

HOW TO DO THINGS
WITH WORDS

*The William James Lectures
delivered at Harvard University
in 1955*

J. L. AUSTIN
HOW TO DO THINGS
WITH WORDS

Second Edition

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

DR. Sbisà has read through all Austin's notes for these lectures, comparing them with the printed text of the first edition and noting all points at which it seemed to her that improvements could be made. The editors have together examined Austin's notes at all these places and have, as a result, corrected and supplemented the printed text at a number of points. They believe that the new text is clearer, fuller, and, at the same time, more faithful to the actual words of the notes made by Austin. They have added to the appendix a literal transcription of a number of additions made by Austin in the margin or between the lines of his notes, the sense of which was not sufficiently clear for incorporation in the text but which might be of help and interest to the reader.

MARINA SBISA
J. O. URMSON

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The lectures here printed were delivered by Austin as the William James Lectures at Harvard University in 1955. In a short note, Austin says of the views which

underlie these lectures that they 'were formed in 1939. I made use of them in an article on "Other Minds" published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XX (1946), pages 173 ff., and I surfaced rather more of this iceberg shortly afterwards to several societies. . . . In each of the years 1952-4 Austin delivered lectures at Oxford under the title 'Words and Deeds', each year from a partially rewritten set of notes, each of which covers approximately the same ground as the William James Lectures. For the William James Lectures a new set of notes was again prepared, though sheets of older notes were incorporated here and there; these remain the most recent notes by Austin on the topics covered, though he continued to lecture on 'Words and Deeds' at Oxford from these notes, and while doing so made minor corrections and a number of marginal additions.

The content of these lectures is here reproduced in print as exactly as possible and with the lightest editing. If Austin had published them himself he would certainly have recast them in a form more appropriate to print; he would surely have reduced the recapitulations of previous lectures which occur at the beginning of the second and subsequent lectures; it is equally certain that Austin as a matter of course elaborated on the bare text of his notes when lecturing. But most readers will prefer to have a close approximation to what he is known to have written down rather than what it might be judged that he would have printed or thought that he probably said in

lectures; they will not therefore begrudge the price to be paid in minor imperfections of form and style and inconsistencies of vocabulary.

But these lectures as printed do not exactly reproduce Austin's written notes. The reason for this is that while for the most part, and particularly in the earlier part of each lecture, the notes were very full and written as sentences, with only minor omissions such as particles and articles, often at the end of the lecture they became much more fragmentary, while the marginal additions were often very abbreviated. At these points the notes were interpreted and supplemented in the light of remaining portions of the 1952-4 notes already mentioned. A further check was then possible by comparison with notes taken both in America and in England by those who attended the lectures, with the B.B.C. lecture on 'Performative Utterances' and a tape-recording of a lecture entitled 'Performatives' delivered at Gothenberg in October 1959. More thorough indications of the use of these aids are given in an appendix. While it seems possible that in this process of interpretation an occasional sentence may have crept into the text which Austin would have repudiated, it seems very unlikely that at any point the main lines of Austin's thought have been misrepresented.

The editor is grateful to all those who gave assistance by the loan of their notes, and for the gift of the tape-recording. He is especially indebted to Mr. G. J. Warnock, who went through the whole text most thoroughly and

saved the editor from numerous mistakes; as a result of this aid the reader has a much improved text.

J. O. URMSON

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LECTURE I

WHAT I shall have to say here is neither difficult nor contentious; the only merit I should like to claim for it is that of being true, at least in parts. The phenomenon to be discussed is very widespread and obvious, and it cannot fail to have been already noticed, at least here and there, by others. Yet I have not found attention paid to it specifically.

It was for too long the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely. Grammarians, indeed, have regularly pointed out that not all 'sentences' are (used in making) statements:¹ there are, traditionally, besides (grammarians') statements, also questions and exclamations, and sentences expressing commands or wishes or concessions. And doubtless philosophers have not intended to deny this, despite some loose use of 'sentence' for 'statement'. Doubtless, too, both grammarians and philosophers have been aware that it is by no means easy to distinguish even questions, commands, and so on from statements by means of the few and jejune grammatical marks available, such as word order, mood, and the like:

¹ It is, of course, not really correct that a sentence ever *is* a statement: rather, it is *used in making a statement*, and the statement itself is a 'logical construction' out of the makings of statements.

17

MINISTR L
EVOLUTION
V.
PERFORMATIVE
FUNCTION

perception

though perhaps it has not been usual to dwell on the difficulties which this fact obviously raises. For how do we decide which is which? What are the limits and definitions of each?

But now in recent years, many things which would once have been accepted without question as 'statements' by both philosophers and grammarians have been scrutinized with new care. This scrutiny arose somewhat indirectly—at least in philosophy. First came the view, not always formulated without unfortunate dogmatism, that a statement (of fact) ought to be 'verifiable', and this led to the view that many 'statements' are only what may be called pseudo-statements. First and most obviously, many 'statements' were shown to be, as KANT perhaps first argued systematically, strictly nonsense, despite an unexceptionable grammatical form: and the continual discovery of fresh types of nonsense, unsystematic though their classification and mysterious though their explanation is too often allowed to remain, has done on the whole nothing but good. Yet we, that is, even philosophers, set some limits to the amount of nonsense that we are prepared to admit we talk: so that it was natural to go on to ask, as a second stage, whether many apparent pseudo-statements really set out to be 'statements' at all. It has come to be commonly held that many utterances which look like statements are either not intended at all, or only intended in part, to record or impart straightforward information about the facts: for example, 'ethical propositions' are perhaps intended, solely or partly, to evince

TRUTH VALUE IS PRESERVED FOR SOME STATEMENTS.
UTTERANCES NOT MEANT TO CONVEY FACTUAL INFORMATION.

emotion or to prescribe conduct or to influence it in special ways. Here too KANT was among the pioneers. We very often also use utterances in ways beyond the scope at least of traditional grammar. It has come to be seen that many specially perplexing words embedded in apparently descriptive statements do not serve to indicate some specially odd additional feature in the reality reported, but to indicate (not to report) the circumstances in which the statement is made or reservations to which it is subject or the way in which it is to be taken and the like. To overlook these possibilities in the way once common is called the 'descriptive' fallacy; but perhaps this is not a good name, as 'descriptive' itself is special. Not all true or false statements are descriptions, and for this reason I prefer to use the word 'Constative'. Along these lines it has by now been shown piecemeal, or at least made to look likely, that many traditional philosophical perplexities have arisen through a mistake—the mistake of taking as straightforward statements of fact utterances which are either (in interesting non-grammatical ways) nonsensical or else intended as something quite different.

USE!
CONSTATIVE

Whatever we may think of any particular one of these views and suggestions, and however much we may deplore the initial confusion into which philosophical doctrine and method have been plunged, it cannot be doubted that they are producing a revolution in philosophy. If anyone wishes to call it the greatest and most salutary in its history, this is not, if you come to think of it, a

large claim. It is not surprising that beginnings have been piecemeal, with *parti pris*, and for extraneous aims; this is common with revolutions.

PRELIMINARY ISOLATION OF
THE PERFORMATIVE¹

16
B. Subjunctive

The type of utterance we are to consider here is not, of course, in general a type of nonsense; though misuse of it can, as we shall see, engender rather special varieties of 'nonsense'. Rather, it is one of our second class—the masqueraders. But it does not by any means necessarily masquerade as a statement of fact, descriptive or constative. Yet it does quite commonly do so, and that, oddly enough, when it assumes its most explicit form. Grammarians have not, I believe, seen through this 'disguise', and philosophers only at best incidentally.² It will be convenient, therefore, to study it first in this misleading form, in order to bring out its characteristics by contrasting them with those of the statement of fact which it apes.

We shall take, then, for our first examples some utterances which can fall into no hitherto recognized *grammatical* category save that of 'statement', which are not nonsense, and which contain none of those verbal danger-signals which philosophers have by now detected or think

¹ Everything said in these sections is provisional, and subject to revision in the light of later sections.

² Of all people, jurists should be best aware of the true state of affairs. Perhaps some now are. Yet they will succumb to their own timorous fiction, that a statement of 'the law' is a statement of fact.

they have detected (curious words like 'good' or 'all', suspect auxiliaries like 'ought' or 'can', and dubious constructions like the hypothetical): all will have, as it happens, humdrum verbs in the first person singular present indicative active.¹ Utterances can be found, satisfying these conditions, yet such that

- A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and
- B. 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.

This is far from being as paradoxical as it may sound or as I have meanly been trying to make it sound: indeed, the examples now to be given will be disappointing.

Examples:

- cf. PERFORMATIVE
- (E. a) 'I do (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)'—as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony.²
 - (E. b) 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth'—as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem.
 - (E. c) 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother'—as occurring in a will.
 - (E. d) 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.'
- ALL WORD-DESCRIBERS

¹ Not without design: they are all 'explicit' performatives, and of that prepotent class later called 'exercitives'.

² [Austin realized that the expression 'I do' is not used in the marriage ceremony too late to correct his mistake. We have let it remain in the text as it is philosophically unimportant that it is a mistake. J. O. U.]

In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing¹ or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it. None of the utterances cited is either true or false: I assert this as obvious and do not argue it. It needs argument no more than that 'damn' is not true or false: it may be that the utterance 'serve to inform you'—but that is quite different. To name the ship *is* to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words 'I name, &c.'. When I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., 'I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.

DAMN =
EXAMPLE.
TO SAY IS

OFF OF
A PERFORMATIVE

What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type?² I propose to call it a *performative sentence* or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative'. The term 'performative' will be used in a variety of cognate ways and constructions, much as the term 'imperative' is.³ The name is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action

¹ Still less anything that I have already done or have yet to do.
² 'Sentences' form a class of 'utterances', which class is to be defined, so far as I am concerned, grammatically, though I doubt if the definition has yet been given satisfactorily. With performative utterances are contrasted, for example and essentially, 'constative' utterances: to issue a constative utterance (i.e. to utter it with a historical reference) is to make a statement. To issue a performative utterance is, for example, to make a bet. See further below on 'illocutions'.
³ Formerly I used 'performatory': but 'performative' is to be preferred as shorter, less ugly, more tractable, and more traditional in formation.

safest
vs. don't

—it is not normally thought of as just saying something.

A number of other terms may suggest themselves, each of which would suitably cover this or that wider or narrower class of performatives: for example, many performatives are *contractual* ('I bet') or *declaratory* ('I declare war') utterances. But no term in current use that I know of is nearly wide enough to cover them all. One technical term that comes nearest to what we need is perhaps 'operative', as it is used strictly by lawyers in referring to that part, i.e. those clauses, of an instrument which serves to effect the transaction (conveyance or what not) which is its main object, whereas the rest of the document merely 'recites' the circumstances in which the transaction is to be effected.¹ But 'operative' has other meanings, and indeed is often used nowadays to mean little more than 'important'. I have preferred a new word, to which, though its etymology is not irrelevant, we shall perhaps not be so ready to attach some pre-conceived meaning.

CAN SAYING MAKE IT SO?

Are we then to say things like this:

'To marry is to say a few words', or
 'Betting is simply saying something'?

Such a doctrine sounds odd or even flippant at first, but with sufficient safeguards it may become not odd at all.

¹ I owe this observation to Professor H. L. A. Hart.

A sound initial objection to them may be this; and it is not without some importance. In very 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. For example, I may in some places effect marriage by cohabiting, or I may bet with a totalisator machine by putting a coin in a slot. We should then, perhaps, convert the propositions above, and put it that 'to say a few certain words is to marry' or 'to marry is, in some cases, simply to say a few words' or 'simply to say a certain something is to bet'.

But probably the real reason why such remarks sound dangerous lies in another obvious fact, to which we shall have to revert in detail later, which is this. The uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even *the*, leading incident in the performance of the act (of betting or what not), the performance of which is also the object of the utterance, but it is far from being usually, even if it is ever, the *sole* thing necessary if the act is to be deemed to have been performed. Speaking generally, it is always necessary that the *circumstances* in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, *appropriate*, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should *also* perform certain *other* actions, whether 'physical' or 'mental' actions or even acts of uttering further words. Thus, for naming the ship, it is essential that I should be the person appointed to name her, for (Christian) marrying, it is essential that I should not be already married with a wife

performance
of utterance
as act
imp. of
circumstances
v.a.v.
utterances

living, sane and undivorced, and so on: for a bet to have been made, it is generally necessary for the offer of the bet to have been accepted by a taker (who must have done something, such as to say 'Done'), and it is hardly a gift if I say 'I give it you' but never hand it over.

So far, well and good. The action may be performed in ways other than by a performative utterance, and in any case the circumstances, including other actions, must be appropriate. But we may, in objecting, have something totally different, and this time quite mistaken, in mind, especially when we think of some of the more awe-inspiring performatives such as 'I promise to . . .'. Surely the words must be spoken 'seriously' and so as to be taken 'seriously'? This is, though vague, true enough in general—it is an important commonplace in discussing the purport of any utterance whatsoever. I must not be joking, for example, nor writing a poem. But we are apt to have a feeling that their being serious consists in their being uttered as (merely) the outward and visible sign, for convenience or other record or for information, of an inward and spiritual act: from which it is but a short step to go on to believe or to assume without realizing that for many purposes the outward utterance is a description, true or false, of the occurrence of the inward performance. The classic expression of this idea is to be found in the *Hippolytus* (l. 612), where Hippolytus says

ἡ γλῶσσ' ὀμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρήν ἀνωμοτός,

i.e. 'my tongue swore to, but my heart (or mind or other

utterance
vs. utterance
MIME-TU
NOT IN
EPISTEMOLOGICAL

backstage artiste) did not'.¹ Thus 'I promise to . . .' obliges me—puts on record my spiritual assumption of a spiritual shackle.

It is gratifying to observe in this very example how excess of profundity, or rather solemnity, at once paves the way for immortality. For one who says 'promising is not merely a matter of uttering words! It is an inward and spiritual act!' is apt to appear as a solid moralist standing out against a generation of superficial theorizers: we see him as he sees himself, surveying the invisible depths of ethical space, with all the distinction of a specialist in the *sui generis*. Yet he provides Hippolytus with a let-out, the bigamist with an excuse for his 'I do' and the welsher with a defence for his 'I bet'. Accuracy and morality alike are on the side of the plain saying that *our word is our bond*.

If we exclude such fictitious inward acts as this, can we suppose that any of the other things which certainly are normally required to accompany an utterance such as 'I promise that . . .' or 'I do (take this woman . . .)' are in fact described by it, and consequently do by their presence make it true or by their absence make it false? Well, taking the latter first, we shall next consider what we actually do say about the utterance concerned when one or another of its normal concomitants is *absent*. In no case do we say that the utterance was false but rather

¹ But I do not mean to rule out all the offstage performers—the lights men, the stage manager, even the prompter; I am objecting only to certain officious understudies, who would duplicate the play.

that the utterance—or rather the *act*,¹ e.g. the promise—was void, or given in bad faith, or not implemented, or the like. In the particular case of promising, as with many other performatives, it is appropriate that the person uttering the promise should have a certain intention, viz. here to keep his word: and perhaps of all concomitants this looks the most suitable to be that which 'I promise' does describe or record. Do we not actually, when such intention is absent, speak of a 'false' promise? Yet so to speak is *not* to say that the utterance 'I promise that . . .' is false, in the sense that though he states that he does, he doesn't, or that though he describes he misdescribes—misreports. For he *does* promise: the promise here is not even *void*, though it is given *in bad faith*. His utterance is perhaps misleading, probably deceitful and doubtless wrong, but it is not a lie or a misstatement. At most we might make out a case for saying that it implies or insinuates a falsehood or a misstatement (to the effect that he does intend to do something): but that is a very different matter. Moreover, we do not speak of a false bet or a false christening; and that we *do* speak of a false promise need commit us no more than the fact that we speak of a false move. 'False' is not necessarily used of statements only.

¹ We deliberately avoid distinguishing these, precisely because the distinction is not in point.

LECTURE II

WE were to consider, you will remember, some cases and senses (only some, Heaven help us!) in which to *say* something is to *do* something; or in which *by* saying or *in* saying something we are doing something. This topic is one development—there are many others—in the recent movement towards questioning an age-old assumption in philosophy—the assumption that to say something, at least in all cases worth considering, i.e. all cases considered, is always and simply to *state* something. This assumption is no doubt unconscious, no doubt is precipitate, but it is wholly natural in philosophy apparently. We must learn to run before we can walk. If we never made mistakes how should we correct them?

I began by drawing your attention, by way of example, to a few simple utterances of the kind known as performatives or performatives. These have on the face of them the look—or at least the grammatical make-up—of 'statements'; but nevertheless they are seen, when more closely inspected, to be, quite plainly, *not* utterances which could be 'true' or 'false'. Yet to be 'true' or 'false' is traditionally the characteristic mark of a statement. One of our examples was, for instance, the utterance 'I do' (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife), as

uttered in the course of a marriage ceremony. Here we should say that in saying these words we are *doing* something—namely, marrying, rather than *reporting* something, namely *that we are marrying*. And the act of marrying, like, say, the act of betting, is at least *preferably* (though still not *accurately*) to be described as *saying* *certain words*, rather than as performing a different, inward and spiritual, action of which these words are merely the outward and audible sign. That this is so can perhaps hardly be *proved*, but it is, I should claim, a fact.

It is worthy of note that, as I am told, in the American law of evidence, a report of what someone else said is admitted as evidence if what he said is an utterance of our performative kind: because this is regarded as a report not so much of something he *said*, as which it would be hear-say and not admissible as evidence, but rather as something he *did*, an action of his. This coincides very well with our initial feelings about performatives.

So far then we have merely felt the firm ground of prejudice slide away beneath our feet. But now how, as philosophers, are we to proceed? One thing we might go on to do, of course, is to take it all back: another would be to bog, by logical stages, down. But all this must take time. Let us first at least concentrate attention on the little matter already mentioned in passing—this matter of 'the appropriate circumstances'. To bet is not, as I pointed out in passing, merely to utter the words 'I bet, &c.': someone might do that all right, and yet we might still not agree that he had in fact, or at least entirely,

DO TESTIFY
HM

Context of Utterance

succeeded in betting. To satisfy ourselves of this, we have only, for example, to announce our bet after the race is over. Besides the uttering of the words of the so-called performative, a good many other things have as a general rule to be right and to go right if we are to be said to have happily brought off our action. What these are we may hope to discover by looking at and classifying types of case in which something goes wrong and the act—marrying, betting, bequeathing, christening, or what not—is therefore at least to some extent a failure: the utterance is then, we may say, not indeed false but in general unhappy. And for this reason we call the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of the *Infelicities*.

Suppose we try first to state schematically—and I do not wish to claim any sort of finality for this scheme—some at least of the things which are necessary for the smooth or 'happy' functioning of a performative (or at least of a highly developed explicit performative, such as we have hitherto been alone concerned with), and then give examples of infelicities and their effects. I fear, but at the same time of course hope, that these necessary conditions to be satisfied will strike you as obvious.

- (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.
- (T. 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 so to conduct themselves,¹ and further
- (T. 2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

Now if we sin against any one (or more) of these six rules, our performative utterance will be (in one way or another) unhappy. But, of course, there are considerable differences between these 'ways' of being unhappy—ways which are intended to be brought out by the letter-numerals selected for each heading.

The first big distinction is between all the four rules A and B taken together, as opposed to the two rules T (hence the use of Roman as opposed to Greek letters). If we offend against any of the former rules (A's or B's)—that is if we, say, utter the formula incorrectly, or if,

¹ It will be explained later why the having of these thoughts, feelings, and intentions is not included as just one among the other 'circumstances' already dealt with in (A).

say, we are not in a position to do the act because we are, say, married already, or it is the purser and not the captain who is conducting the ceremony, then the act in question, e.g. marrying, is not successfully performed at all, does not come off, is not achieved. Whereas in the two Γ cases the act *is* achieved, although to achieve it in such circumstances, as when we are, say, insincere, is an abuse of the procedure. Thus, when I say 'I promise' and have no intention of keeping it, I have promised but. . . . We need names for referring to this general distinction, so we shall call in general those infelicities A. 1-B. 2 which are such that the act for the performing of which, and in the performing of which, the verbal formula in question is designed, is not achieved, by the name MISFIRES, and on the other hand we may christen those infelicities where the act *is* achieved ABUSES (do not stress the normal connotations of these names!) When the utterance is a misfire, the procedure which we purport to invoke is disallowed or is botched, and our act (marrying, &c.) is void or without effect, &c. We speak of our act as a purported act, or perhaps an attempt—or we use such an expression as 'went through a form of marriage' by contrast with 'married'. On the other hand, in the Γ cases, we speak of our infelicitous act as 'professed' or 'hollow' rather than 'purported' or 'empty', and as not implemented, or not consummated, rather than as void or without effect. But let me hasten to add that these distinctions are not hard and fast, and more especially that such words as 'purported' and 'professed' will not

CONTEXT

MISFIRES

VS.

MISFIRES

VS.

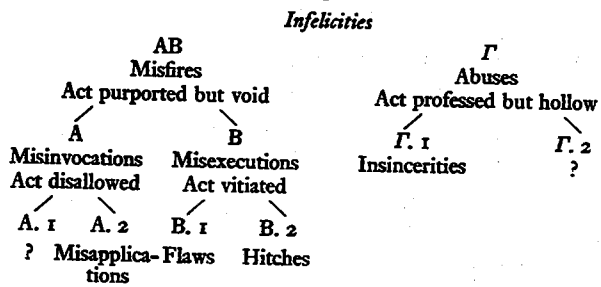
ABUSES

bear very much stressing. Two final words about being void or without effect. This does not mean, of course, to say that we won't have done anything: lots of things will have been done—we shall most interestingly have committed the act of bigamy—but we shall *not* have done the purported act, viz. marrying. Because despite the name, you do not when bigamous marry twice. (In short, the algebra of marriage is BOOLEAN.) Further, 'without effect' does not here mean 'without consequences, results, effects'.

Next, we must try to make clear the general distinction between the A cases and the B cases, among the misfires. In both of the cases labelled A there is *misinvocation* of a procedure—either because there *is*, speaking vaguely, no such procedure, or because the procedure in question cannot be made to apply in the way attempted. Hence infelicities of this kind A may be called *Misinvocations*. Among them, we may reasonably christen the second sort—where the procedure does exist all right but can't be applied as purported—*Misapplications*. But I have not succeeded in finding a good name for the other, former, class. By contrast with the A cases, the notion of the B cases is rather that the procedure is all right, and it does apply all right, but we miff the execution of the ritual with more or less dire consequences: so B cases as opposed to A cases will be called *Misexecutions* as opposed to *Misinvocations*: the purported act is *vitiating* by a flaw or hitch in the conduct of the ceremony. The Class B. 1 is that of Flaws, the Class B. 2 that of Hitches.

1:5 - w/lo
OSTENSIBLY
WITHOUT EFFECT

We get then the following scheme:¹



I expect some doubts will be entertained about A. 1 and F. 2; but we will postpone them for detailed consideration shortly.

But before going on to details, let me make some general remarks about these infelicities. We may ask:

- (1) To what variety of 'act' does the notion of infelicity apply?
- (2) How complete is this classification of infelicity?
- (3) Are these classes of infelicity mutually exclusive?

Let us take these questions in (that) order.

(1) How widespread is infelicity?

Well, it seems clear in the first place that, although it has excited us (or failed to excite us) in connexion with certain acts which are or are in part acts of *uttering words*, infelicity is an ill to which *all* acts are heir which have

¹ [Austin from time to time used other names for the different infelicities. For interest some are here given: A. 1, Non-plays; A. 2, Misplays; B, Miscarriages; B. 1, Misexecutions; B. 2, Non-executions; F, Disrespects; F. 1, Dissimulations; F. 2, Non-fulfilments, Disloyalties, Infractions, Indisciplines, Breaches. J. O. U.]

the general character of ritual or ceremonial, all *conventional* acts: not indeed that *every* ritual is liable to every form of infelicity (but then nor is every performative utterance). This is clear if only from the mere fact that many conventional acts, such as betting or conveyance of property, can be performed in non-verbal ways. The same sorts of rule must be observed in all such conventional procedures—we have only to omit the special reference to verbal utterance in our A. This much is obvious.

But, furthermore, it is worth pointing out—reminding you—how many of the 'acts' which concern the jurist are or include the utterance of performatives, or at any rate are or include the performance of some conventional procedures. And of course you will appreciate that in this way and that writers on jurisprudence have constantly shown themselves aware of the varieties of infelicity and even at times of the peculiarities of the performative utterance. Only the still widespread obsession that the utterances of the law, and utterances used in, say, 'acts in the law', *must* somehow be statements true or false, has prevented many lawyers from getting this whole matter much straighter than we are likely to—and I would not even claim to know whether some of them have not already done so. Of more direct concern to us, however, is to realize that, by the same token, a great many of the acts which fall within the province of Ethics are *not*, as philosophers are too prone to assume, simply in the last resort *physical movements*: very many

of BUTLER

of them have the general character, in whole or part, of conventional or ritual acts and are therefore, among other things, exposed to infelicity.

Lastly we may ask—and here I must let some of my cats on the table—does the notion of infelicity apply to utterances which are statements? So far we have produced the infelicity as characteristic of the performative utterance, which was 'defined' (if we can call it so much) mainly by contrast with the supposedly familiar 'statement'. Yet I will content myself here with pointing out that one of the things that has been happening lately in philosophy is that close attention has been given even to 'statements' which, though not false exactly nor yet 'contradictory', are yet outrageous. For instance, statements which refer to something which does not exist as, for example, 'The present King of France is bald'. There might be a temptation to assimilate this to purporting to bequeath something which you do not own. Is there not a presupposition of existence in each? Is not a statement which refers to something which does not exist not so much false as void? And the more we consider a statement not as a sentence (or proposition) but as an act of speech (out of which the others are logical constructions) the more we are studying the whole thing as an act. Or again, there are obvious similarities between a lie and a false promise. We shall have to return to this matter later.¹

(2) Our second question was: How complete is this classification?

¹ [See pp. 47 ff. J. O. U.]

uhm, oiks... (11)

PERFORMATIVE VS. STATEMENT

FALSE VS. "VOID"

NOT A LIE VS. LIE

FALSE PROMISE

(i) Well, the first thing to remember is that, since in uttering our performatives we are undoubtedly in a sound enough sense 'performing actions', then, as actions, these will be subject to certain whole dimensions of unsatisfactoriness to which all actions are subject but which are distinct—or distinguishable—from what we have chosen to discuss as infelicities. I mean that actions in general (not all) are liable, for example, to be done under duress, or by accident, or owing to this or that variety of mistake, say, or otherwise unintentionally. In many such cases we are certainly unwilling to say of some such act simply that it was done or that he did it. I am not going into the general doctrine here: in many such cases we may even say the act was 'void' (or voidable for duress or undue influence) and so forth. Now I suppose some very general high-level doctrine might embrace both what we have called infelicities and these other 'unhappy' features of the doing of actions—in our case actions containing a performative utterance—in a single doctrine: but we are not including this kind of unhappiness—we must just remember, though, that features of this sort can and do constantly obtrude into any particular case we are discussing. Features of this sort would normally come under the heading of 'extenuating circumstances' or of 'factors reducing or abrogating the agent's responsibility', and so on.

(ii) Secondly, as utterances our performatives are also heir to certain other kinds of ill which infect all utterances. And these likewise, though again they might be

brought into a more general account, we are deliberately at present excluding. I mean, for example, the following: a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way hollow or void* if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language. All this we are *excluding* from consideration.

Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances.

(iii) It is partly in order to keep this sort of consideration at least for the present out of it, that I have not here introduced a sort of 'infelicity'—it might really be called such—arising out of 'misunderstanding'. It is obviously necessary that to have promised I must normally

(A) have been *heard* by someone, perhaps the promisee;

(B) have been understood by him as promising.

If one or another of these conditions is not satisfied, doubts arise as to whether I have really promised, and it might be held that my act was only attempted or was void. Special precautions are taken in law to avoid this and other infelicities, e.g. in the serving of writs or summonses. This particular very important considera-

How can it be void?
CONTEXT

How can it be understood?
SUBJECT
LAWYERS
IS NECESSARY

tion we shall have to return to later in another connexion.

(3) Are these cases of infelicity mutually exclusive? The answer to this is obvious.

(a) No, in the sense that we can go wrong in two ways at once (we can insincerely promise a donkey to give it a carrot).

(b) No, more importantly, in the sense that the ways of going wrong 'shade into one another' and 'overlap', and the decision between them is 'arbitrary' in various ways.

Suppose, for example, I see a vessel on the stocks, walk up and smash the bottle hung at the stem, proclaim 'I name this ship the *Mr. Stalin*' and for good measure kick away the chocks: but the trouble is, I was not the person chosen to name it (whether or not—an additional complication—*Mr. Stalin* was the destined name; perhaps in a way it is even more of a shame if it was). We can all agree

(1) that the ship was not thereby named;¹

(2) that it is an infernal shame.

One could say that I 'went through a form of' naming the vessel but that my 'action' was 'void' or 'without effect', because I was not a *proper* person, had not the *capacity* to perform it: but one might also and

¹ Naming babies is even more difficult; we might have the wrong name and the wrong cleric—that is, someone entitled to name babies but not intended to name *this* one.

alternatively say that, where there is not even a pretence of capacity or a colourable claim to it, then there is no accepted conventional procedure; it is a mockery, like a marriage with a monkey. Or again one could say that part of the procedure is getting oneself appointed. When the saint baptized the penguins, was this void because the procedure of baptizing is inappropriate to be applied to penguins, or because there is no accepted procedure of baptizing anything except humans? I do not think that these uncertainties matter in theory, though it is pleasant to investigate them and in practice convenient to be ready, as jurists are, with a terminology to cope with them.

(imp) For Law?

LECTURE III

IN our first lecture we isolated in a preliminary way the performative utterance as not, or not merely, saying something but doing something, and as not a true or false report of something. In the second, we pointed out that though it was not ever true or false it still was subject to criticism—could be unhappy, and we listed six of these types of *Infelicity*. Of these, four were such as to make the utterance Misfire, and the act purported to be done null and void, so that it does not take effect; while two, on the contrary, only made the professed act an abuse of the procedure. So then we may seem to have armed ourselves with two shiny new concepts with which to crack the crib of Reality, or as it may be, of Confusion—two new keys in our hands, and of course, simultaneously two new skids under our feet. In philosophy, forearmed *should* be forewarned. I then stalled around for some time by discussing some general questions about the concept of the Infelicity, and set it in its general place in a new map of the field. I claimed (1) that it applied to *all* ceremonial acts, not merely verbal ones, and that these are more common than is appreciated; I admitted (2) that our list was *not* complete, and that there are indeed other whole dimensions of what might be reasonably called 'unhappiness' affecting ceremonial

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performances in general and utterances in general, dimensions which are certainly the concern of philosophers; and (3) that, of course, different infelicities can be combined or can overlap and that it can be more or less an optional matter how we classify some given particular example.

We were next to take some examples of infelicities—of the infringement of our six rules. Let me first remind you of rule A. 1, that 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 rule A. 2 of course, completing it, was that the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

A. 1. *There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances.*

The latter part, of course, is simply designed to restrict the rule to cases of utterances, and is not important in principle.

Our formulation of this rule contains the two words 'exist' and 'accepted' but we may reasonably ask whether there can be any sense to 'exist' except 'to be accepted', and whether 'be in (general) use' should not be preferred to both. Hence we must not say '(1) exist, (2) be accepted'

at any rate. Well, in deference to this reasonable query, let us take just 'accepted' first.

If somebody issues a performative utterance, and the utterance is classed as a misfire because the procedure invoked is *not accepted*, it is presumably persons other than the speaker who do not accept it (at least if the speaker is speaking *seriously*). What would be an example? Consider 'I divorce you', said to a wife by her husband in a Christian country, and both being Christians rather than Mohammedans. In this case it might be said, 'nevertheless he has not (successfully) divorced her: we admit only some other verbal or non-verbal procedure'; or even possibly 'we (*we*) do not admit any procedure at all for effecting divorce—marriage is indissoluble'. This may be carried so far that we reject what may be called a *whole code* of procedure, e.g. the code of honour involving duelling: for example, a challenge may be issued by 'my seconds will call on you', which is equivalent to 'I challenge you', and we merely shrug it off. The general position is exploited in the unhappy story of Don Quixote.

Of course, it will be evident that it is comparatively simple if we *never* admit any 'such' procedure at all—that is, any procedure at all for doing that sort of thing, or that procedure *anyway* for doing that particular thing. But equally possible are the cases where we do sometimes—in certain circumstances or at certain hands—accept a procedure, but *not* in any other circumstances or at other hands. And here we may often be in doubt (as in

the naming example above) whether an infelicity should be brought into our present class A. 1 or rather into A. 2 (or even B. 1 or B. 2). For example, at a party, you say, when picking sides, 'I pick George': George grunts 'I'm not playing.' Has George been picked? Undoubtedly, the situation is an unhappy one. Well, we may say, you have not picked George, whether because there is no convention that you can pick people who aren't playing or because George in the circumstances is an inappropriate object for the procedure of picking. Or on a desert island you may say to me 'Go and pick up wood'; and I may say 'I don't take orders from you' or 'you're not entitled to give me orders'—I do not take orders from you when you try to 'assert your authority' (which I might fall in with but may not) on a desert island, as opposed to the case when you are the captain on a ship and therefore genuinely have authority.

Now we could say, bringing the case under A. 2 (Misapplication): the procedure—uttering certain words, &c.—was O.K. and accepted, but the circumstances in which it was invoked or the persons who invoked it were wrong: 'I pick' is only in order when the object of the verb is 'a player', and a command is in order only when the subject of the verb is 'a commander' or 'an authority'.

Or again we could say, bringing the case under rule B. 2 (and perhaps we should reduce the former suggestion to this): the procedure has not been completely executed; because it is a necessary *part* of it that, say, the person to be the object of the verb 'I order to . . .' must, by

some previous procedure, tacit or verbal, have first constituted the person who is to do the ordering an authority, e.g. by saying 'I promise to do what you order me to do.' This is, of course, *one* of the uncertainties—and a purely general one really—which underlie the debate when we discuss in political theory whether there is or is not or should be a social contract.

It appears to me that it does not matter in principle at all how we decide in particular cases, though we may agree, either on the facts or by introducing further definitions, to prefer one solution rather than another. But neither bringing under A. 2 nor bringing under B will do as a general rule, and it is important to be clear:

(1) as against B that however much we take into the procedure it would still be possible for someone to reject it *all*;

(2) as against A. 2 that for a procedure to be *accepted* involves more than for it merely to be the case that it is *in fact generally used*, even actually by the persons now concerned; and that it must remain in principle open for anyone to reject any procedure—or code of procedures—even one that he has already hitherto accepted—as may happen with, for example, the code of honour. One who does so is, of course, liable to sanctions; others refuse to play with him or say that he is not a man of honour. *Above all* all must not be put into flat factual circumstances; for this is subject to the old objection to deriving an 'ought' from an 'is'. (Being accepted is *not* a circumstance in the right sense.) With many procedures, for example playing games, however appropriate the circum-

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stances may be I may still not be playing, and, further, we should contend that in the last resort it is doubtful if 'being accepted' is definable as being 'usually' employed. But this is a more difficult matter.

Now secondly, what could be meant by the suggestion that sometimes a procedure may not even exist—as distinct from the question whether it is accepted, and by this or that group, or not?¹

(i) We have the case of procedures which 'no longer exist' merely in the sense that though once generally accepted, they are no longer generally accepted, or even accepted by anybody; for example the case of challenging; and

(ii) we have even the case of procedures which someone is initiating. Sometimes he may 'get away with it' like, in football, the man who first picked up the ball and ran. Getting away with things is essential, despite the suspicious terminology. Consider a possible case in which we are more likely to state that the procedure does not exist than that we do not accept it: to say 'you were cowardly' may be to reprimand you or to insult you: and I can make my performance explicit by saying 'I reprimand you', but I cannot do so by saying 'I insult you'—the reasons for this do not matter here.² All that

¹ If we object here to saying that there is doubt whether it 'exists'—as well we may, for the word gives us currently fashionable creeps which are in general undoubtedly legitimate, we might say that the doubt is rather as to the precise nature or definition or comprehension of the procedure which undoubtedly does exist and is accepted.

² Many such possible procedures and formulas would be disadvantageous if recognized; for example, perhaps we ought not to allow the

does matter is that a special variety of non-play¹ can arise if someone *does* say 'I insult you': for while insulting is a conventional procedure, and indeed primarily a verbal one, so that in a way we cannot help understanding the procedure that someone who says 'I insult you' is purporting to invoke, yet we are bound to non-play him, not merely because the convention is not accepted, but because we vaguely feel the presence of some bar, the nature of which is not immediately clear, against its ever being accepted.

Much more common, however, will be cases where it is uncertain how far a procedure extends—which cases it covers or which varieties it could be made to cover. It is inherent in the nature of any procedure that the limits of its applicability, and therewith, of course, the 'precise' definition of the procedure, will remain vague. There will always occur difficult or marginal cases where nothing in the previous history of a conventional procedure will decide conclusively whether such a procedure is or is not correctly applied to such a case. Can I baptize a dog, if it is admittedly rational? Or should I be non-played? The law abounds in such difficult decisions—

formula 'I promise you that I'll thrash you'. But I am told that in the hey-day of student duelling in Germany it was the custom for members of one club to march past members of a rival club, each drawn up in file, and then for each to say to his chosen opponent as he passed, quite politely, 'Beleidigung', which means 'I insult you'.

¹ ['Non-play' was at one time Austin's name for the category A. 1 of infelicities. He later rejected it but it remains in his notes at this point. J. O. U.]

in which, of course, it becomes more or less arbitrary whether we regard ourselves as deciding (A. 1) that a convention does not exist or as deciding (A. 2) that the circumstances are not appropriate for the invocation of a convention which undoubtedly does exist: either way, we shall tend to be bound by the 'precedent' we set. Lawyers usually prefer the latter course, as being to apply rather than to make law.

There is, however, a further type of case which may arise, which might be classified in many ways, but which deserves a special mention.

Explicit & implicit
 The performative utterances I have taken as examples are all of them highly developed affairs, of the kind that we shall later call *explicit* performatives, by contrast with merely *implicit* performatives. That is to say, they (all) begin with or include some highly significant and unambiguous expression such as 'I bet', 'I promise', 'I bequeath'—an expression very commonly also used in naming the act which, in making such an utterance, I am performing—for example betting, promising, bequeathing, &c. But, of course, it is both obvious and important that we can on occasion use the utterance 'go' to achieve practically the same as we achieve by the utterance 'I order you to go': and we should say cheerfully in either case, describing subsequently what someone did, that he ordered me to go. It may, however, be uncertain in fact, and, so far as the mere utterance is concerned, is always left uncertain when we use so inexplicit a formula as the

mere imperative 'go', whether the utterer is ordering (or is purporting to order) me to go or merely advising, entreating, or what not me to go. Similarly 'There is a bull in the field' may or may not be a warning, for I *might* just be describing the scenery and 'I shall be there' may or may not be a promise. Here we have primitive as distinct from explicit performatives; and there may be nothing in the circumstances by which we can decide whether or not the utterance is performative at all. Anyway, in a given situation it can be open to me to take it as *either* one or the other. It was a performative formula—*perhaps*—but the procedure in question was not sufficiently explicitly invoked. Perhaps I did not *take it as* an order or was not anyway *bound* to take it as an order. The person did not *take it as* a promise: i.e. in the particular circumstance he did not accept the procedure, on the ground that the ritual was incompletely carried out by the original speaker.

We could assimilate this to a faulty or incomplete performance (B. 1 or B. 2): except that it is complete really, though neither unambiguous nor explicit. (In the law, of course, this kind of inexplicit performative *will* normally be brought under B. 1 or B. 2—it is made a rule that to bequeath inexplicitly, for instance, is either an incorrect or an incomplete performance; but in ordinary life there is no such rigidity.) We could also assimilate it to Misunderstandings (which we are not yet considering): but it would be a special kind, concerning the force of the utterance as opposed to its meaning. And the point is

not here just that the audience *did not* understand but that it did not *have* to understand, e.g. to *take it as* an order.

We might indeed even assimilate it to A. 2 by saying that the procedure is not designed for use where it is not clear that it is being used—which use makes it altogether void. We might claim that it is only to be used in circumstances which make it unambiguously clear that it is being used. But this is a counsel of perfection.

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

We turn next to infringements of A. 2, the type of infelicity which we have called Misapplications. Examples here are legion. 'I appoint you', said when you have already been appointed, or when someone else has been appointed, or when I am not entitled to appoint, or when you are a horse: 'I do', said when you are in the prohibited degrees of relationship, or before a ship's captain not at sea: 'I give', said when it is not mine to give or when it is a pound of my living and non-detached flesh. We have various special terms for use in different types of case—'*ultra vires*', 'incapacity', 'not a fit or proper object (or person, &c.)', 'not entitled', and so on.

The boundary between 'inappropriate persons' and 'inappropriate circumstances' will necessarily not be a very hard and fast one. Indeed 'circumstances' can

clearly be extended to cover in general 'the natures' of all persons participating. But we must distinguish between cases where the inappropriateness of persons, objects, names, &c., is a matter of 'incapacity' and simpler cases where the object or 'performer' is of the wrong kind or type. This again is a roughish and vanishing distinction, yet not without importance (in, say, the law). Thus we must distinguish the cases of a clergyman baptizing the wrong baby with the right name or baptizing a baby 'Albert' instead of 'Alfred', from those of saying 'I baptize this infant 2704' or 'I promise I will bash your face in' or appointing a horse as Consul. In the latter cases there is something of the wrong kind or type included, whereas in the others the inappropriateness is only a matter of incapacity.

Some overlaps of A. 2 with A. 1 and B. 1 have already been mentioned: perhaps we are more likely to call it a misinvocation (A. 1) if the person *as such* is inappropriate than if it is just because it is not the duly appointed one (A. 2)—if *nothing*—no antecedent procedure or appointment, &c.—could have put the matter in order. On the other hand, if we take the question of *appointment* literally (position as opposed to status) we might class the infelicity as a matter of wrongly executed (B. 1) rather than as misapplied procedure—for example, if we vote for a candidate before he has been nominated. The question here is how far we are to go back in the 'procedure'.

Next we have examples of B (already, of course, trenched upon) called Misexecutions.

B. 1. *The procedure must be executed by all participants correctly.*

These are flaws. They consist in the use of, for example, wrong formulas—there is a procedure which is appropriate to the persons and the circumstances, but it is not gone through correctly. Examples are more easily seen in the law; they are naturally not so definite in ordinary life, where allowances are made. The use of inexplicit formulas might be put under this heading. Also under this heading falls the use of vague formulas and uncertain references, for example if I say 'my house' when I have two, or if I say 'I bet you the race won't be run today' when more than one race was arranged.

This is a different question from that of misunderstanding or slow up-take by the audience; a flaw in the ritual is involved, however the audience took it. One of the things that cause particular difficulty is the question whether when two parties are involved '*consensus ad idem*' is necessary. Is it essential for me to secure *correct understanding* as well as everything else? In any case this is clearly a matter falling under the B rules and not under the *I* rules.

B. 2. *The procedure must be executed by all participants completely.*

These are hitches; we attempt to carry out the procedure but the act is abortive. For example: my attempt to make a bet by saying 'I bet you sixpence' is abortive

unless you say 'I take you on' or words to that effect; my attempt to marry by saying 'I will' is abortive if the woman says 'I will not'; my attempt to challenge you is abortive if I say 'I challenge you' but I fail to send round my seconds; my attempt ceremonially to open a library is abortive if I say 'I open this library' but the key snaps in the lock; conversely the christening of a ship is abortive if I kick away the chocks before I have said 'I launch this ship'. Here again, in ordinary life, a certain laxness in procedure is permitted—otherwise no university business would ever get done!

Naturally sometimes uncertainties about whether anything further is required or not will arise. For example, are you required to accept the gift if I am to give you something? Certainly in formal business acceptance is required, but is this ordinarily so? Similar uncertainty arises if an appointment is made without the consent of the person appointed. The question here is how far can acts be unilateral? Similarly the question arises as to when the act is at an end, what counts as its completion?¹

In all this I would remind you that we were *not* invoking such further dimensions of unhappiness as may arise from, say, the performer making a simple mistake of fact or from disagreements over matters of fact, let alone disagreements of opinion; for example, there is no convention that I can promise you to do something to your detriment, thus putting myself under an obligation to

¹ It might thus be doubted whether failure to hand a gift over is a failure to complete the gift or an infelicity of type *I*.

you to do it; but suppose I say 'I promise to send you to a nunnery'—when I think, but you do not, that this will be for your good, or again when you think it will but I do not, or even when we both think it will, but in fact, as may transpire, it will not? Have I invoked a non-existent convention in inappropriate circumstances? Needless to say, and as a matter of general principle, there can be no satisfactory choice between these alternatives, which are too unsubtle to fit subtle cases. There is no short cut to expounding simply the full complexity of the situation which does not exactly fit any common classification.

It may appear in all this that we have merely been taking back our rules. But this is not the case. Clearly there are these six possibilities of infelicity even if it is sometimes uncertain which is involved in a particular case: and we *might* define them, at least for given cases, if we wished. And we must at all costs avoid over-simplification, which one might be tempted to call the occupational disease of philosophers if it were not their occupation.

LECTURE IV

LAST time we were considering cases of Infelicities: and we dealt with cases where there was no procedure or no accepted procedure: where the procedure was invoked in inappropriate circumstances; and where the procedure was faultily executed or incompletely executed. And we pointed out that in particular cases these can be made to overlap; and that they generally overlap with (a) Misunderstandings, a type of infelicity to which all utterances are probably liable, and (b) Mistakes, and acting under duress.

The last type of case is that of *F. 1* and *F. 2*, insincerities and infractions or breaches.¹ Here, we say, the performance is *not* void, although it is still unhappy.

Let me repeat the definitions:

F. 1: where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts, feelings, or intentions, 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, feelings, or intentions, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves;

F. 2: and the participants must so conduct themselves subsequently.

¹ See p. 18 and footnote.

'Check.' To say it is to check in appropriate circumstances. But would it not still be a check if 'check' were not said?

'J'adoube.' Is this suiting the action to the word or is it part of the act of straightening the piece as opposed to moving it?

Perhaps these distinctions are not important: but there are similar transitions in the case of performatives, as for example:

'I quote': he quotes.

'I define': he defines (e.g. x is y).

'I define x as y '.

In these cases the utterance operates like a title: is it a variety of performative? It essentially operates where the action suited to the word is itself a verbal performance.

LECTURE VII

LAST time we considered the Explicit in contrast with the Primary Performative, claiming that the former would be naturally evolved from the latter as language and society develop. We said, however, that this would not remove all our troubles in our search for a list of explicit performative verbs. We gave some examples which incidentally illustrated how the explicit performative develops from the primary.

We took examples from the sphere of what may be called *behabitives*, a kind of performative concerned roughly with reactions to behaviour and with behaviour towards others and designed to exhibit attitudes and feelings.

Contrast:

<i>Explicit</i> <i>Performative</i>	<i>Not Pure</i> <i>(half descriptive)</i>	<i>Descriptive</i>
I apologize	I am sorry	I repent
I criticize }	I blame	I am disgusted by
I censure }		
I approve	I approve of	I feel approval of
I bid you welcome	I welcome you	

We suggested tests of the pure explicit performative:

(1) Does it make sense (or the same sense) to ask 'But

did he *really*?? We cannot ask 'Did he really bid him welcome?' in the same sense as we ask 'Did he really welcome him?' or 'Did he really criticize him?' in the same sense as we ask 'Did he really blame him?' This is not a very good test because, for example, of the possibility of infelicities. We may ask 'Did he really marry?' when he said 'I do', because there may have been infelicities which made the marriage problematical.

(2) Could he be doing the action without uttering the performative?

(3) Could he do it deliberately?; could he be willing to do it?

(4) Could it be literally false that, for example, I criticize (as distinct from blame) when I have said that I criticize? (It could, of course, be *insincere* always.)

Sometimes the test of a different word, sometimes of a different construction of the formula, is available. Thus in an explicit performative we say 'I approve' rather than 'I approve of'. Compare the distinction between 'I wish you were at the bottom of the sea' and 'I wish you at the bottom of the sea', or between 'I wish you were enjoying yourself' and 'I wish you joy', &c.

In conclusion, we distinguished our performatives from:

(1) Purely polite conventional ritual phrases such as 'I have pleasure in . . .'. These are quite different, in that, although ritual and not called upon to be sincere, they are according to all the four tests above not performatives. They seem to be a limited class, limited perhaps to

professions of feeling and even to professions of feeling at saying or hearing something.

(2) Suiting the action to the word, of which a typical example would be Counsel, at the end of his case saying 'I end my case'. These phrases are especially liable to pass over into pure performatives where the action which is suited to the word is itself a purely ritual action, the non-verbal action of bowing ('I salute you') or the verbal ritual of saying 'Huzza' ('I applaud').

A second very important class of words in which the same phenomenon of a shift from descriptive to performative utterance and wavering between them is, as with behabitives, peculiarly rampant, is the class of what I call *expositives*, or expository performatives. Here the main body of the utterance has generally or often the straightforward form of a 'statement', but there is an explicit performative verb at its head which shows how the 'statement' is to be fitted into the context of conversation, interlocution, dialogue, or in general of exposition. Here are some examples:

'I argue (or urge) that there is no backside to the moon.'

'I conclude (or infer) that there is no backside to the moon.'

'I testify that there is no backside to the moon.'

'I admit (or concede) that there is no backside to the moon.'

'I prophesy (or predict) that there is no backside to the moon.'

To say such things as these is to argue, conclude, testify, reply, predict, &c.

Now many of these verbs appear to be quite satisfactory pure performatives. (Irritating though it is to have them as such, linked with clauses that look like 'statements', true or false, we have mentioned this before and will return to it again.) For example, when I say 'I prophesy that . . .', 'I concede that . . .', 'I postulate that . . .', the clause following will normally look just like a statement, but the verbs themselves seem to be pure performatives.

To take our four tests that we have used with the behaviorives: when he says 'I postulate that . . .' then

- (1) we cannot ask 'But was he *really* postulating . . .?'
- (2) he cannot be postulating without saying so;
- (3) one can say 'I deliberately postulated . . .' or 'I am willing to postulate . . .';

(4) it cannot be literally false to say 'I postulate' (except in the sense already noted: 'on page 265 I postulate . . .'). In all these respects 'I postulate' is like 'I apologize for . . .', 'I criticize him for . . .'. Of course, these utterances can be unhappy—he can predict when he has no right to predict, or say 'I confess you did it', or be insincere by saying 'I confess I did' when he did not.

Yet there are numerous verbs which look very similar, and seem to fall into the same class, which would *not* so satisfactorily pass these tests: as, for example, 'I assume that' as distinct from 'I postulate that'. I should

cheerfully say 'I was assuming that . . .' when I did not realize that I was assuming it and without having said anything to that effect. And I may be assuming something, though I don't realize it or say so, in the important descriptive sense. I may, of course, be asserting or denying something, for instance, without saying anything to that effect, where 'I assert' and 'I deny' are pure explicit performatives in some senses which are not here relevant; I may nod or shake my head, or assert or deny it *by implication* in saying something else. But with 'I was assuming that' I could have been assuming something without saying anything, *not* by implication by saying something else, but just by quietly sitting in my corner in a way in which I could not be just quietly sitting in my corner denying it.

In other words 'I assume that . . .' and perhaps 'I suppose that . . .' operate in the ambivalent way that 'I am sorry for . . .' operates: this sometimes is equivalent to 'I apologize', sometimes describes my feelings, sometimes does both at once; so 'I assume' sometimes is equivalent to 'I postulate . . .' and sometimes is not.

Or again 'I agree that . . .' sometimes operates like 'I approve his conduct', sometimes more like 'I approve of his conduct', where at least in part it describes my attitude, frame of mind, state of belief. Here again slight changes of phrase may be important, for example the difference between 'I agree to . . .' and 'I agree with . . .': but this is not a cast-iron test.

The same general phenomenon occurs with this class

as with behabitives. Just as we have 'I premise that (I postulate that)' as a pure explicit performative where 'I assume that' is not, so we have:

- 'I forecast (predict) that' as a pure explicit performative where 'I foresee (expect, anticipate) that' is not;
- 'I endorse (I assent to) that opinion' as a pure explicit performative where 'I agree with that opinion' is not;
- 'I question whether it is so' as a pure explicit performative where 'I wonder (doubt) whether it is so' is not.

Here 'postulate', 'predict', 'endorse', 'question', &c. will pass all our tests of the pure explicit performative, whereas the others will not, or will not always.

Now one point in passing: not all the things we do in this sort of line in fitting our particular utterance, say, into its context of discourse can be things that we can do by an explicit performative. For example, we cannot say 'I imply that', 'I insinuate', &c.

Behabitives and expositives are two very critical classes in which this phenomenon occurs: but it is also found in other classes, for example in what I call *verdictives*. Examples of verdictives are 'I pronounce that . . .', 'I hold that . . .', 'I make it . . .', 'I date it . . .'. Thus if you are a judge and say 'I hold that . . .' then to say you hold is to hold; with less official persons it is not so clearly so: it may be merely descriptive of a state of mind. This difficulty may be avoided in the usual manner by the invention of a special word such as 'verdict', 'I

find *in* favour of . . .', 'I pronounce . . .'; otherwise the performative nature of the utterance still depends partly on the context of the utterance, such as the judge being a judge and in robes on a bench, &c.

Somewhat similar to this would be the case of 'I class *x*'s as *y*'s', where we saw there was a double use: the pure explicit performative which commits me to certain future conduct, and then the description, not of my state of mind, but of my regular behaviour. We may say 'He does not really class . . .' or 'He is classing . . .' and he may be classing without saying anything. We must distinguish this use from those in which we are committed to certain regular acts by the performance of the single act: for example 'I define *x* as *y*' does not state that he regularly does so but commits him to certain regular acts of using one expression as equivalent to another. In this context it is instructive to compare 'I intend' with 'I promise'.

So much for this sort of problem, whether an apparent or suggested explicit performative verb itself operates, or operates sometimes or in part, as a description, true or false, of feelings, states of mind, frames of mind, &c. But this type of case suggests again the wider phenomenon to which attention has been drawn, where the whole utterance seems essentially meant to be true or false despite its performative characteristics. Even if we take such half-way houses as, say, 'I hold that . . .' as said by a non-juryman, or 'I expect that . . .', it seems absurd to suppose that all they describe or state, so far as they do

this or when they do, is something about the speaker's beliefs or expectations. To suppose this is rather the sort of Alice-in-Wonderland over-sharpness of taking 'I think that *p*' as a statement about yourself which could be answered: 'That is just a fact about you'. ('I don't think . . .' began Alice: 'then you should not talk' said the Caterpillar or whoever it was). And when we come to pure explicit performatives such as 'state' or 'maintain', surely the whole thing is true or false even though the uttering of it is the performing of the action of stating or maintaining. And we have repeatedly pointed out that some things that are quite clearly classic performatives like 'Over' bear a very close relation to describing facts, even if others like 'Play' do not.

This, however, is not so bad: we could distinguish the performative opening part (I state that) which makes clear how the utterance is to be taken, that it is a statement (as distinct from a prediction, &c.), from the bit in the that-clause which is required to be true or false. However, there are many cases which, as language stands at present, we are not able to split into two parts in this way, even though the utterance seems to have a sort of explicit performative in it: thus 'I liken *x* to *y*', 'I analyse *x* as *y*'. Here we both do the likening and assert that there is a likeness by means of one compendious phrase of at least a quasi-performative character. Just to spur us on our way: we may also mention 'I know that', 'I believe that', &c. How complicated are these examples? We cannot assume that they are purely descriptive.

Now let us consider where we stand for a moment: beginning with the supposed contrast between performative and constative utterances, we found sufficient indications that unhappiness nevertheless seems to characterize both kinds of utterance, not merely the performative; and that the requirement of conforming or bearing some relation to the facts, different in different cases, seems to characterize performatives, in addition to the requirement that they should be happy, similarly to the way which is characteristic of supposed constatives.

Now we failed to find a grammatical criterion for performatives, but we thought that perhaps we could insist that every performative *could* be in principle put into the form of an explicit performative, and then we could make a list of performative verbs. Since then we have found, however, that it is often not easy to be sure that, even when it is apparently in explicit form, an utterance is performative or that it is not; and typically anyway, we still have utterances beginning 'I state that . . .' which seem to satisfy the requirements of being performative, yet which surely are the making of statements, and surely are essentially true or false.

It is time then to make a fresh start on the problem. We want to reconsider more generally the senses in which to say something may be to do something, or in saying something we do something (and also perhaps to consider the different case in which *by* saying something we do something). Perhaps some clarification and definition here may help us out of our tangle. For after all, 'doing

something' is a very vague expression. When we issue any utterance¹ whatsoever, are we not 'doing something'? Certainly the ways in which we talk about 'action' are liable here, as elsewhere, to be confusing. For example, we may contrast men of words with men of action, we may say they *did* nothing, only talked or *said* things: yet again, we may contrast *only* thinking something with *actually* saying it (out loud), in which context saying it *is* doing something.

It is time to refine upon the circumstances of 'issuing an utterance'.² To begin with, there is a whole group of senses, which I shall label (A), in which to say anything must always be to do something, the group of senses which together add up to 'saying' something, in the full sense of 'say'. We may agree, without insisting on formulations or refinements, that to say anything is

(A. *a*) always to perform the act of uttering certain noises (a 'phonetic' act), and the utterance is a phone;

(A. *b*) always to perform the act of uttering certain vocables or words, i.e. noises of certain types belonging to *and as* belonging to a certain vocabulary, in a certain construction, i.e. conforming to *and as* conforming to a certain grammar, with a certain intonation, &c. This act we may call a 'phatic' act, and the utterance which it is the act of uttering a 'pHEME' (as

¹ I use 'utterance' only as equivalent to *utteratum*: for *utteratio* I use 'the issuing of an utterance'.

² We shall not always mention but must bear in mind the possibility of 'etiolation' as it occurs when we use speech in acting, fiction and poetry, quotation and recitation.

distinct from the pHEME of linguistic theory); and

(A. *c*) generally to perform the act of using that pHEME or its constituents with a certain more or less definite 'sense' and a more or less definite 'reference' (which together are equivalent to 'meaning'). This act we may call a 'rhetic' act, and the utterance which it is the act of uttering a 'rHEME'.

gun' or 'He pulled the trigger' or 'He moved his trigger finger', and all may be correct. So, to shorten the nursery story of the endeavours of the old woman to drive her pig home in time to get her old man's supper, we may in the last resort say that the cat drove or got the pig, or made the pig get, over the stile. If in such cases we *mention* both a B act (illocution) and a C act (perlocution) we shall say 'by B-ing he C-ed' rather than 'in-B-ing . . .' This is the reason for calling C a *perlocutionary* act as distinct from an illocutionary act.

Next time we shall revert to the distinction between our three kinds of act, and to the expressions 'in' and 'by doing x I am doing y', with a view to getting the three classes and their members and non-members somewhat clearer. We shall see that just as the locutionary act embraces doing many things at once to be complete, so may the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

LECTURE IX

WHEN it was suggested that we embark on a programme of making a list of explicit performative verbs, we ran into some difficulties over the matter of determining whether some utterance was or was not performative, or anyway, *purely* performative. It seemed expedient, therefore, to go back to fundamentals and consider how many senses there may be in which to say something is to do something, or in saying something we do something, or even *by* saying something we do something.

We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a *locutionary act*, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense. Second, we said that we also perform *illocutionary acts* such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform *perlocutionary acts*: what we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading. Here we have three, if not more, different senses or dimensions of the 'use of a sentence' or of 'the use of

language' (and, of course, there are others also). All these three kinds of 'actions' are, simply of course as actions, subject to the usual troubles and reservations about attempt as distinct from achievement, being intentional as distinct from being unintentional, and the like. We then said that we must consider these three kinds of act in greater detail.

We must distinguish the illocutionary from the perlocutionary act: for example we must distinguish 'in saying it I was warning him' from 'by saying it I convinced him, or surprised him, or got him to stop'.

It is the distinction between illocutions and perlocutions which seems likeliest to give trouble, and it is upon this that we shall now embark, taking in the distinction between illocutions and locutions by the way. It is certain that the perlocutionary sense of 'doing an action' must somehow be ruled out as irrelevant to the sense in which an utterance, if the issuing of it is the 'doing of an action', is a performative, at least if that is to be distinct from a constative. For clearly *any*, or almost any, perlocutionary act is liable to be brought off, in sufficiently special circumstances, by the issuing, with or without calculation, of any utterance whatsoever, and in particular by a straightforward constative utterance (if there is such an animal). You may, for example, deter me (C. *b*)¹ from doing something by informing me, perhaps guilelessly yet opportunely, what the consequences of doing it would in fact be: and this applies even to

¹ See p. 102 for the significance of these references.

(C. *a*)¹ for you may convince me (C. *a*)¹ that she is an adulteress by asking her whether it was not her handkerchief which was in *X*'s bedroom,² or by stating that it was hers.

We have then to draw the line between an action we do (here an illocution) and its consequences. Now in general, and if the action is not one of saying something but a non-conventional 'physical' action, this is an intricate matter. As we have seen, we can, or may like to think we can, class, by stages, more and more of what is initially and ordinarily included or possibly might be included under the name given to 'our act' itself³ as *really* only consequences, however little remote and however naturally to be anticipated, of our actual action in the supposed minimum physical sense, which will then transpire to be

¹ See p. 102 for the significance of these references.

² That the giving of straightforward information produces, almost always, consequential effects upon action, is no more surprising than the converse, that the doing of any action (including the uttering of a performative) has regularly the consequence of making ourselves and others aware of facts. To do any act in a perceptible or detectable way is to afford ourselves and generally others also the opportunity of coming to know both (*a*) that we did it, and further (*b*) many other facts as to our motives, our character or what not which may be inferred from our having done it. If you hurl a tomato at a political meeting (or bawl 'I protest' when someone else does—if that is performing an action) the consequence will probably be to make others aware that you object, and to make them think that you hold certain political beliefs: but this will not make either the throw or the shout true or false (though they may be, even deliberately, misleading). And by the same token, the production of any number of consequential effects will not prevent a constative utterance from *being* true or false.

³ I do not here go into the question how far consequences may extend. The usual errors on this topic may be found in, for example, Moore's *Principia Ethica*.

the making of some movement or movements with parts of our body (e.g. crooking our finger, which produced a movement of the trigger, which produced . . . which produced the death of the donkey). There is, of course, much to be said about this which need not concern us here. But at least in the case of acts of saying something,

(1) *nomenclature* affords us an assistance which it generally withholds in the case of 'physical' actions. For with physical actions we nearly always naturally name the action *not* in terms of what we are here calling the minimum physical act, but in terms which embrace a greater or less but indefinitely extensive range of what might be called its natural consequences (or, looking at it another way, the intention with which it was done).

We not merely do not use the notion of a minimum physical act (which is in any case doubtful) but we do not seem to have any class of names which distinguish physical acts from consequences: whereas with acts of saying something, the vocabulary of names for acts (B) seems expressly designed to mark a break at a certain regular point between the act (our saying something) and its consequences (which are usually not the *saying* of anything), or at any rate a great many of them.¹

¹ Note that if we suppose the minimum physical act to be movement of the body when we say 'I moved my finger', the fact that the object moved *is* part of my body does in fact introduce a new sense of 'moved'. Thus I may be able to waggle my ears as a schoolboy does, or by grasping them between my finger and thumb, or move my foot either in the ordinary way or by manipulating with my hand when I have pins and needles. The ordinary use of 'move' in such examples as 'I moved my

(2) Furthermore, we seem to derive some assistance from the special nature of acts of saying something by contrast with ordinary physical actions: for with these latter even the minimum physical action, which we are seeking to detach from its consequences, is, being a bodily movement, *in pari materia*¹ with at least many of its immediate and natural consequences, whereas, whatever the immediate and natural consequences of an act of saying something may be, they are at least not normally other further acts of saying something, whether more particularly on the speaker's own part or even on the part of others.² So that we have here a sort of regular natural break in the chain, which is wanting in the case of physical actions, and which is associated with the special class of names for illocutions.

This may get us some little way, but, it may be asked at this point, are not the consequences imported with the nomenclature of perlocutions really consequences of the acts (A), the locutions? Ought we not, in seeking to

finger' is ultimate. We must not seek to go back behind it to 'pulling on my muscles' and the like.

¹ This *in pari materia* could be misleading to you. I do not mean, as was pointed out in the previous footnote, that my 'moving my finger' is, metaphysically, in the least like 'the trigger moving' which is its consequence, or like 'my finger's moving the trigger'. But 'a movement of a trigger finger' is *in pari materia* with 'a movement of a trigger'.

Or we could put the matter in a most important other way by saying that the sense in which saying something produces effects on other persons, or *causes* things, is a fundamentally different sense of cause from that used in physical causation by pressure, &c. It has to operate through the conventions of language and is a matter of influence exerted by one person on another: this is probably the original sense of 'cause'.

² See below.

detach 'all' consequences, to go right back beyond the illocution to the locution—and indeed to the act (A. *a*), the uttering of noises, which is a physical movement?¹ It has, of course, been admitted that to perform an illocutionary act is necessarily to perform a locutionary act: that, for example, to congratulate is necessarily to say certain words; and to say certain words is necessarily, at least in part, to make certain more or less indescribable movements with the vocal organs.² So that the divorce between 'physical' actions and acts of saying something is not in all ways complete—there is some connexion. But (i) while this may be important in some connexions and contexts, it does not seem to prevent the drawing of a line for our present purposes where we want one, that is, between the completion of the illocutionary act and all consequences thereafter. And further (ii), much more important, we must avoid the idea, suggested above though not stated, that the illocutionary act is a *consequence* of the locutionary act, and even the idea that what is imported by the nomenclature of illocutions is an *additional* reference to *some* of the consequences of the locutions,³ i.e. that to say 'he urged me to' is to say that he said certain words and in addition that his saying them had *or* perhaps was intended to have certain conse-

¹ Or is it? We have already noted that 'production of noises' is itself really a consequence of the minimum physical act of moving one's vocal organs.

² Still confining ourselves, for simplicity, to *spoken* utterance.

³ Though see below.

quences (? an effect upon me). We should not, if we were to insist for some reason and in some sense on 'going back' from the illocution to the phonetic act (A. *a*), be going back to a minimum physical action via the chain of its consequences, in the way that we supposedly go back from the death of the rabbit to the movement of the trigger finger. The uttering of noises may be a consequence (physical) of the movement of the vocal organs, the breath, &c.: but the uttering of a word is *not* a consequence of the uttering of a noise, whether physical or otherwise. Nor is the uttering of words with a certain meaning a *consequence* of uttering the words, whether physical or otherwise. For that matter, even phatic (A. *b*) and rhetic (A. *c*) acts are not *consequences*, let alone physical consequences, of phonetic acts (A. *a*). What we do import by the use of the nomenclature of illocution is a reference, not to the consequences (at least in any ordinary sense) of the locution, but to the conventions of illocutionary force as bearing on the special circumstances of the occasion of the issuing of the utterance. We shall shortly return to the senses in which the successful or consummated performance of an illocutionary act *does* bring in 'consequences' or 'effects' in certain senses.¹

¹ We may still feel tempted to ascribe some 'primacy' to the locution as against the illocution, seeing that, given some individual rhetic act (A. *c*), there may yet be room for doubt as to how it should be described in the nomenclature of illocutions. Why after all should we label one *A* the other *B*? We may agree on the actual words that were uttered, and even also on the senses in which they were being used and on the realities

I have so far argued, then, that we can have hopes of isolating the illocutionary act from the perlocutionary as producing consequences, and that it is not itself a 'consequence' of the locutionary act. Now, however, I must point out that the illocutionary act as distinct from the perlocutionary is connected with the production of effects in certain senses:

(1) Unless a certain effect is achieved, the illocutionary act will not have been happily successfully performed. This is not to say that the illocutionary act is the achieving of a certain effect. I cannot be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense. An effect must be achieved on the audience if the illocutionary act is to be carried out.

to which they were being used to refer, and yet still disagree as to whether, in the circumstances, they amounted to an order or a threat or merely to advice or a warning. Yet after all, there is ample room, equally, for disagreement in individual cases as to how the rhetic act (A. c) should be described in the nomenclature of locutions (What did he really mean? To what person, time, or what not was he actually referring?): and indeed, we may often agree that his act was definitely one say, of ordering (illocution), while yet uncertain what it was he was meaning to order (locution). It is plausible to suppose that the act is at least as much 'bound' to be describable as some more or less definite type of illocution as it is to be describable as some more or less definite locutionary act (A). Difficulties about conventions and intentions must arise in deciding upon the correct description whether of a locution or of an illocution: deliberate, or unintentional, ambiguity of meaning or reference is perhaps as common as deliberate or unintentional failure to make plain 'how our words are to be taken' (in the illocutionary sense). Moreover, the whole apparatus of 'explicit performatives' (see above) serves to obviate disagreements as to the description of illocutionary acts. It is much harder in fact to obviate disagreements as to the description of 'locutionary acts'. Each, however, is conventional and liable to have a 'construction' put on it by judges.

© Differentiating
between locutionary
and illocutionary
acts.

How should we best put it here? And how can we limit it? Generally the effect amounts to bringing about the understanding of the meaning and of the force of the locution. So the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of uptake.

(2) The illocutionary act 'takes effect' in certain ways, as distinguished from producing consequences in the sense of bringing about states of affairs in the 'normal' way, i.e. changes in the natural course of events. Thus 'I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*' has the effect of naming or christening the ship; then certain subsequent acts such as referring to it as the *Generalissimo Stalin* will be out of order.

(3) We have said that many illocutionary acts invite by convention a response or sequel. Thus an order invites the response of obedience and a promise that of fulfilment. The response or sequel may be 'one-way' or 'two-way': thus we may distinguish arguing, ordering, promising, suggesting, and asking to, from offering, asking whether you will and asking 'Yes or no?' If this response is accorded, or the sequel implemented, that requires a second act by the speaker or another person; and it is a commonplace of the consequence-language that this cannot be included under the initial stretch of action.

Generally we can, however, always say 'I got him to' with such a word. This does make the act one ascribed to me and it is, when words are or may be employed, a perlocutionary act. Thus we must distinguish 'I ordered him and he obeyed' from 'I got him to obey'. The

© locution
of uptake
subjective
to the speaker
is possible.

1st is
words
construed.

I got him

general implication of the latter is that other additional means were employed to produce this consequence as ascribable to me, inducements, personal presence, and influence which may amount to duress; there is even very often an illocutionary act distinct from merely ordering, as when I say 'I got him to do it by stating x'.

So here are three ways, securing uptake, taking effect, and inviting a response, in which illocutionary acts are bound up with effects; and these are all distinct from the producing of effects which is characteristic of the perlocutionary act.

The perlocutionary act may be either the achievement of a perlocutionary object (convince, persuade) or the production of a perlocutionary sequel. Thus the act of warning may achieve its perlocutionary object of alerting and also have the perlocutionary sequel of alarming, and an argument against a view may fail to achieve its object but have the perlocutionary sequel of convincing our opponent of its truth ('I only succeeded in convincing him'). What is the perlocutionary object of one illocution may be the sequel of another. For example, warning may produce the sequel of deterring and saying 'Don't', whose object is to deter, may produce the sequel of alerting or even alarming. Some perlocutionary acts are always the producing of a sequel, namely those where there is no illocutionary formula: thus I may surprise you or upset you or humiliate you by a locution, though there is no illocutionary formula 'I surprise you by . . .', 'I upset you by . . .', 'I humiliate you by . . .'

Handwritten notes on the left margin of page 118: "ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS", "BY MEANS OF", "UPON", "EFFECT", "PERLOCUTIONARY ACTS".

It is characteristic of perlocutionary acts that the response achieved, or the sequel, can be achieved additionally or entirely by non-locutionary means: thus intimidation may be achieved by waving a stick or pointing a gun. Even in the cases of convincing, persuading, getting to obey and getting to believe, we may achieve the response non-verbally; but if there is no illocutionary act, it is doubtful whether this language characteristic of perlocutionary objects should be used. Compare the use of 'got him to' with that of 'got him to obey'. However, this alone is not enough to distinguish illocutionary acts, since we can for example warn or order or appoint or give or protest or apologize by non-verbal means and these are illocutionary acts. Thus we may cock a snook or hurl a tomato by way of protest.

More important is the question whether these responses and sequels can be achieved by non-conventional means. Certainly we can achieve the same perlocutionary sequels by non-conventional means (or as we say 'unconventional' means), means that are not conventional at all or not for that purpose; thus I may persuade some one by gently swinging a big stick or gently mentioning that his aged parents are still in the Third Reich. Strictly speaking, there cannot be an illocutionary act unless the means employed are conventional, and so the means for achieving it non-verbally must be conventional. But it is difficult to say where conventions begin and end; thus I may warn him by swinging a stick or I may give him something by merely handing it to him. But if I warn

Handwritten notes on the right margin of page 119: "PERLOCUTIONARY ACTS", "BY MEANS OF", "UPON", "EFFECT".

Handwritten note on the right margin of page 119: "PROPOSITIONAL FORM".

him by swinging a stick, then swinging my stick is a warning: he would know very well what I meant: it may seem an unmistakable threatening gesture. Similar difficulties arise over giving tacit consent to some arrangement, or promising tacitly, or voting by a show of hands. But the fact remains that many illocutionary acts cannot be performed except by saying something. This is true of stating, informing (as distinct from showing), arguing, giving estimates, reckoning, and finding (in the legal sense); it is true of the great majority of verdictives and expositives as opposed to many exercitives and commissives.¹

¹ [For the definition of verdictives, expositives, exercitives, and commissives see Lecture XII.—J.O.U.]

LECTURE X

FORGETTING for the time the initial distinction between performatives and constatives and the programme of finding a list of explicit performative words, notably verbs, we made a fresh start by considering the senses in which to say something is to do something. Thus we distinguished the locutionary act (and within it the phonetic, the phatic, and the rhetic acts) which has a meaning; the illocutionary act which has a certain force (in saying something); the perlocutionary act which is the achieving of certain effects (by saying something).

We distinguished in the last lecture some senses of consequences and effects in these connexions, especially three senses in which effects can come in even with illocutionary acts, namely, securing uptake, taking effect, and inviting responses. In the case of the perlocutionary act we made a rough distinction between achieving an object and producing a sequel. Illocutionary acts are conventional acts: perlocutionary acts are not conventional. Acts of both kinds can be performed—or, more accurately, acts called by the same name (for example, acts equivalent to the illocutionary act of warning or the perlocutionary act of convincing)—can be brought off non-verbally; but even then to deserve the name of an illocutionary act, for example a warning, it must be a

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conventional non-verbal act: but perlocutionary acts are not conventional, though conventional acts may be made use of in order to bring off the perlocutionary act. A judge should be able to decide, by hearing what was said, what locutionary and illocutionary acts were performed, but not what perlocutionary acts were achieved.

Finally, we have said there is another whole range of questions about 'how we are using language' or 'what we are doing in saying something' which we have said may be, and intuitively seem to be, entirely different—further matters which we are not trenching upon. For example, there are insinuating (and other non-literal uses of language), joking (and other non-serious uses of language), and swearing and showing off (which are perhaps expressive uses of language). We can say 'In saying x I was joking' (insinuating . . ., expressing my feelings, &c.).

We have now to make some final remarks on the formulas:

- 'In saying x I was doing y' or 'I did y',
- 'By saying x I did y' or 'I was doing y'.

For it was because of the availability of these formulas which seem specially suitable, the former (*in*) for picking out verbs which are names for illocutionary acts, and the latter (*by*) for picking out verbs which are names for perlocutionary acts, that we chose in fact the names *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary*. Thus, for example:

- 'In saying I would shoot him I was threatening him'.
- 'By saying I would shoot him I alarmed him'.

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EXAMPLES

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Will these linguistic formulas provide us with a test for distinguishing illocutionary from perlocutionary acts? They will not. Before I deal with this, though, let me make one general observation or confession. Many of you will be getting impatient at this approach—and to some extent quite justifiably. You will say 'Why not cut the cackle? Why go on about lists available in ordinary talk of names for things we do that have relations to saying, and about formulas like the "in" and "by" formulas? Why not get down to discussing the thing bang off in terms of linguistics and psychology in a straightforward fashion? Why be so devious?' Well, of course, I agree that this will have to be done—only I say *after*, not before, seeing what we can screw out of ordinary language even if in what comes out there is a strong element of the undeniable. Otherwise we shall overlook things and go too fast.

'In' and 'by' are anyway worth investigation; for that matter, so are 'when', 'while', &c. The importance of these investigations is obvious in the general question of how the various possible descriptions of 'what I do' are interrelated, as we have seen in the matter of 'consequences'. We turn, then, to the 'in' and 'by' formulas, and after that shall turn back again to our initial distinction of the performative and constative, to see how it fares in this newly provided framework.

We will take first the formula: 'In saying x I was doing y' (or 'I did y').

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(1) Its use is not confined to illocutionary acts; it will apply (a) with locutionary acts and (b) with acts which seem to fall outside our classification altogether. It certainly is not the case that if we can say 'in saying *x* you were *y*-ing', then 'to *y*' is necessarily to perform an illocutionary act. At most it might be claimed that the formula will not suit the perlocutionary act, while the 'by' formula will not suit the illocutionary act. In particular (a) we use the same formula where 'to *y*' is to perform an incidental part of a locutionary act: for example, 'In saying I detested Catholics, I was referring only to the present day', or, 'I was meaning or thinking of *Roman Catholics*'. Though in this case we would perhaps more commonly use the formula 'in speaking of'. Another example of this kind is: 'In saying "Iced ink" I was uttering the noises "I stink".' But besides this there are (b) other apparently miscellaneous cases, such as 'In saying *x* you were making a mistake' or 'failing to observe a necessary distinction' or 'breaking the law', or 'running a risk', or 'forgetting': to make a mistake or to run a risk is certainly not to perform an illocutionary act, nor even a locutionary one.

We may attempt to get out of (a), the fact that it is not confined to illocutionary acts, by arguing that 'saying' is ambiguous. Where the use is not illocutionary 'saying' could be replaced by 'speaking of', or 'using the expression', or instead of 'in saying *x*' we could say 'by the word *x*' or 'in using the word *x*'. This is the sense of 'saying' in which it is followed by inverted

commas, and in such cases we refer to the phatic and not the rhetic act.

The case (b), of miscellaneous acts falling outside our classification, is more difficult. A possible test would be the following: where we can put the *y*-verb¹ into a non-continuous tense (preterite or present) instead of the continuous tense, or equally where we can change the 'in' into 'by' while keeping the continuous tense, then the *y*-verb is not the name for an illocution. Thus, for 'In saying that he was making a mistake', we could put, without change of sense, either 'In saying that he made a mistake' or 'By saying that he was making a mistake': but we do not say 'In saying that I protested' nor 'By saying that I was protesting'.

(2) But on the whole we might claim that the formula does not go with perlocutionary verbs like 'convinced', 'persuaded', 'deterred'. But we must qualify this a little. First, exceptions arise through the incorrect use of language. Thus people say 'Are you intimidating me?' instead of 'threatening', and thus might say 'In saying *x*, he was intimidating me'. Second, the same word may genuinely be used in both illocutionary and perlocutionary ways. For example, 'tempting' is a verb which may easily be used in either way. We don't have 'I tempt you to' but we do have 'Let me tempt you to', and exchanges like 'Do have another whack of ice-cream'—'Are you tempting me?'. The last question

¹ [That is, the verb substituted for '*y*' in 'In saying *x* I was *y*-ing'. J.O.U.]

would be absurd in a perlocutionary sense, since it would be one for the speaker to answer, if anyone. If I say 'Oh, why not?' it seems that I am tempting him, but he may not really be tempted. Third, there is the proleptic use of verbs such as, for example, 'seducing' or 'pacifying'. In this case 'trying to' seems always a possible addition with a perlocutionary verb. But we cannot say that the illocutionary verb is always equivalent to trying to do something which might be expressed by a perlocutionary verb, as for example that 'argue' is equivalent to 'try to convince', or 'warn' is equivalent to 'try to alarm' or 'alert'. For firstly, the distinction between doing and trying to do is already there in the illocutionary verb as well as in the perlocutionary verb; we distinguish arguing from trying to argue as well as convincing from trying to convince. Further, many illocutionary acts are not cases of trying to do any perlocutionary act; for example, to promise is not to try to do anything.

But we may still ask whether we may possibly use 'in' with the perlocutionary act; this is tempting when the act is not intentionally achieved. But even here it is probably incorrect, and we should use 'by'. Or at any rate, if I say, for example, 'In saying x I was convincing him', I am here accounting not for how I came to be saying x but for how I came to be convincing him; this is the other way round from the use of the formula in explaining what we meant by a phrase when we used the 'in saying' formula, and involves another sense ('in the

process' or 'in the course of' as distinct from 'a criterion') from its use with illocutionary verbs.

Let us now consider the general meaning of the 'in' formula. If I say 'In doing A I was doing B ', I may mean either that A involves B (A accounts for B) or that B involves A (B accounts for A). This distinction may be brought out by contrasting ($\alpha 1$) 'In the course or process of doing A , I was doing B ' (in building a house, I was building a wall) and ($\alpha 2$) 'In doing A , I was in the course or process of doing B ' (in building a wall I was building a house). Or again, contrast ($\alpha 1$): 'In uttering the noises N I was saying S ' and ($\alpha 2$): 'In saying S I was uttering the noises N '; in ($\alpha 1$) I account for A (here, my uttering the noises) and state my purpose in uttering the noises, whereas in ($\alpha 2$) I account for B (my uttering the noises) and thus state the effect of my uttering the noises. The formula is often used to account for my doing something in answer to the question: 'How come you were doing so-and-so?' Of the two different emphases, the Dictionary prefers the former case ($\alpha 1$), in which we account for B , but we equally often use it as in case ($\alpha 2$), to account for A .

If we now consider the example:

In saying . . . I was forgetting . . . ,

we find that B (forgetting) explains how we came to say it, i.e. it accounts for A . Similarly

In buzzing I was thinking that butterflies buzzed accounts for my buzzing (A). This seems to be the use of

the 'in saying' formula when used with locutionary verbs; it accounts for my saying what I did (and not for my meaning).

But if we consider the examples:

- (α 3) In buzzing, I was pretending to be a bee,
In buzzing I was behaving like a buffoon,

we find here that saying what one did (buzzing) in intention or in fact constituted my saying so-and-so, an act of a certain kind, and made it callable by a different name. The illocutionary example:

In saying so-and-so I was warning

is of this kind: it is not of either of the 'in the course of' kinds (α 1) and (α 2) (where *A* accounts for *B* or vice versa). But it is different from the locutionary examples, in that the act is constituted not by intention or by fact, essentially but by *convention* (which is, of course, a fact). These features serve to pick out illocutionary acts most satisfactorily.¹

When the 'in saying' formula is used with perlocutionary verbs, on the other hand, it is used in an 'in the process of' sense (α 1), but it accounts for *B*, whereas the locutionary verb case accounts for *A*. So it is different from both the locutionary and the illocutionary cases.

¹ But suppose there is a quack dentist. We can say 'In inserting the plate he was practising dentistry.' There is a convention here just as in the warning case—a judge could decide.

The question 'How come?' is not confined to questions of means and ends, we may observe. Thus in the example:

In saying *A* . . . I was forgetting *B*

we account for *A*, but in a new sense of 'accounts for' or 'involves', which is not that of means and end. Again, in the example:

In saying . . . I was convincing . . . (was humiliating . . .), we account for *B* (my convincing or humiliating him) which is indeed a consequence but is not a consequence of a means.

The 'by' formula is likewise not confined to perlocutionary verbs. There is the locutionary use (by saying . . . I meant . . .), the illocutionary use (by saying . . . I was thereby warning . . .) and a variety of miscellaneous uses (by saying . . . I put myself in the wrong). The uses of 'by' are at least two in general:

- (a) By hitting the nail on the head I was driving it into the wall,
(b) By inserting a plate, I was practising dentistry.

In (a) 'by' indicates the means by which, the manner in which or the method by which I was bringing off the action; in (b) 'by' indicates a criterion, that about what I did which enables my action to be classified as practising dentistry. There seems little difference between the two cases except that the use to indicate a criterion seems more external. This second sense of 'by'—the criterion

sense—is, it seems, also very close to 'in' in one of its senses: 'In saying that I was breaking the law (broke the law)'; and in this way 'by' can certainly be used with illocutionary verbs in the 'by saying' formula. Thus we may say 'By saying . . . I was warning him (I warned him)'. But 'by', in this sense, is not used with perlocutionary verbs. If I say 'By saying . . . I convinced (persuaded) him', 'by' will here have the means-to-end sense, or anyway signify the manner in which or method by which I did it. Is the 'by'-formula ever used in 'means-to-end sense' with an illocutionary verb? It would seem that it is in at least two kinds of cases:

(a) When we adopt a verbal means of doing something instead of a non-verbal means, when we talk instead of using a stick. Thus in the example: 'By saying "I do" I was marrying her', the performative 'I do' is a means to the end of marriage. Here 'saying' is used in the sense in which it takes inverted commas and is using words or language, a phatic and not a rhetic act.

(b) When one performative utterance is used as an indirect means to perform another act. Thus in the example: 'By saying "I bid three clubs" I informed him that I had no diamonds', I use the performative 'I bid three clubs' as an indirect means to informing him (which is also an illocutionary act).

In sum: to use the 'by saying' formula as a test of an act being perlocutionary, we must first be sure:

(1) that 'by' is being used in an instrumental as distinct from a criterion sense;

(2) that 'saying' is being used

- (a) in the full sense of a locutionary act and not a partial sense, for example of a phatic act;
- (b) not in the double-convention way as in the example from bridge above.

There are two other subsidiary linguistic tests of the illocutionary act to distinguish it from the perlocutionary:

(1) It seems that in the case of illocutionary verbs we can often say 'To say *x* was to do *y*'. One cannot say 'To hammer the nail was to drive it in' instead of 'By hammering the nail he drove it in'. But this formula will not give us a watertight test, for we can say many things with it; thus we can say 'To say that was to convince him' (a proleptic use?) although 'convince' is a perlocutionary verb.

(2) The verbs that we have classified (intuitively—for that is all we have done so far) as names of illocutionary acts seem to be pretty close to *explicit performative* verbs, for we can say 'I warn you that' and 'I order you to' as explicit performatives; but warning and ordering are illocutionary acts. We can use the performative 'I warn you that' but not 'I convince you that', and can use the performative 'I threaten you with' but not 'I intimidate you by'; convincing and intimidating are perlocutionary acts.

The general conclusion must be, however, that these formulas are at best very slippery tests for deciding whether an expression is an illocution as distinct from

a perlocution or neither. But none the less, 'by' and 'in' deserve scrutiny every bit as much as, say, the now-becoming-notorious 'how'.

But what then is the relation between performatives and these illocutionary acts? It seems as though when we have an explicit performative we also have an illocutionary act; let us see, then, what the relationship is between (1) the distinctions made in the earlier lectures regarding performatives and (2) these different kinds of act.

LECTURE XI

WHEN we originally contrasted the performative with the constative utterance we said that

- (1) the performative should be doing something as opposed to just saying something; and
- (2) the performative is happy or unhappy as opposed to true or false.

Were these distinctions really sound? Our subsequent discussion of doing and saying certainly seems to point to the conclusion that whenever I 'say' anything (except perhaps a mere exclamation like 'damn' or 'ouch') I shall be performing both locutionary and illocutionary acts, and these two kinds of acts seem to be the very things which we tried to use, under the names of 'doing' and 'saying', as a means of distinguishing performatives from constatives. If we are in general always doing both things, how can our distinction survive?

Let us first reconsider the contrast from the side of constative utterances: Of these, we were content to refer to 'statements' as the typical or paradigm case. Would it be correct to say that when we state something

- (1) we are doing something as well as and distinct from just saying something, and

8. ~ Hefly
12?

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- (1) we are doing something as well as and distinct from just saying something, and

8. ~ Hefly
22?

(2) our utterance is liable to be happy or unhappy (as well as, if you will, true or false)?

(1) Surely to state is every bit as much to perform an illocutionary act as, say, to warn or to pronounce. Of course it is not to perform an act in some specially physical way, other than in so far as it involves, when verbal, the making of movements of vocal organs; but then nor, as we have seen, is to warn, to protest, to promise or to name. 'Stating' seems to meet all the criteria we had for distinguishing the illocutionary act. Consider such an unexceptionable remark as the following:

In saying that it was raining, I was not betting or arguing or warning: I was simply stating it as a fact.

Here 'stating' is put absolutely on a level with arguing, betting, and warning. Or again:

In saying that it was leading to unemployment, I was not warning or protesting: I was simply stating the facts.

Or to take a different type of test also used earlier, surely

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.

notes of PHRASES OF
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If I simply use the primary or non-explicit form of utterance:

He did not do it

we may make explicit what we were doing in saying this, or specify the illocutionary force of the utterance, equally by saying any of the above three (or more) things.

Moreover, although the utterance 'He did not do it' is often issued as a statement, and is then undoubtedly true or false (*this* is if anything is), it does not seem possible to say that it differs from 'I state that he did not do it' in this respect. If someone says 'I state that he did not do it', we investigate the truth of his statement in just the same way as if he had said 'He did not do it' *simpli-citer*, when we took that to be, as we naturally often should, a statement. That is, to say 'I state that he did not' is to make the very same statement as to say 'He did not': it is not to make a different statement about what 'I' state (except in exceptional cases: the historic and habitual present, &c.). As notoriously, when I say even 'I think he did it' someone is being rude if he says 'That's a statement about you': and this *might* conceivably be about myself, whereas 'I state that he did it' could not. So that there is no necessary conflict between

- (a) our issuing the utterance being the doing of something,
- (b) our utterance being true or false.

For that matter compare, for example, 'I warn you that

it is going to charge', where likewise it is both a warning and true or false that it is going to charge; and that comes in in appraising the warning just as much as, though not quite in the same way as, in appraising the statement.

On mere inspection, 'I state that' does not appear to differ in any essential way from 'I maintain that' (to say which is to maintain that), 'I inform you that', 'I testify that', &c. Possibly some 'essential' differences may yet be established between such verbs: but nothing has been done towards this yet.

(2) Moreover, if we think of the second alleged contrast, according to which performatives are happy or unhappy and statements true or false, again from the side of supposed constative utterances, notably statements, we find that statements *are* liable to every kind of infelicity to which performatives are liable. Let us look back again and consider whether statements are not liable to precisely the same disabilities as, say, warnings by way of what we called 'infelicities'—that is various disabilities which make an utterance unhappy without, however, making it true or false.

We have already noted that sense in which saying, as equivalent to stating, 'The cat is on the mat' implies that I believe that the cat is on the mat. This is parallel to the sense—is the same sense—as that in which 'I promise to be there' implies that I intend to be there and that I believe I shall be able to be there. So the statement is liable to the *insincerity* form of infelicity; and even to the

breach form of infelicity in this sense, that saying or stating that the cat is on the mat commits me to saying or stating 'The mat is underneath the cat' just as much as the performative 'I define *X* as *Y*' (in the *fiat* sense say) commits me to using those terms in special ways in future discourse, and we can see how this is connected with such acts as promising. This means that statements can give rise to infelicities of our two *I* kinds.

Now what about infelicities of the A and B kinds, which rendered the act—warning, undertaking, &c.—null and void? : can a thing that looks like a statement be null and void just as much as a putative contract? The answer seems to be Yes, importantly. The first cases are A. 1 and A. 2, where there is no convention (or not an accepted convention) or where the circumstances are not appropriate for its invocation by the speaker. Many infelicities of just this type do infect statements.

We have already noticed the case of a putative statement *presupposing* (as it is called) the existence of that which it refers to; if no such thing exists, 'the statement' is not about anything. Now some say that in these circumstances, if, for example, someone asserts that the present King of France is bald, 'the question whether he is bald does not arise'; but it is better to say that the putative statement is null and void, exactly as when I say that I sell you something but it is not mine or (having been burnt) is not any longer in existence. Contracts often are void because the objects they are about do not exist, which involves a breakdown of reference.

But it is important to notice also that 'statements' too are liable to infelicity of this kind in other ways also parallel to contracts, promises, warnings, &c. Just as we often say, for example, 'You cannot order me', in the sense 'You have not the right to order me', which is equivalent to saying that you are not in the appropriate position to do so: so often there are things you cannot state—have no right to state—are not in a position to state. You *cannot* now state how many people there are in the next room; if you say 'There are fifty people in the next room', I can only regard you as guessing or conjecturing (just as sometimes you are not ordering me, which would be inconceivable, but possibly asking me to rather impolitely, so here you are 'hazarding a guess' rather oddly). Here there is something you might, in other circumstances, be in a position to state; but what about statements about other persons' feelings or about the future? Is a forecast or even a prediction about, say, persons' behaviour really a statement? It is important to take the speech-situation as a whole.

Just as sometimes we cannot appoint but only confirm an appointment already made, so sometimes we cannot state but only confirm a statement already made.

Putative statements are also liable to infelicities of type B, flaws, and hitches. Somebody 'says something he did not really mean'—uses the wrong word—says 'the cat is on the mat' when he meant to say 'bat'. Other similar trivialities arise—or rather not entirely trivialities; because it is possible to discuss such utterances

entirely in terms of meaning as equivalent to sense and reference and so get confused about them, though they are really easy to understand.

Once we realize that what we have to study is *not* the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act. Moreover, comparing stating to what we have said about the illocutionary act, it is an act to which, just as much as to other illocutionary acts, it is essential to 'secure uptake': the doubt about whether I stated something if it was not heard or understood is just the same as the doubt about whether I warned *sotto voce* or protested if someone did not take it as a protest, &c. And statements do 'take effect' just as much as 'namings', say: if I have stated something, then that commits me to other statements: other statements made by me will be in order or out of order. Also some statements or remarks made by you will be henceforward contradicting me or not contradicting me, rebutting me or not rebutting me, and so forth. If perhaps a statement does not invite a response, that is not essential to all illocutionary acts anyway. And certainly in stating we are or may be performing perlocutionary acts of all kinds.

The most that might be argued, and with some plausibility, is that there is no perlocutionary *object* specifically associated with stating, as there is with informing, arguing, &c.; and this comparative purity may be one reason why we give 'statements' a certain special

position. But this certainly would not justify giving, say, 'descriptions', if properly used, a similar priority, and it is in any case true of many illocutionary acts.

However, looking at the matter from the side of performatives, we may still feel that they lack something which statements have, even if, as we have shown, the converse is not so. Performatives are, of course, incidentally saying something as well as doing something, but we may feel that they are not essentially true or false as statements are. We may feel that there is here a dimension in which we judge, assess, or appraise the constative utterance (granting as a preliminary that it is felicitous) which does not arise with non-constative or performative utterances. Let us agree that all these circumstances of situation have to be in order for me to have succeeded in stating something, yet when I have, *the* question arises, was what I stated true or false? And this we feel, speaking in popular terms, is now the question of whether the statement 'corresponds with the facts'. With this I agree: attempts to say that the use of the expression 'is true' is equivalent to endorsing or the like are no good. So we have here a new dimension of criticism of the accomplished statement.

But now

- (1) doesn't just such a similar objective assessment of the accomplished utterance arise, at least in many cases, with other utterances which seem typically performative; and

- (2) is not this account of statements a little oversimplified?

First, there is an obvious slide towards truth or falsity in the case of, for example, verdictives, such as estimating, finding, and pronouncing. Thus we may:

estimate	rightly or wrongly	for example, that it is half past two,
find	correctly or incorrectly	for example, that he is guilty,
pronounce	correctly or incorrectly	for example, that the bats- man is out.

We shall not say 'truly' in the case of verdictives, but we shall certainly address ourselves to the same question; and such adverbs as 'rightly', 'wrongly', 'correctly', and 'incorrectly' are used with statements too.

Or again there is a parallel between inferring and arguing soundly or validly and stating truly. It is not just a question of whether he did argue or infer but also of whether he had a right to, and did he succeed. Warning and advising may be done correctly or incorrectly, well or badly. Similar considerations arise about praise, blame, and congratulation. Blame is not in order, if, say, you have done the same thing yourself; and the question always arises whether the praise, blame, or congratulation was merited or unmerited: it is not enough to say that you have blamed him and there's an end on 't—still one act is, with reason, preferred to another. The question whether praise and blame are merited is quite different

from the question whether they are opportune, and the same distinction can be made in the case of advice. It is a different thing to say that advice is good or bad from saying that it is opportune or inopportune, though the timing of advice is more important to its goodness than the timing of blame is to its being merited.

Can we be sure that stating truly is a different *class* of assessment from arguing soundly, advising well, judging fairly, and blaming justifiably? Do these not have something to do in complicated ways with facts? The same is true also of exercitives such as naming, appointing, bequeathing, and betting. Facts come in as well as our knowledge or opinion about facts.

Well, of course, attempts are constantly made to effect this distinction. The soundness of arguments (if they are not deductive arguments which are 'valid') and the meritedness of blame are not objective matters, it is alleged; or in warning, we are told, we should distinguish the 'statement' that the bull is about to charge from the warning itself. But consider also for a moment whether the question of truth or falsity is so very objective. We ask: 'Is it a *fair* statement?', and are the good reasons and good evidence for stating and saying so very different from the good reasons and evidence for performative acts like arguing, warning, and judging? Is the constative, then, always true or false? When a constative is confronted with the facts, we in fact appraise it in ways involving the employment of a vast array of terms which overlap with those that we use in the appraisal of

performatives. In real life, as opposed to the simple situations envisaged in logical theory, one cannot always answer in a simple manner whether it is true or false.

Suppose that we confront 'France is hexagonal' with the facts, in this case, I suppose, with France, is it true or false? Well, if you like, up to a point; of course I can see what you mean by saying that it is true for certain intents and purposes. It is good enough for a top-ranking general, perhaps, but not for a geographer. 'Naturally it is pretty rough', we should say, 'and pretty good as a pretty rough statement'. But then someone says: 'But is it true or is it false? I don't mind whether it is rough or not; of course it's rough, but it has to be true or false—it's a statement, isn't it?' How can one answer this question, whether it is true or false that France is hexagonal? It is just rough, and that is the right and final answer to the question of the relation of 'France is hexagonal' to France. It is a rough description; it is not a true or a false one.

Again, in the case of stating truly or falsely, just as much as in the case of advising well or badly, the intents and purposes of the utterance and its context are important; what is judged true in a school book may not be so judged in a work of historical research. Consider the constative, 'Lord Raglan won the battle of Alma', remembering that Alma was a soldier's battle if ever there was one and that Lord Raglan's orders were never transmitted to some of his subordinates. Did Lord Raglan then win the battle of Alma or did he not? Of

course in some contexts, perhaps in a school book, it is perfectly justifiable to say so—it is something of an exaggeration, maybe, and there would be no question of giving Raglan a medal for it. As 'France is hexagonal' is rough, so 'Lord Raglan won the battle of Alma' is exaggerated and suitable to some contexts and not to others; it would be pointless to insist on its truth or falsity.

Thirdly, let us consider the question whether it is true that all snow geese migrate to Labrador, given that perhaps one maimed one sometimes fails when migrating to get quite the whole way. Faced with such problems, many have claimed, with much justice, that utterances such as those beginning 'All . . .' are prescriptive definitions or advice to adopt a rule. But what rule? This idea arises partly through not understanding the reference of such statements, which is limited to the known; we cannot quite make the simple statement that the truth of statements depends on facts as distinct from knowledge of facts. Suppose that before Australia is discovered *X* says 'All swans are white'. If you later find a black swan in Australia, is *X* refuted? Is his statement false now? Not necessarily: he will take it back but he could say 'I wasn't talking about swans absolutely everywhere; for example, I was not making a statement about possible swans on Mars'. Reference depends on knowledge at the time of utterance.

The truth or falsity of statements is affected by what they leave out or put in and by their being misleading,

and so on. Thus, for example, descriptions, which are said to be true or false or, if you like, are 'statements', are surely liable to these criticisms, since they are selective and uttered for a purpose. It is essential to realize that 'true' and 'false', like 'free' and 'unfree', 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.

In general we may say this: with both statements (and, for example, descriptions) and warnings, &c., the question can arise, granting that you had the right to warn and did warn, did state, or did advise, whether you were right to state or warn or advise—not in the sense of whether it was opportune or expedient, but whether, on the facts and your knowledge of the facts and the purposes for which you were speaking, and so on, this was the proper thing to say.

This doctrine is quite different from much that the pragmatists have said, to the effect that the true is what works, &c. The truth or falsity of a statement depends not merely on the meanings of words but on what act you were performing in what circumstances.

What then finally is left of the distinction of the performative and constative utterance? Really we may say that what we had in mind here was this:

(a) With the constative utterance, we abstract from the illocutionary (let alone the perlocutionary) aspects of

the speech act, and we concentrate on the locutionary: moreover, we use an over-simplified notion of correspondence with the facts—over-simplified because essentially it brings in the illocutionary aspect. This is the ideal of what would be right to say in all circumstances, for any purpose, to any audience, &c. Perhaps it is sometimes realized.

(b) With the performative utterance, we attend as much as possible to the illocutionary force of the utterance, and abstract from the dimension of correspondence with facts.

Perhaps neither of these abstractions is so very expedient: perhaps we have here not really two poles, but rather an historical development. Now in certain cases, perhaps with mathematical formulas in physics books as examples of constatives, or with the issuing of simple executive orders or the giving of simple names, say, as examples of performatives, we approximate in real life to finding such things. It was examples of this kind, like 'I apologize', and 'The cat is on the mat', said for no conceivable reason, extreme marginal cases, that gave rise to the idea of two distinct utterances. But the real conclusion must surely be that we need (a) to distinguish between locutionary and illocutionary acts, and (b) specially and critically to establish with respect to each kind of illocutionary act—warnings, estimates, verdicts, statements, and descriptions—what if any is the specific way in which they are intended, first to be in order or not in order, and second, to be 'right' or 'wrong'; what terms

of appraisal and disappraisal are used for each and what they mean. This is a wide field and certainly will not lead to a simple distinction of 'true' and 'false'; nor will it lead to a distinction of statements from the rest, for stating is only one among very numerous speech acts of the illocutionary class.

Furthermore, in general the locutionary act as much as the illocutionary is an abstraction only: every genuine speech act is both. (This is similar to the way in which the phatic act, the rhetic act, &c., are mere abstractions.) But, of course, typically we distinguish different abstracted 'acts' by means of the possible slips between cup and lip, that is, in this case, the different types of nonsense which may be engendered in performing them. We may compare with this point what was said in the opening lecture about the classification of kinds of nonsense.

LECTURE XII

WE have left numerous loose ends, but after a brief résumé we must plough ahead. How did the 'constatives'-'performatives' distinction look in the light of our later theory? In general and for all utterances that we have considered (except perhaps for swearing), we have found:

- (1) Happiness/unhappiness dimension,
- (1*a*) An illocutionary force,
- (2) Truth/falsehood dimension,
- (2*a*) A locutionary meaning (sense and reference).

The doctrine of the performative/constative distinction stands to the doctrine of locutionary and illocutionary acts in the total speech act as the *special* theory to the *general* theory. And the need for the general theory arises simply because the traditional 'statement' is an abstraction, an ideal, and so is its traditional truth or falsity. But on this point I could do no more than explode a few hopeful fireworks. In particular, the following morals are among those I wanted to suggest:

(A) The total speech act in the total speech situation is the *only actual* phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating.

(B) Stating, describing, &c., are *just two* names among

a very great many others for illocutionary acts; they have no unique position.

(C) In particular, they have no unique position over the matter of being related to facts in a unique way called being true or false, because truth and falsity are (except by an artificial abstraction which is always possible and legitimate for certain purposes) not names for relations, qualities, or what not, but for a dimension of assessment—how the words stand in respect of satisfactoriness to the facts, events, situations, &c., to which they refer.

(D) By the same token, the familiar contrast of 'normative or evaluative' as opposed to the factual is in need, like so many dichotomies, of elimination.

(E) We may well suspect that the theory of 'meaning' as equivalent to 'sense and reference' will certainly require some weeding-out and reformulating in terms of the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts (*if these notions are sound*: they are only adumbrated here). I admit that not enough has been done here: I have taken the old 'sense and reference' on the strength of current views. But here we should consider again the statement which we have called 'void' for breakdown of reference, e.g., the statement 'John's children are all bald' if made when John has no children.

Now we said that there was one further thing obviously requiring to be done, which is a matter of prolonged fieldwork. We said long ago that we needed a list of 'explicit performative verbs'; but in the light of the more

general theory we now see that what we need is a list of *illocutionary forces* of an utterance. The old distinction, however, between *primary* and *explicit* will survive the sea-change from the performative/constative distinction to the theory of speech-acts quite successfully. For we have since seen reason to suppose that the sorts of test suggested for the explicit performative verbs ('to say . . . is to . . .', &c.) will do, and in fact do better for sorting out those verbs which make explicit, as we shall now say, the illocutionary force of an utterance, or what illocutionary act it is that we are performing in issuing that utterance. What will *not* survive the transition, unless perhaps as a marginal limiting case, and hardly surprisingly because it gave trouble from the start, is the notion of the purity of performatives: this was essentially based upon a belief in the dichotomy of performatives and constatives, which we see has to be abandoned in favour of more general *families* of related and overlapping speech acts, which are just what we have now to attempt to classify.

Using then the simple test (with caution) of the first person singular present indicative active form, and going through the dictionary (a concise one should do) in a liberal spirit, we get a list of verbs of the order of the third power of 10.¹ I said I would attempt some general preliminary classification and make some remarks on these proposed classes. Well, here we go. I

¹ Why use this expression instead of 1,000? First, it looks impressive and scientific; second, because it goes from 1,000 to 9,999—a good margin—whereas the other might be taken to mean 'about 1,000'—too narrow a margin.

shall only give you a run around, or rather a flounder around.

I distinguish five very general classes: but I am far from equally happy about all of them. They are, however, quite enough to play Old Harry with two fetishes which I admit to an inclination to play Old Harry with, viz. (1) the true/false fetish, (2) the value/fact fetish. I call then these classes of utterance, classified according to their illocutionary force, by the following more-or-less rebarbative names:

- (1) Verdictives.
- (2) Exercitives.
- (3) Commissives.
- (4) Behabitives (a shocker this).
- (5) Expositives.

We shall take them in order, but first I will give a rough idea of each.

The first, verdictives, are typified by the giving of a verdict, as the name implies, by a jury, arbitrator, or umpire. But they need not be final; they may be, for example, an estimate, reckoning, or appraisal. It is essentially giving a finding as to something—fact, or value—which is for different reasons hard to be certain about.

The second, exercitives, are the exercising of powers, rights, or influence. Examples are appointing, voting, ordering, urging, advising, warning, &c.

The third, commissives, are typified by promising or otherwise undertaking; they *commit* you to doing