

## Mood and illocutionary force

### 16.1. *Speech-acts*

Throughout much of this book so far we have been mainly concerned with the descriptive function of language: i.e. with the way language is used to make statements\*.<sup>1</sup> But language also serves as an instrument for the transmission of other kinds of information. Not all the utterances we produce are statements; and statements, as well as questions, commands, requests, exclamations, etc., will contain a certain amount of non-descriptive information, which may be characterized, broadly, as expressive\* (or indexical\*) and social\* (cf. 2.4). Furthermore, the transmission of descriptive information is not usually an end in itself. When we communicate some proposition to another person, we do so, normally, because we wish to influence in some way his beliefs, his attitudes or his behaviour.

To produce an utterance is to engage in a certain kind of social interaction. This is a fact that, until recently, logicians and philosophers of language have tended to overlook, though it has often been stressed by linguists, psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists. One of the most attractive features of the theory of speech-acts, which was introduced into the philosophy of language by J. L. Austin, is that it gives explicit recognition to the social or interpersonal dimension of language-behaviour and provides a general framework, as we shall see, for the discussion of the syntactic and semantic distinctions that linguists have traditionally described in terms of mood\* and modality\*.

Austin's theory of speech-acts\* was developed over a number of years; and in its final version (in so far as Austin himself succeeded in producing a final, or definitive, version before his death) it is deliberately

<sup>1</sup> The term 'statement' is commonly used by logicians in a rather different sense (cf. Lemmon, 1966). My usage is intended to be closer to what I take to be its everyday sense. In particular, it should be noted that statements are a subclass of utterances and that they may be regarded either as acts or signals (cf. 1.6).

modified and extended in the course of its presentation (Austin, 1962). The term 'speech-act' is in fact rarely used by Austin; and, when he does use it, it is not entirely clear how much of what is done, or performed, in the production of the utterance he intends it to cover. We will not go into this question.

Since the term 'speech-act' is now widely employed in work which derives from Austin, and notably in the title of an influential book by Searle (1969), we will use it in the present discussion. It should be pointed out, however, that it is an unfortunate and potentially misleading term. First of all, it does not refer to the act of speaking as such (i.e. to the production of an actual spoken utterance), but, as we shall see, to something more abstract.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, 'speech-act', in what we may call its Austinian (or post-Austinian) sense, is not restricted to communication by means of spoken language. Indeed, it is arguable that there are certain non-linguistic communicative acts that would satisfy Austin's definition of speech-acts. For example, if X summons Y with a manual gesture he may be said to have performed a particular speech-act in the Austinian sense. Austin, it is true, developed his theory of speech-acts with particular reference to language; and he would certainly have accepted the principle of the priority of the phonic medium (cf. 3.3). Neither he nor his followers, however, would seem to be committed to the view that gestures and other kinds of signals can be described within the framework of the theory of speech-acts only in so far as they are equivalent to, or parasitic upon, language-utterances. But this too is a question that will not be discussed further. We will henceforth confine our attention to language-utterances.

Austin started by drawing a distinction between constative\* and performative\* utterances. Constative utterances are statements: their function is to describe some event, process or state-of-affairs, and they (or the propositions expressed) have the property of being either true or false.<sup>3</sup> Performative utterances, by contrast, have no truth-value: they are used to do something, rather than to say that something is or is not the case. For example, the sentences 'I name this ship 'Liberté'' or 'I

<sup>2</sup> The term 'speech-act' (translating the German 'Sprechakt' of Bühler, 1934) has often been used by linguists, and is occasionally still used, in the more natural sense of "act of speech".

<sup>3</sup> The view taken here, and throughout, is that, in technical usage, the terms 'true' and 'false' apply primarily to propositions and only secondarily to the statements expressing, or containing, such propositions. Pre-theoretically, it is not clear what the basic senses of 'true' and 'false' are (cf. p. 734, n. 5 below).

advise you to stop smoking' would be uttered, characteristically, to perform particular kinds of acts which, as Austin pointed out, could hardly be performed in any other way. Roughly speaking, we can say that the distinction between constative and performative utterances, as it was originally drawn, rested upon the distinction between saying something and doing something by means of language (where the expression 'saying something' means "asserting that something is or is not so"). It was an important part of Austin's purpose to emphasize (i) that statements, or constative utterances, constitute only one class of meaningful utterances and (ii) that performative utterances should also be brought within the scope of logical and philosophical investigation.

Austin was in this respect challenging the restrictive view of meaning held by the logical positivists (cf. 6.1), according to whom the only fully meaningful utterances were empirically verifiable statements, all other utterances being classified as emotive\*. This catch-all sense of 'emotive' was commonly used in the hey-day of logical positivism to criticize as meaningless what purported to be descriptive statements in such fields of discourse as metaphysics (cf. Ayer, 1936), and it became the foundation-stone of the so-called emotive theory of ethics (cf. Stevenson, 1944). It was imported into literary criticism and stylistics by such influential writers as I. A. Richards (1925).

Wittgenstein, who had himself been closely associated with the founders of logical positivism, later came to renounce the simplistic distinction of the descriptive and the emotive functions of language, emphasizing instead the functional diversity of language-utterances. Using language, he said, is like playing games whose rules are learned and made manifest by actually playing the game. One acquires one's command of a language, not by first learning a single set of prescriptive rules which govern its use on all occasions, but by engaging in a variety of different language-games, each of which is restricted to a specific kind of social context and is determined by particular social conventions. Describing how the world is (or might be) is but one of indefinitely many language-games that we play as members of a particular society; and it should not be accorded preferential status by philosophers and logicians. Every language-game has its own internal logic (or grammar, as Wittgenstein would have said in a somewhat extended sense of 'grammar') and deserves equal consideration. It is within this general framework that Wittgenstein enunciated his famous, and controversial, principle that the meaning of a word is revealed in its use. Without going into the details of the relationship between Wittgenstein's (1953) doc-

trine of language-games and Austin's theory of speech-acts, it will suffice here to point out that they are similar in that they both emphasize the importance of relating the functions of language to the social contexts in which languages operate and insist that, not only descriptive, but also non-descriptive utterances should be of concern to the philosopher.

Austin emphasized the fact that many declarative sentences (e.g., 'I name this ship 'Liberté'') are employed, in certain standard contexts, not to describe a state-of-affairs which obtains independently of the utterance, but as a constitutive part of some action that is being performed by the speaker. Logical positivists had wished to classify as emotive and unverifiable pseudo-statements such utterances as *It is wrong to kill* or *God is good*. Whether they were right or not in denying to such utterances the status of descriptive statements, they had failed to recognize that there is a whole range of declarative sentences which, though they might not be satisfactorily described as emotive, were even more obviously not being used to make statements.

Austin drew a further distinction within performative utterances between what he called primary performatives and explicit performatives. For example, we can perform the act of promising in English in either of two ways: by saying (cf. Austin, 1962: 69)

(1) *I'll be there at two o'clock*

(2) *I promise to be there at two o'clock.*

The first of these utterances, (1), is a primary performative; the second, (2), which contains a form of the performative verb 'promise', is an explicit performative. Two points should be emphasized in connexion with this distinction of primary and explicit performatives.

The first point is that the fact that a primary and an explicit performative may be used to perform the same speech-act does not imply that the sentences in question have the same meaning. An explicit performative is typically more specific in meaning than a primary performative. If someone says, in the appropriate circumstances, *I promise to be there at two o'clock*, he can hardly deny subsequently that he has made a promise. But if he says *I'll be there at two o'clock*, unless the context is such as to exclude the possibility of any other interpretation, he might reasonably claim that he was merely predicting, rather than promising, that he would be there at two o'clock; and the fulfilment of his prediction might have been conditional upon factors over which he had no control.

Secondly, it is a characteristic feature of explicit performatives in English that they have the form of declarative sentences with a first-



person subject and that the performative verb is in the simple present tense. But this is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of their being explicit performatives. On the one hand, we will find explicit performatives, such as *Passengers are requested to cross the railway line by the footbridge*, with the performative verb in the passive. This is commonly the case with requests or commands that are issued by some impersonal or corporate authority. On the other hand, we will find performative verbs, like 'promise', being used in the simple present tense with a first person subject in constative utterances. In certain circumstances *I promise to be there* is interpretable as a statement. As Austin points out, we can usually settle the question, in particular instances, by asking ourselves whether it would be possible to insert the word 'hereby'. *I hereby promise to be there* is indubitably an explicitly performative utterance. Generally speaking, however, in default of 'hereby' or something equivalent to it in the utterance or in the context in which the utterance is produced, explicit performatives do not carry any definitive indication, in their verbal component at least, of their status. As far as their grammatical structure is concerned, they have the form of declarative sentences; and this gives them, as Austin says, "a thoroughly constative look".

So far we have discussed the theory of speech-acts on the basis of the distinction between saying something and doing something with language. But Austin soon came to realize that this is an untenable distinction. Saying (or asserting) that something is so is itself a kind of doing. Constative utterances, or statements, are therefore just one kind of performatives; and they too may be primary or explicit. To the primary statement

(3) *The cat is on the mat*

there corresponds the explicitly performative statement

(4) *I tell you that the cat is on the mat*

which contains the performative verb 'tell'. Similarly, to the primary question

(5) *Are all the guests French?*

there corresponds the explicitly performative question

(6) *I ask you whether all the guests are French;*

and to the primary command (if, on some particular occasion of its utterance, it is in fact a command)

(7) *Close the window!*

there corresponds the explicitly performative command

(8) *I order you to close the window.*

In all these cases, it should be noted, the explicit performative has the grammatical form of a declarative sentence; and it is more specific in meaning than the corresponding primary performative.

In his further development of the theory of speech-acts, Austin drew a threefold distinction between locutionary\*, illocutionary\* and perlocutionary\* acts, as follows.

(i) A locutionary act is an act of saying: the production of a meaningful utterance (“the utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain words in a certain construction, and the utterance of them with a certain “meaning” in the favourite philosophical sense of that word, i.e. with a certain sense and a certain reference”). Austin, 1962: 94).

(ii) An illocutionary act is an act performed in saying something: making a statement or promise, issuing a command or request, asking a question, christening a ship, etc.

(iii) A perlocutionary act is an act performed by means of saying something: getting someone to believe that something is so, persuading someone to do something, moving someone to anger, consoling someone in his distress, etc.

It would seem to follow from Austin’s definition of the locutionary act that formally identical tokens of the same utterance-type (cf. 1.4) whose constituent expressions differ in either sense or reference are by virtue of this fact products of a different locutionary act; and, if this is so, the whole basis of the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts appears to collapse (cf. Hare, 1971: 100–14). This distinction, as Austin drew it, has been the subject of considerable philosophical controversy, which we need not go into here. We will operate instead with the distinction drawn in chapter 1 between utterance-signals (which may be grouped as tokens of the same type on the basis of their phonological, grammatical and lexical structure, independently of the sense and reference of their constituents) and utterance-acts (to which the notion of type-token identity does not apply).

Austin’s distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts is crucial; and it is one that has frequently been missed or blurred in theoretical semantics. In our deliberately restricted treatment of the notion of communication in chapter 2 and our subsequent discussion of logical semantics in chapter 6, we took the view that the transmission of

propositional information from a sender X to a receiver Y had as its purpose X's making Y aware of some fact of which he was not previously aware: i.e. of putting some proposition into Y's store of knowledge. As far as it goes, this analysis is satisfactory enough as an account of the descriptive function of language. But, apart from its failure to cover more than a small part of what we mean by the communication of information, it fails to bring out the fact that, when we make a statement, we may do so for a variety of reasons and not simply, or even necessarily, to augment or alter the addressee's beliefs. We have already seen that tokens of the same utterance-type may be used to perform a variety of illocutionary acts: to make statements, utter threats, issue commands, etc. What we have not so far introduced into our discussion of the meaning of utterances (and it should be stressed that we are here talking of utterances, not system-sentences: cf. 1.6, 14.6) is the distinction between their illocutionary force\* and their (actual or intended) perlocutionary effect\*; and, as Austin recognized, these are independent components of the complex act of utterance, although they are no doubt connected in certain standard situations. By the illocutionary force of an utterance is to be understood its status as a promise, a threat, a request, a statement, an exhortation, etc. By its perlocutionary effect is meant its effect upon the beliefs, attitudes or behaviour of the addressee and, in certain cases, its consequential effect upon some state-of-affairs within the control of the addressee. For example, if X says to Y *Open the door!* investing his utterance-signal with the illocutionary force of a request or command (and associating with it the appropriate prosodic and paralinguistic features: cf. 3.2), he may succeed in getting Y to open the door. Our use of the word 'succeed' presupposes of course that it is X's intention to bring about this particular effect. We must be careful therefore to distinguish between the intended and the actual perlocutionary effect of an utterance. It is the intended perlocutionary effect that has generally been confused with illocutionary force.

It is especially important to distinguish between the intended or actual perlocutionary effect of an utterance and what Austin called illocutionary uptake\*: the addressee's recognition that a particular illocutionary act has been performed. Illocutionary uptake is necessary, though not a sufficient, condition of the receiver's successful performance of the cognitive act we call understanding an utterance. It is not a sufficient condition, because the receiver's knowledge of the phonological, grammatical and lexical structure of the language is also involved. There is a sense in which understanding an utterance can be

described as a cognitive response on the part of the receiver. It is, however, a response which is distinct from the actual or intended perlocutionary effect; and to call it a response would tend perhaps to blur this distinction (cf. Searle, 1969: 42ff). If X tells Y that something is so, he may do so because he wants Y to believe that it is so; but Y's understanding of the utterance is independent of his recognition of this intended perlocutionary effect. Y can quite legitimately say, afterwards, that X had made a statement and that he does not know whether X intended him to believe it or what effect X intended to achieve. In other words, Y can know what X meant without knowing, or needing to know, why X said what he said.<sup>4</sup>

One of the questions that has been hotly debated by philosophers in connexion with the theory of speech-acts is whether, as Austin appeared to hold, convention is necessarily involved in the determination of the illocutionary force of an utterance. Strawson (1964a), following Grice (1957), has argued that such basic illocutionary acts as making statements, asking questions and issuing commands are essentially non-conventional, in the sense that they can be explicated solely in terms of so-called natural responses involving beliefs and the recognition of communicative intention. According to Searle, "some acts at least, e.g. statements and promises . . . can only be performed within systems of "constitutive" rules and the particular linguistic conventions we have in particular natural languages are simply conventional realizations of these underlying constitutive rules" (1971: 9). He concedes, however, that this is "one of the most important unresolved controversies in contemporary philosophy of language". This being so, we will make no attempt to pre-judge it one way or the other here. Both parties to the controversy subscribe to some form of Grice's (1957) analysis of meaning as being crucially dependent upon the sender's intention that the addressee shall recognize his intention to perform a particular illocutionary act.

What we may call the sender's communicative intention turns out to

<sup>4</sup> We are talking here of arbitrarily selected particular occasions. It is arguable that there is nonetheless an essential connexion between knowing what X's utterance means and knowing what someone would normally mean by producing a token of such-and-such an utterance-type under standard conditions (cf. Grice, 1957, 1968). In much the same way, it can be argued that although deceit and prevarication are possible (and indeed quite common) in everyday language-behaviour, communication depends logically upon there being established in the community a convention of truthfulness (cf. Lewis, 1969).

be, on further analysis, rather more complex than it appears at first sight; and we need not go into the details. The important point is that meaning and understanding are correlative, and both involve intentionality: the meaning of an utterance necessarily involves the sender's communicative intention and understanding an utterance necessarily involves the receiver's recognition of the sender's communicative intention. We can abstract from communicative intention, or illocutionary force, in our discussion of the meaning of a sentence, or of the expressions that occur in a sentence. At the same time, we must recognize that in all languages sentences are systematically associated, in terms of their phonological, grammatical and lexical structure, with the illocutionary acts that may be performed in uttering them. There is no one-to-one correspondence between grammatical structure, in particular, and illocutionary force; but we cannot employ just any kind of sentence in order to perform any kind of illocutionary act. Furthermore, we learn the sense and denotation of lexemes and the meaning of grammatical categories and constructions in actual utterances; and it is this fact that relates several of the distinguishable senses of 'meaning' mentioned in the first chapter (1.1).

Austin pointed out in his discussion of speech-acts that there are various felicity conditions\* which an illocutionary act must fulfil if it is to be successful and non-defective. The felicity conditions will be different for different kinds of illocutionary act, but they can be grouped under three main heads, which, following Searle (1969: 57-61), we may refer to as preparatory (or prerequisite) conditions, sincerity conditions and essential conditions, respectively. Violation of each of these sets of conditions makes the utterance infelicitous in a particular way.

(i) Preparatory conditions. The person performing the act must have the right or authority to do so; and, in certain cases, the occasion of his utterance must be appropriate to the illocutionary act in question. For example, one cannot christen a ship simply by uttering the sentence 'I name this ship 'Liberté'' regardless of the situation of utterance. The person who performs the act of christening must be authorized to do so and, presumably, he must produce the utterance in the course of a more or less well established ceremony. If these preparatory conditions are not fulfilled the act will be null and void: as Austin puts it, the act will misfire. It is important to realize that it is not only ritualistic and ceremonial utterances that are governed by preparatory conditions. According to Austin, we cannot make a valid statement unless we have evidence

for our assertion and have reason to believe that the addressee is unaware of what we assert to be the case.

(ii) Sincerity conditions. If the person performing the act does so insincerely (i.e. without the appropriate beliefs or feelings) his illocutionary act will not be nullified, but he will be guilty of what Austin calls an abuse. For example, if X makes a statement which he knows or believes to be untrue, he thereby perpetrates the abuse that we refer to as lying or prevarication; and, if he does so on oath in a court of law, he commits perjury. Similarly, if X thanks Y for some gift or service, he must, if he is sincere, feel gratitude or appreciation towards Y. There are of course occasions when sincerity is overridden by politeness; and these occasions are presumably determined by social convention, even if the more basic sincerity conditions are not. We are not always expected to tell the truth or give expression to our true feelings.<sup>5</sup>

(iii) Essential conditions. The person performing the act is committed by the illocutionary force of his utterance to certain beliefs or intentions; and, if he thereafter produces an utterance which is inconsistent with these beliefs or conducts himself in a way that is incompatible with the intentions to which he is committed, he may be judged guilty of a breach of commitment. For example, in making a statement we commit ourselves to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence uttered in making the statement. Commitment\*, in this sense, does not mean that we must believe that what we say is true; still less does it mean that the asserted proposition is in fact true. Commitment is independent of sincerity and truth; it is a matter of appropriate behaviour. The nature of our commitment is revealed in the generally accepted illogicality of asserting simultaneously two contradictory propositions: e.g., "All of John's children are bald" and "Some of John's children are not bald". According to Austin, violation of the law of the excluded middle in an argument is a breach of commitment of essentially the same kind as breaking a promise.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting: (i) how readily the word 'true' is used in collocation with such words as 'feeling', 'attitude' or 'sentiment'; and (ii) that, in everyday usage, the expression 'tell the truth' carries very strong implications of sincerity. Telling the truth is not simply a matter of saying what is true – i.e. of uttering a proposition which, regardless of one's own beliefs, happens to be true. One cannot tell the truth by insincerely and accidentally saying what is true, but one can insincerely or accidentally say what is true without telling the truth. Arguably, the sense of 'true' in which to speak truly is to give expression to one's true feelings is as basic a sense of 'true', pre-theoretically, as is the sense in which to speak truly is to utter a proposition which happens to correspond to some state-of-affairs.

We need not go further into the question of felicity conditions. The important point to notice (and it is philosophically controversial) is that, under this analysis, such basic illocutionary acts as making statements, asking questions and issuing commands are made subject to the same kinds of conditions as are the more obviously performative utterances which Austin originally contrasted with constatives. What Austin offers then is, in principle, a unified theory of the meaning of utterances within the framework of a general theory of social activity. His theory of meaning, like the later Wittgenstein's, can be described as a contextual theory of meaning, in the sense in which the theories of Firth and Malinowski are contextual theories (cf. 14.4); and it has the advantage that it throws a bridge over the chasm that has long existed between philosophical and sociological or anthropological approaches to semantics. It is perhaps fair to say also that Austin's theory of speech-acts preserves all that is valid and useful in behaviourist semantics (cf. 5.4). It is not of course a behaviouristic theory in the strict sense, but it is not incompatible with an extended version of behaviourism; and Austin's distinction of illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect, on the one hand, and his analysis of the different sets of felicity conditions, on the other, points the way to the kind of extension that is required in order to remedy the more obvious inadequacies of behaviourist theories of semantics of the kind we looked at earlier.<sup>6</sup>

Over and above the three sets of felicity conditions listed and exemplified above, illocutionary acts are governed and determined by what we may call a general condition of meaningfulness; and it is here that Grice's analysis of meaning in terms of intention (which again is not incompatible with an extended version of behaviourism) comes into play. As Searle puts it: "The speaker intends to produce a certain illocutionary effect by means of getting the hearer to recognize his intention to produce that effect, and he also intends the recognition to be achieved in virtue of the fact that the meaning of the item he utters conventionally associates it with producing that effect" (1969: 60-1). In making a promise, for example, the speaker assumes that "the semantic rules (which determine the meaning of the expressions uttered) are such that the utterance counts as the undertaking of an obligation".

Two further points should be mentioned before we move on from this general discussion of speech-acts to consider how the notion of illocutionary force relates to mood and modality. The first is that what we

<sup>6</sup> Bennett's (1976) broadly behaviouristic account of communication by means of language is of considerable interest in this connexion.

have referred to as a single illocutionary act, such as making a statement or a promise, may involve, and typically will involve, several component speech-acts. Suppose we make a statement in order to ascribe to a particular entity a certain property which is denoted by a predicative expression. Our reference to the entity in question by means of a particular referring expression is itself a particular kind of act (in Austin's sense of the term 'act'). So too is predication, or the ascription to the entity of a certain property (cf. 6.3). We may think of the propositional content of a sentence (i.e. the proposition expressed by a sentence when it is uttered to make a statement) as being an abstraction from a particular propositional act, and the propositional act as being composed of the two component acts of reference and predication (cf. Searle, 1969: 22–6). But the illocutionary force of a statement is not exhausted by its propositional content: it must be associated with the illocutionary act of assertion. And the same propositional content may be associated, as we shall see in the next section, with a variety of different illocutionary acts to yield such distinct speech-acts as questions, commands, requests, etc.

The second point is that Austin's theory of speech-acts necessarily raises the question whether there is any upper or lower limit to the number of illocutionary acts that need to be recognized in the semantic analysis of natural languages. There are some hundreds of performative verbs in English; and it is clearly unsatisfactory to have a theory which leaves all the acts denoted by these verbs distinct and unrelated. Can they be grouped into a relatively small number of basic classes? And, if so, how? There are at least three ways of doing this.

(i) By studying the relationship between primary and explicit performatives, on the assumption that different kinds of primary performatives (whose meaning, as we have seen, is typically more general) distinguish certain basic categories of illocutionary force. The meaning of such performative verbs as 'promise', 'predict', 'swear' and 'threaten' might, on this assumption, derive from the encapsulated syntagmatic modification of a more basic underlying performative verb which particular languages may or may not lexicalize (cf. 8.5).

(ii) By studying the terms used to report instances of particular kinds of utterances. For example, the fact that X's utterance *I'll be there at two o'clock* might be reported in English as *X promised to be there at two o'clock* is an indication that sentences such as 'I'll be there at two o'clock' may be used to make promises. It is worth noting, in this connexion, that, although, in English, the verbs that are used to describe



particular illocutionary acts are for the most part the same as the verbs that are used to perform these same illocutionary acts, this is obviously a contingent fact about the lexical structure of particular languages. It is in principle possible (though it would be uneconomical) for a language to have two distinct sets of verbs, one set for performing and the other for describing illocutionary acts. Indeed, it would be possible for a language to make no use of performative verbs at all, but to use instead a set of performative particles or prosodic and paralinguistic features in order to distinguish particular kinds of explicitly performative utterances.<sup>7</sup>

(iii) By studying the felicity conditions associated with particular kinds of speech-acts and constructing a typology of speech-acts in terms of shared subsets of preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions. It has been argued that such intuitively apparent relationships as hold between promising and threatening, and between advising and warning, can be explicated in this way (cf. Searle, 1969). But the analysis of felicity conditions for a wide and representative sample of speech-acts is a task that so far has barely been started and, until it is accomplished, it is hard to say what the result will be.<sup>8</sup>

Nothing has been said so far, it should be noted, about the universality of particular kinds of speech-acts. It is perhaps reasonable to assume that what Strawson and others have called basic illocutionary acts – notably making statements, asking questions and issuing commands or requests – are universal, in the sense that they are acts that are performed in all human societies; and this might be so regardless of whether they are necessarily grounded in convention or not. But there are certain speech-acts that would seem to be dependent upon the legal or moral concepts institutionalized in particular societies. Austin's example of naming a ship is presumably one such act. Others are the acts of swearing on oath in a court of law, baptizing a child into the Christian faith or conferring a university degree. Such acts are obviously both conventional and specific to particular cultures. In what follows, we shall be concerned solely with the more basic speech-acts which may be assumed to be universal. It should not be forgotten, however, that, in any particular society, these more basic speech-acts are integrated with,

<sup>7</sup> For example in Ancient Greek the form *êmén* ("truly", "verily") was regularly used, with or without the accompanying performative verb-form *hómnumi* ("I swear"), in oaths.

<sup>8</sup> Austin began this task himself and introduced a number of general classes of speech-acts (cf. Fraser, 1974).

and governed by, felicity conditions of the same kind as those which govern other forms of behaviour and social interaction in that society.

At this point, it is convenient to introduce the notion of what have been called parenthetical verbs\*. Verbs such as 'suppose', 'believe' and 'think' may be used parenthetically in the first person of the simple present tense "to modify or weaken the claim to truth that would be implied by a simple assertion" (Urmson, 1952). Their function, as described by Urmson, is illustrated by sentences like

(9) She's in the dining-room, I think;

and it is comparable, if not identical, with what was referred to in chapter 3 as the prosodic and paralinguistic modulation\* of utterances (cf. 3.1).

The similarity between performative and parenthetical verbs will be obvious. In fact, it would seem to be desirable to widen the definition of parenthetical verbs offered by Urmson so that it also includes performative verbs used parenthetically. Sentences such as the following

(10) I'll be there at two o'clock, I promise you

illustrate the parenthetical use of performative verbs. In uttering a sentence like (10), the speaker adds to the first clause, with which he performs the illocutionary act of promising, a second clause which makes explicit the nature of his speech-act; and the parenthetical 'I promise you' confirms, rather than establishes, the speaker's commitment (cf. *I'll be there at two o'clock – that's a promise*). Now, as (10) is related, both semantically and grammatically, to

(11) I promise (that) I'll be there at two o'clock,

so (9) is related to

(12) I think (that) she's in the dining-room;

and it is arguable that

(13) I promise to be there at two o'clock

is semantically, if not grammatically, equivalent to (11). Just how these sentences are related, grammatically and semantically, is a controversial question. It has been argued by J. R. Ross (1970) and others that all sentences contain an underlying performative verb of saying: we will come back to this question later (16.5).

The parallelism between parenthetical and performative verbs was noted by Benveniste (1958a), independently of both Austin and Urmson; and Benveniste emphasized their non-descriptive role as markers of subjectivity (“indicateurs de subjectivité”) – i.e. as devices whereby the speaker, in making an utterance, simultaneously comments upon that utterance and expresses his attitude to what he is saying. This notion of subjectivity\* is of the greatest importance, as we shall see, for the understanding of both epistemic\* and deontic\* modality (cf. 17.2, 17.4).

In a related article, Benveniste (1958b) also draws attention to what he calls *delocutive\** verbs. These may be defined as follows: a verb ‘x’ is *delocutive* if it is morphologically derived from a form *x* and if it means “to perform the (illocutionary) act that is characteristically performed by uttering *x* (or something containing *x*)”. This definition is hardly precise enough, as it stands (cf. Ducrot, 1972: 73ff): but it will serve for our present purpose. The important point to note is that *x* is a form that is uttered in the performance of the act that is denoted by the lexeme ‘x’ and that there is a morphological relationship between *x* and the forms of ‘x’. For example, the Latin ‘salutare’ (“to greet”) is morphologically related to the stem-form of ‘salus’ and thus to *Salus!* (“Greetings!”); the French ‘remercier’ (“to thank”) is morphologically related to *merci* (cf. *Merci!*, “Thank you!”); the English ‘to welcome’ is morphologically related to the form *welcome* (cf. *Welcome!*). Of course, ‘salutare’ does not mean “to say *Salus!*”, any more than ‘remercier’ means “to say *Merci!*” or ‘to welcome’ means “to say *Welcome!*”. But one way of greeting a person in Latin was to say *Salus!*, as one way of thanking someone in French is to say *Merci!* and one way of welcoming someone in English is (or was) to say *Welcome!* Moreover, in each case the utterance that serves as the basis for the morphological derivation of the verb denoting the more general act of greeting, thanking or welcoming is one that is (or was) characteristically used for this purpose. The conventionalization of the utterance of *x* is prior to the creation of the lexeme ‘x’ or to the association with the pre-existing lexeme ‘x’ of the sense “to perform the act that is characteristically performed by uttering *x*”. Up to a point, therefore, we are justified in saying that the more general sense “to greet” developed out of the more specific sense “to say *Salus!*”; and so for the more general sense of ‘remercier’, ‘to welcome’, etc.

What must be emphasized, however, is that the verb ‘say’, which we have used in referring to the more specific sense of ‘salutare’ does not, and cannot, simply mean “utter”; and the reason why this is so is

crucial for a proper understanding of both delocutive and performative verbs, and of the connexion between them.

It is a commonplace of the philosophical discussion of language that the verb 'say' (and more or less comparable verbs in other languages) has several distinguishable senses. Austin himself (1962: 92ff) analyses the act of saying ("in the full sense of 'say'") into three component acts: (i) the act of "uttering certain noises"; (ii) 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"; (iii) the act of using the product of (ii) "with a certain more or less definite sense and a more or less definite reference (which together are equivalent to meaning)". It is easy to see that Austin's analysis is, from the linguistic point of view, either incomplete or imprecisely formulated (e.g., it is not made clear, under (i), how much of the vocal signal is covered by the non-technical term 'noise', and no attempt is made, under (ii), to distinguish between forms, lexemes and expressions); and the technical terms that Austin does introduce at this point (notably 'phatic' and 'rheme') tend to be used quite differently by linguists. But his general intention is clear enough; and, as far as it goes, his analysis would seem to be on the right lines. At least these three kinds of acts are involved in the complex act of saying.

Vendler (1972: 6ff) draws a broad distinction, as others have done, between saying something in the full sense of the word (let us call this "say<sub>1</sub>") and saying something in the weak sense which is "roughly equivalent to uttering, mouthing or pronouncing" (let us call this "say<sub>2</sub>"); and he points out that "no illocutionary act will be performed if, for one thing, the speaker does not understand what he is saying or, for another, he does not intend to perform such an act, that is, does not intend his audience to take him to be performing one" (p. 26). It is inherent in the notion of performing an illocutionary act (i.e. of saying in the sense "say<sub>1</sub>") that the speaker should both understand and mean what he says (in the sense "say<sub>2</sub>"). It might be argued that we are frequently held to be responsible, in a court of law for example, for the unintended consequences of our actions. This is true, but irrelevant. If we are judged guilty of breach of promise by virtue of the utterance of something that we did not intend to be taken as a promise, our guilt is established, at law, in terms of the eminently practical principle that we must be deemed to have made a promise if we have ostensibly performed an act which is conventionally interpreted as making a promise and if there is no clear indication at the time that we are not to be taken

seriously. But it is one thing to be deemed to have made a promise; it is another to have actually made a promise. If we indicate clearly (i.e. in a way that any reasonable person could be expected to interpret correctly) that our utterance is not to be taken seriously as a promise, we shall not only not have made a promise, but we shall not even be deemed to have made a promise. What was said earlier about promising, and more generally about the performance of any illocutionary act, is to be construed in terms of this proviso. One cannot unwittingly or unintentionally say something in the sense “say<sub>1</sub>” merely by saying something in the sense “say<sub>2</sub>”. Furthermore, as Vendler points out, whereas ‘say’ in the sense “say<sub>2</sub>” is an activity-verb, in the sense “say<sub>1</sub>” it is an accomplishment-verb: it follows that the truth of the proposition “X says<sub>2</sub> . . .” at a particular point in time carries no implications whatsoever with respect to the truth of the proposition “X says<sub>1</sub> . . .” at the same, or any subsequent, point in time (cf. 15.6).

This distinction between “say<sub>1</sub>” and “say<sub>2</sub>” is by no means sufficient to support all the weight that it is sometimes expected to bear: in particular, it will not of itself suffice for drawing the distinction between direct and indirect discourse from a semantic point of view.<sup>9</sup> Apart from the various problems that philosophers have discussed in their attempts to make precise all that is involved in “say<sub>1</sub>”, there are quite serious problems attaching to the interpretation of “say<sub>2</sub>”; and these have not been so extensively discussed. It is clearly of some importance, for example, to distinguish between the type-token identity that is relevant to the notion of repetition and the type-token identity that is relevant to mimicry. Repetition and mimicry are two quite different kinds of replication\* (cf. 1.4). When we assert truly that X has correctly repeated Y’s utterance, we abstract from all sorts of phonetically describable differences in the utterance-signals. Voice-quality is certainly not relevant to the specification of the truth-conditions of the sentence ‘Mary repeated what John had said’. For Mary to make an attempt to replicate John’s characteristic voice-quality in response to his request that she should repeat what he had said would be, to say the least, supererogatory. So too would be her attempt to replicate the paralinguistic, and even some of the prosodic, features in his utterance. The truth-conditions of ‘Mary repeated what John had said’ (unlike those of ‘Mary imitated what John had said’) are presumably identical with the truth-

<sup>9</sup> For some interesting comments on the relationship between corresponding direct and indirect discourse constructions cf. Banfield (1973), Partee (1972), Zwicky (1971).

conditions of 'John said *X* and so did Mary' (where *X* is a form or an utterance-signal and 'and' is construed to mean "and subsequently"). But it is remarkably difficult to establish, other than by methodological fiat, what these truth-conditions are.<sup>10</sup> It is presumably a necessary condition of the relevant kind of type-token identity that the two tokens of *X* should contain the same forms in the same order. But this is rarely, if ever, a sufficient condition; and it is not clear that there is any determinate set of additional conditions that would be appropriate to decide, for all occasions of its utterance, whether 'John said *X* and so did Mary' is being used to assert a true proposition or not. In short, "say<sub>2</sub>" is far from being as straightforward as one might think. So too is the distinction that philosophers frequently invoke between what is said (in the sense "say<sub>2</sub>") and the manner of saying it.

Crude though it is, the distinction between "say<sub>1</sub>" and "say<sub>2</sub>" may be used to throw light on the nature of performative and delocutive verbs, and on the nature of the relationship between them. As we have seen, the utterance by *X* of *I promise* can never of itself be a condition of the truth of the proposition "X promises". However, in so far as *I promise* serves as a performative formula whose utterance (in the appropriate circumstances) is associated by convention with the act of promising (i.e. of committing oneself, under pain of dishonour, social disapproval or some other such sanction, to some future act or course of action), as the utterance of *Hello!* is associated with the act of greeting and the utterance of *Welcome!* with the act of welcoming, "X said<sub>2</sub> *I promise*" will generally be held to imply "X promised", just as "X said *Hello!*/*Welcome!* (to Y)" will generally be held to imply "X greeted/welcomed Y". It is arguable, therefore, that the performative use of *I promise* is logically, if not historically, prior to the descriptive use of the verb 'to promise' and that the token-reflexivity of particular utterances of *I (hereby) promise . . .* is a secondary consequence of this fact (cf. Ducrot, 1972: 73ff). However that may be, the semantic connexion between the Latin delocutive verb 'salutare' and the performative formula *Salus!* is obviously no different, as far as the distinction between "say<sub>1</sub>" and "say<sub>2</sub>" is concerned, from the semantic connexion that

<sup>10</sup> By the term 'methodological fiat' I am referring to the more or less deliberate process of standardization\* that is an inevitable part of linguistic analysis and description (cf. 14.2). There are of course constraints upon the linguist's fiat: up to a point native speakers will agree that two utterances are tokens of the same type, the one being a repetition of the other. But dialectal and stylistic variation are such, in most language-communities, that the question is not always pre-theoretically decidable.

holds between the descriptive sense of the verb 'to promise' and the performative formula *I promise*. The fact that the performative formula *I promise*, unlike *Salus!* (or *Hello!* or *Thanks!*), contains the first-person singular form of the corresponding descriptive verb, and may thus be construed as token-reflexive (cf. 1.4), is, from this point of view, irrelevant.

As we have seen, in Austin's later doctrine all utterances, including statements, are taken to be performative utterances. Much of the original motivation for introducing the term 'performative', therefore, disappears in the subsequent development of the theory of speech-acts. But the distinction between explicit and primary performatives remains; so too does the distinction between the performative and the purely descriptive use of such verbs as 'say' and 'promise'. Each of these two points requires a final brief comment.

It is not absolutely clear on what grounds Austin draws his distinction between explicit and primary performatives: in particular, it is not clear whether an explicit performative must necessarily contain a performative verb. (The reader should note at this point that, whenever the term 'performative' is employed as a noun in this book, it is to be construed as an abbreviation for 'performative utterance'. In this respect, we base our usage upon Austin's (1962: 6). Other writers treat the noun 'performative' as an abbreviation for 'performative verb'; and this can occasionally lead to confusion.)<sup>11</sup> If we take seriously the criterion of "making explicit (which is not the same as stating or describing) what precise action is being performed" (cf. Austin, 1962: 61), it is obvious that, in principle, the element that makes explicit the illocutionary force of an utterance need not be a verb. For there is no reason to suppose that only verbs have the function of making things explicit. Indeed, it need not be a word, or even a particle: it could be some prosodic or paralinguistic feature. But Austin certainly argues throughout as if the only way in which the illocutionary force of the utterance can be made explicit is by means of a performative verb (in the first-person singular); and his examples all suggest that this is so. It very much looks, in fact, as if Austin is covertly and perhaps illegitimately restricting the interpretation of "making explicit". Exegesis is rendered the more difficult in that Austin, like most philosophers and many linguists, does not explain how

<sup>11</sup> Our distinction between 'sentence' and 'utterance' is different from Austin's, for whom sentences were a subclass of utterances. We do not therefore operate, as others (including Austin) have, with the notion of performative sentences.

much of the signal-information in an utterance is to count for type-token identity: i.e. he does not tell us how to interpret what we have called 'say' in the sense "say<sub>2</sub>". Presumably, it is a precondition of something being an explicitly performative element for Austin that it should be part of what we say (in the sense "say<sub>2</sub>"), rather than part of our manner of saying it; and he does operate with this distinction between what is said and the manner of its being said. But the distinction itself is never made precise.

As for the distinction between the performative and the descriptive use of verbs like 'say' and 'promise', it is frequently argued (and more especially by those who wish to account for the meaning of all sentences in terms of their truth-conditions: cf. 6.6) that Austin was wrong when he said that performative utterances (in the original sense of 'performative') were neither true nor false. All that needs to be said on this issue is that it is by no means as clear-cut as either Austin or his opponents have implied. A case can be made for assigning a truth-value to the propositions that are expressed by sentences used to make non-constative utterances (cf. Stampe, 1975). But it certainly should not be asserted as a matter of commonsense (cf. Lewis, 1972: 210) that anyone saying *I declare that the earth is flat* (under the appropriate conditions) has spoken truly. The commonsense view would surely be that anyone saying this would be asserting, somewhat emphatically, the proposition that the earth is flat, rather than the proposition that he declares that the earth is flat. Nor is it the case that anyone saying *I am speaking* would normally expect to be taken as asserting that in the course of saying *I am speaking*, rather than before or after his utterance of *I am speaking*, he was speaking: it is difficult, though not impossible, to imagine a situation in which *I am speaking* could be token-reflexive. There may well be theoretical advantages in extending the notions of description and truth in such a way that, in our metalinguistic statements about performative utterances, we can say that the speaker, in producing an explicit performative, simultaneously describes his performance (by means of a parenthetically used performative verb) and, provided that the felicity conditions are fulfilled, that he does so truly. But we cannot reasonably say that this is in accordance with any everyday or commonsense use of the terms 'describe' or 'true'. Furthermore, the whole question whether sentences used to make performative utterances do or do not have truth-conditions is of secondary importance. As we have seen, there is a systematic relationship between the truth-conditions of "X promised" and the felicity-conditions of *I promise* said by X. If, for theoretical



reasons, we say that X, in saying *I promise*, asserts the proposition "X promises" and that the proposition is true provided that the felicity-conditions are fulfilled, we are in effect labelling the felicity-conditions as truth-conditions; and that does not absolve us from taking account of the differences, to which Austin drew attention, between constative and non-constative utterances.<sup>12</sup>

### 16.2. *Commands, requests and demands*

In this and the following section we shall be concerned with what are traditionally regarded as the three main classes of sentences. Most grammars, however, do not distinguish systematically between sentences and utterances. Throughout our discussion we shall maintain the terminological distinctions that have already been introduced, using 'statement', 'question' and 'command' for utterances with a particular illocutionary force and 'declarative', 'interrogative' and 'imperative' for sentences with a particular grammatical structure.

As far as statements are concerned, we will restrict our attention in this section to modally unqualified, or categorical\*, assertions: i.e. to statements that are unqualified in terms of possibility and necessity. It is the propositions expressed by the sentences uttered in making such statements that have been formalized in the standard two-valued propositional calculus (cf. 6.2). We shall need to distinguish later between the assertion of a negative proposition and the denial of a positive proposition, but we can proceed, for the present, without drawing this distinction. It will be sufficient, at this point, to remind the reader that the typical statement will have the form of a simple declarative sentence; and that assertion is an illocutionary act, which, when combined with a propositional act, makes the utterance into a statement.

As used in traditional grammar, the term 'command' is generally taken to cover requests and entreaties, as well as commands in the narrower sense. In order to avoid confusing the more general and the more specific senses of 'command', we will henceforth employ Skinner's term *mand\** as a general term to refer to commands, demands, requests, entreaties, etc. Our use of the term 'mand' does not of course commit us to a behaviouristic analysis of meaning (cf. 5.3). Mands, as we shall see, are a subclass of what might be called *directives\** (cf. Ross, 1968);

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion of the notion of speech-acts, from a philosophical and linguistic point of view, cf. Cole & Morgan (1975), Ducrot (1972), Fann (1969), Habermas (1972), Wunderlich (1972). For the integration of speech-act theory with sociolinguistics and stylistics: cf. Giglioli (1972), Hymes (1974).

that is to say, utterances which impose, or propose, some course of action or pattern of behaviour and indicate that it should be carried out. Mands differ from other subclasses of directives, such as warnings, recommendations and exhortations in that they are governed by the particular speaker-based felicity-condition that the person issuing the mand must want the proposed course of action to be carried out: if the speaker does not really want his mand to be obeyed or complied with, he is guilty of what Austin would call an abuse (cf. 16.1). Not only mands, but all personal directives, including warnings, recommendations and exhortations, are governed also by the more general addressee-based condition that the speaker must believe that the addressee is able to comply with the directive. One cannot appropriately command, request, entreat, advise, or exhort someone to perform an action, or demand that he perform an action, which one knows or believes he is incapable of performing.

In many languages the difference between mands and statements is grammaticalized in the form of the main verb of the sentences that are characteristically used to perform such acts. These differences in the inflexional forms of the verb are traditionally described in terms of the grammatical category of mood\*. For example, the second-person singular imperative form of the Latin verb 'dicere' ("to say") is *dic* and the second-person singular of the present indicative is *dicis*: cf. 'Dic mihi quid fecerit' ("Tell me what he did") vs. 'Dicis mihi quid fecerit' ("You are telling me what he did"). Latin is typical of most of the Indo-European languages (and many other languages outside the Indo-European family are like Latin in this respect) in that the second-person singular imperative carries no overt indication of person or tense (as the vocative singular of nouns in the Indo-European languages carries no overt indication of case). It has often been suggested that the reason for this is that the imperative, as the principal mood of will and desire, is ontogenetically more basic than the indicative, the mood of statement.

Whether or not this is a correct explanation of the fact that, in certain languages, the imperative forms of the verb carry no overt indication of tense and person, it is important to realize that commands and requests, of their very nature, are necessarily restricted with respect to the semantic distinctions that are grammaticalized, in many languages, in the categories of tense and person. We cannot rationally command or request someone to carry out some course of action in the past: the only tense distinctions that we might expect to find grammaticalized in the imperative, therefore, are distinctions of more immediate and more remote

futurity. For similar reasons, the imperative is intimately connected with the second person (or vocative). It is implicit in the very notion of commanding and requesting that the command or request is addressed to the person who is expected to carry it out. In so far as the imperative is the mood whose function is that of being regularly and characteristically used in commands, the subject of an imperative sentence will necessarily refer to the addressee. This does not mean of course that the subject of a command or request must be a second-person pronoun. We can transmit a command or request indirectly through an intermediary (e.g., *Let him come and see me tomorrow*). More important, we can, in certain styles, refer to an addressee in the third person (cf. 15.1); it is in principle possible, therefore, for a language to have a true third-person imperative.

What are traditionally described as first-person and third-person imperatives, however, in the Indo-European languages at least, are not true imperatives, in the sense in which the term is being used here. The subject of these so-called imperatives does not refer to the addressee. The fact that the subject of an imperative sentence is normally grammaticalized in the second person (in those languages which do in fact grammaticalize the deictic category of person) derives from the fact that the communication of a command or request, like the communication of a proposition, requires both a sender and an addressee; and commands and requests are necessarily, not just contingently, addressed to those who are to carry them out.

At this point, the reader's attention is drawn to an important difference between the terms 'imperative' and 'interrogative', as they are traditionally employed by grammarians. The former, like 'indicative' and 'subjunctive', is used to refer to the mood of the verb, and only secondarily to particular kinds of sentences: an imperative sentence, therefore, is a sentence whose main verb is in the imperative mood, as an indicative sentence is one whose main verb is in the indicative and a subjunctive sentence is one whose main verb is in the subjunctive.<sup>13</sup> The term 'interrogative', on the other hand, is never used in traditional

<sup>13</sup> The term 'mood' is used throughout this work in its traditional, rather restricted, sense. In view of what is said in this and the following paragraph I now believe that it was misleading (although it is by no means uncommon) to suggest that the difference between declarative and interrogative, like the difference between indicative and imperative, is a matter of mood (cf. Lyons, 1968: 307). Many linguists nowadays employ the term in a much broader sense (cf. Halliday, 1970a; Householder, 1971). So do certain logicians (cf. Kasher, 1972; Stenius, 1967).

grammar to refer to one of the moods of the verb; and the reason is that in none of the languages with which traditional grammar has been concerned, and possibly in no attested language, is there a distinct mood that stands in the same relation to questions as the imperative does to mands.<sup>14</sup> The term 'declarative' is like 'interrogative' in this respect.

We have been operating with two tripartite distinctions: between statements, questions and mands, on the one hand, and between declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences, on the other. It will now be clear, however, that this is a somewhat misleading classification, in that 'imperative' goes with 'indicative' (and 'subjunctive') rather than with 'declarative' and 'interrogative'. As a sentence may be both interrogative and indicative (but not both interrogative and declarative), so, in principle, it might be both interrogative and imperative (but not both indicative and imperative). What is required, then, is a term that does stand in the same relation to mands as 'interrogative' does to questions and 'declarative' to statements. The term that we will use for this purpose is one that has occasionally been employed in something like this sense by grammarians: *jussive\**. A *jussive* sentence, then, will be one of a grammatically defined class of sentences that are characteristically used to issue mands. Generally speaking, imperative sentences (in languages that have a distinct imperative mood) will be a proper subset of *jussive* sentences. In Spanish, for example, the class of *jussive* sentences includes both imperative and subjunctive sentences, as it does in many other languages (though the conditions for the use of one kind of sentence, rather than the other, may vary considerably across languages). Needless to say, the term 'imperative sentence' is frequently employed by other writers in the broader sense that we have here given to '*jussive* sentence'; and this can lead to confusion.<sup>15</sup>

So far we have made no attempt to distinguish between commands and requests. It has been suggested that this difference (like the difference between offers and promises) is one of politeness or deference (cf. Gordon & Lakoff, 1971; Heringer, 1972). But this suggestion is unconvincing. It may well be that the notion of politeness is inapplicable to

<sup>14</sup> There may well be languages, however, with a mood whose basic function is that of expressing doubt or qualifying the speaker's commitment to truth; and, as we shall see later, there are parallels between questions and dubitative, or epistemically qualified, utterances such that it would not be unreasonable to expect that what is basically a dubitative mood might be regularly used both for posing questions and expressing doubt or uncertainty.

<sup>15</sup> Even greater confusion is caused by the fact that the term 'imperative sentence' is often used in place of 'command', 'request', etc.

commands. But one can be either polite or impolite in the way in which one makes a request; and an impolite request is not a command.

The crucial difference between a command and a request seems to be rather that a request leaves to the addressee the option of refusal to comply with the mand, whereas a command does not. One way in which this option of refusal may be encoded in the verbal component of English utterances is by adding the form *please*. A sentence like

(1) Open the door, please

will therefore be normally used to make a request. But, as always, information that is encoded in the verbal component of an utterance may be contradicted or cancelled by information that is encoded prosodically or paralinguistically (cf. 3.1); and the difference between commands and requests is in fact mainly conveyed, as one might expect, in the non-verbal component of utterances. Another way of encoding verbally the option of refusal in English is by adding a parenthetical interrogative tag (e.g., ‘will you?’, ‘won’t you?’) to an imperative clause, as in (2) and (3):

(2) Open the door, will you?

(3) Open the door, won’t you?

The tag\* that is added to an imperative clause clearly indicates that the speaker is conceding to the addressee the option of refusal. But, once again, this concession may be contradicted or cancelled by the prosodic or paralinguistic component of the utterance.

In his analysis of the meaning of declarative, jussive and interrogative sentences, Hare (1970) draws a valuable terminological distinction between what he calls the phrastic, the tropic and the neustic.<sup>16</sup> By the phrastic\* he means that part of sentences which is common to corresponding declarative, jussive and interrogative sentences: its propositional content. The tropic\* is that part of the sentence which correlates with the kind of speech-act that the sentence is characteristically used to perform: it is what Hare calls “a sign of mood”; and in many languages it will in fact be grammaticalized in the category of mood. The difference between the imperative and the indicative mood in Latin, for example, grammaticalizes the difference in the tropics of corresponding jussive and declarative sentences: e.g., ‘Dic mihi quid fecerit’ and ‘Dicis mihi quid fecerit’ (to repeat the example given earlier). The neustic\* is what Hare calls a “sign of subscription” to the speech-act that is being performed:

<sup>16</sup> This tripartite distinction constitutes a refinement of the earlier, and perhaps better-known, bipartite distinction of Hare (1952).

it is that part of the sentence which expresses the speaker's commitment to the factuality, desirability, etc., of the propositional content conveyed by the phrastic. Like many authors, Hare frequently used the term 'sentence' where it would seem to be more appropriate to use the term 'utterance'; nor does he distinguish clearly between 'statement', 'declarative' and 'indicative', between 'command', 'jussive' and 'imperative', and so on. We will treat the neustic, the tropic and the phrastic as being components of the logical structure of utterances.

Hare's distinction of the neustic from the tropic separates two of the functions that Russell & Whitehead (1910: 9), following Frege (cf. Dummett, 1973: 308ff), ascribed to the assertion-sign ( $\vdash$ ), which they prefixed to a propositional variable, in order to show that the proposition was being asserted as true, rather than merely being entertained or put forward for consideration. As far as straightforward statements of fact, or categorical assertions, are concerned, the tropic can be said to have the meaning "it is so" and the neustic "I say so". Both of these meanings are normally taken to be included in "it is the case that" when we interpret the formulae of the propositional calculus as having this phrase prefixed to them (cf. 6.2). But they can be dissociated. When a simple proposition (e.g.,  $p$ ) is embedded in a complex proposition (e.g.,  $p \rightarrow q$ ), the I-say-so part of the assertion-sign ("it is the case that") is not applicable to the component simple proposition, but only to the complex proposition taken as a whole. The component simple proposition, however, still has associated with it what Hare calls a sign of mood ("it is so"). When we make a hypothetical, rather than a categorical, assertion (e.g., *If John is working, . . .*), we do not subscribe to the factuality of the proposition expressed by the embedded declarative sentence ("John is working"); we nonetheless put this proposition forward for consideration as a fact, and thereby associate with it the it-is-so component of the act of assertion. Similarly, when we embed a declarative sentence as the object of a verb of saying in indirect discourse, we associate the it-is-so component, but not the I-say-so component, with the proposition that is expressed by the embedded sentence (cf. the statement *He says that John is working*).

The illocutionary force of a statement may be regarded as the product of its tropic and its neustic. As we shall see later, it is in principle possible to draw a distinction between the unqualified assertion of the possibility of a proposition and the qualified assertion of its factuality (17.6); and this distinction can be handled in terms of the difference between qualifying the tropic and qualifying the neustic. English, however, does

not systematically distinguish between these two kinds of modality; and perhaps no language does in primary performatives.

Mands differ from statements in that their tropic is to be interpreted as “so be it”, rather than “it is so”. Whereas a statement tells the addressee that something is so, a mand tells the addressee that something is to be made so. Corresponding statements and mands can be said to have the same propositional content, but to differ in their tropic. Both categorical assertions and commands, however, contain the same unqualified I-say-so component, indicating that the speaker commits himself fully to the factuality (it-is-so) or desirability (so-be-it) of what is described by the phrastic. The difference of illocutionary force between categorical assertions and commands is, therefore, a function of the difference between “it is so” and “so be it”.

The only kinds of mands that we have considered so far are commands and requests. There is however a third major type of mand: demands\* (cf. Boyd & Thorne, 1969). Demands are like commands and requests in that they are inherently restricted with respect to tense. Just as we cannot rationally command someone to do something in the past, so we cannot rationally demand that it be so in the past. But demands differ from commands and requests in that they are not necessarily addressed to those upon whom the obligation of fulfilment is imposed. In English, primary performatives with the illocutionary force of demands will typically contain what is traditionally described as a third-person imperative (e.g., *Let there be light*) or one of the modal verbs ‘shall’ (pronounced with heavy stress) or ‘must’ (e.g., *He must be here at six, He shall be here at six*). Explicitly performative demands are typically introduced by verbs such as ‘demand’ and ‘insist’ (e.g., *I demand that he be here at six, I insist that he come*). It is worth noting that in many dialects of English the subordinate clause in such explicitly performative demands is grammatically distinct from the subordinate clause in explicitly performative statements. The verb ‘insist’ can be used to make explicitly performative statements or demands: cf. *I insist that he is there, I insist that he be there*. (Insistence, of course, is not an illocutionary act: it is an emphatic qualification of the I-say-so component that is common to both statements and demands.)

Corresponding primary performatives with the illocutionary force of statements and demands differ characteristically in Latin (and many other languages) in much the same way that the subordinate clause of *I insist that he is there* differs from *I insist that he be there* in English. To the Latin subjunctive sentence ‘Fiat lux’ (“Let there be light”), which

may be uttered to make a demand (whoever or whatever, in this case, might be the addressee), there corresponds the indicative sentence '*Fit lux*' ("Light is coming into being"), which may be uttered to make a statement. Although *fiat* is traditionally described as a present-tense subjunctive form, it is (by virtue of its so-be-it component) as much future as present. The semantic opposition of past, present, and future does not apply to demands, as it does not apply to commands and requests. The correspondence between indicative and subjunctive sentences (like the correspondence between declarative and jussive sentences in general) is therefore a many-to-one, and not a one-to-one correspondence. But this does not affect the general point being made here that corresponding indicative and subjunctive sentences express the same proposition. It is, in any case, possible (as we shall see later) to treat the tense of an indicative sentence, like its mood, as something which is analytically separable from the proposition which it expresses (cf. 17.2).

If demands are said to be like commands in that they have the same phrastic and the same neustic as categorical assertions do, but to differ in their tropic, how do we account for the difference in the illocutionary force of commands and demands? The answer that is tentatively offered here depends upon the assumption (which might however be challenged) that there is no difference, as far as primary performatives are concerned, between imposing a command and imposing a demand upon the addressee. The distinction can be drawn, it is true, by means of two different explicitly performative utterances, such as

(4) *I order you to free the prisoner immediately*

and

(5) *I demand that you free the prisoner immediately.*

But the felicity-conditions attaching to the appropriate utterance of (4) and (5) are very similar, if not identical. At most, the difference would seem to reside in the fact that giving commands is something that we associate with institutionalized authority, but issuing demands is not; and this is not a difference which makes the speaker's assumption of authority when he utters a command something different from his assumption of authority when he issues a demand. A primary performative, using the imperative, like

(6) *Free the prisoner immediately*



could be used in circumstances in which either (4) or (5) would be appropriate. Further support for this analysis comes from the fact that commands and demands can both be reported by means of the same kind of statement, for example,

(7) *I told him to free the prisoner immediately;*

also, from the fact that constructions which are characteristically used to make demands (the subjunctive in Latin, 'must' in English, 'sollen' in German, etc.) can, under conditions which vary from one language to another, be used interchangeably with the imperative to issue commands, provided that it is clear in context that the obligation to carry out the mand is being imposed on the addressee. It may well be therefore that the difference between commands and demands is not one of illocutionary force, but something that derives solely from the nature of social interaction and communication. It is nevertheless convenient to have distinct terms, 'command' and 'request', for mands that are issued to the addressee, since these are, again by virtue of the nature of social interaction and communication (in most situations at least), the most frequently used kinds of mands; and many languages, as we have seen, have special forms of the verb, imperatives, whose characteristic function is that of being employed in commands and requests.

### 16.3. Questions

It has been argued that questions can be analysed satisfactorily as subtypes of mands (cf. Hare, 1949; Lewis, 1969: 186). According to this proposal *Who is at the door?* might be analysed as an instruction to the addressee to name (or otherwise identify) the person at the door and *Is he married?* as an instruction to assert one of the component simple propositions of the disjunction "He is married or he is not married". Essentially the same proposal has been made more recently, within the framework of generative grammar, by several linguists; and it has been quite widely accepted. The advantage of this analysis of questions is that it would enable us to handle the illocutionary force of the three main classes of utterances in terms of the two primitive notions of asserting and issuing mands. There are, however, a number of objections to the proposal that questions should be analysed as instructions to make a statement. None of these objections is perhaps conclusive. Taken together, however, they point the way to an alternative, and more general, analysis of the meaning of questions.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For other approaches to the analysis of questions from a logical and linguistic point of view: cf. Åqvist (1965), Bach (1971), Baker (1970), Hamblin

The first point to note is that the grammatical structure of what we will call yes-no\* questions (i.e. questions to which we can respond appropriately with the words 'yes' or 'no' in English, and their equivalents in other languages) is, in many languages, similar to that of declarative sentences. In fact, the difference between questions and statements is commonly drawn solely in the non-verbal component of utterances; and it is one that can be associated with an intonation pattern or paralinguistic modulation of the utterance which expresses the speaker's doubt. This fact would suggest that the difference between declarative sentences and interrogative sentences (in those languages in which such a distinction is drawn in the verbal component of sentences) results from the grammaticalization of the feature of doubt. It would be generally agreed that one of the felicity-conditions attaching to the appropriate utterance of questions (other than so-called rhetorical questions) is that the speaker should not know the answer to his question. It is for this reason that certain authors prefer to analyse questions as meaning, not "Assert that such-and-such is so", but "Bring it about that I know that such-and-such is so" (cf. Åqvist, 1965; Householder, 1971: 85; Hintikka, 1974b); and it is worth noting that "Tell me that such-and-such is so" can be interpreted in either of these two ways. What is at issue is whether, in uttering a question, the speaker necessarily assumes that his addressee knows the answer. If he does not make this assumption he can hardly impose upon the addressee the obligation to supply the answer.

The second point to be made is that, if yes-no questions were a subclass of mands, one might expect that the response *No* would indicate the addressee's refusal to comply with the mand (i.e. his refusal to state whether something is or is not so). But this is not the case. If the addressee says *No* in response to a question of the form *Is the door open?*, he is answering the question. But if he says *No* in response to what is clearly a mand, such as *Open the door*, he is refusing to do what he is being commanded or requested to do.

Finally (and this is the most important point), it does not seem to be essential to the nature of questions that they should always require or expect an answer from the addressee. It is true that, in normal everyday conversation, we generally expect the questions that we utter to be answered by our addressee. But this is readily explained in terms of the

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(1973), Hudson (1975), Hull (1975), Keenan & Hull (1973), Prior & Prior (1955), Rohrer (1971).

general conventions and assumptions which govern conversation. If I say *I wonder whether the door is open* or *I don't know whether the door is open*, which (like the question *Is the door open?*) express my doubt as to the state-of-affairs which obtains, the addressee can appropriately respond to my utterance, if he is in a position to do so, by resolving my doubt. Given that this is so, all we need to assume in order to account for the fact that questions normally expect and obtain an answer is a conventional association between the utterance of a question and the expectation of an answer from the addressee. In principle, however, this association is independent of the illocutionary force of questions.

What seems to be required, in fact, is a distinction between asking a question of someone and simply posing\* the question (without necessarily addressing it to anyone). When we pose a question, we merely give expression to, or externalize, our doubt; and we can pose questions which we do not merely expect to remain unanswered, but which we know, or believe, to be unanswerable. To ask a question of someone is both to pose the question and, in doing so, to give some indication to one's addressee that he is expected to respond by answering the question that is posed. But the indication that the addressee is expected to give an answer is not part of the question itself.

The advantage of this analysis of questions is that it is more general than their analysis as mands. It covers, not only information-seeking questions, but various kinds of rhetorical and didactic questions without obliging us to treat these as being in any respect abnormal or parasitic upon information-seeking questions (cf. Bellert, 1972: 59–63). It has the further advantage that it puts factual questions into more direct correspondence with statements and what are traditionally described as deliberate questions (e.g., *Should I wash my hair to-night?*, *What am I to do?*) into more direct correspondence with mands and other kinds of directives. Corresponding statements and factual questions, on the one hand, and corresponding mands and deliberative questions, on the other, can be said to have the same phrastic and tropic, but to differ in their neustic. This is not simply a difference between the presence and the absence of an element meaning "I-say-so"; it is the difference between the presence of an I-say-so element and the presence of an I-don't-know element.

One of the inadequacies of the analysis of questions as mands which has not so far been mentioned is its failure to account satisfactorily for the difference between wondering whether something is so and asking oneself whether something is so. According to Hare (1971: 85):

(1) *I wonder whether that is a good movie?*

which he classifies as an indirect interrogative, is “very similar in meaning” to

(2) *I ask myself “Is that a good movie?”*

Similar in meaning they may be, but there is an important difference between them; and one should not be misled by the fact that in certain languages the verb used to refer to, or give expression to, an act of wondering is a reflexive form of the verb meaning “ask”. The equivalent of (1) in French, for example, is

(3) *Je me demande si c'est un bon film.*

But the expression ‘se demander’ does not normally mean “to ask oneself”; the most common French expression used to refer to, or to perform, acts of asking oneself whether something is so is ‘se poser la question’ (“to put the question to oneself”). The difference between wondering and asking oneself is the difference between simply posing a question and putting a question to oneself as the addressee with the intention of answering it. For one can ask questions of oneself, in soliloquy and discursive reasoning, just as one can make statements or issue commands to oneself; and to ask a question of oneself is to perform a mental or illocutionary act which is governed by the same felicity-conditions as those which govern information-seeking questions addressed to others. If Sherlock Holmes asks himself whether his visitor is married or single, he does so with the expectation and intention, after considering the evidence, of answering the question which might be formulated, in an utterance, as

(4) *Is he married?*

If Sherlock Holmes merely wonders whether his visitor is married he poses the same question, but he does not necessarily expect to be able to answer it.

Wondering, like entertaining a proposition, is first and foremost a mental act: indeed, it is one way of entertaining a proposition. In order for wondering to be converted into an illocutionary act by means of utterance, it must be the speaker’s intention to tell the addressee that he has a particular proposition in mind and that he is entertaining it in what we may refer to as the dubitative mode.<sup>18</sup> Otherwise the utterance

<sup>18</sup> The term ‘mode’ is quite commonly used in this sense by philosophers. It is related to, though distinguishable from, the sense in which it was employed

is at most informative, rather than communicative (cf. 2.1); and illocutionary acts, as we have seen, are necessarily communicative (cf. 16.1). *I wonder whether that is a good movie* may or may not be used (like *Do you know whether that is a good film?*, *I don't know whether that is a good film*, *Can you tell me whether that is a good film?*, etc.) to ask, indirectly, a question of one's addressee.

So far all the questions that we have actually discussed have been of the yes–no type. But there is another class of question which, following Jespersen (1933: 305), we will call *x*-questions\*. (Jespersen's term for yes–no questions is 'nexus-question': cf. also Katz, 1972: 207.) As Jespersen points out, in *x*-questions "we have an unknown quantity *x*, exactly as in an algebraic equation" and "the linguistic expression for this *x* is an interrogative pronoun or pronominal adverb". Since the interrogative pronouns and adverbs in English are words, which, in their written form, typically begin with *wh*- (*who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, etc.), *x*-questions are commonly referred to in the literature as *wh*-questions; and *wh*- is sometimes treated, by linguists, as the orthographic form of an interrogative morpheme which, when it is combined with indefinite pronouns or adverbs, has the effect of converting them into interrogative elements whose characteristic function it is to be used in *x*-questions (cf. Katz & Postal, 1964; Katz, 1972: 204ff).

Not only *x*-questions, but also yes–no questions, can be treated as functions which contain a variable (or "unknown quantity", to use Jespersen's phrase). When we ask a question of our addressee, what we are doing, in effect, is inviting him to supply a value for this variable. A yes–no question, like *Is the door open?*, contains a two-valued variable. It is equivalent to the bipartite disjunctive question *Is the door open or not?*; and it can be appropriately answered with either *Yes* (which implies the proposition expressed in the statement *The door is open*) or *No* (which implies the proposition expressed by *The door is not open*). A factual yes–no question presupposes\* (in one of the senses of this term: cf. 14.3) the disjunction of two propositions, each of which has associated with it an it-is-so tropic. Similarly, a deliberative yes–no question (e.g., *Shall I get up?*) presupposes the disjunction of a corresponding positive or negative proposition associated with a so-be-it tropic.

An *x*-question is a many-valued function, which presupposes the

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earlier for the two ways of describing situations (cf. 15.4). The term 'mode', like 'mood', derives from the Latin 'modus', which being a word of very general meaning ("manner", "way", etc.) acquired several distinct technical uses.

disjunction of a set of propositions (positive or negative according to the form of the question), each member of the set differing from the others in that it supplies a different value for the variable. For example,

(5) *Who left the door open?*

presupposes the disjunction of the set of propositions expressed by the statements that could be made by uttering

(6a) *John left the door open*

(6b) *That little boy left the door open*

(6c) *Uncle Harry left the door open*

etc.

More particularly, (5) presupposes the proposition expressed by

(7) *Someone left the door open;*

and the indefinite pronoun 'someone' (in its non-specific interpretation: cf. 7.2) can also be thought of as a variable whose range of possible values depends upon the universe-of-discourse. If the addressee responds to (5), uttered as a question (whether it is asked of him or merely posed), by making the statement

(8) *No-one left the door open,*

he is denying (7) and thereby refusing to accept one of the presuppositions of (5); he is not answering the question, but rejecting it. If, on the other hand, he replies to (5) by uttering (7) – that is to say, by asserting what (5) presupposes – he is evading, rather than answering, the question (cf. Katz, 1972: 213).

We will not discuss the grammatical structure of interrogative sentences in detail. One point should be made, however, in connexion with the grammatical relationship between (5) and (7). In most of the Indo-European languages, the forms of the interrogative pronouns and adverbs are related etymologically to indefinite pronouns and adverbs: cf. English *who, whom, what*, etc.; French *qui, que, quand*, etc.; Russian *kto, čto*, etc.; Greek *tis/tís, pote/póte*, etc.; Latin *quis, quando*, etc. In many languages, including English, a set of indefinite pronouns and adverbs has been created by affixing an adjectival modifier meaning "some" to the original common pronominal or adverbial element, or to some replacement of it: cf. English *someone, something*; French *quelqu'un, quelque chose* (where the numeral meaning "one" and a noun meaning "thing" replace the original pronominal element); Russian

*kto-to* “someone (specific)”, *kto-nibudj* “someone (non-specific)”; Latin, *quidam* “someone (specific)”, *aliquis* “someone (non-specific)”; English *somewhere*, French *quelque part* (where the noun ‘part’ replaces the original adverbial element). In Classical Greek the same forms are used as both interrogative and indefinite pronouns (*tis, ti, tina*, etc.); and the difference between them is one of accentuation (the indefinite pronoun normally being unaccented) and their position of occurrence in the sentence.

These various morphological relationships clearly depend upon the grammaticalization of some semantic property which is common to what may be regarded as corresponding statements and questions. We have seen that the question (5) presupposes the proposition expressed by the statement (7), with ‘someone’ taken in its non-specific interpretation. But consider now the effect of questioning the proposition expressed by (7), not by means of (9)

(9) *Did anyone leave the door open?*

(where ‘anyone’ may be regarded as a grammatically determined variant of non-specific ‘someone’), but by means of the prosodic (and paralinguistic) modulation of (7). This prosodic (and paralinguistic) modulation we will symbolize with a question-mark:

(10) *Someone left the door open?*

This utterance (which might be naturally used in English to express doubt, surprise, etc.), if it is taken as a question, might be appropriately answered with *Yes* or *No*. But it is easy to see that it might also be construed as an *x*-question, presupposing the proposition expressed in (7) and expecting the addressee to respond by supplying a value for ‘someone’.

Given that this is so, it is also easy to see that there are various ways in which languages might systematically distinguish between yes–no questions containing an indefinite pronoun (or adverb), *x*-questions and indefinite statements, like (7), without necessarily grammaticalizing the difference between all three classes of utterances, or any two of them, in the verbal component. Suppose, for example, that we were to associate a falling-intonation with statements and a rising-intonation with questions, and that we were to assign heavy stress to the indefinite pronoun (or adverb) in *x*-questions. This of itself would be sufficient to maintain the distinction between the three classes of utterances. Needless to say, the relationship between statements and the two kinds of questions is

rarely, if ever, systematically made solely in the non-verbal component of languages. But it is important to realize that it need not be grammaticalized in terms of a structural difference between declarative and interrogative sentences; and furthermore that, if the distinction between declarative and interrogative sentences is grammaticalized, particular languages might well employ prosodically (and paralinguistically) modulated declarative sentences, containing indefinite pronouns or adverbs, for *x*-questions, reserving interrogative sentences for yes–no questions; or alternatively that they might employ non-verbally modulated declarative sentences for yes–no questions and use interrogative sentences containing special pronominal or adverbial forms for *x*-questions. In other words, the distinction between yes–no questions and *x*-questions is a logical, or semantic, distinction that is universal, in the sense that it can be drawn independently of the grammatical and lexical structure of particular languages; but the difference between two kinds of interrogative sentences, and even the difference between interrogative and declarative sentences, is not.

The morphological relationship between interrogative and relative pronouns (and adverbs) that holds in most Indo-European languages including English is also worth commenting upon briefly in connexion with *x*-questions. The forms *who*, *when* and *which* (cf. also German ‘welcher’, Latin ‘qui’, etc.), which are diachronically related to, if not identical with, the interrogative/indefinite pronouns of the earlier Indo-European languages, are found in both restrictive\* and non-restrictive\* relative clauses in most dialects of modern English: cf.

- (11) That man, who broke the bank at Monte Carlo, is a mathematician  
 (12) The man who/that broke the bank at Monte Carlo is a mathematician.

Non-restrictive relative clauses, like (11), which are set off by commas in written English and are at least potentially distinguishable by rhythm and intonation in the spoken language, do not concern us here.<sup>19</sup> Nor do

<sup>19</sup> Non-restrictive relative clauses may have a different illocutionary force associated with them from that which is associated with the rest of the text-sentence within which they occur. In this respect they are like parenthetically inserted independent clauses (cf. 14.6). For example, (11) can have the same range of interpretations as *That man – he broke the bank at Monte Carlo – is a mathematician*; and just as we can have *Is that man – he broke the bank at Monte Carlo – a mathematician?* as an acceptable text-sentence, so we can have *Is that man, who broke the bank at Monte Carlo, a mathematician?*



relative clauses introduced by *that*, which is of a quite different origin (cf. 15.2).

Restrictive relative clauses, like (12), are used, characteristically, to provide descriptive information which is intended to enable the addressee to identify the referent of the expression within which they are embedded (cf. 10.3). For example, 'the man who/that broke the bank at Monte Carlo' tells the addressee of which person it is being asserted that he is a mathematician. In order to bring out the semantic relationship between restrictive relative clauses, used in this way, and *x*-questions containing an indefinite/interrogative pronoun, we will construct a form of Quasi-English in which 'someone' and 'something' are employed indifferently (like the Classical Greek 'tis') in questions and indefinite statements: cf. (7) and (10). A sentence like

(13) Someone broke the bank at Monte Carlo

could be used, therefore, in this kind of Quasi-English either to ask an *x*-question or to make a statement. Now, just as an attributive adjective, like 'tall', denotes a property which supplies a value for *x* in referring expressions like 'the *x* man', so too do restrictive relative clauses (and they are traditionally classified as adjectival clauses). Let us therefore simply embed (13) in place of this adjectival variable, to yield, for example, the Quasi-English sentence

(14) The someone broke the bank at Monte Carlo man is a mathematician,

which is equivalent, in meaning, to (12). If this sentence were used to make a statement, it would, like (12) in the same circumstances, presuppose that someone broke the bank at Monte Carlo, the proposition expressed by (13); that someone is a man, expressed by

(15) Someone is a man;

and furthermore that it is the same specific (rather than non-specific) someone that is being referred to in both cases and that the addressee should be able to identify him in terms of the properties denoted by 'man' and 'having broken the bank at Monte Carlo'. What has been outlined here is one way in which relative clauses might be formed by grammaticalizing these presuppositional relations and associating them with an adjectivalized interrogative or indefinite declarative sentence construed as a predicate denoting a property; and this would seem to be

the source of the 'who'/'which' relative clauses in English, except that they are more closely related, diachronically, to interrogative than to indefinite declarative sentences.

We have seen that there is a particular kind of semantic correspondence which holds between an *x*-question like *Who broke the bank at Monte Carlo?* and an indefinite statement like *Someone broke the bank at Monte Carlo*: the former presupposes\* the truth of the proposition expressed by the latter. We have also seen that a similar semantic relationship holds between an open yes-no question and the disjunctive proposition formed by combining the proposition (*p*) expressed by the corresponding statement with the negation of that proposition ( $\sim p$ ): e.g., *Is John married?* presupposes the truth of the disjunction of "John is married" (*p*) and "John is not married" ( $\sim p$ ).

Mention should also be made, in this connexion, of disjunctive questions like *Are you British or American?*, which can be construed either as restricted *x*-questions or as open yes-no questions, according to the context and the nature of the propositions that are put forward in the disjunction. By a restricted *x*-question\* is to be understood an *x*-question in which the set of possible values for *x* is restricted to those that the speaker actually supplies in his question. If

(16) *Are you British or American?*

is taken as a restricted *x*-question, it presupposes the truth of one, and only one, of the propositions that are put forward by the speaker: i.e. "You are British" and "You are American". If it is construed as a yes-no question, on the other hand, it presupposes the disjunction of the two contradictory disjunctive propositions "You are British or American" and "You are not British or American". Generally speaking, the two kinds of disjunctive questions are kept apart in English by intonation (cf. Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 399).

To investigate and formalize the presuppositions of different kinds of questions is one of the central concerns of erotetic\* logic (cf. Prior & Prior, 1955; Åqvist, 1965). Another is to decide what constitutes a valid answer to a question. That these two parts of the logic of questions are interconnected will be clear from the fact, mentioned above, that either to assert or to deny the presuppositions of a question is to fail to answer it. But there are other ways in which one can respond\* to a question without answering it (cf. Hull, 1975). Responses may be appropriate or inappropriate; and answers, complete or partial, constitute but one of the subclasses of appropriate responses. We shall not pursue this topic

any further, except to point out that *I don't know* is generally an appropriate response to a question, though it is not of course an answer. Any utterance which has the effect of qualifying the speaker's categorical assertion that something is or is not the case is also an appropriate response; and the reason why this is so will be made clear in our treatment of epistemic\* modality (cf. 17.2).

There is one final point about  $x$ -questions that may be mentioned before we move on. There is no interrogative pronoun meaning "what entity?" in English (or in any of the more familiar languages). What we find instead is a distinction drawn between 'who?' and 'what?' ("what person?" *vs.* "what thing?"); and it is interesting to note that the same distinction is drawn in such languages as French, German and Russian, where it cuts across the distinctions of gender operating elsewhere in the pronominal system, and also in a language like Turkish ('kim' *vs.* 'ne'), which has no gender. The distinction between 'who' and 'what', used as interrogative pronouns, matches the distinction between 'someone' and 'something' and leaves the same gap with respect to anything that is neither a person nor a thing (cf. 11.4). This is obvious enough. Rather less obvious is the fact that there are other presuppositional differences between 'what'-questions and 'who'-questions, which are independent of the difference between persons and things. Whereas *What did you see?* makes no presuppositions with respect to specificity or definiteness of reference and may be answered with either *John's new car* or *A car* (and this may be construed as having either specific or non-specific reference), *Who(m) did you see?* cannot be answered appropriately otherwise than by means of an expression with definite reference. To respond to *Who(m) did you see?* with *A man*, even if this is construed as having specific reference, is to evade, rather than to answer, the question. It is not clear how general this difference is, across languages, in the presuppositions of "what person?" *vs.* "what thing?". In Turkish, where specificity of reference is indicated by a special (so-called definite) suffix, there is a clear distinction between the two versions of "What did you see?" ('Ne gördün?' *vs.* 'Neyi gördün?'), but there is only one version of "Who(m) did you see?" ('Kimi gördün?'). Apparently, Persian is like Turkish in this respect, whereas in Macedonian there are two versions of "Who(m) did you see?", but only one version of "What did you see?" (cf. Browne, 1970). It is nonetheless arguable that in all three languages, as in English, a question introduced with an interrogative pronoun meaning "what person?" is more specific in its presuppositions than one introduced by an interrogative pronoun meaning "what

thing?’; and this is hardly surprising in view of the greater salience, for human beings, of other individual human beings.

It is interesting to note that the interrogative tags\*, which may be attached to declarative sentences in English, can be accounted for in terms of a natural extension of the analysis of open questions that we have outlined above. There are in fact two kinds of interrogative tags that may be attached to declarative sentences, and their function is rather different. Tags of the first kind, which may be referred to as copy tags\* (cf. Sinclair, 1972: 75), have the same value with respect to the distinction of positive and negative as the declarative sentence to which they are attached: cf.

(17) The door is open, is it?

(18) The door isn't open, isn't it?<sup>20</sup>

Their function is to express the speaker's attitude (surprise, scepticism, irony, scorn, etc.) towards the state-of-affairs described by the proposition expressed by the declarative sentence to which they are attached. Sentences like (17) and (18) may be used to pose or ask questions, but they do so indirectly. They are like exclamatory sentences in that they do not have any characteristically distinct illocutionary force associated with them.

It is the second type of tags, checking tags\*, with which we are primarily concerned here; and these have a more definite and describable effect upon the illocutionary force of utterances containing them. Checking tags may be regarded as elliptical interrogative sentences which, when they are attached to declarative sentences with the same topic and expressing the same proposition, produce single sentences whose characteristic illocutionary force is that of asking (and not simply posing) a question. Negative tags are attached to positive sentences, and positive tags to negative sentences: for example,

(19) The door is open, isn't it?

(20) The door isn't open, is it?

What we now have to explain is how (19) and (20) differ in meaning from

(21) Is the door open?

and

(22) Isn't the door open?

<sup>20</sup> Some native speakers of English may be doubtful about (18). I am assuming that it is grammatical, but there may well be genuine differences of dialect or idiolect here.

Questions like (21) are open\* questions in the following two senses: (i) they are neutral with respect to any indication of the speaker's beliefs as to the truth-value of  $p$ ; and (ii) when they are asked of an addressee, unless they are given a particular prosodic or paralinguistic modulation, they convey no information to the addressee that the speaker expects him to accept or reject  $p$ . Their presupposition of the disjunction of  $p$  and  $\sim p$  is unweighted, as it were, in these two respects. Simple negative questions, like (22), are also unweighted with respect to the speaker's expectation of acceptance or rejection of the proposition,  $\sim p$ , that is being questioned; and like open questions they may be merely posed (cf. "*Isn't the door open?*", *he wondered*; *He wondered whether the door wasn't open*). The speaker utters (22) rather than (21) because there is some conflict between his prior belief that  $p$  is true and present evidence which would tend to suggest that  $\sim p$  is true. He questions  $\sim p$  because it is the negative proposition that occasions his doubt or surprise.

Utterances formed with checking tags cannot be used merely to pose questions. Hence the normality of "*The door isn't open, is it?*", *he asked himself*, and the abnormality of "*The door isn't open, is it?*", *he wondered*. The reason why this is so is that the function of the checking tag is expressly to solicit the addressee's acceptance or rejection of the proposition that is presented to him. A sentence like (19), when it is uttered with its characteristic illocutionary force, puts to the addressee the positive proposition  $p$  (which the speaker is inclined to believe is true and assumes the addressee will accept), but at the same time explicitly admits in the tag the possibility of its rejection. Sentence (22), on the other hand, offers the addressee the negative proposition  $\sim p$ , which he is expected to accept as true, but may reject. There is a difference, therefore, between the two utterances *Isn't the door open?* and *The door is open, isn't it?*, although they may both be said to indicate the speaker's belief that  $p$  is true (cf. Hudson, 1975: 27).

Whether the checking tag is negative or positive, it may have various intonation-patterns superimposed upon it; and so may the declarative clause to which it is attached. For our purpose, it is sufficient to distinguish two patterns: falling (including rising-falling as a subtype) and rising (including falling-rising). Of these: the falling intonation-pattern may be regarded (as it generally is in English) as being neutral with respect to indexical information (cf. 3.1, 4.2). The most neutral realization of (19) and (20) has a falling intonation on both the declarative part and the tag; and any variation of this intonational pattern is indicative of

the speaker's doubt, surprise, etc. We need not go further into the details, which are complex and to some extent controversial.

The tag that is added to an imperative sentence, as we have seen, can be interpreted as an element which explicitly concedes to the addressee the option of refusal to comply with the mand; and it does so formally by parenthetically questioning his willingness or ability. With negative imperatives, whose characteristic function is that of uttering prohibitions (i.e. commands or requests not to do something), the addressee's ability is not at issue, but only his intentions. For that reason, neither *Don't open the door, can you?* nor *Don't open the door, can't you?* is an acceptable utterance. Furthermore, there is no point in telling or asking someone to refrain from carrying out some course of action, unless we have some prior expectation that he will or may do what we want him not to do. It is therefore only the positive tag, *will you?*, that may be attached to negative imperatives: *Don't open the door, will you?*, but not *Don't open the door, won't you?*, is an acceptable utterance. With positive imperatives the situation is different, and all four tags may occur: *will you?*, *won't you?*, *can you?*, *can't you?* (cf. Bolinger, 1967a). Of these *will you?* is the most neutral and, unless it is given a particular kind of prosodic or paralinguistic modulation, it reveals nothing of the speaker's beliefs about the addressee's willingness to comply: its function is like that of an open question. The negative tags, *won't you?* and *can't you?*, however, are like *Isn't the door open?* They are used when the speaker is confronted with some evidence (e.g., the addressee's initial failure to respond) which suggests that the addressee is unwilling or unable to comply with the mand. It is for this reason that they are commonly, though not necessarily, associated, in utterance, with a prosodic or paralinguistic modulation indicative of impatience or annoyance.

There is a relationship between questions and one major subclass of mands, namely requests, that we have not so far mentioned. That requests are related to questions in the way that commands are related to categorical assertions is suggested by the fact that in English questions and requests are reported as acts of asking, but commands and categorical assertions as acts of telling: cf.

(23) *He asked me whether the door was open*

(24) *He asked me to open the door*

(25) *He told me to open the door*

(26) *He told me that the door was open.*

Similarly in French:

- (27) *Il m'a demandé si la porte était fermée*  
 (28) *Il m'a demandé de fermer la porte*  
 (29) *Il m'a dit de fermer la porte*  
 (30) *Il m'a dit que la porte était fermée.*

In most of the Indo-European languages different verbs are used for reporting questions and requests, on the one hand, and commands and statements, on the other. This may or may not be taken as evidence that the distinction between asking and telling is language-specific. We will pursue the hypothesis that it is a universally applicable distinction: that asking and telling are two distinguishable subtypes of saying.

We have already suggested that categorical assertions and commands (and demands) contain the same unqualified I-say-so component, but that they differ in their tropic (“it is so” *vs.* “so be it”); and that posing a yes–no question has the effect of qualifying the I-say-so component by expressing the speaker’s inability to assign a truth-value to the proposition expressed by the sentence used to pose the question. It may now be suggested that requests contain the same neustic as questions (and the same tropic as commands). In order to make a case for this analysis, we must clearly look for some more general interpretation of their alleged common neustic component.

As we have seen, a yes–no question presupposes the disjunction of a proposition and its negation: the speaker admits the possibility that either  $p$  or  $\sim p$  is true. If he asks the question of an addressee, he does so, normally, with the expectation that his addressee will assign a truth-value to  $p$  by accepting or rejecting it. When the speaker issues a request, he explicitly admits the possibility that the addressee may or may not comply with the mand and thus, by his response, make  $p$  true or refuse to make  $p$  true. Unlike questions and requests, categorical assertions and commands do not explicitly leave to the addressee the option of acceptance or rejection, though the addressee may in fact deny the speaker’s assertion, just as he may refuse to comply with a command. It is the option of acceptance or rejection that we propose to identify with the act of asking.

We cannot, however, say that a request is related to a command in the same way that an open yes–no question is related to a categorical assertion. It is clearly unsatisfactory to analyse requests as meaning nothing more than “Is it to be so that  $p$ ?”. In fact, this is the kind of analysis that we require for deliberative questions: when the speaker poses or asks a deliberative question (*What am I to do?, Shall I open the door?*,

etc.) he expressly withholds his commitment to the desirability or necessity of the course of action which would make  $p$  true. When he issues a request, however, he commits himself, by virtue of the speaker-based sincerity condition which governs all mands, to the desirability of the proposed course of action. Requests are related to commands as non-open\* yes–no questions are related to categorical assertions. To make the point rather crudely: *The door is open, isn't it?* means something like “I think that “The door is open” is true: but I concede your right to say that it is not true”; and *Open the door please* means “I want you to make “The door is open” true: but I concede your right not to make it true”.<sup>21</sup> Another way of making the point is to say that in non-open questions and requests the speaker indicates his own commitment to the it-is-so or so-be-it component of the utterance and invites the addressee to do the same. The addressee’s commitment to the so-be-it component of a request may be expressed in either of two ways: (i) he may carry out the course of action that is proposed and thereby make  $p$  true at some later time; (ii) he may say *yes* (or something equivalent to this), and his utterance will count as a promise, rather than a prediction.

The analysis of questions and requests that has been put forward in this section, it must be emphasized, is by no means a standard or generally accepted analysis. But it does have the advantage that it seems to give a more satisfactory account of the difference between acts of asking and acts of telling than the alternative analysis, mentioned above, according to which questions and requests constitute two unrelated subclasses of mands. As we shall see in the following chapter, there is also a relationship between factual questions and epistemically modalized utterances that must be accounted for; and a further, and quite different, relationship between mands and deontic modality.

#### 16.4. *Negation*

So far we have treated the assertion of a negative proposition (“it is the case that not- $p$ ”) as equivalent to the denial of the corresponding positive proposition (“it is not the case that  $p$ ”). Both of these are symbolized in the propositional calculus as  $\sim p$  (cf. 6.2). As soon as we start considering propositions containing a modal operator of possibility, however, it becomes clear that a distinction needs to be drawn between

<sup>21</sup> Strictly speaking, one should draw a distinction between wanting the door to be open and wanting “The door is open” to be true (and also, though less obviously, between causing the door to be open and causing “The door is open” to be true). But the distinction is not relevant to the argument.



the negation of the modal operator and the negation of a simple proposition within the scope of the modal operator (cf. 6.3): e.g.,  $\sim\text{nec } p$  ("it is not necessary that  $p$ ") *vs.*  $\text{nec } \sim p$  ("it is necessary that not- $p$ "). There is also a clear difference of meaning in utterances which result from the negation of a performative verb and the negation of its complement:

- (1) *I don't promise to assassinate the Prime Minister*
- (2) *I promise not to assassinate the Prime Minister.*

It is only (2) that can be said in the performance of the illocutionary act of promising; and in this case it would be a promise to refrain from doing something. Utterance (1), on the other hand, might be a statement with which the speaker explicitly refuses to make, or denies that he is making, a promise. Assertion, like promising, is an illocutionary act; and, as (1) differs from (2), so the statement

- (3) *The door is not open*

differs from the statement

- (4) *I do not say that the door is open.*

There is no way of representing this difference in the propositional calculus, which does not allow for the negation of the assertion-sign.

In modal logic, the difference between the negation of the modal operator and the negation of the proposition within the scope of the modal operator is commonly referred to in terms of a difference between external and internal negation; and the difference between (1) and (2), or between (3) and (4), has been described in the same terms (cf. Hare, 1971: 82). It is possible, of course, to negate both the performative verb and the complement, as in

- (5) *I do not promise not to assassinate the Prime Minister*
- (6) *I do not say that the door is not open.*

And, just as  $\sim\text{nec } \sim p$  is not equivalent to  $p$  (but to  $\text{poss } p$ ) so (5) and (6) are not equivalent to *I promise to assassinate the Prime Minister* and *The door is open*. In other words, if one negative is external and the other internal, two negatives do not make a positive. The relationship between *I do not say that the door is not open* and *The door is open* is therefore different from the relationship that holds in the propositional calculus between  $\sim\sim p$  and  $p$ .

This much about negation is relatively uncontroversial. But it is

arguable that there are at least two kinds of external negation; and that the difference between them can be accounted for by assigning one to the neustic and the other to the tropic. It is negation of the neustic (the I-say-so component) that is exemplified by (1) and (4). We will refer to this kind of negation as performative negation\*. By negating the neustic we express our refusal or inability to perform the illocutionary act of assertion, promising, or whatever it might be. But to do this is in itself to perform an illocutionary act: an act of non-commitment. Acts of non-commitment are to be distinguished, on the one hand, from saying nothing and, on the other, from making descriptive statements. Consider, for example, the circumstances under which it might be appropriate to utter a declarative sentence like

(7) I don't say that John is a fool.

If someone has asserted or implied that X goes around saying that John is a fool, X can deny that this is so by uttering (7) as a descriptive statement; and in this case *don't* will bear heavy stress, as it normally does (as we shall see presently) in denials\*. X's utterance-act might then be reported by means of another descriptive statement such as

(8) *X said that he didn't/doesn't say that John is a fool.*

But X might also utter (7), without stressing *don't*, not to deny that he goes around making a particular assertion, but to express, or indicate, his refusal, on this very occasion, to put his signature, as it were, to "I say so"; and this is a positive act, which might be reported by

(9) *X wouldn't/couldn't say that/whether John was a fool,*

rather than by (8) or

(10) *X didn't say that John was a fool.*

The theory of speech-acts, as it has been developed so far, does not seem to allow for acts of non-commitment. They are nonetheless of frequent occurrence in the everyday use of language; and their perlocutionary effect is characteristically different from that of statements. If we express our refusal to assert that *p* is so, by means of an act of non-commitment, we will often create in the mind of the addressee the belief, which he did not previously hold, that *p* may in fact be true;<sup>22</sup> especially if the situation is such that we might be expected to assert that not—*p* is so.

<sup>22</sup> We might even be held to invite the inference that *p* is true: cf. Zwicky & Geis (1971) for the cases of what they call invited inference.

When we negate the tropic (the it-is-so component) of a statement, we are still making a statement; but it is a different kind of statement from that which is made by negating the phrastic. We are denying\* that something is so: we are rejecting a proposition (either positive or negative) that we might be expected to accept as true. One reason for believing that we are expected to accept that  $p$  holds might be that our interlocutor has just explicitly presented it to us in a statement or a non-open question: but this is not the only reason. The situation may be such, or the proposition itself of such a nature (a generally accepted truism), that there need be no previous assertion to which our denial is linked. Nevertheless, the proposition that is accepted or rejected will always be, in some sense, in the context. It seems reasonable therefore to draw a distinction between context-bound\* and context-free\* statements, and to account for the difference between the denial of  $p$  and the simple assertion of not- $p$  in terms of this distinction. We will say that to reject  $p$  by means of a context-bound statement is to deny\* that  $p$  holds and to accept  $p$  by means of a context-bound utterance is to confirm\* that  $p$  holds. In either case  $p$  may be positive or negative. Denials\* and confirmations\* are thus the two major subclasses of context-bound statements.

Just as a negative sentence may be uttered to deny a positive proposition, so a positive sentence may be uttered to deny a negative proposition. But this does not invalidate the distinction between the negation of the tropic and the negation of the phrastic that we have just drawn. If (3) is uttered as a denial, it will bear heavy stress on the negative particle (and, if *not* is contracted with the verb, upon *isn't*). If

(11) *The door is open*

is uttered as a denial of the proposition expressed by the context-free assertion of (3) it will have a heavy stress on the form *is*. So too if it is uttered to confirm, rather than simply to assert, that the door is open. The distinction between context-free and context-bound statements is systematically maintained, in English, by stress; it is not generally represented in the verbal component of utterances.

The distinction between negation of the phrastic, which we will henceforth refer to as propositional negation\*, and negation of the tropic, which we will call modal negation\*, is something that must be taken account of in the treatment of presupposition. According to what is probably the most generally accepted criterion for at least one class of presuppositions (cf. 14.3), one proposition,  $p$ , is said to presuppose

another proposition  $q$ , if  $q$  is entailed, or strictly implied, by both  $p$  and its negation: i.e. if both  $p$  entails  $q$  and  $\sim p$  entails  $q$ , then  $p$  presupposes  $q$  (cf. Keenan, 1971). Granted that the context-free assertion of a proposition,  $p$ , or its propositional negation,  $\sim p$ , commits the speaker to a belief in the truth of any proposition,  $q$ , that is presupposed by  $p$ , this does not hold for the denial of  $p$ . If someone were to assert that the present King of France is bald, we could quite reasonably deny this by saying:

(12) *The present King of France is not bald: there is no King of France.*

Similarly, though it would be irrational for someone to utter

(13) *I don't know that the earth is round*

as a context-free assertion ('know' being a factive\* verb which normally presupposes the truth of the proposition expressed by its complement: cf. 17.2), there is nothing wrong with the utterance of (13) as a denial.<sup>23</sup>

It might further be argued that there are two kinds of propositional negation: one of which converts the proposition into its contradictory\* and the other into its contrary\*. The logical distinction between contradictories and contraries has already been referred to, in a previous chapter, in connexion with the difference between gradable and ungradable opposites (9.1). An utterance like

(14) *I don't like modern music*

is more likely to be interpreted as expressing a proposition that is the contrary, rather than the contradictory, of

(15) "I like modern music".

But both interpretations are possible. Since the conversion of a proposition into its contrary seems to depend upon the negative being more closely associated with the predicate, than with the subject–predicate

<sup>23</sup> As was noted earlier (14.5), tokens of (13) may also be interpreted as meaning "I am not sure that the earth is round" or even "I am inclined to believe that the earth is not round". In such cases *don't* will not normally bear heavy stress (though *is* may if the utterance is context-bound). It is suggested later in this section, in the discussion of (29), that examples like (13), as well as examples containing such verbs of propositional attitude as 'think' and 'believe' (which are normally handled in terms of the notion of transferred negation), are perhaps best analysed as containing performative negation. There is a close parallel between the negation of a performative verb as in (1) or (4) and the negation of a parenthetical\* verb (cf. 16.1); and the same general notion of positive non-commitment seems to be relevant to both.

link, or nexus\* (to use Jespersen's term), within the proposition, we might appropriately distinguish the two kinds of propositional negation as predicative negation\* and nexus negation\*. Both types of negation are found in

(16) *I don't not like modern music,*

which is equivalent to

(17) *I don't dislike modern music.*

It seems to be the case that the application of propositional negation to a gradable expression (e.g., 'like') will always tend to produce a contrary, rather than a contradictory, whether the language-system lexicalizes the contrary (e.g., 'dislike') or not.

If we recognize two kinds of propositional negation, as suggested in the previous paragraph, we are going against the traditional logical maxim that negation of the predicate is equivalent to negation of the proposition. Furthermore, it might be maintained that utterances like (16) and (17) would rarely, if ever, occur as context-free assertions; and, if this is so, there is no need to distinguish nexus negation from modal negation. Four kinds of negation may well be too many, but it does seem clear that at least three kinds are required in order to handle utterances with an it-is-so tropic (i.e. statements and factual questions).

One may now ask whether the same three kinds of negation are to be found in utterances with a so-be-it tropic. There is of course a clear difference between explicitly refusing to tell someone to do something and telling him not to do something. We therefore need to allow for at least two kinds of negation: performative negation and either modal or propositional negation. One of the points that we shall have to deal with in our discussion of deontic modality\* is how acts of non-commitment with a so-be-it tropic are related to permissions\* and exemptions\* (cf. 17.4). For the present, however, the following will serve as an analysis of the meaning of utterances in which the speaker explicitly refuses to commit himself to the imposition of an obligation: "I do not say so – so be it – (that) *p*".

The main problem that concerns us here, however, is to decide whether prohibitions, like

(18) *Don't open the door,*

contain a negated tropic or a negated phrastic. And this is a tricky problem. Does (18), construed as a prohibition, mean "I (hereby) impose upon you the obligation not to make it so that *p* holds" or "I

(hereby) impose upon you the obligation to make it so that not- $p$  holds"? As we have already seen, prohibitions are not normally intended or taken as instructions to carry out, but to refrain from carrying out, some course of action. The speaker does not want the addressee to bring about a state-of-affairs of which not- $p$  is true; for this state-of-affairs already exists. The reason why he issues his prohibition is that he thinks that, in default of the prohibition, the addressee will, or may, bring about a state-of-affairs of which  $p$  (the contradictory of not- $p$ ) would be true. It seems preferable, therefore, to treat prohibitions as having a negated tropic: i.e. as resulting from modal negation. This analysis, it should be noted, groups prohibitions with denials, rather than with context-free negative assertions. It also suggests that corresponding positive and negative jussive sentences (e.g., 'Open the door' and 'Don't open the door'), in their most characteristic use, will be construed as contradictories, rather than contraries; and, in general, this seems to be correct.

At the same time, it must be recognized that negative jussive sentences, used to issue prohibitions, are sometimes intended and taken as directives to bring it about that not- $p$  holds. This is especially clear when not- $p$  is the contrary, rather than the contradictory, of  $p$ . For example,

(19) *Don't trust him*

can be understood as being the contrary of

(20) *Trust him,*

equivalent to

(21) *Distrust him.*

If the difference between contradictory and contrary statements is associated with the distinction between modal and propositional negation, we should perhaps allow for propositional negation in directives as well as statements. Generally speaking, however, prohibitions will involve modal negation; and they are to be analysed as "I say so - let it not be so - (that)  $p$ ", rather than as "I say so - so be it - (that) not- $p$ ".

Two further points may now be mentioned, each of which has been the subject of considerable discussion recently. The first is the interaction between negation and information-focus\* (cf. 12.7). When contrastive stress occurs elsewhere than at the end of the clause in English, this is an indication that the clause has marked, rather than neutral,

information-focus; and, if this happens in a negative sentence, the sentence will tend to be interpreted (on particular occasions of its utterance) as carrying rather specific presuppositions (cf. Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 382; Jackendoff, 1972: 252). For example, the utterance *Máry didn't come* (with contrastive stress on *Máry*) is comparable with *It was not Máry (but someone else) that came*: but the two utterances are not equivalent, since it is also possible to say *I don't know whether anyone came (but) Máry didn't come* (i.e. it is possible to cancel what is normally taken to be a presupposition of *Máry didn't come*, the proposition "Someone came": cf. 14.3). It is obvious that stress, and also intonation, must be taken into account in any comprehensive discussion of negation; and, when they are taken into account, further complexities become apparent. The question of information-focus is clearly of some relevance to the notion of modal negation; but the connexion between them is, in certain respects, obscure.

The second point has to do with what has been called transferred negation\* (cf. Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 789). The term suggests (as do 'negative transportation' or 'negative raising' – which are the terms most commonly used in Chomskyan transformational grammar) that the phenomenon to which it applies involves some kind of displacement of the negative operator. For example,

(22) *I didn't think he would do it*

is rightly said to have two interpretations: roughly, (i) "It is not the case that I thought he would do it" and (ii) "I thought that he would not do it". The former of these is unusual, however, in colloquial English and almost inevitably requires heavy stress on *didn't*: and this fact suggests that it is a modal negation that is involved. Under the second interpretation, which with normal stress and intonation is by far the more common, (22) is generally said to be equivalent to

(23) *I thought (that) he would not do it*

and to be derivable, in a transformational grammar, from the same underlying structure, the negative element having been transferred from the subordinate to the main clause.

Whether (22) and (23) are equivalent is a moot point. It is important to notice, in this connexion, that the construction in question (which is to be found in many languages) is especially common with verbs denoting belief and assumption; and furthermore that it is far more common with first-person subjects than it is with third-person and

second-person subjects. What is interesting about (22) is that, although it has a first-person subject, it is in the past tense. In this respect it stands mid-way between

(24) *I don't think he'll do it*

and

(25) *She didn't think he would do it.*

Now (25) is much closer, semantically, to

(26) *She thought he wouldn't do it*

than (24) is to

(27) *I think (that) he won't do it.*

And the reason is that, under the most normal interpretation of (24) and when *don't* is unstressed, the verb 'think' is not being used descriptively, in a constative utterance (cf. 16.1). As in

(28) *I think he'll do it,*

it is being used to qualify the speaker's commitment to the truth of "He will do it". Even more striking than (24) is the colloquial, but by no means unusual, use of

(29) *I don't know that he'll do it*

to mean, roughly, "I am inclined to believe that he won't do it". (29) cannot be accounted for in terms of transferred negation.

What all this suggests is that (24) exemplifies something that is closer to, if not identical with, performative negation. Looked at from a purely semantic point of view, it has an obvious connexion with subjective epistemic modality (cf. 17.2). However that may be, the notion of transferred negation is by no means as straightforward as it is frequently supposed to be.

Indeed, it might be suggested, in conclusion, that the notion of negation itself is far from being as straightforward as it might appear to be at first sight. Much of the research that has been devoted recently to the study of negation in natural language has, not surprisingly, taken as its starting-point that kind of negation (propositional negation, in our terms) which is formalized in the propositional calculus and defined in the associated truth-tables as the difference between the values of  $p$  and  $\sim p$  (cf. 6.2). Our own treatment of negation in this section might be



justifiably criticized, in this vein, for using a single negation operator, in different positions or with variation of scope, to account for the several kinds of negation that we have discussed. It is worth noting, therefore, that in many languages there are several different kinds of negative sentences, often with different negative particles, and that, if it were not for a prior commitment to the belief that propositional negation is basic, we might not be inclined to treat these several kinds of negation under the same rubric. What is or is not basic is, as always, a thorny question. But if we interpret 'basic' to mean "acquired earlier by children and serving as the basis for further development", it seems fairly clear that propositional negation is not basic.

The following four kinds of negation have been identified by scholars working in the field of language-acquisition (cf. Brown, 1973: 17): (i) non-existence; (ii) rejection; (iii) refusal to comply; (iv) denial. What is called non-existence is perhaps best described as absence or disappearance: this fits the data, and it is less suggestive of propositional negation. As for the other three kinds of negation, they can be much more satisfactorily accounted for in terms of the more general notion of rejection than they can be in terms of the logician's notion of negation, definable with reference to truth and falsity. As one rejects some physical entity that is offered (pushing it away so that it disappears or goes away: cf. (i)), so one may reject a proposition or a proposal. Looked at from this point of view, modal negation would seem to be more basic than propositional negation; and assent and dissent, rather than truth and falsity, would seem to be the notions with which we should operate in any account that we give of the difference between the assertion and the denial of  $p$ . If this point of view is accepted, propositional negation may be seen as developing out of modal negation, in much the same way as objective epistemic modality develops out of subjective epistemic modality (cf. 17.2). In this connexion, it should not be forgotten that, as speakers of English, we are tempted to interpret *Yes* and *No* as meaning "That is so" and "That is not so". Not all languages, however, have forms of assent and dissent that can be interpreted in this way. For example, *Da* and *Njet* in Russian are much more satisfactorily interpreted, not as meaning "No" and "Yes", but "I accept (what you assert or imply)" and "I reject (what you assert or imply)". Hence, the possibility of saying what is often mistranslated into English as *Yes, it's not raining*.

16.5. *The performative analysis of sentences*

What has been presented in the previous sections of this chapter, it should be emphasized, is an analysis of the structure and meaning of utterances, not sentences. However, there is commonly some correspondence between the grammatical and lexical structure of sentences and their characteristic illocutionary force. For example, explicitly performative utterances in English will normally have, as the complement of a verb of telling or asking, an embedded finite clause (e.g., *that the door is open, whether the door is open*) when, under our analysis, they contain an it-is-so tropic and an embedded infinitive or subjunctive clause (e.g., *to open the door, that the door be open*) when they contain a so-be-it tropic. So too will statements which describe or report illocutionary acts. And in both cases whether it is a verb of telling or a verb of asking that is used will be determined by the occurrence of an I-say-so or an I-can't-say-so component in the neustic of the illocutionary act that is being performed or reported.

In view of the structural correspondence that exists, in many languages at least, between the sentences used to make explicitly performative utterances (e.g., 'I tell you that the door is open', 'I tell you to open the door') and the sentences used to describe or report illocutionary acts (e.g., 'I told you that the door is open', 'I told you to open the door'), regardless of whether these illocutionary acts have been performed by means of primary performatives (e.g., *The door is open, Open the door*) or explicitly performative utterances (e.g., *I tell you that the door is open, I tell you to open the door*), it is natural to consider the possibility of deriving all sentences from underlying structures with an optionally deletable main clause containing a first-person subject, a performative verb of saying and optionally an indirect-object expression referring to the addressee. That the grammatical and semantic structure of all sentences should be accounted for in terms of the embedding of a subordinate clause within an outer, or higher, performative main clause has been proposed, independently, by Boyd and Thorne (1969), Householder (1971), Lakoff (1969), Ross (1970), Sadock (1974), and others; and it is this proposal that we are referring to as the performative analysis of sentences. A more restricted version of the performative analysis according to which only non-declarative sentences are to be accounted for in terms of the embedding of a subordinate clause as the complement of a deletable performative verb of saying has been put forward by such scholars as Lewis (1972).

The performative analysis of sentences, it should be obvious, would tend to invalidate the distinction between system-sentences and utterances, which we have tried to maintain, as consistently as possible, throughout this work. It would also destroy, or at least lessen the importance of, Austin's distinction between primary performatives and explicitly performative utterances (cf. 16.1). These would be merely alternative surface-structure realizations of the same, underlying deep structures, or semantic representations (cf. 10.5); and every sentence that can be used to perform a variety of distinct illocutionary acts would be provided by the rules of the grammar with a set of non-equivalent deep-structure analyses. For example 'I'll be there at two o'clock' would be shown, presumably, as grammatically ambiguous according to whether it is held to be equivalent in meaning to 'I (hereby) promise to be there at two o'clock' or 'I (hereby) state/predict that I'll be there at two o'clock'. And 'I promise to be there' will be shown as grammatically ambiguous according to whether its utterance constitutes an act of promising (allowing for the insertion of 'hereby') or a statement descriptive of some habitual action that the speaker performs. The distinction of system-sentences and utterances is of course a methodological distinction: it is not one that has to be maintained at all costs. The question is whether we can more satisfactorily describe the structure and use of language by drawing it than by not drawing it; and this is a question that is difficult, if not impossible, to answer until the performative analysis of sentences has been developed in greater detail and applied to a wider range of data.

There are certain considerations, however, which would suggest that the performative analysis of sentences, as it has been formulated within the framework of transformational grammar, is ultimately indefensible. First of all, it should be noted that the conditions which determine the selection of a subject expression and an indirect-object expression in the text-sentence (*S*) containing the performative verb of saying in an explicitly performative utterance are quite complex; and they will vary according to the nature and occasion of the illocutionary act that is being performed. The speaker can use any expression that is appropriate to refer to himself as the performer of the illocutionary act in question; and this need not be, and for certain socio-culturally and ritualized acts cannot be, the first-person pronoun. Similarly, he can use any expression that is appropriate to refer to the addressee; it need not be a second-person pronoun. It will not therefore be sufficient to formulate the rules in such a way that the subject of the performative verb in English is

necessarily 'I' (or 'we') and its (optional) indirect object 'you'. To say that 'the chair' is a surface-structure replacement for a deep-structure first-person pronoun in 'The chair (hereby) rules that the last speaker was out of order' is surely misguided. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for the speaker to refer to himself, in English, as 'I' and there are circumstances in which it is appropriate or mandatory for him to use another expression. In this connexion, it is worth noting that in reporting or describing a mental or illocutionary act involving reference to himself as the addressee, the speaker will normally use a first-person reflexive pronoun (e.g., *I told myself not to be a fool*), but in performing the act in question he will address himself normally in the second person (e.g., *Don't be a fool*). Furthermore, whereas he will address himself in the second person in a factual question that he puts to himself, he will use the first-person in a corresponding deliberative question (cf. *What are you going to do? vs. What am I to do?*). It is hard to see how these differences can be accounted for within the framework of the performative analysis of sentences, which presumably treats the relationship between a performative verb and its indirect object as being the same as the relationship between a descriptive verb and its indirect object.

The second point, and it is connected with the first, is that the performative analysis of sentences explicates our understanding of the meaning of the underlying performative verb in terms of our prior understanding of the meaning of verbs of saying as they are used to describe or report illocutionary acts. But the whole purpose of Austin's original distinction of performative and constative utterances was to establish the difference between engaging in an act and describing it; and, as we have seen, he eventually came to the view that saying is a kind of doing (16.1). It is arguable, though philosophically controversial, that the performance of certain basic communicative acts is logically independent, not only of the existence of language, but also of any conventionalized system of communication (cf. 16.1). However that may be, it seems perverse to assimilate the performative function of verbs of saying to their descriptive function, rather than to assume that we come to know the sense and denotation of verbs of saying by virtue of our prior understanding of what is involved in the performance of illocutionary acts; and that we acquire this understanding, just as we acquire our understanding of how deixis operates, by engaging in communicative acts and learning how particular language-systems conventionalize the means for referring to ourselves, our addressees and other components of the situation-of-utterance.

None of the syntactic arguments so far produced in favour of the performative analysis of sentences is very convincing; and much of the data that has been cited in arguing for it is questionable (cf. Sadock, 1974). What the syntactic arguments show is that we can insert in primary performatives and explicitly performative utterances expressions which refer to, or qualify in some way, various components of the illocutionary act that we are performing. But this fact in itself does not force us to recognize a superordinate performative clause in all sentences. In fact, the standard performative analysis is clearly unsatisfactory in its representation of the relationship between the performative clause containing the verb of saying and the complement clause. The relationship between the performance of an illocutionary act and the sentence that is uttered is an instrumental relationship of some kind, as the possibility of inserting 'hereby' would indicate. It is by means of the very utterance-signal that we are producing that we perform the act of assertion, commanding, promising, etc. But, as we saw earlier, there are two different senses of 'say' involved here: "say<sub>1</sub>" and "say<sub>2</sub>" (cf. 16.1). Given that *S* is the explicitly performative statement *I (hereby) tell you that the door is open* and that *S'* is the embedded sentential complement of the performative verb, the meaning of *S* would seem to be something like "(By saying<sub>2</sub> *S*) I say<sub>1</sub> "*S'*" (to you)", where "*S'*" (i.e. the meaning of *S'*) is "that (it is the case that) *p*". The optionally insertable 'hereby' (which has been glossed as "by saying<sub>2</sub> *S*") is naturally construed as a deictic element referring either to *S* or to what Austin would distinguish as the locutionary act of saying *S* (cf. 16.1). The performative verb, on the other hand, refers to the illocutionary act that is performed in saying *S*. It does not seem right therefore to treat simple sentences like 'The door is open' as transforms of the subordinate clause of a deleted performative verb. They differ from explicitly performative utterances in that they lack the property of token-reflexivity (cf. 1.4); and they differ from the complements of descriptive verbs of saying in that they do not mean "(that it is the case) that *p*".

The fact that explicitly performative utterances have the property of token-reflexivity makes them rather difficult to handle from a logical point of view. They are like such notorious utterances as ↘ *What I am now saying is false*↙ or ↘ *This sentence contains five words*↙. Utterances of this kind have been analysed in various ways by philosophers; and there is still no generally accepted solution to the logical paradoxes, or antinomies, to which they give rise in the formalization of semantics.

Towards the end of the first section of this chapter (16.1), we intro-

duced the notion of parenthetical modulation. It was suggested that the function of the parenthetical tag-clause *I promise you* in the utterance *I'll be there at two o'clock, I promise you* was to confirm, and make explicit, the speaker's commitment to the illocutionary force of *I'll be there at two o'clock*. The parenthetical *that's an order* in *Be here at two o'clock: that's an order* has the same function. The grammatical structure of *I'll be there at two o'clock, I promise you* and *Be here at two o'clock: that's an order* is, superficially at least, quite different from the grammatical structure of *I promise you (that) I'll be there at two o'clock* and *I order you to be here at two o'clock*. The tag-clauses do not have the property of token-reflexivity, and it seems gratuitous to derive them from deep-structure main clauses. Now, it is undeniable that *to be here at two o'clock* is part of the grammatical complement of the verb 'order' in the explicitly performative *I (hereby) order you to be here at two o'clock* as it is in the statement *I ordered him to be here at two o'clock*; and it is possible that both of them should be derived by embedding an imperative sentence (*S'*) within a deep-structure main clause (*S*) containing a verb of saying of a particular subclass ('order', 'tell', 'command', 'request', 'ask', etc.).

It is also possible, however, that the surface-structure status of a performative main verb should be accounted for by a grammatical rule which operates upon two juxtaposed, or paratactically\* associated, clauses neither of which is subordinate to the other in deep structure. One of the semantic effects of this rule would be to produce the peculiar property of token-reflexivity. But it would not destroy the parenthetical character of the performative clause; and this is an important point that must be accounted for. The illocutionary force of *I promise you that I'll be there* and *I'll be there, I promise you* seems to be the same; and the relationship between *I promise you* and the act of promising is in both cases the same. Current versions of transformational grammar operate with processes of subordination and co-ordination, but they have no way of formalizing what is traditionally known as parataxis\*: i.e. a looser syntactic association of the constituents of a sentence than co-ordination. There are, however, good semantic reasons for distinguishing parataxis from subordination and co-ordination.

One of the syntactic arguments that has been adduced in favour of the performative analysis of sentences, and possibly the strongest, is that it enables us to account for the function of at least a subclass of so-called sentence-adverbs, like 'frankly' and 'honestly', which can be said to modify the optionally deletable performative verb in statements. Granted

that the following two statements have the same meaning (and this is in itself debatable)

(1) *I tell you frankly (that) he's a fool*

and

(2) *Frankly, he's a fool,*

what, in fact, is explained by the performative analysis of the grammatical structure of (2)? Notice, first of all, that if (2) is denied by uttering

(3) *That's not true,*

the person uttering this denial is not challenging the frankness or honesty of his interlocutor, but the assertion that the referent of 'he' in (2) is a fool. The situation is less clear cut if (3) is uttered in response to (1). What is clear, however, is that (3) cannot be used to deny the fact the utterer of either (1) or (2) is performing an act of telling. If (3) is uttered in response to

(4) *Anne told Mary frankly that he was a fool*

it may be construed as a denial either that an act of telling was performed or that the person performing this act was frank in doing so; and, under either of these interpretations, (3) may be followed in the same utterance by *She didn't*. It may also be construed as denying the fact, which is not asserted by (4) (and to whose truth the speaker of (4) makes no commitment), that the referent of 'he' is, or was, a fool: in which case it may be followed by *He isn't* (or *He wasn't*). Only *He isn't* (and not *You don't*) can be added to (3) as a response to either (1) or (2).

The second point to be made in connexion with the difference between (1) and (2), on the one hand, and (4) on the other, is that (4) is not a natural description of an illocutionary act of the kind that would be performed by uttering either (1) or (2). The person saying (4) is asserting that Anne was frank in the manner in which she performed the act of telling (whatever sentence, or sentences, may have been used in the performance of this act). If the person uttering (1) or (2) is making any claim to frankness at all, it is best construed as a parenthetical comment on his willingness to make a blunt, unqualified statement or as an appeal to the addressee to accept his opinion. If we substitute 'honestly' or 'actually' for 'frankly' in (1), (2) and (4), these differences are even

clearer. Furthermore, there are adverbs and adverbial phrases (e.g., *to tell you the truth, as a matter of fact*) which can be used in place of 'frankly' in (2) and which appear to have a similar function, but which cannot be used to modify either a performative or a descriptive verb of saying. The performative analysis of sentences contributes nothing to our understanding of the function of these.

What these various arguments show is that there are serious semantic objections to the postulation of a deleted main clause in the underlying structure of primary performatives. They also show that, from a semantic point of view, the function of the main clause in an explicitly performative utterance is, in some sense, parenthetical; and that the relationship between a performative verb and its modifiers appears to be different from the relationship between a descriptive verb of saying and its modifiers.

One of two conclusions can be drawn. The first is that, if the performative analysis of sentences is to be made semantically revealing, it must somehow capture the notions of parenthetical modulation and token-reflexivity: this is not done in current versions of the performative analysis.

The alternative conclusion, which is more in accord with traditional conceptions of the nature and limits of grammatical analysis, is that there is a distinction to be drawn between the grammatical structure of a sentence and its meaning, on the one hand, and a different distinction to be drawn between the meaning of sentences and the meaning of utterances, on the other. Nothing that has been said in this section forces us to draw one conclusion rather than the other. But the performative analysis of sentences, as currently formulated, is clearly unacceptable; and it has not yet been demonstrated that an amended version would in any way simplify the task of linguistic analysis or solve any problems that are insoluble within a more traditional framework. We will continue to draw a distinction, therefore, between the grammatical structure of sentences and the logical, or semantic, structure of the speech-acts that these sentences may be used to perform.<sup>24</sup>

In conclusion, something must be said about so-called indirect speech-acts\*. It has been proposed by Gordon and Lakoff (1971), on the basis of suggestions made by Searle (1969; cf. also 1975), that mands may be issued, not only directly by uttering a jussive sentence (e.g., *Open the*

<sup>24</sup> References to the literature relating to the performative analysis, especially as it was developed by Ross (1970), are to be found in several of the articles in Cole & Morgan (1975). There is a full critique in Gazdar (1976).



*door*), but also indirectly, by (i) asserting that a speaker-based sincerity condition holds (e.g., *I want you to open the door*) or (ii) questioning whether an addressee-based sincerity condition holds (e.g., *Can you open the door?*). This proposal has been generalized and extended, with certain modifications, to other kinds of illocutionary acts by Heringer (1972). As Heringer points out, one may indirectly perform an illocutionary act, not only by questioning, but also by asserting, an addressee-based condition: so that, not only *Can you open the door?*, but also *You can open the door*, may be used as a mand.

For the purposes of the present section, there are just two points to be made in connexion with the notion of indirect illocutionary acts. The first is that it blurs the distinction between the meaning of a sentence and the illocutionary force of an utterance; or rather, it introduces the possibility that an utterance may have two kinds of illocutionary force, which we may refer to as its actual and its incidental illocutionary force. For example, *I want you to do it* may be meant incidentally as a statement, but actually as a request – “a request made by way of making a statement” (cf. Searle, 1975: 59). The incidental illocutionary force of an utterance is directly determined by the grammatical structure of the sentence that is used in making the utterance; the actual illocutionary force of an utterance is derivable from the meaning of the sentence and its incidental illocutionary force, according to the principles discussed by Gordon and Lakoff (1971), Heringer (1972) and Searle (1975). For example, *Can you tell me the time?* and *Do you know what time it is?* are perhaps most commonly uttered in order to make a request; and this, their actual illocutionary force, is explicable in terms of the principles which govern the performance of indirect illocutionary acts. We do not have to say that, when the sentence *Can you tell me the time?* is used to make a request, it no longer has its literal meaning. We can say instead that the sentence may be used, without any change of meaning, either directly to ask a question or indirectly to make a request; and, if it is used indirectly to make a request, it has two kinds of illocutionary force. It is because it can always be understood, at least incidentally, as a question, that it can also be held, in context and in terms of what Grice (1975) calls conversational implicatures (cf. 14.3), to imply, or implicate, a particular request.

The second, and more important, point is that the sincerity conditions that are asserted or questioned in the performance of indirect illocutionary acts all have to do with the knowledge, beliefs, will and abilities of the participants; and these, as we shall see, are the factors which are