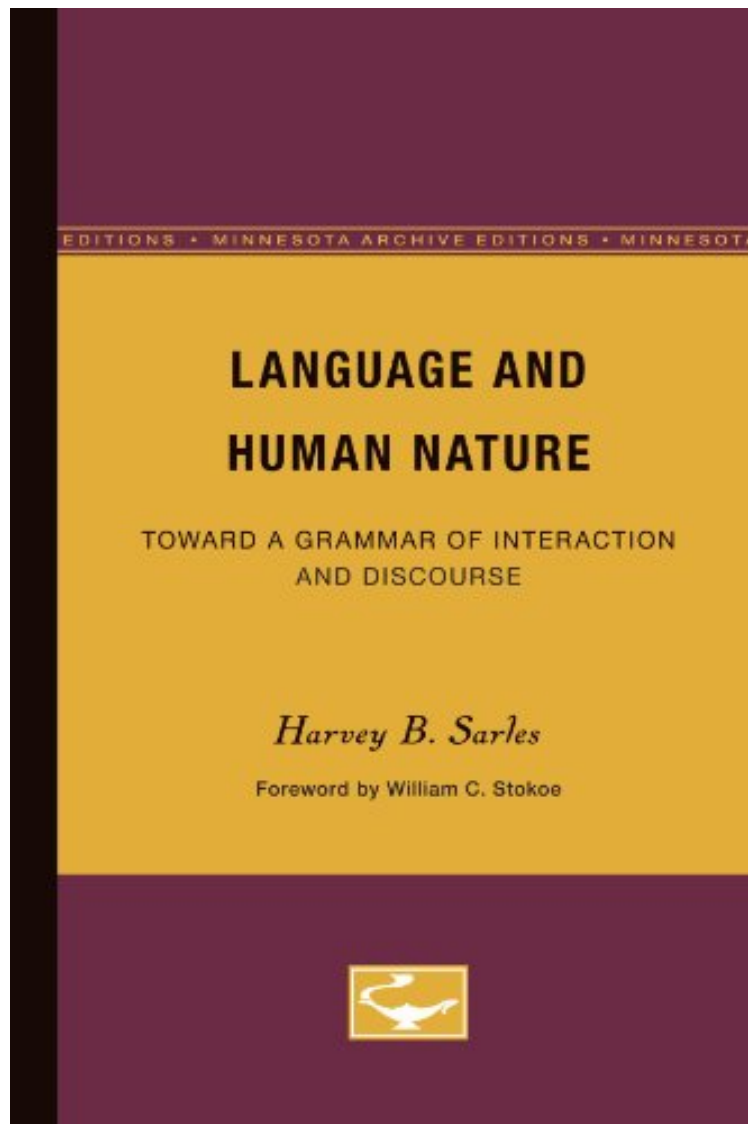


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Language and Human Nature: Toward a Grammar of Interaction and Discourse

Harvey Sarles

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Harvey Sarles : Language and Human Nature: Toward a Grammar of Interaction and Discourse before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Language and Human Nature: Toward a Grammar of Interaction and Discourse:

Language and Human Nature was first published in 1977 as *After Metaphysics: Toward a Grammar of Interaction and Discourse* and was reissued under the present title in 1985. Language, in Western thought, is the major metaphor for all that we consider truly and uniquely human. It is what separates us from other species and makes human society possible. Language has been taken to be an aspect of the mind -- the seat of logic, rationality, and objectivity; study of language has focused on its formal aspects -- structure and grammar. In recent years, language has come to seem an independent object, unconnected to either our bodies or the world around us. In *Language and Human Nature*, Harvey Sarles challenges those views of language; his aim is to explore the foundation of the concept of language and to suggest alternative ways of thinking about both language and what is human in human nature. The subjects of these fourteen essays range from the unexamined assumptions embedded in the academic discipline of language study, to the dynamics of facial expression, to the question of whether an extraterrestrial being could discover human language; but two themes emerge: First, the Western notion of language historically has been used to justify or defend particular political, religious, and metaphysical theories. Its use as the definition of humanness has profound implications for our relations with those excluded -- other species, and humans with impaired language ability. Second, the focus on the mind has led to a narrow definition of language that ignores the enormous communicative power of the body. Recognition of the body's role allows language to be defined more broadly as communication and interaction. The reification of language in the traditional approach, Sarles argues, has severely limited research and has led to static formulations of linguistic and social problems. *Language and Human Nature* was first published in 1977 (as *After Metaphysics: Toward a Grammar of Interaction and Discourse*); since then the deficiencies of formal language study have become apparent, and important new research has expanded our knowledge of complex animal communication patterns. The door is now open to different approaches that require the reexamination and reworking of old assumptions. These provocative essays, with a foreword by William C. Stokoe and a new preface by the author, offer one route to a new and more fruitful science of communication.