

## IS STATING TO STATE A REDUNDANT AFFAIR? constative and performative utterances

Before formulating his theory of speech acts, J. L. Austin focused on the distinction between so-called *performative* utterances and so-called *constative* utterances. The former consists in *doing*, whereas the latter is mainly *saying*. In the beginning he tries to analytically distinguish the two types of utterances by means of truth and happiness. He argues that only constative utterances can be analysed in the dimension of truth, whereas only performative utterances can be analysed in the dimension of happiness. He goes through a lot of pain to give linguistic criteria for this distinction. Neither a grammatical criterion (i.e. first person singular present indicative active) nor a list of ‘performative verbs’ or formulae can be given (i.e. ‘I assert that...’, ‘I warn you...’, ‘I give and bequeath...’, &c.).

Now there are a lot of philosophers who have challenged this distinction in one or the other way (Bach 1975, Schiffer 1972, Holdcroft 1974, Gale 1970) and I will focus on Schiffer and Bach (who makes in part a response to Schiffer). Bach tries to challenge the assumption that performatives can not be analysed in the dimension of truth. He argues that ‘*performatives are statements too*’. He defends this by asserting the necessity that *in* asserting or promising or warning one is also stating *that* one is asserting or promising or warning and the latter can certainly be true. Performatives can therefore be true or false next to being happy or unhappy.

Now my focus is to challenge the performative-constative distinction in another way. I will argue with the example of ‘stating’ that there is no difference between ‘I hate spinach.’ (which seems constative) and ‘I hereby state that I hate spinach.’ (which seems performative) in terms of truth and happiness. If the former is true, then the latter is true. And if the latter is true, then the former is true. The same applies for happiness. The argument goes roughly as follows: in making a mere statement one is saying something which can be true or false (i.e. the expressed proposition [that I hate spinach]) *and* one can fail or succeed *in* stating this! If my uttering these words does not meet certain conditions of fulfillment, it is not a statement (of course it may look like a statement) and is therefore unhappy. The same kind of thoughts apply to the case where one states that one is stating. For any utterance to be true it has to meet *in toto* specific conditions of fulfillment (dependent on its illocutionary force).

Now if this is true, I think it is also true for a lot of other cases (asserting, promising, warning, ordering, &c.). Therefore one should take the constative-performative distinction with a pinch of salt and maybe stop talking about constative *utterances* at all! Because *as an utterance* the utterance is *always* performative and never *merely* constative.