

# Introduction: John Searle in Czech Context

In the seventies, when the university teaching and official publication policy in Czechoslovakia admitted only one philosophical orientation, numerous Czech and Slovak linguists intensively studied analytic philosophy of language and worked with its conceptual apparatus. The main interest focused, quite naturally, on the works by John Austin and John Searle. For many philosophy students of that time, the first encounter with the analytic philosophy has been mediated by debates among linguists (in more or less closed circles): the role of the initiating work was then typically played by John Searle's *Speech Acts* and some of his articles later collected in Searle (1979).<sup>1</sup>

Meeting their admired author in person during his repeated visits to the Czech Republic since the early nineties was an exceptionally inspiring (and most pleasing) experience for all these scholars.<sup>2</sup> The visits started with a unique series of lectures in May 1991 held at various Prague philosophical and linguistic departments, with topics ranging from the state of the US philosophical scene through fundamental issues of contemporary philosophical debates (like rule-following or the realism-antirealism dispute) to special questions of joint interest for linguists and philosophers of language (like the status and functions of explicit performatives).<sup>3</sup>

The impact of these lectures and debates with John Searle (together with his philosophical writings) on the formation and development of Czech analytic philosophical thought has been enormous and the interest they have attracted among Czech philosophers and linguists

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<sup>1</sup> Among many others, this was the case of one of the editors of this volume. This is perhaps the right opportunity to mention the linguistic seminar held in the early seventies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Brno, focusing on detailed work with John Searle's definitions of speech acts. The seminar was led by Mirek Čejka, probably the most competent Czech interpreter of John Searle's and John Austin's work during the so called "normalization" period.

<sup>2</sup> We are especially pleased to add that these visits gave us the opportunity to get acquainted also with John Searle's wife Dagmar.

<sup>3</sup> The text of the lecture 'Is There a Problem About Realism?' appeared in Searle (1992).

continued in the following years.<sup>4</sup> It culminated during John Searle's visits to Prague and Ústí nad Labem in May 2011 and June 2012.<sup>5</sup> The hopelessly overcrowded *Conference Centre* of the Prague's *Institute of Philosophy* has hosted his lecture on *The Intentionality of Visual Perception* (whose transcription appears in this volume) and, one year later, on *Language and Social Ontology*.

Both lectures have been followed by workshops devoted to John Searle's philosophical work. The papers presented during them, or on the Searlean colloquium in Ústí nad Labem, gave rise to the idea of this volume. Several other papers appeared after this plan became commonly known. Honestly speaking, it is hard to imagine that we could collect so many original Czech articles related to the work of any other philosopher of our times. The range of the material presented in this volume illustrates (at least partially and rather selectively) how profound and manifold is the impact of John Searle's work on Czech philosophers, linguists and literary theorists.<sup>6</sup>

It is not difficult to say what the reasons for such an enormous interest are. The first is, obviously, the indisputable significance and exceptionally wide thematic scope of John Searle's work. You can hardly understand (and even less participate in) contemporary debates on meaning, reference, communication (in its "ordinary" forms as well as in rather specific ones, such as the fictional discourse or the highly "ritualized" use of language within the operation of various institutions), on the nature of intentionality, consciousness, artificial intelligence, social reality and its institutions etc., unless you are familiar with John Searle's views on these matters. Second, these views are presented with precision and clarity which can serve as a paradigm of the virtues typically proclaimed (but not always observed) by analytic philosophers. As a consequence, the author's statements, arguments and theoretical constructions are highly transparent and directly open to critical exam-

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<sup>4</sup> Most of these visits have been organized by the *Center for Theoretical Study* and initiated by its head Ivan M. Havel. Papers presented at the colloquium on John Searle's philosophy organized by the *Center* appeared, together with others, in Smith (2003).

<sup>5</sup> Both visits have been organized by Josef Moural from the Philosophical Faculty of J. Ev. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem.

<sup>6</sup> As a special bonus for the reader, we have included (with great pleasure) also a paper by our Budapest colleague Zsófia Zvolenszky, which has been presented at the Prague workshop on John Searle's philosophy in June 2012.

ination; moreover, the concepts and distinctions introduced by him in this manner into a theoretical discourse find immediately an operative application as instruments of philosophical analysis.

Those who appreciate philosophy as a unique opportunity for speaking about unspeakable will not be impressed by these virtues. For analytic philosophers, on the contrary, they should count as a criterion for seriousness of any theoretical work as well as of the author's respect to the reader. Our respect to John Searle and his work gave rise to this volume and the authors did their best to do justice to values they find most convincingly exemplified in his way of doing philosophy. They have not found a better way of expressing their appreciation of the role his philosophical work and his personal engagement played in the constitution and rise of analytic philosophy in the Czech Republic.

We are grateful to John Searle for his kind approval to publish a transcription of one of his Prague lectures and in particular for substantial, detailed and creative reactions to each of the 15 papers collected in this volume. In these responses, the reader receives the most valuable source for better appreciation of John Searle's views on many significant philosophical topics, their background and their consequences.

Our thanks belong also to the *Philosophical Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences* for generous support of this project and to the editors of *Organon F* for cooperating on its implementation.

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The volume is opened by a transcription of the lecture on *The Intentionality of Visual Perception*, given by John Searle at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague on May 23, 2011. We are grateful to Irma Hvorecká for having reconstructed the talk from (technically not quite perfect) video recording and to John Searle for having revised the resulting text for the publication in this volume.

The papers of other contributors are divided into four sections, rather roughly and with numerous thematic overlaps. The first one, focusing on the problems of *ontology*, begins with two attempts to specify and critically evaluate John Searle's position in the realism-antirealism dispute: *Lukáš Zámečník* analyzes the relations of Searle's external realism to the system of commonly shared beliefs and communicative commitments, while *Tomáš Marvan* argues that Searle's position is in fact compatible with ontological constructivism and defends the idea of "privileged conceptual scheme", rejected by Searle. In the third paper

of this section, *Vladimír Havlík* discusses Searle's account of ontological emergence and raises several questions concerning its explicative potential.

A special challenge (in particular for those who feel committed to the naturalistic position) represents the emergence of consciousness and of behaviour based on free will – phenomena that are thoroughly discussed in the first two papers of the second section, devoted to the *philosophy of mind*. *Martin Pokorný* develops an account of consciousness which is (intended to be) in the Searlean line, while *Juraj Hvoorecký* discusses Searle's solution of the (apparent) conflict between the universal determinism and the possibility of free will. In other contributions to this section, *Pavla Toráčová* approaches Searle's theory of social institutions as a source of the explanation of the nature of intentionality; *Tomáš Hříbek* addresses the dispute between Searle and Davidson concerning the attribution of thought to prelinguistic animals and suggest a position which should enable to appreciate relevant arguments raised on both sides; *Petr Kořátko* defends and applies the Searlean internalist way of construing the content of thoughts and communicative acts, which (as he attempts to show) reflects and incorporates some aspects of the externalist initiative.

An important part of this discussion (and of the externalist/internalist debate in general) concerns the role of proper names – a topic of the first two papers of the *philosophy of language* section. *Zsófia Zvolenszky* demonstrates how Searle's theory of proper names, in its authentic form, not identifiable with the cluster-of-descriptions doctrine commonly attributed to Searle, is (or can be made) safe against the main objections raised by its critics. *Marek Nagy* suggests how to approach proper names from the perspective set up by Searle's theory of social reality, in particular by exploiting his notion of status function. *Vít Gvoždíak* proposes an interpretation of Searle's achievements in the philosophy of language, as well as of his analysis of the constitution of social reality, from the point of view of semiotics. In the last contribution of this section, *Tomáš Koblížek* addresses some issues of the well-known discussion between John Searle and Jacques Derrida: he defends (against Searle's objections) Derrida's account of the purity of concepts (as independent on the results of their application) and questions Searle's account of the relation between expression meaning and utterance meaning.

The last group of papers deals with the applications of Searle's philosophy of language (in particular of his speech act theory) in the

theory of *fiction* and in the analysis of *metaphors*. Jiří Koten discusses the applicability of Searle's account of fictional discourse (as based on pretended assertions) in the theory of film, while Jan Tlustý exploits Searle's theory of fiction in analyzing the distinction between fictional and factual autobiography. In the last paper, Jakub Mácha confronts Searle's and Davidson's account of metaphors and argues that Searle's theory can meet most of Davidson's objections.

Although this collection has been intended as homage to John Searle and congratulation to his anniversary, the real gift was received by the contributors (and with them all the readers) in John Searle's thorough and attentive replies. They appear in the last section of the volume.

*The Editors*

## References

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