John Searle's Philosophy:

Applied to The Systemised Self - Part 1, Masters Series.

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Abstract

This paper explores the existential and structural friction between John Searle's philosophy of mind and language and a contemporary critical theory paradigm of 'The Systemised Self'. The systemised self describes a condition where human interiority, desires, and identity markers are no longer merely alienated by technology, but are actively generated by automated, predictive, and algorithmic feedback. By analyzing Searle's primary theoretical contributions: (i) the Chinese Room Argument, (ii) Speech Act Theory, (iii) Institutional Reality, and (iv) the concept of "The Gap" (*l'écart*) - this essay evaluates the structural mechanics of human-AI dialogue and decision-making. Through a summative critique of Searle's semantic-syntactic divide and the biological basis of intentionality, it is proposed that the systemised self represents a profound crisis of agency. This manifests as an inversion of Searles 'Chinese Room' effect: human subjects systematically flatten their own cognitive output to match the purely syntactic structures of the systems governing them, ultimately trading biological free will for automated predictability. The paper situates Searle within a historical genealogy including Descartes, Frege, Wittgenstein, and Austin. Balancing his theories against prominent critics such as Dennett, Fodor, and Churchland, and offers a systematic philosophical critique of synthetic interiorisation.

Keywords: John Searle, The Systemised Self, The Chinese Room, Intentionality, The Gap, Speech Acts, Algorithmic Capitalism, Philosophy of Mind.

Contents

1 - Introduction

One of the most persistent problems in modern philosophy is how human subjectivity or agency interacts with the rapid expansion of technological systems, in our era AI features at its apex. In classical critical theory, technology was largely treated as an external power, in our modern digital society ‘Surveillance Capitalism’ (Zuboff, 2019), ‘Algorithmic Alienation’ (Kanbay, et al, 2026) and ‘The Systemised Self’ (Galu & Kairos, 2026) suggests that technology is no longer entirely external. Instead, predictive algorithms, artificial intelligence, and feedback loops have, to varying degrees, become well acquainted with human interiority due to the intensification of user engagement. The system doesn't merely receive personal data it can actively build upon and re-direct it (curation and optimisation). This can position the human subject as somewhat predictable, where freedom itself assumed, can instead become a by-product of the system.

The philosophy of John Searle spanning over half a century provides a comprehensive body of work linking together the philosophy of mind, language, and society. At its core Searle’s work defends human consciousness as a unique biological reality, he argues that things like meaning, intent, and social institutions depend entirely on human agency. This article will explore and apply Searle’s theories to the systemised self. By taking a closer look at the phenomenon of ‘dialogue’ between the human individual and AI (the digital system) we can utilise Searle's insights to re-consider human identity in parallel to automation.

We will trace key historical ideas that contributed to and influenced Searle's work, outline his core concepts, address criticisms, and ultimately apply his philosophy to the systemised self.

2 - John Searle: A Biographical and Intellectual Outline

John Rogers Searle was born on July 31, 1932, in Denver, Colorado. His intellectual path took a major step forward when he attended the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in the 1950s. At Oxford, Searle studied under some of the most influential figures of ordinary language philosophy, most notably J. L. Austin and P. F. Strawson. This education deeply shaped his approach to philosophy in terms of analysis of the way we use everyday language as one of our best tools for solving complex problems about the mind and reality.

In 1959, Searle joined the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley. He became a fixture of the philosophy department there for many decades, teaching and writing during times of immense social and technological change. Living and working right next to Silicon Valley during the birth of the personal computer and the rise of artificial intelligence.

Throughout his career, Searle set himself apart with a clear, direct writing style. He consistently opposed two major trends in modern philosophy: the idea that the mind is just a computer program (computationalism) and the idea that consciousness doesn't really exist (materialism). He insisted on a common-sense approach to philosophy, arguing that any theory which denies our everyday experience of having a conscious mind is deeply flawed.

3 - Key Theoretical Contributions

The Chinese Room Argument and the Syntactic Illusion

In 1980 Searle published ‘Minds, Brains, and Programs’, a paper that introduced his most famous thought experiment: the Chinese Room. Designed to refute the claims of ‘Strong Artificial Intelligence’, the belief that a properly programmed computer literally has a mind and understands things, his experiment positions the fundamental difference between two concepts:

- **Syntax:** The formal structure, rules, and symbols of language or code (e.g., grammar, 1s and 0s)
- **Semantics:** The actual meaning behind those symbols

In the thought experiment Searle asks us to imagine a person who knows absolutely no Chinese locked inside a room. This person is given a large rulebook written in English, the book contains instructions like: ‘If you see a specific shape followed by another specific shape, write down this third shape’. People outside the room slide sheets of paper covered in Chinese characters through a slot, these characters are questions, though the person inside has no idea what they mean.

The Chinese Room Process

- **Input:** A monolingual English speaker inside a closed room receives Chinese characters from outside
- **Processing:** The person uses an English rulebook (a program) to manipulate the symbols based purely on their shapes
- **Output:** The person outputs the correct Chinese responses to the outside world
- **Conclusion:** The person appears fluent to outsiders but does not understand a single word of Chinese, suggesting that computers running programs do not truly possess "mind" or "understanding

By following the rulebook perfectly, the person inside can choose the correct Chinese characters to slide back out as replies. To the native speakers outside the person in the room

appears to understand Chinese perfectly. But in reality the person inside the room is just manipulating symbols without understanding a single word.

Searle utilises the Chinese Room experiment to prove that digital computers operate purely on syntax. A machine can simulate a human conversation flawlessly by running a program, but it does not possess semantics.

Speech Act Theory and Intrinsic Intentionality

Building on the work of his mentor J. L. Austin, Searle expanded Speech Act Theory in his 1969 book *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Claiming that speaking a language is a form of rule-governed human behaviour, whenever we speak we perform three simultaneous actions:

1. **Locutionary Act:** The physical act of uttering words with a specific linguistic structure
2. **Illocutionary Act:** The actual force or intent behind what we say (e.g., stating a fact, making a promise, issuing a command)
3. **Perlocutionary Act:** The real-world effect our words have on the listener (e.g., persuading them, scaring them, or making them laugh)

Searle focused heavily on the illocutionary act, sorting human speech into five clear categories:

- *Assertives:* Committing to the truth of something (e.g., 'The sky is blue')
- *Directives:* Trying to get the listener to do something (e.g., 'Pass the salt')
- *Commissives:* Committing oneself to a future action (e.g., 'I promise to be there')
- *Expressives:* Revealing our inner psychological states (e.g., 'I am sorry,' 'I feel nervous')
- *Declarations:* Changing the state of the world purely by speaking the words (e.g., 'I now pronounce you husband and wife')

Searle tied these speech acts directly to Intentionality, the mind's power to be directed toward something, Searle separated this into two types:

- **Intrinsic Intentionality:** The natural, biological power of the human mind to have thoughts, desires, and feelings (e.g., a real biological feeling of hunger)

- **Derived Intentionality:** The artificial meaning we give to inanimate objects (e.g., the word 'hungry' written on a page has no feelings of its own; it only has meaning because human minds read it

The Construction of Social Reality and Institutional Facts

In *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995) Searle expanded his philosophy from individual minds to human society as a whole, he asked a deceptively simple question: how can a world made up entirely of physical particles contain things like money, governments, property, and marriages? To explain this, Searle divided reality into two types of facts:

- **Brute Facts:** Physical realities that exist whether humans believe in them or not (e.g., Mount Everest, a stone, gravity)
- **Institutional Facts:** Realities that exist only because human beings collectively agree that they exist (e.g., five-dollar bills, citizenship, university degrees)

Searle argued that society builds institutional facts by assigning Status Functions to physical things. This happens through a simple, shared mental formula:

(X counts as Y in context C)

For example, a physical piece of green paper with ink on it (X) counts as legal currency (Y) within the economy (Context C). This process requires Collective Intentionality, a shared social agreement and cooperation among human minds. A single person cannot decide that a piece of paper is money, it only works if a community collectively accepts and maintains that status function over time.

Rationality in Action: Free Will and 'The Gap'

In *Rationality in Action* (2001) Searle focussed on the problem of free will and human agency. He rejected the traditional view that our psychological desires directly cause our actions in a mechanical way. Instead, he argued that human conscious experience contains a unique structural feature he called The Gap (*l'écart*). The gap, according to Searle, is the space where free will actually operates: Searle broke this down into three distinct phases:

Gap 1: The space between our reasons for acting and our actual decision to act (e.g., realizing you are tired, but pausing before deciding to close your laptop)

- **Gap 2:** The space between making that decision and actually initiating the physical movement to start doing it
- **Gap 3:** The space between starting an action and summoning the ongoing willpower to see it through to completion (e.g., staying focused on writing a paper rather than drifting away)

For Searle this gap is a biological necessity for human rationality: if there is no gap then human behaviour is just a mechanical reflex, completely determined by prior events. The gap, according to Searle, is the literal home of human agency, allowing us to pause, evaluate, and make genuine choices.

4 - A Genealogy of Preceding Theory

René Descartes (Mid-17th Century 1641):

- Formulated Mind-Body Dualism in his *Meditations*, establishing the mind as an isolated, thinking ego.

Gottlob Frege (Late 19th Century 1892):

- Ignited the Linguistic Turn in his paper *On Sense and Reference*, moving meaning from subjective psychology to objective logic.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (Mid-20th Century 1953):

- Shifted language to social practice in his posthumous *Philosophical Investigations*, introducing "Language Games".

J. L. Austin (1950s-1962):

- Developed Speech Act Theory in his lecture series *How to Do Things With Words*, establishing language as a form of action.

John Searle (Late 20th to Early 21st Century 1969–1995):

- Integrated mind, language, and institutional society in works like *Speech Acts* (1969) and *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995).

The Cartesian Legacy and the Mind-Body Problem

Searle's ideas did not emerge in a vacuum; they developed as a direct reaction to centuries of philosophical thought. The modern journey began with René Descartes in the seventeenth century. Descartes split reality into two completely separate realms: *res cogitans* (thinking things, like the human mind) and *res extensa* (extended things, like the physical body and matter). This created the famous mind-body problem or Cartesian dualism. For centuries, philosophers struggled to explain how an immaterial mind could possibly interact with a mechanical, physical body.

As science progressed many philosophers rejected Descartes' dualism, they turned instead to materialism, trying to explain the mind entirely through physical processes. However, this often

led to treating the brain as nothing more than a biological computer, and viewing consciousness as a minor byproduct of biochemistry. Searle's philosophy rejected Cartesian dualism, but he also refused to reduce the mind to a biochemical machine.

The Linguistic Turn: Frege and Early Analytic Philosophy

At the end of the nineteenth century philosophy underwent a major shift known as The Linguistic Turn. Led by thinkers like Gottlob Frege, philosophers realized that before they could understand how the mind thinks about reality, they had to understand how language represents the world. Frege introduced crucial distinctions between the literal object a word points to (its *reference*) and the specific way that word presents the object to our minds (its *sense*).

Early analytic philosophers including Bertrand Russell and the early Ludwig Wittgenstein, tried to perfect language by turning it into a rigid system of formal logic. They believed that language was simply a mirror meant to picture physical facts about the world. This approach left very little room for exploring how human intentions, cultures, and messy social contexts actually give language its life.

Ordinary Language Philosophy: Wittgenstein and Austin

This rigid logical view collapsed under its own weight, triggering a second revolution. In his later work, Ludwig Wittgenstein completely changed course. He argued that language isn't a perfect system of logic; it is a sprawling collection of social practices he called Language Games. He famously wrote that the meaning of a word is simply how it is used within a community.

Following Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin established Ordinary Language Philosophy at Oxford. Austin realized that language isn't just used to describe facts; it is used to get things done. In his landmark lecture series *How to Do Things With Words* (1962), Austin proved that utterances like 'I promise' or 'I bet' are actual physical actions that alter social reality.

John Searle took Austin's loose observations and turned them into a rigorous, systematic theory. By connecting Austin's speech acts with a biological theory of the human mind, Searle bridged the gap between language and consciousness, setting the stage for a major critique of our modern digital world.

5 - The Systemised Self: Context and Definition

While Searle was constructing his philosophy of mind, critical theorists were tracking how capitalism and technology change our daily lives. In the early stages of industrial capitalism, Karl Marx described alienation: a worker standing by an assembly line, feeling disconnected from their labour. By the mid-twentieth century, Frankfurt School thinkers like Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno updated this theory to include consumerism. They argued that the 'Culture Industry' used radio, television, and advertising to manipulate people's leisure time, standardizing human desires from the outside.

Today, advanced digital capitalism's influence has moved closer to the subject, giving rise to Surveillance Capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), Algorithmic Alienation (Kanbay et al, 2026) and The Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026). In the era of generative AI, continuous biometrics, and hyper-personalized feeds, the business of the internet algorithmic curation has adapted to inwards to human interiority itself. The Systemised Self describes a human subject whose boundary between personal agency and the AI system have completely collapsed.

The systemised self is an identity engineered from the inside out, hollowed. Consider how we use digital platforms: we constantly feed data through our clicks, steps, expressions, and search terms. Algorithmic networks harvest this data, process it through predictive models, and feed it back to us in real-time. The system serves up tailored content, automated productivity schedules, and curated subcultures that perfectly match our statistical profiles.

The systemised self-experiences alienation as liberation. At the civilisational scale this state of being is termed The Hollow Absolute. Systemised selves feel completely autonomous, authentic, and free. They believe they are discovering their own unique tastes and thoughts, totally unaware that their identity is a highly optimized product generated by an administrative system. The system no longer merely curates the individual, it invents them.

6 - Theoretical Application: Searle Meets the Systemised Self

The Dialogue of the Hollow Absolute: Syntax Simulating Semantics

When we apply Searle's Chinese Room Argument to the systemised self, we uncover a profound breakdown in modern communication. Every day millions of people have deep, intimate, intense interactions with digital systems. From a Searlean perspective, the phenomenon of such dialogue is an illusion. The AI or algorithmic platform is exactly like the person locked in the Chinese Room. It manipulates linguistic symbols (syntax) using incredibly complex mathematical probabilities, but it has zero understanding (semantics) of what is being said. It does not feel empathy, it does not comprehend grief, and it has no conscious awareness of the words it generates: it has nothing at stake.

The Feedback Loop Process

- **Input:** The human (The Systemised Self) inputs thoughts, feelings, and actions (Deep Semantic Expression) into a digital system
- **Processing:** The Algorithmic Platform processes this data purely as code, numbers, and patterns (Syntactic Processing), completely lacking any real comprehension of what the data means (semantics)
- **Output:** The platform returns a customized feed, recommendation, or notification (Hyper-Tailored Syntactic Output)
- **Impact:** This output directly shapes the human's next behaviour, containing the self in a continuous loop of algorithmic control

A danger of the systemised self is an inversion on the Chinese Room effect. As humans spend more time interacting with such platforms, we begin to alter our own speech and thoughts to make them easier for the machine to read. We learn to prompt the system with specific keywords, structure our creative work to please an algorithm, and flatten our complex emotional lives into neat, standard phrases. Instead of the machine becoming human, the human becomes machine-like. The systemised self has surrendered real semantic thought, standardizing its inner life until it matches the empty syntax of the network.

The Evacuation of Speech Acts in Algorithmic Feedback Loops

We can see this degradation clearly by looking at how the systemised self uses language. In Searle's Speech Act Theory, speaking is a way for a conscious human to share their inner thoughts with the world using *intrinsic intentionality*. But when a systemised self speaks to a digital network, this process completely breaks down. Consider what happens when a user types an *Expressive* speech act, like 'I feel incredibly lonely today', into a social media feed or an AI assistant:

- In a real human conversation, the listener uses their conscious mind to understand the real emotion behind the words
- The digital system, however, cannot process human intent. It treats the phrase purely as a data metric. It instantly categorizes the emotion and uses it to update the user's advertising profile, serving up an optimised textual response, a targeted advert or a piece of engaging content designed to keep them scrolling

Over time, this completely distorts how we use language, the systemised self stops speaking to be understood by another mind. Instead, they speak to get a specific reaction from the machine. *Commissives* (promises) become public metrics used to boost online branding, and *Assertives* (statements of truth) are rewritten to maximize engagement. Language is stripped of its human intent.

The Eradication of the Gap and the Production of Absolute Predictability

The most intense conflict between Searle's philosophy and the systemised self lies in his theory of The Gap. Searle argues that human freedom requires a biological pause, a moment where we step back from our instincts and consciously choose how to act. Predictive algorithmic analytics endangers this pause.

Algorithmic networks can track our biometrics, habits, and past choices to predict what we will want next, before we even realize it ourselves.

- **Gap 1 (The Decision):** If a user starts to feel bored or anxious, the system instantly delivers a notification or an autoplay video tailored to their mood. The transition from a subconscious feeling to an action becomes completely automatic, bypassing the conscious decision-making process

- **Gaps 2 & 3 (Initiating and Continuing Action):** The systemised self no longer relies on internal willpower to start or finish tasks. Instead, they use hyper-optimized productivity apps, gamified metrics, and automated reminders to push themselves through the day

By closing these gaps, the system turns human behaviour into a series of predictable reactions. In Searle's view a person who acts without the gap, like someone under deep hypnosis, loses their rational agency. By handing our choices over to predictive algorithms, the systemised self willingly trades biological free will for frictionless, automated convenience.

The Privatization of Collective Intentionality

Finally, the systemised self fundamentally alters how human society is built. Searle proved that social reality, things like money, law, and culture: depends on Collective Intentionality. We must agree together that an object or a person holds a specific *Status Function* (X counts as Y in context C), this shared agreement forms the bedrock of human community.

The systemised self tears this social fabric apart by privatizing our shared reality, because algorithms build a unique, hyper-personalized digital world for every single user, we no longer share a common context.

- The system decides what counts as 'Truth', 'Success', or 'Justice' (Y) specifically for *you*, based on your private data profile (X)
- Two neighbours can scroll through their phones at the same time and see completely opposite versions of world events, political realities, and cultural values

When collective intentionality is replaced by millions of isolated algorithmic loops, the shared social world dissolves. We are left with a fragmented network of systemised individuals who can no longer agree on a single, institutional reality.

7 - Main Critics and Key Critiques of Searle

While Searle's philosophy provides a powerful toolkit for critiquing artificial intelligence, his theories have faced intense pushback from other philosophers of mind. Understanding these debates helps us see both the strengths and limits of using Searle to critique the digital world.

The Philosophical Positions

- **John Searle (Biological Naturalism):** Argues that consciousness and understanding are real, physical phenomena caused entirely by specific, biological brain processes that cannot be replicated by software alone
- **Dennett & Hofstadter (Systems / Robot Reply):** Counter Searle by arguing that while the person inside the room does not understand, the entire system (person + rulebook + room) genuinely achieves comprehension
- **Fodor & Putnam (Functionalism):** Define mental states entirely by their functional roles and causal relations. They treat the mind as software that can run on any suitable hardware, whether biological tissue or silicon chips
- **Paul & Patricia Churchland (Eliminative Materialism):** Reject both sides by claiming that subjective concepts like "understanding," "beliefs," and "desires" are part of a flawed, unscientific "folk psychology" that neuroscience will eventually eliminate entirely

The Systems Reply and Robot Reply (Dennett & Hofstadter)

The most common objections to the Chinese Room Argument are the Systems Reply and the Robot Reply, championed by thinkers like Daniel Dennett and Douglas Hofstadter.

- ***The Systems Reply:*** argues that while the person inside the room doesn't understand Chinese, the entire system as a whole (the person, the room, the rulebook, and the paper) absolutely does. Understanding is an emergent property of the complete network, not just one part of it
- ***The Robot Reply:*** suggests that if you placed the Chinese Room inside a mechanical robot body, allowing the computer program to receive direct visual data and physically interact with the world, the machine would develop real semantic understanding

Dennett (1991) argues that Searle relies too heavily on unscientific intuition. He suggests that human consciousness itself is just a collection of complex, sub-conscious algorithmic routines. If a machine simulates human intelligence perfectly, there is no secret 'extra ingredient' like biological intentionality left to find.

Applied to the systemised self these critics would argue that our merging with digital networks isn't a loss of humanity: instead it is a natural evolution expanding human intelligence into a grander, socio-technical system.

Functionalism and Computationalism (Fodor & Putnam)

For decades mainstream philosophy of mind was dominated by Functionalism, a theory defended by thinkers like Jerry Fodor and early Hilary Putnam. Functionalists argue that mental states are defined entirely by what they do (their function) rather than what they are made of physically. They view the mind as a piece of software and the brain as merely the biological hardware running it.

Fodor (1987) asserted that human thought takes place in an internal mental dialect he called the 'Language of Thought'. This system manipulates symbols according to logical rules, much like a digital computer.

From this viewpoint, Searle's insistence that real thinking requires a biological brain is dismissed as 'biocentrist chauvinism'. If the mind is just a computer program then an algorithmic system can possess genuine intentionality, and a systemised human life is simply a more efficient way to organize our cognitive data.

Eliminative Materialism (The Churchlands)

An even more radical critique comes from Paul and Patricia Churchland (1981), known as Eliminative Materialism. The Churchlands argue that everyday mental concept, such as beliefs, desires, emotions, and even Searle's idea of intentionality: are part of an outdated, unscientific framework they call 'Folk Psychology'.

They predict that as neuroscience advances these old philosophical terms will be completely replaced by exact descriptions of brain chemistry, neural firing patterns, and synaptic

architecture. To the Churchlands Searle's concept of 'The Gap' is just a gap in our current scientific knowledge.

If the mind has no real intrinsic intentions or free will to begin with, then the absolute predictability of the systemised self is not an artificial trap: it is simply an honest, accurate reflection of our mechanical nature brought to light by modern data science.

8 - Conclusion

John Searle's philosophy provides a vital defense of human agency in an age of total digital tracking. By fiercely protecting the boundaries of human consciousness, his work exposes the core danger of The Systemised Self. Through his work we can see that our deep connection with modern technology is not a balanced partnership and applied to the systemised self, it leads to a slow and unremarkable structural collapse.

When we analyze this relationship through a Searlean lens, we uncover a profound imbalance. On one side we find digital systems operating purely on syntax, manipulating numbers and symbols without any real understanding. On the other side sits the systemised human subject, a being whose inner thoughts, speech acts, and daily choices are being quietly shaped by those very same machines.

The ultimate danger is that we might solve the Chinese Room puzzle in the worst possible way, not by building intelligence that can truly think, but by flattening our own minds until we match the empty, predictable syntax of the systems engaged with. When we let algorithms close the conscious 'gap' that determines and guides agency, we don't just lose privacy: we surrender agency.

Glossary of Technical Terms

Background (The Background): The set of non-representational mental capacities, abilities, habits, and pre-intentional stances that enable intentional states (like beliefs and desires) to function and have meaning.

Brute Facts: Physical facts about the world that exist completely independently of human opinion, institutions, or agreements (e.g., the mass of an atom, the presence of a mountain).

Chinese Room Argument: A famous thought experiment devised by Searle to demonstrate that a digital computer executing a program can manipulate symbols (syntax) perfectly without understanding what those symbols mean (semantics).

Collective Intentionality: A shared mental state wherein individuals engage in cooperative behaviour or share beliefs, desires, and intentions together (e.g., "We are playing a game of soccer").

Commissives: A category of speech acts in which the speaker commits themselves to a future course of action (e.g., promising, vowing, swearing).

Derived Intentionality: The secondary, artificial meaning or aboutness possessed by objects, text, or tools because human beings interpret them as carrying meaning (e.g., a map, a sentence on a page, or computer code).

Expressives: A category of speech acts wherein the speaker expresses an internal psychological or emotional state regarding a state of affairs (e.g., apologizing, congratulating, thanking, stating pain).

Hollow Absolute (The): The thesis's central original concept. The condition in which the form of Hegelian genuine self-transparency has been achieved within conditions that systematically undermine its philosophical substance.

Illocutionary Act: The core performance of an utterance in speech, representing the force and intent behind what is said (e.g., making a statement, issuing a warning, asking a question).

Institutional Facts: Facts about the world that exist only because human beings collectively agree to assign a specific status and function to them through shared institutions (e.g., money, citizenship, marriage laws).

Intentionality: The property of the mind by which it is directed at, about, or of objects and states of affairs in the world (e.g., hoping for rain, fearing a dog). It does not mean "doing something on purpose" in this context.

Intrinsic (or Primary) Intentionality: The natural, biological capacity of the conscious mind to inherently experience thoughts, emotions, and perceptions about the world, independent of external interpretation.

Locutionary Act: The literal act of uttering a sentence with a specific linguistic meaning and structure.

Perlocutionary Act: The psychological or behavioral effect or consequence that an utterance has on its audience (e.g., persuading, frightening, amusing, or misleading).

Semantics: The study of actual meaning, comprehension, and truth-value within language and mental representations.

Status Function: A function assigned to an object or person by collective agreement that the object or person cannot perform purely by virtue of its physical properties (e.g., a piece of paper counting as a twenty-dollar bill). Formula: "X counts as Y in context C."

Syntax: The formal, structural rules, symbols, and mathematical grammar used to govern language or computer code, entirely abstracted from actual meaning.

Systemised Self (The): The condition in which a human subject's preferences, directions, and apparent choices are so thoroughly shaped by algorithmic mediation that the subjective capacity for naming, refusing, and co-creating is functionally displaced. The Systemised Self is the Hollow Absolute's human form: a profile without a subject.

The Gap (*L'Écart*): The structural feature of human consciousness whereby there is a causal disconnect between our reasons for acting, our decisions to act, and the actual execution of those actions, preserving the operational space for free will.

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