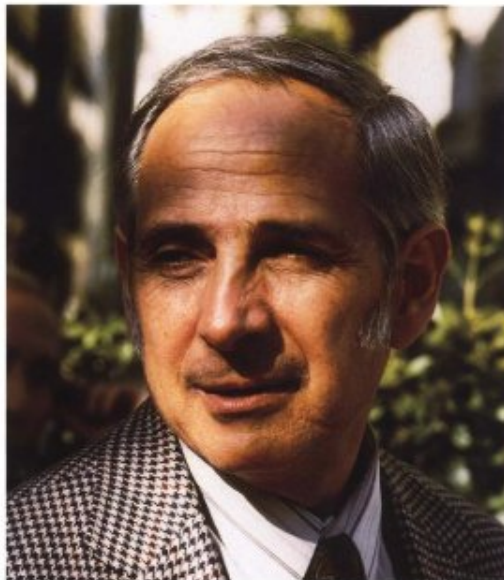


EXPRESSION AND MEANING: STUDIES IN THE THEORY OF SPEECH ACTS BY JOHN R. SEARLE

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Expression and meaning

STUDIES IN THE THEORY OF SPEECH ACTS



JOHN R. SEARLE

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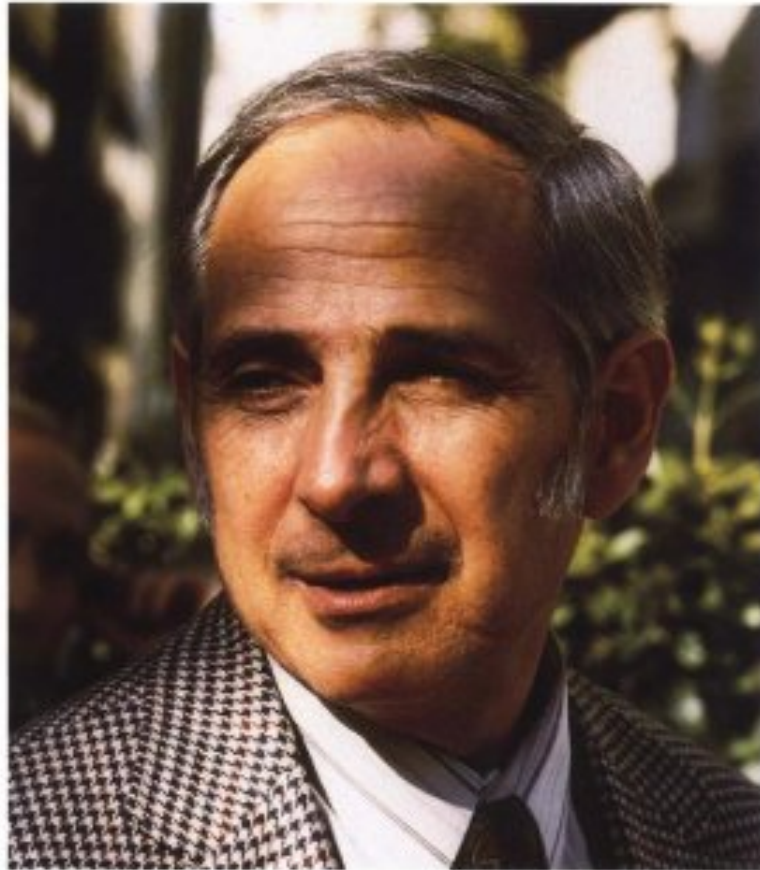
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Review

'[The essays] are written with typical Searlean vigor, clarity, and originality. The result is a volume that deserves more than a mealy-mouthed speech act issuance of the 'You ought to read it' sort, which could be countered without inconsistency with 'But don't bother if you are busy.' Instead, I issue a straight directive: Read it!' *Language in Society*

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'As one would expect, this is a stimulating collection. Searle is sensitive to detail, but I am most stuck by his penchant for bold distinctions and explanations. And he is systematic; the book considerably enlarges the earlier theory.' Brian Loar, *The Philosophical Review*

'There is a great deal of meat in Searle's treatment of metaphor, as elsewhere in his book, giving it an important place among the steadily increasing works that are developing the foundations, implications and applications of act theory.' Monroe C. Beardsley, *International Studies in Philosophy*

From the Back Cover

This book points forward to a larger theme implicit in these problems- the basis certain features of speech have in the intentionality of mind, and even more generally, the relation of the philosophy of language to the philosophy of mind.

About the Author

John R. Searle is Mills Professor of the Philosophy of Mind and Language at the University of California, Berkeley.

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EXPRESSION AND MEANING: STUDIES IN THE THEORY OF SPEECH ACTS BY JOHN R. SEARLE PDF

John Searle's *Speech Acts* made a highly original contribution to work in the philosophy of language. *Expression and Meaning* is a direct successor, concerned to develop and refine the account presented in Searle's earlier work, and to extend its application to other modes of discourse such as metaphor, fiction, reference, and indirect speech acts. Searle also presents a rational taxonomy of types of speech acts and explores the relation between the meanings of sentences and the contexts of their utterance. The book points forward to a larger theme implicit in these problems - the basis certain features of speech have in the intentionality of mind, and even more generally, the relation of the philosophy of language to the philosophy of mind.

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- Binding: Paperback
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Ok

By Reader

Published in 1979 John Searle's 'Expression and Meaning' is a series of essays that amplify and build on his earlier work in the philosophy of language (Speech Acts). Searle is a leading contemporary American philosopher who has made significant contributions in the areas of social philosophy, philosophy of the mind and the philosophy of language.

In many ways this short text is a period piece that provides insight into Searle's developing thought in the areas of human cognition and language. From my perspective the most interesting and important essays are those in which he articulates his taxonomy of speech acts (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations), and those that examine fictional language and metaphor. In the decades since the publication of 'Expression and Meaning' Searle has continued to refine his views, articulating them more clearly and concisely elsewhere (his recent work in the area of social reality come to mind). Other essays such as the one responding to Ross, Gordon and Lakoff are of less value to the contemporary reader.

Overall, while Searle's contributions to the philosophy of language are important and influential this text is probably a pass for most readers. For those interested in getting a feel for Searle's work I would suggest one of his many more recent publications or some of his lectures available through itunes U/UC Berkley.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

THE SECOND PART OF A "TRILOGY" BY THE FAMED ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHER

By Steven H Propp

John Rogers Searle (born 1932) is an American philosopher at UC Berkeley. He has written many other books, such as The Rediscovery of the Mind, The Mystery of Consciousness, Intentionality, Speech Acts, Mind: A Brief Introduction, Mind, Language And Society, The Construction of Social Reality, etc.

He wrote in the Introduction to this 1979 book, "These essays represent a continuation of a line of research begun in 'Speech Acts.' Most of them were originally projected as chapters of a larger work in which discussions of some of the outstanding problems of speech act theory---for example, metaphor, fiction, indirect speech acts, and a classification of types of speech acts---were to have been embedded in a general theory of meaning, in which I hoped to show in what ways the philosophy of language was based on the philosophy of mind, and in particular how certain features of speech acts were based on the Intentionality of the mind. The original chapter on Intentionality however has now grown into a book length manuscript of its own, and... it seemed a better idea to publish these studies as a separate volume. This book is not intended as a collection of unrelated essays, and my main aim in this introduction is to say something about how they are related." (Pg. vii)

He continues, "The method I use in this essay is in a sense empirical. I simply look at uses of language and find these five types of illocutionary point, and when I examine actual discourse I find, or at least claim, that utterances can be classified under these headings... Perhaps the chief methodological conclusion to be

derived from this essay is that we do not need to postulate either alternative deep structures or an extra set of conversational postulates to account for these cases..." (Pg. viii-ix)

He concludes the first chapter with the statement, "The most important conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is this. There are not, as Wittgenstein... and many others have claimed, an infinite or indefinite number of language games or uses of language. Rather, the illusion of limitless uses of language is engendered by an enormous unclarity about what constitutes the criteria for delimiting one language game or use of language from another. If we adopt illocutionary point as the basic notion on which to classify uses of language, then there are a rather limited number of basic things we do with language: we tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we commit ourselves to doing things, we express our feelings and attitudes and we bring changes through our utterances. Often, we do more than one of these at once in the same utterance." (Pg. 29)

He says, "The hypothesis I wish to defend is simply this: In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer. To be more specific, the apparatus necessary to explain the indirect part of indirect speech acts includes a theory of speech acts, certain general principles of cooperative conversation... and mutually shared factual background information of the speaker and the hearer, together with an ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences." (Pg. 32)

He ends the second chapter, "The question, How do I know when he has made a request when he only asked me a question about my abilities? may be like the question, How do I know it was a car when all I perceived was a flash going past me on the highway? If so, the answer to our problem may be neither 'I have a set of axioms from which it can be deduced that he made a request' nor 'I have a set of syntactical rules that generate an impressive deep structure for the sentence he uttered.'" (Pg. 57)

He begins the fifth chapter, "The view I shall be attacking is sometimes expressed by saying that the literal meaning of a sentence is the meaning that it has in the 'zero context' or the 'null context.' I shall argue that for a large class of sentences there is no such thing as the zero or null context for the interpretation of sentences, and that as far as our semantic competence is concerned we understand the meaning of such sentences only against a set of background assumptions about the contexts in which the sentence could be appropriately uttered." (Pg. 117)

He concludes the book, "The purpose of language is communication. The unit of human communication in language is the speech act, of the type called illocutionary act [i.e., 'an act performed in saying something']. The problem... of the theory of language is to describe how we get from the sounds to the illocutionary acts... The rules enable us to get from the brute facts of making of noises to the institutional facts of the performance of illocutionary acts of human communication. Now, if that is the case, then the role of a theory of speech acts in a grammar will be quite different from what either the proponents of generative syntax or even most of the proponents of generative semantics have considered. The theory of speech acts is not an adjunct to our theory of language, something to be consigned to the realm of 'pragmatics,' or performance; rather, the theory of speech acts will necessarily occupy a central role in our grammar, since it will include all of what used to be called semantics as well as pragmatics." (Pg. 178)

This book will be of great interest to anyone studying Searle's thought and its development, or contemporary analytic philosophy in general.

6 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Speech Act Theory

By A Customer

If your reading Jacques Derrida, esp. Limited Inc and Psyche this work along with Austin's How to do Things with Words are essential. These two books are the fundamental texts of Speech Act Theory. So if you want to find out about Locutions, Illocutionary Force and whatnot check out this text.

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