

## PREFACE

John R. Searle, who was born in Denver in 1932, is one of the most famous and influential present-day philosophers. He studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics mainly at Oxford. Since 1959 he has been a lecturer at the University of California in Berkeley.

Searle is not a philosophers' philosopher. For one thing, the subjects he tackles and above all the way he tackles them appeal to more than just philosophers. His influence on the entire field of linguistics and cultural studies is at most comparable with that of Wittgenstein — which is apt since Searle's philosophising began with a critique of Wittgenstein. Moreover, Searle addresses more than just philosophical questions. His bold comments on freedom of speech at universities and the attempts to rewrite the curriculum at American schools on multicultural lines have shown Searle to be a brave thinker in public debates. Searle is never one to mince his words in philosophy or public discourse, and always comes straight to the point. For him, arguments are always more important than authorities. Searle often writes as if he himself began each philosophical debate. This may well seem very provocative. Then again, Searle's provocations have in fact paved the way for totally new philosophical developments on several occasions.

Searle's most important publications include *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969), *Intentionality. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (1983) and *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995). These topics and above all their interfaces match Searle's three main fields of philosophy: philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and social philosophy.

*Speech Acts* also touches on the two other fields. What is the difference between a parrot echoing a sentence and a competent speaker who wants to communicate something to us by means of uttering the very same sentence? And on what does the role played by utterances in the various contexts of the real world depend? Searle answers the first question by recourse to special speakers' intentions; the second by using various rules and institutions. In his later works, these answers are substantiated by incorporation into the corresponding basic theories. *Intentionality* provides a general theory of intentionality; *The Construction of Social Reality* supplies the corresponding extensive theory of institutions.

Searle's strengths are not limited to being a designer of new theories. He is also famous for his brilliant attacks. These are usually directed against whatever happens to be the philosophical mainstream at the time. Examples include his speech-act taxonomy against Wittgenstein's dictum of the endless variety of our language games, his thesis of the primacy of semantics vis-à-vis syntax, and against both Chomsky's view of language and the current fashionable comparisons of the human

mind with a computer, and his robust realism against the pseudo-Wittgensteinian mania which claims all facts to be linguistically constituted.

Günther Grewendorf and Georg Meggle have been fascinated by this type of philosophy since their student days together at Stegmüller Institute in Munich. There are many factors which prompted them to organise an authors' colloquium on Searle and his theses regarding *Speech Acts, Mind, and Social Reality* with the help of ZiF (Centre for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld university). One of them is that they simply wanted to return to their previous joint pleasure 'with Searle' — this time with Searle himself. And this has indeed worked out — thank you, John. Thanks are also due to the DFG (German Research Council) and the ZiF, which made it all possible, and to all those who were in attendance. This volume is the product of this delightful event.

Günther Grewendorf  
Georg Meggle

Speech Acts, Mind, and Social Reality

Discussions with John R. Searle

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