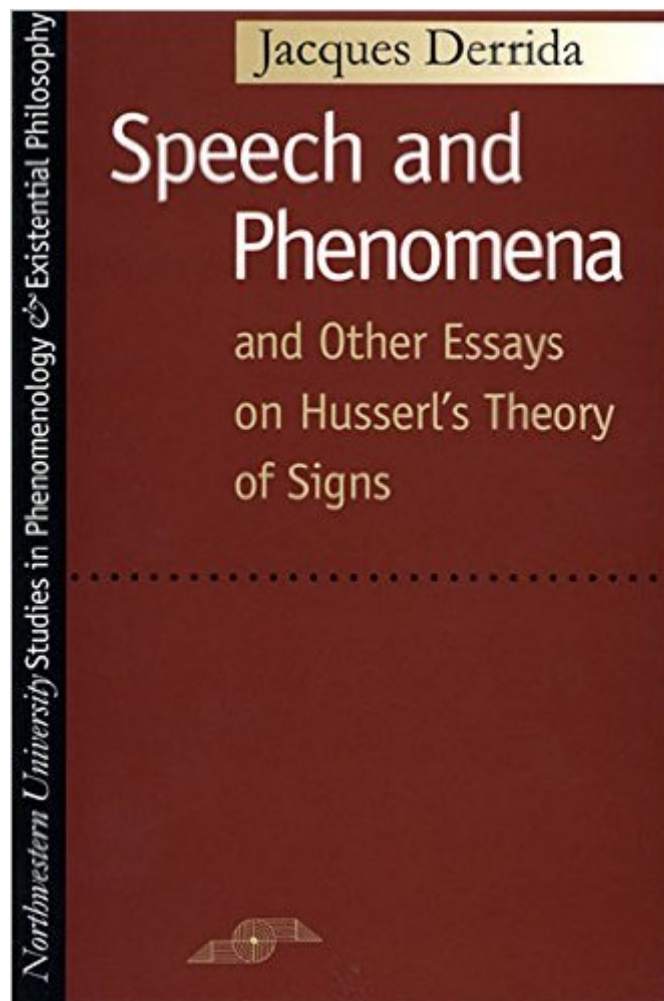


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Speech And Phenomena: And Other Essays On Husserl's Theory Of Signs (Studies In Phenomenology And Existential Philosophy)



Synopsis

In *Speech and Phenomena*, Jacques Derrida situates the philosophy of language in relation to logic and rhetoric, which have often been seen as irreconcilable criteria for the use and interpretations of signs. His critique of Husserl attacks the position that language is founded on logic rather than on rhetoric; instead, he claims, meaningful language is limited to expression because expression alone conveys sense. Derrida's larger project is to confront phenomenology with the tradition it has so often renounced--the tradition of Western metaphysics.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was a French philosopher and writer, best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as “Deconstruction.” He wrote in the first chapter of this 1967 book, “The historic destiny of phenomenology seems in any case to be contained in these two motifs: on the one hand, phenomenology is the reduction of naïve ontology, the return to an active constitution of sense and value, to the activity of a LIFE which produces truth and value in general through its signs. But at the same time, without being simply juxtaposed to this move, another factor will necessarily confirm the classical metaphysics of presence and indicate the adherence of phenomenology to classical ontology. It is with this adherence that we have chosen to interest ourselves.” (Pg. 28-29) He begins chapter 6 with the statement, “Phenomenological ‘silence,’ then, can only be reconstituted by a double exclusion or double reduction: that of the

relation to the other within me in indicative communication, and that of expression as a stratum that is subsequent to, above, and external to that of sense. It is in the relation between these two exclusions that the strange prerogative of the vocal medium will become clear. We shall start with a consideration of the first reduction as it figures in the "essential distinctions," to which we are here restricting our inquiry. One must admit that the criterion for the distinction between expression and indication in the end rests on an all too summary description of "inner life." It is argued there is no indication in this inner life because there is no communication; that there is no communication because there is no ALTER EGO. And when the second person does emerge in inner language, it is a fiction; and, after all, fiction is only fiction.

Arguably one of the most controversial philosophers within the Continental tradition, Derrida's work either heralds a revolution in philosophy or its utter destruction. Derrida cites two important pedigrees (as the title suggests): Husserl and (tacitly) de Saussure. Using the "course in general linguistics" of de Saussure, Derrida notes a certain degree of freedom, a "jeu," between the words-as-symbols and the thought contents they produce. Exploiting de Saussure's note that the relation between the sign and the mental content is arbitrary, Derrida questions the validity of any text (where the notion of text includes, but is not limited to, books, magazines, commercials, art, sex). Derrida sees behind any "text" its entire recursive history, the weight of all the words, the mental experience of the reader. At the point he considers the reader's experience he starts to deal with phenomenology - the study proposed and defined by Husserl himself in his Vienna and Paris lectures. A short definition might be that Phenomenology is the study of how man mentally relates to the objects of his experience (I admit, debatably so). This book proposes Derrida's famous example of "différance" and its effect upon the Gallically trained ear and mind. So if you want to seem witty and "with-it" this introductory tome shall suffice. As far as my own deconstruction / critique of the work. As an introductory work it is dense. Derrida is often criticized for losing himself in intellectual crevices, being prolix, and employing poor stylistics. These are not unmerited.

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