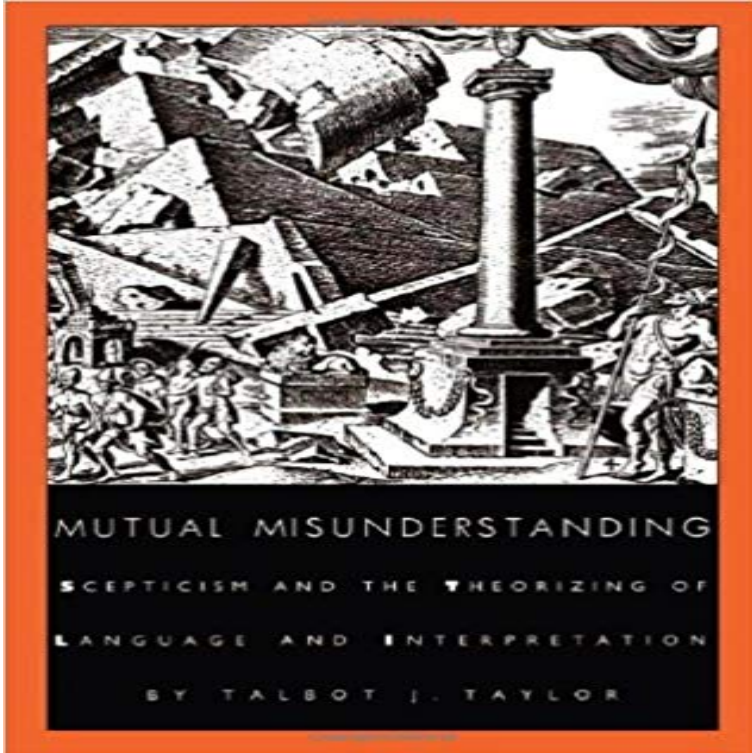


Mutual Misunderstanding: Scepticism and the Theorizing of Language and Interpretation (Post-Contemporary Interventions)



Do others understand what we say or write? Do we understand them? Theorists of language and interpretation claim to be more concerned with questions about what we understand and how we understand, rather than with the logically prior question whether we understand each other. An affirmative answer to the latter question is apparently taken for granted. However, in *Mutual Misunderstanding*, Talbot J. Taylor shows that the sceptical doubts about communicational understanding do in fact have a profoundly important, if as yet unacknowledged, function in the construction of theories of language and interpretation. *Mutual Misunderstanding* thus presents a strikingly original analysis of the rhetorical patterns underlying Western linguistic thought, as exemplified in the works of John Locke, Jacques Derrida, Gottlob Frege, Jonathan Culler, Noam Chomsky, Ferdinand de Saussure, H. Paul Grice, Michael Dummett, Stanley Fish, Alfred Schutz, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Harold Garfinkel, and others. This analysis reveals how, by the combined effect of appeals to commonsense and anxieties about implications of relativism, scepticism has a determining role in the discursive development of a number of the intellectual disciplines making up the human sciences today, including critical theory, literary hermeneutics, philosophy of language and logic, communication theory, discourse and conversation analysis, pragmatics, stylistics, and linguistics. Consequently, this provocative study will be of value to readers from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds.

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