<sup>17</sup>

A few instances 'I appoint your...', 'I name...', 'I dismiss...' etc.

But there arises a rather important question. Do the adverbs 'correctly', 'rightly', 'justly', etc. mean the same thing as 'true', 'truly', etc., which characterise constatives? Austin is unwilling to admit any very sharp distinction between them. He says :

It is essential to realise that 'true' and 'false'... do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of being a right or proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions;<sup>18</sup>

and elsewhere :

under the heading 'truth' what we in fact have is, not a simple quality nor a relation, nor indeed one anything, but rather a whole dimension of criticism...

There is a whole lot of things to be considered and weighed up in this dimension alone — the facts, yes but also the situation of the speaker, his purpose in speaking, his hearer, questions of precision, etc.<sup>19</sup>

(b) Contrary to his initial view that true-value is purely distinctive of constatives, Austin now finds, on a second thought, that it may characterise also performatives, so that performatives and constatives cannot be universally distinguished by reference to truth-value. In the same way, according to Austin, we cannot justify any absolute separation between constatives and performatives on the basis of the original supposition that performatives alone are subject to being happy or unhappy, while constatives are not. For, he comes across instances which make him conclude '... that statements are liable to every kind of infelicity that performatives are liable'.<sup>20</sup>

(i) Let us first mention instances of constatives which, like performatives, become void rather than true or



false. We have a very good example on this point when someone says 'The king of France is bald'. Since the statement does not have any reference it cannot be called true or false. As a matter of fact, the question of its being true or false does not arise at all. The best way to characterise it is to call it void, in the sense in which a performative having violated the conditions A-1 or A-2 is so. Some more examples of more or less of the same kind are : 'You cannot order me', said in a situation when the person giving the order is not in an appropriate position to do so; 'This is diamond' said by a person who does not have the expertise for telling diamond from other stones, and the like.

Austin proceeds further to detect among constatives instances such as are not true or false but should better count as instances of flaws and hitches. We have cases of such constatives particularly on those occasions in which what is said is not what is meant. Austin's own example is 'The bat is on the mat' when the speaker wants to mean that the cat is on the mat.

(ii) Constatives are also liable to be vitiated by insincerity in the same fashion as a performative, e.g.,

'I promise to be present on your birthday' (when, in fact, I have no intention to do so), is vitiated. Representative example of such insincere constative is my saying 'The cat is on the mat' when I do not actually believe that the cat is on the mat'.

## VII

We come now to give an account of Austin's second thought on the particular criterion which is that the performative is doing something over and above merely saying something as opposed to the constative which is just saying something.

In a sense, this is most important among Austin's initial criteria, because in it precisely lies his ground for calling performatives by that name. What becomes of this criterion when it is subjected to reconsideration by Austin? Does it appear to possess the required universality? As in the cases of other criteria, here also, the outcome turns out to be discouraging. For, on a closer scrutiny, constatives also appear to Austin to be capable of being construed in the sense of doing something or performing an action. Take for example the constative 'Grapes are sour'. One can well

recast it in the form of such utterances, as for example, 'I say that the grapes are sour', 'I state that the grapes are sour', 'I assert that the grapes are sour', and so on; and 'saying', 'stating', 'asserting' and the like are performing actions, to be precise, illocutionary acts, no less than 'promising', 'warning' and the like. 'Surely', says Austin, 'to state is every bit as much to perform an illocutionary act as, say, to warn or to pronounce.... "Stating" seems to meet all the criteria we have for distinguishing the illocutionary act'.<sup>21</sup> Stating, asserting, etc. and 'warning', 'promising', 'arguing', etc. reveal a parallelism because of which they may be assigned to the same linguistic category. Austin appeals to certain linguistic facts to confirm this hypothesis.

(i) 'In saying that it was raining, I was not betting, arguing or warning : I was simply stating it as a fact'.<sup>22</sup>

(ii) Similarly, 'In saying that it was leading to unemployment, I was not warning or protesting : I was simply stating the facts'.<sup>23</sup>

In these two cases, stating is put in the same level with arguing, betting and warning. And the same happens

when we note that 'I state that he did not do it' is exactly on a level with "I argue that he did not do it", "I suggest that he did not do it", "I bet that he did not do it", & C.'<sup>24</sup>

## VIII

Thus Austin discovers action-potential, more precisely, illocutionary-act-potential in constatives. And this gives a new turn to his line of thinking. All utterances become, in the eyes of Austin, varieties of acts called speech-acts by him. Consequently, performatives and constatives which were initially contrasted meet each other as species of speech-acts. The position is summed up by him say :

What we need, perhaps, is a more general theory of these speech-acts, and in this theory our Constative-Performative antithesis will scarcely survive.<sup>25</sup>

Also :

...the dichotomy of performatives and constatives... has to be abandoned in favour of more general families of related and overlapping speech-acts.<sup>26</sup>

The new concept i.e., the concept of speech-art is no doubt important and has, in fact, proved, if we may say so, even revolutionary. Philosophical literature and those in linguistics in recent years will, perhaps, amply testify to this. The notion is useful no doubt in understanding language and therewith performatives and constatives. But it is open to doubt whether it is incompatible with the performative-constative antithesis, in the sense that to accommodate it in our range of concepts would make it mandatory for us to give up the identity of the performatives, as distinguished from the constatives. The matter will come up for consideration, along with other things in the following chapter.

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## 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 <sup>denial</sup> ~~criticism~~ 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<sup>e</sup>ra<sup>d</sup>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<sup>e</sup>rade as constatives? Obviously, the grammatical features which they share in common with constatives. Thus, in calling performatives 'masqu<sup>e</sup>ra<sup>d</sup>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 pair<sup>9</sup> 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'<sup>e</sup>. 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<sup>t</sup> 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 <sup>a</sup> 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<sup>c</sup> 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, of '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,<sup>1</sup> 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'.<sup>2</sup> 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 ...<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

## 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<sup>a</sup> is the 'traditional, surface-oriented grammar'.<sup>5</sup> It has its limitation on account of which it is incapable of yielding any purely grammatical criterion for the performative. This grammar<sup>a</sup> 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'.<sup>6</sup>

Continuing Katz says, '...such counter-examples are beside the point when the distinction is framed as a thesis about competence',<sup>7</sup> that is to say, when we~~/~~... ~~move~~ from syntax to semantics, and from traditional taxonomic grammar to contemporary transformational grammar...'<sup>8</sup> 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'.<sup>9</sup> /Katz's attempt to restore performatives is<sup>n</sup> 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<sup>g</sup> 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<sup>a</sup>. 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.<sup>10</sup> 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 <sup>n</sup> acquire truth-value in our actual linguistic practices may 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".<sup>14</sup>

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).<sup>11</sup>

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."<sup>13</sup> 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 <sup>instances</sup> 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 linguists<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

We have already quoted Austin saying this. Commenting on  
 the conclusion it embodies Chisolm<sup>16</sup> and Black<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup>

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.

<sup>3</sup>  
~~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.

<sup>3</sup>~~I~~ 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~~<sup>o</sup>.

## 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.<sup>20</sup>

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...'<sup>22</sup> seems to be a  
performative ...<sup>24</sup>

In view of this, consideration of the phrase 'I state  
that...' 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,<sup>22</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> Jane Heal.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup> 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...'<sup>25</sup>

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<sub>P</sub>, when used in  
 specified circumstances, if and  
 only if its so being used counts  
 as a case of the speaker's  
 thereby X-ing.<sup>26</sup>

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 <sup>t</sup>stage...' 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, must<sup>h</sup> 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<sup>es</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

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,<sup>30</sup> 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 <sup>both</sup> analytic and synthetic. The examples of such sentences to which Austin specially draws our attention are, 'This noise exists', <sup>31</sup> 'What is good ought to exist'. <sup>32</sup>

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. ~~the~~ 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.

## Chapter 5

### PERFORMATIVES AND KNOWLEDGE

We have argued in defence of the semantic identity of performatives. We are now in a position to say with a degree of confidence that performatives are not a bogus class but constitute a class of utterances distinct from constatives. The notion of performatives is a fertile notion. It is useful towards illuminating a number of basic philosophical concepts, the concepts of knowledge and truth in particular. We have already expressed our hope to that effect. We may, now, proceed to elaborate it. The case of truth will be taken up later. We propose to begin with knowledge. To what extent, if at all, can the notion of performatives prove helpful towards understanding knowledge? Consideration of this is going to occupy us in the present chapter.

#### I

Knowledge is, by no means, too simple a concept. So, it behoves us to be clear about what we are going to be concerned with before we embark on the task of understanding it

in the light of the concept of performatives. One thing is certain. The word 'knowledge' is often supposed to be the name of a presumed entity of a questionable character, e.g., substance, relation and such like; but when we talk of knowledge we do not have the idea of any such entity in mind. Equally certain is another thing. Taken in its extension, 'knowledge' is often understood to designate either a true proposition or the entire body of true propositions, so that a so-called inquiry into knowledge on such a construal would, in fact, turn out to be an inquiry into the nature of propositions. We do not understand knowledge in its extension, and so a theory of propositions under the deceptive name of a theory of knowledge is not going to be of any interest to us here. But this should not be taken to mean that knowledge is being taken by us in its intension, in other words, that our interest is going to centre around any object of the Platonic kind which often goes by the name of concept or idea of knowledge. A concept or idea of this kind is a suspect in our eyes. That, however, is not our only reason to avoid it. The real reason is that taken as a concept or idea knowledge, for obvious reasons, is not amenable to investigation, at a linguistic plane which, we are, in a sense, implicitly committed to do when we undertake to make an attempt to read knowledge in the light of

performatives, a kind of linguistic utterances. One may suggest that this difficulty is, perhaps, avoidable if we leave aside such things as concept or idea of knowledge in favour of the word 'knowledge', in which case, investigation of knowledge may well count as an investigation of the word 'knowledge', an investigation conducted on a linguistic plane as desired by us. But the suggestion is not without difficulty. For, the word 'knowledge' is a substantive, and, therefore, like every another substantive, to put <sup>it</sup> in the words of Wittgenstein, is a source of 'philosophical bewilderment',<sup>1</sup> a cause of 'mental cramp'.<sup>2</sup> 'A substantive', says Wittgenstein, 'makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it'.<sup>3</sup> Commenting on the difficulty of the word 'knowledge' Wittgenstein says :

...it seems that there is something wrong with the ordinary use of the word 'knowledge'. It appears we don't know what it means and that, therefore, perhaps, we have no right to use it. We would reply :  
 'There is no exact use of the word 'knowledge'; but we can make several such usages which will more or less

agree with the ways the word is  
actually used.<sup>4</sup>

A question about knowledge — the word 'knowledge' being a substantive — presents, to use the language of George Pitcher 'the aspect of a blank' and 'a very high wall : one is reduced to staring at it helplessly'.<sup>5</sup> The way out of this helplessness is not hard to find. As suggested in the passage quoted above from Wittgenstein, it is to abandon the word 'knowledge' in favour of the verb 'know', a more humble and common word. This means that a philosophical inquiry into knowledge, to become a manageable endeavour, is to be transformed into a characteristic inquiry pertaining to the verb 'know'. Inquiry of knowledge in this form may proceed along different lines. It may consist in :

- (i) a discussion of what is common among all the multifarious uses of 'know' we come across;
  - (ii) an explanation of all the uses of 'know';
  - (iii) an explanation of some uses or of the most crucial use of 'know'.
- (ii) i.e., explanation of all the uses of 'know' is too difficult and cumbersome a task, if it is at all possible.



For, theoretically it is possible for a word to assume new meanings, so that in no stage are we justified in presuming that the uses of the particular word, namely, 'know' we are aware of, exhaust all the uses of it.

(i), on the other hand, rests on a number of presuppositions which cannot be taken for granted without considerable examination. The presuppositions include (a) that the various uses of 'know' have really something in common, (b) that this common something is knowable to us and such like. The fact that certain instances count as instances of the use of the word 'know' is no guarantee that these instances must share something in common. We are warned against presuming the common something by Wittgenstein's example of games;<sup>6</sup> games, even though they are instances of games, strictly speaking, exhibit nothing in common except that they are called games. Hence, to account for their unity Wittgenstein invokes his famous notion of family resemblance; but to say that there is family resemblance among certain things is not to say that the things share something common, a property, a substance, or anything of that kind.

We are thus led to fall back on (iii), that is

to say, philosophical inquiry into knowledge in the sense of an inquiry into some uses or the most crucial use of the verb 'know'.

The important thing for us, now, is to see whether there really is any one use of 'know' which may be identified in some significant sense, as more important than its other uses, a use which may be called fundamental. The particular use of 'know' we have uppermost in our mind is what may be called its claimative use, i.e., the use which is embodied in the expression 'I know'. But what is it that may be said to account for the crucial character of this particular use? Granted that the expression 'I know' is used to make a knowledge-claim, is there no other use of the verb 'know', e.g. 'He knows', 'You know', and the like which also may be supposed to do the same job? Is the function of the expression 'I know' confined only to urging knowledge-claims, or may it be said to have other functions too? Such questions call for answers. A.R.White speaks of some extra-claimative uses of the expression 'I know'. For example, 'It is used... to make admissions of difficulties, to announce the coming to a decision, to agree and commiserate, to make concessions, and in many other ways'.<sup>7</sup> All this may be true; we need not deny that. But despite that 'I know' stands out

predominantly as a verbal devise<sup>c</sup> for urging knowledge-claims.

Arthur Danto begins his Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge with the observation.

... the theory of knowledge is best appreciated as the philosophical explanation of claims to knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

What is said by Danto in elaboration of this tends to cover most of the reasons which, we suppose, would justify the privileged position ~~we~~ assign to the expression 'I know'.

Construal of the theory of knowledge as a philosophical explanation of 'I know' has one very great advantage. It will enable us to treat knowledge at the linguistic level which, as we have said, is needed for reading knowledge in the light of performatory utterances. There are ~~some~~ additional advantages also. When someone says, 'X knows...'

*Exp* We do not understand what exactly corresponds to the verb 'know'. The meaning of 'know' in the sentence is, in that sense, unclear. But this is not the case with 'know' in the

sentence 'I know...' understood in the claimative sense. 'There is no comparable difficulty', says Danto, 'with claiming to know, for claiming is plainly an action of some sort'.<sup>9</sup>

However, it is not merely on consideration of these advantages that we have decided to highlight the claimative use of 'know' in the expression 'I know'. The particular use, we think, is, in fact, more fundamental than other uses. The reason for our so maintaining is that the expression 'I know' has to invariably accompany every assertion we make. It is true that when we make an assertion P we do not normally say 'I know that P'. That would sound 'over-emphatic' or 'pontifical'. It is, in fact, logically unnecessary. For, every assertion has to be prefixed implicitly by 'I know'. No assertion without this claimative prefix can count as an assertion. Whatever is to count as an assertion is to be either true or false; but a sentence which goes without a claimative prefix is neither and therefore, cannot pass for an assertion.

The line of argument by which we have tried to show that the most crucial use of 'know' is its use in

the expression 'I know', an expression by which we make a knowledge-claim, is not of our own. It is modelled after Kant's insight into the role of Cogito in making a judgement. According to Kant, Cogito accompanies every judgement made by us. Which means if someone asserts a judgement to the effect J then, according to Kant, it should be read as Cogito J. There is no assertion without the presupposition of Cogito. To state the matter in Kant's own words :

The, 'I think', must accompany all my representations, for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought; in other words, the representation would be impossible, or at least be, in relation to me nothing. The representation which can be given previously to all thought is called intuition. All the diversity or manifold content of intuition, has, therefore, a necessary relation to the 'I think', the subject in which the diversity is found.<sup>10</sup>

Why do you say that "I know" is not an assertion, but "he knows" "you know" are?

Why do you say that assertions must be prefixed by "I know"?

"He knows", you say, is not a claim, but "I know" is. But "he knows" being an assertion, you say, must be prefixed by (implicit) "I know". Thus non-claiming use of "know" involves claiming-use of "know", and the two uses get mixed up.

But our argument to show that the expression 'I know' exemplifies the basic use of the word 'know' or that 'I know' is the only expression which may be said to embody a knowledge-claim will remain inconclusive until one particular question is answered. The question is whether such expressions as 'He knows', 'You know', etc., can also be said to embody knowledge-claims. The question arises, we think, mainly from our inability to see the difference in the functioning of 'know' in the expression 'I know' from its functioning in 'He knows', 'You know', etc. In the former case we make a knowledge-claim and this fact is not disputed; but in the latter cases we do not make any knowledge-claim, rather, we endorse or allow or judge<sup>11</sup> a knowledge-claim made by somebody else. In the first case, the utterer's role is that of a claimant, while in the second that of a judge.

The expression 'I know', like the Kantian Cogito, is not itself an assertion; but expressions like 'He knows', 'You know', etc. are assertions, and being so, like every other assertion, must be prefixed by 'I know'. And this fact could once again point to our contention that the verb 'know' in its claimative use in the expression 'I know' is more basic than its other uses.

## II

Analysis of knowledge, on our construal, then, is to count as an analysis of the expression 'I know'. According to the official view, 'I know' is supposed, in some sense, to be a description of a characteristic mental state. This descriptivist view of knowledge is not without numerous limitations for which it is not favoured by many. We shall discuss this view separately in the next chapter. Austin also is averse to this view. He says, 'To suppose that "I know" is a descriptive phrase is only one example of the descriptive fallacy so common in philosophy'.<sup>12</sup> Because of the alleged inadequacy of descriptivism, finding an alternative analysis of 'I know' is considered necessary by some. This accounts for the importance and relevance of Austin's performatory analysis of 'I know'. The analysis is suggested to Austin by the parallelism he discovers between 'I know' and 'I promise' which is a typical example of a performatory utterance. And it takes the form of elaborating the analogy.

(a) As distinguished from expressions like 'I believe', it is the characteristic of the expression 'I know' that it would not make sense for one to say



'I know that p but I may be wrong'. For, if one is already aware that he may be wrong in respect of what he claims to know, then obviously, there is no point for him to make a claim by saying 'I know...'. This is the first point in which, according to Austin, the functioning of 'I know' resembles that of the performative 'I promise', in the sense that it does not also make sense for one to say 'I promise... but I may fail'. For, if one has any definite reasons to suppose that he may fail then there is no point for him to say 'I promise'.

If you are aware you may be mistaken, you ought not to say you know, just as, if you are aware that you may break your word, you have no business to promise.<sup>13</sup>

Thus 'I know' is shown to be alike 'I promise' in the sense that just as 'I may fail' does not go with the latter, so 'I may be wrong' does not go with the former. But this particular point of similarity exhibited by 'I know' to 'I promise' should be fortified against certain misunderstanding.

(i) The first point of misunderstanding arises from the fact of our inability to 'foresee the future'. It is often argued that since we cannot know what will happen in the future and, therefore, whether or not we shall fail, we do not have any right to make any promise at all. Likewise, it is argued that if it is such that if I know I cannot be wrong then, I am never in a position to say 'I know', because I am always liable to be wrong and there is no perpetual safeguard against being so.

The obsession, as has been observed by Austin, 'fastens on my inability to make predictions as the root of the matter'. But this obsession, according to Austin, is 'doubly mistaken'. '... we may be perfectly justified in saying' says Austin, 'we know or we promise inspite of the fact that things 'may' turn out badly...'<sup>14</sup> Austin further maintains '... it is overlooked that the conditions which must be satisfied if I am to show that the thing is within my cognisance or within my power are conditions, not about the future but about the present and the past...'<sup>15</sup>

(ii) The second source of misunderstanding is a certain difference between our reaction to someone's saying 'I promise' and someone's saying 'I know' when in both cases

things turn out badly. In the latter case we say 'You have proved wrong, so you did not know', while in the former we say 'You have failed to perform, although you did promise'.

Austin dismisses the misunderstanding because the alleged difference on which it is based is, according to him, more apparent than real. He says :

The sense in which you 'did promise' is that you did say you promise ... But it may well transpire that you never fully intended to do it, or that you had concrete reason to suppose that you wouldn't be able to do it..., and in another 'sense' of promise you can't then have promised to do it, so that you didn't promise.<sup>16</sup>

(b) We may now mention another characteristic in respect of which 'I know' is alike 'I promise'. This particular characteristic is specially emphasised by Austin. When someone says 'I promise' he is supposed to express a certain intention. That is true. But, according to Austin, what he does in addition to this is to stake his reputation

in a new way, to make himself as if a part of the promise he makes. And the same happens when someone says 'I know'. 'Saying "I know", is taking a new plunge'.<sup>17</sup> Elaborating the matter Austin says,

[I]t is not saying 'I have performed a specially striking feat of cognition, superior, in the same scale as believing and being sure, even to being merely quite sure' : for there is nothing in that scale superior to being quite sure. Just as promising is not something superior, in the same scale as hoping and intending, even to merely fully intending : for there is nothing in the scale superior to merely fully intending. When I say 'I know', I give others my word : I give others my authority for saying that 'S is P'.<sup>18</sup>

By saying 'I know' I involve myself in what I say as much as I do when I say 'I promise'. The truth of this contention becomes, in a way, obvious because it would explain a number

of facts. To mention a few such facts.

(i) Suppose I say 'I promise to do A', although my hearer refuses to take my promise seriously, and contrast it with my saying 'I intend to do A' which also is not taken seriously. In the former case I feel offended in a way in which I do not feel in the latter case. The same is found to happen when I consider my saying 'I know' Vis-a-Vis my saying 'I am sure'. My hearer's refusal to accept the former offends me far more seriously than if he refused<sup>s</sup> to accept the latter. All this becomes accountable only on the supposition that in saying 'I promise' and 'I know', I do not just issue certain utterances but go further to involve myself with the utterances in a very special way, by making myself, as if, a part of the utterances, if we may say so.

(ii) The second fact which becomes intelligible in the light of the supposition is this. Suppose I say 'I am sure that P' but eventually I am found to be wrong; and compare it with my saying 'I know that P' in which case also I turn out to be wrong. In the former case I can evade the responsibility for my failure by saying such things as 'I am sure for my part', and the like; but in the latter

case, there is no such way out. There is no way for me to shed my responsibility, and so, I am liable to be rounded on by others in a very special way. An exactly comparable situation is found when I compare my saying 'I promise to do A' when eventually I fail to do A with my saying 'I intend to do A' though, in fact, I fail to do A. In the former case I am liable to be rounded on by others in a special way, that is, a way in which I am not liable in the latter case.

(c) The final point in which 'I know' and 'I promise' resemble is that both are 'transmissible'. On the basis of someone having said to me 'I know that P', I also am entitled to say that I know that P. The only difference between the two knowledge-claims is that while the former may be first hand, the latter is to be called second hand. The same holds good of 'I promise'. If someone says seriously 'I promise', then on the basis of that I also am entitled to say that I promise.

Expl.

### III

In spelling out the analogy between 'I know' and 'I promise', Austin apparently has two objectives in mind : on the one hand, to avoid the descriptivist analysis of

'I know', and, on the other hand, to assimilate the expression 'I know' to the sentential sub-class of performatives of which 'I promise' is a most typical example. But this comparative analysis of these two expressions is confined to his article 'Other Minds'; it may be a matter of some interest to note that he did not subsequently follow it up. In his subsequent works, nowhere does the comparative study of the two expressions happen to recur. Anyway, this move on the part of Austin to interpret 'I know' as a performative has proved quite provocative. It has been subjected to fairly widespread criticism by philosophers, not all of whom tend, otherwise to share the same platform. Thus, e.g., one critic, Arthur Danto who is critical about Austin's performatory analysis of 'I know', appears inclined to accept the latter's non-descriptivist thesis about knowledge in a general way. 'It is a common ground between Austin and myself', he says, 'that there are no cognitive actions...'<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, Jonathan Harrison, another critic, who has little sympathy for the non-descriptivist hypothesis, accuses Austin of over-working the discovery that language, in general, has a non-descriptive function. He says thus :

When the interesting and important  
discovery that language has other

uses than to state facts, describe things, or communicate information was first made, it was only natural that philosophers should over-estimate the extent to which language was 'non-propositional'... The view that the function of 'I know' resembles the function of 'I promise' is a case in point.<sup>20</sup>

Assimilation of 'I know' to performatives is, according to Harrison, a mistake. Pointing to this mistake he remarks :

Our predecessors, so far from committing the 'descriptive fallacy' with regard to 'I know', had the better of us in that they did not make this mistake.<sup>21</sup>

The objections against Austin's performatory analysis of 'I know' are quite multiferous. They consist, almost entirely, in showing certain disanalogies between 'I know' and 'I promise'. However, subject to our judgement being correct, the disanalogies may broadly be divided into those



that are misconceived and those that are too weak and peripheral to be capable of having any adverse effect on the analysis cited by Austin.

## IV

Let us first be concerned with some objections which are misconceived. Specimens of this type are to be found in Jonathan Harrison and also in Zeno Vendler.

Harrison says :

...both 'promising to' and 'promising that' are essentially different from saying 'I know...', in that someone who says either 'I promise not to be late' or 'I promise that I will not be late' is correctly described as having promised, but someone saying 'I know...' is not correctly described as having known.<sup>22</sup>

Vendler also says something substantially to the same effect. To quote him.

To say (in the appropriate circumstances)  
"I promise to X" is to promise to X.

This fails with know : it is  
 not the case, in any circumstances,  
 that to say 'I know that P' constitutes  
 knowing that P.<sup>23</sup>

The objection seems to be based, as far as we understand, on a gross misconstrual of the intended purport<sup>r</sup> of the expression 'I know'. That is not hard to see. When the expression 'I know' is understood in the intended sense the alleged disanalogy between 'I know' and 'I promise' will disappear. In saying 'I promise', in appropriate circumstances, I do make a promise. That's a fact. But if one is to go by the exact purport of the expression 'I know', then one cannot say that in saying 'I know' I perform an act of knowing. In saying 'I know' one does not perform an act of knowing but the act of claiming to know. It is unlike 'I promise' in saying which one promises but does not make a claim to promise. Now, taken in this claimative sense — which is the correct sense — 'I know' really amounts to saying 'I make a claim to know'. If it be so then why should it not be the case that in saying 'I know', i.e., 'I make a claim to know', in appropriate circumstances, I do make a claim to know just as in saying 'I promise', in appropriate circumstances, I do make a promise? To say, 'I claim to know' is to make a claim to know. Whether or not

my claim is justified in the light of relevant facts and I do really know is a different matter.

The claimative feature of 'I know' having been missed by Harrison, in particular, while formulating his objection against the performatory interpretation of 'I know' might seem a bit incongruous in the sense that he is not exactly unaware of the matter. For, in the preceding section of his paper he writes :

One of the important difference is that someone saying 'I promise...' is thereby promising, whereas someone saying 'I know...' is not thereby knowing, but simply claiming that he knows.<sup>24</sup>

In Austin's use, the claimative sense of 'I know' is essential so that, in attempting to understand the expression one must take adequate precaution not to lose sight of it. The critics' failure on this score has, on occasions been, in our opinion, the source of another objection. The objection pertains to Austin's position that both in saying 'I know' and in saying 'I promise',

the person so saying gives others his word. Now, the critics' objection consists in showing a number of instances in which saying of 'I know' by somebody does not involve anything like giving word to others on his part. Thus Harrison says :

There are, however, cases when we would certainly not say of someone who said 'I know p' that he gave his word that p. If X says to me 'I know that you are determined to make a fool of yourself', he is surely not correctly described as having given me his word, pledge his authority, that I will make a fool of myself. When the amateur investigator says to the detective-inspector 'I know there is strong circumstantial evidence against him, but...' it would be very odd to describe what he is doing in the way Austin does. In general, when X says to Y 'I know that p', when he believes Y to be already aware of p, he is not doing this so much to assure Y of p, as to communicate to Y the fact that he also knows p. In such

cases, to describe X as giving his word to Y that P is true would be thoroughly implausible.<sup>25</sup>

Similar examples are also cited by Danto.

It is easy to find examples in usage where a man cannot be giving his word when he says 'I know'. Thus A says 'I no longer love you' to B and B replies 'I know you do not'. B cannot be giving A his authority here ! Here he is acknowledging that the words 'I love you no longer' are not needed. C says to D that A no longer loves B, and D says 'I know she does not'. Here he is not giving C his word. He is saying that C brings stale news.<sup>26</sup>

But what do all these examples may be supposed to show ? What exactly, is their relevance ? They tend no doubt to confirm that there are some extra-claimative uses of 'I know'. There indeed are such uses. Who would

deny that ? But the fact of the existence of such uses has nothing in it to disprove that when 'I know' occurs in language in the claimative sense, in other words, when it is used by someone to make a claim to the effect that he knows, it is being used to give his word or authority to others.

We have met to our satisfaction the objection that arises from misconception. Yet, it may not be out of place here to take notice of certain observations made by Chisolm. Referring to the question raised in the Thaetetus as to how to differentiate between "saying, of a man, that he has true opinion that P, and saying of him that P falls within his cognizance", Chisolm maintains that Austin's view suggests an important clue to an answer to this problem. He says :

Suppose you consider his statement  
 'When I say "I know", I give others  
 my word : I give others my authority  
 for saying "S is P" and revise it to  
 read : 'If a man knows that S is P,  
 then he has the right to give others  
 his word - to give others his  
 authority for believing S is P'. ~~27~~ 27

Working within the framework of his view that all performative verbs 'conform to the achievement schema in their tense structure', Zeno Vendler mentions one particular point of disanalogy between 'I know' and 'I promise'. The disanalogy consists in the fact that one can know something for a period of time, but this does not hold good of promising. As a result, there is incongruity in asked <sup>ing</sup> 'Since when does he promise...?', but there is no such incongruity in asking 'Since when does he know?' To quote Vendler :

Just think of the incongruity of saying things like : "Since when does he...?"...  
Now with Know, all these questions make sense; know like believe, doubt, etc., are state-verbs; One can know something for a period of time, since a certain date, and so forth.<sup>28</sup>

But the alleged disanalogy seems to be based on a misapprehension of the way in which the verb 'promise' functions in our language, and the misapprehension has its source presumably in the acknowledged framework of his thinking. I may indeed know something for years or since a particular time; but I

may equally be said to be promising something for a certain period of time. Interestingly, the point figures in the writings of a fellow-critic, Arthur<sup>3</sup> Danto, when he says :

I may have known something for years, as indeed I may have been under a promised obligation for years. I report the latter fact by saying that I am under such and such a promise. This means that at the beginning of that period I said the words 'I promise' or performed some equivalent action. That action instituted the period, which will last until the promise is fulfilled : breaking the promise does not remove me from the obligation.<sup>29</sup>

The particular disanalogy between 'I know' and 'I promise' is followed up by Vendler by another of a somewhat different kind. This disanalogy is supposed to consist in the use of the mark 'hereby' with 'promise' and 'know'. In Vendler's own words the disanalogy is this.



Finally, the hereby mark : the sentence

I hereby promise to X

is issued to make the promise quite

explicit and official

I hereby know that P

on the other hand once more falls short of

the requirements of grammar and good sense.

We are unable to understand why Vendler has taken his particular disanalogy at all seriously. For, as we understand, it does not, in any way, become prejudicial to the analogy between 'I know' and 'I promise' which Austin has spelt out with the idea of assigning 'I know' to performatives. The disanalogy takes for granted the position to the effect that 'I know' and 'I promise', more generally, performatives, can be unified in a class on the basis of a common identifying mark derived from the vocabulary. But the position is wrong, which has been shown by Austin through extensive examination. Vocabulary can provide nothing in respect of which performatives may be said to be analogous to one another. So, the failure of the 'hereby'-mark to ensure an analogy between 'I know' and 'I promise' need not be confined to these two expressions; it may well be true of any two typical performatives. That will not impair their performativeness.

## V

There indeed are more objections to Austin's know-promise parallelism having been made by critics on the basis of misconceived or genuine disanalogy between the two expressions. We are not unaware of that. But we consider it, in a sense, redundant to mention or discuss them separately. For, those objections, as we can see, share certain common defects, at a general level, on account of which they cannot be said to possess the force they may appear to have. These objections, if we may say so, are based mainly on two mistakes.

One : the mistake consisting in the presupposition that there is some identifying feature which is common to all performatives and bind them together in a sentential class. But such a feature, as we have already seen is elusive, though fortunately, the identity of performatives as a distinct class of utterances is not prejudiced on account of that.

Two : the mistake consisting in the inability to see that some degree of disanalogy may characterise any two performatives, however paradigmatic they may happen to be. The reason for our so saying is this. The functioning

of performatives is governed by a number of felicity conditions. There is nothing mandatory that two performatives will violate the same conditions or the same set of conditions.  $P_1$  may violate  $C_1$  while  $P_2, C_2$ . That will exhibit a disanalogy between  $P_1$  and  $P_2$ . But despite this disanalogy their performativeness is not adversely affected.

. . . . .

## Chapter 6

### A NOTE ON THE DESCRIPTIVIST ALTERNATIVE

What we call the descriptivist account of knowledge and, for that matter, of the expression 'I know', is a classical alternative to its performatory account which has been sought to be defended in the preceding chapter. In this chapter, we shall make an attempt to show the limitations of the descriptivist hypothesis. The obvious purpose it is supposed to subserve is to strengthen the case of the performatory account. Otherwise, there is no reason for us to be concerned with it in the present context.

The central contention of descriptivism is that whenever someone is credited with knowledge, he is in possession of a characteristic mental state, and in saying 'I know' he is to be understood as describing the mental state. Thus the expression 'I know', on the descriptivist hypothesis, is a descriptive expression which, for that reason, unlike a performative, admits of characterisation as true or false.

But how, exactly, is the characteristic mental state, which is supposed to be described by 'I know', is to be conceived? This divides descriptivism broadly into two types.

1. According to one version, the characteristic mental state is unique, simple and unanalysable, and being so it is naturally not reducible to or definable in terms of any other mental state; to be in this mental state is to know something. Arthur Danto uses the name 'Cognitive Intuitionism'<sup>1</sup> for this variety of descriptivism. We have no particular objection to this name and hereafter shall use it ourselves.

2. The second version of descriptivism, named 'Cognitive Naturalism'<sup>2</sup> by Danto, does not, unlike Cognitive Intuitionism, consider the mental state as indefinable; on the contrary, it maintains that the mental state in question is definable in terms of such other mental state as a belief, to be specific, belief which is true and justified.

Now, in attempting to execute our plan to expose the limitations of the descriptivist view of 'I know', we shall confine ourselves to the above two versions of it, namely, Cognitive Intuitionism and Cognitive Naturalism.

## I

To begin with Cognitive Intuitionism. The standard version of this classical view is to be found in

H.A. Prichard's Knowledge and Perception,<sup>3</sup> and in dealing with it we shall have mainly this particular version in mind. This particular version may be summarised in the following points.

(i) When X knows Y, he is in a certain condition or state of mind (and in saying 'I know', he just describes that he is in that condition or state).

(ii) When X knows Y, he knows that he is knowing Y by reflection.

In Prichard's language, "...when we know something we either do, or by reflection can know that our condition is one of knowing that thing..."<sup>4</sup>

(iii) "It [knowledge] is neither true nor false, just as a colour is neither heavy nor light".<sup>5</sup>

(iv) "...when we know, we are not mistaken".<sup>6</sup>

That is to say, we cannot mistake knowledge for any other mental state, e.g., belief, and this implies that in knowing that I am in a mental state of knowing, I know what knowing is.

(v) Knowledge is not definable, in the sense that, one cannot say what it is in terms of anything else.

## II

All the five points listed above are not important — at least not equally important — for our purpose. We are not interested in descriptivism as such. It figures on our agenda and we undertake to indicate its limitations, because it happens to present a counter-model to the performatory analysis of 'I know'. This has already been made mention of. From our point of view, then, what is naturally of utmost importance is (i), the basic descriptivist position, namely the position that when X knows Y, he is in a characteristic state or condition of mind, so that his saying 'I know', may at all be supposed to describe that state or condition. The descriptivist construal of 'I know' presupposes the existence of the characteristic mental state or condition. The presupposition, is, in fact, most crucial. So, what is of first importance for us is to consider whether the presupposition has any justification whatever, in other words, whether the mental state or condition may at all be said to exist.

The mental state in question could have been summararily dismissed by us as hypothetical, as an illusory factual counterpart of knowledge generated by the grammatically substantive character of the word 'knowledge'. But this method of summary dismissal, we are afraid, is not going to be immediately available to us. What comes, obviously, in the way is (ii), i.e., the contention that when X knows Y, he knows by reflection that he is knowing. Thus 'reflection' comes to play a decisive role in Prichard. Accessibility of the mental state to it, tends to provide an initial protection against a possible attempt to reject the state or condition of mind as hypothetical or non-existent.

From this, it follows that whatever truth the basic descriptivist thesis as embodied in (i) may be supposed to possess is to depend on the truth of <sup>the</sup> reflection-thesis as embodied in (ii). But how far is the reflection-thesis tenable? This, again, depends on whether or not the notion of reflection itself can be credited with any intelligibility at all. What, exactly, may 'reflection' be taken to stand for? The word itself, by no means, contains the answer. To decide the issue we have to follow the method of proceeding through the examination of the various possible ways of understanding the concept. And let us do it.



May we take the word 'reflection' to mean what is called introspection, i.e., 'the sort of inward glance by which we are alleged to discover our own internal mental condition?'<sup>7</sup> A possible interpretation to this effect is made mention of by Arthur Danto. But the interpretation involves difficulties which are not hard to see. If 'reflection' be construed as introspection or 'subjective inward glance' then it would follow that the truth-conditions of a knower's knowledge that P are inherent in the knower himself. That is to say, they are entirely knower-dependent having nothing to do with anything besides the knower. But such a subject-oriented position is difficult to uphold. To illustrate the point. Suppose, on someone's saying 'This is emerald', we ask him 'How do you know that it is so?' In answer the knower concerned is to state the truth-conditions of 'This is emerald'. That is understandable. But if the truth-conditions were purely subjective to the knower, then the only way for him to know them would have been to have recourse to introspection. Through introspection alone they would have been accessible to him. But in actuality this is not what happens. The knower concerned does not bother to look into his mind in search of the truth-conditions. That, in fact, is considered irrelevant by him. What he is required \*

to do and what he actually does is to give his answer by enumerating the properties of emerald possessed by the object called emerald by him. But the properties of emerald are extra-mental objects not accessible to introspection. Which points to the fact that the knower in search of the truth-conditions of 'This is emerald' has to go outside himself and take into account extra-subjective matters. And for knowing such extra-subjective matters he has obviously to adopt means of knowledge other than introspection.

Let us go over to another possible construal of reflection. May it be supposed that when talking of reflection what Prichard has in mind is remembering, or falling back on memory, or what Wittgenstein calls 'seeing into the past?' Such a construal, again, has certain very serious difficulties. Reflection, in the sense of remembering, or falling back on memory, can claim no special significance for itself. For, if reflection be taken in the sense of remembering, then to say that knowledge is known as knowledge through reflection would be the same as saying that remembering is a form of knowing, and that what is known by us can be remembered when we reflect on it. But this, obviously, is not what Prichard or anybody can afford to mean. The worst difficulty that would arise in that case would be that nobody

can speak of knowing through reflection an event of current knowledge : the talk of remembering in the case of current knowing does not make any sense of remembering and thereafter to make an attempt to explain knowledge in terms of it proves self-~~defeating~~<sup>defeating</sup> : it leaves knowledge itself unexplained.

Thus, as far as we can see, an intelligible account of reflection as a distinct means of knowledge is not possible to obtain. The notion has to go and along with that must go the alleged mental state corresponding to knowledge and, consequently, the claim that the expression 'I know' is a description of the mental state. The supposed mental state which is said to be described by 'I know' has no epistemic backing for its existence. The purport of this is that if the mental state is said to exist, then it must exist arbitrarily without any justification.

As a matter of fact, lack of epistemic foundation apart, the descriptivist construal of 'I know' has a serious difficulty which is peculiarly its own. The difficulty is this. Let us take our earlier example of someone's saying 'This is em<sup>e</sup>erald'. We may well ask him how can he say so, or whether he just believes it or knows it. Suppose, he answers 'I know this is em<sup>e</sup>erald', and the basis of this

knowledge-claim is the evidence in favour of the fact that this is emerald. But what makes it pertinent for us to ask whether the person knows that this is emerald and for him to say that he knows that this is emerald? Evidently, the fact that the sentence 'This is emerald' is descriptive of a state of affairs. Now, if 'I know' be supposed to be descriptive in the way 'This is emerald' is, then the person on his saying 'I know that this is emerald' may well be asked by us whether he knows that he knows that this is emerald and he is well entitled to answer 'I know that I know that this is emerald'. And this will continue endlessly.

### III

Let us take up for consideration the second type of descriptivism called 'Cognitive Naturalism' here. This type of descriptivism though not new in philosophy, has been upheld by a number of recent philosophers. These

philosophers include, among others, Chisolm,<sup>8</sup> Keith Lehrer,<sup>9</sup> Ayer.<sup>10</sup> As opposed to Cognitive Intuitionism which maintains that the mental state purported to be described by 'I know' is indefinable, Cognitive Naturalism says that the alleged mental state is definable as justified true belief. It is said that X knows and, for that matter, can justly claim

'I know' only when certain conditions obtain. The conditions are (i) if X believes that 'P', (ii) if 'P' is true and (iii) if the belief that 'p' is justified. Now, Cognitive Naturalism upholds the position that in saying 'I know' one describes in a way basically the same mental state which he describes in saying 'I believe'. That there is a characteristic mental state corresponding to believing, or that in saying 'I believe', the speaker gives a description of the mental state is difficult to doubt. But what is ~~not~~ so is whether knowing is definable in terms of believing, or whether the expression 'I know' describes basically the same mental state as is described by 'I believe'. The problem thus reduces itself to an examination of a relation between knowledge and belief, in linguistic terms, between the expressions 'I know' and 'I believe'. That is to say, we have to say whether knowledge is definable in terms of belief of a certain kind, together with whether the expressions 'I know' and 'I believe' function in the same way in language.

As regards the latter, Austin<sup>11</sup> has made certain interesting observations which it would be worthwhile to take cognizance of.

It we want to challenge someone having said 'I believe' our challenge assumes the form of 'Why do you believe' and not 'How do you believe?' On the contrary, if our challenge pertains to someone's having said 'I know', it takes the form of 'How do you know?' and not 'Why do you know?'. Again, while such words as 'suppose', 'assume', 'be certain', 'be sure', etc., follow the example of 'I believe', they do not follow the example of 'I know'.

The claims 'I know' and 'I believe' may both be questioned out of 'respectful curiosity'. But often they may also be questioned in a spirit of skepticism. In such a case, one more difference between 'I believe' and 'I know' surfaces itself. If we skeptically ask X, 'How do you know?' on his saying 'I know', we suggest that X perhaps does not know at all; on the other hand, the skeptical question, 'Why do you believe' addressed to X on his claiming 'I believe' suggests that X should not believe. In the former case, we are questioning the existence of knowledge itself. But in the latter, we are not questioning the existence of belief but only the evidence in favour of it.

The disparity between 'I believe' and 'I know' in respect of their functioning in language is enough to

make one feel that the two expressions do not belong to the same category, in other words, knowledge and belief are not similar in the way which would justify the former being definable in terms of the latter, or someone's supposing that the former describes essentially what the latter does. There indeed are many points in which knowledge and belief differ.

It is a matter of fact that, ordinarily, one does not say 'I know that P' unless he believes that P. This tends to create the impression that believing invariably accompanies knowing, or that knowing entails believing. Those who are guided by this impression do not, naturally, admit any basic distinction between knowing and believing. For them, the only difference between knowing and believing is in respect of emphasis, in other words, saying 'I know' is an emphatic way of saying 'I believe'. According to them, there is no inconsistency in saying 'I do not believe that P', 'I know that P', just as there is no inconsistency 'This is not a house, it is a mansion'.<sup>12</sup> The second part in each of these two statements does not contradict the first. It only serves to say the first part emphatically. Being a mansion does not exclude the possibility of a building being a house. Likewise, knowing that P does not exclude the

possibility of believing that P. Thus knowing and believing, it is argued, are not mutually exclusive. Saying 'I know' is only an emphatic way of saying 'I believe', which implies that between knowing and believing the difference is just one of degree, and that a belief with adequate emphasis becomes transformed into knowledge. This seems prima facie an untenable position. For, howsoever strongly one may believe that ghosts exist, the existence of ghosts does not become a matter of knowledge. Again, if knowing were basically the same as emphatic believing and, conversely, believing were a weak form of knowing, then it would naturally follow that by increasing the degree of emphasis we can transform a belief into knowledge. That is to say, the statement 'X absolutely believes that P' (instead of 'X believes P') would become logically equivalent to the statement 'X knows that P'. But this does not hold good. A belief about which one is absolutely sure does not for that reason become knowledge, alternately, from the fact that X absolutely believes P it does not follow that X knows P.

Another point to note. Take the statement 'X believes that P'. It is true if it is a fact that X



believes that P and false if it is a fact that X does not believe that P. Truth or falsity of P does not have anything to do with the truth or falsity of 'X believes that P'. Substantially the same point is asserted by Danto when he says :


... the sentence 'm believes that s' may be true invariantly as to whether s itself is true or false, so that if the difference between true and false belief... is only the difference between the truth and falsity of s, then m may believe that S under whatever variations in truth-value of S there may be. Comparably, 'm believes in n' may be true invariantly as to whether n exists... one may believe what is false... In contrast... 'm knows that S' ... entail  $\lceil \bar{S} \rceil$  the truth of S.<sup>13</sup>

One may believe what is false as also what is true. Contrarily, one is said to know only what is true and not what is false. The point may be summed up by saying that

while knowledge is semantically committed to truth, belief is non-committal.

It is ordinarily a fact that when X knows that P he also believes that P, in other words that, X cannot know that P without believing P. But what may it be taken to suggest? At best that normally, believing that P is a condition of knowing that P, not that believing that P is a necessary condition for knowing that P, and that believing that P, for that reason, is a defining characteristic of knowing. To have tongue, lips, vocal cord, etc., even though they are preconditions of making a statement cannot constitute what would help us to define a statement.

We have said that believing that P is normally a condition of knowing that P. This tends to suggest a position to the effect that there are occasions when we know that P without believing that P. But how far is this position correct? Are there really occasions when one may be said to know that P without believing or being sure that P? There, of course, are instances of this kind. Woozley has cited a number of such instances. We may mention one here. The example is that of a man who knows that he has

 got what he has  
 /terribly wanted, but can't really believe it.

The man who knows that he has  
 just got something that he has  
 terribly wanted, such as  
 promotion or a particular  
 appointment, not only says that  
 that he cannot really believe it,  
 but may really not be able to  
 believe it — until he is actually  
 sitting at the new desk or wearing  
 the badges with nobody stopping him.<sup>14</sup>

It would be interesting to take note of one final point which  
 differentiates knowledge from belief. Knowledge, if we  
 may say so, is social in a sense in which belief is not.  
 In other words, believing has a characteristic subjective  
 overtone which is not found in knowing. This becomes  
 evident from the fact that while it is perfectly common  
 to say 'So far as I am concerned I believe that P', it would  
 be an outrage of linguistic convention if someone says  
 in the same way 'So far as I am concerned I know that P'.

Knowledge and belief are thus disanalogous  
 to such an extent that it would be a wrong move to define

the former in terms of any concept which involves the latter. They belong, if we may say so, to different categories. It is indeed difficult to deny the value of the insight expressed by Austin in the famous passage we have already referred to.

... saying 'I know' is taking a new plunge.  
But it is not saying 'I have performed  
a specially striking feat of cognition,  
superior, in the same scale as believing  
and being sure, even to being merely  
quite sure' : for there is nothing in  
that scale superior to being quite  
sure.<sup>15</sup>

• • • • •

## Chapter 7

### PERFORMATIVES AND TRUTH

As we know, Austin makes no secret of his aversion to the descriptivist account of knowledge. 'To suppose that "I know" is a descriptive phrase, is only one example of the descriptive fallacy, so common in philosophy'. We have already quoted this remark of Austin's. So his desire to get rid of the descriptivist account of knowledge and for that purpose, to find a suitable alternative to it, which he thinks would be available in his reconstruction of the notion of knowledge in terms of that of performatives, is understandable. But his stance against descriptivism is not a stance against descriptivism as such; it seems to be confined to his theory of knowledge. For, Austin shows special interest in the problem of truth and the theory that results from it tends to present a very different picture. Asking himself, when it is that a statement is said to be true, Austin answers, "A statement is said to be true when the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by demonstrative conventions (the one to which it refers) is of a type with which the sentence used in making it is correlated by descriptive conventions".<sup>1</sup> And speaking of 'is true' as this particular correlation, he remarks, 'If it is admitted (if) that the

rather bearing yet satisfactory relation between words and world... does genuinely occur why should the phrase "is true" not be our way of describing it?'<sup>2</sup> Except for its sophistication, Austin's account of truth is substantially a version of the particular brand of descriptivist theory which in the philosophy of truth is called correspondence theory. Thus as far as the problem of understanding truth is concerned, Austin, having shun the anti-path to descriptivism which he originally showed in connection with the interpretation of knowledge becomes, on the contrary, reconciled to it. What is more, his refined version of the correspondence theory may well be supposed to be a new contribution towards enriching the descriptivist tradition in the philosophy of truth. As regards truth, Austin is thus quite happy with a descriptivist hypothesis. So, it has been only natural that the idea of performatives does not figure in his thoughts about truth. That the concept of performatives, a discovery of his own, can be of any use in a theory of truth does not have any occasion to occur to him. The concept comes in for the first time<sup>3</sup> for exploitation by Strawson in his characteristic theory of truth. This theory, often called a performatory theory, is an attempt to understand how the phrase 'is true' is used in language, in the light of a characteristic set of

performatory utterances. What is historically more important about this Strawsonian account of truth is that eventually it is made to play an antithetic role in relation to Austin's correspondence theory of truth.<sup>4</sup>

Reacting to this theory Strawson says, "The correspondence requires, not purification, but elimination".<sup>5</sup>

Strawson's performatory account of truth may well be looked upon as constituted of a number of different contentions. One such contention — no doubt a basic contention — is the non-descriptivist position to the effect that the word 'true' in a sentence of the form 'P is true' does not describe or designate a quality or relation or anything of the kind. This, as is known to us, happens to be the central thesis of the particular theory of truth which is associated with the names of F.P.Ramsey and A.J.Ayer and is often called Redundancy or Logical Superfluity theory of truth.

According to Ramsay, the word 'true' in a 'truth-sentence' does not denote anything. So that, we do not have any separate problem about truth; to add the predicate 'true' to a proposition is to add nothing to it. In Ramsey's own language :

... it is true that Caesar was murdered means no more than that Caesar was murdered.<sup>6</sup>

The same position is more explicitly formulated by A.J.Ayer when he says :

... in all sentences of the form 'P is true' the phrase 'is true' is logically superfluous. When, e.g., one says that the proposition ' "Queen Anne is dead" is true', all that one is saying is that Queen Anne is dead..., to say that a proposition is true is just to assert it.<sup>7</sup>

Strawson admits that 'is true' in 'P is true' does not designate anything. So far he is in agreement with Ramsey and Ayer. But he dissociates himself from the latter when they proceed to treat 'is true' as 'logically superfluous' or as a bare mark of assertion. For Strawson, 'is true' is not logically superfluous ' "True" and "not true" ' he says, 'have jobs of their



own to do...'<sup>8</sup> Let us follow the analysis through which this position is worked out by Strawson.

A ~~sentence~~-pattern may indeed be used to assert P. But this assertiveness is not the whole truth or the only truth about it. For, according to Strawson, there are circumstances in which it may be used to do many things besides making an assertion. To illustrate the point consider any of the following :

- (a) Nehru is the first Prime Minister of India.
- (b) It is ten O'clock.
- (c) Truth survives in the long run.

A certain sentence-pattern has been used in each of these cases to make an assertion. But the making of the assertion is certainly not the only thing it can be used to do. Depending on its use in appropriate context it can be said to do more things, i.e., perform duties other than merely that of asserting. Thus (a) may figure in a quiz contest to answer the question 'Who is the first Prime Minister of India ?' (b) may be taken in the sense of, say, telling or reminding somebody that he should begin his work. In the

same way, (c) may be used to function as a means of encouraging someone who has lost his faith in truth. There indeed are many more such jobs other than making assertion which a sentence may be used to perform, e.g., warning, inspiring, reassuring, reprimanding and so on. Now, in many such cases, i.e., cases which provide appropriate context for a sentence to do a job over and above that of asserting, one may make the assertion without using the sentence-pattern. Certain 'abbreviatory devices' are there for making the assertion. The matter is stated by Strawson himself thus :

In many of the cases in which we are doing something besides merely stating X is Y, we have available, for use in suitable contexts, certain abbreviatory devices which enable us to state that X is Y without using the sentence - pattern 'X is Y'. Thus, if someone asks us 'Is X Y', we may state (in the way of reply) that X is Y by saying 'yes'.<sup>9</sup>

Now, the word 'true', according to Strawson, is one such 'abbreviatory device'. To be more precise, it is said to work as a substitute for each of a number of such devices. But what exactly are the devices? In answering this question Strawson has recourse to what is identified by Austin as performatory utterances. That is to say, the devices are performatory expressions like 'I corroborate', 'I agree', 'I grant', 'I confirm', 'I accept', and such like. One uses the word 'true', according to Strawson, as a substitute for any of these expressions which, again, is used as a device for making an assertion, say, P, in the context of the same assertion being actually made or envisaged to be made by somebody. From this it follows that 'true', like the expressions it is a substitute for, performs in language a performatory role in addition to that of asserting; and in this, according to Strawson, lies its logical significance; it is not as supposed by Ramsey and Ayer, logically superfluous.

Thus, according to Strawson, the expression 'true' or 'is true' is basically performatory. This performatory feature, while it explains its logical relevance, also explains another important thing, namely why it is that Strawson accepts the Ramsey-Ayer position that 'true'

does not designate anything. The non-designating feature of the word 'true' follows straightway from its performatory feature. For, one of the distinctive features of an expression called performatory is that it is non-descriptive; it does not report or describe anything whatever in the world, a situation, a state of affair or anything of the kind.

But in maintaining that the word 'true' in a sentence of the form 'P is true' performs basically a performatory role and does not describe anything, Strawson faces one difficulty of which he is fully aware. The difficulty arises from the obvious resemblance of the sentence 'P is true' to a sentence of the kind 'The flower is yellow'. The word 'yellow' in the sentence describes the subject 'flower' and is a grammatical predicate in it. If so, why should we not be in a position to say that 'true' in 'P is true' is a grammatical predicate functioning as a description of 'P' ? That 'true' in 'P is true' is a predicate is an obvious grammatical fact which Strawson does not deny. But he denies that 'true' can be understood as the name of a property describing 'P' in the way 'yellow' as the name of a property describes flower. The function of 'true' is not to describe 'P'. To suppose that it is so, is to be misled by its grammatical position. According to Strawson, 'true' is

neither a device for making an assertion about 'P' nor is it a device for making an assertion other than 'P'; its entire function is to assert 'P' itself in a certain particular way which is the performatory way. What specifically this performatory way would be would, of course, depend on the nature of the context in which 'P' is asserted. Thus, on occasions, it may assume the 'agreeing' way, on occasions the 'endorsing' way or the 'accepting' way, and so on.

## II

To provide an exhaustive account of Strawson's view of truth is not germane to our present interest. However, the outline we have given above <sup>of</sup> Strawson's account of the use of the phrase 'is true' seems adequate enough to highlight the points considered salient and relevant by us. The points are as follows :

- (a) In saying 'P is true' one does not make a statement about 'P' or a statement over and above 'P'.
- (b) 'Is true' in sentences of the form 'P is true' does not designate anything in the way 'yellow' in the sentence 'The flower is yellow' does.

- (c) The use of the word 'true' needs a context in which a statement is actually made or is envisaged.
- (d) To say that the statement so made or envisaged is true, is to make the statement itself in a performatory way, that is to say, in agreeing, endorsing, 'confirming, and similar other ways.

The points are not all of them, as far as we can understand, such as are equally and directly related to our interest. Nor do we think that they are all equally fundamental.

Thus take (a). It may, in a way, be said to be subordinate to (d) that is, the performatory point. For, if it is granted that in saying 'P is true', we are asserting 'p' itself in a certain characteristic way, then it inevitably follows that 'P is true' is neither a separate statement about 'P' nor a separate statement over and above 'p'.

In the same way, (b) also is, in a sense subordinate to (d). For, if it be correct to say that the purport of 'is true' in 'P is true' is non-descriptive,

more specifically performative, then the question of its designating anything does not arise at all.

The basic and the most important thing from our point of view is thus the point (d). The point (c) is built in (d) in such a way that one need not treat it separately. Dealing with (d), in a way, will cover (c). Thus for us, consideration of Strawson's view about the use of the phrase 'is true' boils down to the consideration of (d). Which means, our task now is going to be basically an examination of how far, if at all, the function of 'is true' in 'is-true' - sentences can be construed after the model of those performed by such performatives as 'I agree', 'I accept', 'I concede', 'I corroborate', 'I endorse', and such like !

Before we get into this task in right earnest it would however, be worthwhile to clear up certain general points and therewith certain misgiving arising out of them. This, we hope, will offer some protection to Strawson's analysis of 'true' against being unduly exposed to certain misconceptions.

(a) One thing calls for some emphasis. It is this. Strawson is concerned to explain the use of the word 'true' : he has no intention to provide any metaphysical account of truth. This explanation, again, is not intended to answer when we use the word 'true', but to answer how we use the word 'true'.<sup>10</sup> This, it may be noted is made quite explicit by Strawson himself. But in mentioning just this we have not fully delimited the scope of Strawson's<sup>t</sup> interest. The word 'true' is used in a variety of linguistic contexts. Thus it may occur, for instance, in an interrogative sentence like 'Is it true that your friend has lost his job?'; as has been mentioned by Peter Geach,<sup>11</sup> ~~it~~ ~~■~~ may also occur in a conditional sentence, e.g., 'If the statement "The earth is flat" is true, astronomy is bunkum'. The word 'true' may figure also in similar other sentences. But Strawson's explanation is not designed to cover the vast and varied <sup>t</sup> range of all possible uses of the word 'true'. What it is confined to is the use of 'true' in the context of one particular variety of sentences, namely, those indicative 'is true' - sentences which contain statements as their grammatical subjects. The statement in the sentence, it should be noted, may be explicitly stated, e.g., 'The statement that sugar is sweet is true'. It may also be <sup>t</sup>



left inexplicit, as for example, in sentences like 'That's true', 'Your statement is true', 'What he said yesterday is true', and so on. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that by taking into consideration 'is true' - sentences of the latter variety, i.e., sentences in which the statement is kept inexplicit, Strawson's analysis enjoys one advantage over that of Ramsey and Ayer. According to the Ramsey and Ayer, as we know, 'is true' - sentences of the form 'P is true' does nothing more than asserting 'P'. On this view, explanation of 'is true' - sentences with inexplicit statements as their grammatical subjects runs into difficulty. For, obviously, a statement which is inexplicit cannot be asserted. But if 'is true' in 'P is true' is conceived, as Strawson does, as a device for endorsing or giving assent to 'P', then there is no such difficulty: there is no absurdity in endorsing or agreeing to an inexplicit statement.

Anyway, let us come back to the point that Strawson's analysis of truth is not comprehensive in the sense of covering all the uses of 'true' or 'is true'. Nor does it make a claim to be so. And this, it may be mentioned, is a ground for some, for instance, Warnock<sup>12</sup>, to suppose

that what Strawson says about truth does not amount to a theory of truth. The supposition would, no doubt, hold good, if it is granted that whatever is to count as a theory of truth must be such as to be capable of throwing 'some sort of light on contexts in general in which "true" on "truth" might occur, or in which questions of truth or falsehood might arise'.<sup>13</sup> But is it mandatory for us to understand a theory of truth in this sense? That is to say, is it necessary for a theory of truth to be comprehensive to the extent of covering all, or even nearly all uses of the word 'true'? In that case, one would wonder whether anybody at any time has constructed a theory of truth. None of the theories of truth known to us would appear to fulfil this requirement. "We are surely over the days" very rightly said by Wheatley, "when we expect one simple theory to solve all the problems over a huge field".<sup>14</sup> The stipulation of being comprehensive not being unduly insisted on, Strawson's view of truth may well count as a theory of truth. For, in trying to throw light on the use of 'true' as a predicate in indicative sentences, Strawson is trying to throw light on a particular use of 'true' which is undeniably fundamental. The fact that his preoccupation with 'true' is purposefully selective does not come in the way of his view being called a theory.

(b) Strawson certainly maintains that in saying 'p is true' one is not making any statement about 'p' or any statement over and above 'p'; this much is fairly clear : there is hardly any ambiguity on this point. The position may be correct or incorrect. We need not commit anything on this point. But one thing seems pretty clear to us. It is that even if it turns out to be incorrect, it would not affect, in any adverse way, the analysis of 'is true' in 'is true' - sentences in terms of such non-dissenting performatives as 'I agree', 'I accept', etc., etc. Yet, it is to be noticed that, while dealing with Strawson's view of truth, Warnock has chosen this position as a special target of his criticism. But what, exactly, may be supposed to follow, if it is granted that Warnock's criticism is justified ? Perhaps only that the position is incorrect, not that Strawson's performatory analysis is untenable. Warnock's criticism, if it has any value, has a value of its own, and not on account of any possible bearing of it on the performatory analysis of 'true'.

Let us take up a connected point which, perhaps, is more important. Even though he denies that 'p is true' is a statement about 'p' or that it is a statement over and

above 'p', Strawson does not deny that 'p is true' is a statement, namely, that 'p', though in a characteristic way, i.e., the way called performatory. Apparently, having this statemental character of 'p is true' in mind, Warnock shows some degree of reservation against calling the Strawsonian account of the expression 'is true' in the sentence 'p is true' by the name performatory. He says, '...Strawson has been taken by some to be propounding what I have heard called "the performative theory of truth" : but I think it is clear that what he says neither deserves, nor surely claims<sup>15</sup> any such title'.<sup>16</sup> And in all this, Warnock, it appears, has been led by the idea that an utterance which is a statement cannot count as a performative. But this, we suppose, is a mistake not too uncommon in philosophy of language. For an utterance to become a statement does not exclude the possibility of its possessing a performatory character. Being a statement and being a performative are not incompatible concepts. They may well go together without any prejudice to the distinction between performatives and constatives. We have already argued this point in some detail<sup>18</sup> and, we shall not repeat our arguments here. As a matter of fact, to suppose that the statemental character of an utterance is incompatible with its performatoriness is to commit what is called the 'fallacy of the Single

Function' by Arthur Danto.<sup>19</sup> Austin says, 'To say that you are a cuckold may be to insult you, but it is also, and at the same time to make a statement which is true or false'.<sup>20</sup> It makes no difference if this remark is read with some alteration as 'To say that you <sup>are</sup> a cuckold may be to make a statement which is true or false, but it may also, and at the same time be to insult you'.<sup>21</sup>

(c) Warnock does not deny that to say 'That's true' may be to express agreement with what someone has said. '...it is quite obvious', he says, 'that that's so, that this is at least one of the ways in which "is true" is used'.<sup>22</sup> But explanation of this particular use of 'is true', Warnock tends to feel, does not matter much. What is required of a theory of truth is that it must contain an answer to what the word 'true' means. But Strawson's view is accused by Warnock of having failed on this particular score. It is alleged to leave the question of the meaning of 'true' unanswered, because saying how the word is used is not saying what the word means. To quote Warnock :

If someone were to say, correctly,  
that the phrase 'is a fool' is often  
used to criticise, belittle, denigrate,

or insult the person of whom it is predicated, it is plain that he would not have offered an answer to the question what the phrase 'is a fool' means; and similarly, it would seem that one who says, correctly, [as Strawson does] that 'is true' is often used to indicate the speaker's agreement has offered no answer to ... what the words 'is true' mean.<sup>23</sup>

We are not quite able to understand how all this may be said to have a bearing on Strawson's view of truth. True, Strawson does not say ~~that~~ anything which is characterised by him as the meaning of 'true' or 'is true'. Nor does he appear, from what he has said, to aspire to do so. His avowed objective has been to explicate how the word 'true' is used in 'is true' - sentences. Whether or not such an attempt can be construed as an explication of the meaning of the word 'true' is to depend on how exactly is the relation between the use of a word and the meaning of it is conceived, in other words, whether or not the meaning of a word is to be defined in terms of its use. But Strawson is non-committal on this point. And

that does not in any way undermine the merit of his view of truth, if it really has any : an account of the use of a word - and for that matter, the use of 'true' - does not have to depend for its ~~truthfulness~~<sup>worthwhileness</sup> on an account of its meaning. Explanation of the use of a word is an autonomous philosophical activity having a value of its own.

### III

It is time that we address ourselves to what we have earlier called our basic task. How far, if at all, is an use of 'is true' understandable as a performative of the non-disseñting type, e.g., 'I agree', 'I accept', 'I confirm', 'I endorse', etc. Alternately, to what extent, if at all, can we assimilate the varied uses of the phrase 'is true' to the particular species of performatives ? One obvious and common way to decide the issue is to conduct an explanation to see whether or not in every case the function of the phrase 'is true' can adequately be discharged by one or more performatives in question. And, conversely, also to see whether or not in every case the job done by a performative like 'I agree', 'I endorse' etc. can be made to be done using the phrase

'is true'. In short, we have to examine whether in all cases 'is true' and the performatives are logically interchangeable. There are philosophers who think that it is not so, and to substantiate their position they have produced some arguments.

(a) The argument we take up first is of Warnock's. It consists in citing instances in which it is perfectly sensible to say 'I agree', 'I endorse', and the like though, not 'true' or 'That's true'. Thus, e.g., I can agree with a decision, with a policy, with an appraisal, with a taste or an opinion. '...if I agree with his decision or his assessment', Warnock says, 'I may, of course, say, "Yes, I agree"... but in neither case, surely, could I naturally or could I properly say "That's true"'.<sup>24</sup>

Warnock is certainly right in saying that in the context of decision, policy, resolution, taste, appraisal and such like, we are entitled to say 'I agree', 'I endorse', etc., and that in these contexts it is improper to use the locution 'That's true'. No one would dispute this. Decisions, resolutions, etc., do not have any truth-value at all, so that there is indeed no point in talking of interchangeability between truth and agreement in their case.



But in what way may it affect the position that 'is true' in the context of a sentence is replaceable by agreement-expressing locutions which precisely is what is maintained by Strawson? A statement differs basically from decisions, resolutions and appraisals etc., in that unlike the latter it is either true or false : in fact, it has to be so. Which means decisions, resolutions, etc., provide no reliable model for finding what may be said to hold good in the case of statements. Taken in the sense of an objection to Strawson's view, what Warnock says, seems to lose sight of the view itself.

Warnock's objection has been to the effect that in certain instances agreement-expressing locutions cannot be substituted by 'is true' locutions. We shall now consider certain converse instances, i.e., instances, in which 'is true' locutions, it is alleged, cannot be substituted by agreement-expressing locutions.

(b) It is not denied that there are occasions when in saying 'That's true' what one does is to express his non-dissent in the context of a statement. Yet, it is felt by some that, it would be unfair ~~to~~ ~~to~~ to reduce them to such agreeing or endorsing expressions

as 'I agree', 'I accept', 'I endorse', 'Ditto', 'Yes', etc. Thus, take for instance, G. Ezorsky, who in his article, 'Truth in context'<sup>24</sup> maintains that the expression 'That's true' has a power or authority which places it above expressions like 'I agree'. This power or authority derives from his idea that saying 'p is true' we take into consideration the evidence or proof in favour of 'p' which we do not do when we say 'I agree that p'. To put the matter in Ezorsky's own words :

To teach someone the use of 'true' is not the same lesson as teaching the use of 'yes', 'Ditto', 'I accept'... etc. One would expect words like 'evidence', 'test', 'proof', 'verified' to be the major figures in the first lesson, but they might not show up at all in the second.<sup>25</sup>

From this alleged peculiarity of 'is true' - sentences, vis-a-vis sentences in which we express our agreement, arises a difference between the two types of sentences at the linguistic level. For example, there is nothing outrageous in saying 'I agree that p, though

I do not have any evidence or proof for p'; contrarily, we are debarred from saying 'p is true, though there is no evidence or proof for it'. Another connected difference which appears to surface itself when we address 'why' - questions to someone who says 'I agree that p' and to one who says 'p is true'. That is to say, when we ask 'Why do you agree that p?' and 'Why do you say that 'p' is true"? In the former case, the answer may well consist in the stating of such extra-logical factors, as for example, 'Because I wanted to avoid an encounter with X who said that p', 'Because it would please x' and such like. But in the latter case, such answers will not do. What is required is a statement of the logical ground for saying that p is true.

Ezarsky's argument to draw a line between 'That's true' and 'I agree' does not have any finality for us. It is far from conclusive. For, the criterion he uses to mark off the two sentences from each other is not absolute. It may be true that such sentences as 'I agree that p, though I do not have evidence or proof for p' are normally admitted in our discourse. But it is equally true that saying such sentences as 'I agree that p and I have evidence or proof for p' is not quite uncommon.

One may indeed expect words like 'evidence', ~~that~~  
'test', 'proof', 'verified' to figure in our process of  
learning the use of 'true'. But our learning the use of  
the expressions like 'I agree', etc., will not be vitiated  
if these words occur in the process, 'That's true' and  
'I agree' are not thus completely separated from each  
other, even if we admit what Ezorsky has said. There may  
indeed be occasions when they meet, in other words, do the  
same job.

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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  11. Cf. Gilbert Ryle's observation in The Revolutionary Philosophy, (McMillan, London, 1960), p.68.
  12. The point would be elaborated in the next chapter.
  13. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.13.
  14. 'Truth' in Philosophical Papers, 2nd edn., eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford University Press, London, 1970), p.117. *Parentheses ours.*
  15. Ibid.
  16. Ibid. *Parentheses ours.*
  17. Vide "Truth", Analysis, Vol.X, No.6, (1949); reprinted in Truth, ed. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, 1964).
  18. See, for example, H.A. Prichard 'Knowing and believing' in Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths (Oxford University Press, 1967); also Ch<sup>h</sup>esolm, Theory of Knowledge (Prentice-Hall of India, New Delhi, 1977) and Lehr<sup>g</sup>er, Knowledge (Oxford University Press, London, 1974).
- Danto classified the descriptivist account of Knowledge into four types, Vide his Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.7.

19. Vide his article "Other Minds" Philosophical Papers, eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.98-103, where the Parallelism between the two expressions have<sup>s</sup> been elaborated.
20. Vide his article "Truth", reprinted in Truth, ed. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964); also "Truth", Analysis, Vol.IX, No.6, (1949).
21. See Chapters 5 and 7.

## Chapter 2

1. 'Critical Review of How to Do Things with Words', Symposium On J.L.Austin, ed. K.T. Fann (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), p.351.
2. An explanation substantially to this effect has been suggested by Jarold Katz, Vide his Propositional Structure and Illocutionary Force, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980) p.169. Also, compare in this connection his 'Literal Meaning and Logical Theory', Journal of Philosophy, April 1981, p.209.
3. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.4.
4. Language, Truth and Logic (Dover Publication, New York, 1946), p.35.
5. Ibid., p.2.
6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p.5.
8. Ibid.
9. 'Performative Utterances', in Philosophical Papers, eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock, (Oxford University Press, London, 196~~7~~<sup>8</sup>), p.236.
10. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.8.
11. Ibid., pp.9-10.
12. Ibid., p.10.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., pp.14-15.
16. The name 'breach of commitment' is used by Austin in his paper 'Performative-Constative', in Philosophy and Ordinary Language, ed. C.E. Caton (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1963), p.24. Elsewhere, this particular infelicity is left without a specific name.

### Chapter 3

1. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.52.
2. 'In Pursuit of Performatives', in Symposium on J.L. Austin, ed. K.T. Fann (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), p.412.



3. This, however, is not to be construed to mean that the facts presupposed by the performatives also depend for their facthood on the happiness of the performatives. E.g., the facthood of there being an appointed bridegroom is not dependent on the happiness of 'I do'.
4. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.49.
5. Cf. Ibid., pp.48-50.
6. Ibid., p.50.
7. Ibid., pp.50-51.
8. Ibid., p.58.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p.57.
11. Ibid., pp.60-61.
12. Ibid., p.62.
13. Urmson in his 'Austin's Philosophy' remarks, "...he (Austin) did not speak as some do who purport to discuss his views, of Performative verbs'...", Symposium on Austin, ed. K.T.Fara (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), p.27. The remark appears confusing in view of the expression 'performative verbs' having been used by Austin repeatedly in How to Do Things with Words, See, e.g., p.61, p.77, p.81, p.91, p.130.
14. 'Performative-Constative' in Philosophy and Ordinary Language, ed. C.E.Caton (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1963), p.25. Cf. his remark "'Hereby' is a useful criterion that the utterance is performative'. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.57.

15. Vide, How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.61.
16. Ibid., p.55.
17. Ibid., p.154.
18. Ibid., p.144.
19. 'Performative-Constative' in Philosophy and Ordinary Language, ed. C.E.Caton (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1963), p.33.
20. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.134.
21. Ibid., p.133; see also 'Performative-Constative' in Philosophy and Ordinary Language, ed. C.E.Caton (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1963), p.31, p.37.
22. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.133.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. 'Performative-Constative' in Philosophy and Ordinary Language, ed. C.E.Caton (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1963), p.31.
26. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.150.

## Chapter 4

1. Cf. his saying, "...I order you to shut the door"...  
It is performing the act of ordering you to shut the door, and it is not true or false. But in appropriate circumstances surely we could perform exactly the same act by simply saying "Shut the door", in the imperative', 'Performative Utterances' in Philosophical Papers, eds., J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford University Press, London, 1970), p.243.
2. Saying and meaning (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1971), p.161.
3. 'Some types of Performative Utterances' in Essays On J.L. Austin, eds. Berlin and others, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973), pp.73-74. Parenthesis ours.
4. Ibid., p.30. Parenthesis ours.
5. Propositional Structure and Illocutionary Force (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980), p.158.
6. Ibid., p.156. Cf. also, his 'Literal Meaning and Logical Theory', Journal of Philosophy, April, 1981, pp.214-215.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p.158.
9. Ibid.
10. 'Truth' in Philosophical Papers, eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford University Press, London, 1970), pp.180-120.
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12. 'Literal Meaning and Logical Theory', Journal of Philosophy April, 1981, p.211.
13. How to Do Things with Words, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p.144.
14. Mention may be made of J.R.Searle, W.Alston, D.Holdcroft, G.Bird, J.Katz and D.Wunderlich among others.
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16. 'Austin's Philosophical Papers in Symposium On J.L. Austin, ed. K.T.Fann (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969).
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18. 'Some Types of Performative Utterances' in Essays On Austin, ed. I.Berlin and Others (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973), p.75. Paraphrasing ours.  
Incidentally, it may be mentioned that Mats Furberg's separation of performative-thesis and force-thesis may, in a sense, be said to be substantially in line with Warnock's position. Vide, Chapter 5, Saying and Meaning (Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1970).
19. Ibid., pp.75-76.
20. Symposium on J.L.Austin, ed. K.T. Fann (Routledge and Kegan Paul, <sup>London</sup> ~~Harmondsworth, New York~~, 1969), p.405.

21. "Austin's Worries about 'I state that...'", Mind No.76 (1967), p.111.
22. "Performatives and Statements", Mind 83 (1974), pp.1-18.
23. "Explicit Performative Utterances", Philosophical Studies 25(1975), pp.229-236.
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26. 'Austin On Performative Utterances', Symposium on J.L.Austin, ed. K.T.Fann (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), p.405.
27. 'Some Types of Performative Utterances', Essays On J.L.Austin, eds. I. Berlin and Others (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973), p.79.
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29. (Oxford University Press, 1939), Chapter II.
30. Ibid.
31. 'The Meaning of a Word', Philosophical Papers (Oxford University Press, 1970), p.65.
32. Ibid.
33. Speech Acts (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.66.

## Chapter 5

1. The Blue and Brown Books (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978), p.1.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.27.
5. Introduction, Truth, ed. George Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, 1964), p.2.
6. Philosophical Investigations (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1976), p.31. In this connection compare Austin's position  
~~xx~~ in "The Meaning of a Word" in Philosophical Papers eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock, (Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.71-74.
7. "On Claiming to Know", Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths, (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.111.
8. (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.1.
9. Ibid.
10. Critique of Pure Reason, tr. J.M.D. Meiklejohn, (Everyman's Library, London, 1974), p.94.

11. Cf. Alan White "On Claiming to know",  
Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths (Oxford  
University Press, 1967), White says, "I know" is  
used to make a claim; "He knows" or "You know" to  
endorse or allow ... a claim', p.101.
12. 'Other Minds' in Philosophical Papers, eds. J.O.Urmson and  
G.J. Warnock (Oxford University Press, 1970),  
p.103.
13. Ibid., p.98.
14. Ibid., p.101.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p.99.
18. Ibid.
19. Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge  
University Press, 1968), p.117.
20. 'Knowing and Promising', reprinted in  
Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths (Oxford University  
Press, 1967), p.126.

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p.119.
23. 'Telling the facts' in Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics  
eds. Searle et al (D.Reidel Publishing Co., Holland, 1980),  
p.273.
24. 'Knowing and Promising', reprinted in Knowledge and Belief,  
ed. Griffiths (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.118.  
Underlining ours.
25. Ibid., pp.124-25.
26. Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge University  
Press, 1968), p.118.
27. 'Austin's Philosophical Papers,<sup>3</sup> in Symposium on J.L.Austin,  
ed. K.T.Fann (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), p.112.
28. 'Telling the Facts' in Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics,  
eds. Searle et al (D. Reidel Publishing Co., Holland, 1980),  
p.274.
29. Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge University  
Press, 1968), p.118.
30. 'Telling the Facts' in Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics,  
eds. Searle et al (D.Reidel Publishing Co., Holland, 1980),  
p.274.

## Chapter 6

1. Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge University  
Press, 1968), p.8.



2. Ibid.
3. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1950. The relevant part is reprinted in Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.60-68.
4. Knowledge and Perception (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1950), p.86. Also Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.63.
5. Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.63. Parenthesis ours.
6. Ibid.
7. Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.98.
8. Theory of Knowledge (Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 1977).
9. Knowledge (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974).
10. The Problem of Knowledge (Penguin Books, 1972 edn.)
11. 'Other Minds', in Philosophical Papers, eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J.Warnock (Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.78-79.
12. Keith Lehrer, Knowledge (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974), p.50.
13. Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.78.
14. 'Knowing and not Knowing', reprinted in Knowledge and Belief, ed. Griffiths (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.89.
15. 'Other Minds', reprinted in Philosophical Papers eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J.Warnock (Oxford University Press, 1970), p.99.

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1. 'Truth', reprinted in Truth, ed. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.22.
2. Ibid., p.31.
3. Vide, 'Truth', Analysis, Vol.IX, No.6, 1949.
4. Vide 'Truth', Proceedings of the Aristotilean Society Supplementary Volume xxiv (1950); reprinted in Truth, ed. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964).
5. 'Truth' in Truth, ed. George Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.32.
6. 'Facts and Propositions', reprinted in Truth, ed. G. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.16.
7. 'Truth and Probability', Language, Truth and Logic (Great Britain, C. Nicholls and Co.Ltd., 1946), pp.117-118.
8. 'Truth', reprinted Truth, ed. G. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.46.
9. Ibid., p.45.
10. Vide, 'Truth', ed. G.Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.44.
11. Mental Acts (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957), p.97.
12. Vide Warnock's 'A Problem about Truth' in Truth, ed. G.Pitcher (Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.57.
13. Ibid.
14. Weatley, John, 'Austin on Truth' in Symposium on J.L.Austin, ed. K.T. Fann (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), p.238.

15. This appears not to be a fact, because the word 'Performatory' which is a synonyme of 'Performative', is used by Strawson himself to characterise 'is true'. See his 'Truth', Analysis (1949).
16. Warnock, 'A Problem about Truth' in Truth, ed. G.Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 19<sup>64</sup>/~~6~~), p.56.
17. 'Truth', Proceedings of the Aristotélean Society, Supplementary Volume XXIV (1950); reprinted in Truth, ed. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 19<sup>64</sup>/~~6~~), p.45.
18. See Chapter IV.
19. The Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.115.
20. Austin, 'Truth', Proceedings of the Aristotilean Society, Supplementary Volume XXIV (1950); reprinted in Truth, ed. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.31.
21. Warnock, 'A Problem about Truth' in Truth, ed. Pitcher (Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964), p.57.
22. Ibid., pp.57-58.
23. Ibid., p.64.
24. Journal of Philosophy, Vol.LX, No.5 (1963).
25. Ibid., p.127.

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pp. 43-44, 106-9, 116, 132

- (1) Constatives as a sub-class of performatives.  
Stating, asserting, describing etc are also performing something
- (2) 'I know p', besides being a happy or unhappy expression accg. to circumstances; may also be true or false like statements (constatives). So the distinction bet Constatives and Performative breaks down.

### Sub-classes of illocutionary force

Expositives (wh. includes Constatives), Commisives (promising, vowing, adopting, betting), <sup>exercitives</sup> ~~verdictives~~ (when we appoint, demote, sentence or veto), Verdictives (acquit, assess, diagnose), Behavitives (thank, apologise or curse).

p. 80

Has Austin anywhere said that the theory of speech-acts dissolves (causes rejection of) P-C distinction? If so, where? If not, the entire reasoning in pp. 83-89 is misdirected & irrelevant.

pp. 93-94. If 'I state' is logically  
superfluous (in that it only makes  
explicit linguistically what is being done),  
'I promise' may also be said to be so.  
Instead of making the promise by  
saying "I promise to give you ----" I  
may make it simply by saying  
"I will give you ----".