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'ORDINARY AND SPIRITUALLY-CHARGED DISCOURSE IN ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN TEXTS'

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In the past fifty years especially, western linguists and philosophers of language have worked to produce an exhaustive analysis of types of discourse. The work of J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle were especially pioneering in this regard, and their development of 'speech act theory' laid the groundwork for an enormous body of research that has massive implications for the psychology of cognition and communication.

Austin's threefold schema of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts offered a very useful first map of the terrain. Searle's own triad of utterance-, propositional, and illocutionary acts is not identical to Austin's, but shares some of its goals and parameters. Searle went further by developing a five-fold classification of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, declarations, and expressives. Other theorists not only picked up these terms but sometimes also redefined them, further complicating the matter.

There is much wisdom in each of these terms and systems. We may, however, gain some insight into the ancient Mediterranean understanding of discourse (and this may extend well beyond the Greco-Roman world) by thinking rather differently about it, and in terms that might make more sense to the ancients themselves. This paper proposes to sort the utterances we encounter in ancient texts according to whether they are ordinary or spiritually-charged discourse (SCD). It proceeds by offering a comprehensive taxonomy of the various types of SCD, and lays the groundwork for an examination of how they do the work they do in the stories that report them.