Introduction

C. Mantzavinos

Philosophy of science examines "scientific knowledge." It tries to illuminate the specific characteristics of science, the way it is produced, the historical dimensions of science, and the normative criteria at play in appraising science. The discussions mostly take place with reference to the natural sciences, which are still at the core of the philosophy of science as a discipline. The examples used are often taken from one of the natural sciences (usually physics); and it is characteristic that the training of most contemporary philosophers of science has been – at least partly – in one of the natural sciences. The philosophy of the social sciences, on the other hand, traditionally deals with such problems as the role of understanding (*Verstehen*) in apprehending social phenomena, the status of rational choice theory, the role of experiments in the social sciences, the logical status of game theory, as well as whether there are genuine laws of social phenomena or rather social mechanisms to be discovered, the historicity of the social processes, etc.

The aim of this volume is to push the frontiers of the philosophy of the social sciences as a sub-discipline of the philosophy of science by presenting the results of cutting-edge research in the main fields, along with their critical discussion by practicing social scientists. The enterprise is motivated by the view that the philosophy of the social sciences cannot ignore the specific scientific practices according to which scientific work is being conducted in the social sciences and will only be valuable if it evolves in constant interaction with the theoretical developments in the social sciences. Since a great number of basic concepts of the philosophy of the social sciences have become increasingly sophisticated and technical, and even philosophically minded social scientists do not follow the philosophical discussion on a number of issues – like intentionality, reductionism, shared agency etc. – there is a real need for interaction between the two communities. This volume is designed to close this gap and to foster an exchange between philosophers and philosophically minded social scientists on philosophical concepts and the practices of apprehending social phenomena.

With this in mind, the format of the volume is the following: It includes ten chapters by philosophers, who draw from their broader research agenda, but focus on one or more specific issues. Social scientists who are philosophically minded, but who nevertheless employ the standard scientific practices of their respective disciplines provide comments on the chapters. This format guarantees a genuine discussion of the issues, engaging both philosophers and social scientists in productive dialogue that provides insights into the three main areas of the philosophy of the social sciences. The book is designed so that its three parts correspond to those three areas.

The first area concerns *Basic Problems of Sociality* (Part I). The social sciences deal with the interactions of individuals and the products of those interactions – obviously from very different angles. In a nutshell, the problems that a social scientist deals with are problems of sociality, and the philosophy of the social sciences attempts to shed some light on those problems. Social ontology, broadly defined to include issues such as collective intentionality, shared agency, the reality of group agents, etc., delineates the field of philosophical work that deals with what exists in the social world.

The second area concerns the *Laws and Explanation in the Social Sciences* (Part II). When problems of social interaction are studied by social scientists, a series of problems emerge concerning the appropriate method of study and the epistemological status of the obtained knowledge. A few of the notorious problems concern whether there are any laws in the social sciences and whether there are genuine social scientific explanations or rather *Verstehen* (understanding). Methodology of the social sciences, broadly defined to include issues such as how social scientific knowledge relates to knowledge that is produced by the natural and life sciences, the degree of complexity of social phenomena, issues related to how to proceed to policy advice based on the empirical findings of the social sciences, etc., is the field of philosophical work that deals with the method of the study of what exists in the social world.

The third area concerns *How Philosophy and the Social Sciences Can Enrich Each Other* (Part III). The relationship between philosophy and the sciences is a difficult problem which remains unresolved. However, it seems that philosophy does not have a more epistemologically privileged position than the sciences and that there is rather a continuum between philosophy and the sciences. Besides, the application of scientific theses, research, and results must be both acceptable and imperative for philosophy. The scaffolding of philosophy erected on the social sciences is far from perfect – its exact shape and function is the third main area of research into the philosophy of the social sciences.

A detailed plan of the chapters and comments is provided at the beginning of each Part, so that the reader has a map of what awaits him and what he can look for in every Part of the book. The *Epilogue* contains a short reflection on the problem areas of the discipline and how they have been addressed in this volume.

Part I

Basic Problems of Sociality

Part I of this book starts with *John Searle*'s chapter on "Language and Social Ontology." This aims to work out the role of language in the creation, constitution, and maintenance of social reality and to answer the question, "What are the ontological implications of the very capacity to categorize linguistically?" The upshot of Searle's discussion is that all social reality and all social institutions presuppose language. Searle defends the view that the logical form of the creation of the institutional fact is always a Declaration and elaborates on how the theory of speech acts can be applied to institutional analysis. He extends the account he presented in *The Construction of Social Reality*, including a "power creation operator" in the conceptual analysis to do justice to the phenomenon of power, which is inimical to all institutions. In his comment, *Mark Turner* focuses on the implications of taking language for granted, as Searle indicates a number of authors do. Taking language for granted implies taking political ontology for granted, taking intentionality for granted, taking personal identity for granted, and taking counterfactuality and a number of other things for granted. Turner shows that theorizing about this impressive list of entities, mechanisms, and processes that are taken for granted when approaching the social world can be productively done with the help of the tools of modern cognitive science. Arguing that social reality and performance are conditioned by the nature of our basic mental operations and our most characteristic capacities, such as language, Turner suggests a view complementary to Searle's.

In Chapter 2, *Michael Bratman* tackles the issue of shared agency – an issue of obvious importance for social ontology. Beginning with an underlying model of individual planning agency called the planning theory, he develops a framework that aims to support theorizing about forms of modestly sized sociality. He then seeks a conceptual and metaphysical bridge from such individual planning agency to modest forms of sociality. Bratman explores the idea that this involves **shared intention**. He suggests a *constructivist* view of shared intention: Individual participants are guided by norms of individual planning agency; and, given

the special contents of their intentions and their interrelations, these apply and conform to corresponding social norms on shared intention. According to Bratman, constructivism posits a kind of normative emergence – when individuals become aware of this normative emergence, they may go on to explicitly internalize these social norms and directly appeal to them in their practical reasoning. *Pierre Demeulenaere* asks in his comment: "Where is the social?" He points out Bratman's commitment to individualism since his aim is to proceed from individual intentions to shared intentions without introducing any irreducible social level independent of individual intention. Demeulenaere does endorse methodological individualism. Specified *negatively*, this is the rejection of any kind of "social" agency i.e., the rejection of the suggestion that "collective entities" or institutions are, as such, actors. Specified *positively*, it is the assertion that only individuals are actors, and any institution or group depends on individuals to be "active." He nevertheless criticizes the notion that the social level somehow "emerges" from the individual level. Even if one grants that shared intentions rest on individual intentions, it is inaccurate to view the social as *emerging* from the individual, the social being everywhere, pervading individual activities.

Philip Pettit addresses another issue of obvious importance for the social sciences: Are groups to be apprehended as agents? Pettit first sets out the requirements that systems of any kind must fulfil if they are to count as agents, arguing that they should display a purposive–representational pattern of behavior. He then looks at the way in which individuals might seek, on the basis of shared intention, to form a group agent, and he focuses on the capacity of a straw-vote assembly to display a broadly agential pattern of behavior. Pettit claims that the straw-vote assembly, which has been identified as a candidate for group agency, is hard to dismiss as an institutional possibility; it does satisfy the requirements of group agency. His conclusion is that groups can be real agents. *Diego Rios* situates the argument of Pettit's chapter in the broader context of the philosophical discussions on individualism. He recollects the powerful arguments of Hayek and Popper in defence of the thesis that groups are not true agents; and though he agrees with the main thrust of Pettit's argument, he raises the question of the applicability of his analysis in the hard case of fully opaque groups. These are characterized by the fact that *none* of the individual members is aware of the purposive global outcomes of the group. Rios suggests that further arguments are needed to make a convincing case that even these groups can be ascribed agential status.

These three interactions deal with problems of social ontology, highlighting the issue of sociality from different angles. The first interaction is

centred around the role of language for the construction of social reality, both from an *a priori* and an empirical point of view. The second interaction deals with a traditional problem of the social sciences – how individuality and sociality are related. It focuses more specifically on the way that shared intentions can be conceptualized as resting on individual intentions; it is an attempt, in a way, to find the locus of the social. The third interaction tackles the issue of whether groups can be agents, a core issue of the individualism–collectivism debate, elaborating on the conditions that could make the ascription of agential status to groups plausible and acceptable. All three interactions deal thus with *Basic Problems of Sociality*.

1 Language and Social Ontology

John R. Searle

This chapter is concerned with the ontology of a certain class of social entities and the role of language in the creation and maintenance of such entities. The social entities I have in mind are such objects as the $20 bill in my hand, The University of California, and the President of the United States. I also include such facts as that Barack Obama is President of the United States; that the piece of paper I hold in my hand is a $20 bill; and that I am a citizen of the United States. I call such facts "institutional facts," and it will emerge that the facts are logically prior to the objects (because the object is only institutional if it is created by a certain linguistic operation that creates an institutional fact). Under the concept of social entity, I also mean to include such institutions as money, property, government, and marriage. I believe that where the social sciences are concerned, social ontology is prior to methodology and theory. It is prior in the sense that unless you have a clear conception of the nature of the phenomena you are investigating, you are unlikely to develop the right methodology and the right theoretical apparatus for conducting the investigation.

I have also a polemical aim for wishing to discuss social ontology and that is that I believe we have a long tradition, going back to the ancient Greeks, of misconstruing the role of language in the creation and constitution of social and political reality. It is characteristic of, I believe, all the authors known to me in our tradition, from the Greeks to the present, that they do not accurately see the role of language in the creation, constitution, and maintenance of social reality. Social and political theorists assume that we are already language-speaking animals and then go on to discuss society, without understanding the significance of language for the very existence of human social reality. Every author I have read, from the ancient Greeks right through to such contemporary authors as Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas, takes language for granted. What I mean when I say they take language for granted is that in their discussions of social reality they are discussing people who already have a language. It may seem puzzling that I charge Foucault,

Bourdieu, and Habermas with taking language for granted, since they do discuss language and its relation to society. But it seems to me that in each case, they fail to tell us what language is. For example, Bourdieu remarks, correctly, that the ability to control the way that political issues are linguistically categorized is an important element in political power. But he does not tell us what is involved in being able to use language to categorize at all. What are the ontological implications of the very capacity to categorize linguistically? The worst offenders in this regard are the Social Contract theorists who simply assume that we are language-speaking animals and that we all get together in the state of nature and form a social contract. The point I make in this chapter is that once you have a language you already have a social contract. The social contract is built into the very essence of language. So by way of beginning this discussion, I am going to briefly examine the nature of language.

1 What Is Language?

Human language is an extension of prelinguistic forms of intentionality and I need to identify some of the relevant features of intentional states that form the basis for the evolution of language. We do not know how language evolved from prelinguistic forms of mental life, and because of the absence of fossil evidence, maybe we will never know how it evolved; but even if we do not know the details of the evolution of language we can still identify the conceptual distinctions between prelinguistic intentionality and linguistic forms of intentionality. At one time beasts more or less like ourselves, hominids, walked on the Earth in Africa and did not have language. Now we have language. What is it that we have that they did not have? More specifically: what conceptual resources are already available in prelinguistic intentionality, and what do we have to add to prelinguistic intentionality to get language?

To begin to answer this question, I have to say some things about intentionality in general. Intentional states and events are those mental states and events that are *directed at* or *about* objects and states of affairs in the world. They include not only intending, in the sense which I intend to go to the movies, but also perception and intentional action, belief, desire, the emotions and indeed any state that has a directed content. Intentional states have some remarkable features that already foreshadow corresponding features in language, and on the basis of which we could develop a language. Specifically intentional states typically have a propositional content in a certain psychological mode. Thus, for example, I can believe that it is raining, fear that it is raining, or hope that it is raining. In each case I have the same propositional content – that it

is raining – but I have these in different psychological modes. And this corresponds in language to the distinction between the propositional content of the speech act and the corresponding speech act mode, the type of speech act that it is. Thus, I can order you to leave the room; I can ask whether you will leave the room; and I can predict that you will leave the room. In each case, we have the same propositional content, that you will leave the room, presented in different types of speech acts.

Because intentional states typically have a propositional content, they can represent how things are in the world, or how we would like them to be, or how we intend to make them be. A belief is supposed to represent how things are in the world, a desire represents how we would like them to be, an intention, how we intend to make them be. Let us introduce the notion of "conditions of satisfaction" to describe what is common to all these cases and then, leaving out all sorts of details, we can say that the essence of intentionality is representation of conditions of satisfaction. In each case, the intentional state represents its conditions of satisfaction: truth conditions in the case of belief, carrying out conditions in the case of intentions, and fulfillment conditions in the case of desires.

Another crucial feature of intentional states that carries over to language is that intentional states have different ways of fitting reality. The aim of a belief is to be true, the aim of an intention is to be carried out, the aim of the desire is to be fulfilled. We may think of beliefs therefore as supposed to represent how things are. They fit the world with what we can call the "mind-to-world" direction of fit (the state in the mind is supposed to represent how things are in the world) but desires and intentions are not supposed to represent how things are, but rather how we would like them to be, or how we intend to make them be and we may say therefore that they have the "world-to-mind" direction of fit (the state of the world is supposed to come to match how things are represented in the mind). The best test for the presence of the mind-to-world direction of fit is to ask, Can the state in question be literally true or false? Beliefs can be true or false, and thus they have the mind-to-world direction of fit. Desires and intentions cannot literally be true or false, and thus they do not have the mind-to-world direction of fit. All of this is going to carry over to language (with some absolutely crucial variations). I think in simple metaphors, and so I like to think of the mind (or word)-to-world direction of fit as going downward ↓ from the representation to reality, and the world-to-mind (or word) of direction of fit is going upward ↑, from the reality to the representation. And I will use upward and downward arrows to represent the two directions of fit. Statements, like beliefs, have the downward direction of fit ↓; orders and promises like desires and intentions, have the upward direction of fit ↑.

Our hominids also have conscious perceptions and actions and this will give them a set of perceptual and action categories for coping with their experiences. They will perceive objects, properties, and relations and they will act in a way that will manifest their own agency, and their capacity for experiencing causation. If they can recognize the same object on different occasions and distinguish one object from another, they are manifesting the categories of identity of an individuation. They thus can operate with a rather hefty set of Aristotelian and Kantian categories, even though of course they have no concepts corresponding to these categories.

We have been talking as if intentionality were a property only of individual minds, but of course in understanding society we have to introduce the notion of collective intentionality. When you and I are engaged in some sort of cooperative behavior such as preparing a meal together or having a conversation we have collective intentionality. A meeting like this where we are all gathered together to discuss common issues is a paradigm case of collective intentionality. All intentionality is in individual human and animal brains, but some of it is in the form of the first-person plural. It is not just that I am doing this and you are doing this, but we are doing this together; and this fact is represented in each of our heads in the form of collective intentionality.

So far we are imagining that our prelinguistic hominids have an inventory of prelinguistic intentional states, that have the remarkable features that they can represent states of affairs in the world and they can do so with different directions of fit. We also imagine that they have experiences like ours that manifest such categories as object, identity, property, relation etc. And they are capable of cooperating, thus they have the capacity for collective intentionality. What do we have to add to all of that to get language?

2 Meaning, Conventions and Syntax

There are lots of differences between the linguistic forms of intentionality and the prelinguistic forms, but for the purpose of our present discussion, which is about social ontology, the three crucial features of language which prelinguistic intentionality does not have are *meaning*, *convention*, and *syntactic structure*. I will now discuss each of these. Lots of prelinguistic animals have the capacity to communicate with other animals by way of signaling. The bees are the most famous case, but the bee language has some puzzling features, so let us take an even simpler case, the vervet monkey. These monkeys have different signals for different types of danger. They have one type of signal if the danger is from