MEANING, FORCE AND EXPLICIT PERFORMATIVES

Eduardo A. Rabossi

I

Let me start with some general and rather obvious remarks about Austin's doctrine of explicit performative sentences.

An explicit performative sentence is a sentence, say p, satisfying the following two conditions, (1) p is of the form 'I X...', where X is a verb in the first person singular, present, indicative, active, and (2), normally, the verb X is the name of the doing (the act, the action) one would be performing in uttering p (cf. HTD, 32). Accordingly, when uttered in appropriate circumstances,

(1) I (hereby) order you to go,
(2) I (hereby) warn you that aunt Matilda's cat is dangerous,
and
(3) I (hereby) promise to pay you back one hundred pounds,

are explicit performative sentences.

The study of this sort of sentences is somehow basic to Austin's approach to language : a place *prima facie* well-deserved. According to Austin, explicit performative sentences masquerade, mostly, as statements of fact, i.e., as having a descriptive or constative function. Neither grammarians nor philosophers have managed to see through this 'disguise'. But a perspicuous look at their functioning reveals a

different and, indeed, peculiar role. True, sentences like (1) — (3) are indicative sentences. But the *grammatical form* does not imply that they report, describe or inform about an actual state of affairs. Their being indicative merely means that they are coined in the English indicative grammatical form. Austin's conclusion is well-known: to utter an explicit performative sentence, say 'I X...', is not to describe my doing X nor to state that I am doing X; it is to X. In Austin's own words :

> "...it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it : it is to do it. None of the utterances cited is either true or false." (HTD, 6).

That explicit performative sentences are neither true nor false is taken as obvious and in no need of argument.

Three points call for attention here.

First, the family of relevant cases in which *saying* something is *doing* something (in an interesting sense of 'doing something') is wider and richer than the class of explicit performative sentences. For example, consider such utterances as,

(4) Guilty (uttered by the spokesman of a jury),
and,
(5) Out (uttered by a referee in a boxing match).

Obviously, (4) and (5) differ from explicit performative sentences on mere grammatical grounds. But, more attractively, they also differ in the way they presuppose conventions and in the nature of the conventions thus presupposed. Take the case of 'Guilty'. It is clear that uttering 'Guilty' is giving a verdict in so far this linguistic feat is part of a system of non-linguistic rules, conventions or practices which constitute saying 'Guilty' as the act of giving a verdict. In other words, it is by convention — in fact, by a set of non-linguistic conventions, e.g., those concerning criminal procedure — that to say 'Guilty' in appropriate circumstances constitutes giving a verdict : the utterance plays a *precise role* in a convention-constituted procedure. These sort of cases, although related to, are, nevertheless, *different* from, explicit performative sentences. (Cf. Warnock [1971], 70-74).

Moreover, there are cases of *prima facie* explicit performative sentences, that do not fit exactly into the conditions so far

introduced. Take, for instance,

(7) Passengers are warned to cross the track by the bridge only (HTD, 57),

(8) Warning. No smoking in this area,

and,

(9) Notice is hereby given that trespassers will be prosecuted (HTD, 57).

It is clear that (7) is in the third person plural, that in (8) and (9) the verb is 'impersonal', and that in (9) the verb is in the passive voice. We might deal with this sort of cases in an Austinian way, that is, as showing that person and voice are not essential to explicit performative sentences. But we prefer to adopt here a different approach, we will treat them as somehow typical cases which may be considered together, with due allowances, with those exemplified in (1) — (3).

In short, there are cases in which *saying* something is *doing* something, that are *different*, in some respects, from explicit performative sentences. However, this fact does not prevent the expression 'explicit performative sentence' from picking out a class of utterances that is adequately neat and able to be contrasted with the fairly large class of non-performative ones.

Second, it is difficult to deny the originality of Austin's claim that descriptive performative sentences are peculiar in not being descriptions of my doing or statements that I am doing 'what I should be said in so uttering to be doing'. But it is important to notice that this claim is associated to an analytic strategy that is far from being original. In fact, Austin's claim may be interpreted as a new application of the time-honoured distinction between *grammatical form* and *logical form*. Austin's starting point is a class of utterances in which the grammatical form — the indicative mood, furnished with some kind of philosophical import — wrongly suggests a descriptive or constative function. But grammar — as philosophers have learnt so often — is not a reliable guide, as far as philosophy is concerned. Sentences like (1) — (3) have a peculiar function of their own. And consequently, they display a typical *logical form* (in a broad sense of this obscure and fruitful expression). It is not easy to discern such form, but a possible guess is,

(9) $P(...)$,

where 'P' is a variable ranging over verbal phrases with a first person

personal pronoun followed by a performative verb (first person singular, present, indicative, active), and '(...)' is a blank to be filled in by some sort of content corresponding to what counts — in a sense to be discussed next — as an *implicit* or *primary* performative sentence. Such proposals as 'P-radicals' (M. Furberg), 'neustics' (R. Hare), 'illocutionary force indicating devices' (J. Searle) and 'performative prefixes' (J. Cohen, some linguists), point to a parsing of explicit performative sentences which is similar to that suggested in (9). There are some hints in Austin that favour this interpretation. Discussing whether utterances with performative features are meant to be true or false, Austin points out,

> "...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 that clause which is required to be true or false. However, there are many uses which... we are not able to split into two parts in this way, even though the utterance seems to have some sort of explicit performative in it, thus 'I liken x to y', 'I analyse x as y'." (HTD, 90).

In spite of exceptions, this sort of parsing seems to be presupposed in Austin's analysis of explicit *performative verbs*, that is, verbs which make explicit the illocutionary force of an utterance or, alternatively, what illocutionary act is performed in issuing the utterance. (Correspondingly, the logical form of a non-explicit performative sentence will be '$P^*(...)$'. The star marks the absence of an (explicit) performative prefix. Recently, some linguists have argued that every indicative, imperative and interrogative sentence has a performative prefix in deep structure. This is a most attractive thesis that deserves to be mentioned in this context).

This way of interpreting Austin and/or the proposal that follows from it, may be challenged — and, in fact has been challenged, on different grounds. In what follows we will accept the view that Austin's doctrine of explicit performative sentences amounts to the proposal of a peculiar *logical form* for such sentences, and will take (9) as rendering such form. We will have something to say about this suggestion latter on.

Third, explicit performative sentences are approached by Austin from a point of view that may be properly called 'dynamic'. Not only explicit performatives are, historically, a latter development

from mere primary utterances (HTD, 71), but they are distinguished, in concrete speech-situations, from *implicit* and *primary* (or *primitive*) performatives. It is not easy to disentangle the logic of this distinction, but a possible 'reading' may be this. Suppose a person S issues in a conversation the utterance,

(10) Go.

In doing so, S may achieve practically the same as he achieves by the utterance of (1). No doubt, if someone were to ask what S did (in uttering (10)), a proper answer would be that S ordered someone to go (cf. HTD, 32). In this sort of cases we will say that (10) is an *implicit* performative, and (1) the corresponding *explicit* performative sentence.

But as far as the mere utterance of (10) is concerned, it is always left uncertain whether S is ordering someone to go or, say, advising someone to go. Or there may be nothing in the context of the utterance of (10) by which we can decide whether it is a performative at all (cf. HTD, 33). In other words, given the utterance of (10), or of a similar expression, we may have to decide about its possible force and, in case of an affirmative answer, about the specific force meant by the speaker (i.e., whether S meant (10) as an order, an advise, or what not). In this sort of cases we will say that (10) is a *primary* performative (or a *primitive* performative), and (1) the corresponding *explicit* performative sentence.

Austin's way of drawing the distinction between *implicit* and *primary* performatives may suggest, wrongly, that he is willing to distinguish between (a) successful non-explicit performatives, and (b) non-explicit performatives likely to be successful. But in fact, he is suggesting a more important distinction, namely, the distinction between the smooth functioning of a non-explicit performative (that is, *implicit* performatives), on the one hand, and the potentiality of forces inherent to any non-explicit performative (*primary* performatives), on the other (granted, of course, that the utterance is a performative at all). And this latter sort of performatives are intimately related to Austin's way of introducing the distinction between *meaning* and *force*. It is important to notice that Austin speaks for the first time of such distinction on occasion of contrasting *implicit* and *explicit* performatives (HTD, 32-33). Later, after dwelling on the expression 'explicit performative' (as opposed to 'primary performative'), he concludes,

"Language as such and in its primitive stages is not precise, and it

is also not, in our sense, explicit : precision in language makes it clearer what is being said — its *meaning* : explicitness, in our sense, makes clearer the *force* of the utterances, or 'how...the utterance is to be taken'." (HTD, 73).

Austin insists that 'making explicit' is not the same as describing or stating (in a philosophers' sense) what I am doing, but making plain "how the action is to be taken or understood, what the action is." (HTD, 70). Finally, once the locutionary/illocutionary distinction has been introduced (remember that meaning and force are associated to locutionary and illocutionary acts, respectively; and that Austin suggests that when we have an explicit performative we also have an illocutionary act), Austin remarks,

"...the whole apparatus of 'explicit performatives' ... 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'." (HTD, 114, footnote 1).

In short, the notion of 'explicit performative sentence' is not a *static* notion produced out of mere taxonomic delight. More importantly, it is a 'dynamic' instrument, both practically and theoretically, that plays a basic role in a doctrine of language such as Austin's.

II

The notion of 'explicit performative sentence' has been a favourite target for criticism. Enemies and partisans of Austin's views about language have found that explicit performatives are an excellent platform for lauching attacks on such crucial notions as performative/constative, locutionary/illocutionary, meaning/force, illocutionary/perlocutionary, conventional/nonconventional; and consequently, on the concepts involved. A good survey of such discussions will be equivalent to a revision of Austin's doctrine and to an assessment of its developments and refinements.

In what follows I intend to pursue a modest task. I will pick up two *types* of criticism concerning explicit performative sentences, and will try to elucidate their content and to assess their critical import. The first *type* of criticism ('CR I', in what follows) challenges Austin's way of drawing the meaning/force and the locutionary/illocutionary distinctions, and points out difficulties arising when this conceptual apparatus is applied to explicit

performative sentences. The second *type* of criticism ('CR II', in what follows) dwells on Austin's point about the non-statemental character of explicit performative sentences, and draws conclusions about the 'verification' of explicit performative sentences, about the meaning of performative verbs and, even, about the logical form of such sentences. Both *types* of criticism are variously stated by philosophers. There is also a variety of views concerning their critical weight. This lack of agreement is, of course, a revealing fact. But it cannot obscure the real import of CR I and CR II.

III

Consider the primary performative, uttered by S,

(11) The eleven-thirty train is late.

Suppose someone asks what did S mean by (11) (or, what is the meaning of (11), or what is the meaning of what S said when uttering (11), etc.). According to Austin, a correct answer will consist in a description of the locutionary act performed by S. Such answer will clear up, if necessary, syntactic or semantic ambiguities, in order to describe the intended interpretation of the 'linguistic' meaning of (11). And it will clear up also, if necessary, the reference of the demonstrative elements of (11). However, this answer is far from being the 'whole' answer, as far as the original question is concerned. And it is not the whole answer because we do not know yet whether S meant (11) as a warning, an advice, a report, etc. In other words, we do not know yet what sort of illocutionary act was performed by S in uttering (11), what force — as different from 'linguistic' and 'referential' meaning — S intended (11) to have. So, according to Austin, a proper answer will include also a description of the illocutionary act performed thereof.
Consider now the explicit performative sentence, uttered by S,

(12) I (hereby) warn you that the eleven-thirty train is late.

What would be a proper answer to the question about the meaning of (12) (or about what S meant by (12), etc.) ? Notice that in this case the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts — and, consequently, the distinction between meaning and force — is far from being as neat as in (11). Once we know the 'linguistic' and the 'referential' meaning of (12), it is difficult to identify something additional to that knowledge — something about the way in which

what is said is intended to be taken — that should count as relevant additional knowledge about what S meant by (12). In general terms, force is made explicit by means of the formula 'I X...', which is a linguistic item. To grasp the intended meaning of an instance of such formula we only need to rely on our knowledge of the 'linguistic' and 'referential' meaning of its linguistic elements. But, if this is the case, the basic distinctions between locutionary and illocutionary acts and between meaning and force seem to collapse, or, at least, seem to be in need of revision. Surprisingly enough, the difficulty is detected in the highly privileged case of explicit performative sentences.

This is a possible way — and a fairly neutral one — of introducing CR I.

It is important to notice that there are variants of CR I. J. Cohen ([1965]), for instance, argues (among some other things) that (a) in explicit performative sentences the personal pronouns and the verb of the performative prefix, 'I X...', must have a reference and a sense, respectively; (b) if the locutionary act is defined in terms of the phonetic and phatic acts, the locutionary act of uttering, say, (11) must be different to the act of uttering (12); (c) if expressions like 'I protest' have a meaning as well as a force when uttered alone, they hardly would loose their meaning when subordinate clauses are added to them; and (d) if an utterance like (11) gives a warning that is rendered explicit by (12), and if the warning is part of the meaning of (12), it is unreasonable to suppose that the warning is also part of the meaning of (11).

Some of these arguments are misguided. Take (c). It is difficult to imagine a situation in which the expressions 'I protest', 'I warn', 'I order', etc., would be "uttered alone", unless they were used *for short* of sentences like 'I protest the decision of the umpire', 'I warn you that the cat is dangerous', 'I order you to go', etc. But this is not the sort of cases Cohen is in need of to make his point valid. Actually, the only way in which we might give a content to the claim that 'I protest', etc., may be "uttered alone" is by way of a convention-constituted procedure in which, somehow, the issuing of 'I protest' constitutes the act of, say, expressing a protest (Imagine regulations concerning debates, for instance). But this peculiar use of 'I protest' excludes the addition of subordinate clauses. In short, Cohen's assumption about relevant cases in which 'I X' is "uttered alone", is void: either 'I X' is uttered for short of 'I X...' or 'I X' is not, strictly speaking, an explicit performative sentence. Take now (d). Even granting that there is a sense according to which warning is part of the meaning of (12), it is incorrect to suggest that, in some

obscure way, the warning is also a part of the meaning of (11). According to Austin's doctrine, a primary performative is an expression *meant with* a certain force. Such force *may* be rendered explicit by the use of the corresponding explicit performative prefix. But making explicit the *force* of a primary performative does not consists in displaying *something* hidden or implicit in its *meaning*. There is nothing in the meaning of the explicit performative to be displayed in that way. (In fact, the meaning of the primary performative is restricted to the linguistic items that would be included in a description of the locutionary act performed). So, Cohen's argument (d) seems to be groundless.

Arguments (a) and (b) merit a different assessment. Although far from being conclusive they are the sort of arguments that compel defenders of Austin's doctrine to be explicit about some important topics. Are we to say that in spite of grammatical appearances, 'I' and 'you' do not have a referring role in (12) ? How about the meaning of 'warn' ? Which is, exactly, the content of the locutionary act performed in uttering (12) ? These are questions that spring out of Cohen's arguments (a) and (b). But, is it necessary to accept *a priori* that these questions are *relevant* questions ? I think that the proper move for an Austinian philosopher is to object the assumption that they are relevant. And the best way to show, briefly, their irrelevance, is by reminding the critic some basic tenets of Austin's proposal.

Austin's doctrine is, basically, an attempt to systematize the *forces* of linguistic utterances. The importance of Austin's views about explicit performative sentences lies, precisely, in his suggestion about the peculiar nature of performative prefixes as force-indicating devices, 'I warn you that', in (12), allows the hearer to understand how the locution 'The eleven-thirty train is late' is to be taken. It is a linguistic device that helps the hearer to get a correct uptake of the locution. But performative prefixes are more than mere markers or signals to help linguistic transactions. Warnings — as well as promises, advices, predictions, reports, bettings, etc. — are *doings* that call for a special *pendant* at the level of *sayings*. When used in the first person, present, indicative, active, the issuing of such verbs as 'warn' *constitutes* the action that that verb *names* or *describes* when used in the infinitive, or in other persons and times. This is, of course, a peculiar linguistic function : there are *sayings* that are *doings* (in an interesting sense of 'doings'). This function is not posited out of transcendental arguments. It comes out of a fair description of how language works. True, 'I', 'you', 'warn' may be viewed as *grammatical* items performing a *grammatical* function. But when (12) is analysed

from a *philosophical* point of view, the 'anomalous' case of explicit performative sentences — 'anomalous' in so far they are indicative sentences — is put into focus. And there is no point, then, in asking the sort of questions suggested by Cohen's arguments (a) and (b). As there might be no point in asking Russell about the reference and sense of the *grammatical* subject of 'The present king of France is bald', once the logical form of the sentence has been displayed. In fact, Russell's theory of descriptions and Austin's doctrine of explicit performative sentences are philosophical attempts to exhibit *logical structures* lying behind *grammatical forms*. I am not suggesting, of course, that this parallel may be carried further than this. But I think that even restricted to this minimal point, it is a revealing parallel that helps to see a basic outcome of Austin's doctrine (cf. Schiffer [1972]), 104-105). In short, Cohen's arguments (a) and (b) give rise, interestingly enough, to this sort of comments. They are not real challenges to Austin's position, which must be assessed on grounds different from those suggested by Cohen. Actually, CR II is closer to a relevant criticism in this respect.

An alternative variant of CR I is found in J. Searle's important discussion of Austin's doctrine (cf. Searle [1968]). Searle points out difficulties concerning explicit performative sentences, but his conclusions are far from being as drastic and negative as Cohen's. Searle does not think, for instance, that the locutionary/illocutionary and the meaning/force distinctions are bogus ones. Both distinctions play a crucial role in his refinaments on Austin's doctrine. Searle's qualms about explicit performative sentences concern the way in which the existence of such sentences prevents — so he thinks — a "general" functioning of the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts ("general" in the sense of "marking off two mutually exclusive classes of acts"). According to Searle, meaning determines (at least one) illocutionary force of the utterance of the explicit performative sentence. The utterance of the sentence with certain meaning has certain particular force. But if so, the description of the act as a (happily) performed locutionary act, is a description of the illocutionary act involved; "they are one and the same act". Searle argues that when meaning uniquely determines a particular force, there are not two different acts (namely, a locutionary and an illocutionary act) but two different labels for the same act (a certain illocutionary act). In short, in the case of explicit performative sentences it is impossible to abstract meaning from force. (Such an attempt would be like "abstracting unmarried men from bachelors"). And this is equivalent to assert that *some* locutionary acts are

illocutionary acts. Conclusion: the locutionary/illocutionary distinction is not completely general.

Searle's argument is far from being acceptable because it relies heavily on a doubtful rendering of Austin's views about the *description* of linguistic utterances. This is an important point, and I shall dwell on it for a moment.

When S utters (11) his uttering may be described as the performance of a certain locutionary act, i.e., the act of *saying* 'The eleven-thirty train is late', and it also may be described as the performance of a certain illocutionary act, i.e., the act of warning that the eleven-thirty train is late. In order to describe S's uttering as 'the locutionary act of saying ...', we must take into account the *grammatical structure*, the *lexical components* and the *'linguistic'* and *'demonstrative' meaning* attached to them. The description of S's uttering as 'the illocutionary act of X-ing' presupposes taking into account *S's intention*, as expressed, somehow, in tone of voice, emphasis, etc., the *circumstances of the utterance*, and the *conditions for the successful performance of the illocutionary act involved*. (In the case of warning, some such conditions are (a) that what the addressee is warned about is (for him) important, (b) that the effects (consequences) of what the addressee is warned about are (for him) undesirable, (c) that the addressee is in a position to avoid (correct, change) what he is warned about, (d) that the person who issues the warning is in a position to state, if challenged, his reasons for issuing the warning, and the consequences that would follow if the addressee pays no attention to what he is warned about, etc.). The features which we must take into account in order to describe and utterance as 'the locutionary act such-and-such' or 'the illocutionary act such-and-such', I dub 'conditions for the description of the utterance'. It is clear that the conditions for the description of the utterance as a locutionary act are of a *different* sort (of a different nature) than the conditions for the description of an utterance as an illocutionary act.

Well then, how many acts does S perform when uttering (11)? Clearly, two acts, namely, the locutionary act of *saying* 'The eleven-thirty train is late' and the illocutionary act of warning that the eleven-thirty train is late. These two acts are not independent from one another, but intimately related in a peculiar way: *in* performing one (the locutionary act) S performs the other (the illocutionary act). Though peculiar, this is not so extraordinary as it may appear. (Suppose we see soldiers across the fields. We may describe what we see as 'Army Z crossing the border' or as 'Army Z starting hostilities'. And we may also say that *in* performing one act

(crossing the border) Army Z was performing the other (starting hostilities). Notice how different are the conditions for the description of both acts. There are, of course, many examples of this sort).

Suppose S utters (12), and we are asked to describe the act(s) performed by S in so doing. If we keep in mind the thesis that Austin's doctrine of explicit performative sentences amounts to displaying their logical form, we may say that on the occasion of uttering (12) S performed the locutionary act of *saying* 'The eleven-thirty train is late' (remember the suggestion that in explicit performative sentences the locutionary act is restricted to the primary performative involved; the performative prefix being a linguistic device for showing how the utterance is to be taken, i.e., for exhibiting the force of the utterance), and the illocutionary act of warning that the eleven-thirty train is late. *Prima facie*, there is no difference in the *descriptions* of (11) and (12). But an important difference exists at the level of the *conditions for description*. The conditions for the description of the illocutionary acts involved in the utterance of explicit performative sentences are restricted to what we called 'conditions for the successful performance of the act'. The conditions concerning the intention of the speaker (as expressed in tone of voice, emphasis, etc.) and the conditions concerning the circumstances of the utterance, are dropped out because unnecessary :

> "...the performative rules out equivocation and keeps the performance fixed, relatively." (HTD, 76).

This partial dropping out of some of the conditions for the description of the illocutionary act explains, somehow, Searle's proneness to think that in the case of explicit performative sentences the description of the locutionary act and the description of the illocutionary act are the same, and to suggest as an explanatory principle : ''force is part of the meaning''. It is true that the conditions for the description of illocutionary acts involved in explicit performative sentences are the rather 'formal' ones concerning the 'successful performance of the act'. This does not mean that there are no conditions at all; nor does it amount to a confused way of introducing the distinction between *trying* and *succeeding* in the performance of an illocutionary act. Actually, the very possibility of drawing this distinction presupposes the existence of such conditions for the successful **performance** of the act. In other words, the description of an utterance as 'trying to perform

such-and-such illocutionary act' or as 'a successful performance of such-and-such illocutionary act' is possible because there are conditions for the description of such utterance as an illocutionary act of a certain *sort*. It is easy to overlook this conceptual priority. And I think Searle has overlooked it.

Notice that it follows from Searle's analysis that the expression,

(13) *In* saying 'I (hereby) warn you that the eleven-thirty train is late', S was warning,

is void of any informative content. I am arguing that (13) is not thus void. Consider, for instance, the following utterances of the '*in*-formula', that resemble (13) only in its linguistic dressing,

(14) *In* saying 'I (hereby) warn you that the lack of a daily target practise will affect your marksmanship, S was warning. (The addressee is a convict, a former marksman; an Olympic champion).

(15) *In* saying 'I (hereby) warn you about your wife's views on abortion' S was warning. (S is not able to state what her views on abortion are, nor how they differ from her husband's).

(16) *In* saying 'I (hereby) warn you that the ice is thin near the coast of Greenland', S was warning. (S addresses the sentence to a fellow executive of the car industry, while discussing business in Paraguay).

In none of these cases the '*in*-formula' is true. The very point of warning seems to be absent (in several ways) from (14) — (16). But what prevents (13) from a similar fate ? In fact, nothing in particular. It might well be the case that (13) was a false assertion about the force of S's utterance. And this is important to realise: (13) *may* go wrong. If this is the case, (13) is not *void*. Now, a Searlean philosopher might argue at this point that cases like (14) — (16) are ruled out of consideration by a restriction concerning the *seriousness* of the utterances of explicit performative sentences ((14) — (16) are taken as including non-serious utterances). But this is an *ad hoc* restriction lacking theoretical interest. Leaving aside the vague content of 'a serious utterance of', as used by Searle, the restriction about 'seriousness' does not hinder the possibility of cases like (14) — (16): it only rules them out of consideration. And this, I suggest, is a most doubtful strategy. The Searlean philosopher might argue, alternatively, that what is really at stake here is the distinction

between *successful* and *unsuccessful* performances of the act. And that this is a much less interesting distinction than the locutionary/illocutionary one. But, as I have suggested before, the drawing of the distinction between *successful* and *unsuccessful* utterances presupposes the existence of the 'conditions for the successful performance of the illocutionary act (involved)'. And these conditions are essential for the description of an act as an illocutionary act (of a certain sort). It follows from this that the description of an act as an illocutionary act can never be *the same* as the description of an act as an locutionary one.

In short, Searle's arguments are far from being conclusive. It is doubtful that in the utterance of explicit performative sentences, "the description of the act as a locutionary act *is* a description of the illocutionary act involved". I have been trying to show that the conditions for the descriptions of locutionary and illocutionary acts are different and, consequently, do not conflate even in the extreme case of explicit performatives. Further, it is not true that in such case the locutionary and the illocutionary acts "are one and the same act". If the conditions for the description of locutionary and illocutionary acts are different, they cannot identify "one and the same act". Finally, there seems to be something queer in Searle's point about force being part of meaning (a point suggested already by Cohen). The point is made when *stating* CR I. But this is objectionable : one of the things CR I is supposed to *prove* is, precisely, that force *is* part of the meaning.

The foregoing discussion of these two poignant variants of CR I is far from exhausting their basic claims. It suggests, however, some fairly acceptable points about the way in which such claims might be tackled. This is a most interesting outcome : there are adequate grounds for doubting that CR I makes *definite* objections to Austin's doctrine of explicit performative sentences; that is, to Austin's contentions about the peculiar role of the performative prefix, and the way in which *saying* 'I X...' is X-ing. The question now is whether CR II raises stronger claims against Austin's approach.

IV

CR II challenges a basic feature attributed by Austin to explicit performative sentences, viz., that such sentences are neither true nor false. Austin takes this point as obvious and in no need of argument. an attitude that is the natural outcome of his views about the way in which explicit performative sentences behave. In uttering, say, (12), S does not *state that* he is warning, nor he *describes* his act of

warning; in uttering (12), S makes *explicit* his warning and, in saying 'I warn you that...', S *performs* (in appropriate circumstances) the act of warning. This way of viewing the function of explicit performative sentences is basic to the claim that they are 'masqueraders', that is, sentences that wrongly suggest, through their *grammatical form*, a statemental character. And this point leads — as suggested in Sections I and III — to the thesis that Austin's doctrine is concerned with the *logical form* of explicit performative sentences.

The variants of CR II are rather large in number, and couched in fairly elaborate terms. However, in spite of notorious differences defenders of CR II standardly argue that (a) explicit performative sentences are statements and, hence, true or false utterances, and (b) their alleged peculiarities may be explained away by recourse to features commonly shared by sentences *other* than canonical performatives. Thus, we are told that explicit performative sentences are sentences verifiable by their use (E.J. Lemmon [1963]), or statements of intention *and* assertions about the speaker's action (P.S. Ardall [1968]), or plain statements (expressions that may be assessed as true or false, or as a lie) (J. Heal [1974]), or sentences describing the act in the grammatical *perfective* aspect (instead of the grammatical *imperfective* aspect) (D. Wiggins [1971]), or constatives (in *logical* form) not uttered, as explicit performative sentences, with their full conventional force (S. Schiffer [1972]), or perfectly *ordinary* first person present indicative sentences (G. Warnock [1970]), etc.

In what follows I shall restrict myself to a brief discussion of Warnock's sensitive and unsophisticated statement of CR II. I will not claim that my critical remarks, if valid against Warnock, would apply *mutatis mutandi* to any variant whatever of CR II. But, since Warnock's moves are very typical of CR II, I will claim that my criticism suggests a way of dealing with the basic mechanism presupposed by the variants of CR II.

Warnock starts by drawing a sharp distinction between 'performative utterances' (remember examples (1) and (2) of Section I), and 'explicit performative sentences'. Concerning 'performative utterances' Warnock points out that

> "...there is a class of conventional acts which can be, or normally are, or even necessarily are, done *by* the utterance of certain conventionally prescribed words...the utterance is 'operative' in a special way... There is however, no special verbal form that such utterances have to take." ([1970], 88).

Explicit performative sentence differ from performative utterances in two major respects : (a) explicit performatives are all of a certain verbal form, and (b) it is not necessarily, or even often, by *convention* that to issue the *explicit* performance sentence "is to do the thing". Warnock insists, rightly I think, that 'performative utterances' are a sub-class of conventional doings,

> "...which have in common that, in virtue of non-linguistic conventions, to issue them (happily) *counts* as *doing* this or that." ([1970], 74).

Now, the idea of *saying* something which, by *convention*, counts as *doing* something, differs from the idea of *making explicit* what one is *doing* with the help of a performative verb. Warnock thinks that Austin was unclear about the differences that exist between both ideas, and points out, further, that Austin took explicit performative sentences as 'masqueraders' because he followed the "model" of 'performative utterances'. But explicit performative sentences — Warnock asserts — are not 'masqueraders',

> "...they are to be construed exactly as their form of 'grammar' suggests that they should be, ... conventions do not (necessarily anyway) come in at all here... in saying, for example, 'I advise you to resign', I do indeed make it explicitly clear that I am offering you advice, but...I do so just by saying, truly or falsely, that I do." ([1970], 81).

In short, explicit performative sentences are to be construed as perfectly *ordinary* first person present indicatives.

Warnock's main contentions may be summarized as follows. 1. Austin presupposes the general principle that *to say that* one does something is not, and cannot be, *to do* it. The principle applies in those cases where *what* one does, and whether one does it, is *independent* of one's saying that one does, or of saying anything at all. Now, in the case of explicit performative sentences, we are dealing with things people *do in* saying things, "their doing of which is therefore not independent of what they say." The principle fails to apply here : what one says when one utters an explicit performative sentence (namely, *that* one X-es) is *made true* by the fact that one says it. Explicit performative sentences make themselves true. 2. It might be objected that if I X *in* saying *that* I X, what I say "would substantiate itself and *could* not be false." But this objection may be met by arguing, *a.* that "there is nothing in principle vicious in the

idea of a proposition which, while it can be true or false, can't be falsely asserted, or rather, can't be falsely asserted by a particular person", or *b*. that since saying 'I X' is not a sufficient element in X-ing, "it is possible to say that one X-es when one does not, just as — or anyway, somewhat as — it is possible to say that one smokes when one does not." This is not the case of, say, a false promise, "in which case one does not promise, not intending to perform." (Warnock is inclined to accept *b*). 3. It might be objected also that if the explicit performative sentence 'I X' were about what I do, it should be of the form of 'I am X-ing'; and the present continuous is not the verbal form for explicit performatives. The objection is met by arguing *a*. that as a matter of fact, explicit performatives occasionally are in the present continuous, and *b*. that one resorts to the present continuous when the doings one is engaged in extend beyond the natural boundaries of one's saying With explicit performative sentences, "one's doing the thing coincides with, does not temporally over-spread, one's saying that one does it." 4. What makes it the case that in saying (happily) 'I promise' or 'I advise you to...', I promise or I advise, is not a convention in virtue of which to speak so counts as or constitutes promising or advising, but simply the standard, normal *meaning* of the words I utter. In order to grasp what I do in saying 'I warn you that...', you need no equipment beyond the understanding of English. 5. Explicit performative sentences are peculiar : "they have the peculiarity that, since in these cases what the speaker says that he does is something that is done in speaking, and indeed is in fact done by himself (if all goes well) in saying the very thing he says, the truth-value of what he says is involved...in a decidely unusual way with the fact that he says it."

The notion of 'convention' plays a crucial role in Warnock's discussion. He acknowledges a strong sense of 'convention' ('convention$_1$', in what follows) according to which conventions$_1$ = non-linguistic conventions, i.e., sets of rules, legal provisions, officially recognized practices, etc. Performative utterances presuppose conventions$_1$. It is *by* convention$_1$ (or, better, *by* a set of conventions$_1$) that, say, to utter 'Guilty', in appropriate circumstances, is giving a verdict. It is clear that conventions$_1$ are not involved in explicit performative sentences; and that Austin took conventions$_1$ as a "model" for his doctrine about *sayings* that are *doings*. Warnock acknowledges a weaker sense of 'convention' ('convention$_2$', in what follows) according to which conventions$_2$ = *linguistic* conventions, i.e., conventions that essentially enter into all linguistic utterances as such (conventions regulating the *meaning* of linguistic items; conventions involved in merely speaking a language).

Explicit performative sentences presuppose conventions$_2$ (a feature that they share, democratically, with every sentence of the language). Warnock asserts, further, that "illocutionary forces are not conventionally constituted — which is why they can...be distinguished from *meanings*"." ([1970], 76). Now, Warnock is right in saying this, because 'conventionally constituted' refers, in this context, to conventions$_1$. But, what follows from this ? It follows, obviously, that conventions$_1$ are not involved in explicit performative utterances. It does *not* follow — as Warnock thinks it does — that there are no conventions$_2$ in virtue of which to say 'I X...' *constitutes* X-ing. And this is a basic point. There is nothing wrong with the idea of a full-fledged language including some sort of conventions$_2$ to regulate, somehow, *sayings* that are *doings*. Furthermore, there is nothing unusual in the suggestion that a living language may produce devices to make explicit the forces of the utterances, and that these devices may be conventionally$_2$ regulated in such a way that uttering them, in appropriate circumstances, *constitutes* a doing of a certain sort. Actually, the forces of the utterances being what they are, this is the sort of device we may expect to have in a language. Two objections (at least) may be raised at this point. First, we might be urged to produce clear examples of conventions$_2$ by which *saying* 'I X...' constitutes X-ing. Second, we might be charged with confusing conventions$_2$ (i.e., regulations of the *meaning* of performative verbs) with some alleged conventions$_2$ (obscurely) involved in the utterances of explicit performative sentences. These objections merit rather simple answers. Notice, first, that once it is granted that linguistic conventions are far from being precise, clear-cut, neat regulations concerning the uses of words, it is not difficult to "reconstruct" the eventual content of those conventions$_2$ which regulate the use of the devices for making explicit the force of the utterances. Secondly, there is no point in suggesting that the "reconstruction" achieved is only of the *meaning* (as opposed to *force*) of such devices. The crucial point here is that *force* is a dimension of *meaning* (in a broad sense of 'meaning'), and that it differs, as such, from 'linguistic' and 'referential' meaning (this is a narrower sense of 'meaning', close to the Austinian 'sense' and 'reference'). It is true, then, that to grasp what I do in saying 'I warn you that...' you need no equipment beyond the understanding of English. Actually, what we mean by 'understanding of English' includes, among various things, being conversant with the dimension of meaning we are calling 'forces'. Hence it is not correct to assert that what makes it the case that in saying (happily) 'I X...', I X, is not a convention [i.e., a convention$_2$] which constitutes X-ing, "but

simply the standard, normal *meaning* of the words I utter." As pointed out before, the exclusion of conventions$_2$ as constitutive of X-ing, is based on a misunderstanding of the argument about conventions$_1$: the meaning (broad sense) of X includes conventions$_2$ which *constitute* X-ing.

The argument produced so far affects, if valid, contention 4 . Contentions 1 — 3 are intimately related among themselves and call for different comments. According to Warnock, when one utters an **explicit** performative sentence, 'I X...', (a) one says *that* one X-es, and (b), that one X-es, is *made true* by the fact that one says it : "explicit performative sentences make themselves true." Now, the evidence produced by Warnock in support of this thesis is far from being convincing. To the objection that it follows from it that explicit performative sentences will substantiate themselves and *could* not be false, Warnock answers that saying 'I X...' is not a sufficient element in X-ing. He suggests, further, that we must take into account *felicity conditions.* But this is a strange thing to say. If the fact that saying *that* one X-es, makes true *that* one X-es, it is difficult to see what room is left for felicity conditions to play the role of *falsifying*, somehow, that one X-es. Again, to the known objection that the continuous present is not properly used in connection with explicit performatives, and the additional point that if 'I X...' were statemental, it should be of the form 'I am X-ing', Warnock argues that in the case of explicit performative sentences one's doing the thing does *not* temporarily over-spread one's saying that one does it. That is why the present continuous is not properly used in those cases. But — Warnock suggests — this is not peculiar of explicit performative sentences. This is what happens, normally, when there is a concurrence between words and deeds. "Severing the jugular vein to the patient in the operating theatre I say concurrently and explanatorily to the assembled students : 'I sever the jugular vein'." Now I agree that the concurrence between words and deeds explains why the present continuous is not available in some cases, but I disagree with the suggestion that there is nothing peculiar to explicit performatives in this respect. In fact, Warnock does not provide further examples to support his claim. And the only example he provides ('I sever the jugular vein') is a case of what Austin called 'suiting the action to the word' (HTD, 81-82); a case which is far from supplying the neat example of a statement about one's deeds that Warnock is in need of. When one suits the action to the words one does not produce a performative, but this does not mean that one produces a statement about one's action. The situations in which one suits the action to the words are variegated and not always, not

even normally, allow for a statemental use of language.

There are some additional points, in Warnock's defense of CR II, that deserve attention. But I think that the discussion so far produced gives a fairly acceptable view of a typical statement of CR II, and a sample of objections one might raise against it.

<div align="center">V</div>

Which is the outcome of this discussion ?

If the points made in Sections III and IV against some versions of CR I and CR II are correct — and I think they are —, there are *prima facie* reasons to think that Austin's doctrine about explicit performative sentences is basically correct. This is not a harmless thing to say in these days. As pointed out in Section II, enemies and partisans of Austin's doctrine have taken explicit performative sentences as a kind of target on which they have projected objections and alleged refinements. The outcome is far from being theoretically fruitful. No one denies the value of Austin's insight, but there is disagreement as to how to cope with the linguistic facts he pointed out so sharply.

To say that Austin's doctrine is basically correct is not to say that Austin's analysis is acceptable as it stands. In the discussion of CR I and CR II, and in the general comments of Section I, I have touched upon several questions that deserve further attention. The distinction between performative utterances and explicit performative sentences, the logical form of explicit performative sentences, the features of the description of utterances expressing force, and the nature of the linguistic conventions involved in such utterances, are, I take it, basic and important problems. I have said something about each of these problems. But I am conscious that this only amounts to a mere suggestion about the way in which such problems should be approached.

<div align="right">*National Research Council*
of Argentina</div>

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