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194.
JOHN SEARLE (1932–)

John searle is an American philosopher of language who has taught since 1959 at the University of California, Berkeley, best known for his work on language, intentionality, and social ontology. Habermas draws extensively on Searle's speech act theory (Searle 1969, Searle 1983, Searle 1986) in developing his "universal pragmatics." Later discussions are informed by a seminar that Habermas, Searle, and Karl-Otto Apel taught in Frankfurt in 1986. According to Habermas, J. L. Austin and Searle overcome the restrictions of traditional semantic theory by acknowledging that language use is an essential dimension of meaning. Furthermore, Searle leaves the Gricean model of language use as strategic action (OPC, 258) behind and discovers that successful communication rests on a complex set of preconditions regarding shared background knowledge – a claim that Habermas takes up when developing his theory of the lifeworld (TCA1, 337). Searle also improves on Austin's theory by developing a more precise categorization of speech acts.

However, Habermas criticizes Searle for two commitments that do not allow him to move to an intersubjective conception of validity. First, Searle subscribes to *intentionalism* (OPC, 271), that is, to the idea that we can understand speech acts by examining the intentional states that they are intended to communicate. However, while intentional states are distinguished by their "direction of fit" (mind to world, world to mind), this distinction cannot be used to distinguish different modes of speech acts. For example, "declaratives" (such as closing a meeting) force Searle "purely out of embarrassment" (TCA1, 325; OPC, 273) to introduce the idea of a "double" direction of fit. The direction-of-fit categorization also fails to distinguish different kinds of illocutionary force. For instance, Searle categorizes imperatives under the category of directives. However, pure imperatives only express the speaker's will, while directives (such as commands) make implicit claims to normative authority. Finally, even constative assertions do more than just communicate the speaker's beliefs and the intention that the recipient share it; they are also motivated by the speaker's desire for the hearer to see them as justified and thus generate the possibility for the hearer to accept or deny them (OPC, 268f.). This, however, is only possible if we assume that the success of speech acts is bound to intersubjective validity. Second, Searle subscribes to a Fregean program (OPC, 296) that sees *truth as the only validity dimension* of speech acts, which constitutes a step backwards from Austin, who introduced a (vague) notion of "rightness." Searle implicitly acknowledges, however, the additional validity dimensions of normative rightness and expressive sincerity (or truthfulness) by including agreement on the relevant claims in the "preconditions" of successful speech acts (OPC, 271).

These problems can be avoided if one replaces the idea that speech acts communicate a relation between mental content and the world with the idea that they raise validity claims on three dimensions – truth, rightness, truthfulness – which can only be cashed out in intersubjective reasoning. This revision allows speech act theory to form the basis for a theory of communicative social integration.

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Habermas and Searle have also more recently engaged in a dialogue about the problem of free will (LGFW; Searle 2007), focusing on whether free will ascriptions presuppose a different "language game" than neuroscientific explanation.

Titus Stahl

SEE ALSO:

Formal/Universal Pragmatics
Free Will and Determinism
Speech Act
Validity
J. L. Austin

SUGGESTED READING

Cooke, Maeve. 1994. *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

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