

The Social Reality of Truth

Foucault, Searle and the role of truth within social reality.

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Introduction

What makes an utterance accepted as representing something true? This is the question that initiated the writing of this thesis, and it has evolved into a study of the notion of social reality and the role of truth within it. This evolution has taken place, because I think when one wants to study truth, one must study it in the right context. And this context is that of society, because our social context has an immense influence on what we believe is true and what is false. I think that we must understand our utterances as expressions of the reality we hold to be true, i.e., our social reality. And truth is not something alien to it, but functions by the grace of this social reality.

To study the role of truth in a social reality, we'll have to have an idea of how to conceive both. To do so, I will introduce the work of Michel Foucault and John Searle. Both are well known for their extensive studies on how society influences the way we see the world, and, in addition to that, both have a distinct view on what the role of truth is within this context. I will argue, however, that the position truth is given in their theories must be revised.

"Truth is a thing of this world..."

(Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in Power/Knowledge, p. 131.)

The first section discusses the work of Michel Foucault and focusses mainly on his ideas about discourse, power, knowledge and truth. Although Foucault has made some remarkable changes in his methodological approaches, these aforementioned phenomena have always been part of his work and can be considered as leading throughout his oeuvre. In studying these social phenomena, Foucault hands us important insights on how social reality *works*. It is in the interrelatedness of power, knowledge and truth, and the way they are expressed in discourse, that Foucauldian social reality is defined. With Foucault we will not really find an ontology of social reality, but he does make clear what the important factors are that define social reality.

We will come to see that for Foucault, truth plays an active role in social reality. In its relatedness to power and knowledge, truth is molded by the influence of power/knowledge. Truth is shaped, and with it, our holding things for true. In Foucauldian terms, truth can be described as a 'standard' handed to us by the society we live in and determining the way we 'see' the world.

"...truth is a matter of correspondence to facts..."

(John R. Searle, The Construction of Social Reality, p. 199.)

In the second section I will discuss John Searle's ontological study of social reality. Searle offers us a very well structured and detailed theory of the constitution of social reality. We will see that his ontological theory of social reality has quite some similarities with Foucault's views, but Searle is more precise in his definitions. He will show us that social reality is a purely human construct, based on our need to structure our reality and gain 'deontic power' to reach future goals. It is for the largest part dependent on our symbolic capacity and the way we use this capacity to assign functions and represent them in language. Social reality consists of institutions and the facts created by these institutions. Their existence is, according to Searle, wholly dependent on language, because communicating facts, is not only essential for their constitution,

it also allows them to remain current and become 'reality'. Searle's notion of truth nicely fits his view of the factuality of social reality and his emphasis on the importance of communication. He argues that truth is dependent on facts; a statement is true when it corresponds to the fact it represents. However, I will argue that Searle, while presenting a revised correspondence theory of truth, overlooks an important aspect of his own theory of social reality.

"...truth just as such has no claim..."

(Jane Heal, *The Disinterested Search for Truth*, p. 99.)

The last section of this thesis will focus on the role of truth in social reality. I will start with focussing on the position truth has been given by Foucault and Searle, respectively, and how this position is problematic for a correct understanding of truth. What will become clear is that there is a tension between reality and truth. Therefore, I will first elaborate on the definitions of facts, reality and truth. This is where I will introduce Jane Heal's position on truth. She will show that truth as such has no claim and that we must consider truth as a special type of 'operant' that enables us to value or assess beliefs or utterances on their truth. In line with Heal's thought, I will argue that when we are talking about a reality, it is a construct of beliefs about the world we hold as true. Truth in itself has nothing to do with reality, applied to beliefs and utterances, however, it contributes to the constitution or maintenance of a reality. In this position, views from both Foucault and Searle combine. To put it all in perspective, I will discuss an example where we can see how social reality and truth hang together, and thus gives an idea of the role of truth within social reality.

Language, Power and Truth: The social reality of Michel Foucault

The French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) has been of serious influence in the continental philosophical tradition, and has left us with an extensive intellectual heritage. Of interest to this thesis, is Foucault's elaborate study on the structures of society and the role of discourse/language in shaping it. From his early work until his last, his main interest is with how we human beings are products of our self constructed societies. We will see that what we tend to hold for true is a product of what is considered to be true within a particular social context. With his famous concept of power, Foucault explains how society 'forces' truth upon its civilians. In the following we will give an analysis of Foucault's view on social reality and the role of truth within it.

Within the scope of this thesis, I think it is most clarifying to discuss the main elements of Foucault's view on social reality and truth. These elements are; discourse/language, power, knowledge, and truth. By explaining these elements one by one, we'll also get a clear view on how Foucault sees social reality in general, and how we have to think about truth in this social reality. I will first discuss discourse/language and secondly I will take power, knowledge and truth together, for they are closely related, and it is important to see how these three elements are effecting one another. What will become clear is that Foucault's use of truth is not singular in definition, but it essentially represents a reality held within a social reality.

Discourse/Language

While a large part of his research on language is set in Foucault's 'structuralist' period, essential insights gained in this time remained actual in his later work. It was not so much the whole theory that was rejected, but more his perspective on the relation between language and social reality that changed, and the method he used to study these phenomena.¹ This shift in perspective mainly holds a shift from a view on language as a bare (stripped of meaning and truth) and autonomous structure, towards language as a social practice. Even more so, in the structuralist view, language is seen as constitutive for reality, while later, it is seen as a representation of a reality. Most importantly, however, one needs to keep in mind that Foucault, " [...] is not interested in the dispositions of the world, in what is the case outside of language; his concern is with what governs objectification and description of the world *in* language."²

Foucault's main object of research is the phenomenon of discourse, for it is in discourse that the functioning of power and knowledge becomes apparent. Discourse can be understood as " [...] a group of statements which provide language for talking about - a way of representing

¹ Michel Foucault's work is characterized by several 'shifts' of perspective, of which probably the most important one was his rejection of structuralism and his turn towards genealogy. In this chapter I will not go into detail about the difference between these perspectives of Foucault, but for a thorough study of this important move in his work, I would recommend Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, 2nd edition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983)

² C.G. Prado, *Searle and Foucault on Truth*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 98-99.

the knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment [...]."³ The easiest way to see how discourse should be understood is to imagine the language of a professional, let's say, a lawyer. The whole context in which lawyers are 'lawyer', the words they utter, the texts they write, their clothing, their social habits, etc., is what is expressed in the concept of discourse. Thus in the complex of acting like lawyers, the actors are 'lawyers'. Foucault speaks of discursive formation, as the moment when we can differentiate a typical form of discourse, as different from 'normal' discourse. It is, for instance, in the communicative actions that define 'lawyers', and the full context of 'lawynerness', that the discourse of lawyers becomes typical. In more technical terms, Foucault describes this as follows;

"Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation* - thus avoiding words that are already overlaid with conditions and consequences, and in any case inadequate to the task of designating such a dispersion, such as 'science', 'ideology', 'theory', or 'domain of objectivity'."⁴

Thus, a typical discourse is formed when the behavior of particular groups of agents, shows certain regularities of their behavior and disperses from mainstream behavior. It relates to group-formations in society, where we see a similar type of dispersion from standard behavior.

The most relevant action for discourse is communicative action. In communication the 'rules' that constitute and maintain a discourse are kept in circulation by the communicative action of the agents acting within a certain discourse. As Stuart Hall emphasizes: "It is important to note that the concept of discourse in this usage is not purely a 'linguistic' concept. It is about language *and* practice. It attempts to overcome the traditional distinction between what one says (language) and what one *does* (practice)."⁵ It is essential to see that discourse describes a total act of agents, and its most important, and arguably most influential, instrument is language.⁶ That is why Foucault focussed his research on language, initially. "Discourse refers to specific patterns of language that tell us something about the person speaking the language, the culture that that person is part of, the network of social institutions that the person is caught up in, and even frequently the most basic assumptions that the person holds."⁷

One last thing to stipulate is that discourse, or discourses, must not be understood as closed and rigid systems. For one, there are no separate discourses, but all discourses are related to others and in this relation also effect each other. Secondly, discourses can be regarded as always in 'motion'. Since they are reliant on human agents and their actions, and the

³ Stuart Hall, *Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse*, in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, and S.J. Yates, *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), p. 72.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, in *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 38.

⁵ Hall, Foucault..., p. 72.

⁶ Notice the similarity to the idea of a speech act, and more specifically the idea of the illocutionary act as is defined by J.L. Austin and John Searle.

⁷ Clayton Whisnant, *Foucault & Discourse: A Handout for HIS 389*, lecture handouts, p. 7-8. See bibliography for link.

fact that discourses effect each other, they are in a sense 'fluid bodies', i.e., discourses are based for a large part on knowledge, and it is through human interactions that knowledge is exchanged amongst agents. Through these exchanges of knowledge, the 'bodies' of the discourses is constantly under revision.

We now have an idea about what we are supposed to understand when talking about discourse, but Foucault's main interest was with what discourse does. Clayton Whisnant provides us with an overview of what discourse does;⁸

- *Discourse 'creates a world'*: by shaping our perceptions of the world, pulling together chains of associations that produce a meaningful understanding, and then organizing the way we behave towards objects in the world and towards other people, one might say that discourse generates the world of our everyday life. [W]e construct this world through a complex interaction between experience, upbringing, and education. Discourses, as chains of language that bind us social beings together, play a key role in the social construction of reality.
- *Discourse generates knowledge and 'truth'*: [...] knowledge is not simply communicated through language; all knowledge is organized through the structures, interconnections, and associations that are built into language. Foucault would even go so far to say that discourse generates truth [...]. Certain discourses in certain contexts have the power to convince people to accept statements as true. This power can have no relation to any objective correctness of the statement.
- *Discourse says something about the people who speak it*: Discourse communicates knowledge not only about the intended meaning of language, but also about the person speaking the discourse. By analyzing the discourse a speaker uses, one can often tell things about the speaker's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class position, and even more specifically the speaker's implied relationship to the other people around him.
- *Discourse and power*: [discourse is] intimately involved with socially embedded networks of power. Because certain types of discourse enable specific types of individuals to 'speak the truth', or at the very least to be believed when speaking on specific subjects, discourses also give these individuals degrees of social, cultural, and even possibly political power.

We see that discourse has an important influence on the social reality people live in. It not only allows for the expression of the social standards, it also has a determinative role in what people know, what they hold for true, and how they behave accordingly. As shown, language is a key feature in the functioning of discourse, because it facilitates power, and it is precisely this concept of power that determines the conditions for a social reality. In the next paragraph I will focus on the way power, in its strong interrelatedness to knowledge, truth and language, conditions society.

⁸ Whisnant, Foucault & Discourse, p. 6-7.

Power/Knowledge and Truth

Especially in his post-archeological work, Foucault turned his focus towards the *effect* of discourse, instead of defining it theoretically. In theorizing the structures of language, or discourse, he could not capture the effect of these discourses, because in order to theorize discourse he had to bracket meaning and truth.⁹ As an archeologist, he had to place himself completely outside of his own context of discourses, and he therefore needed to discard any meaningful or truthful judgements. Later on, Foucault had to admit, however, that "...what was lacking here [in Foucault's 'archeological' works, ed.] was this problem of the 'discursive régime', of the effects of power peculiar to the play of statements. I confused this too much with systematicity, theoretical form, or something like a paradigm."¹⁰ Foucault could not explain the way power was essential in the workings of discourses with a theoretical model of the structure of discourse as being a linguistic structure. Power shows that discourse is not only a linguistic structure, but first and foremost epistemic. There is an important interplay between knowledge and power and this is represented through language. This is the point where we can see an important shift in Foucault's work. He positions the constitutive force not any longer within discourse, but appoints it to the interrelatedness of power and knowledge. It is because of the strong interrelatedness of power and knowledge, that Foucault prefers the term 'power/knowledge' for expressing this type of relationship. As Foucault explains in his *Discipline and Punish*:

"We should admit [...] that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, not any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. [...] In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge."¹¹

The question that first needs to be addressed now is; how to understand the concept of power? I think it is an easily misinterpreted concept within the work of Foucault. Throughout his work, one can get the idea that Foucault takes a negative stance towards the concept of power. I'd like to argue, however, that, of course, Foucault, as a child of his times, wanted to warn us for the repressive and restrictive forces that were active in our modern societies. But, with his conception of power and its relatedness to knowledge, he addresses an important phenomenon in human societies, and that is the complex of related 'forcefields' within societies. That means, what we tend to take for granted in our everyday lives as being our social reality, actually is a complex of historical, cultural, institutional, and intellectual relations all imposing their 'forces' on

⁹ This bracketing of meaning and truth is a methodological procedure derived from the phenomenologist tradition, e.g., Husserl, on which structuralists tended to rely to 'neutralize' meaning and truth and get to the bare structures of language. This is also well explained in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power, an interview by A. Fontana and P. Pasquino* in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 113.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 27-28.

the subject. This is what Foucault calls a 'micro-physics of power', because it is in the subject that all power-relations culminate and shape the subject as a member of a certain tradition, culture, etc. Now, we can read this in a negative sense that power represses and restricts the subject and determines his life, but I do not think that this is what Foucault really wants to point out.

"What makes power hold so good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression." ¹²

Simply put, 'power' is the working force of society in general. Human beings are a social species, and it is society that shapes us as human beings. In this sense, we can argue that a Foucauldian ontological theory will see power/knowledge as a primary element of human society. Together, history, culture, and institutions are powers working on what we can define as a meta-level. We can see it as large 'movements in time' that are essential form giving elements in society. Also on the level of the individual, and its relations to others, power is of important influence. It is in the actions of the individual that power manifests itself. Foucault sees power-relations as a dense, web-like structure, interwoven with society and the acting agents within this society. Therefore, every action of one individual can have effects on the possible actions of other individuals. This is, however, not an act of restriction or coercion on the individual, but, as C.G. Prado explains: "As a network, as opposed to instances of domination or coercion, power constrains *actions*, not individuals. Power is all about people acting in ways that blindly and impersonally condition others' options to act. *Some* of the acts comprising the network are intended, but they never effect only what is intended; all acts have unforeseen consequences for the actions of others." ¹³ It is possible to state that Foucault sees a kind of social holism in actions undertaken by the individuals of a society. This idea of holism also expresses a type of 'fluidness' that is typical for societies in general. A society is not a static body, because what constitutes society are the individuals and their actions. And it is in their actions that they do not just follow the standards of society, but, as Foucault also so strongly emphasized, it is in the deviations, the ruptures, the unforeseen and unstructured behavior of the individual that society is constantly 'forced' into changes. And where these unorthodox behaviors first appear in the actions of the individual, they can affect an entire society's history. Foucault concludes:

"By power, I do not mean 'Power' as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body." ¹⁴
[...]

¹² Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 119.

¹³ Prado, Searle and Foucault, p. 80.

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*, [abbreviated HoSv1] (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 92.

"...power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society."¹⁵

Power, thus, is a *complex strategical situation in a particular society*. It is not possible to give an exact definition, but we must understand it as that 'force' in a society that allows a society to exist in the first place. It is what conditions agents to form a working society.¹⁶

Returning to the interrelatedness of power and knowledge, we have not fully addressed the specific relation between power and knowledge yet. For it is in this interrelatedness that we will also find Foucault's vision on 'truth'. First, we need to explain the specific relation between power and knowledge. As we could have read above, the interrelatedness of power and knowledge consists of a mutual effectuation of knowledge through power and vice versa. Let's put it this way: In a somewhat Heideggerian sense, when I am born, I enter an already defined social reality. In growing up, I will learn the norms and conventions of my culture, i.e., enculturation. I learn the current standards of behavior in my social environment and, thus, know how I am supposed to behave. This example shows how power on the meta-level of culture effects an individual, but this power is also apparent on the micro-level of the relationship between the parents and the child, or the relation of the child with other children. This disciplining the subject, as Foucault calls it, goes on until death. And it is mutual, in the sense that it is not only the environment that effects the individual, but the actions and behavior of the individual have an equal effect on his/her's environment.

The strong relation between power and knowledge is that power produces knowledge, and knowledge produces power. Where the individual develops his knowledge through discipline, in return, he can act on this knowledge to discipline others. It is a social reality that learns the individual what is real, and it is the knowledge of the individual of what is real, that makes it real. What we have to keep in mind, though, is that most of these processes of normalization, as Foucault calls it, happen unconsciously to the individual. Some forms of power are consciously applied, and these are often those types of power that are repressive and coercive. Most forms of power, however, work in such a way that those under its influence are not aware of it.

In their mutual relation, power and knowledge have strong effects on each other, but although power and knowledge are strongly related, "[they] are not *identical* with each other either. [...] They have a correlative, not a causal relationship, [...]"¹⁷ This correlative relation, is, as Joseph Rouse aptly emphasizes, a *dynamic* relationship.¹⁸ Rouse points to the fact that power is not singular in the sense that one individual may want to enforce his power upon another, but it needs the action of the other accordingly for the power to have any effect. Again, there is a mutual relation between, not only the interaction of individuals, but also the interaction

¹⁵ Foucault, HoSv1., p. 93.

¹⁶ I think it is this conditioning that Foucault hints at when speaking of a '*strategical* situation'. If a society wants to be successful it must organize itself, and to do this it needs a strategy for how to reach this organization. This strategy is not something instigated by a ruler, but is inherent to the formation of a society. Simply put, if people want to organize and cooperate, they need to have an idea how.

¹⁷ Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, 2nd edition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 203.

¹⁸ Joseph Rouse, *Power/Knowledge* in Garry Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault, 2nd edition*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 95-122.

of power and knowledge, in the sense that one individual has to accept the power of the other, for it to have effect. In other words, one individual under the power of another will have to accept a belief that is imposed upon him by the other, for the power to have any effect on the knowledge of the accepting individual.¹⁹ Rouse refers here to work of Thomas Wartenberg²⁰ :

"Wartenberg's point is that even in situations in which we might characteristically describe one person as having or exercising power over another, that power depends upon other persons or groups acting in concert with what the first person does. In Wartenberg's examples, when teachers grade students or employers discipline or fire employees, they exercise power only when others (the school admissions officer or possible future employees) act, or are prepared to act, in ways oriented by their own actions. Agents may thereby also exercise power unbeknownst to themselves, or even contrary to their intentions, if other agents orient their actions in response to what the first agents do."²¹

Rouse than points to Foucault's remark that "Power is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."²² And he continues:

"Power is not possessed by a dominant agent, not located in that agent's relations to those dominated, but is instead distributed throughout complex social networks. The actions of the peripheral agents in these networks are often what establish or enforce the connections between what a dominant agent does and the fulfillment or frustration of a subordinate agent's desires. Certainly this must be true of a power exercised discreetly through surveillance and documentation. Such practices can embody power only as far as and insofar as a significant alignment of agents orients their actions to what is thereby disclosed and recorded."²³

The important aspect here is to see that power relies on actions. It is in the dynamics of the actions of agents that power spreads throughout society. And it is only in the alignment of agents, in the fact that they 'accept' the power induced upon them, that power can have any effect. This 'acceptance' of power happens through knowledge. That is how power and knowledge are in a correlative relationship. Power needs a vehicle to be accepted, to be internalized, and knowledge needs a vehicle to be expressed, to be externalized (it is important to emphasize that 'knowledge' requires a wide reading here, and that it is not just about concepts, but also about practical knowledge, more or less like *epistèmè and technè*). In their correlative relation, both are dependent on the actions of agents. For that is the only way how power and knowledge can be distributed. Remarkably, this is in many cases an automatic process, for

¹⁹ The process as described here is very similar to the basic communicative process. Our words impose an intended action upon the hearer, but the hearer has to recognize and accept this intention first, before he will consider acting upon it.

²⁰ Thomas Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

²¹ Wartenberg as quoted by Rouse, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 109.

²² Foucault, *HoSv1*, p. 93.

²³ Rouse, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 109.

communication, and especially the transfer of knowledge, is a key component in a functioning society. And thus, the importance of language shows itself again.

To conclude, the dynamism of power and knowledge in their correlative relationship, consists in their dependence on agentive actions. And through this dependence they are dynamic in the sense that, where power produces knowledge and knowledge produces power, it is the way in which power/knowledge is *used* that it is subservient to the dynamism of human society as such.

It is also in this idea of a dynamic relation between power and knowledge that we can find Foucault's notion of truth, because:

"...truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power [...]. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its **régime of truth**, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."²⁴

As Foucault explains, this régime of truth must be seen as a 'general politics' of truth, i.e., the complex body of truths that essentially defines the character of the society to which it belongs. Truth, in this context, is a generalized term defining the accepted definitions of the 'world' at large. I mean that truth here must be seen as labeling a particular social 'paradigm' as accepted by its civilians as being true. The régime of truth is however not a static paradigm and changes not, in a Kuhnian sense, just by way of a revolution towards a new paradigm, but as Foucault emphasized earlier, it is constantly influenced by ruptures, deviations, and the unforeseen and unstructured behavior of agents. In the sense that the relationship between power and knowledge is dynamical, so is the régime of truth a dynamical paradigm. Considering truth in this sense causes a problem of definition and distinction between reality and truth. What is a truth and what is reality? I will return to this later.

Where Foucault refers to power in the quotes discussed, I think, in line with Rouse, that there is a constant dynamical relationship with knowledge. And, on its term, this relationship is of the essence for the production of 'truths'. As Foucault says, truth is produced by multiple forms of constraints, and the way power/knowledge constrains is through limiting actions of agents by disciplining the possible ways to act. That means, by discipline we give shape to power and knowledge, and thus by what we know and what we do, we produce our 'own' truth. It is our truth, because this whole process of the production of power, knowledge and truth is in essence a circular process. Ontologically speaking, we are the source of the social environment, of its institutions and the hierarchies that are part of human society, and in this way, we are also the origin of power, knowledge, and truth. It is through our actions, that we accord to our own rules and conventions that make up our social reality. And the most important action of all is the communicative action that makes power, knowledge and truth, 'current', i.e., active in the social environment. As far as power and knowledge are in a dynamical relationship, so is the

²⁴ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 131, my emphasis.

relationship between power/knowledge and the produced truths. It is evident that in the dynamics of power and knowledge, the régime of truth, that is the product of this interrelatedness, is itself dynamic.

The difficulty with Foucault is that while he has a clear view on how truth fits into the structure of power/knowledge relations, he does not provide a theory of truth, for he claims that truth is pluralistic in the way it is used. C.G. Prado has made these uses insightful by distinguishing five different types of uses.²⁵ What must be kept in mind, as Prado stresses, is that all these different uses 'are interrelated, overlapping and complementary.'²⁶

- The *Criterial* use: in the sense that every society has its 'régime of truth', each society has its own 'standards' for what types of discourse are considered as true, what mechanisms there are to define true and false statements and what authorities have the power to produce truth. This is a (cultural) relativistic notion of truth.
- The *Constructivist* use: closely related to the criterial use, this type of use represents the central idea that power(/knowledge, ed.) produces truth. The relation with the criterial use is based on the fact that the constructivist use addresses the creation of truth and the criterial use addresses the fact that these truths are accepted in a particular régime of truth. As Prado explains, 'the criterial idea is that truth is discourse-relative; the constructivist idea is that the power relations that generate and define discourses produce truths.'
- The *Perspectivist* use: in the Nietzschean tradition, this use makes truth a function of interpretation and denies that there is anything but interpretations. 'Foucault's Nietzschean perspectivism primarily denies that we can meaningfully assert that things are a certain way independently of how we take them to be, and it denies the corollary that we should strive to achieve the one true perspective.'²⁷ His perspectivism, then, is not a positive thesis about the nature of truth; it is the rejection of the possibility of referring to and discerning a determinate state of being beyond our interpretation.' This use shows how, for Foucault, truth is bound to discursive régimes, in the sense that truths are only accepted truth when they are current. That is, when a truth is an accepted part of the régime of truth.
- The *Experiential* use: according to Prado, this fourth use describes how cognitive elements reassemble themselves, how we see something differently because of a striking and provocative experience. Foucault makes a distinction between truth resulting from inquiry (l'enquête) and truth resulting from test and trial (l'épreuve). This is the difference between, respectively, what is realized through investigation and what is realized in a challenging experience. Prado emphasizes that '[l]ike the perspectival use, the experiential use of truth has more to do with the appropriation of truth than with truth's production by power.' Therefore, '[w]hat emerges as most noteworthy about experiential truth is that it opposes power-produced truth. It does so in that experiential truth wrung from the cognitive and

²⁵ Prado's distinction of five 'uses of truth' is more a characterization of Foucault's general idea of truth. Though Foucault's idea of truth can be called multi-faceted, these five uses tend to give the idea that there are multiple truth's for Foucault. The *truth* Foucault talks about can indeed be characterized by these 'uses', but as a concept, there is only one truth.

²⁶ Prado, Searle and Foucault, p. 85.

²⁷ In the course of this thesis, we will see that this particular use of truth is opposing John Searle's realist position.

emotional disruption of a limit experience offers the only counter to the ever-tightening grip of power. This is because experiential truth is in large part determined by individuals' particular histories, situations, and how they cope with power's shaping of them. The experiential use of truth is a kind of balance to the others: it explains why the production of truth and its appropriation by individuals are not wholly determining of what those individuals believe and of what they are subjects.'

- The *Tacit-realist* use: this use is what Prado sees as addressing the many accusations of Foucault's notion of truth as being relativistic. Prado shows however, that these accusations are mainly based on reading Foucault as making a strict distinction between power-produced truth and that what is true, outside of power. Prado emphasizes, however, that Foucault 'is not interested in the disposition of the world, in what is the case outside of language; his concern is with what governs objectification and description of the world in language. Foucault is in agreement with Rorty's contention that though the world plays a causal role in our awareness of it, it plays no epistemic role. Paraphrasing Davidson, 'the world is not what makes truths true.' For Prado, the key to understanding the tacit-realist use is that 'contrary to tradition, and certainly contrary to Searle's view, objective reality plays no epistemic role in sentences being true because truth is not relational; true sentences are not propositional renditions of how things are in the world [...].' In short, Foucault is a realist in the sense that we relate to a physical world, but he claims that this world is not the realm of truth, for truth is a discursive quality.²⁸

As one might notice in the explanations of these uses of truth, they derive from Foucault's basic conception of social reality as a product of the interrelatedness of power, knowledge and truth. Both the Criterial and Constructivist uses are easy to explain in the light of these basic elements. Power produced truths are part of the 'standard' of truth that is current in a particular society, known as its régime of truth. The Perspectivist use adds a cognitive level to the first 'primary' uses, in showing that what we consider to be true is relative to our interpretation of those truths. What we know as true, is the truth. That this knowledge of what is true is not a certain truth, is what is shown by the Experiential use. Simply put, through learning, discovering or experiencing the opposing truth, we'll have to revise our former conception of this truth. Lastly, and as an addition to mainly those uses of truth that position Foucault in a relativist position, we must see the Tacit-realist use of truth as representing Foucault's realist stance that, although the outside world is causally involved in our awareness of it, it plays no role in the knowledge we have of it. Thus, Foucault doesn't deny the existence of an outside reality, he only denies its influence on the way we understand that world.

In these five uses of truth, we see how the Foucauldian notion of truth has several distinct, though interrelated and overlapping, definitions. The first four are, more or less, uses of truth with commendatory force, while the last, is the special case of Foucault not rejecting any reality outside of language, but focussing on discursive power-produced truths, and not making any judgements about extralinguistic reality. Thus, that we can define the different uses, Prado claims, is mainly because: "Foucault's concern is not merely with a general explanation of how *true* and *truth* work; he is concerned with explaining how *true* and *truth* work and come to work as they do

²⁸ Prado, Searle and Foucault, p. 83-100.

in diverse discourses or, as we might put it, different forms of life." ²⁹ Truth, with Foucault, is always bound to its use in a particular social context.

To Conclude: Foucault's Social Reality

Although Foucault does not give himself an ontological account of how social reality becomes existent, he does provide us with a strong view on how this social reality works. We have seen above that the four main elements for creating an idea of a social reality are language, or in Foucauldian terms discourse, power, knowledge, and truth. And even more important is the strong interrelatedness of these elements.

With his concept of discourse, Foucault describes a complex structure of power-knowledge relations that are represented through language. Discourse is not just language, it can be seen as a complete package of preconditions for certain typical social 'institutions'. It not only determines how people are supposed to talk, it also provides a standard for how they have to behave. Discourse provides the norms and rules one needs to comply with to be able to relate oneself to a particular culture. And we need to read culture here in the widest sense possible. From the meta-level of national culture to such a specific culture as that of the family. As discussed above, discourse 'creates a world', generates knowledge and truth, characterizes the people who speak the discourse, and it facilitates power. Discourse is the coming together of power and knowledge, and through language, creation and maintenance of a social reality.

In the strong interrelatedness of power and knowledge, Foucault sees the true origin of the workings of human society. It is on the basic level of intelligibility that social reality is made. For we can see power, especially in its relatedness to knowledge, as an intelligible component of society. In the mutual dependency of power and knowledge, power is both source for and product of knowledge, and power is only effective if it is accepted by the agents on which it is imposed. Acceptance is only possible through internalizing the restrictions that power brings and act accordingly. That's why power/knowledge is strongly related to action. Where power restricts actions, knowledge initiates them. If power wants to be effective it has to restrict, or better put, shape knowledge. Vice versa, when seeing knowledge as the source of actions, the intentions with which restrictive actions are executed, are founded on the set of beliefs and desires of the agent. The desire of one agent may restrict those of another. This is the important mutual and dynamic relationship of power and knowledge, and the interplay upon which a social reality is 'created'.

In the way that power/knowledge relations control 'truth', they control what is taken to be true. Foucault's régime of truth is exactly the way in which a certain social reality is controlled by the interplay of power and knowledge through discourses, institutions, norms, rules and restrictions. Foucault provides us here with an insight that puts the notion of social reality into our own hands. This means, that power and knowledge are, as I said earlier, components of *human* society, and they are constitutive for what we tend to hold as a reality. So, what is real, what we hold to be 'true', is that what we think is true, and what we think that is true is not necessarily the same as that what is real, independent of our conception of it. Foucault stressed that 'truth' is shaped by multiple forms of constraint, and in this sense it is possible to see truth as a

²⁹ Prado, Searle and Foucault, p. 102.

perspective we have on reality. All of society, all its power/knowledge relations, all its institutions, its cultural habits, norms and rules, makes us 'see' the world in a particular way. It is society that hands us a 'standard' for how the world is, it provides us with a defined scope through which we make the outside world intelligible to ourselves. We see these characterizations return in the five 'uses of truth' as they are specified by Prado. The Criterial, Constructivist, Perspectivist, Experiential and Tacit-realist uses together characterize truth.

As a concluding remark, we could argue that Foucault wanted to show us that what we tend to hold for real, that what we think is true, must be approached with a healthy doses of suspicion. It is through his thorough studies of discourses of madness, medicine, psychology, penitentiary systems, and sexuality, that he is able to reveal the ways in which our society thrives by the grace of power and knowledge and the 'control' of both. He wants to make us aware of the complex hierarchies of today's society and how strongly we are influenced by the societies we live in. The social reality of Michel Foucault is a complex reality in which the individual is, at the same time, master and puppet in a highly complex game with constantly changing rules, and only by being aware of the forces of society can the individual have options to act.

John R. Searle: An Ontology of Social Reality

In the previous section we have been presented with an analysis of social reality that is phenomenological of kind and provides us with an overview of the processes that are elementary in the functioning of societies in general. With his conceptions of power/knowledge and truth, Michel Foucault shows how society is a phenomenon under constant construction. In the dynamical context of the acts of agents and institutions, the parameters that are distinctive for a social reality, i.e., power/knowledge and truth, are changing over time. Studying the active processes in society delivers an interesting view into how society works, but it does not provide insight into the ontology of social reality as such, for Foucault's studies remain too vague about the origins of social realities. It needs a more detailed study of the fundamental phenomena of social reality.

It is in the work of John Searle that we will find a more specific study of the ontology of social reality. Two works of Searle will be the main sources for this section, i.e., his 1995 *The Construction of Social Reality*, where he set out his basic theory, and his 2010 *Making the Social World. The Structure of Human Civilization*, an elaboration and revising of his theory of social reality.^{30 31} We will come to see that in Searle's theory much is found that Foucault already observed in his study of society, but Searle will provide us with an evenly thorough analysis, but with more precise definitions of the primary constitutive elements.

In the following, I will first discuss the basic elements of social reality as defined by Searle and how they are constitutive for social reality. Next, in line with the aim of this thesis, we will look at how Searle defines truth, and positions it in his theory of social reality.

Searle's Dual Distinctions

To start, let us begin with introducing Searle's dualist backbone, for this basic distinction leads Searle through the construction of his ontology. In our world, the world we live in, we can distinguish two sorts of facts, 'brute' facts and 'institutional' facts.³² The brute facts are those facts of the world that exist wholly independent of us. This means that, although we have to make these facts intelligible to be able to speak about them, the factual objects themselves are not dependent on the human social environment. Think of brute facts as being objects in the sense of mountains, sand, atoms, etc. We could also call these 'brute' facts, primitive facts. They are primitive, for they are not depending on a complex social environment for their existence. The institutional facts are, as their name already hints at, dependent on human institutions for their existence. Searle's most used example is money. The one dollar bill as a piece of paper has no value whatsoever, it is, however, in the institution of a monetary economy, that we have placed

³⁰ John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* [abbreviated: CSR] (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

³¹ John R. Searle, *Making the Social World. The Structure of Human Civilization* [abbreviated: MtSW] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³² Searle's idea of facts stems from the presupposition that, although there is a world completely independent of our knowledge of it, what we know about it, is our interpretation of it. As we have seen in the previous section, and what has been stressed by C.G. Prado, is that Foucault equals this thought. There is a distinction between that what exists and that what is fact, the former is physical existence, the latter a cognitive representation. This returns in the discussion of Searle's idea of realism.

value upon this piece of paper. Further down we will explain more about this institutional character of these types of facts, but for now it is sufficient to keep in mind that these facts are products of a complex human social environment.

Searle further elaborates on his dualism of brute and institutional facts by introducing sub-distinctions. First, there is the objective and subjective. " [...] two senses are crucial", he says, "an epistemic sense of the objective-subjective distinction and an ontological sense."³³ In the epistemic sense the distinction pertains to judgments. We can already see a hint of Searle's support for correspondence here, for he describes objective judgements as those judgements that depend on objective facts for being true, while subjective judgements depend on " [...] certain attitudes, feelings, and points of view of the makers and the hearers of the judgement."³⁴ For the ontological sense of the objective-subjective distinction, Searle defines this as those predicates and types of entities ascribing modes of existence. The examples are clarifying: pain is ontologically subjective, because its mode of existence pertains only to subjects. Mountains are ontologically objective, their mode of existence is wholly independent of any subject. Thus, the epistemic sense of the objective-subjective distinction pertains to judgments, where objective judgements are related to independent objects, and subjective judgements are related to 'states of mind'. The ontological sense pertains to modes of existence, the ontologically objective is that mode of existence wholly independent of a subject or observer, ontologically subjective modes of existence are dependent on and pertain to a subject only.

Clearly, the distinctions made rest on a basic distinction between a reality being independent or dependent on human social institutions. Consequently, Searle defines the features pertaining to both sides of the distinction as, respectively, intrinsic features and relative features. Those features that are intrinsic belong to the object itself, those features that are relative are relative to the intentionality of observers or users. Important to see is that: "The existence of observer-relative features of the world does not add any new material objects to reality, but it can add epistemically objective features to reality where the features in question exist relative to observers and users."³⁵ This relative stance towards an object, and thus the relative features appointed to such an object, are determined by the observer's or user's intention towards this object. So, we can state that it is only by human agency that an object becomes meaningful or purposeful, and only so in the human environment of society. According to Searle, this distinction is most important, because "...social reality in general can be understood only in the light of [this] distinction."³⁶ This position seems to be on par with Foucault's claim that a social reality is completely distinct from an objective reality. Searle's position will turn out to be more subtle, however.

The basic distinctions have now been made; we have the intrinsic and observer-relative, the ontological objective and subjective, and the epistemic objective and subjective, as being part of the more general distinction between 'brute' facts and 'institutional' facts. This distinction is crucial, for it shows how the structure of social reality is dependent on human institutions, but also needs a grounding by an external 'meta'-reality.

³³ Searle, CSR., p. 8.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁶ Ibid.

The Building Blocks of Social Reality

Now that we have set the basic distinction between 'brute reality' and 'social reality', it is time to discuss the main building blocks for social reality. The fundamental 'traits' for the constitution of social reality are; the assignment of *function*, the use of *constitutive rules*, and most importantly, collective and individual *intentionality*. The importance of the assignment of function has been proven by evolution. Although we are not the only species having such a specific trait, think of chimpanzees using small twigs to 'fish' for termites, or African baboons using rocks as hammer and anvil to crack hard nuts, we humans have evolved this trait to a level of complexity not found with any other species. Not only can we impose functions on 'natural' objects, we can also impose functions on objects especially designed for this purpose. The assignment of functions is always intentional, and thus observer-relative. As Searle also describes it, a function is *imposed upon* an object. It is external to the object itself, and thus not an inherent part of that object. According to Searle, even natural functions, like the pumping of the heart, are eventually assignments of function, because the only way we can understand the natural causality is to assign a function to this causality and make it relative to our system of values. On the basis of this distinction between causality and function, Searle defines another distinction of agentive and non-agentive functions. Agentive functions are those functions that are assigned to an object intentionally, non-agentive functions are those that occur "...in nature independently of the practical intentions and activities of human agents..."³⁷ Searle adds that, normally agentive functions require a constant use to remain 'active', while non-agentive functions, function independently and continuously.³⁸ Now, lastly, Searle defines within the class of agentive functions the special subclass of representation. With representing something "...we have intentionally imposed intentionality on objects and states of affairs that are not intrinsically intentional."³⁹ This can also be described as meaning or symbolism, and its most usual type of expression is in language. "In the use of language we impose a specific function, namely, that of representing, onto marks and sounds."⁴⁰

Summarizing, the assignment of function is an act of imposition of function on an object, this imposition is either agentive or non-agentive, functions for our use, or functions by definition, and lastly there is the special character of representation, a crucial feature which is used to give meaning to an object.

Above we discussed the difference between 'brute' facts and 'institutional' facts. As their name already explains, institutional facts need human institutions for their existence. According to Searle, an institutional fact exists by the grace of rules. He distinguishes regulative and constitutive rules, where the regulative rules regulate the things that are, while constitutive rules constitute a certain thing. Searle's examples are, respectively, the rule that we all drive on the right hand side to regulate traffic flows, and the rules of the games of chess that are constitutive for the game itself, for without those rules there would be no game of chess. The constitutive rule

³⁷ Searle, CSR., p. 20.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 20-21 .

³⁹ Ibid., p. 21 .

⁴⁰ Ibid.

is also that type of rule that provides the possibility for creating institutional facts. It generally has the form; *X counts as Y in context C*. An object or property X gets the symbolic meaning Y in a certain context C. In this formula, we can discover the other two elements of social reality: within a certain context C, there is a collective intentional stance towards object X, upon which there has been imposed a certain function (F), such that the object X, within context C, means Y.

The last element to discuss is probably the most important element in the constitution of a social reality. In several of the above discussed items, we have already come across the role of intentionality in them. Most of it pertained to individual intentionality, which is of course of great importance, but to construct a social reality, we are in need of a collective intentionality as well. As Searle describes it: "...what I believe is the fundamental building block of all human social ontology and human society in general: human beings, [...], have the capacity for collective intentionality."⁴¹ Searle describes collective intentionality as a sort of overarching intentional stance that is shared amongst the participants within a certain community. It is not just the adding up of individual intentional states, but it is, as he describes it, like together engaging in a project, for instance the playing of a game. Searle's example in *Making the Social World* is that of playing a duet for piano and violin.⁴² It is in the mutual, but individual intention of playing the composition for the duet, that both agents expect one another to cooperate in the execution of it. Either one intends to play his/her part, and both intend to play the composition. It is to be noted that Searle argues that we cannot just reduce the collective intention to the individual's intention. Searle argues that, "...the individual intentionality that each person has is derived from the collective intentionality that they share,"⁴³ not the other way around. The individual derives its intentions from the common goal/purpose the collective wants to reach. Therefore, the agent must believe that he or she is able to perform his or her part, and has to believe that the other agents, who are cooperating, will do their part. However, collective intentionality doesn't only pertain to cooperative actions. Searle argues that cooperation is a secondary 'output' of collective intentionality. It comes after the collective recognition or acceptance of the initial collective intention. This is quite an important difference, for "...the existence of an institution does not require operation [per se, ed.] but simply collective acceptance or recognition."⁴⁴ Further on, we will see that acceptance or recognition is key for the vitality of social reality.

While the above mentioned elements are constitutive for social reality, Searle argues that alongside of these elements we can define a specific condition that is equally essential to the act of creating a social reality. However, where the former explain *how* to create social reality, they do not answer the question *why*. Social reality isn't created without a reason, it has a specific purpose. As Searle argues: "...there is a common element that runs through all (or nearly all) institutions, and that is that they are enabling structures that increase human power in many different ways."⁴⁵ He continues; "Human social reality is not just about people and objects, it is

⁴¹ Searle, MtSW, p. 43.

⁴² Ibid., p. 52.

⁴³ Searle, CSR, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Searle, MtSW, p. 58.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 105.

about people's activities and about the power relations that not only govern but constitute those activities."⁴⁶ The social reality and its institutions provide us with *deontic power*. That means, through the constitution of a social reality, we humans are capable of empowering ourselves to reach set goals. Deontic power is 'deontic' because it is driven by an ulterior purpose, it is 'power' because it creates possibilities and opportunities to realize these ulterior purposes. Thus, the principle of deontic power describes the latent abilities and opportunities that agents can derive from the social reality they live in.

Of course, this notion of power provokes a comparison with the notion of power as used by Michel Foucault. Both describe power as an enabling, but also as a restrictive phenomenon. Institutes provide possibilities, but in order to benefit from the institution, one needs to accord to its rules. Both recognize the importance of human rationality for the existence of power. With Foucault it is not as clearly defined as with Searle, but both see rationality as the basis for power. Searle distances himself from Foucault in claiming that the latter focusses on "...the achievement of control over the bodies of human beings by subjecting them to the *normalizing* practices of society."⁴⁷ It looks like Searle goes along in the negative reading of Foucault's idea of power as a repressive instrument of society. As claimed earlier, this is not what Foucault means. The problem is that Foucault's notion of power is derived from social phenomena and not from a detailed analysis of human social behavior as such. I will return to this issue further down.

Constructing a Social Reality

The imposition of function, the constitutive rules, and (collective) intentionality, together form the basis for the construction of social reality. We have seen above what each individual element implies, however, in the actual construction of social reality, there is a rather complex interplay of these elements. What makes a social reality 'real' are its institutional facts. In the following I will try to elaborate on the coming into existence of an institutional fact.

Searle argues that "...any fact involving collective intentionality is a social fact".⁴⁸ It is evident then, that a social fact is only social in the sense that it is recognized by a group of people. That equally applies to collective intentionality, that is only 'collective' because the initial intention is recognized by a group of people. When there is an intention that is collectively recognized, this intention has to be realized in the creation of a social fact. To create the fact, a certain phenomenon to which the intention is aimed, receives a particular status-function within the collective. To be able to perform this declaration⁴⁹ of status-function, we need a constitutive rule. The constitutive rule is actually nothing more than a formal representation of the way in which we human beings are able to assign and recognize symbolic meaning. The formula 'X counts as Y in context C' is a representation of the assignment of symbolic meaning onto a

⁴⁶ Searle, MtSW, p. 106.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

⁴⁸ Searle, CSR., p. 38.

⁴⁹ The declarative speech act is that speech act that has the power to assign a status-function to a certain phenomenon, it is performative. Not every social fact exists by the grace of a speech act, but most of them do. I will return to the importance of language in social reality later on.

certain phenomenon. Within a particular social context C, the phenomenon X has the symbolic status Y. Or, as Searle explains it;

“...the Y term has to assign a new status that the object does not already have just in virtue of satisfying the X term; and there has to be collective agreement, or at least acceptance, both in the imposition of that status on the stuff referred to by the X term and about the function that goes with the status. Furthermore, because the physical features specified by the X term are insufficient by themselves to guarantee the fulfillment of the assigned function specified by the Y term, the new status and its attendant functions have to be the sort of things that can be constituted by collective agreement or acceptance. Also, because the physical features specified by the X term are insufficient to guarantee success in fulfilling the assigned function, there must be continued collective acceptance or recognition of the validity of the assigned function; otherwise the function cannot be successfully performed.”⁵⁰

We immediately see how strongly embedded a social fact is. It is fully dependent on the collective that has created it, because, as we can read above, not only is it reliant on the recognition of its factual status, it is also dependent on the collective for its existence in the sense that the fact has to remain actual. If the social fact is no longer used or accepted, it loses its status and thus ceases to be a social fact. Furthermore, the complexity of social reality shows itself in the strong interrelatedness of social facts. They often form a web-like structure of interrelated facts and institutions. Many facts are also iterable. This means that a fact can have several meanings in distinct institutions. The easiest example to see this ambivalent quality is in the case of a marriage. ‘I now pronounce you man and wife,’ is the speech act the priest performs when he closes the wedding between a couple. In this case several institutions and ambivalent institutional facts come together. To start with the speech act itself, its words have their literal or linguistic meaning, and represent a certain condition in which this speech act represents a true statement. However, the intention with which this speech act is uttered is to declare the couple as being married. The declarative speech act has the power to make the institutional/social fact of marriage actual for this couple. The priest who utters this speech act, is priest, because, within the institute of the church, he was declared a priest when he was inaugurated by the bishop. As a priest, people accept and recognize his status, and thus his power to marry people. To be married does not only require the power of the priest to close a marriage, but also the recognition of this power by the couple that will be married. The couple themselves, add another status to their general social status. One of them can be a lawyer, a coach of a local soccer team, and now also a married person. This example not only shows the complexity of our social environment, also the complexity of the interrelatedness of institutions and institutional/social facts. One final remark has to be made, however, and that is that, although it is now explained as being a conscious act, the creation of institutional facts often happens unconsciously. First, “...for most institutions we simply grow up in a culture where we take the institution for granted. We need not be consciously aware of its ontology.”⁵¹ Second, “...in the evolution of the institution the participants need not be consciously aware of the form of the

⁵⁰ Searle, CSR., p. 44.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 47.

collective intentionality by which they are imposing functions on objects.”⁵² So, according to Searle, the largest part of the creation, use, and decline of social/institutional facts happens without the social agents consciously aware of it.

Having discussed Searle’s ontological study in brief, what is there to say about social reality? Let’s recapitulate: According to Searle, social reality is purely a human construct. It requires specific capacities only to be found in the human species. These capacities are symbolism, communication, (collective) intentionality, and social integrity, i.e., the way in which we follow the social tradition into which we are born and grow old in. We can recognize these capacities in the three main elements that Searle defines for the creation of social reality, the assignment of (status) function, collective intentionality, and the constitutive rule.

Now that we have seen what constitutes social reality, can we also say what social reality is? We can state that it is exactly that environment in which we have constructed our own reality. It is the sediment of how we, as intelligible creatures, find our place in the world. More specifically, it is a systematic organization of intellectually constructed institutions that provide us with the necessary opportunities to improve our ‘comfort’ of life. Because, in essence, we are a social species and we need a social organization to thrive. This social organization manifests itself in our habits, customs, language and acts. It is what makes us human.

Language and Social Reality

Having explained the basics of what, according to Searle, social reality is, it is important to emphasize the role of language. Language is crucial in our society, for “...in human languages we have the capacity not only to represent reality, both how it is and how we want to make it be, but we also have the capacity to create a new reality by representing that reality as existing.”⁵³ It is exactly this capacity, the capacity to ‘create’ a reality, that makes language an essential component in the constitution of social reality. As Searle explains; “The feature of language essential for the constitution of institutional facts is the existence of symbolic devices, such as words, that by convention mean, represent or symbolize something beyond themselves.”⁵⁴ Symbolic representation is the constitutive factor for language itself. It is key in creating institutional facts, because it contains the ability to make beliefs and intentions externally available for others. That is what the whole purpose of communication is about. For Searle, however, we have to make some distinctions to be concise on how language is constitutive of institutional reality. The first distinction made by Searle is between language-dependent and language-independent facts. To define the distinction, Searle’s example is quite illustrative: The statement ‘Mt. Everest has snow and ice at the summit’ and there actually being snow and ice at the summit of Mt. Everest show exactly what the difference holds. Only through the English sentence used can I express that there is snow and ice at the summit of Mt. Everest, while this has no influence whatsoever on that actually being the case. A second distinction that Searle introduces is that between language-independent and language-dependent thoughts. Language-

⁵² Searle, CSR, p. 47.

⁵³ Searle, MtSW., p. 86.

⁵⁴ Searle, CSR., p. 60.

independent thoughts "...are noninstitutional, primitive, biological inclinations, and cognitions not requiring any linguistic devices."⁵⁵ According to Searle, language-dependent thoughts are those thoughts that are only possible because of a language capacity. So, to have these thoughts presupposes having linguistic capabilities.⁵⁶

In the light of these distinctions, Searle argues that we have to restate the thesis that 'language is essentially constitutive of institutional reality', into the thesis that 'thoughts are constitutive for institutional facts, because they are language-dependent.' Searle explains the general principle behind the revised thesis;

"At the lowest level, the shift from the X to the Y in the move that creates institutional facts is a move from a brute level to an institutional level. That shift, [...], can exist only if it is represented as existing. But there can be no prelinguistic way to represent the Y element because there is nothing there prelinguistically that one can perceive or otherwise attend to in addition to the X element, and there is nothing there prelinguistically to be the target of desire or inclination in addition to the X element."⁵⁷

What is meant here, is that to impose status-function (Y) on a certain phenomenon (X) one needs language to be able to execute this imposition. In their prelinguistic states, i.e., on the very basic level, the Y term has no existence whatsoever. There is only the brute reality of phenomenon X. What can be derived from this general rule, is that to have institutional facts, one needs to be able to make the thoughts that create the fact exterior to the mind. As we have come by earlier, an institutional fact needs to be recognized and accepted as fact, and therefore it needs to be communicated to the other agents within a society. So, to make the institutional fact existent, it has to be represented. And that is exactly what the Y term does, because "...to assign a role to the X term is precisely to assign it a symbolizing or linguistic status."⁵⁸ The Y term, the status-function, represents a status imposed upon the phenomenon X, and to have the status-function recognized, it needs "markers"⁵⁹, it needs language or other symbolic means. The social status Y, that is imposed upon phenomenon X, is something that goes beyond the inherent properties of X. Therefore, we need an instrument to make Y understandable. Language and other symbolic means do exactly that, they represent something (money, marriage, etc.) that goes beyond themselves (words, images, etc.).

What is becoming obvious is that symbolism is the primary element for the existence of institutional facts. "Symbols do not create cats and dogs and evening stars; they create only the

⁵⁵ Searle, CSR., p. 62.

⁵⁶ The distinction Searle makes here, raises some doubts if this contributes to the point he is trying to make that every institutional fact requires language. Searle's example of an animal having conscious thoughts and some form of causal reasoning (see p. 62), but no language and thus no access to institutional facts, does not seem to be a valid argument for the fact that we can have such an institutional fact as money, and animals not.

I'd like to argue that it is because, first and for all, we have the capacity of symbolism that enables us to impose meaning onto phenomena. Language itself is a successful 'tool' we evolved that totally relies on this symbolic trait. For arguments for this position see also Terrence Deacon's *The Symbolic Species*, an evolutionary anthropology that states that symbolism is the basic trait from which language developed.

⁵⁷ Searle, CSR., p. 68.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

possibility of referring to cats, dogs, and evenings stars in a publicly accessible way. But symbolization creates the very ontological categories of money, property, points scored in games and political offices, as well as the categories of words, and speech acts.”⁶⁰ Searle stipulates that, in the case of words and speech acts, we have to bear in mind that they have a double symbolic property, that means, that words refer to something beyond themselves. So, there is the linguistic meaning of the word itself, and the concept to which it refers. With, for instance, points scored in a game, this is not the case. An example, the statement ‘Blue leads the game by 2-1’ refers to the actual situation of Blue leading the game, while the points scored themselves are a rule within the game and do not refer to a further meaning.

The symbolic quality of language allows us to impose meaning upon different phenomena. And, as we have seen, language is an ideal vehicle to make this imposition of meaning real and communicated. However, this is not sufficient to make something with a symbolic meaning an institutional fact. As we have come by earlier, it is important for institutional facts that they are recognized by the civilians within the social reality these facts belong to. According to Searle, we have to address the deontological quality of linguistic utterances, for it is that characteristic feature that commits us to the truth of the utterance.

“...we will not understand an essential feature of language if we do not see that it necessarily involves social commitments, and that the necessity of these social commitments derives from the social character of the communication situation, the conventional character of the devices used, and the intentionality of speaker meaning. It is this feature that enables language to form the foundation of human society in general. If a speaker intentionally conveys information to a hearer using socially accepted conventions for the purpose of producing a belief in the hearer about a state of affairs in the world, then the speaker is committed to the truth of his utterance.”⁶¹

The intention that one has with uttering a particular statement, makes one committed to the truth of this utterance. This means that in uttering ‘It is raining’, one commits oneself to the belief that it is raining, although there is the possibility that it isn’t raining in reality. The utterance of the sentence expresses the belief. This is an important feature for the constitution of social reality and its institutional facts, for in this act of committing oneself to the truth of ones beliefs in ones utterances, we can find the basis for the recognition of social reality. That’s also why Searle names this feature the ‘deontic’ quality of language. This view is related to Searle’s notion of deontic power, as explained above. Again, a clear example is the case of marriage. In the utterance ‘I now pronounce you man and wife’, the priest declares a man and woman to become husband and wife by imposing this social status upon them. Uttering these words not only commits the priest to the truth of his belief that he marries these persons, but it also requests from the man and woman to accept their new social status as husband and wife. The deontic character of this utterance is that this linguistic act has consequences for all participants. In marrying, the man and woman gain new opportunities, rights, duties, obligations, etc. The

⁶⁰ Searle, CSR, p. 75.

⁶¹ Searle, MtSW, p. 80.

acceptance of the pronunciation of the marital status imposes a deontology upon the agents accepting it.

Summarizing and in reference to Searle's thesis that thoughts are constitutive for institutional facts, because they are language-dependent, we can point out the main arguments for this thesis;

- we can distinguish between language-independent and language-dependent facts and language-independent and language-dependent thoughts;
- these distinctions illustrate, respectively, the brute and institutional facts, and the primitive and linguistic thoughts;
- institutional facts can only exist by the grace of the imposition of a symbolic meaning (Y) onto a brute fact (X), this is where thought and fact come together;
- the only way, however, to make the symbolic meaning apparent, is by means of representation, and language is such a representational instrument that can make the symbolic thought exterior and object-relative.
- as we have seen, through linguistic representation, we have the ability to put a kind of force into our utterances, i.e., deontic power. This deontic power commits us to the truth of ours or others utterances and thus our actions stemming from the acceptance of this truth.⁶²

Realism and Truth

Focussing so strongly on the idea of a social reality, might lead to criticism that this self created reality could be the only reality. Searle, however, is very clear on this. Social reality indeed is a human construct, but it is an addition to the brute reality of our world. There is a reality of our image of our world and the reality of the world in itself, this idea is named by Searle as 'external realism'.

Realism, for Searle, means that "...the world exists independently of our representations of it."⁶³ When this statement is seen from an anthropological and evolutionary perspective, Searle has a strong argument to say that it is not the world that is dependent on us, but it is the human species that is fully dependent on the existence of the world. Human beings are always internal to the reality of the world they live in. And, although one can argue that the metaphysical aspect of human cognition gives them a way out of this reality (and the idea that they can 'conquer' nature), the metaphysics is still grounded in this primary reality of the world. Searle continues; "... I want to note that the world exists independently not only of language, but also of thought, perception, belief, etc. The point is that, in large part, reality does not depend on intentionality in any form."⁶⁴ The addition of 'external' in external realism is exactly this. It emphasizes that realism

⁶² This deontic power is actually retraceable to the speaker's intentions. In the tripartite distinction of intention, the speaker wants to evoke a certain action by its hearer (perlocutionary intention), by performing a speech act (illocutionary intention), using specific words to make the hearer understand the intended action (semantic intention).

⁶³ Searle, CSR., p. 153.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

has to be understood as the notion that 'brute' reality is external to, and independent of us humans. With this position, Searle also tries to eliminate doubts about realism as a philosophical position.

"...[R]ealism, as I am using the term, is not a theory of truth (it is consistent with theories of truth, but not itself one), it is not a theory of knowledge (it is a pre-epistemic condition), and it is not a theory of language (realism does not prescribe a 'perfect' vocabulary to be represented with). If one insists on a pigeonhole, one could say that realism is an ontological theory: It says that there exists a reality totally independent of our representations."⁶⁵

As Searle points out, we can consider external realism as an ontological theory that designates the condition of a world independent of human knowledge of it. In the history of philosophy, quite some arguments against realism have been made⁶⁶, but the strength of Searle's notion of external realism is that it imposes on itself a sort of autonomy against, mainly, epistemological counter arguments. The theory is actually very simple and clear. "Realism is the view that there is a way that things are that is logically independent of all human representations. Realism does not say how things are but only that there is a way that they are."⁶⁷

With the introduction of Searle's idea of external realism, we are introduced (again) with the basic dualism in Searle's theory. Our social reality distinguishes itself from the brute reality, because it is our reality, a human construct. In the former we have seen what constitutes this social reality, but, as Searle stipulates, we have to explain the concept of truth. Because, this reality is only upheld when it is accepted as true. For Searle, in our statements about our reality we make statements of facts, consequently, these statements are true when they correspond to the facts. In other words, Searle argues for a theory of truth based upon correspondence to facts:

"In general, statements are attempts to describe how things are in the world, which exists independently of the statement."⁶⁸ The statement will be true or false depending on whether things in the world really are the way the statement says they are. Truth, in short, is a matter of accuracy of a certain sort of linguistic representation."⁶⁹

What is said in above quote can be reduced to the following account of a correspondence theory of truth;

⁶⁵ Searle, CSR, p. 155, quote is enriched with explanations by Searle.

⁶⁶ Searle discusses some positions that, to him, are most strongly opposing external realism. In brief, they are: Conceptual Relativity, Verificationism, and the Kantian ding-an-sich argument. The main form of critique in all three views is, however, related to judgements about the world, thus, in essence, representations. This is exactly the reason why they do not form valid counter-arguments against realism. Judgements are only possible by making the outside world intelligible.

⁶⁷ Searle, CSR., p. 155.

⁶⁸ Searle adds a comment here that there is the exception of the self-referential sentence as for instance 'This sentence is in English.'

⁶⁹ Searle, CSR., p. 200.

'A statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts.'

According to Searle however, this account is still too vague about the notions of correspondence and fact that are inherent to it. He argues that we have to look to disquotation to be able to resolve the issues with 'corresponds' and 'fact'. What Searle does is implementing the notions of correspondence and fact into the basic account of disquotation that we can describe as: *for any s, s is true iff p*. Thus, every sentence s is true if and only if there exists a fact p that s refers to. For Searle, this is too minimal. He wants to emphasize that the relation between s and p is a relation of correspondence. His revised version of the correspondence theory comes down to: *for any s, s is true iff s **corresponds** to the fact that p*. In this sense, Searle argues, the theory of truth complies to our intuitive notion of truth.

This seems to be a very clear and obvious way to formulate a theory of truth. It is important, however, to get a clear definition of the main criteria of this formula, which are the notions of 'true', 'correspond', and 'fact'. To start with 'true' or, more generally, truth, Searle states that "... truth has some general connection to trustworthiness and reliability [...]", and continues; "Under what conditions would we find a statement trustworthy or reliable? Obviously when it does what it purports to do, that is, when it accurately states how things are."⁷⁰ According to Searle we can find this trustworthiness and reliability in the disquotation criterion for truth, because "...truth applied to statements is a term of assessment implying trustworthiness, and disquotation gives us a criterion of trustworthiness."⁷¹ To be able to state something true, the statements needs to accord to certain conditions under which it is true. We can find those conditions in facts. A 'fact' is "...a general term for what makes statements trustworthy, for what it is in virtue of which they are reliable."⁷² Facts are the conditions under which a statement is true, "...they are conditions in the world that satisfy the truth conditions expressed by statements."⁷³ The fact, according to Searle, is something that stands outside the statement, but is at the same time the condition that makes the statement true. So for Searle, the fact is something nonlinguistic. Here we can see the relatedness to realism. 'Fact', just plain and simple, is the word for "...the nonlinguistic correlate of the statement in virtue of which, or because of which, the statement is true, [...]"⁷⁴ The relation that exists between the statement and the facts in virtue of which it is true, is one of correspondence. " 'Corresponds to the facts' is just a shorthand for the variety of ways in which statements can accurately represent how things are, and that variety is the same as the variety of statements, or more strictly speaking, the variety of assertive speech acts."⁷⁵

With this in mind, Searle argues that there is no conflict between the disquotation criterion and the correspondence theory. Correspondence may lead to the misconception that there exists an isomorphic relationship between statements and facts as complex entities. Similarly so with disquotation. The misconception with disquotation, according to Searle, is that it leads to the

⁷⁰ Searle, CSR, p. 210.

⁷¹ Ibid., Searle means the trustworthiness that a statement s is true iff p, thus that the statement is true when it satisfies the conditions of p.

⁷² Searle, CSR., p. 210-211 .

⁷³ Ibid., p. 211 .

⁷⁴ Searle, CSR., p. 218.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 213.

idea that truth has no property at all, in other words, that truth is redundant. These misconceptions are due to the fact that: "Disquotation and the correspondence theory are trivially, tautologically true; hence, any appearance of conflict must derive from our urge to misunderstand them."⁷⁶ So, Searle's leading argument for the integration of correspondence and disquotation is that they have an equal inherent tautology of the relationship between statement and fact. The statement is fact, because making a statement is essentially stating a fact. Inherent in the statement is the condition that makes it true (or false). So, saying that a statement is true or false is assessing the way in which it satisfies the conditions of the fact that it states. Searle uses the notions of success and failure to describe, respectively, the statement as satisfying the conditions of the fact stated (and thus true), and the statement as not satisfying the conditions of the fact stated (and thus false).

To summarize, we have to read Searle's (revised) correspondence theory of truth: 'For any s, s is true iff s corresponds to the fact that p,' as follows;

- there is a statement s, such that s is a linguistic representation of a nonlinguistic fact p;
- for s to be true, it has to 'correspond' to p, this means that it has to satisfy the conditions as set by p;
- in the sense that s is in essence the statement of p, s and p are in a tautological relation, thus s = p, e.g., the fact that a banana is yellow can only be expressed, or in other words, stated, by saying 'A banana is yellow.'

A Critical Note

In revising the correspondence theory of truth, what Searle actually has done is adding terms of correspondence to the disquotational account. This is a rather awkward move, for it would mean that, what is actually already inherent in the disquotation criterion, is being made explicit under the name of a revision of the correspondence theory. Searle claims that the disquotational account in itself is too minimal: "We need words to describe success and failure in achieving fit for statements, just as we need words for describing success and failure in achieving fit for orders. The words for statements are 'true' and 'false'; the words for orders are 'obeyed' and 'disobeyed'."⁷⁷ This, of course, derives from the thought that a statement needs to satisfy the conditions of the fact in order to be true. That is, Searle claims that a statement has the word-to-world direction of fit, meaning that the word fits to a certain state of affairs outside of the linguistic context. So, according to Searle, the statement is a successful and thus true statement if it satisfies the conditions of the state of affairs to which it refers to. But, as Michael Clark explains, success or failure is not the same as truth or falsity.

⁷⁶ Searle, CSR, p. 214.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 215.

“Success is not intrinsic either to what is said or denied, or to what is ordered or prohibited. If I simply know that a propositional content is true, I do not know whether the act is successful, whether what the speaker aims at is achieved, until I know what the speaker is aiming at, and I do not know that until I know the illocutionary force of the act.”⁷⁸

Clark points out that the success and failure of a statement are part of the intended action that a statement can evoke, it is about the ulterior purpose of the statement. Truth, however; “...is a matter of fitting the facts, which, [...], can be wholly characterized by the minimal [disquotational, ed.] theory.”⁷⁹ Plain and simple, what makes a statement true is the way its propositional content fits reality, not the act of making the statement, and that is already inherent in the disquotation criterion.

Resumé

Summarizing Searle's development of a theory of social reality, we can start with his introduction of an ontological dualism, his distinction of 'brute' and 'institutional' facts. Related to this main distinction are those between the intrinsic and observer-relative, the ontological objective and subjective, and the epistemic objective and subjective. In essence, Searle introduces an elaborate version of the object – subject distinction. The aim is to show that we have to understand social reality as something different from physical, or brute reality. Social reality is a product of subjects, and ontologically independent of brute reality (in the sense that it's creation is not 'natural' but social). Searle's notion of realism already shines through in setting out these basic distinctions.

In the light of the division of social reality from brute reality, it is Searle's task to show how social reality becomes as 'real' as brute reality. Searle defines three main elements that are at the basis of the constitution of social reality: the imposition of function, collective intentionality and constitutive rules. For a fact to be an institutional fact it has to comply to these three elements. Let's use Searle's example of money; money is created by imposing a special function to a piece of paper or metal. In this particular case we even designed that piece of paper or metal specifically for this purpose. The imposition of the function 'money' onto paper or metal requires a constitutive rule that turns paper or metal into money. We have seen that this is the symbolic imposition of the status-function Y onto object X, in context C, our society. This is, however, not enough to call money, 'money'. I can make my own coins and notes, but that doesn't make it valid money. To be money, in the way we are used to it, it is required that the collective of subjects that make up a society, recognize and accept those specific paper notes and metal coins as money. Money becomes 'socially real' through the acceptance by the collective of its status-function of being 'money.' In accepting the institution of money, we have created a deontic power. A type of power that is a result of the constitution of social reality and institutions. This deontic power is in essence the abilities and opportunities that are latently available in the institutional structure of our society, and provide us with 'tools' to reach particular goals in our social lives.

⁷⁸ p. 206 from Michael Clark, *Truth and success: Searle's attack on minimalism*, in *Analysis* 57.3, July 1997, p. 205-209.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

Symbolism is crucial for the success of constituting social or institutional facts. The imposition of function by a constitutive rule is only made possible by the use of symbolism. This imposition of function starts on the level of thought, and to become an institutional fact, it needs to be expressed towards, and recognized by, the collective. That's where language plays a crucial role. Language is the key instrument to represent the status-function that is imposed upon an object. It is only through communicating these facts to the collective that the construction of a social reality is possible. The rules and conventions of a social reality and its institutions have to be distributed amongst its civilians, and language is the primary way to do this. For language not only informs but also commits. By distributing social facts not only are people informed about these facts, they are also requested to commit themselves to these facts. That is key in creating collective acceptance of a social reality.

Now, how to see a relationship between Searle's notion of truth and the aforementioned principles of social reality. As we have seen, language has an important role in the constitution of institutional facts. Think of the declarative speech acts that 'create' institutional facts. Searle's notion of truth as 'for any s , s is true iff s corresponds to the fact that p ,' shows this relation as a trivality.⁸⁰ Facts are those things that are real outside of language, and are represented in the statement. Note again, that this pertains to all facts, both 'brute' and institutional facts. Truth, with Searle, is distinguished from the reality of society as such. We will further elaborate on this in the next section, because this view differs on an essential level from Michel Foucault's view.

⁸⁰ Searle sees the correspondence theory of truth as that theory that is trivially natural to how we perceive statements as true statements of facts. The statement represents the fact. There is a one-on-one relationship.

Reality and Truth

In the previous sections, I have tried to give an account of the theories on social reality as they are put forward by Michel Foucault and John Searle. These accounts are quite substantive because I think it is important to have a good understanding of their views on social reality and more specifically the function they assign to the concept of truth. In this section I will be further investigating the position of truth within a social reality.

I will focus first on how Foucault and Searle positioned truth, because both have a different take on the role of truth within social reality. What will become apparent is a tension between reality and truth. And it is in this tension that we have to look for a better definition of truth's role. To do so, I will look at the distinctions we have to make between facts, reality and truth. In the former we have seen that Foucault and Searle use different definitions for these terms. With the introduction of Jane Heal's position of truth as an applied concept, I hope to show that truth has a distinct position in social reality, but not the one as it is given by Foucault or Searle. Truth as such has no claim, Heal will argue, and in considering truth as a tool for assessment we can argue for its value within social reality. That is, truth allows us to value our thoughts and one's own and others' utterances in relation to the reality we live by.

Foucault's Power-Produced Truth

"Power, in shaping subjects, determines what they come to hold true, and power, in the imposition of discipline and practices, *produces* truth. This is because, [...], power determines discursive currency."⁸¹ As we have seen in the section on Foucault, his notion of truth is strongly related to power/knowledge and discourse. That is, truth is produced by power, and power's main instrument is discourse. Truth is a discursive truth, because only in the confinements of a certain discourse do discursive facts have the status of truths. Contra Searle, it is not the world of facts, or the state of affairs that determines what is true or false, it is the 'ruling' discourse that determines truth. As Prado explains; "For Foucault, what determines sentences as true is entirely internal to discourse and consists of the practices that allow certain things to be said and disallow certain other things to be said. Truth is a status given to some beliefs and sentences. This is the point of Foucault's claim that regimes of truth each have procedures and designated authorities that determine what is true [...]."⁸²

Prado indeed focusses here on the key point in Foucault's thought, that truth is linguistic, and that the distribution of this truth, through discourse, happens under the influence of social power relations. Power, as can be read above, determines what can and cannot be said. "Foucault's position is basically that there are no truths, no facts of the matter, independent of societal and disciplinary truth-establishing practices."⁸³ The truths we hold are the products of the complex interrelatedness of power, knowledge and discourse, those elements that are constitutive for our social reality. This leads to the argument that our beliefs, and the expression

⁸¹ Prado, Searle and Foucault, p. 80.

⁸² Ibid., p. 126.

⁸³ Ibid.

of them through the use of statements, are malleable under the force of society. Of course, this is one of the reasons why Foucault is seen by some as a relativist. What is important to note, however, is that Foucault is focussing on how and why we hold certain 'facts' for true and others as false. As Prado points out, "Foucault's concern is not merely with a general explanation of how *truth* and *true* work; he is concerned with explaining how *true* and *truth* work and come to work as they do in diverse discourses or, as we might put it, different forms of life."⁸⁴ What we learn is that what we hold for true, and in relation to that, the image of a reality we live by, is a product of the way power relations influence our view upon the world. Truth is an active part in discourse, and through discourse, active in the constitution of social reality.

"[T]ruth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements [...]."⁸⁵ Truth is a *modus operandi* of statements, as expressions of the beliefs we hold, and this important lesson of Foucault points into the direction where I think we have to position truth. As Prado characterized Foucault's notion of truth by the introduction of his 'five uses', he shows that Foucault gives us an important insight into how truth works for us, and in our social environment. Unfortunately, Foucault remains vague about the fundamentals of this social reality, where power/knowledge and truth 'rule'. The latter already presuppose a social environment, for they are typical elements within a social reality, but they do not explain how we come to this reality.

Foucault's study of truth gives us insights into the procedures that are inherent in social environments and influence the way we see the world, *our* world. Truth is positioned as part of our social behavior, as a product of the complex interplay of power and knowledge. When claiming that truth is a discursive truth, Foucault aims at truth as defined by the 'standards' of a particular society. What is being held as true, is relative to the social environment in which the agent holding these truths resides. Truth, in Foucault, can be considered as a general term for the set of beliefs of an agent that shapes his or her reality. How it works has been extensively studied, but what it is in itself remains rather vague.

Searle's Correspondence

In Searle's account we are given an extensive theory on the constitution of a social reality and he offers us a theory on truth as the relation between statement and fact. We have seen that Searle emphasizes on the importance of language, mainly the declarative speech act, for the constitution of social reality and the creation of institutional facts. It are especially these facts that are important in Searle's conception of truth, for he argues that it is in the relation of a correspondence between these facts and the linguistic declarative act, that we are able to assess an utterance on its truth. Searle presents his theory of truth as a revised version of the correspondence theory of truth. His main argument is that for a statement to be true it has to correspond to the fact it represents. Earlier, I already argued that his way of revising the classic correspondence theory by incorporating the account of disquotation, does not improve his theory of truth.

⁸⁴ Prado, Searle and Foucault, p.102.

⁸⁵ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 133.

According to Searle, correspondence is an intuitive quality of statements: "In general, statements are attempts to describe how things are in the world, which exists independently of the statement. The statement will be true or false depending on whether things in the world really are the way the statement says they are."⁸⁶ In a more theoretical form this is described as 'For any s , s is true iff s corresponds to the fact that p '. So, the statement has to correspond to a fact p to be true, but what does this correspondence mean? Correspondence is a type of relation, but what does it relate? Correspondence in Searle's notion relates facts, both institutional and brute, to the statements about those facts. The relation of correspondence is a relation of 'agreement'. The statement refers to a certain fact, or state of affairs, that is existent outside of the confined space of the statement itself. Searle presses, however, that this relation of agreement is not a relation of isomorphism. As said earlier, it is a relation of reference in the sense of reference through representation. So what is wrong with Searle's notion of correspondence?

The problem is mainly that Searle makes his notion of truth dependent on extra-linguistic reality. A statement as a linguistic representation of a fact, is true if and only if it suffices to satisfy the conditions as stated by that extra-linguistic fact. That there can be no isomorphic relationship between a linguistic and extra-linguistic object is quite obvious in this sense, but a relation of correspondence isn't a correct interpretation either, because in essence, statement and fact are the same. Remarkably enough, Searle has incorporated this criticism in his *The Construction of Social Reality* as Strawson's main argument against correspondence; "...according to Strawson, there are no two independent entities, [...]. Rather, 'facts are what statements (when true) state; they are not what statements are about'."⁸⁷ Searle uses this criticism as an argument for incorporating the criterion of disquotation into the correspondence theory. But, as we have seen, with taking the criterion of disquotation as the basis for his correspondence theory of truth, he does not improve the latter. He only makes explicit what is already implicit in the account of disquotation.

Why Searle tends to keep hold of the idea of a correspondence theory of truth is founded in the way he build his theory of social reality. "[T]he overall picture I, in fact, hold proceeds by way of external realism through the correspondence theory to the structure of social reality."⁸⁸ It is clear that Searle argues that statements describe states of affaires, and the way in which the description of the statement satisfies the conditions of the state of affairs determines if it is true or false. Searle's idea of truth is directly linked to his idea of social reality. All facts, both brute and institutional make up the reality of our life-world. A truthful description of this reality is only possible when a statement describes the states of affaires in this reality. Thus, Searle's idea of truth overarches the relation between what is real and our description of this reality. Indeed quite an intuitive concept, but is it right to assume a relation of correspondence between the utterance about a reality and the factual condition of this reality itself, when the utterance is in essence the expression of these facts? I guess we have proven that it does not require correspondence.

⁸⁶ Searle, CSR., p. 200.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 205. Searle quotes Strawson, see his article "Truth" in P.F. Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2nd ed., 2004), p. 147-164.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 199-200.

What is shining through in studying both notions of truth is the difficulty to pin-point a definition for terms as fact and truth, where truth is, in regard to some modern day views, perhaps even an undefinable concept.⁸⁹ With Searle we have seen that he argues for a relation of correspondence between fact and truth, but his theory of institutional facts make it difficult to maintain the objectivity of his definitions of facts. He distinguishes institutional from brute facts, to make evident the way in which institutional facts originate from human (collective) intentions. However, in his revised correspondence theory of truth, he argues that 'facts' are those non-linguistic entities that set the conditions for a statement to be true. To be able to state this, Searle is required to explain how institutional facts, as products of institutional reality, are as objective as brute facts. Brute facts are both epistemic and ontologically objective facts, while institutional facts can be epistemically objective, but are always ontologically subjective. Searle's argument for considering institutional facts as 'objective' is that through human habitual behavior these institutional facts have become Background knowledge and thus, over time, acquire this objective status equal to brute facts. For instance, in normal everyday situations we do not see money as a piece of meaningful paper, it *is* money. Considering the status of facts in Searle's notion of truth, brute and institutional facts are no longer separated, but of equal status. We can ask ourselves, however, and this is a question Searle also asked himself, if brute facts, as epistemically objective, do not start off as epistemically subjective? They can only have a factual status when brute facts first have been made intelligible. A statement, as a linguistic expression of a particular fact, is in essence an expression of a concept, an intelligible entity. Before there is any possibility of uttering a statement, there has to be a concept that can be stated. A fact is such a concept. So, I think Searle can make a distinction between the ontology of brute and institutional facts, but not between brute and institutional facts as being, respectively, epistemically objective and subjective. A fact has the factual status only by the grace of it being an intelligible entity.

Searle is not particularly clear about how strict he is taking this difference, but regarding his own theory of social reality, it is plausible to argue that every fact starts as an epistemically subjective fact. Institutional facts often rely on brute facts for their existence.⁹⁰ Let's consider, for instance, the 'reality' of a hammer. We have knowledge of its material existence, i.e., its weight, texture, color, etc., and we know that this object is a 'hammer' and that we recognize the function that we imposed on it, i.e., the possibility of driving nails into wood. Thus, the reality of the hammer consists of brute and institutional facts. Only in this combination can we truthfully speak of a 'hammer'. We can extrapolate this thought to all the facts we know. It is our knowledge of facts that shapes our reality. Something we could already implicitly find in Foucault. In Searle we'll find a similar view. He showed that we can understand our social reality as constructed on a basic level of brute facts to which we have added a level of institutional facts. For Searle this distinction is obvious, for it derives from his view on external realism. But, I think, Searle has to

⁸⁹ Donald Davidson had the idea that it was not the right endeavor to try to define truth itself, but that we should study it as part of human (communicative) behavior. See *The Folly of Trying to Define Truth* in Donald Davidson, *Truth, Language, and History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 19-37.

⁹⁰ This is not always the case. Think of the case of marriage. There are several symbols representing the institute of marriage, but it is not necessarily connected to any brute fact. Wearing a wedding ring symbolizes that I am a married person, but it doesn't mean that if I don't wear it, I'm not married anymore.

admit that before we can define brute facts as epistemically objective, they have to become epistemic facts first. Thus, defining a distinction between brute and institutional facts presupposes a definition of facts. Facts are the true beliefs we hold that constitute the full cognitive image of our reality. So, 'fact' is another term for a belief we hold as true. And the group of facts/beliefs that make up our body of knowledge, constitute the image of a reality we accept as real. Returning to the notion of truth, our concept of truth functions as a tool for the assessment of ours or another's take on reality. We can even argue that every belief that we hold is in essence a true belief until it is proven false. Every individual constitutes his reality on beliefs he takes as true and has to assess them on their truth whenever confronted with counter evidence that could prove his beliefs as false. Again, we can relate this to Foucault's work.

It is Foucault that reveals the effects of society upon what is taken to be true. If we like it or not, if what we hold to be true would not change over time, we would never have been able to evolve to the intelligent species we are today. Foucault argues that we have to relativize our notion of truth, for, since it is always under influence of the power-relations that are current in our societies, it will always be a subject of change.⁹¹ But, we have to be aware that truth in this sense is already applied to the existing reality.

When considering truth there is an important distinction to be made between what is being held as truth and what truth is. As Jane Heal so aptly commented in her paper *The Disinterested Search for Truth*, "...the truth just as such has no claim..."⁹² She means that we should not understand truth, as such, as a goal of our actions. Our actions are intended to reach certain goals and truth is never the endpoint of it. As Heal says: "Truth is sometimes said to be 'transparent' and we could use that image to put the point: the transparency of truth allows whatever valuable features there are in a situation or project to shine through but does not itself contribute anything of substantive value."⁹³ Quite similar to Searle's idea that truth is an instrument for assessment, Heal argues that we should not impose any value on truth itself, but that we should value the way it 'characterizes' certain actions or beliefs. Not that it provides any justification, obligations or temptations, for "truth by itself has no motivating power at all."⁹⁴ It is important to notice the subtlety of the argument here, for Heal is not arguing that truth is fully redundant. She argues that truth never is of any value *in itself*. Uttering a true sentence is not for the sake of uttering a true sentence, it is for the sake of getting something done in line with the intention that caused the utterance. That we choose to make true utterances fits the conditions of the situation in which the utterance is made. As Heal claims, it evenly counts for making false utterances. When I say 'I did not steal this apple', when being asked by the grocer whose apple I stole, I am uttering a false statement, but my intention is to be released from suspicion. Therefore I have to deceive the grocer in letting him think I didn't steal the apple, hopefully convincing him to let me go. Reflecting on this example, Heal means that the 'false' utterance made will only be

⁹¹ I think Foucault would agree that there are certain 'truths' that are quite resistant to the influence of power-shifts, changes within society and our view upon the world. It is quite similar to a verificationist idea of knowledge, strong 'truths' are often supported by strong evidence that makes them more resistant.

⁹² Jane Heal, "The Disinterested Search for Truth." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 88 (1987-1988), p. 99, my italics.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

known to be false when the grocer has evidence that I am lying. My intention is not to make a false statement, but to convince the grocer that what I say is true.

What the example shows and what we can derive from Jane Heal's arguments is that truth as such is not of much value when we take it as truth *sec.* Truth is, however, of essential value in our social reality. The reality in which we acquire our beliefs and communicate them with others. With Foucault and Searle we have been presented different conceptions of truth and it is important to have clear what role there is for truth and how it relates to facts and social reality. In line with Jane Heal, I argue that truth is not itself of any value, but that we have to understand it as giving character to our reality. When we see facts as essentially beliefs that together shape our notion of a reality, truth is the element that characterizes these beliefs as true. The value of these beliefs being 'true' beliefs, is that we consider these beliefs as an acceptable explanation of the world we encounter in our everyday life, both the physical and institutional world. We can recognize such a position in parts of both Foucault's and Searle's views, but I think they both misconceive the true position of truth. We do not hold a truth, as Foucault would argue, but what we actually hold are beliefs which are characterized as 'true'. In other words; considering the current circumstances we live by, (which can be all kind of social and physical phenomena like social pressure, hierarchies, education, geographic location, mental state, bodily condition, etc.), we value the beliefs we hold as a correct explanation of the world we experience and thus we value them as 'true'. Equally, Searle's notion of truth as a relation of correspondence between fact and utterance is not the way to understand truth's role in social reality. Utterances are statements of facts, those facts are the beliefs we hold, and the beliefs we hold shape our reality. What we do when claiming that a statement is true or false, is assessing it on its truth. This means that we value it in relation to our own set of beliefs, depending on factors as trustworthiness and plausibility. It is exactly this process that's of essential value for the constitution of social reality. Accepting certain beliefs, or, in Searle's case 'facts', presupposes that we value them as trustworthy and truthful. However, as Foucault showed, valuing these beliefs happens under pressure of a lot of social 'stress', that is what Foucault's notion of power tries to show. A simple example is that we tend to respect opinions of people with a higher social status than our own. Think of parent-child, or boss-laborer relations, but also seller-customer and many more typical relationships where one agent 'rules' the other.⁹⁵

Wrapping it up, our reality is valued as a true reality because we consider the beliefs that constitute this reality as truthfully explaining the world that we are confronted with in everyday life. And as Foucault already showed by explaining the complex power/knowledge/truth relations, and what Searle later incorporated in his idea of deontic power (the way institutions provide and restrict 'powers' to its agents), this view on reality controls and enables our complex social lives.

⁹⁵ The difficulty is that we can argue that someone can hold false beliefs. For instance, the belief that the earth is a flat disc. However, this is an observation in reference to our set of beliefs that contains the belief that the earth is a sphere. Who is holding the true belief? My evidence for holding the earth as spheric is perhaps stronger than the other person's belief, but can I convince him of my belief? Perhaps a stronger example is that of religious belief. Can a non-believer convince a believer that there is no God? What I am pointing at here is the inherent relativity of our limited knowledge as partly a product of our social upbringing.

Relating Truth and Reality

Truth has now been given a position as valuing our beliefs and actions. But, as Prado also noted in his study on Foucault's and Searle's notions of truth, we need to address the relation between truth and reality. Because, if reality is considered as that image of the world we have to deal with in our everyday lives, based on the beliefs we hold as being true, how do we consider the world that is outside of this cognitive image? As Prado explains, we have to make a statement about the relation between truth and realism. In their quest to 'naturalize' truth, Foucault and Searle attempted to relate truth to reality, but both in entirely different ways.

"...despite their difficulties, both Searle and Foucault are trying to move beyond the sort of theorizing about truth's 'nature' that has proven so unproductive; both are doing something very like what Quine tried to do with epistemology and Davidson more or less succeeded in doing with truth. Searle and Foucault are trying to 'naturalize' truth, though in quite opposed ways. Foucault is trying to say how truth works *in discourse* but without theorizing about how true sentences relate to extralinguistic states of affairs. Searle is trying to say how true beliefs and sentences work in our coping with how things are but without theorizing about some 'relation of correspondence' to the objective world."⁹⁶

The issue comes down to how we have to understand the relation between an independent reality and the beliefs we hold true about this reality. As we have seen above, Foucault tends to argue (in line with Donald Davidson) that what we believe as true is not dependent on external reality, but on other beliefs we hold for true. In other words, since truth is related to linguistic behavior, it is dependent on the truth as set by the discourse it is part of. When considering truth as relative to discourse, Prado argues, the second step is "...to deny, contra Searle, that the disposition of the world plays an epistemic role in the confirmation of beliefs and sentences and is the guarantor of truth in virtue of true beliefs and sentences corresponding to states of affairs."⁹⁷ This is, of course, the primary principle by which Foucault is often set aside as arguing for a relativist notion of truth. We must keep in mind however that Foucault does not say that what we hold as true is just a product of our imagination.⁹⁸ Foucault claims that a disposition like madness has no natural ground, i.e., it is a construction of society that does not relate to any dispositions in the brute reality of the outside world. In this claim, we can show how Foucault and Searle actually aren't that far apart in their ideas on the relation between truth and reality. And it reveals that Searle explains what Foucault fails to do, or isn't interested to do, which is showing where a social reality comes from.

Searle argues that the 'facts' that constitute our reality, have to correspond to reality in order to be considered as true. The facts represent states of affairs. These states of affairs aren't just the states of brute reality, but also those of institutional or social reality. For Searle, facts and states of affairs are equal. I think however that there is an important difference to make. States of affairs can exist totally independent of our conception of it, but when we make it

⁹⁶ Prado, Searle and Foucault, p. 171-172.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 140.

⁹⁸ "...the possibility of an indefinite number of possible alternative genealogical descriptions 'does not mean that there is nothing there and that everything comes out of somebody's head'." Prado, Searle and Foucault, p. 141.

intelligible it becomes fact. Facts represent our knowledge of the states of affairs in our world, i.e., our set of beliefs. As I discussed above, many of the facts that have strong evidence will have a long and stable existence, and Searle argues that over time they will become part of our Background knowledge. These facts become 'objective' facts. These 'objective' facts are important in the constitution of our image of reality, for they give us a stable conception of this reality, and form the background for our intentions and actions. However, important to take into account is that this view of reality is a result of our conception of it. Searle's argument for external realism stems from his initial distinction between brute and social reality. He correctly argues that there is a world completely independent of our conception of it. From a human perspective, however, we only have one view on reality and that is our self constructed view.⁹⁹ In essence, both Foucault and Searle argue that though there is a world independent of our conception of it, human knowledge of this world is restricted to its own perceptive and cognitive apparatuses. What we know, and thus what we can say about the world is nothing more than what *we can know* and *what we can say* about this world. It's as simple as that. However, how simple this position may sound, it is important to keep it in mind when considering the relation between truth and reality.

As I argued above, we must hold a position regarding truth as presented by Jane Heal. Truth has no claim as such, it only is of value in its application to beliefs and utterances. Beliefs are those cognitive factors that constitute our conception of a reality, and to do this we need to be certain about our beliefs, we need to be able to accept them as true. So, with Searle, I think we can argue for the definition of two types of realities. The first reality can be called a 'brute reality', in line with realism, this is the world independent of our conception of it. The second reality, for which we can find arguments in both Foucault and Searle, is that of social reality. It is Foucault's argument that all truth is discursive and thus inherent to a social sphere. For Searle, social reality is an extra dimension we add to that of brute reality. Thus, our reality is a social reality that is constructed from beliefs we hold to be true, because we value them as true. And this valuation can come from social factors or individual explorations, but it comes down to what convincing evidence we are provided with. Truth, in essence, is not a reality on itself, it is an operant that allows us to value the beliefs that make up our social reality.

The Power of Speaking the Truth

In the former I have tried to argue for understanding truth as an operative function active within a social reality. I think we must understand truth as closely related to the social reality we live in, and as we have learned from both Foucault and Searle, this social reality thrives by our use of language. Language allows us to express our beliefs and inform or convince others of those beliefs. The social reality of truth is the valuation of beliefs, and related to that the image we have of the reality we live in. Truth is the result of a complex judgement over many parameters that come with beliefs. To make the complexity of social reality and the position of truth within it

⁹⁹ An interesting example is found in research by Serge Caparos as presented in the BBC documentary Horizon: 'Do you see what I see?' (see <http://youtu.be/4b71rT9fU-I>). His research focusses on the perception of colors by people of the Himba tribe from Northern Namibia. They perceive the sky as white, while we Westerners consider it to be blue. They believe the sky to be white, and thus, when asked, will say 'The sky is white'. The Westerner will say 'The sky is blue'. Who is telling the truth?

insightful, I'd like to discuss the following example. In the example different topics of this thesis return in situ.

Assume a man, arrested on suspicion of murder, is in court to hear the verdict of the judge at the end of the court case. The judge makes his verdict ¹⁰⁰ and says: 'I sentence you to 25 years in prison'. The verdict is closed and the man is taken to prison to go into detention for 25 years. With one single sentence, one person clearly ruled over the actions of another. That is the power speech can have. But, where does this power come from?

The single speech act made is placed within a complex social context, and it is this context that provides it with power. The judge is part of the institute of justice, and through his profession he is bound to the rules set by this institution. On the other hand, in the role of being a judge, the same institution provides him with special privileges. One of which is making a verdict. As being part of the socially recognized institute of justice, the judge has been given the power to sentence people.

The murderer, in the case of him being convicted, also falls under the rule of the institute of justice. As a civilian of the society where this institute is accepted and recognized, he is forced to comply to the rules of this institute. ¹⁰¹ This does not mean that the institute of justice doesn't provide him with any power. Under normal circumstances, the institute provides several opportunities for the man to prove his innocence, if necessary, under the assistance of a lawyer. If the man does prove himself innocent, the rule of the institute is to set him free of charges.

Thus, a social institute, such as in this case an institute of justice, by imposing rules upon those that are actively related to it, not only restricts, but also enables people to undertake actions. In this case, the judge is empowered to verdict people, and the people under verdict are empowered to prove themselves innocent. It is by means of structuring certain social behavior, by means of rules, that an institute can provide power.

Returning to the speech act of the judge, we can now relate his utterance, empowered by the institute of justice, to the execution of a true utterance. For we must understand that his utterance only becomes truly powerful when he speaks the truth. The communicative act of the judge when uttering his verdict is meant to convince the suspect, and indirectly the community in which the suspect did his awful deed, that he is convicted for murder and will be sentenced to 25 years in prison. As said earlier, the whole context of the utterance makes the utterance become meaningful and thus powerful. But, we can imagine that we require the judge, as he is in such a powerful position, to make truthful judgements and honest verdicts. His verdict cannot be just a spin of his mind, he needs to come with a well thought and carefully weighed, but most of all true verdict. So, when do we hold the verdict of the judge as a true verdict?

First of all, that the utterance of the judge is a true statement as such is not the reason why we take it as true, for the simple reason that we cannot know if the judge decides to speak the truth or tell a lie. Our decision to hold the utterance of the judge for true stems from all the factors we can use as evidence for the assumption that his utterance is true or false. ¹⁰² One of

¹⁰⁰ *Verdict* stems from the Latin *veredictum*, which can be understood as 'to say the truth'.

¹⁰¹ I use the term 'forced' here, for the murderer can choose to not recognize the institute of justice, but as a civilian of the society that recognizes the institute, he has no choice, because the institute of justice is already a given in that society.

¹⁰² Weighing an utterance to judge its truth is equal to that of making an interpretation of its meaning. This process of interpretation is studied intensely by W.O. Quine and Donald Davidson. See for instance Quine's *Word and Object*, and Davidson's *Radical Interpretation*.

them is the judge's social status, derived from his role as representing the institute of justice, which rules we accept and recognize. Another factor can be our knowledge of the whole process in court and the evidence for or against the suspect, by which we can make our own judgment if the verdict of the judge is plausible. Also the known reputation of the judge can be of influence to our decision. Lastly, our relation to the judge is also to be weighed in. If I am the suspect, victim, lawyer, or a member of the audience, I have a 'special' relation towards the judge that influences my judgement of his utterance.

Secondly, we can assume that the judge wants to convince the suspect, but also the other people involved, of his verdict. The judge has a goal in uttering his verdict, i.e., convicting the suspect. Therefore, the judge has an interest in making a true utterance, because the suspect will accept his verdict more easily when it proves to be a reliable and honest verdict. This implies that the judge would have no interest in lying. On the other hand, the judge, as a member of the institute of justice and thus a powerful person, is under social pressure from the institute and the society accepting this institute, that he has to make reliable, honest and truthful verdicts. A judge must be trustworthy.

Holding the verdict of the judge as true depends from a lot of factors we have to take into account. The truth of this verdict is the belief we extract from these factors, because the image of our reality changes when accepting the verdict as true. From the perspective of the suspect, his reality will become that of 25 years in prison.

This is where the power of speaking the truth lies. A single utterance can change the reality of one or many persons. The ability to do so depends on what power lies in the utterance and if the hearer accepts it or not, i.e., if he values the utterance as true or false. As we have seen, the latent power of utterances is dependent on the social institutions that back the utterance and from which it derives meaning. If the utterance has its intended effect and thus, if the latent power becomes actual depends on the acceptance of the utterance and the action the hearer takes accordingly. The power of speaking the truth is exactly that feature in human language by which we can get things done.

Conclusion

With this thesis I have tried to give an account of truth as it finds its function in a social reality. I have started with introducing the ideas on social reality and truth's position in it as developed by Michel Foucault and John Searle. I think Foucault offers us important insights into the complexity of the interrelatedness of social power relations, individual and collective knowledge and the 'creation' of a 'truth'. Truth, as we have seen, has many different 'uses'. It can be characterized in different ways, but I think within Foucault's thought it mainly comes down to a reality that is held by the agents that are active within a particular discourse. Truth is the general concept defining the image of reality an agent has under influence of his social context. But this position makes truth a rather vague and 'fluid' notion. We could even argue that it becomes arbitrary. The problem with Foucault is that he was not interested in providing a theory of truth and therefore his definition of truth remains insufficient.

John Searle's ontological study of social reality has quite some similarities with Foucault's, but his analytical approach provides more insight into the fundamentals of social reality. He clarifies a lot of issues that remained vague in Foucault's studies. For one, he argues that we have to make a clear distinction between a reality that is independent and one that is dependent on us humans. Secondly, this dependent reality, or social reality, can be considered to be an addition to the independent or 'brute' reality. Within the social reality we tend to give meaning to the phenomena in our lifeworld, 'brute' or social. The assignment of function, collective intentionality and the notion of constitutive rules are traits that reveal our need for 'structuring' our reality. As Searle argues, this structuring provides us with deontic power, because this structured reality enables us to get certain goals within reach. If, however, this social reality wants to function, it has to be accepted as such. And communication, as we also learned from Foucault, is essential in this. Searle's theory of truth relates to the essence of communicating the social facts that help maintain a social reality. For Searle, a statement is true when it corresponds to the facts. However, as discussed, a statement is the expression of a fact and there is no correspondence involved.

Truth as such has no claim, as we learned from Jane Heal. Therefore, I think we have to understand it as an operant that enables us to value the beliefs that, for instance, are expressed in an utterance. Beliefs are essential for the construction of a reality. As I argued, Searle's facts are in essence the beliefs we hold in relation to the reality we accept as truthfully representing the lifeworld we are confronted with. A view that has similarities with Foucault's position. To be more precise, I think we can agree with both Foucault and Searle that at the basis of our social reality is a reality completely independent of our conception of it. However, social reality is the reality by which we live our everyday lives, i.e., it is *our reality*. An important observation done by Foucault. I argued that it is in this reality that we have to position truth. For it is truth that allows us to value the beliefs we hold about our reality. We want to know if the image of a reality we have is reliable and we have to have an instrument to assess our beliefs on their reliability and trustworthiness. In our everyday lives, many times we are asked to assess our own beliefs. It is truth that allows us to judge these beliefs and label them as valuable or invaluable. Therefore, I think the social reality of truth is a reality where it is applied to the fundamental items of this reality, that are the beliefs we hold as true and provide us a trustworthy and reliable image of our lifeworld.

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