AUSTIN, STRAWSON AND THE CORRESPONDENCE THEORY OF LANGUAGE

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I

Logical atomism is largely characterized by adherence to a certain theory of language, The Picture Theory of Language (the PTL), which consists of the following four propositions:

P1. Language is one thing, the world is another.
P2. In a logically perfect language, all of the meaningful words must correlate with objects in a one-to-one correspondence.
P3. In a logically perfect language, the structure of language is identical with the structure of the world.
P4. The relationship between language and the world is that of mirroring or picturing.

It is correctly held that the Picture Theory of Language did not survive the criticisms first of logical positivism and then of the "ordinary language" philosophers. Yet, although it did not survive, a logically weaker version of the same basic theory rose from its ashes, The Correspondence Theory of Language (the CTL), which is characterized by four similar propositions:

C1. Language is one thing, the world is another.
C2. At least some of the elements of language correlate with some objects in the world.
C3. The basic structure of language must be similar to the basic structure of the world.
C4. The relation between words and the world is conventional.

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To begin, I shall briefly explain and compare these two theories of language.

P1 is *prima facie* odd. Language certainly is a part of the world. More concretely, individual words, tokens if not types, help stock the world. Yet P1 is implicit in the contrast Wittgenstein repeatedly draws between language and the world (e. g., 4.014). In certain passages the contrast is explicit.

2.19 Logical pictures depict the world.
4.04 Reality is compared with propositions.

Since pictures depict from a point outside what is pictured, 2.19 entails that language is outside the world; and since any comparison involves at least two things, 4.04 entails the same conclusion, that propositions must be other than reality. This position is more poetically expressed in his *Notebooks, 1914-1916*, for example, "The picture must now in its turn cast its shadow on the world" (6.11.14), and quite graphically there also
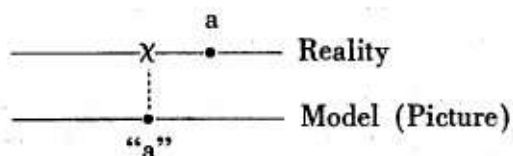
Although the poetry and images go, C1 itself comes over unamended though it is no more plausible today than it was half a century ago. Yet subscription to it is so widespread that its acceptance cannot be denied. It is not uncommon for a philosopher to introduce his book as "an attempt to contribute to an understanding of the relation between language and the world." [1] John Searle claims at the beginning of *Speech Acts* that one of the most basic questions for the philosophy of

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[1] Jack W. Meiland, *Talking About Particulars* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), xiv; see also xiii.

language is "How do words relate to the world?" and at least three recent books in philosophy and linguistics bear the title *Word and Object*, or some variant on it. We might say that acceptance of P1 and C1 is explicit but not self-conscious.

This initial separation of words from things is more a presupposition than a theorem. It is never proved nor even elaborated; it is axiomatic. It is also problem generating. Once the line between language and the world is drawn, the trick is to unite them. This is the task that exercises philosophers. What requires discussion for them, so it seems, is not what it means or why it is thought to be true but how it is possible for words and things to get connected. In other words, P1 motivates P2 — P4, and C1 motivates C2 — C4.

P2 and C2. For logical atomists, language attaches to the world through relationships that hold between words and their meanings, the meanings of words being objects in the world. Words make up sentences or propositions; objects make up facts. The hook up is envisioned as a one-to-one correspondence between the meaningful words in a proposition and the objects in a fact. Thus Russell says,

> In a logically perfect language, the words in a proposition would correspond one by one with components of the corresponding fact . . . In a logically perfect language, there will be one word and no more for every simple object, and everything that is not simple will be expressed by a combination of words, by a combination derived, of course, from the words for the simple things that enter in, one word for each simple component.[2]

Atomists disagreed about which words are correlated with which objects. Wittgenstein, whose world consisted of objects without qualities, objects that had nothing to be said for them,

[2] Bertrand Russell, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", *Logical and Knowledge* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), 197-198.

so to say, restricted the meaningful words to the logically proper names, those which had simple objects for their meanings.

3.203   A name means an object. The object is its meaning.
3.22   In a proposition a name is the representative of an object.

At about the same time, Russell, who was lavish by comparison, counted among the objects of the world not only particulars but universals (relations of various ranks beginning with "monadic" relations). Thus not only did "this"s and "that"s attach to thises and thats, but some common nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions, all of which he called common names, attached to universals, e.g., "red" to redness and "above" to aboveness.

Russell's ontology of particulars and universals and its ministering language, which is orthodoxy itself, is followed by Austin and Strawson in their own fashion, as we shall see. C2 is weaker than P2 but sustantially the same. Talk of logically perfect languages, as the requirement of one-to-one correspondence, is dropped as interest in natural languages increases. Common nouns such as "cat" attach to many objects, each cat, and words such as "good", "true", and "beautiful" are said to be meaningful even though they are unattached. Meaning however is no longer considered the primary way in which words attach to the world. Talk of meaning is replaced by talk of referring, describing and such.

P3 and C3 express the main, if not the sole purpose of language, the representation of reality, which it accomplishes via its structure. Proponents of both the PTL and CTL subscribe to the postulate Russell expressed so clearly: "there will always be a certain fundamental identity of structure between a fact and a symbol for it".[3] The structural representation is accomplished in either or both of two ways: through the syntactic structure of the sentence or the semantic cate-

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[3] *Ibid.*, 197.

gories of the meaningful items. The world with the most frugal ontology, that of the *Tractatus*, is completely represented by the syntactic structure of the proposition. Since in a logically perfect language, each meaningful word is attached to an object, the structure of a fact is represented by the syntactic structure of a proposition. Suppose the world consists of two objects, named by "a" and "b". Then the syntactic structure of "ab" says that a is next to b; it expresses a world quite different from one correctly expressed by "ba", "^a_b" or "$^{ab}_a$". Since the simple objects are featureless, there are no "descriptive" words. Each meaningful word is a proper name, and serves the same function, that of referring to or picking out an object. The next most frugal ontology, Russell's, contains two kinds of objects, particulars and universals, and is represented by semantic as well as syntactic features of language. Semantically, words are assigned to one of two lexical categories according to the type of object they have as their meaning. Words that have particulars as their meanings are proper names; words that have universals as their meanings are common (descriptive) names. Syntactically, two different sentence functions are distinguished, subjects and predicates. Language interrelates syntax and semantics by assigning specific lexical categories to specific sentence functions; supposedly only proper names can function as subjects, only common names can be predicates.

The CTL, having forsaken the idea of a logically perfect language, awakes from the impossible dream of perfect representation while remaining committed to the view that the basic structure of reality is represented by language. Because the traditional particular-universal ontology is still favored, so is the division of sentence functions into subject and predicate. Lexical categories are sometimes neglected, but not always, and here again something akin to the proper name-common name dichotomy operates.

P4 and C4. Since the meaningful linguistic and non-linguistic items were supposed to match up one-to-one and since

the structure of one was supposed to be identical with the structure of the other, it was natural for proponents of the PTL to think of the relation between language and the world as that of mirroring. Thus Wittgenstein says, "logic . . . mirrors the world" (5.511), and Russell: "The fact that two things stand in a certain relation to each other, or any statement of that sort, has a complexity of its own. I shall therefore in the future assume that there is an objective complexity in the world, and that it is mirrored by the complexity of propositions."[4]

For proponents of the CTL, with one-to-one correspondence and isomorphism gone, mirroring goes also. Proponents of the CTL insist the correspondence between language and the world is merely conventional. Language is governed by rules instituted by the community of speakers. Certain words correlate with certain things because people use just those words to mean just those things. Common usage establishes the correlation; so the correlation is conventional. Originally and for the most part this agreement is tacit and *de facto,* though not always. The French Academy holds the power of correlating words and things explicitly and *de jure.* Conventional correlations allow the observation of regularities in speech from which rules for the use of words can be abstracted.

II

It is my contention that two of the most distinguished British philosophers of mid-century, J. L. Austin and P. F. Strawson, are to be counted among the adherents of the CTL. While detailing their specific versions of the theory is far beyond the scope of this paper, one can establish that both are committed to the CTL by focusing on their exchange of views at the symposium on truth sponsored by the Aristotelian Society in 1950 and the papers generated by that initial exchange.

[4] *Ibid.*

In addition to connecting the philosophy of language of the first half-century to that of the second half, studying the symposium from the point of view of the CTL helps put the Austin-Strawson debate into perspective. It is commonly held but false in my opinion that the basic issues debated at the symposium fundamentally and irreconcilably divided Austin and Strawson. We can falsify that commonplace by showing that each accepts the CTL. The appearance of division will persist however until an explanation of their differences is forthcoming. As Strawson, sensing some fundamental agreement, said almost fifteen years after the symposium, "there is something absurd about the continuation of this appearance of vast disagreement" (69).[5] Unfortunately, although Strawson purports to dispel the appearance at the end of "A Problem about Truth—A Reply to Mr. Warnock", his remarks are so grudging that they do more to aggravate than relieve the situation. The same can be said for his paper "Truth: A Reconsideration of Austin's Views", which appeared at about the same time and in which he concludes that Austin's theory of truth

> is really unsatisfactory in all of its distinctive features. I would agree that my 1950 reading of it was inaccurate, but I do not think it could be said to have been ungenerously restrictive. For that reading at least allowed the formula some application; but when carefully read it seems doubtful whether it has any.[6]

So it is still necessary to dispel the appearance of vast disagreement. It is also held that Strawson by and large bested

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[5] Both Austin's and Strawson's contributions to the symposium are reprinted in George Pitcher (ed.), *Truth* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964). Also included in this volume are G. J. Warnock's "A Problem About Truth", and Strawson's "A Problem About Truth—A Reply to Mr. Warnock". Page references to the articles included in Pitcher's volume will be embedded in parentheses whenever convenient.

[6] P. F. Strawson, "Truth: A Reconsideration of Austin's Views", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, XV (1965), 300.

Austin in just about every disputed issue. This too seems to me false; and I shall argue that their views converged over the years.

Section III contains a sketch of their adherence to the CTL. Section IV contains more detailed comments on their versions of the CTL and the nature and degree of their disagreements.

III

Austin's statement of his acceptance of C1 is quite explicit. He says that communication requires words and "something other than words, which the words are used to communicate about; this may be called 'the world'" (22; see also 24). Strawson swears his allegiance to C1, as well as C2, in expressing at several places his agreement with Austin on this point. "Mr. Austin rightly says or implies . . . that for some of the purposes for which we use language, there must be conventions correlating the words of our language with what is to be found in the world" (41). Again, in urging the stronger point that this necessity holds also for words used in commands and questions, Strawson says there is "no less need for a conventional correlation between the word and the world" (41). Again, he says "for B's statement to be true, it is, *of course*, necessary that the words used by A in making the statement should stand in a certain conventional (semantical) relationship with the world; and that the 'linguistic rules' underlying this relationship should be rules 'observed' by both A and B" (43). And Strawson reaffirmed his commitment to C1 and C4 when he reconsidered the issues between himself and Austin years later: "a statement is true when there is a . . . certain 'purely conventional' relation between words and the world" (83; see also 84).

Although both accept C2 and C3, Austin and Strawson had different ideas about the machinery of word-world hook up. Strawson, who has a conventional theory of subjects and predicates attaching to particulars and universals, has never seen fit to alter his views. Austin, on the other hand, later aban-

doned the unorthodox rendering of C2 and C3 he presented in 1950.

Drawing on but transforming Frege's theory, Austin distinguishes two different semantic relations which are established by two different types of conventions, descriptive and demonstrative conventions (22). The relation established by the descriptive conventions is analogous to Frege's notion of meaning (*Sinn*); the relation established by the demonstrative conventions is analogous to Frege's notion of reference (*Bedeutung*). Unlike Frege, who attached both meaning and reference to words, phrases, and sentences alike (with some unimportant exceptions), Austin does not think that every word, phrase and sentence is governed by each type of convention, though some are. Common nouns, adjectives, verbs, prepositions and so on are governed, for the most part, I take it, by descriptive conventions and determine the meaning of a sentence as ordinarily conceived; verb-tense and extra-linguistic devices such as time and place of utterance, are governed by demonstrative conventions, and determine the reference of a statement.

The relations effected by the descriptive conventions attach sentences to types of situations in the world. The connection with meaning seems to be this. To know what type of situation in the world a sentence attaches to is to know its truth conditions, and to know a sentence's truth conditions is to know the meaning of the sentence. But meaning is not everything. Austin, like Frege, recognizes that to know the meaning of a sentence is not thereby to know what particular situation a statement made by the use of that sentence refers to. The particular situation referred to is a function of the demonstrative conventions which pick out a particular situation from all the particular situations of the type correlated with the sentence used in making the statement. In other words, the descriptive conventions, activated when a grammatical string of words is produced, connect these words with a type of situation, event, or thing in the world. The demonstrative conventions, activated whenever a grammatical string

of words is used to make a statement, connect those words with a particular situation, thing or event on that occasion.

So explained, the distinction between descriptive and demonstrative conventions seems clear enough. Problems arise however when one attempts to apply the distinction to actual cases. Consider the dilemma that results from attempting to apply the distinction to the sentence "This is red". Either the convention governing "this" (which is a demonstrative convention) enters into the explanation of the meaning of the sentence or it does not. If it does, then a demonstrative convention is relevant to sentence meaning. But this contradicts the requirement that demonstrative conventions will not be relevant to sentences but to statements. If, on the other hand, it does not, then the meaning of the sentence must be understood without reference to the conventions governing "this". In this case, the entire meaning of "This is red" would be revealed by the conventions governing "is" and "red" or "is red". But it is evident that the meaning of the phrase "is red" is not the same as the meaning of the sentence "This is red".

The dilemma arises because the distinction between descriptive and demonstrative conventions is badly drawn. Demonstrative words and demonstrative conventions are every bit as relevant to specifying a type of situation as so-called descriptive words and descriptive conventions. "This" can be used to refer to *any* particular; the present tense of the verb can be used to refer to *any* present time; the past tense to *any* past time; the future to *any* future time. "Now" can be used to refer to *any* present time and "here" to *any* place near at hand. Each of these demonstrative elements helps determine different types of situations. In the case of "this" simply compare "A ball is red" with "This ball is red". The latter is correctly used in those situations where a red ball is actually present, the former is not. To see this for verb tense, compare "A man is here" with "A man was here". The latter is correctly used in the type of situation where a man no longer is present but was, the former is not. What Austin thinks of as demonstrative *conventions* are not conventions

at all. They apply to particular situations, not to anything established by usage. Austin's demonstrative conventions are actually the instantiations of his descriptive conventions.

Austin himself became disenchanted with his original way of satisfying C2 and C3. By 1952 he had adopted a quite familiar way of satisfying C2 and C3, a quite familiar way of explaining how we "use language for talking about the world". The world Austin describes, a simplified model of our own, consists of two kinds of objects, particulars, which he calls "items", and universals, which he calls "types". The particulars and universals are such that each particular belongs to one and only one type. The language which Austin describes consists of sentences of but one form:

<div align="center">I is a T.[7]</div>

"I" and "T" designate two different functions within the sentence, the familiar subject and predicate roles of traditional grammar and philosophy. Each function place takes words from a specific lexical category: I-words occupy the I-function place; T-words occupy the T-function place. Austin then describes how language hooks to the world.

> In order for this language to be used for talking about this world, two sets of (semantic) conventions will be needed. I-conventions, or conventions of *reference*, are needed in order to fix which item it is that the vocable which is to be an I-word is to refer to on each (and in our simple case, on *every*) occasion of the uttering (assertive) of a sentence containing it ... T-conventions, or conventions of *sense*, are needed in order to associate the vocables which are to be T-words with the item-types, one to one .... [8].

[7] J. L. Austin, "How to Talk: Some Simple Ways", in J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (eds.), *Philosophical Papers*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 134; see also 137.
[8] *Ibid.*, 135-136.

Thus I-words are linked to particulars via what he no longer calls demonstrative conventions but conventions of reference; T-words are linked to types via what he no longer calls descriptive conventions but conventions of sense. Thus did Austin's further reflections on the nature of language yield a completely orthodox and traditional view of the relation between language and the world.

In 1950, Strawson interpreted Austin as already in possession of his later view and hence believed that he was representing Austin's position as much as his own. Speaking of subject-predicate sentences, Strawson says,

> In using such sentences to make statements, we refer to a thing or person (object) in order to go on to characterize it (we demonstrate in order to describe)... When we refer correctly, there certainly is a conventionally established relation between the words, so used, and the thing to which we refer. When we describe correctly, there certainly is a conventionally established relation between the words we use in describing and the type of thing or person we describe (36).

Their agreement that the world consists of particulars and universals to which certain words attach in two specific ways by conventional correspondence made the misinterpretation easy, made, that is, the identification of his conventions of reference and description with Austin's demonstrative and descriptive conventions easy. We have already pointed out Strawson's error of interpretation to which he himself admitted in 1965. Strawson's conventions apply to the subject and predicate functions of sentences; Austin's do not. When we make a true statement with a subject-predicate sentence, there is, according to Strawson, a correspondence between the subject term of the sentence uttered and the object to which it refers. The subject of the sentence correlates to a particular thing. The predicate correlates to the universal it signifies. Strawson says, for example, "the quality or property the

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referent is said to 'possess' is the *pseudo*-material correlate".
Strawson calls it "the *pseudo*-material correlate", I take it,
because universals are not material objects, at least not for
the most part.[9]

One of Strawson's other expressions of this view is less
clear. He says, "When we describe correctly, there certainly
is a conventionally established relation between the words
we use in describing and the type of thing or person we de-
scribe" (36). This remark suggests that the words we use in
describing are correlated with the kind of thing that the sub-
ject-expression signifies, because what is described is what
is talked about, the reference of the sentence. But if this were
the case, then if someone correctly described his jacket in
saying, "My ski-jacket is blue", there would be a conven-
tional correspondence between ski-jackets and the phrase "is
blue". But this is absurd. To make sense of Strawson's re-
mark, we must understand it as saying that the correlation
holds between the words used to describe and the kind of
thing which makes the object describable as such. Notice that
in each of the passages which specify the connection between
words and the world, Strawson is thinking primarily of the
subject and predicate sentence functions. This neglect of the
role lexical categories play is not typical of him. His full
theory, which is presented in *Individuals*, includes a rather
sophisticated theory of lexical categories.[10]

Because Strawson's acceptance of C4 in connection with
C1 has been cited, it remains to mention Austin's discussion
of the nature of the correlation between words and the world
which is compendious.

> The only essential point is this: that the correla-
> tion between the words (=sentences) and the
> type of situation, event, etc. . . . is *absolutely*
> and *purely* conventional. We are absolutely free

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[9] One kind of universal, feature universals, are material according to Straw-
son. See "Particular and General", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*,
LIV (1953-54), 235.

[10] See *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959), 168-182, 208-218.

to appoint *any* symbol to describe *any* type of situation, so far as merely being true goes... There is no need whatsoever for the words used in making a true statement to "mirror" in any way, however indirect, any feature whatsoever of the situation or event; a statement no more needs, in order to be true, to reproduce the "multiplicity", say, or the "structure" or "form" of the reality, than a word needs to be echoic or writing pictographic (24).

Austin's explicit denial that he has mirroring in mind is significant. By denying that he is propounding a Picture Theory of Language, Austin is implying that he holds a weaker version, which I claim is the CTL. Notice that he does not deny that the structure or form of reality is in some way to some extent captured in the structure of language. What he denies is that the similarity he is advocating is onomatopoeic or pictorial reproduction. Had Austin denied that there was *any* kind of similarity between the structures of language and reality, then he would have been denying adherence to the CTL.

Notice also that in rejecting the "mirroring" relation in behalf of the "conventional" relation, Austin sounds as if he is using "conventional" to mean "arbitrary" as in the above remark where he explains "conventional" as being "absolutely free to appoint *any* symbol to describe *any* type of situation..." (24). Whereas "arbitrary" in the sense implied by Austin's remark means "arising from will or caprice" or "selected at random or without reason", "conventional" in the sense relevant here means "generally agreed to" or "commonly accepted by usage".[11] Thus conventional correspon-

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[11] The difference between "conventional" and "arbitrary" is obviously great. Cabinet members are appointed according to a conventional procedure, but the procedure is not arbitrary. An arbitrary procedure in this and any number of other cases would be disastrous. Further, the absolute freedom that Austin suggests belongs to people in appointing meaning to words belongs to people as a whole, not to individuals. Finally, new words are not assigned meanings arbitrarily for the most part, but with good supporting reasons. It is not by

dence between words and things is the correlation which is established between words and things according to the rules of usage agreed upon by the speakers of the language, as explicated in our discussion of C4.

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

Since Austin and Strawson are generally interpreted as holding deeply different views, their common adherence to the CTL should be surprising. After all, Austin confesses his faith in the correspondence theory of truth, albeit to the Protestant sect that professes the belief that a statement (as opposed to a sentence, belief, proposition, etc.) is true when it corresponds to the facts (as opposed to things, situations, propositions, etc.) while Strawson renounces the faith: "The correspondence theory requires, not purification, but elimination" (32). Strawson's opposition to Austin's view seems verified by the excoriating arguments that dominate his contribution.

Doubtless differences exist, the most important of which revolve around statements, facts and the use of "true" or "is true". Yet even here their differences are larded with agreement, and thus understanding the latter will also throw light on the former.

Their dispute over the nature of statements and facts arises from their agreement that conventional correspondence is a dyadic relation between a linguistic and non-linguistic term. They agree in calling the totality of linguistic terms language and the totality of non-linguistic terms the world, to use a neutral terminology; and they would agree in calling the particular linguistic terms words and the particular non-linguistic terms things, to use equally neutral terminology. Disagreement begins when the name-calling involves the non-neutral terminology of "statement" and "fact". Austin maintained that "statement" is still another name for the linguistic

accident that automobiles and astronauts are so-called. When a word is coined there is usually something to back up its minting besides the need for a new word, namely, a good reason for a certain word to be chosen.

term and "fact" still another name for the non-linguistic term. Strawson strenuously disagreed. "Statement" and "fact" are not names for the terms of the relation between language and the world but are according to him, I shall argue, two names for the relation itself.

The disagreement stems from alternative linguistic analyses of the words "fact" and "statement". Austin thought that statements and facts were just other names for words and things because he thought that in the relevant senses whatever could be said of one could be said of the other, respectively; that one was substitutable for the other. Strawson disagreed; he thought that Austin's linguistic analysis of the words "statement" and "fact" was defective.

With regard to statement, Austin and Strawson agreed that they rather than sentences *tout court* are true or false. Austin held that a statement is a sentence used by a certain person on a certain occasion to say something true or false. Statements, however, are not alone in having truth-values. Beliefs, descriptions, accounts, sentences and words are some of the other principal candidates for being the "primary bearers" of truth and falsity. Yet, Austin elects statements, because only they appear among the primary forms of expressions of truth:

It is true (to say) that the cat is on the mat.
That statement (of his, etc.) is true.
The statement that the cat is on the mat is true (19).

All the other candidates are reducible to some form of these primary expressions. The reduction of words and sentences is relevant here. Austin concedes that words and sentences are said to be true or false "only in certain senses" (20). The sense is not the philologist's, lexicographer's, grammarian's, or printer's. When words or sentences are said to be true or false, they refer "to the words or sentence *as used by a certain person on a certain occasion.* That is, they refer . . . to *statements*" (20).

Three different elements comprising Austin's characterization of "statement" can be distinguished: (1) statements are

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sentences, that is, a certain kind of linguistic entity; (2) statements are made in and are relative to a certain kind of context; (3) statements are true or false. Strawson categorically denied (1); statements are no kind of linguistic entity nor anything else in the world for that matter. As for (2) and (3), Strawson thought that these indicated not different characteristics of statements but rather different senses of the word "statement", namely a process sense and a product sense respectively. In its process sense "statement" designates a certain speech act, a person's act of saying something; a person's saying something is an episode. It is this sense that is intended when we say a person's statement was interrupted. In its other sense "statement" designates what is said as a result of that speech act. It is what he says (as opposed to his saying it) which we declare to be true. Thus Strawson denied that (2) is true in the sense of "statement" which makes (3) true. In sum, in 1950 Strawson and Austin recognized the same distinctions or elements relevant to the analysis of statements but essentially disagreed about the roles they played.

I know of no evidence that Austin ever abandoned this view. His latest remarks about statements are consistent with his earlier ones; he says, " 'sentences' are (used in making) statements . . . It is, of course, not really correct that a sentence ever *is* a statement; rather, it is used in *making a statement* . . .".[12] Thus, I know of no evidence for G. J. Warnock's thesis that Austin's position was always identical with Strawson's (67) and that Strawson, in seemingly noting discrepancies, misinterpreted Austin.[13] Warnock claims, doubtless with the best intentions, that the supposed misinterpretation is the result of "two curious, but not . . . very important slips which Austin's paper contains" (67, note 4) but presents no argument or evidence for this claim. Strawson, persuaded by

[12] J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, J. O. Urmson (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 1.

[13] Many philosophers, including Strawson, accepted Warnock's thesis. *Op. cit.*, note 6, 289.

Warnock's insistence, attributes the problem to "an error in drafting".[14] But as Warnock admits, no single error of drafting is involved. Austin indicates in several places that statements are certain kinds of linguistic entities: "Words and sentences are indeed said to be true..." (20): *"The words taken in this sense ... are true"* (20); "the words or sentences *as used by a certain person on a certain occasion* ... are *statements*" (20); and "words (=statements)..." (22). (The italics are Austin's.) *An* error of drafting might be plausible, several are not, in light of the care Austin exercised in saying exactly what he wanted to say in the way he wanted to say it. Finally, nowhere in Austin's contribution to the symposium is there any evidence that Austin held the view Warnock attributes to him.

True statements are closely related to facts, so closely that it is tempting to conflate them, according to Austin. The temptation arises because the use of "fact" in large part parallels the use of "true statement". For example, any sentence of the form "The fact is that S" is equivalent to any sentence of the form "The statement that S is true" where "S" is a variable for a sentential clause. Moreover, when people consider the facts, they do not consider non-linguistic entities as a rule but consider certain true statements. Facts are stated as are statements, and for every true statement there is a fact. Finally, according to Austin, "'Fact that' is a phrase designed for use in situations where the distinction between a true statement and the state of affairs about which it is a truth is neglected" (23-24) in non-philosophical discourse. Such a view, however, overlooks the divergence between true statements and facts, e.g., that true statements describe facts but facts themselves do not.

According to Austin a fact is what makes a statement true and is a thing or a complex of things in the world. Strawson half agrees with this. He agrees that facts are what make statements true—"What 'makes the statement' that the cat

[14] *Ibid.*

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has mange 'true', is not the cat, but the condition of the cat, i.e., the fact that the cat has mange" (37)—and also subscribes to Austin's view that facts and true statements are connected—"Of course, statements and facts fit. They were made for each other" (39).

But he denies that a fact is a thing or complex of things in the world: "The only plausible candidate for the position of what (in the world) makes the statement true is the fact it states; but the fact it states is not something in the world" (37). He claims three main linguistic facts to support this point, each of which Austin contests. (*i*) He claims that "while we certainly say that a statement corresponds to (fits, is borne out by, agrees with) the facts, as a variant on saying that it is true, we *never* say that a statement corresponds to the thing, person, etc., that it is about" (37). Further (*ii*) we may say of something in the world that it was witnessed, heard, broken, overturned, interrupted, prolonged, kicked, destroyed, mended or noisy, while this is never true of facts. Facts are known, learned, forgotten, overlooked, commented on. (*iii*) Strawson contends that at the root of Austin's error of equating facts with things in the world is an assimilation of stating and referring. Statements state facts, as Austin said, but they do not refer to them.

Strawson ties referring to aboutness. "That (person, thing, etc.) to which the referring part of the statement refers . . . is that which the statement is *about*" (36). According to Strawson, what a statement is about, the referent of the statement, is what (in the world) the subject of the sentence (used to make the statement) designates. The referent is not stated, rather something is stated about the referent in a statement. In addition, facts make statements true; but the referent does not make the statement true, although a referent is a precondition for a true statement. The fact that makes a statement true is not an object (simpliciter) signified by a referring expression in the sentence.

Whatever force these criticisms have, they did not convince Austin, who systematically rebutted each of Strawson's objec-

tions in a paper delivered to the Philosophical Society in
Oxford in 1954. Answering Strawson in kind, Austin notes
certain linguistic facts of his own and corrects Strawson's
linguistic intuitions. (*i*) Austin for example claims that phe-
nomena, events, situations, and states of affairs are com-
monly supposed to be genuinely-in-the-world and that they
are facts.[15] "The collapse of the Germans is an event and is a
fact—was an event and was a fact."[16] (*ii*) While many of the
things Strawson says about facts and things are true, e.g.,
things, but not facts, can be broken, he does not tell the whole
story. Both facts and things can be witnessed and observed
and are objects of personal acquaintance,[17] and saying that
facts are what statements, when true, state is as informative
as saying that births are what birth certificates, when ac-
curate, certify, or that events are what narratives, when true,
narrate. (*iii*) Austin refuses to bank anything on the meaning
of "about", and he thinks Strawson ought not to try either.
The word is too vague to decide anything about what is or
is not in the world. Nevertheless, if someone thinks "about" is
so important, it ought to be noted that it is not at all excluded
from "fact"-discourse. Facts "are both what we forget and
what we forget about, both what we know and what we know
about . . .".[18]

I do not know whether Strawson was in attendance when
Austin read "Unfair to Facts", but he certainly brought his
views in line with Austin's on the nature of facts. For instance,
Strawson commandeers Austin's point about the vagueness of
"about" to criticize P. T. Geach's characterization of the dis-
tinction between subjects and predicates. Geach holds that a
subject stands for what an assertion is *about*. Strawson objects.
While it makes sense to say that an assertion made by the
use of the sentence "Raleigh smokes" is about what "Raleigh"
stands for, "it is also plain that there might be circumstances

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[15] Cf. Austin's "Unfair to Facts", *Philosophical Papers*, 168.
[16] *Ibid.*, 156. Cf. Zeno Vendler, "Facts and Events", *Linguistics in Philo-
sophy* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967).
[17] *Loc cit.*, note 15.
[18] *Ibid.*, 169.

in which it would be correct to say of someone using the sentence that he was talking *about* smoking ... [This suggests] that Geach's definitions rest on sand in so far as they rest on the distinguishing powers of the word 'about'."[19] Moreover, Strawson now relies heavily upon the notion of a fact as something in the world. Facts are not merely admitted to the world; they become the basic constituents of the world! In *Individuals,* Strawson appeals to the notion of a fact when he specifies the most basic or fundamental structure of reality, that is, when he resolves "the complexity of the particular" into its component parts. Particulars, which Strawson thinks are ontologically most fundamental for constructing the stable spatio-temporal world, are themselves resolved into facts. Strawson says,

> the particular is a construction from facts ... We must ultimately find facts which supply a basis for some particulars, but in which neither particulars of any kind, nor sortal universals instantiated by particulars of any kind, are constituents ...
>
> So the fundamental picture, or metaphor, I offer is that of the particular resting on, or unfolding into, a fact. It is in this sense that the thought of a definite particular is a complete thought ...
>
> If any facts deserve, in terms of this picture, to be called ultimate or atomic facts, it is the facts stated by those propositions which demonstratively indicate the incidence of a general feature. These ultimate facts do not contain particulars as constituents but they provide the basis for the step to subject-predicate proposition.[20]

So the fundament of reality is a certain kind of fact, an atomic fact, which is the referent of a "feature-placing" state-

[19] *Op. cit.,* note 10, 144.
[20] *Ibid.,* 210, 211-212.

ment.[21] It follows that more complex constitutents of reality are molecular facts.

Though we have shown that Strawson later came to hold Austin's views about facts, we have not explained what his view was in 1950, just as we have neglected a positive account of his view of statements. The neglect was intentional. Statements and facts must be considered together. Although there are other types of statements, at least one of which stakes a claim to ontological basicness, Strawson restricted his comments at the symposium to those statements and facts expressed by subject-predicate sentences, and so by "statement" I shall mean "subject-predicate statement".

As explained earlier, attachment to the world for subject-predicate sentences is effected via two types of conventions: conventions of reference and conventions of description. The conventions of reference attach the subject of the sentence to the thing in the world identified by the subject, if there is such a thing.[22] Reference itself is the relation obtaining between the subject expression and the object identified.[23] The conventions of description attach the predicate to the thing predicated (some universal) of the object identified. Description itself is the relation obtaining between the predicate expression and the universal predicated.[24] With the addition of Strawson's definition of "statement", his view of statements becomes plain: a statement is "reference-cum-description" (36). In other words, a statement is a compound relation consisting of the relations reference and description.

Because of the close connections of statements and facts —"Of course, statements and facts fit. They were made for each other. If you prize the statements off the world you prize the facts off it too; but the world would be none the poorer"

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[21] *Ibid.*, 202-204.

[22] I will not discuss the complications of a sentence used to express a statement when there is nothing for the subject to connect with.

[23] More correctly, reference is a tetradic relation between a speaker, hearer, subject and object.

[24] Again, more correctly, description is a tetradic relation between a speaker, hearer, predicate and what is predicated.

(39; see also 41)—it should not be surprising that facts are relations too. Thus Strawson says the words "fact" and "statement" have "a certain type of word-world relating discourse (the informative) *built in* to them" (41). That is to say, statements and facts are the relations between words and the world.

Independent of this consideration, Strawson's position that facts are relations could be inferred by process of elimination. In Strawson's theory of language there are just four elements. The dyadic relation between words and the world, the linguistic term (the words) and the non-linguistic term (the world) and the conventions that establish the relations. That facts are not conventions needs no argument. That facts are neither term of the relation is evidenced explicitly by several important remarks. Strawson denies that facts are "non-linguistic correlates" (41) or anything else in the world (37), and he denies that they are any kind of term when he refers to them as "pseudo-entities" (41). This leaves facts to be relations. Given that statements and facts are relations, how are they connected? The answer, I think, is that true statements and facts are converse relations. The extension of "true statement" is a set of ordered pairs consisting of a linguistic term (a sentence) and a non-linguistic term (things in the world). The extension of "fact" is the set of conversely ordered pairs. Thus, for any given true statement $\langle s,t \rangle$ there is a corresponding fact $\langle t,s \rangle$. A consequence of this view is that anything stated truly is a fact and that any fact is stated truly, and further that the existence of facts depends upon the existence of words used assertively. Strawson recognizes this and consequently holds that if a language did not contain statements, facts "would no more be found" (41).

It is only by interpreting Strawson in this way that his most trenchant criticism of Austin's view of statements is intelligible, namely that to consider facts as things in the world is absurd. As Strawson puts it: "the demand that there should be such a relation is logically absurd: a logically fundamental type-mistake" (37). Austin's category mistake,

according to Strawson, consists of thinking that a fact is a term of a relation (that of contentional correspondence) when it is actually the relation itself.

So Austin's and Strawson's disagreement about whether "fact" and "statement" name the terms of the relations of conventional correspondence stems from their agreement that there are such terms and relations.

V

To take stock, then, Austin and Strawson were in basic agreement at the symposium on truth about the basic structures and mechanisms of language; both accepted a weaker version of the Picture Theory of Language, which most philosophers believe was killed root and branch at least twenty-five years ago, in part by Austin and Strawson themselves. And not only were they basically agreed at that time, but the distance between them on several other points has narrowed over the years, so that for all intents and purposes they stand together, the beneficiaries of logical atomism.

RESUMEN

Es una opinión muy extendida la de mantener que la Teoría Representativa del Lenguaje (*Picture Theory of Language*; TRL en adelante), cuya presentación más fuerte la hizo Wittgenstein en el *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, no sobrevivió al ataque que él mismo le hizo en sus *Investigaciones Filosóficas* y al que le hicieron los filósofos del "lenguaje ordinario" de Oxford. En este ensayo sostengo que la TRL sobrevive. de hecho, en Oxford, mostrando que tanto J. L. Austin como P. F. Strawson aceptan la que llamaré La Teoría del Lenguaje de la Correspondencia (TLC), que consta de las siguientes cuatro proposiciones:

C1. El lenguaje es una cosa, el mundo es otra.
C2. Cuando menos algunos de los elementos del lenguaje están correlacionados con algunos objetos en el mundo.
C3. La estructura básica del lenguaje debe ser similar a la estructura básica del mundo.
C4. La relación entre palabras y mundo es convencional.

Estas proposiciones son, o bien las mismas o bien tan sólo ligeramente más débiles que cuatro proposiciones que caracterizan la TRL:

P1. El lenguaje es una cosa, el mundo es otra.
P2. En un lenguaje lógicamente perfecto, todas las palabras significativas deben correlacionarse con objetos en una correspondencia uno a uno.
P3. En un lenguaje lógicamente perfecto, la estructura del lenguaje es idéntica con la estructura del mundo.
P4. La relación entre el lenguaje y el mundo es la de reflejo o representación (*picturing*).

A fin de probar que Austin y Strawson aceptan la TLC, estudio su largo debate, que se inicia en 1950 con el simposio sobre *Verdad*, en la Aristotelian Society, y que continuó por muchos años. con G. J. Warnock defendiendo la posición de Austin a la muerte de éste. Uno de los aspectos interesantes de esta historia es que las posiciones de Austin y de Strawson tuvieron la tendencia a convergir en puntos que originalmente los dividían; esta convergencia está en consonancia con la aceptación, por parte de ambos, de la TLC.

Así pues, en contra de la opinión aceptada, Austin y Strawson tenían un acuerdo filosófico básico en 1950; siendo los puntos que los separaban relativamente menores y superables. Y, lo que comparten Austin y Strawson, es una creencia sobre ciertas opiniones acerca de la naturaleza del lenguaje; opiniones que parcialmente caracterizan al atomismo lógico.

(Resumen de Aloysius P. Martinich)