

# Searle

## one moment, Derrida another

### SEARLE DERRIDA

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**01**

Is not as Derrida seems to think something in conflict with the intentionality of linguistic acts, spoken or written, it is the necessary

**01****02**

I could have pretended to begin with a “false” beginning, my penchant for falsity [pour le faux] no longer requiring special demonstration.

**02****03**

It would be a mistake, I think to regard Derrida’s discussion of Austin as a

**03**

confrontation  
between two  
prominent  
philosophical  
traditions.

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**04**

Let's be serious.  
Faced with this  
speech act ("let's be  
serious"), readers  
may perhaps feel  
authorized in  
believing that the  
presumed signatory

**04**

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**05**

This is not so much  
because Derrida  
has failed to  
discuss the central  
theses in Austin's  
theory of  
language, but  
rather because he  
has misunderstood  
and misstated  
Austin's position  
at several crucial  
points

**05**

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**06**

admitting that what  
he has previously  
been engaged in was  
something entirely  
different. In this  
simulated  
confrontation, we are  
"fronts":

**06**

07

In the first part he mounts an attack on the idea of writing as the communication of intended meaning. The argument is that since writing

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I like this word, which I encountered in the film of Woody Allen dealing with events dating from the era of McCarthysim, and where I learned

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can and must be able to function in the radical absence of the sender, the receiver, and the context of production, it cannot be the

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that it signified "prête-nom," mask, substitute for a clandestine subject. But these "fronts" do not, as Sarl suggests, represent

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communication of the sender's meaning to the receiver. Since my

11

writing can  
continue to  
function after I  
and all my  
intended readers  
are

**12**

"two prominent  
philosophical  
traditions". Because,  
if there is only  
sentence of the Reply  
to which I can  
subscribe, it is the  
first

**12****13**

dead, and since  
the context of the  
writing may be  
totally forgotten  
or unknown, the  
horizon of  
communication is  
not the  
communication of

**13****14**

("It would be a  
mistake, I think, to  
regard Derrida's  
discussion of Austin  
as a confrontation  
between two  
prominent  
philosophical  
traditions"),

**14****15**

consciousness or  
presences nor is it  
the transport of

**15**

the intended  
meaning (vouloir  
dire) of the author.  
"My  
communication  
must be

**16**

although for reasons  
other than those of  
Sarl. I know of no  
one, aside from Sarl,  
who could have  
formed such an  
hypothesis. Nor do I  
know

**16****17**

repeatable -  
iterable - in the  
absolute absence  
of the receiver or  
any empirically  
determinable  
collectivity of  
receivers". (pp.  
179-80) This  
conclusion

**17****18**

why it was formed.  
For I too, consider it  
quite false, though  
for different reasons.  
Among the many  
reasons that make me  
unqualified to

**18****19**

is then in turn used  
to support his  
general attack on  
the idea of

**19**

# 6

communication as  
the communication  
of intended  
meanings. His  
claim is that

**20**

represent a  
"prominent  
philosophical  
tradition", there is  
this one: I consider  
myself to be in many  
respects quite close  
to Austin, both

**20**

**21**

the three essential  
features in the  
classical concept  
of writing - that  
writing remains  
(reste) after  
inscription, that is  
has "une force de

**21**

**22**

interested in and  
indebted to his  
problematic. This is  
said in Signature  
Event Context, very  
clearly; Sarl forgets  
to mention it. Above  
all,

**22**

**23**

rupture" with its  
context of  
production, and  
that it has an  
"espacement"  
which constitutes

**23**

the written sign -  
are to be found in  
all

**24**

however, when I do  
raise questions or  
objections, it is  
always at points  
where I recognise in  
Austin's theory  
presuppositions  
which are the

**24****25**

language because  
of the iterability of  
linguistic elements.  
Iterability looms  
large in both of  
these arguments,  
and I will have  
more to say

**25****26**

most tenacious and  
the most central  
presuppositions of  
the continental  
metaphysical  
tradition. I will return  
to this in an instant.

**26****27**

about it later. In  
order to get at  
what is wrong with  
these arguments  
let us begin by  
asking what is it  
exactly that  
distinguishes  
written

**27**

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Moreover, what these "fronts" represent, what weighs upon them both, transcending this curious chiasmus, are forces of a non-philosophical

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from spoken language. Is it iterability, the repeatability of linguistic elements? Clearly not. As Derrida is aware, any linguistic

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nature. They will have to be analysed one day. Here, within the limits of this discussion, such an analysis is impossible, but the forces

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element written or spoken, indeed any rule-governed element in any system of representation at all must be repeatable, otherwise the rules

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32

that exceed those limits are already

32

implicated, even here.  
 But let's be serious.  
 Why am I having such  
 difficulty being  
 serious in this

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would have no  
 scope of  
 application. To say  
 this is just to say  
 that the logician's  
 type-token  
 distinction must  
 apply generally to  
 all

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33

34

debate, in which I  
 have been invited, in  
 turn, to take part?  
 Why did I take such  
 pleasure in accepting  
 this invitation?  
 Nothing compelled  
 me

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rule-governed  
 elements of  
 language in order  
 that the rules can  
 be applied to new  
 occurrences of the  
 phenomena  
 specified by the  
 rules. Without this  
 feature of  
 iterability there  
 could not be the  
 possibility of

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**36**

to accept, and I could have yielded to the temptation of suggesting to interested readers that they simply reread Signature Event Context

**36**

**37**

producing an infinite number of sentences with a finite list of elements; and this, as philosophers since Frege have recognised, is one of

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**38**

instead obliging myself to comment or to repeat myself more than once. Where does the pleasure I take in this repetition, in prolonging the

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**39**

the crucial features of any language. His paper divides naturally into two parts: In the first part he discusses writing and its relation to

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**40**

debate, or rather the “confrontation” come

**40**

from? I have just cited the Reply. The word “confrontation” appears twice in the first paragraph,

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context and communication. In the second, applying various of the conclusions of the first part, he discusses some features of Austin’s

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**42**

once in each sentence, the second stating that - at (and in the) present -[au présent] - “the confrontation” between Austin and myself “never quite takes

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**43**

theory of speech acts. He concludes with a discussion of the role of signatures. In my reply I will not attempt to deal with all or even very

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**44**

place.” Is it because the confrontation never quite takes

**44**

# 12

place that I take such  
lasting pleasure in it?  
Because I, too, think  
as much,

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**45**

many of the points  
he raises, but will  
concentrate on  
those that seem to  
me the most  
important and  
especially on those  
where I disagree  
with his

**45**

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**46**

almost that is, almost  
but not quite? Or is  
it, on the contrary,  
because I am very  
excited, I confess, by  
this scene? By the  
speech acts of

**46**

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**47**

conclusions. I  
should say at the  
outset, that I did  
not find his  
arguments very  
clear and it is  
possible that I may  
have  
misinterpreted him

**47**

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**48**

Reply, by their  
structure composed  
of denial, seduction,  
coquettishly  
fascinating  
underneath the virile

**48**

# 13

candor, initiating a  
“confrontation”

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**49**

as profoundly as I believe he has misinterpreted Austin. This confusion of permanence with iterability lies at the heart of his argument for

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**50**

by saying that it has not taken place and, moreover, that at (and in the present) between the late Austin and myself, it does not take place,

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**51**

assimilating features of the written text with features of spoken words. He writes, “This structural possibility of being weaned from the

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**52**

or at least not entirely, not quite, both because I have missed the point, missed him, and because he was already dead (“a theory that

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referent or from the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to me to make every mark, including those which are

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Austin did not live long enough to develop himself!”) when I missed him, so that in fact I did not have much of a chance. I like this

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oral, a grapheme in general; which is to say, as we have seen, the non-present remainder (restance) of a differential mark cut off from its

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improbable confrontation just as others like voyages and diplomacy. There are interpreters everywhere. Each speaking his language, even if

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putative 'production or origin' (p. 183). But

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again this possibility of separating the sign from the signified is a feature of any system of

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**58**

he has some knowledge of the language of the other. The interpreter's ruses have an open field and he does not forget his own interests.

**58**

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**59**

representation whatever; and there is nothing especially graphematic about it at all. It is furthermore quite independent of those special

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**60**

Most of the authors of the Reply, if they have read Sec in their fashion, do not know me either personally or, obviously, through any of the

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**61**

features of the "classical concept" of writing which are supposed to

**61**

# 16

form the basis of the argument. The type-token distinction, together

**62**

other texts that form the context of Sec and endow it with a certain meaning. To a certain degree, the inverse is also true. Sec

**62**

**63**

with the physical realisation of the signs makes quotation possible; but these two features have nothing to do with previously mentioned

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**64**

has apparently been read, and is generally cited in English (we shall mention consequences of this) within a Reply written in

**64**

**65**

special features of graphemes. I conclude that Derrida's argument to show that all elements of language (much

**65**

less, experience)  
are really

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English. I have read it  
in English but I am  
trying to respond in  
French although my  
French will be marked  
in advance by English  
and

66

67

graphemes is  
without any force.  
It rests on a simple  
confusion of  
iterability with  
permanence. I  
have left the most  
important issue in  
this

67

68

destined in advance  
for a translation that  
will doubtless present  
certain difficulties.  
These problems (re-  
production,  
iterability,

68

69

section until last.  
Do the special  
features of writing  
determine that  
there is some  
break with the  
author's intentions  
in particular or  
with

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# 18

**70**

citation, translation, interpretation, multiplicity of codes and parasitisms) constitute the most apparent aspect of what is at stake in

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**71**

intentionality in general in the forms of communication that occur in writing? Does the fact that writing can continue to function in the

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**72**

this so-called “confrontation”. And it will have taken place (yes or no?) on a terrain who neutrality is far from certain, in a publication

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**73**

absence of the writer, the intended receiver, or the context of production show that writing is not a vehicle of intentionality? It seems to

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**74**

and at the initiative of professors who for

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# 19

the most part are Americans (more or less), but who, in their work and in their projects are

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**75**

me quite plain that the argument that the author and intended receiver may be dead and the context unknown or forgotten does not in the least

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**76**

second to none in their knowledge of migrations and wanderings [déplacements]. Their position, in terms of the political significance of the university, is highly original and their role in this debate, whether

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**77**

show that intentionality is absent from written communication; on the contrary, intentionality plays exactly the same role in written as

**77**

# 20

in

**78**

it takes place or not, decisive. This, for me, comprises the most interesting and most important aspect of the situation. But the topology

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**79**

spoken communication. To show this ask yourself what happens when you read the text of a dead author. Suppose you read the sentence, "On

**79**

**80**

of these "fronts" and the logic of its places will have more than one surprise in store for us. For example: isn't Sarl ultimately more

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**81**

the twentieth of September 1793 I set out on a journey from London to Oxford". Now how do you understand this sentence? There are two

**81**

**82**

continental and Parisian than I am? I

**82**

# 21

shall try to show why. Sarl's premises and method are derived from continental philosophy, and in one

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**83**

obstacles to understanding this rather obvious point, one implicit in Derrida, the other explicit. The first is the illusion that somehow

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**84**

form or another they are very present in France. If I may cite myself, for the last time referring to a text other than Sec

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**85**

illocutionary intentions if they really existed or mattered would have to be something that lay behind the utterances, some inner pictures

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**86**

(hereafter i will restrict myself to the latter essay), this is what I wrote in "Avoir l'oreille de la philosophie" [To Have

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**87**

animating the visible signs. But of course in serious literal speech the sentences are precisely the realisations of the intentions: there

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**88**

of Philosophy] (see footnote 1): "Signature Event Context analyses the metaphysical premises of the Anglo-Saxon - and fundamentally

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**89**

need to be no gulf at all between the illocutionary intention and its expression. The sentences are, so to speak, fungible intentions. Often,

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**90**

moralistic - theory of the performative, of speech acts or discursive events. In France, it seems to me that these premises underlie the hermeneutics

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especially in writing, one forms one's intentions (or meanings) in the process of forming the sentences: there need not be two separate

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92

of Ricoeur and the archaeology of Foucault". Thus, Sarl did indeed understand. No question here of the essentials being misunderstood. Or

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93

processes. This illusion is related to the second, which is that intentions must be all conscious. But in fact rather few of one's intentions are ever brought to consciousness as intentions. Speaking and

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rather, if "understanding" is still a notion dominated by the allegedly constative regime of theory or

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# 24

of philosophy, let us  
not use the

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**95**

writing are indeed  
conscious  
intentional  
activities, but the  
intentional aspect  
of illocutionary  
acts does not  
imply that there is  
a

**95**

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**96**

word "understood",  
let us say instead that  
Sarl was touched.  
That is, Sarl has not  
been missed by the  
set, the ensemble of  
these

**96**

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**97**

separate set of  
conscious states  
apart from simply  
writing and  
speaking. To the  
extent that the  
author says what  
he means the text  
is the

**97**

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**98**

misunderstandings, of  
these misstating  
missiles. In the family  
of Latin languages, a  
speech act, whether  
written or spoken, is  
only said to

**98**

**99**

expression of his intentions. It is always possible that he may not have said what he meant or that the text may have become corrupt in some

**99**

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**100**

be pertinent when it touches: the object to which it seems to refer, but also - why not? - someone, its addressee, upon whom it produces

**100**

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**101**

way; but exactly parallel considerations apply to spoken discourse. The situation as regards intentionality is exactly the same for the

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**102**

certain effects, let us say of a perlocutionary sort. Thus, in analysing the violence and the type of evaluative reaction, I had the

**102**

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**103**

written word as it is for spoken:

**103**

# 26

understanding the utterance consists in recognising the illocutionary intentions of the author and these

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**104**

impression that Sec had touched the mark, right in the middle, as it were. If I said, that Searle himself had been touched,

**104**

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**105**

intentions may be more or less perfectly realised by the words uttered whether written or spoken. And understanding the sentence apart from

**105**

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**106**

I would be going out on a limb. For it may very well be not Searle himself, as a whole, or even in part, but in the final analysis, a “front”,

**106**

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**107**

any utterance is knowing what linguistic act its utterance would be the performance of.

**107**

# 27

Derrida has a  
distressing  
penchant for  
saying things

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**108**

something making its  
way beneath Searle's  
more or less indebted  
and mortgaged  
signature; something  
identifying itself so  
much with Austin

**108**

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**109**

that are obviously  
false. I will discuss  
several instances  
in the next section  
but one deserves  
special mention at  
this point. He says  
the

**109**

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**110**

that it can only read  
Sec feverishly, unable  
to support the fact  
that questions might  
be posed serenely  
concerning the

**110**

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**111**

meaningless  
example of  
ungrammatical  
French, "le vert set  
ou", means  
(signifie) one thing  
anyhow, it means  
an example of  
ungrammaticality.

**111**

# 28

**112**

limits or the presuppositions of Austin's theory. Or at least unable to tolerate this when it is done by others. It is this last feature

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**113**

But this is simple confusion. The sequence "le vert set ou" does not MEAN an example of ungrammaticality, it does not mean anything, rather

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**114**

that I find most interesting: what characterises a self-proclaimed heir (especially when the father has died too young, at the age of 48!)

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**115**

it IS an example of ungrammaticality. The relation of meaning is not to be confused with instantiation. This mistake is important because it

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**116**

is the fact that, doubting his own

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# 29

legitimacy, he wishes to be the only one to inherit and even the only one, in a tête à tête, to break, now

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**117**

is part of his generally mistaken account of the nature of the quotation, and his failure to understand the distinction between use and

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**118**

and then, the filial bond of identification, in what is here the height of identification; he alone shall have the right of criticising or

**118**

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**119**

mention. The sequence "le vert set ou" can indeed be mentioned as an example of ungrammaticality, but to mention it is not the same as to use it.

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**120**

correcting his teacher, of defending him before the others at the very moment of murderous

**120**

# 30

identification, of parricide. All this is familiar in philosophy and mutatis mutandis, has been ever since the Sophist; also, ever

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**121**

In this example it is not used to mean anything; indeed it is not used at all. Derrida's discussion of Austin is designed to show that

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**122**

since the Sophists, and no one will be astonished when I observe that they haunt our present debate, as more than one sign shall indicate.

**122**

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**123**

all the difficulties encountered by Austin in his theory of speech acts have a common root: "Austin has not taken account of what - in the

**123**

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**124**

Thus Sarl, would like to be Austin's sole legitimate heir and

**124**

his sole critic. At the very moment "I" make a shopping list, I know (I use

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**125**

structure of locution (thus before any illocutionary or perlocutory determination) - entails that system of predicates I call graphematic in

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**125**

**126**

'knowing' here as a convenient term to designate the relations that I necessarily entertain with the object being constructed) that it will

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**126**

**127**

general..." (p.187). Thus in what follows Derrida ties his discussion of Austin to his preceding discussion of writing; in both he emphasises

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**127**

**128**

only be a list if it implies my absence, if it already detaches itself from me in order to function

**128**

beyond my "present"  
act and if it is

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**129**

the role of the  
iterability and  
citationality of  
linguistic elements.  
I believe he has  
misunderstood  
Austin in several  
crucial ways and  
the

**129**

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**130**

utilisable at another  
time, in the absence  
of my-being-present-  
now, even if this  
absence is the simple  
"absence of memory"  
that the list is

**130**

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**131**

internal  
weaknesses in his  
argument are  
closely tied to  
these  
misunderstandings.  
In this section  
therefore I will  
briefly summarise  
his

**131**

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**132**

meant to make up for,  
shortly, in a moment,  
but one which is  
already the following  
moment, the absence  
of the now of writing,  
of the writer

**132**

# 33

**133**

critique and then simply list the major misunderstandings and mistakes. I will conclude with an - again all too brief - discussion of the

**133**

**134**

maintaining, [du maintenant- écrivant] grasping with the one hand his ballpoint pen. Yet no matter how fine this point may be, it is like the stigmè of every mark,

**134**

**135**

relation between intention and iterability in speech acts. Derrida notes that Austin distinguishes between felicitous and infelicitous speech

**135**

**136**

already split. The sender of the shopping list is not the same as the receiver, even if they bear the same name and are endowed with the

**136**

**137**

acts but does not sufficiently ponder the consequences arising from the fact that the possibility of failure of the speech act is a necessary

**137**

**138**

identity of a single ego. Indeed, were this self-identity or self-presence as certain as all that, the very idea of a shopping list would be

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**139**

possibility. More to the point, according to Derrida, Austin excludes the possibility that performative utterances (and a priori every other

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**140**

rather superfluous or at least the product of a curious compulsion. As in the realm of botany, from which it draws its metaphorical value,

**140**

**141**

utterance) can be quoted. Derrida makes this

**141**

extraordinary  
charge on the  
grounds that  
Austin has  
excluded fictional  
discourse,  
utterances

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**142**

this word marks  
emphatically that the  
divided opening, in  
the growth of a plant,  
is also what, in a  
positive sense, makes  
production,

**142**

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**143**

made by actors on  
a stage, and other  
forms of what  
Austin called  
"parasitic" or  
"etiolated" speech  
from consideration  
when setting out  
the

**143**

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**144**

reproduction,  
development  
possible. Dehiscence  
(like iterability) limits  
what it makes  
possible, while  
rendering its rigour  
and purity

**144**

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**145**

preliminary  
statement of his  
theory of speech  
acts. Furthermore,

**145**

# 36

according to  
Derrida, Austin  
saw these forms of  
discourse as a kind  
of agonie

**146**

impossible. Firstly, it  
is in the name of  
analogy, underlined in  
my citation, that  
Searle justifies the  
idealising method  
within the theory

**146**

**147**

of language "qu'il  
faut fortement  
tenir à distance".  
They are not,  
according to  
Derrida's version  
of Austin, even  
part of "ordinary  
language".

**147**

**148**

of speech acts when  
he speaks of the  
structure of  
illocutionary acts. He  
authorises this  
procedure by drawing  
an analogy with the

**148**

**149**

But, asks Derrida,  
does the  
possibility of this  
parasitism  
surround language  
like a ditch (fossé),  
an external place

**149**

of perdition, as  
Austin

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**150**

construction of  
models in "most"  
sciences. Let us pass  
over the fact that this  
fundamental  
theoretical preamble  
[protocole], which  
defines

**150**

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**151**

seems to think; or  
it is not rather the  
case that this risk  
is the internal and  
positive condition  
of language itself?  
He points out

**151**

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**152**

and delimits the  
entire enterprise, that  
this metalanguage on  
the different  
theoretical languages  
already involves a lax  
(or non-strict, if

**152**

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**153**

ominously that "it  
is as just such a  
'parasite' that  
writing has always  
been treated by  
the philosophical  
tradition" (p.190).  
And he concludes  
his

**153**

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**154**

you prefer) recourse  
to resemblance,

**154**

# 38

indeed to a non-literal figure. Let us also pass over the enormous problem of the construction of

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**155**

sequence of rhetorical questions with the following: "For, ultimately isn't it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception,

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**155**

**156**

"models" in the sciences, in different sciences at different moments of their history. To speak simply of "most" sciences is in this regard to

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**156**

**157**

'non-serious', citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality - or rather, a

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**157**

**158**

resort to woolly approximations that are most surprising, especially in this

**158**

# 39

particular place. But all this would hold us up too long.

---

**159**

general iterability - without which there would not even be a 'successful' performative" (p. 191). According to Derrida (and contrary to what he

**159**

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**160**

This leads me to the second "illusion" diagnosed by Sarl, the "explicit" one this time. According to Sec - so Sarl -

**160**

---

**161**

supposes is Austin's view) a performative can succeed only if its formulation repeats a coded or iterable utterance, only if its

**161**

---

**162**

"intentions must all be conscious" (p. 202). Confronted with this assertion I must confess that I had to rub my eyes. Was I dreaming? Had I misread?

**162**

# 40

**163**

identifiable in some way as a citation. Once we have a typology of such forms of iteration we can see that there is "an essential absence of

**163**

---

**164**

Mistranslated? Was the text suddenly becoming sarcastic? Or even, as I had just wished, ironic? Was it all a joke? Was the patented

**164**

---

**165**

intention to the actuality of the utterance" and that Austin was wrong to exclude "parasitic" forms from ordinary language. Before beginning

**165**

---

**166**

theoretician - or theoreticians - of speech acts calling us to task for forgetting the existence of the unconscious? What a fake-out,

**166**

---

**167**

a discussion of Derrida's charge I should point out

**167**

that I hold no brief  
for the details of  
Austin's theory of  
speech acts, I have  
criticised

---

**168**

leaving me flat-  
footed in the camp of  
those insufficiently  
aware of the  
unconscious! I always  
love to watch a good  
fake-out, even if it's  
at

**168**

---

**169**

it elsewhere and  
will not repeat  
these criticisms  
here. The problem  
is rather that  
Derrida's Austin is  
unrecognisable. He  
bears almost no

**169**

---

**170**

my expense. But my  
delight,  
unfortunately, is  
short-lived. I cannot  
imagine how Sam  
Weber is going to  
translate "fake-out".  
For his benefit

**170**

---

**171**

relation to the  
original. 2. Related  
to the first  
misunderstanding  
about the status of  
the exclusion of

**171**

parasitic discourse  
is a

---

**172**

let me specify that, ever since my adolescence, I have understood the word above all as a soccer term, denoting an active ruse designed to

**172**

---

**173**

misunderstanding of the attitude Austin had to such a discourse. Derrida supposes that the term "parasitic" involves some kind of moral

**173**

---

**174**

surprise one's opponent by catching him off balance. Sarl's second objection is practically redundant with regard to the first. It consists

**174**

---

**175**

judgement; that Austin is claiming that there is something bad or anomalous or not "ethical" about such discourse. Again, nothing could be

**175**

**176**

in recalling that Austin's concept of "parasitism" involves a relation of "logical dependence": "it does not imply any moral judgment and certainly not that the parasite is somehow immorally sponging off the host."

**176**

---

**180**

further from the truth. The sense in which, for example, fiction is parasitic on nonfiction is the sense in which the definition of the rational

**180**

---

**181**

I have already answered this objection in principle. I will simply add that it is not necessary to point to a flesh-and-blood example, or to write moralising pamphlets demanding the exclusion of

**181**

---

**182**

numbers in number theory might be said to be parasitic on the definition of natural numbers,

**182**

or the notion of  
one logical  
constant in a

---

**183**

wicked parasites  
(those of language or  
of the polis, the  
effects of the  
unconscious, the  
pharmakoi, people on  
welfare,  
nonconformists or

---

**183**

**184**

logical system  
might be said to  
be parasitic on  
another, because  
the former is  
defined in terms of  
the latter. Such  
parasitism is a  
relation

---

**184**

**185**

spies) in order to  
speak an ethical-  
political language or -  
and, in the case of  
Austin at least, this is  
all that I wished to  
indicate - to

---

**185**

**186**

of logical  
dependence; it  
does not imply any  
moral judgement  
and certainly not  
that parasite is  
somehow  
immorally

**186**

sponging off the  
host

---

**187**

reproduce in a  
discourse said to be  
theoretical the  
founding categories  
of all ethical-political  
statements. I am  
convinced that  
speech act

---

**187**

**188**

(Does one really  
have to point this  
out?). Furthermore  
it is simply a  
mistake to say that  
Austin thought  
parasitic discourse  
was not part of

---

**188**

**189**

theory is  
fundamentally and in  
its most fecund, most  
rigorous, and most  
interesting aspects  
(need I recall that it  
interests me

---

**189**

**190**

ordinary language.  
The expression  
"ordinary  
language" in the  
era that Austin  
gave these  
lectures was  
opposed to  
technical or  
symbolic or

**190**

# 46

**191**

considerably?) a theory of right or law, of convention, of political ethics or of politics as ethics. It describes (in the best Kantian

**191**

**192**

formalised language as occurred in mathematical logic or in the technical terminology of philosophy. Austin never denied that plays and

**192**

**193**

tradition, as Austin acknowledges at one point) the pure conditions of an ethical-political discourse insofar as this discourse involves the

**193**

**194**

novels were written in ordinary language; rather his point is that such utterances are not produced in ordinary circumstances, but rather,

**194**

**195**

relation of intentionality to

**195**

# 47

conventionality or to rules. What I wanted to emphasise above, however, in this regard was simply the

---

**196**

for example, on stage or in a fictional text. 3. In what is more than simply a misreading of Austin, Derrida supposes that by analysing

**196**

---

**197**

following: this "theory" is compelled to reproduce, to reduplicate in itself the law of its object or its object as law; it must submit to

**197**

---

**198**

serious speech acts before considering the parasitic cases, Austin has somehow denied the very possibility that expressions can be quoted.

**198**

---

**199**

the norm it purports to analyse. Hence, both its fundamental, intrinsic moralism and its irreducible

**199**

# 48

empiricism. And  
Hegel knew how to

---

**200**

I find so many  
confusions in this  
argument of  
Derrida that I  
hardly know where  
to get started on  
it. To begin with,  
the phenomenon  
of

**200**

---

**201**

demonstrate how  
compatible both are  
with a certain kind of  
formalism. As for the  
second part of this  
second objection ("it  
is simply a

**201**

---

**202**

citationality is not  
the same as the  
phenomenon of  
parasitic  
discourse. A man  
who composes a  
novel or a poem is  
not in general  
quoting anyone;

**202**

---

**203**

mistake to say that  
Austin thought  
parasitic discourse  
was not part of  
ordinary language",  
p.206), I remind you  
that Sec

**203**

# 49

**204**

and a man who says his lines on a stage while acting in a play while he is indeed repeating lines composed by someone else, is not in general

**204**

**205**

never said anything of the sort. Merely this: according to Austin, the parasite is part of so-called ordinary language, and it is part of

**205**

**206**

quoting the lines. There is a basic difference in that in parasitic discourse the expressions are being used and not mentioned. To Derrida's

**206**

**207**

it as parasite. That's all. I also recalled, just a while ago, that the parasite is part, in its way (neither the same nor other), of what

**207**

**208**

rhetorical question, "For, ultimately, isn't it true that what

**208**

# 50

Austin excludes as  
anomaly,  
exceptions, 'non-  
serious' citation  
(on stage, in

**209**

it parasites and is not  
simply external or  
alien to it. But if  
Austin recognised  
this "being-part-of,"  
it didn't prevent him  
from proposing

**209**

**210**

a poem, or a  
soliloquy) is the  
determined  
modification of a  
general  
citationality - or  
rather, a general  
iterability -  
without which  
there

**210**

**211**

to "exclude" (see  
above) this part.  
That's all. We now  
come to the third  
objection. It is aimed  
at what is so  
admirably entitled  
"more than

**211**

**212**

would not even be  
a 'successful  
performative?"  
(p.191), the answer  
is a polite but firm

**212**

"No, it isn't true".  
To begin with most  
of the

---

**213**

simply a misreading  
of Austin". This  
objection repeats - or  
makes slightly more  
explicit - the  
preceding ones. It  
was never said or

**213**

---

**214**

instances of  
parasitic discourse  
are not cases of  
citation at all.  
They are, to  
repeat, cases  
where expressions  
are used and not  
mentioned.

**214**

---

**215**

suggested in Sec that  
the "phenomenon of  
citationality" is "the  
same as the  
"phenomenon of  
parasitic discourse".  
It was

**215**

---

**216**

But, more  
important,  
parasitic discourse  
of the kind we  
have been  
considering is a  
determined  
modification of the  
rules for

**216**

## performing

---

**217** never said in Sec that the novelist, poet and actor are in "general quoting", although they can also do that. What **217**

---

**218** speech act,s but it is not in any way a modification of iterability or citationality. Like all utterances, parasitic forms of utterances **218**

---

**219** Sec was driving at, without confusing citationality with parasitism (or fiction, literature, or theatre), was the **219**

---

**220** are instances of, though not modifications of, iterability, for - to repeat - without iterability there is not language at all. Every **220**

---

**221** possibility they have in common: the iterability which renders possible both the "normal" rule or convention and its **221**

transgression,

---

**222**

utterance in a natural language, parasitic of not, is an instance of iterability, which is simply another way of saying that the type-token

**222**

---

**223**

transformation, simulation, or imitation. I will now cite Sarle's fourth objection, underlining several words here and there to be taken up

**223**

---

**224**

distinction applies to the elements of language. 4. Derrida assimilates the sense in which writing can be said to be parasitic on spoken

**224**

---

**225**

in my response. Responses. a. It is impudent to assimilate too quickly, more quickly than one can, what is not easily assimilable. Otherwise,

**225**

---

**226**

language with the sense in which

**226**

fiction, etc., are parasitic on nonfiction or standard discourse. But these are quite different. In the case

---

**227**

what is liable to result is what certain psychoanalysts call incorporation without introjection: a sort of indigestion more or less desired

**227**

---

**228**

of the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, the relation is one of logical dependency. One could not have the concept of fiction

**228**

---

**229**

by the unconscious and provoked by the other or alien body which cannot yet be assimilated. For the moment, here is my advice: it applies

**229**

---

**230**

without the concept of serious discourse. But the dependency of writing on spoken

**230**

language is a  
contingent fact  
about the history  
of human

---

**231**

to the day when the  
person who says I  
[Searle] will no  
longer, as in 1975, be  
in New Literary  
History, Virginia, but  
instead will be  
dreaming

---

**231**

**232**

languages and not  
a logical truth  
about the nature  
of language.  
Indeed, in  
mathematical and  
logical symbolism  
the relation of  
dependence goes

---

**232**

**233**

of being taken [I  
don't say mistaking  
himself] for Jimmy  
Carter and  
demanding to be  
finally admitted to  
the White House.  
Upon encountering

---

**233**

**234**

the other way. The  
spoken, oral  
version of the  
symbols is simply  
an orally  
communicable way

**234**

of representing the  
primary written  
forms.

---

**235**

certain difficulties, as  
one anticipate, he  
will, if he takes my  
advice, tell the Secret  
Service: it was all a  
fiction, I was  
pretending in

---

**235**

**236**

5. A leitmotif of  
Derrida's entire  
discussion is the  
idea that somehow  
the iterability of  
linguistic forms  
(together with the  
citationality

---

**236**

**237**

the second sense; I  
was pretending [in  
the second sense] to  
pretend [in the first  
sense]. They of  
course, will ask for  
proof, for witnesses,

---

**237**

**238**

of linguistic forms  
and the existence  
of writing)  
militates against  
the idea that  
intention is the  
heart of meaning  
and  
communication,  
that

**238**

**239**

not being satisfied with declarations of intention; they will ask which of the "horizontal conventions" were involved in this game. My advice

**239**

**240**

indeed, an understanding of iteration will show the "essential absence of intention to the actuality of the utterance". But even if

**240**

**241**

to Searle, at this point, is to say that he is playing all by himself, that he alone forms a company, just like certain chess players who

**241**

**242**

everything he said about iterability were true it would not show this. Indeed, I shall conclude this discussion by arguing for precisely the

**242**

**243**

play by themselves or with fictitious

**243**

# 58

opponents; or he can also say that he was experimenting with a fiction ["to pretend" in the second

---

**244**

converse thesis: The iterability of linguistic forms facilitates and is a necessary condition of the particular forms of intentionality that

**244**

---

**245**

sense] in view of writing a novel or a philosophical demonstration for Glyph. Let's not worry about the details. If he insists upon entering

**245**

---

**246**

are characteristic of speech acts. The performance of actual speech acts (whether written or spoken) are indeed events, datable singular

**246**

---

**247**

the White House with such declarations, he will be arrested. If he continues to insist, the official psychiatrist will not

**247**

be long in coming.

---

**248**

events in particular historical contexts. But as events they have some very peculiar properties. They are capable of communicating from

**248**

---

**249**

"All this [i.e., 'parasitic' as opposed to 'normal use' - my emphasis] we are excluding from consideration." Isn't that clear enough? Did or

**249**

---

**250**

speakers to hearers an infinite number of different contents. There is no upper limit on the number of new things that can be communicated

**250**

---

**251**

did not Austin propose to exclude, under the rubric of parasitism, something which is part of ordinary language but which, he claimed, is

**251**

# 60

not

---

**252**

by speech acts,  
which is just  
another way of  
saying that there is  
no limit on the  
number of new  
speech acts.  
Furthermore,  
hearers are able

**252**

---

**253**

normally a part of  
normal ordinary  
language? This is why  
Sec never argued that  
for Austin the  
parasite is not part of

**253**

---

**254**

to understand this  
infinite number of  
possible  
communications  
simply by  
recognising the  
intentions of the  
speakers in the  
performances of  
the

**254**

---

**256**

ordinary language but  
rather, that "the  
concept of the  
'ordinary', thus of  
'ordinary language' to  
which he has recourse  
is clearly marked by

**256**

---

**257**

speech acts. Now  
given that both

**257**

# 61

speaker and hearer  
are finite, what is  
it that gives  
speech acts this  
limitless capacity  
for  
communication?

---

**258**

this exclusion."  
"Marked by this  
exclusion" - can this  
be denied? I promised  
(very) seriously to be  
serious. Have I kept  
my promise? Have I

**258**

---

**259**

The answer is that  
the speaker and  
hearers are  
masters of the set  
of rules we call the  
rules of language,  
and these rules are  
recursive.

**259**

---

**260**

taken Sarl seriously? I  
do not know if I was  
supposed to. Should I  
have? Were they  
themselves serious in  
their speech acts?  
Shall I say that

**260**

---

**261**

They allow for the  
repeated  
application of the  
same rule. Thus  
the peculiar  
features of the

**261**

# 62

intentionality that  
we find in speech  
acts

**262**

I am afraid they  
were? Would that  
mean that I do not  
take their seriousness  
very seriously? What  
am I saying? What am  
i doing when I say

**262**

**263**

require an  
iterability that  
includes not only  
the type we have  
been discussing,  
the repetition of  
the same word

**263**

**264**

that? I ask myself if  
we will ever be quits  
with this  
confrontation. Will it  
have taken place, this  
time? Quite?

**264**

**265**

in different  
contexts, but also  
includes an  
iterability off the  
application of  
syntactical rules.  
Iterability - both  
as

**265**

**266**

It should also be  
remembered that the  
parasite is by  
definition never

**266**

# 63

simply external, never  
simply something  
that can be excluded  
from or

---

**267** exemplified by the repeated use of the same word type and as exemplified by the recursive character of syntactical rules **267**

---

**268** kept outside of the body “proper”, shut out from the “familial” table or house. Parasitism takes place when the parasite (called thus by the **268**

---

**269** 1. Derrida has completely mistaken the status of Austin’s exclusion of **269**

---

**270** owner, jealously defending his own oikos) comes to live off the life of the body in which it resides - and when, reciprocally, the host **270**

---

**271** parasitic forms of discourse from his preliminary investigations of **271**

# 64

speech acts.  
Austin's idea is  
simply this: if we  
want to know what  
it is

---

**272**

incorporates the  
parasite to an extent,  
willy nilly offering it  
hospitality: providing  
it with a place. The  
parasite then "takes  
place".

**272**

---

**273**

to make a promise  
or make a  
statement we has  
better not start  
our investigation  
with promises  
made my actors on  
stage in the course  
of a play

**273**

---

**274**

And at bottom,  
whatever violently  
"takes place" or  
occupies a site is  
always something of  
a parasite. Never  
quite taking place is  
thus part

**274**

---

**275**

or statements  
made in a novel by  
novelists about  
characters in the  
novel, because in a  
fairly obvious way

**275**

# 65

such utterances  
are not standard

**276**

of its performance, of its success as an event, of its taking-place. The “standard” case of promises or of statements would never occur as

**276**

**277**

cases of promises and statements. We do not, for example, hold the actor responsible today for the promise he made on stage last night in the

**277**

**278**

such, with its “normal” effects, were it not, from its very inception on, parasited, harbouring and haunted by the possibility of being

**278**

**279**

way that we normally hold people responsible for their promises, and we do not demand of the author how he knows that his characters have

**279**

# 66

**280**

repeated in all kinds of ways, of which the theatre, poetry, or soliloquy are only examples, albeit examples that are more revelatory or

**280**

**281**

such and such traits in a way that we normally expect the maker of a statement to be able to justify his claims. Austin describes this

**281**

**282**

congenial for the demonstration. From this iterability - recognized in principle by Austin and Sarl- Sec seeks to draw

**282**

**283**

feature by saying that such utterances are "hollow" or "void" and "nonserious". Furthermore, in a perfectly straightforward sense such

**283**

**284**

the consequences: the first and most general of which being that one

**284**

# 67

neither can nor ought  
to exclude, even  
“strategically”, the  
very roots

---

**285**

utterances are  
“parasitical” on the  
standard cases;  
there could not,  
for example, be  
promises made by  
actors in a play if  
there were not the  
possibility of  
promises made in  
real life.

---

**285**

**286**

of what one purports  
to analyse. For these  
roots are two-fold:  
you cannot root out  
the “parasite” without  
rooting-out the  
“standard”

---

**286**

**287**

The existence of  
the pretended  
form of the speech  
act is logically  
dependent on the  
possibility of the  
nonpretended  
speech act in the  
same way that any  
pretended form of  
behaviour is  
dependent on  
nonpretended

**287**

forms of  
behaviour, and

288

[le “propre”]at the  
same time. What is at  
work here is a  
different logic of  
mimesis. It will not  
have escaped notice  
that the notion of

288

289

in that sense the  
pretended forms  
are parasitical on  
the nonpretended  
forms. Austin’s  
exclusion of these  
parasitic forms  
from consideration

289

290

“logical dependence”  
or of “logical priority”  
plays a decisive role  
in Sarl’s  
argumentation no less  
than in Searle’s  
Speech Acts. We are

290

291

in his preliminary  
discussion is a  
matter of research  
strategy; he is, in  
his words,  
excluding them “at  
present”; but it is  
not a

291

292

constantly told: to  
respect the order of  
logical dependency

292

# 69

we must begin with the “standard”, the “serious”, the “normal”, etc., and we

---

**293**

metaphysical exclusion: he is not casting them into a ditch or perdition, to use Derrida’s words. Derrida seems to think that Austin’s

**293**

---

**294**

must begin by excluding the “non-standard”, the “non-serious”, the “abnormal”, the parasitical. Temporary and strategical, such an exclusion

**294**

---

**295**

exclusion is a matter of great moment, a source of great metaphysical difficulties, and that the analysis of parasitic discourse might

**295**

---

**296**

thus supposedly submits its *ordo inveniendi* to a logical and onto-logical order. In the passage

**296**

# 70

quoted Sarl writes:  
"The existence of the

---

**297**

create some insuperable difficulties for the theory of speech acts. But the history of the subject has proved otherwise. Once one has

**297**

---

**298**

pretended form of the speech act is logically dependent on the possibility of the nonpretended speech act in the same way that any pretended

**298**

---

**299**

A general theory of speech acts - a theory which Austin did not live long enough to develop himself - it is one of the relatively simpler

**299**

---

**300**

form of behaviour is dependent on nonpretended form of behaviour, and in that sense the pretended forms are parasitical on the nonpretended forms"

**300**

71