On the context and presuppositions of Searle's philosophy of society

Rodrigo A. González (rodgonfer@gmail.com) Centro de Estudios Cognitivos, Universidad de Chile (Santiago, Chile) ORCID 0000-0001-9693-0541

Abstract

In this article, I deal with Searle's philosophy of society, the last step to complete his philosophical system. This step, however, requires an examination of the context and presuppositions, or default positions, that make possible the key concepts of this new branch of philosophy. In the first section, I address what the enlightenment vision implies. The second section focuses upon how consciousness and intentionality are biological tools that help us create and maintain the social world. In the third section, I explain the importance of the difference between subjectivity and objectivity. Finally, in the fourth section I elaborate upon the default positions: the existence of one world, truth as correspondence to facts, direct perception, meaning, and causation. Importantly, I show how the context and presuppositions of the philosophy of society are an opportunity of interdisciplinary work between philosophy and the social sciences.

Key words: Searle, system, society, presuppositions, interdisciplinarity.

Introduction

The Construction of the Social Reality strongly influenced, as few books have, the contemporary philosophers. As such, it declares that, pace the constructivists, "the world exists independently of our representations of it" (Searle 1995: 177). This means that the world is one but metaphysically very complex. Such complexity is reflected in the fact that, besides atoms, protons, viruses, galaxies, and so on, marriages, money, cocktail parties, presidents, and so on exist. The fact that the world is composed of particles, systems of particles, and what Searle calls "institutional facts" (Searle 1995: 2) makes some people solve the metaphysical complexity of the world by claiming that two or three worlds exist. This amounts to more complexity, as more worlds and their relation need elucidation. Accordingly, Searle counters any form of strong constructivism, arguing that the mode of existence of the social world, for example, is caused by brains, which have consciousness and intentionality.

Oddly enough, few researchers of the social sciences have taken interest in Searle's views, even though another book, *Making the Social World*, systematizes a "philosophy of society" (Searle 2010: 5-6) Even so, most people in the social sciences simply neglect Searle's philosophy, although it can be regarded as a whole *system* that integrates different aspects of reality, such as cognition, society, the role of the human being and, certainly, the human civilization. In relation to the last topic, it is also interesting that Searle claims that the philosophy of society is a branch of philosophy that could be devoted to explaining the emergence and the structure of the human civilization. How so? Searle considers what the philosophy of society is thus: "[…] in the sense in which there is a separate branch that we now think of as the philosophy of language, but which didn't exist at the time of Kant and Leibniz; so we should think the philosophy of society as a separate branch of philosophy" (Searle 1998a: 143).

Against this background, this paper focuses upon the context and presuppositions that provide the foundation of the philosophy of society. Not only do I describe such presuppositions; in addition, I systematize them, showing their crucial importance for Searle's system. In fact, it is possible to show that, without the context, and were those presuppositions false, all or one by one, the entire Searlean

system would collapse; further, there would be no room for the so-called philosophy of society and, certainly, for interdisciplinary work between philosophy and the social sciences.

Importantly, Searle's system depends upon certain key philosophical concepts, which all serve to elucidate the structure of the human civilization. Such concepts are the following: "status functions," "collective intentionality," "deontic powers," "desire independent reasons for action," "constitutive rules," and the abovementioned "institutional facts" (Searle 2010: 6-11). As this philosopher argues, language is also a key for understanding the emergence of the civilization. I will not discuss in detail such concepts; rather, I will deal with the context and presuppositions that make possible and consistent them. That is, I will argue that those key concepts would have never been proposed, had not Searle resorted to the context and presuppositions I discuss here.

The first part of the context is the so-called "enlightenment vision," a view according to which "there was a long period in the Western civilization when it was assumed that the universe was completely intelligible and that we were capable of a systematic understanding of its nature" (Searle 1998b: 2). On this view, the human being acts, for the most part, in accordance with reason. The second part of the context characterizes how consciousness and intentionality are "biological features of the brain, which though causally explained," enable the existence of the human civilization (Searle 1998b: 85). Finally, the last part of the context shows how "objectivity and subjectivity have been ill interpreted" by most philosophers (Searle 1998b: 42). The context allows one to comprehend the first presupposition: "there is a world that exists independently of us." The second presupposition is that "our statements are typically true or false depending on whether they correspond to how things are". The third presupposition is that "we have direct perceptual access to that world." The fourth is that, for the most part, "words like rabbit or tree typically have reasonably clear meanings." The last presupposition is that "causation is a real relation among things and events." (Searle 1998b: 10) All these presuppositions are fundamental to understand Searle's realism and, further, his project to make possible a philosophy of society.

1.   The context part I: The "enlightenment vision"

Major revolutions took place in the seventeenth century. A general view of nature and the human being was developed then, leading to major changes as to how science and scientific knowledge should be achieved and justified. As Searle puts it, in virtue of the scientific revolutions of the seventeenth until the twentieth century, "it was possible for an educated person to believe that he or she could come to know important things about how the universe works" (Searle 1998b: 1). Given theories such as Copernico's, Newtonian physics, and others such as Darwin's theory of evolution, "the universe made a kind of sense" and, thus, it looked *intelligible* (Searle 1998b: 1). The very project of the encyclopedia, which was carried out by Diderot and D'Alambert, shows the optimism about the growth of knowledge, a feature of the enlightenment that indeed contrasts, for example, to the middle ages.

Save for Spinoza, an ontological monist and pantheist, in the enlightenment it was believed that God was not directly involved in how the universe works. In fact, those who held scientific theories felt that God should not play an important role in the growth of scientific knowledge, which made decrease the importance of religion. Even so, there were notorious views involving God such as deism, fideism and atheism. Deism holds that reason could prove the existence of God; fideism holds that reason is unfit for justifying the existence of God; finally, the atheists denied the appeal to God and supernatural reasons to explain nature and society. Despite these exceptions, many scientists of the enlightenment believed

that the universe seemed harmonious, and scientific laws, which were postulated by them within different scientific fields, seemed to be consistent.

The enlightenment gave birth to what Searle calls "enlightenment vision" (Searle 1998b: 1-6). In particular, he asserts that, according to the enlightenment, there were two parts that complement with each other. On the one hand, the universe was taken to be *knowable*, then, it was intelligible for reason. On the other hand, intellectuals believed that it was possible to discover and postulate the *laws of nature*. As a result, the enlightenment vision is quite optimistic in that it supposes that knowledge of the world, which is reflected by scientific laws, is possible, and there were no hard-unsolvable problems in that respect. Within this picture of the world, most thinkers assumed a role for the human being in the universe, and expectations grew because philosophy, and the natural and social sciences could help the human beings improve their lives.

Philosophers of the enlightenment believed that reason could overcome irrationality. Despite the period of terror during the French revolution, Kant claims that the enlightenment was "a process by which humankind may release from its self-incurred immaturity" (Kant 1784: 3). Undertaking thinking oneself was Kant's main ideal; thus, the human being should employ and rely on their own intellectual capacities to think and act. Put simply, intellectuals thought that the human being should exercise their own intellectual powers to overcome superstition, myth, prejudice, miracles and irrational forms of authority. It was believed, then, that forms of irrationality oppressed the human being, to the degree that people could not act in accordance with values such as liberty and equality.

Nevertheless, critics of the enlightenment vision stress the forms of violence associated with the British, American and French revolution. It is claimed, for instance, that the enlightenment did not overcome forms of irrationality; rather, it paradoxically encouraged them. As Wilson points out, the enlightenment favored the view according to which

[…] autonomous individuals can freely choose, or will, their moral life. Believing that individuals are everything, rights are trumps, and morality is relative to time and place, such thinkers have been led to design laws, practices, and institutions that leave nothing between the state and the individual save choices, contacts, and entitlements. Fourth grade children being told how to use condoms is only one of the more perverse of the results (Wilson 1993: 244-5 y 250).

Moreover, critics remark that the enlightenment vision, although has public concerns about the "rights of man", neglected rights of women and of non-white people. As Eze puts it, the enlightenment is highly ethnocentric because

Race – I shall thus limit my contribution – is not marginal to either Enlightenment's historical self-constitution or conceptual self-understanding. This is obvious once we examine Enlightenment's dominant theories and practices of reason, humanity, culture, and civilization […]
But what, for Kant, is meant by "mankind" of "maturity"? Does this mean all human beings, or just Europeans and white humans? (Eze 2002: 281).

Furthermore, "has 'enlightenment' meaning as such?," Fabiani questions (2011: 7). Warts and all, the enlightenment vision serves as the basis upon which the philosophy of society can be founded. Contra some thinkers of the twentieth century and their pessimism, Searle believes that the human being is for the most part rational, independently of the culture, be it western, eastern or another one. The rationale is the following: the human being would not live in a world of institutions otherwise, and

irrationality would be central if goals were irrationally pursued. This makes the Searlean system resemble the Newtonian one, but unlike the latter it mainly focuses upon how in "a world of physical particles in fields of force there can be such things as consciousness, intentionality, free will, language, society, ethics, aesthetics, and political obligations"? (Searle 2010: 1). Thus, reason needs to discover social laws, and sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistic, and philosophy should interact rather than compete. Before explaining the presuppositions of the philosophy of society, I will provide the second part of the context.

2.   The context part II: Consciousness and Intentionality

The mind is a complex phenomenon; it is perplexing in that most theories have difficulties to characterize the nature of the mind; in fact, most theories *reduce* the mind to something else, but that something seems to be much simpler than consciousness; hence, the mind's subjective viewpoint seems to be left out. Contemporary philosophers do not agree in relation to what consciousness is, since some believe that the mind: i) is part of the natural world (the naturalists and materialists); ii) is different from the natural world (the dualists) and iii) exists in a mysterious form (the mysterianists). As Searle puts it, "From the time of the ancient Greeks up to the latest computational models of cognition, the entire subject of consciousness, and of its relation to the brain, has been something of a mess […] (Searle 1997: 4-5). On Searle's view the mind is a real phenomenon, and it should be causally explained in terms of biology itself. That is, the essence of the mind, which is consciousness, is like any other biological phenomenon, such as digestion, photosynthesis, respiration, and so on.

The mind has two elements that allow the creation of the social world, namely, consciousness and intentionality. These are fundamental to grasp in what sense the mind can create and maintain the social world. Consciousness is a phenomenon that is present in animals and other highly developed creatures. As such, it allows organisms to map the world around us, and to give the ability to know how things are in the environment. But how emerged consciousness in "a world that is composed of systems of particles in fields of force?" (Searle 1998b: 40).

The particles are sometimes organized into systems. The boundaries of the systems are set by causal relations, which means that they exist as objects in nature in relation to other systems. Now, certain organisms, which are carbon-based, have developed nervous systems. In virtue of them, minds come into play. As mentioned above, conscious minds map the environment, and make us know how things are around us. Consciousness, which includes all the mental states that provide sentience when awake, has an inner character, and is qualitative and subjective.

By the inner character of consciousness, Searle means that this biological phenomenon is related to an organism's inner mental states, "in a very spatial sense" (Searle 1998b: 41). The pain I feel is accessed by my organism, in a way that it has no access to any other organism. Such states are also qualitative, as no objectivity, in quantitative terms, can explain the way conscious mental states exist. Rather, there is a feel of a what-it-is-like to have those conscious states. Finally, these are subjective, because they exist, according to the first-person ontology, i.e., for a subject who maps the environment.

During the waking hours of our lives, we are in different forms of consciousness. Feeling bored, the taste of a wine, the smell of a flower, happiness, sadness, being angry at other drivers, etc. are forms of consciousness that are the most important part of our lives. In fact, life would be meaningless, if consciousness did not exist, because life itself is related to consciousness. For example, it enables us to *value* life experience, in the sense that no other biological phenomenon does. Did consciousness

disappear, we would all act as robots without feelings, emotions, experiences. In short, a world without consciousness would not enable us to value our experience, which ontologically depends upon the existence of consciousness.

Although some philosophers deny that consciousness has a function, it does. Most human activities such as walking, eating, copulating, speaking a language and so on would be meaningless without consciousness. Despite this, some philosophers hold that our behavior may be the same without consciousness: to advance their arguments, they hold nature constant, and then they imagine that consciousness does not exist. They claim, furthermore, that there would be no conscious behavior, but the world would be the same. Naturally, this argument supposes without an adequate proof that all the activities would *necessarily* be the same, did not consciousness exist. But that is wrong: there is an important difference between "any science fiction we like, and the real world" (Searle 1998b: 63). Indeed, in the real world we do *care* for institutions and the constitutive rules, that is, rules that are part of what the institutions are.

Intentionality is related to consciousness, in an essential form. Mental causation reflects the way in which we act "by representing the events we cause" (Searle 1998b: 64). For example, if I desire to drink water, I consciously represent the event that will be caused, namely, drinking water. Therefore, there is an important link between consciousness and intentionality because the former enables the human being to causally produce what is represented, that is, objects, events, and states of affairs. If consciousness did not exist, there would not exist mental causation, and the things represented could not be enacted in the world.

Now, intentionality is a technical philosophical term: "Intentionality is that feature of certain mental states and events that consists in their (in a special sense of these words) being directed at, being about, being of, or representing certain other entities and states of affairs". (Searle 1984: 3). But, it is important to be careful here: the intentional object need not exist. John's desire to travel to the Atlántida does not entail that the Atlántida really exists. In addition, all intentional states are conscious, which means that intentionality must be understood in terms of consciousness. Even though many intentional states are not conscious (e.g. John's belief that Washington was a white man), they can become conscious, and thus they are potentially conscious. This feature of intentionality is the key to understanding why it enables the human being to relate to the environment, be it physical or social. As Searle remarks, "the primary evolutionary role of the mind is to relate us in certain ways to the environment, and especially to other people" (Searle 1998b: 85).

One important distinction Searle makes about intentionality is that it is intrinsic, derived, or as-if. Intrinsic intentionality is the internal property of certain mental states that make them represent things, be them existent or not. For example, "John believes it is raining in London" is about John's belief about the weather conditions in London, which is not observer-dependent: John's mental state has the property independently of what can be observed. By contrast, derived intentionality is not internal to anything, but derived from the intentionality of the intrinsic mental states of agents (e.g. maps). Incidentally, it is observer-dependent: "'Es regnet' means it is raining is German", which derives its intentionality from the mental states of agents. Finally, the as-if intentionality is only metaphorical: when I assert that the ATM believes that my pin number is incorrect, it is only a metaphor about what is going on with a machine.

In addition, intentional states have direction of fit and conditions of satisfaction. The direction of fit consists in the way intentional states refer to; for example, a belief about the moon has the direction

mind-to-world, because the mind needs to adjust, or it does not, to how the world is. Likewise, a desire may have a direction of fit world-to-mind: something must occur in the world to fulfill a desire. Certain intentional states have null direction of fit: being happy because you earned the lottery implies that the mind need not adjust to the world, or the world needs to adjust to the mind.

Conditions of satisfaction, on the other hand, are what needs to be satisfied for the propositional content (the proposition to be believed, for example), if the belief is true (for instance, it needs to rain to make the belief "it's raining" true). In the case of desires, and similar intentional states, the world needs to change if the conditions of satisfaction are to be satisfied. Thus, these intentional states fulfill certain conditions instead of making beliefs true. Conditions of satisfaction are fulfilled, then, when the propositional content match the reality represented.

Importantly, intentional states do not come in isolation; on the contrary, they appear in a *network* of other intentional states. For example, the belief that "It's raining" is connected to a desire "I desire to get my umbrella". In addition, the belief that "having the flu is nasty" is connected to my desire to get the umbrella. All beliefs, desires, hopes, and other intentional states appear in what Searle calls the *network*. If a belief did not connect to other intentional states, they would be meaningless because one would not be able to answer *why*, *how, in what sense* one has an intentional mental state. As a result, intentionality is *holistic*, for the network has infinite beliefs, desires and other mental states that are connected.

Finally, intentionality would not exist, did a *background* of preintentional states not existed. By "background" Searle means capacities, abilities, know-how, and taken for granted presuppositions that make possible the existence of intentional states. As Negru points out,

The Background is not the consequence of the transcendental relationship between the subject and the world, as phenomenology considers, but it is the condition of possibility of man's representing the social and biological world. Its content is given, on the one hand, by the capacities all people share, as biological beings that belong to the same species (i.e., deep Background). On the other hand, its content is given by the local cultural practices influencing the individual as a member of a certain society (i.e., local Background) (Negru 2013: 30).

The desire to walk requires background presuppositions that makes the action possible: we presuppose gravity, going forward, and so on. The belief that it is impossible that A≠A presupposes the principle of contradiction. While the former background is *deep*, the latter seems to be *local or cultural*. As I will examine in section 4, that the world exists, truth as correspondence between statements and facts, perception as direct access to the world, meaning as somehow clear, and causation as the way we relate events are part of the background, and for this reason Searle names them the "default positions." However, to understand such positions the last part of the context needs to be examined.

3.   The context part III: Subjectivity vs. Objectivity

Neither subjectivity nor objectivity has been topics that make people reach a consensus in philosophy. The former, for example, has been related to issues such as the nature of beauty, because this property seems to require that perceivers declare that something is beautiful. For this reason, some people have analyzed beauty in terms of subjectivity; by contrast, other people believe that there is beauty in things themselves, and thus consider that beauty is an objective property. A perfect rose, for instance, is believed by some philosophers to be beautiful, independently of what is perceived, or of the

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representations. Furthermore, the moral beauty view has been associated to the thesis that "moral virtue is beautiful and moral vice is ugly" (Panos 2017: 1). This explains why considerations about beauty are controversial, like those of taste. Unlike beauty, taste is taken to be merely subjective; the expression *de gustibus non est disputandum* clarifies in what sense taste is subjective. Is objectivity as controversial as subjectivity?

Objectivity is not only related to issues such as beauty, but also to scientific judgements. Objectivity is often taken to be a characteristic of scientific claims, and thus is identified with the role that science plays in society. Think, for example, about a trial in which a murderer is being investigated. If certain evidence, such as DNA samples, were discovered and matched the DNA of the accused, her identification would be taken to be objective, and a sentence could be imposed. Indeed, scientific evidence is most of the time considered to be objective, in that no values or preferences play a role. Of course, this is controversial, since automatic discrimination exists, and is difficult to avoid. As Tetlock and Mitchell remark: "no one knows what types of accountability structures are essential for preventing implicit prejudice, variously defined, from translating into discrimination, variously defined." (Tetlock and Mitchell 2008: 14). Thus, subjective judgements are made due to different factors, and objectivity seems to be more an ideal, a must do, rather than something easy to achieve.

Offering a philosophical account of subjectivity and objectivity, Searle distinguishes an epistemic and an ontological side of both concepts. When talking about epistemology "subjective" is related to judgements that are made in virtue of preferences and values. For example, judging that the Statue of Liberty is more beautiful than the Tour Eiffel is subjective, because such an appraisal is in function of certain preferences or values. Some people, in fact, prefer New York over Paris when it comes down to beauty. Others believe that Paris is more beautiful than London. All those judgements are subjective, and they even be related to certain social status. As two sociologists remark, "Beauty (and its opposite) often functions as a status cue; that is, when it activates patterns of widely shared cultural beliefs it is a status characteristic just as race and sex are […]" (Webster and Driskell 1983: 140).

Despite the role of culture and prejudices, Searle claims that not distinguishing between epistemic subjectivity vs. metaphysical subjectivity, and epistemic objectivity vs. metaphysical objectivity has led people to deny that the mind can be studied objectively. The confusion most people have is the following: they take the mind to be subjective (in the epistemic sense) and conclude that it cannot be objectively examined. Such a conclusion is wrong: for Searle holds that the mind has subjective existence, and this does not prevent us from making objective judgements, in scientific terms, about it. As already examined, the causal explanation of the mind does not prevent us from understanding its subjectivity.

In short, Searle's distinction of what is subjective, and what is objective is also well connected with another one, namely, truth as correspondence, which is also at the core of Searle's realism. Indeed, denying that statements correspond to facts would not only undermine his realism, but also the sense of objectivity I have examined here.

4. Searle's presuppositions of the philosophy of society

4.1 Default position I: The one and only world

On Searle's view, there is only one world. In that world atoms, molecules, viruses, mountains, tectonic plates, planets, galaxies, etc. exist. Msimang emphasizes Searle's point as follows: "he takes for granted a particular kind of naturalism that is contained within his notion of the basic facts […] Whatever the basic facts are that constitute the world, it is presumed that social reality is installed upon them" (Msimang 2014: 173-174). In view of this naturalism, terms of physical objects refer independently of our observations, and furthermore, of preferences or values. While the Fuji mountain exists independently of geography and geographers, and of the knowledge about that object, the Minotaur only exists in our minds. In fact, to describe the meaning of "Minotaur," the context of a fictional story is required, that is, we need to resort to imagination. The relation between fiction and imagination is not trivial at all: as explained in the introduction, a whole intellectual movement holds that physics is constructed in the social world. In fact, advocates of constructivism claim that no metaphysical difference exists between Minotaur and the Fuji mountain. But this cannot be right: Minotaur and the Fuji mountain are indeed different. While the former existence has been collectively imagined, the latter requires no imagination at all; in fact, if the humankind disappeared the Fuji mountain would exist anyway. It is related, then, to a basic fact.

Searle firmly argues against any form of constructivism and of idealism, but for practical reasons: "you have to take it for granted that there is a way that things really are" (Searle 1998b: 32). Even though there is only one world, all physical objects and social objects belong to this only world. The world of physical objects is also the world in which scientific terms refer. For instance, "water" refers to certain molecules that do not depend for their existence on our minds. In contrast, marriages depend on intentional agents to exist, but they do exist. Accordingly, Searle claims that the social cannot be over the physical, and nor is the latter *only* fiction, although we resort to our minds and imagination to create and maintain money, marriages, football games and cocktail parties. In short, social objects belong to the world of particles and systems of particles, but their existence fundamentally depends on our minds.

Searle's philosophy is a form of realism that accepts the existence of collectively imagined represented objects but denies that physical objects only depend on our minds. This form of realism, which I will explain further below, has an advantage to counter anti-realism: it allows the explanation of social objects as collective creations of minds, and thus they are dependent upon what Searle dubs *collective intentionality*. Pace wives, marriages are socially constructed in this very sense because their existence requires that husbands believe that they are married too. But, unlike in fiction, a declaration and a collective commitment are necessary for the existence of marriages; they would merely be fictitious social relations otherwise.

Based on the metaphysical status of objects, Searle distinguishes between brute facts and institutional facts. When an earthquake hits the coasts of California, a major movement with the tectonic plates has occurred, and that very event exists independently of what we believe. In contrast, when Mary holds that she is married to John, both are married because an official has declared their social status, and we all recognize, collectively, that such a marriage exists (a constitutive rule of the form "X counts as Y in context C" is recognized, incidentally). I will return to this issue below.

Institutions are constructed, but they do not depend on preferences or values. On the contrary, institutions are objective in the sense that institutional facts, which are associated with institutions, exist independently of what we prefer or value. Money is certainly another paradigmatic example of an institution because it illustrates how functions are collectively assigned to objects that have intrinsic

properties. These are contingent regarding what the object is. As to the creation of institutions, Searle presents the paradigmatic example of a tribe that builds a wall around its territory thus:

Consider for example a primitive tribe that initially builds a wall around its territory. The wall is an instance of a function imposed in virtue of sheer physics: the wall, we will suppose, is big enough to keep intruders out and the members of the tribe in. But suppose the wall gradually evolves from being a physical barrier to being a symbolic barrier. Imagine that the wall decays so that the only thing left is a line of stones. But imagine that the inhabitants and their neighbors continue to *recognize* the line of stones as marking a boundary of the territory in such a way that it affects their behavior. For example, the inhabitants only cross the boundary under special conditions, and outsiders can only cross the territory if it is acceptable to the inhabitants. The line of stones now has a function that is not performed in virtue of sheer physics but in virtue of collective intentionality (Searle 1995: 39-40 emphasis in original).

For this reason, Searle claims that the social world has a *subjective* ontology (mode of existence), like consciousness. But there is an important difference: social objects and events exist in virtue of the agents' collective intentionality, and thus they are related to certain *recognized* constitutive rules. As I will analyze below, money is also ontologically subjective, but the fact that one dollar gives rights in virtue of constitutive rules is epistemologically objective. In short, there is only one world, but objects vary their mode of existence in it.

4.2   Default position II: Truth as correspondence to facts

Facts are primary when it comes to truth and correspondence. It is worth noting that truth as correspondence implies that what we believe or say is true if it corresponds to the facts. Analytic Philosophy has embraced this thesis, that is, true statements correspond to facts. For instance, if I say: "It is raining", such a statement needs to correspond to the actual weather conditions. If it is sunny, then the statement is false, whereas if it is raining, the statement is true. Consequently, the correspondence theory of truth puts all the emphasis on the statements, and whether these correspond to the facts.

An antecedent of the correspondence theory is the identity theory of truth, which was advanced by Moore and Russell in the early 20th century. According to this theory, a true proposition is identical to a fact. As such, propositions are believed, and they must be understood as objects of beliefs and other propositional attitudes. Thus, propositions, which are the content of beliefs and propositional attitudes, are the bearers of truth. In this sense, truth is a property of propositions, which involves that such a property is unanalyzable: it cannot be defined by any other property. As Glanzberg remarks,

Moore and Russell came to reject the identity theory of truth in favor of the correspondence theory, sometime around 1910 […] They do so because they came to reject the existence of propositions. Why? Among reasons, they came to doubt that there could be any such things as false propositions, and then concluded that there are no things as propositions at all (Glanzberg 2016: 3).

Put simply, Moore and Russell denied the possibility that false propositions could correspond to false facts. How facts could be false at all? This problem led Moore and Russell to abandon the identity theory of truth. As the issue of the constituents of a statement was problematic, because the unity of a proposition was also problematic, they held the following thesis: instead of propositions, the bearers of truth are beliefs themselves. An ontological thesis was advanced then, namely, a belief is true if there *exists* a fact to which it corresponds.

On this view, it is also assumed that facts are entities. Facts are composed of particulars, properties and relations or universals. The correspondence theory needs the metaphysical thesis about facts, because it would make no sense otherwise. Facts are primitives, as they are truisms, they merely exist. For example, a fact that John is brushing his teeth corresponds to a fact: <John, brushing teeth>, in which an individual has the property of being brushing his teeth. By contrast, the world does not include the fact <John, singing>, in case John is brushing his teeth.

Propositions have a structure that corresponds to the structure of sentences, and the correspondence theory of truth holds that there is correspondence when the proposition and the fact have the same structure, and the same constituents. If there is no match, the proposition is simply false. Propositions, which are the contents of a belief, mirror reality, by corresponding to the right pieces of reality. In summary, the world provides with certain structured entities that explain truth. Such entities involve a metaphysics according to which the nature of truth is in function of the structured entities, the propositions and the beliefs. Why Searle would endorse such a theory?

As described above, Searle embraces the enlightenment vision, that is, the view according to which the universe exists independently of our minds, and our cognitive tools are sufficient to make us comprehend its nature. Further, and as explained above, Searle distinguishes the epistemological issues (how we come to know) from the metaphysical ones (what exists). For example, when discussing Gödel´s proof, this philosopher asserts that "truth is a matter of correspondence to the facts. If a statement is true, there must be some fact in virtue of which it is true. The facts are a matter of what exists, of ontology" (Searle 1998b: 5). Thus, Gödel´s proof only shows that mathematical truth is not to be identified with provability. By concluding this, Searle insists on the enlightenment vision, and how he wants to contribute to it.

It is worth noting that a popular alternative to the correspondence theory is the coherence theory. According to this alternative theory, it is not the world that provide facts to which propositions are contrasted. Instead, beliefs exist in a system of other beliefs, and thus they cohere with them if the belief is true. Since most advocates of the coherence theory are idealists, the world is composed of a system of beliefs, and only then a belief can be true, if and only if such a belief is consistent in a system of other beliefs. Glanzberg explains this point as follows: "if there is nothing to truth beyond what is to be found in an appropriate system of beliefs, then it would seem one's beliefs constitute the world in a way that amounts to idealism" (Glanzberg 2016: 6).

Most advocates of the correspondence theory are realists, like Searle. Naturally, the theory of correspondence to facts is one of the so-called "default positions." Again, default positions are the views that we hold prereflectively "so that any departure from them requires a conscious effort and convincing argument" (Searle 1998b: 9). In the case of truth, we simply tend to presuppose that beliefs (and their propositions) correspond to facts in the world. And, as examined above, such facts, which belong to the one and only world, are either brute or institutional. Therefore, denying the correspondence theory completely blurs such a distinction. However, another way to undermine Searle's realism is to counter the direct access theory of perception.

4.3   Default position III: Perception

Perception is intentional, that is, it involves an intentional mental state; moreover, perception is the most important way by which we relate to the environment. Investigating the conceptual story that

explains how "*x* looks at *y*" (*x* being a subject and *y* a perceptual object), Searle focuses on the visual experience of "looking at an object" (Searle 1983: 37). The visual experience consists in looking at the object, but the looked or perceived properties do not pertain to the experience; instead, they are part of the object itself. For example, if I look at John parking his blue Ford mustang, my experience is not blue, nor does it have the shape of a mustang. The car itself has such properties. Shape, color and other properties are accessible through vision, but the visual experience is caused by the object itself. But, one may object that, if I were hallucinating, what would my experience be of?

In this situation, one would indeed have an experience, but there would be no reference for it, since one would appear to be seeing an object when in fact one sees nothing. When a hallucination of a car is induced, one sees nothing and yet has an experience which is exactly indistinguishable from the experience of looking at a real car (this is precisely why hallucinations look so real; their conditions of satisfaction are not fulfilled, and the experiences are at fault, not the world).

Visual experiences have conditions of satisfaction like beliefs and desires; as such, it is difficult to separate the intentional object from the intentional state. One may not separate the visual experience from being an experience *of* and a belief from being a belief *about*. But, again, neither a visual experience nor a belief requires the existence of the intentional object. As perceptions are intentional, they also have internal conditions of satisfaction. One must *know* what has to be the case in order that the experience of looking be correct (like knowing what has to occur in order that the belief be true), which is a trivial consequence of the fact that *the intentional content determines the conditions of satisfaction*, and the fact that, in the case of perceptual experiences and beliefs/desires, *the content is a whole proposition*, that is, such content represents an object or a state of affairs. As a result, the important thing to bear in mind is that the conditions of satisfaction can be satisfied, but this does not entail that the content of an experience necessarily exists.

Nonetheless, there are some important differences between common intentional states and perception. First of all, my visual experience of John's blue Ford mustang is not a representation, but a presentation, because it is a *direct* experience of an object. Experiences have directedness and immediacy, and reporting their occurrence consists in stating *the existence of a state of affairs*. Secondly, unlike beliefs and desires, which need not be conscious, visual experiences require consciousness (for example, the following report entails that Mary is conscious, if true: Mary looks at John flirting with Sue). Thirdly, unlike ordinary intentional states, visual experiences implement a particular relation with their conditions of satisfaction, namely, some of them are utterly necessary for the causal production of the visual experience. If one looks at John's car, the conditions of satisfaction of that intentional state *cause* one's visual experience, because the intentional content of the visual experience determines what has to occur in order that one's experience be veridical. For this reason, Searle says that perceptions have *self-referential contents*, that is, they figure in their own conditions of satisfaction. One part of the conditions of satisfaction is satisfied by the existence of the intentional object, and another part is satisfied when the content of the visual experience is caused by what is seen.

It should be carefully noted that Searle favors a naïve realist account of *direct* perception. While both representationalism and phenomenalism, two classical theories about the nature of perception, hold that the visual experience is the object of visual perception and, then, that what is seen is an impression or sense datum, Searle asserts that: "We see material objects and other objects and states of affairs in the world, at least much of the time; and in the hallucination cases we don't see anything, though we do indeed *have* visual experiences in both cases (Searle 1983: 58, emphasis in original)."

On Searle's *direct* account of perception, the intentional content is the object toward which one's visual perception is directed. This means that perception is a taken for granted presupposition, or a default position that enables one to relate to the environment, if the conditions of satisfaction of perception are satisfied.

4.4   Default position IV: Meaning

The last century had a good deal of philosophical debate about meaning. A number of philosophers hold that the meaning of expressions corresponds to certain facts. However, a prominent tradition in the philosophy of language denies that there are facts about the meanings of linguistic expressions. Quine's famous *gavagai* thought experiment is paradigmatic in this regard: if linguists had to translate this expression from a totally unknown language into English, in the presence of a rabbit and an aborigine native speaker who utters *gavagai*, some would immediately translate this as rabbit, but this translation would not be accurate at all: it could mean "soup", "stew", "bad luck", "good luck" and so on. N view of this thought experiment, it is not clear whether meanings correspond to facts, because the "empirical" evidence is not conclusive at all. For, what would be the intention of the native speaker who utters *gavagai*?

Against this background, Searle adopts a viewpoint according to which "words like, *rabbit* or *tree* typically have reasonably clear meanings" (Searle 1998b: 10, emphasis in original). Further, like in subsections 4.2 and 4.3, he holds that meaning is a presupposition, or a default position. In particular, the meaning of meaning needs to be examined in linguistic terms, that is, the property of meaning in terms and sentences, on the one hand, and of the speaker's intentions, on the other. A distinction should be made then: between the sense of sentences or of expressions, and of speaker meaning or utterance meaning. While sentences and expressions have meanings as part of a language, and thus they depend upon the meaning of words and their syntactical arrangement, speaker or utterance meaning is in function of the speaker's intentions. As such, then, sentence meaning is part of the conventions of a language; by contrast, speaker meaning is related to what thoughts a speaker intends to communicate. Searle considers that speaker meaning is the primary notion of meaning because language is a tool to communicate intentional states. Therefore, when addressing meaning, Searle mainly focuses upon speaker meaning.

He phrases his concern about meaning with the following question: "How is it that speakers can impose meaning on mere sounds made from their mouths or on marks made on a paper?" (Searle 1998b: 140). In view of this problem, Searle advances his main thesis, namely, meaning is a form of derived intentionality, that is, the original intrinsic intentionality of a speaker's intentional state is transferred to words, sentences, terms, etc., which involves that the original intentionality of thought is imposed on symbols. Upon this basis, the speakers perform speech acts, that is, the imposition of intentionality on those symbols. The performance of an intentional act, such as an utterance, and the production of sounds, is part of the conditions of satisfaction of an intention to make an utterance.

When making an utterance one imposes conditions of satisfaction on conditions of satisfaction. For example, if a German speaker utters "Es regnet", conditions of satisfaction of the sentence are part of the complex intention she had. Nevertheless, as she meant that it is raining, the utterance acquires conditions of satisfaction on its own; in other words, the utterance will be satisfied if and only if it is raining. The last conditions are the truth conditions of the utterance, and as such it will be true if it is raining and false otherwise. There are two parts, then, in her intention: the intention to make the utterance, and the intention that the utterance has certain conditions of satisfaction. Moreover, there

are a third set of conditions of satisfaction, namely, the communicative ones. The speaker intends that the hearer *understands*, and thus the utterance has been made intentionally and the sentence has certain truth conditions.

Conditions of satisfaction are, then, what really matter when examining meaning. As Searle emphasizes, if he were practicing the German pronunciation in the shower, and said "Es regnet, es regnet, es regnet", he would say but not mean that it is raining. In this case, the conditions of satisfaction are quite different because an utterance would be made, but no intention to *mean* would exist. But, what are the conditions of satisfaction when I utter "Es regnet" and I really mean it? Well, I must have the meaning intention, while making the utterance, and say it sincerely. The key to understanding this is, again, the existence of conditions of satisfaction in intentional states. Then, according to Searle, the meaning intention is the intention that the utterance has additional conditions of satisfaction. He emphasizes the point as follows:

[…] since the utterance is itself the condition of satisfaction of the intention to make the utterance, the meaning intention amounts to the intention that the conditions of satisfaction, that is, in this case, truth conditions. What I intend when I say, "Es regnet," and mean it, is that my utterance "Es regnet" should have truth conditions –and thus, when I say and mean it, I am committed to its truth. This point holds whether I am lying or not. Both the liar and the truth teller make a commitment to tell the truth. The difference is that the liar is not keeping his commitment" (Searle 1998b: 143).

Therefore, there are at least two sets of conditions of satisfaction: those of the intention to utter, and those of the utterance itself. When I say and mean it "Es regnet", I am committed to the truth of the utterance. Now, the intention to communicate meaningfully in words should not be confused with the intention to communicate meaning to a hearer: the former aims at the conditions of satisfaction that acquire the utterance, or meaning intention, whereas the latter is communication intention: the aim to produce understanding in people by making them recognize what we are trying to say.

In communication one succeeds when one makes people recognize what I am trying to tell them. In this case, understanding is the grasp of meaning, for example, if I utter "Es regnet". In short, communication intention boils down to making people recognize that I have uttered a sentence to make them understand what I meant. If this happens, the hearer knows the language, recognizes my intention to utter a sentence of the language, and recognizes that I mean what I say. Only then I will have succeeded in communicating her, for example, that it is raining. This is meaning, according to Searle: we presuppose that mental states enable communication, and the understanding of thoughts occurs by means of language.

4.5   Default position V: Causation

Hume holds that causation does not exist, because it is only the way in which we habitually conjunct events in the world. Searle counters this view by holding that causation is "a real relation among things and events" (Searle 1998b: 10). Moreover, he supposes that to characterize causation properly we have to stick to the facts, and these show that the standard model of causation begins at early stages, when the child learns that one object may exert physical pressure on another. This concept of causation, which Searle describes as Piaget's model of causation, leads to mistakes like epiphenomenalism, or the view that holds that consciousness is a residue that causes nothing in the world. Therefore, the "push-pull" or billiard ball concept of causation leads to the denial that consciousness plays an important role

in explaining complex human behavior, which range from one's arm moving to the factors that caused inflation, economic depression, or a war.

Piaget's model of causation is wrong, according to Searle. This is so because, as we learn more about how the world works, we need to acquire other concepts of causation, those that enable one to explain complex social phenomena. After we move from the push-pull concept, we become capable of explaining a wide range of causes. As Searle emphasizes,

Causation, in short, is not a matter of pushing and pulling, it is a matter of something being responsible for something else happening […] *Suppose we start with the fact that the mind affects the body and the body affects the mind, and go from there.* That is, let us assume at the start what we all know from our own experience – that there are causal relations between consciousness and other physical events. For example, when I consciously intend to raise my arm, my conscious state causes my arm to go up; when I bump into a solid object, the impact of the object causes me to feel a sensation of pain. Let us start, at least provisionally, with the acceptance of these facts and then redraw the conceptual map so that it accurately reflects them (Searle 1998b: 59-60, emphasis in original).

Science is a good example of how the concept of causation needs to be broadened. Today we think of fields of force to explain gravitation, for example. Nobody thinks that there must be strings connecting one object to another to explain gravitational attraction. Given what we know in history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics and other scientific disciplines, we should broaden the scope of causality. Only then there is room to include mind-body and mind-to the world causation. But, what if we remain skeptical and deny the existence of causation?

As explained above, we would need a philosophical argument, a very complex one, to deny the facts, and especially the experience of the mental and other types of causation. That will not do, because there are different levels of causation, and we *presuppose* that mental causation exists to elucidate the complexity of the world, be it physical or social. In fact, levels of causation are crucial to grasp the working of a gasoline engine, according to Searle: at one level, we talk about the cylinders and pistons. At a different lower level, we describe the passage of electrons across the electrodes, the oxidation of the hydrocarbons, the formation of new compounds, and so on. Which level is the right one? Both levels. The same goes for the mind: we explain the feeling of thirst at a brain level, but this one allows the conscious behavior that makes us understand why we need to quench our thirst.

Briefly put, in nature there is a low level of description, i.e. physics, but such a level does not prevent us from accepting a higher level, like in the social world. The causation presupposition is fundamental to understand why interdisciplinary work in sciences needs to be favored. If we reduce everything to a basic level of explanation, we leave out crucial parts of how the world works. That is, both the basic and the high level of explanation are necessary to understand the physical as well as the social world.

Conclusion

Searle's philosophical system explains the world. However, three parts of context are needed to understand the last step of that system, the philosophy of society: the enlightenment vision, consciousness and intentionality, and subjectivity and objectivity. Such parts allow us to grasp better not only the default positions, but also the basic key concepts that are part of the philosophy of society. In a world of systems of particles and fields of force, we *presuppose* the existence of a world, truth as correspondence to facts, direct perception, clear meanings, and causation. But, what if we consciously

abandoned such presuppositions? That is, what if we remained skeptical about the different levels of explanation of complex social and mental phenomena?

Even if we advanced complex philosophical arguments to do so, we would still *act* based on such presuppositions, i.e., from a practical viewpoint we would stick to the default positions anyway. But there is an extra: once accepting the existence of the presuppositions or default positions, one can make room for interdisciplinary work to explain the structure of the human civilization. Indeed, philosophy is necessary to grasp phenomena such as consciousness and intentionality, which allow us to move to higher levels of explanation. But other sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. can explain complex phenomena in terms of high levels of explanation.

What I have tried to accomplish here is an elucidation of the default positions and the key concepts related to the social world. To wit, I have systematized the ways in which we do cope with the world, which is only one, despite its complexity. Searle's system, then, is an invitation to interdisciplinary work between philosophy and the social sciences. But, such an opportunity is "up for grabs" if and only if we move on from certain philosophical prejudices to a sort of interdisciplinarity that encourages cooperation instead of competition in explaining the world.

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