

# Declaring the Self and the Social: Intellectual Responsibility and the Politics of the Cognitive Self

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**Abstract:** The epistemological problem is traditionally expressed in the question “How do we know that we know?” The emphasis is on the relationship between the claim that we know and what it is that we know. We notice, only belatedly, that the agent who knows does not really matter in the question. The knower is but an abstracted entity whose only qualification is that s/he claims to know. Virtue epistemology’s virtue lies in the centering of the knower: What is it about the knower that enables her to claim that she knows or that enables us to agree that she indeed knows? The concept of intellectual responsibility in virtue epistemology does not only brings us into the realm of the normative but also implicates, necessarily, the social and the political. Invoking the openness of alternative virtue epistemology to unconventional sources and methods, this essay turns to metaphysics and social ontology in order to explore the problems of intellectual responsibility, society, and politics in humankind’s disposition and striving to know.

**Keywords:** cognitive self, intellectual responsibility, politics, Searle, Sokolowski, virtue epistemology.

The epistemological problem is traditionally expressed in the question “How do we know that we know?” The focus is on the relationship between our claims that we know and what it is that we know. Thus, traditional epistemology considers sentences of the form “*S* knows that *p*” where *S* is the knowing agent, *p* is some state of affairs to be known, and *S* stands in some privileged epistemic relation to *p*. (McKinnon 2003, 227) But the knowing agent *S* in the above formulation is part of the problem only in the sense that she is making the claim that she knows. In the actual analysis, *S* is bracketed from what epistemology deems fundamental. The real epistemological problem is the proposition *p*, which can be expanded to the general form of predication “*x* is *y*,” wherein *x* is the subject of the predicate *y*. The epistemological conundrum is how the statement “*x* is *y*” is true (or false); that is, how it depicts the state of affairs in such a way that the depiction corresponds to reality. Thus, if the statement is true then, of course, *S* knows that *p* or, because *p* is equal to “*x* is *y*,” *S* knows that *x* is *y*.

We notice, belatedly, that the agent who knows, our *S*, does not really matter in all these. *S* is not even a container, with simple shape and features, that accommodates particular instances of the knower, but a totally abstracted entity whose only qualification is that it claims to know. Who (or, since the

requirement is only that one knows: what) it is not taken into account. But *S* is interesting. Is there anything about her that affects her claim to know that *p*; that is, that “*x* is *y*?” What if *p* is about her; that is, that she is the subject *x*? Thus the statement “Mary Jane knows that she is given temporary reprieve for her execution” (Rappler 2015) stops us in our analytical track and ask: Who? The state of affairs *p* can also be about somebody else: “Mary Jane knows that Manny lost his boxing match.”<sup>1</sup> Or, the more complicated “Mary Jane knows that Manny interceded in her behalf prior to losing his boxing match.” (Philippine Star 2015) Don’t we want to know about Mary Jane and how she knows? And what if “Manny knows that Mary Jane is given temporary reprieve?” Don’t we want to know about Manny too? Don’t we want to know about how both know and how both are also known? How Mary Jane’s knowing is tied to her being given reprieve? How Manny’s knowing is tied to his capacity to intercede?

Virtue epistemology’s virtue lies in its focus on the knower. What is it about the knower that enables her to claim that she knows? Or, what is it about the knower that we can agree that she indeed knows?<sup>2</sup> These questions highlight the values that initiate virtue epistemology’s break from traditional epistemology: first, epistemology is a normative discipline; and second, epistemic agents and their communities constitute the criteria and are, at the same time, the focus of epistemological valuation. (Greco and Turri 2011) Also, these questions yield the answer from which virtue epistemology gets its name: *intellectual virtue*. Intellectual virtue is the property of the knower that makes her say that she knows or that makes us agree that she knows. But intellectual virtue means different things to the two camps of practitioners within this novel trajectory in epistemology. Virtue reliabilists claim that intellectual virtues refer to faculties such as perception, intuition, reflection, memory, imagination, etc. Reliabilist call these intellectual virtues *faculty-virtues*. They are virtues because even if they are natural faculties, they are not automatically reliable. Perception can be deceived, reflection can be misled, and memory can fail. Like any virtue, we have to develop these in such a way that they become reliable. Virtue responsibilists, meanwhile, understand intellectual virtues to mean developed character traits such as honesty, conscientiousness, open-mindedness, responsibility, etc. Responsibilists call these intellectual virtues *trait-virtues*. How these are virtues is pretty straightforward. But responsibilists value the other-regarding characteristic of these virtues. The goal is not just the development of an individual’s intellectual virtues but also the promotion of a community’s intellectual flourishing. (Hookway 2003; Greco and Turri 2011)

After highlighting the relevance of the knower and her virtues, reliabilists (and some responsibilists) are more open and predisposed to addressing the

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<sup>1</sup> *Manny* here is Manny Pacquiao, the popular Filipino professional boxer turned politician (See Wikipedia 2015).

<sup>2</sup> The first question can be interpreted as a question for reliabilist virtue epistemology, and the second question for responsibilist virtue epistemology.

standard problems in epistemology. They reconstruct these problems from the point view of the reliability of the knower's faculty-virtues. Like traditional epistemologists, they make explanations for the skeptic. (Sosa 2003; Greco and Turri 2011) More often than not, responsibilists are concerned with exploring non-standard epistemological questions or they deploy new (to epistemology) methods and consult non-traditional sources. Their interests go beyond knowledge and justification to such themes as deliberation, inquiry, understanding, wisdom, and the social and political dimensions of knowing. They do not feel the need to address the skeptic. (McKinnon 2003; Greco and Turri 2011) John Greco and John Turri call these distinctions conventional and alternative virtue epistemologies.<sup>3</sup>

I remark on this distinction as I now state the themes and trace the limits of this essay's concern. The concept of intellectual responsibility appeals to me as it brings us into the realm of the normative. It also implicates, necessarily, the social and the political. In this sense, the focus is no longer just the singular knower but knowers, not just knowing the world but knowing other knowers. Specifically, we enter the realm of knowing in both the physical and the social sciences. In her essay *Knowing cognitive selves*, Christine McKinnon (2003) opened many possibilities for the exploration of what virtue epistemology means not just for the study of *cognitive selves* but for the study of society in general. But the bracketing of *politics* in her deployment of feminist analysis, in clarifying what is involved and is at stake in knowing others, hobbled her attempt, as feminism is precisely a political critique. Applied to society in general, we know that even supposedly pure epistemic endeavors are determined by the political – if we understand it to refer to the structuring of social relations by means of power. As I wish to explore the dynamics (conceptually and practically) of intellectual virtue, knowing the social, and power, McKinnon essay is an impasse.

Aligning myself then not only to what inspire alternative virtue epistemology but also to their openness to alternative sources (and methods), I turn to metaphysics and social ontology in order to explore the problems of intellectual responsibility, society, and politics in humankind's inclination and endeavor to know. Robert Sokolowski (2008) in *Phenomenology of the Human Person* and John Searle (2010) in *Making the Social World*, both address these problems. They both start from the responsibility and power implied by declarations – a syntactical form that declares the knower for Sokolowski, a speech act for Searle.

Sokolowski claims that the declarative use of the word *I* in sentences like "I know that the acacia tree is very old," discloses not only the acacia tree but also the knower. As such, the declaration also commits to two levels of responsibility: to the truth of the nested statement "The acacia tree is very old"

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<sup>3</sup> Greco and Turri note that what they designate as conventional/alternative distinction in virtue epistemology is similar to Solomon's (2003) routine/radical distinction within virtue ethics.

and to the appropriation of the proposition. The knower stakes his being as an agent of truth in this appropriation. Sokolowski also entangles the social in all occurrences of speech. This is because all speaking occurs in conversations (even solitary reflections are in anticipation of such conversations). For Sokolowski then, intellectual responsibility extends from the knower to the known, and the speaker to other knowers/listeners. "There is a distinctive kind of friendship and justice in our cognitive achievements." (Sokolowski 2008, 66) But Sokolowski fails to account for the politics of the responsibility of knowing. The syntax, speech, and actions of the knower/speaker, he says, have enormous social consequences. Yet he does not tell us how, and he elides the negative consequences of such knowing/speaking nuances that stare us in the face every day.

Searle claims that the intentions, which underpin declarations, are self-referential; that is, the conditions of satisfaction of intentions must refer back to the intention itself. This connects to the reliabilist and responsibilist basic demand for intellectual strivings to be self-referential – that it be suitably reliable and that it be responsible for what it finds out. Moreover, not only are intentions self-referential but also when we speak them (represent them as propositions and speech acts), we become committed or obligated to the conditions of their satisfaction – that they must be true. But the more significant assertion for this essay is Searle's claim that declarations are necessarily deontological. Structurally, their utterance makes rights and duties – status functions on which social institutions are built. Declarations make the social world. Searle does not really give it attention or even acknowledge it, but in his social ontology the role of intellectual responsibility becomes paramount. This is true not only in making the social world, which is Searle's main concern, but especially in unmaking it. After all, there have been and are social institutions whose effects (also social facts) we do not want: slavery, poverty, war. As Searle casually comments about social facts: "You are already committed to [the] acceptance [of social institutional facts] by your acceptance of the institution. The only problems are epistemic." (Searle 2010, 103) This is a formula for the workings of power and how it relates to and deploys knowledge. This, to me, brings us to the crux of the issue in terms of commitment and responsibility whether they are moral or intellectual – the analysis and resolution of which is political.

In the next two sections I discuss the particulars of Sokolowski's metaphysics of the human person and the specifics of Searle's social ontology. More precisely, I focus on their concepts of, and concepts related to "declaration," "intellectual responsibility," and the socio-political implications of intellectual responsibility; that is, I ask the question "If I have intellectual responsibility, what does this demand of me politically?" I then conclude with an evaluation of their implied politics with regard to the political and social

demands on intellectual responsibility: what the politics of the cognitive self ought to be.

### **Declaring the Self: Sokolowski on the Responsibility of the Declarative Use of *I***

Sokolowski uses the “special way in which we use the word *I* and its variants” as a lever to open up “the dimension of being that is proper to persons.” (Sokolowski 2008, 7) This way of using *I* when we speak manifests what we are as persons. When we consciously and thoughtfully speak of ourselves (as humans, as persons, and as selves) our rationality and our personhood appears. This same act of speaking wherein we declare ourselves also shows how things appear to us. Our rationality and our deployment of reason are essentially the disclosure of things. Thus, when think, remember, picture, quote, when we act; the world of things manifests in various ways its truth to us, until our reason rests finally in understanding.

There are two different ways in which we use the first-person pronoun *I*. When we refer to ourselves the way we refer to things, when we simply name ourselves, the word *I* simply tells and informs. Thus “I am hungry” or “I weigh 145 pounds” or “I study in UP Los Banos” might as well be “The cat is hungry” or “That poor dog is obese” or “She teaches in UP Los Banos.” All these statements are informational, and there is no qualitative difference in the deployment of the first-person and the third-person points of view. But when we declare using *I*, when we say “I believe that she teaches in UP Los Banos,” or “I will come back,” or “I must honor this debt of gratitude,” we do not merely report on ourselves but we engage ourselves in what we say. We point to our responsibility in speaking; we signify our agency. We put our rationality at stake. To say “I know that our politics is corrupt” is to report that our politics is indeed corrupt, but more importantly that I have looked at and noted its appearances, analyzed and reflected about it, and judged it so. What I know do not just come to me, I pursue them and commit to their truth.

Sokolowski lists different types of declaratives and their deployment to convey cognition, emotion, decision, and existence. All these types of declarations are commitments to truths: to the truth of what we understand, the truth of how we feel, what we commit, and the truth of our presence. (Sokolowski 2008, 22-29) He says these declaratives “achieve a double disclosure.” They show the rational activity we are engaged in and they show that we are engaged in it. Declarative speech as such is both achievement and appropriation – we declare an achievement of our reason and the appropriation of this achievement as our responsibility. But there are also declaratives that go beyond the first and second order disclosure of the thing and the speaker herself to the disclosure of the philosophical dimension – the dimension beyond the linguistic space from which we ordinarily declare (Sokolowski 2008, 30).

Philosophical declarations disclose, among other things, the structure of our agency in the quest for truth.

From this philosophical dimension, Sokolowski claims that our being agents of truth is disclosed by our act of appropriating or owning up to our disclosure of the things of the world. But what makes possible this double disclosure? What is the structure of our agency in the game of truth? To declare is to speak. To disclose is to speak. But speaking is not as simple as making sounds, expressing, and naming. To speak is to possess language. To possess language is to be able to say something about what we name, not just one thing but also many things, to manifest the myriad appearances of what we name. To speak is to propose a state of affairs, to point to a truth. A lexicon cannot make this happen. But add syntax and the world can be spoken.

Syntax is the structure of language. It allows for the nesting or embedding of words within phrases, phrases within phrases, phrases within statements, statements within statements, paragraphs, arguments, stories, and so on, so that they make books, laws, lectures, poems. Syntax allows language to build thoughts, to embed thoughts within thoughts. Syntax makes possible for language to speak of things even in their absence. And finally, "...if reason is expressed paradigmatically in speech, then the human person... is likewise expressed primarily in it... if syntactic structure establishes language as such, then syntax is the most tangible presence of reason and the most palpable presence of the human person." (Sokolowski 2008, 39)

There is a sense in Sokolowski then that the responsibility that necessarily attaches to declarations is structural. It is demanded by the syntax of our speech that makes possible the making of propositions and the personal appropriation of these propositions.

But there is more to syntax than just structurally underpinning Sokolowski's version of intellectual responsibility. Syntax structures not only speaking but conversation and, effectively, society – to the extent that society is made up of our conversations or discourse.<sup>4</sup> Let us look, for example, at predication – what philosophy has traditionally considered as the principal activity of reason, and what Sokolowski considers as the fundamental act in syntax. (2008, 48) Sokolowski asserts that predication is intersubjective, that speakers and listeners predicate for one another. What is asserted here is that communication is not an afterthought to language, it is there from the beginning. This fundamental intersubjectivity enriches philosophical analysis, as we take into consideration not just the formal structure of propositions but also that aspect of language that contextualizes their articulation. (Sokolowski 2008, 69-72)

Sokolowski cites *quotation* as naming the instance of the intersubjective syntactic form. In quoting we embed or nest in our articulations the articulations

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<sup>4</sup> Searle makes a stronger assertion on this matter: declarations make social reality.

of others, we hold others to what they say, we declare our agreement or disagreement, and we disclose not only the things of which we speak but also each other. (Sokolowski 2008, 73-79) In such exchange of quotations, we signal our acts of thinking as speakers, and we signal our listeners to think. Our goal is veracity and truthfulness, wherein: "There is an intrinsic connection between the flowering of veracity and the presence of human freedom or responsibility. The awakening and growth of truthfulness calls for our personal involvement; in fact, it is our personal involvement." (Sokolowski 2008, 93) This leads to Sokolowski's earlier assertion that there is an ethical dimension in intersubjective predication. We are required to be logical for others; we must be sincere and accurate. But this is not automatic, for we can go about this virtuously or viciously. When we are virtuous, we achieve "a distinctive kind of friendship and justice." But what about when we are vicious?

Syntax also structures our actions in so far as speaking underpins them, and to the extent that we socially deploy them in combination. Sokolowski approaches this from the practice of wishing and willing. When we wish we intend and choose. Here, we not only show how we think but also why we desire and act. Sokolowski lists three kinds of wishes: We wish for something entirely impossible, which shows us the outermost contour of our practical world. It also points to what we can achieve or what we can do, which is the third kind of wish. The second kind of wish is both impossible and possible. It is impossible for us to achieve but someone else can do it. This shows our dependence on others, that we need our fellow human persons. It shows the intersubjective condition of volition. (Sokolowski 2008, 238-250) The wish that depends on our own action is mediated by our choices and our performances. They are wishes because as such they "cover a distance." When a wish is engaged, when it starts to direct what we do, it becomes an intention or a purpose. It is through intention that we become active, when we choose and perform. When we choose, we act. Choice "is an intervention, and it creates the world in a way that exhibits rational articulation." (Sokolowski 2008, 257) We act and we speak, we are agents who make a difference in the world through our deeds and our words.

This combination makes for action of immense magnitude that can have enormous consequences in the world: "World wars are syntactic structures [they are consequences of our rationality], so is globalization, as well as weights, measures, and prices, which bind people in commercial communities... [t]he various political regimes are categorial wholes that define countries." (Sokolowski 2008, 266)

The emphasis here for our intellectual responsibility is that it is public, its space is public space. This necessarily implicates the social. Our responsibility in our declarations and our actions is not only connected to their truth and to our appropriation of their truth, but also to how the speaking and acting of these truths (about the world and ourselves, about our will) can make and unmake our relations with others. They structure our relations and, as such, the whole of

society. Thus the social importance of intellectual responsibility rests, not so much on its relationship to truths, but on its power.

### **Declaring the Social: Searle on the Deontology of Declarations**

Like Sokolowski, Searle's version of intellectual responsibility is primarily structural. Unlike Sokolowski, Searle is not so much interested in what this responsibility ethically implies. What we find in Searle are the boundaries that limit and put any version of responsibility in its place. But he does provide an interesting concept of freedom wherein we can extrapolate on intellectual responsibility beyond the confines of its structural beginnings. Structurally, responsibility is related to a much larger account not only of commitment but also of duty, obligation, right, and power – what Searle calls deontology.

Where Searle starts from is also language – from a simple 'formal linguistic mechanism' that all institutions and institutional facts trace their lineage and power. The overall claim is that a specific type of speech act – declarations,<sup>5</sup> constitutes social institutions and facts from basic physical facts by assigning them status functions with corresponding deontic powers. This is made operational through our collective recognition or acceptance, which ensures not only that status functions take hold but are also maintained. Institutions regulate our relations in such a way that we are inclined to act according to desire independent reasons for action – a supreme achievement of any society.

Here, we can see that Sokolowski and Searle diverge on the significance of declarations. Sokolowski insists that they manifest our being agents of truth. Searle, on the other hand, claims that they make society. Let us to follow Searle's arguments for his overall claim by defining some his constitutive ideas.

Searle uses *status function* to refer to our capacity to attach "functions on objects and people where the objects and the people cannot perform the function solely in virtue of their physical structure." (2010, 7) In an earlier work, Searle introduced the formulation "X counts as Y in context C" as the structure of status functions. X is the object or person on which the status Y is assigned. The context C specifies the framework or condition of the collective recognition. Status functions depend on *collective intentionality*. The kind of collective intentionality that is most relevant here is collective recognition, which can be acceptance or merely acknowledgment of any form such as "[h]atred, apathy, and even despair..." (Searle 2010, 8) We need not support a status function. We need only to acknowledge it, grudgingly or even by opposing it.

Status functions, without exception, imply *deontic powers*. Status functions come with "rights, duties, obligations, requirements, permissions, authorizations, entitlements, and so on." (Searle 2010, 9) Searle uses the concept of deontic power to encompass positive powers such as rights and negative powers such as obligations, among others. Status functions are made by or through *Declarations*

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<sup>5</sup> Searle himself dramatically spells this with the capital *D*.



–widely accepted cases, which act like rules that either constitute or regulate. Declarations are a special kind of speech act. For Searle, they “change the world to match the content of the speech act” and to “represent reality [in the sense of how propositions work] as being so changed.” Declarations “change the world by declaring that a state of affairs exists and thus bringing that state of affairs into existence.” (Searle 2010, 11-12)

*Intentionality* underpins Searle’s account of social ontology at two important moments: at Declarations and at the workings of collective intentionality. If there is no Declaration then there is no status function. If there is no collective intentionality, expressed as recognition, acceptance or cooperation, then there is no deontic power. To talk about intentionality is to talk about mental states and language. To talk about Declarations is to be already at the level of language (with corresponding mental states). There is, to Searle, a quality of Declarations from wherein deontic powers necessarily flow: articulation, the publicness of their articulation. But all these start with intentionality.

Intentionality, according to Searle, is the “capacity of the mind by which it is directed at, or about, objects and states of affairs in the world, typically independent of itself.” (2010, 25) To intend (in the ordinary sense), to believe, to desire, to hope, to fear, etc., are examples of intentional states that manifest this capacity. Intentional states are not really isolated states but come in complex network of other intentional states that are mostly unconscious. It also assumes a set of presuppositions and capacities that makes its conditions of satisfaction possible. Intentionality as intention (in the ordinary sense of *intention*) moves us into or prompts our actions. This happens in two ways: as prior intention, when we decide and plan to do something, and as intention-in-action, when our intention is a component of the action itself and causes the necessary body movement (and/or vocalization for speech acts) for the action. Intentions are causally self-referential since “the form in which the content sets a condition of satisfaction is a causal one that refers to the intentional state itself.” (Searle 2010, 35)

But intention is a mental state and as such can only exist in individual minds. How can there be collective intentionality then? What is involved in the linguistic formulation “we intend” that must be qualitatively distinct from “I intend?” We know of course that we can come together, plan, and decide a course of action. In so doing, we put together a collective prior intentionality that we individually hold in our individual minds. The next question then is how each of these individually held collective prior intention can ensure the collective intentionality’s condition of satisfaction when what can we individually cause can only be part of what the collective intentionality intends? Searle asserts that “[p]art of what it means to say that the intentionality is collective is that each agent has to assume that the other members of the collective are doing their parts... each has to assume that the others also have an intention-in-action which

has the same goal... *B*, where the [individual] *A* can be different because each person can only perform his[/her] own action *A*." (2010, 52) This relies on the fact that further actions can be achieved by way of or by means of previous ones; that is, prior collective intentions for goal *B* can be achieved by the many individual intentions-in-action to achieve individual *As*, by way/means of which *B* is caused. Each intention in action in this case need not refer to other intentions in action, they only need to assume or to take them for granted. What Searle adds is the crucial many intention-in-actions and the complexity of actions that lead to "by way/means of" causations.

A weaker form of collective intentionality that is essential in all cases of cooperation is collective recognition or acceptance. To Searle, "institutional structures require collective recognition by the participants in the institution in order to function, but particular transactions within require cooperation..." (2010, 57) Further, "in the case of collective recognition, even if the participants are opposed to collective recognition all the same if they each individually recognized the phenomenon and there is mutual knowledge that they do so recognize it, then... we have collective recognition." (Searle 2010, 58) Society is composed of collectively recognized institutions and institutional facts that facilitate cooperation. Language is co-existent with society. But language also serves a bridge between mind and society, between our intentional states and institutional facts.

In a chapter on free will or freedom, Searle connects the concepts of rationality, free will, and deontology in such a way that social institutions become naturalized in the two senses of the word: first, that they follow logically (also naturally) from our biologically traceable capacity to articulate our intentions into Declarations; and second, that they are something we can question only at the risk of endangering our conceptions of who we are. The argument is simple and, thus, elegant: The rationality that Searle is interested in is practical reason. To Searle, this is usually seen as desire-based or desire-dependent.<sup>6</sup> But it is characteristic of language to create reasons for intention and/or action that are desire-independent, such as obligations.<sup>7</sup> Obligations are desire-independent because they do not depend on desire but they create the desire to act. Deontology then is "locked" into our rationality. They are reasons for our actions within society. But all these do not matter without our experience of the *gap*; that is, that ultimate disconnect between reasons and action expressed in the experienced conviction that *we could have chosen otherwise*. Social institutions persist because we experience our recognition or acceptance

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<sup>6</sup> "There must be a total reason for the practical intention and/or act that includes at least one motivator, an effector and/or a constitutor. The relevant component here is the motivator, which analysis identify it as usually desire-based." (Searle 2010, 124-132)

<sup>7</sup> The obligation or deontology Searle talks about are rights, duties, authorizations, requirements, permissions, etc. that connect with auxiliary verbs such as ought, should, must, etc. (Searle 2010, 123)

of them as free. We experience our cooperation within them as free. This is precisely why institutions as deontology can become, in turn, reasons for our intentions/actions.<sup>8</sup>

The experience and practice of freedom makes possible the opposite effect: "People [can] have strong motivations to break the rules, and rules are not self-reinforcing... [s]ometimes you have to call the police or other coercive measures." (Searle 2010, 141) All these are why "society have this structure and not some other." And thus Searle can accept with confidence the conclusion: "The institutions enable free agents to do things they could not otherwise do, but in so enabling they constrain the agents in ways that make the continued functioning of the institutions possible at all." (2010, 144)

Thus, if institutions are natural then the way they enable and the way they constrain are natural too.

As is usual with Searle, he provides the point for possible engagement: "...an obligation I am under can only motivate me, can only succeed in affecting my behavior through the exercise of rationality if I internalize [it] ...in the form of some intentional state." (2010, 131) Searle makes it possible for us to pose the eminently political question: How does this internalization occur? For the moment, let us leave this political question and address it instead in the next section.

So far, we can identify three instances wherein the issue of intellectual responsibility becomes important in Searle. First, we intend and make our intentions effective through Declarations. What we do when we do so is to declare the world as such and represent the world as so changed. Second, we collectively intend changes in the world through our individual actions by way/means of which the collective goal is achieved. Third, we collectively recognize or accept these changes and as such attach to them status functions in such a way that they become social institutions. Responsibility for Searle consists in making a statement about the world (whether proposition or Declaration) and ensuring that such is true. This actually translates into two kinds of responsibility. The first is epistemological. The second is deontological. But we must be careful even with epistemic responsibility in Searle since it may be contextualized by the physical world, which means it is an objective epistemic responsibility. Or it may be contextualized by the social world, which means that it is an objective epistemic responsibility that is warranted as such by a subjective ontology; that is, it is an objective epistemic responsibility in so far as we recognize the social institutions in which the statement occurs. This dual characteristic of intellectual or epistemic responsibility is not resolved even with Searle's assertion that social facts are founded on brute physical facts. There is a kind of autonomy in the practice of Declarations and collective intentionality that

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<sup>8</sup> To be more violent: Deontology is in our rationality as reasons, but this is only possible because we experience such reasons as freely accepted.

wrests social facts from brute facts. The social fact that money can buy us food when we are hungry is not so apparent in the brute fact that this particular money I am holding right now is cellulose pulp (even *paper* is social). The social fact that there are billions of people who are hungry because they do not earn enough money is a world away from the brute reality that there is so much cellulose pulp lying around, even in garbage dumps. We can only reconcile this cleavage when we see that the social institutions of physical (physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) sciences (universities, research centers, scientific foundations and agencies) actually determine what counts as brute physical facts. Then everything becomes an issue of epistemic responsibility. Deontological responsibility, on the other hand, cautions us about the effects of the deontic powers of our statements. Declarations, after all make the social world. They can also unmake it.

### **The Politics of the Cognitive Self**

Both Sokolowski and Searle provide an account of the intellectual responsibility of the knower based on his/her relation to truth. In Sokolowski the agent of truth as knower must strive for veracity and truthfulness. This is because when she declares and appropriates a statement about the world, she structurally commits herself to the truth of the proposition and to the truth of her appropriation. In Searle, the individual as knower commits to the truth of his Declaration at the moment of its utterance. If it is a proposition then it must depict an obtaining state of affairs. If it is a promise, then the knower must make it true as such. Both also hint of an intellectual responsibility that goes beyond structural origins in language. In Sokolowski, conversation as the context for all speech makes us beholden to our listeners who are also speakers and as such similarly responsible. In Searle, the experience of the gap, as being able to choose otherwise, not only makes possible the collective recognition of Declarations but also of the deontology that comes with them. This means not only rights but also more importantly duties to each other. But the final relevance of Sokolowski's and Searle's versions of the knower rests on his/her power. Through our statements, declarations (or/and actions) we make our world, we make the good and the bad of our world. But we do this asymmetrically: Some of us are powerful, most of us are not.

The next question then is: Do Sokolowski and Searle account for what this power demands of the knower? What is our political and social responsibility as knowers? Unfortunately, both Sokolowski and Searle fail to adequately address this question.

*Sokolowski and the politics of the cognitive self.* In discussing the consequences and concomitants of what we do, Sokolowski lets in a fleeting glimpse of the dystopic possibilities, the disastrous consequences of our speech and action. He says, "world wars are syntactic structures." (Sokolowski 2008, 266)

Scattered within his text, we find that as agents of truth we can lie, mislead, deceive, we can insist with authority and force. As agents of truth we are responsible for these acts, we are accountable. But we are also accountable even if we are at the receiving end, “modern tyranny is complete only when the subjects are willing to disavow their own exercise of truthfulness, and to say that the four fingers being held up in front of them are not necessarily four, but they could be three, or five, or four, or even all of these at once, depending on what the [authority]<sup>9</sup> says they are.” (Sokolowski 2008, 96) What Sokolowski misses here is the tangential naming or referring of the phrase four fingers. It may, as we know in ordinary speech, refer to four fingers. It may also refer to a gun pointed at our heads, or the threat of being fired from a job we so desperately need, or to a structured (we are poor and never learned to count properly) ignorance. How can we be agents of truth in such circumstances?

Isn't poverty a syntactic structure? Isn't persecution, whether social, political, or religious, syntactical articulations? How can we, as agents of truth, let these happen? Are we all to be blamed, agents of truth that we are, even when we are in a position of structured weakness and fear?

In not even two pages of reflection, Sokolowski speaks of “speech and politics.” He says that politics “is a crown of speech, it... perfects it and makes it more exact... it provides the setting in which speech is most itself.” He appropriates someone else's<sup>10</sup> speech by quoting him approvingly “It is not the word that produces community, but community that produces and sustains the word. If there are all sorts of communities and, therefore, all sorts of words, all the words nonetheless find the place for their pronunciation in the political association, the city.” (quoted in Sokolowski 2008, 269)

Sokolowski, of course, has been saying this all along with his insistence on the intersubjectivity of speech. To speak is to converse. The world is conversing. Rationally? Yes, but also with guns, with threats, with bribes, with asymmetrical positions of power, with asymmetrical capacities to speak. What kind of politics is Sokolowski imagining for his speech, for our speaking?

What can a philosophy of the human person do to address this contextual reality of our words?

*Searle and the politics of the cognitive self.* In discussing how deontology extends to social reality, Searle explains the society creating power that comes after a Declaration “This is my property” and “This is my husband.” But with the words “property” and “husband,” these speech acts already assume a huge network and background of institutional facts and capacities. So let us start instead with “This is my land” and consider it as a *founding* Declaration that is quite new (in the

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<sup>9</sup> Sokolowski's word is *Party*. I replaced it with *authority*. Sokolowski places the assertion within a specific timeframe and context. I want it to be more generic. After all, do we not say *four fingers* even today when we are faced with terror (state or state-to-be)?

<sup>10</sup> Sokolowski quotes Pierre Manent. See Sokolowski for the complete citation.

sense that the convention is communal use). Searle then glosses over what is required prior to this kind of founding Declaration: "A person who can get other people to accept this Declaration will succeed in creating an institutional reality that did not exist prior to the declaration." (2010, 85) The deontology Searle is interested in comes after language and its performance. Searle does not consider the power that must guarantee the founding claim: violence. "This is my land. Recognize my claim or else" – uttered with much effect over a lifeless body for those listening in trembled silence.

The violence of the founding claim is precisely the problem in the "state of nature." In the absence of an overarching authority, all claims are founding claims. But Searle derides the social contract theorists by declaring, "*for language-speaking animals, there is no such thing as a state of nature.*"<sup>11</sup> His point is that to assume language is to assume social institution, to assume society. But we know, of course, that he makes an easy argument by misrecognizing what the social contract creates: the modern state. So Thomas Hobbes may claim that the state of nature is no place "for Industry... no Culture...no commodious Building...no Instruments of moving and removing...no Knowledge of the face of the Earth... no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society" and so on. (1991, 89) But we can interpret this as not the absence of industry, culture, etc. but the absence of *one* industry, *one* culture, *one* of everything else. Put differently, it is the presence of many industries, cultures, etc. This is precisely Hobbes' problem, that the many (or the multitude) makes conflict. Hobbes solution is precisely the arrogation of the violence of founding claims and its demarcation as the power of the Sovereign alone. This is illustrated, of course, through the social contract. (Malabed 2012)

There are historical and historico-theoretical works that account for the emergence of modern state institutions in Europe precisely from this kernel of state power: the standing army from fighting enemies without; the police from fighting enemies within, the tax system from efforts to fund all these fighting; the justice system in order to redress expropriations made through (and resulting entitlements because of) the tax system, etc. (Van Creveld 1999; Tilly 1993; Mann 1986). Thus, while these institutions may historically owe their lineage to societal institutions prior to the modern state, a large part of their institutionalization and persistence is due to violence.

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<sup>11</sup> The whole passage in Searle is more telling: "They assume the existence of us as language-speaking creatures, and then they speculate how we might have got together in a 'state of nature' to form a social contract. The point I will be making, over and over, is that once you have a shared language you already have a social contract; indeed, you already have a society. If by 'state of nature' is meant a state in which there are no human institutions, *then for language-speaking animals, there is no such thing as a state of nature.*" (Searle 2010, 62; Emphasis is Searle's) He repeats this again later in the book after asking "What sort of *society* would you contract into?" (Searle 2010, 134; emphasis is mine.)

The contemporary liberal democratic state, admittedly, looks different. But then it has a history. This history, typically, can be tracked down to a founding violence – war of liberation, civil war, and empire/colonial occupations. The contemporary application of this violence, which is also the liberal democratic state’s power, appears not to have diminished if we look at the many internal and external conflicts, proxy wars, cyber and drone wars around the world that originate from the exemplar liberal democratic state – the state from where Searle philosophizes and writes.<sup>12</sup>

But to blame violence alone is too easy. Searle asks the relevant question: “How do we get away with it?” “How does it get to be so successful?” “Why do people accept institutions and institutional facts?” The problem is that he also gives easy answers: “Many institutions... are in everybody’s interest and it is hard how one would go about rationally rejecting them.” “... [O]ne feature that runs through a large number of cases is that in accepting the institutional facts, people typically do not understand what is going on.” “... [T]he individual tends to feel helpless in the face of the institution.” “A related powerful motive for acceptance... is the human urge to conform...” All these in three-pages-long answer to the first question above in a 200-page book. (Searle 2010, 106-108) Within these passages, Searle quotes Karl Marx: “One man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him. They, on the other hand, imagine that they are subjects because he is king.” (Searle 2010, 107)<sup>13</sup> The relevant concept in Marx here is ideology. But since Marx, this concept has evolved in the thoughts of Marxists and post-Marxists. The problem is no longer simple *false consciousness*, or if we are aware of the “arbitrariness or even injustice of the institutional phenomena, [we] despair of ever being able to change it” as Searle puts it. (2010, 108) Ideology works because we consent to it through the negotiations-like *quid pro quo* between domination and resistance, or because we console ourselves that we can choose otherwise, or because we accept the bribe of the putative post-ideological world: that we can enjoy without the guilt. (Zizek 2002)

It is not that Searle does not recognize the role of violence and ideology in the constitution of the institutions and institutional facts that make society and the state. It is that Searle elides them or that he does not consider their importance at the appropriate juncture of his account of society: violence reinforces the founding claim and warrants its maintenance; ideology makes

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<sup>12</sup> Searle, in a letter submitted to an op-ed page and published online as part of a collection of writings on *Philosophy in Wartime*, showed support for the US War on Terror, suggesting what might constitute an intelligent response on the part of the USA. (Searle, 2015)

<sup>13</sup> The quote comes from a footnote in the first chapter of Marx’s *Capital*.

societal/state institutions internal to the identity of the subjects, constitutive parts of their self-discipline.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps these are not really Searle's concern. But of what use is Searle's social ontology then beyond its "elegant"<sup>15</sup> account of social institutions and facts?

*The politics of the cognitive self.* I see Sokolowski and Searle as eliding the pertinent socio political questions that necessarily entangles the knower and her knowing. They both recognize the power of the knower and the power of the activity of knowing. But they fail to give account of how these powers are distributed, that they are distributed asymmetrically, and that this lopsided distribution affects the knower, her knowing, and the limits of what she can know. All these, in turn, are internalized in the knower and become part of how she sees herself as such. All these make what the knower must designate and recognize as her intellectual responsibility.

But perhaps I demand too much from Sokolowski's ontology of the human person and Searle's social ontology. Perhaps there is some fundamental weakness in limiting ourselves to ontologies, as there is fundamental weakness to limiting ourselves to traditional epistemological analyses. What is there to know? How it is that we know? These questions do not tell us why we live in this crazy, crazy (human) world. And they do not tell us how to make a better world.

I steer this essay's discussion of intellectual responsibility towards the political and dwell on the issues it stirs because they are important to me. They are reasons for my philosophy and why I do philosophy. The whole point is not just to describe reality, as Marx would say,<sup>16</sup> it is to change reality. But before this, Marx preempts Sokolowski and Searle so pithily. At the beginning of his "Theses of Feurbach," he criticizes all existing materialism for mistaking reality as the object of contemplation, and "not as human sensuous activity...not subjectively." Further, he dismisses objective truth and instead asserts that we "must prove truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of [our] thinking in practice." (Marx 1978, 143-144) For me, this is the exemplar intellectual responsibility: a subjectively militant commitment to truth that changes the world. This should be the burden and power of any human endeavor to know.

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<sup>14</sup> Searle considers them mainly as effects of institutions or as institutions themselves that are necessary for the maintenance of the social structure of institutions as a whole. (2010, 141-142)

<sup>15</sup> Searle's social ontology is, as he says of one of its aspects, "so elegant, and indeed so beautiful..." (2010, 39)

<sup>16</sup> "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." (Marx 1978)



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