Austin, "Performative Utterances"

Historically, "the only things that [philosophers] are interested in are utterances which report facts" (p. 136).

But according to Austin, philosophers' interests widened in two stages:
  (1) The verificationist stage: An interest in identifying nonsense sentences.
  (2) The (later) Wittgensteinian stage: Might nonsense statements "be intended not to report facts but to influence people?" (ibid.)

Performatives
Austin's concern: Sentences which are grammatically declarative, yet are neither true nor false…yet not nonsensical either. In certain cases, uttering such a sentence will constitute "*doing* something rather than merely *saying* something" (p. 137).

Examples: 'I do' (in a marriage ceremony), 'I apologize', 'I name this ship *Queen Elizabeth*' (at a christening), 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow'
These are more *performative* than *descriptive* (in relevant contexts). What makes them performative is not an "inward spiritual act;" instead, "our word is our bond" (p. 138)

"to imply that something or other is true, is not at all the same as saying something which is true itself" (ibid.) E.g., Saying 'I do' implies I am currently unmarried. [Grice: "conversational implicature"]

Infelicities
"Infelicities," failed performatives. E.g., 'I hereby divorce you.' 'I pick George' (when George is not playing). 'I appoint you' (when you have already been appointed)

However, these failures differ from cases of insincerity: 'I congratulate you' (when I think you don't deserve the credit), 'I promise' (*sans* intention to fulfill the promise.)

A third kind of failure: 'I welcome you' (there may be no insincerity at the time, but a failure of the performative occurs if you go on to make the person feel unwelcome.) [There are other kinds of failures, and sometimes the infelicities overlap.]

Criteria for Performatives
Grammatical: first-person singular present indicative active: "I promise" vs. "He promises" or "I promised." Counterexamples: Second or third person passive: "Passengers are hereby warned," "You are hereby authorized"

Call an *explicit* performative any performative that can be analyzed as having the form "I hereby…" or "You (or he) hereby…". Some performatives are not explicit, e.g. "Shut the door," which could express an order, a plea, a temptation, etc. (Still, many devices can clarify which performative is intended, e.g., tone of voice, cadence, gesture, context.)

Performatives evolve along with social habits: 'I reprimand you' vs. 'I insult you'.

Distinguish: Clarifying which performative is enacted versus *stating* which performative is enacted. Consider the case of lifting your hat after bowing. Similarly, 'I warn you that…', 'I order you to…' do not *state* which performative is enacted, but rather *constitute* performatives that clarify which performatives they are.

Borderline performatives: 'Hurrah', 'Damn', 'I'm sorry', 'Out' (said by an umpire)
The last suggests that "I state that…" is akin to "I warn you that…" Austin: "But then one may feel that utterances beginning 'I state that…' do have to be true or false, that they *are* statements" (p. 143)
"But they are also liable to infelicity" (ibid.) Cf. Moore's paradox.

Thus, besides asking about the truth of a statement, you can also ask: is it in order? (p. 144). "I'm feeling pretty moldy this morning." Similarly, we can ask whether "I warn you to…" is felicitous, but also whether it was a justified warning.

"If, then, we loosen up our ideas of truth and falsity we shall see that statements, when assessed in relation to the facts, are not so very different after all from pieces of advice, warnings, verdicts, and so on. // We see then that stating something is performing an act just as much as is giving an order…on the other hand...when we give an order…there is a question about how this is related to fact which is not perhaps so very different from…when we discuss how a statement is related to fact" (ibid.)

"What we need besides the old doctrine about meanings is a new doctrine about all the possible forces of utterances" (p. 144-5).

Searle, "The Structure of Illocutionary Acts"

<u>Background:</u> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*
Locutionary act: the act of saying something with a semantic content, e.g., uttering 'I concede' where it means that I (the speaker) concede (the relevant proposition)

Illocutionary act: A locutionary act understood in terms of its significance in communication. E.g., when I uttered 'I concede', I thereby made known my position on the issue. (Conversationally implicating a proposition [in Grice's sense] is one type of illocutionary act, but not the only type.)

Perlocutionary act: The locutionary act understood by its practical effect on the audience. E.g, when I uttered 'I concede', I thereby put an end to the debate we were having.

<u>Promising as a paradigm illocutionary act</u>: The task is to find "what conditions are necessary and sufficient for the act of promising to have been successfully and non-defectively performed" (p. 146).

A "defective" speech-act is, e.g., an insincere/broken promise (which is still a promise).

Chess analogy and Wittgenstein: "this insight into the looseness of our concepts…should not lead us into a rejection of the very enterprise of philosophical analysis; rather the conclusion to be drawn is that certain forms of analysis…are likely to involve (in varying degrees) idealization of the concept analyzed" (p. 147).

Hence: Searle is ignoring "marginal, fringe, and partially defective promises…promises made by elliptical turns of phrase, hints, metaphors, …promises…which contain elements irrelevant to the making of the promise…[and] hypothetical promises" (ibid.)

These do "not 'refute' the analysis, rather they require an explanation of why and how they depart from the paradigm cases of promise making" (ibid.) Compare with science.

Give that a speaker S utters a sentence T in the presence of a hearer H, then, in the literal utterance of T, S sincerely & nondefectively promises p to H iff conditions (1)-(9) obtain:
      (1) Normal input and output conditions obtain.
      (2) S expresses the proposition that p in the utterance of T.
      (3) In expressing that p, S predicates a future act A of S.
      (4) H prefers S's doing A to his not doing A, and S believes H has that preference.
      (5) It is not obvious to S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events.
      (6) S intends to do A.
      (7) S intends that the utterance of T will place him under an obligation to do A.
      (8) S intends (*i-1*) to produce in H the knowledge K that the utterance of T is to count as placing S under an obligation to do A. S intends to produce K by means of the recognition of *i-1*, and he intends *i-1* to be recognized in virtue of (by means of) *H's* knowledge of the meaning of T.
      (9) The semantical rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered iff conditions 1-8 obtain.
Preparatory conditions: (1) means "no physical impediments to communication" (p. 148); (3) precludes promising past acts; (4) distinguishes promises from threats, invitations [but ignore 'I promise' when used merely for emphasis]; (5) ensures that acts violating this condition would at best correspond to a defective promise.

(7) is the essential feature of a promise; (8) Gricean condition: Ensures that T was meant as a promise; (9) ensures that the linguistic rules of the language accord with (1)-(8).

Insincere Promises:
(6) is violated; also, delete 'sincerely' from the *analysandum* and condition (9). But:
      (6a) S intends the utterance of T will make him responsible for intending to do A.

Rules for the Illocutionary "Promising" Force: Infer form the descriptive conditions (1)-(9) prescriptive conditions for making a promise-speech-act. [Rule 5 is an exception]

Psycholinguistics: "In the case of promising, the rules would more likely attach to some output of the combinatorial operations of the semantic component"

Extending the Analysis: See Table on p. 154.

Grice, "Meaning"

Natural vs. Non-Natural Meaning. (Cf. natural vs. conventional signs)
'Those spots mean measles' naturally means that the person has measles.

x <u>naturally means</u> *p* if:
      (1) "*x* means *p*" entails *p*,
      (2) I cannot infer from *x* some statement about "what is meant by *x*,"
      (3) I cannot infer from *x* some statement about *what someone meant* by *x*,
      (4) I cannot reformulate "*x* means *p*" in a way were 'mean' is followed by
      inverted commas.
      (5) I can restate "*x* means *p*" by prefacing it with 'the fact that…'
Also, natural meaning includes 'mean' in the sense of "intend," as in "A means to do
such-and-such," where A is a human agent.

x <u>non-naturally means</u> *p* ("means$_{NN}$") if the opposite of (1)-(5) are true.

A Causal Analysis of Meaning$_{NN}$ (Stevenson)
For *x* to mean$_{NN}$ something, *x* must have (roughly) a tendency to produce in an audience
some attitude (cognitive or otherwise) and a tendency, in the case of a speaker, to *be*
produced *by* that attitude, these tendencies being dependent on 'an elaborate process of
conditioning attending the use of the sign in communication'

<u>Problems</u>: (Grice)
    (1) Putting on a tail coat does not mean$_{NN}$ that you are about to go to a dance. But the
        causal analysis entails that. (You can't limit the analysis to cases of
        communication, since that results in circularity.)
    (2) 'Jones is an athlete' does not mean$_{NN}$ that Jones is tall, yet the analysis entails that.
        (You can't fix it with a permissive rule, since its rationale will use 'mean$_{NN}$' thus
        making the analysis circular.)
    (3) No distinction between what *x* standardly means, and what a speaker means by *x*
        on a give occasion. No account of standard meaning in terms of speaker meaning.

Grice's Analysis:
Start with speaker-meaning$_{NN}$, and then work your way toward (timeless) sentence-
meaning$_{NN}$.

A First Pass: *x* meant$_{NN}$ something if *x* was intended by its utterer to induce a belief in
some audience, where the belief is what *x* meant$_{NN}$. *Counterexample*: Planting B's
handkerchief at a crime scene.

Second Attempt: Add that for *x* to mean$_{NN}$ something, the utterer must have intended the
audience to recognize the intention behind the utterance. *Counterexamples*: Herod
presents the head of St. John, (2) a child lets his mother see his pallor, (3) leaving out the
broken china.

Need to distinguish "letting someone know *p*" or "getting someone to think *p*" from "saying *p*." Consider showing Mr. X a photo vs. a drawing of Mr. Y displaying "undue familiarity" with Mrs. X. Grice: the drawing but not the photo means$_{NN}$ something.

Third Attempt: Add that for *x* to mean$_{NN}$ something, uttering *x* causes the audience to belief something *only if* the audience recognizes that my intention in producing *x* was to cause the belief. *Counterexample?* A deliberate frown means$_{NN}$ something, but it causes the audience to believe I am displeased, whether or not the audience recognizes my intention to cause that belief.

Clarification: For *x* to mean$_{NN}$ something, the audience must see my production of *x* as intended to cause belief in that thing. (Thus even a deliberate frown means$_{NN}$ something only if: the audience not only recognizes the frown as deliberate, but also takes it that the frown is intended to convey displeasure.)

Imperatives work a similar way, but they are uttered with the intention not to cause a *belief* in the audience, but to cause some other act.

Summary:*"By producing x, a person P meant$_{NN}$ something"* is true iff P uttered *x* with the intentions:

> (1) to produce some effect in some audience A,
>
> (2) to make A recognize that P intends (1),
>
> (3) to have the effect in (1) caused by A's recognition in (2)

Or in brief: "A meant$_{NN}$ something by *x* is (roughly) equivalent to 'A intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention" (p. 112).

Timeless Sentence-meaning

First Attempt: *x* means$_{NN}$ (timeless) that *p* iff "people" (vague) intend to effect by *x* (where the effect is possibly disjunctive). *Counterexample:* Grunting in order to cause blushing.

Second Attempt: Add that the "recognition of the intention behind *x* is for the audience a reason and not merely a cause" (p. 112)

What is an intention?
"I must disclaim any intention of peopling all our talking life with armies of complicated psychological occurrences. I do not hope to solve any philosophical puzzles about intending" (p. 113). But 'intention' is used in the sense of "plan" (though intentions can be unconscious).