

SEARLEWORLD¹

MAKING THE SOCIAL WORLD: THE STRUCTURE OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION. By John R. Searle. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv, 208.

“And lastly the motive, and end for which this renouncing, and transferring of right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a man’s person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it.”

—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

“Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.”

—Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

“Some social theorists have seen institutional facts as essentially constraining. That is a very big mistake. . . . *Why do people accept institutions and institutional facts?* The most general answer is that most of the institutions one can think of work for our benefit by increasing our powers.”

—John Searle, *Making the Social World*

ABSTRACT

John Searle’s most recent effort to account for human social institutions claims to provide a synthesis of the explanatory and the normative while simultaneously dismissing as confused and wrongheaded theorists who held otherwise. Searle, although doubtless alert to the usual considerations for separating the normative and the explanatory projects, announces at the outset that he conceives of matters quite differently. Searle’s reason for reconceiving the field rests on his claim that both ends can be achieved by a single “underlying principle of social ontology” (7). This principle, he maintains, proves basic both to any explanation of how the social arises and sustains itself as well as to all justifications of core common norms, for example, human rights. His approach transforms what previously appeared to be ontological/explanatory questions (and so *prima facie* empirical/causal matters) completely into semantic/conceptual issues. By situating language as constitutive of the social, and intentionality as a necessary conceptual precursor to language, Searle claims to join by semantic necessity philosophical projects that the philosophical tradition that he rejects held distinct. Searle’s notion of the social comes for free once one has language as a conventional cloak for prelinguistic, semantically well-formed intentional contents, individual and collective. But upon examination, Searle’s key argument for displacement of the tradition depends upon the viability of his linguistic mechanism, and that in turn requires prelinguistic necessity for all forms of intentionality. But he can produce

1. I would like to thank Mark Bevir, Maeve Cooke, Maksymilian Del Mar, Stephen Turner, and Thomas Uebel for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. However, I alone bear responsibility for the essay.

no compelling connection, conceptual or empirical, to establish the role that collective intentionality supposedly must play.

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With respect to social theory broadly conceived, a traditional divide concerns a distinction between *normative* questions on the one hand and *explanatory* ambitions on the other.² Normative disputes include within their range issues such as cultural variations regarding what counts as rational as well as those of legitimating, for example, competing conceptions of authority. Types of explanatory issues include how the institutional structures that exist come to be—why they arise and what sustains them, as well as the entities taken to be ontologically basic for the purpose of explanation (for example, individuals or social class). Rarely does one and the same social theory claim to satisfy both explanatory interests and normative ones. For a standing challenge confronting any such proposed synthesis concerns what assumptions must be made about an unchanging core of human nature in order to license inferences both about what is and what ought to be. A unified account of the foundations of the causes for coordinated actions (for example, invisible hands or stag hunts) and of what makes a normative standard rational *tout court* (for example, social contracts or veils of ignorance) would be an exemplary achievement.

John Searle's most recent effort to account for human social institutions claims to provide just such a synthesis of the explanatory and the normative while simultaneously dismissing as confused and wrongheaded theorists who held otherwise. Searle, although doubtless alert to the usual considerations for separating the normative and the explanatory projects, announces at the outset that he conceives of matters quite differently. "But social philosophy courses, as they have been traditionally conceived, tended to be either the philosophy of social science or a continuation of political philosophy, sometimes called 'political and social philosophy.' . . . I am suggesting that there is a line of research that is more fundamental than either . . . , namely, the study of the nature of human society itself . . ." (5).³ Searle's reason for reconceiving the field rests on his claim that both ends can be achieved by a single "underlying principle of social ontology" (7). This principle, he maintains, proves basic both to any explanation of how the social arises and sustains itself as well as to all justifications of core common norms, for example, human rights.

2. Philosophy of social science courses will typically focus on explanatory concerns. The normative concerns that arise in such courses, for example, rationality, scientific method, or interpretation, connect to explanation. Courses in social and political philosophy characteristically fall straightforwardly under the rubric of value theory and so examine, for example, normative issues such as legitimation of authority or distributive justice.

3. For a very incisive and comprehensive review of an earlier Searlean effort on this topic, see Stephen Turner's review essay, "Searle's Social Reality," *History and Theory* 38 (1999), 211-231. Since Searle draws on no one's work nearly as much as on his own, Turner's review proves particularly helpful precisely because it situates Searle's current reflections on social ontology and reality in the context of Searle's earlier writings.

His approach, that is, transforms what previously appeared to be ontological/explanatory questions (and so *prima facie* empirical/causal matters) completely into semantic/conceptual issues. “I am in search of a single mechanism. I claim we use one formal linguistic mechanism, and we apply it over and over with different contents” (7). Although he states that this principle constitutes a “mechanism,” Searle’s use of the term must be taken advisedly. For the so-called mechanism that generates his social ontology turns out to be a principle of semantics, at least as Searle conceives of that topic.

One of the agreeable features of writing in the present era is that we have in large part overcome our three-hundred-year obsession with epistemology and skepticism. . . . [Frege et al.] did not address the problems that interest me in this book, [but] they did develop techniques of analysis and approaches to language that I intend to use. . . . And why is [social ontology] an appropriate subject for philosophy and not the proper domain of empirical sciences? Because it turns out that society has a logical (conceptual, propositional) structure that admits of, indeed requires, logical analysis. (6)

The metaphysics of the social—the so-called ontological foundations on which all actual concrete institutions and their related norms rest—stands revealed as a consequence of statements with certain semantic features.

Failure to appreciate this priority of semantics, and ultimately of the conceptual over the empirical in the case of social ontology, proves to be the misstep that causes all pre-Searlean thought about the nature of the social to falter.

All of the philosophers of politics and society that I know of take language for granted. They all assume that we are language-speaking animals and then they are off and running with an account of society, social facts, ideal types, political obligation, the social contract, communicative action, validity claims, discursive formations, the habitus, bio-power, and all the rest of it. . . . 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. (62)

What does it mean to say that prior efforts “take language for granted”? It implies, at least, that pre-Searleans did not comprehend any *necessary* connection between accounting for what makes language possible and for what makes the social possible. Consequently, “the problem with all of them is that they did not tell us what language is” (62). But then the misstep of other thinkers in this realm comes early, in failing to comprehend that “you cannot have institutional facts without language. And once you have a shared language you can create institutional facts at will” (63; see also 62 and 69).

Apparently, a variation on a familiar philosophical curse—a bewitchment of the mind by language—befell almost all other thinkers in this tradition, causing them to misapprehend the very logic of the inquiry they pursued. “In giving an account of language, I will try to overcome the curse of all social (and political) theorizing from Aristotle through Durkheim, Weber and Simmel to Habermas, Bourdieu, and Foucault” (62).⁴ Specifically, the curse blinds at least those just named to the fact that language, rather than being just another social formation, actually underwrites all things social, both institutional and normative. What pre-Searle thinkers failed to perceive, in other words, concerns what conceptual

4. It should not be assumed that a failure to dispute some particular claim of Searle’s implies agreement with Searle on that point.

resources must already be in play in order for there to be a shared language—the underlying conditions of the possibility of language, one might say. To lift this curse, Searle believes that he needs only to recite his conceptual analysis of what people must share when they share language.

The decisive move in the magic trick of uniting the causal and the normative, a creating of all things social from the mere stuff of meaning, comes then at the very first step. A conceptual analysis of what makes shared meaning possible proves to be all that is needed in order to ascertain the ontological foundations for social institutions and basic human social norms. It must happen in order for language to be.⁵ In particular, Searle's redoing of "ontology recapitulates philology"⁶ develops from his account of how human prelinguistic intentional structure permits movement from individual intentional and representational states to what he terms collective intentionality. Briefly then, human beings come prepackaged with intentional states that also have representational capacities.⁷ Biology augments this common innate capacity for representation by endowing each individual with a common repertoire of perceptual capacities as well as an instantiation of the intentional in the neurological. As a result, these individual intentional/propositional/representational states can then be communicated by means of language to others (68; 71). Communication *and* collective action turn out to be possible because individuals already have an innate, *pre-linguistic* capacity to have semantically well-structured propositional contents and to then formulate utterances that express them. The very expression also functions to commit speakers to what they say. Thus the conceptual resources that make language possible for humans serve both to create social reality and to bind them to it.

Over time, Searle has moved from a modestly analytic view of meaning to, so to speak, meaning on steroids.⁸ A pumped-up version of what can only be termed

5. "I have to emphasize that in structuring the question this way I am not engaging in speculative evolutionary biology. . . . I am emphatically not engaging in that enterprise. My question is conceptual. Subtract language from a species like us and what do you have? Now add language. What are you adding?" (65-66).

6. Cited as an epigram to W. V. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960). Quine attributes the *bon mot* (a play on a famous remark by Ernst Haeckel) to James Grier Miller. However, I have been unable to find a published source for this attribution. See also the last three paragraphs of Turner, "Searle's Social Reality."

7. "Our prelinguistic hominids already have perception, intentional action, and prelinguistic thought processes. All of these are intentional states with full propositional contents" (71). See also Searle's discussion on 25-29.

8. As Searle himself remarks, he finds "a certain irony" that while in his work on speech acts he "tried to use the similarity with games and other institutional phenomena to explain language," he now maintains "that the existence of games and other nonlinguistic institutional phenomena can be explained only in terms of language. You can't use the analogy with games to explain language because you understand games only if you already understand language" (114-115). As he repeatedly emphasizes, "to have language is already to have a rich structure of institutions" (134). But the intellectual lineage Searle concerns himself with consists of himself, and the developing of insights that he had in 1969 and 1975 (see, for example, 11) that blossomed in part in his 1995 book, *The Construction of Social Reality*, and only now reaches full theoretical flower (see, for example, 19). Indeed, as Searle elsewhere informs his readers, his main debt and his inspiration owe only to . . . himself. "All institutional facts, and therefore all status functions, are created by speech acts of a type that in 1975 I baptized as Declarations" (11; see also 12-13). That relieves the rest of a great responsibility.

neurosemantics now bears the entire weight of Searle's analysis of social reality. The turtles needed to support Searleworld consist of a nested stack of conceptual/ logical dependencies that have language as their conceptual consequence and also position language in this stack as *necessarily* prior to the social and so constitutive of it. The turtle at the base belongs to a special Searlean species of innate intentionality. As discussed below, only a very selective breeding of this conceptual species ensures that Searlean language receives the support needed, for the intentionality turtle supplies the critical innately representational and so innately semantical capacities and structures at the base of Searleworld.⁹ Understanding just how Searleworld rests on these particular turtles proves key to assessing whether Searleworld stands as steadily as claimed.

Although barely 200 pages, this book covers the conceptual foundations of all human social institutions, the conceptual foundations of language, the concepts of free will, rationality, and the proper understanding of the links among them, especially with regard to the analysis of human action. It concludes with a derivation of fundamental human rights. Chapter 1 offers only a quick summary of the many wonders to be glimpsed on Searleworld. Searle's "conceptual analysis" of the role language plays in allowing humans to make this transition from individual to collective intentionality, and so the creation of the social, occupies slightly over half the book (about 100 pages, chapters 2-5). Once the role of language in creating and sustaining social ontology has been given its conceptual due, Searle requires only about 75 pages (chapters 6-8) to demonstrate how free will, rationality, action, power, and human rights all follow from the analysis that he provides. It would be pointless to summarize the book any further. Outlining the outlines of Searle's many sketches of arguments would only strain a reader's credulity.

Better to ask just what resources permit him to accomplish so much so quickly and economically. As he tells his readers repeatedly, he accomplishes this seemingly daunting task by means of a single principle. When asked on what linguistic principle the entirety of social reality consists—the world that humans and not nature created, Searle has a ready answer—status function declarations (SFDs). And on what do SFDs depend? Not to worry; it's SFDs all the way down. "In spite of the stunning variety of human forms of institutional social existence, I am convinced that there is a single logical principle that underlies all of the structures. . . . The basic, and simple, idea is that all nonlinguistic institutional facts are created and maintained in their existence by speech acts that have the same logical form as Declarations" (122). It might thus seem as if SFDs constitute Searle's master concept. But he cobbles SFDs together from units that prove more fundamental, but also more problematic, for the alleged reality of Searleworld. These constituents of SFDs carry the real weight of his argument.

9. "Thus, the existence of a Declaration is itself an institutional fact and thus a status function. But does it itself require a further declaration to exist? It does not. Indeed, if it did, we would have an infinite regress. . . . [T]he semantic content of the speech act by itself is sufficient to make statements, promises, requests, and questions" (14). "But the capacity of a sentence to represent linguistically does not require additional powers of linguistic representation. They are already built into the semantics of the sentence. . . . On my account, meanings are used to create a reality that goes beyond meaning. . . . We are investigating a branch of extra-semantical semantics" (114). "The language itself determines that it is a sentence with that meaning" (114).

In particular, although SFDs create the social, in order to so, they logically presuppose the availability of what Searle terms “collective intentionality” (59). Whatever one takes “collective intentionality” to be, it must for a Searlean be forged from the stuff of (though not reducible to) individual intentions.¹⁰ Searle does not posit a group mind or any such entity; such a notion he regards as ruled out by the basic facts of natural science, whatever those might be. Collective intentionality cannot be easily characterized, though examples come readily to hand. Consider Margaret Gilbert’s now canonical example that illustrates one clear sense of a “collective intention,” namely, an instance of what she terms “walking together.”¹¹ In the Gilbert case, two acquaintances meet by happenstance on a street, but as a result begin to walk together. As Gilbert analyzes this case, this event exemplifies the existence of a joint intention of the people involved to perform an action. For just one person to have this intention would not suffice to create the mutual action. What the people do jointly neither could do just as an isolated individual. So actions such as walking together, Gilbert concludes, demonstrate the existence of a type of intentional behavior that does not (indeed, cannot) simply tie to the purpose of a single individual.¹²

One interesting consequence that seems to follow from distinguishing between individual and collective intentions concerns how cases of collective intentionality enmesh individuals in normative commitments that do not clearly or directly arise from just an individual’s intentions. For example, in the case of walking together, one person would seem to wrong another by suddenly veering off without warning and ambling into a store. A joint action, in short, generates justified expectations to which each person involved can be held accountable. A related and more complex case, nicely analyzed by Alban Bouvier,¹³ involves being a signatory to a document that represents a type of compromise among the signatories. In such a case, the document represents a joint or collective act on the part of the individuals, even though with respect to any specific signatory, that person may not have intended (or even fully endorsed) just that document.¹⁴

10. “The only intentionality that can exist is in the heads of individuals. There is no collective intentionality beyond what is in the head of each member of the collective” (55). “[A]s long as we respect the basic facts we have to acknowledge that all human intentionality exists only in human brains” (44). For an important discussion of this move from individual intentionality to collective intentionality and its centrality for Searle’s theory, see Turner, “Searle’s Social Reality,” 215-218.

11. Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

12. An important sticking point that arises for these sorts of cases (not just Gilbert’s), but an issue into which I will not delve, involves exactly how one then analyzes or unpacks the notion of intentionality for such mutual or joint actions.

13. Alban Bouvier, “Individual Beliefs and Collective Beliefs in Sciences and Philosophy: The Plural Subject and the Polyphonic Subject Accounts. Case Studies,” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34, no. 3 (2004), 382-407.

14. As a further complication, collective intentions seem to require that one’s individual actions be part of some joint undertaking, while not necessarily entailing an endorsement or knowledge of what others do. One typically relies on others to do their part, but nothing further may be involved. For example, if one were involved in some Christo-like project of wrapping a town in gauze, a person may volunteer his or her time and efforts with no knowledge whatsoever of exactly what others do, who they are, or even the ultimate outcome. Yet, this would be a collectively intended act, one that no single individual’s intention brings about, but still where one can attribute to individuals involved agency and responsibility.

Searle, however, has a grander game in view than worrying about the details of what appears to be a special case of agency. Searle asserts that “The distinctive feature of human social reality . . . is that humans have the capacity to impose functions on objects and people where the objects and the people cannot perform the functions solely in virtue of their physical structure” (7). Only people can confer status functions on individuals and objects, functions that they possess yet that will not appear on any list of basic facts about that object. What makes an object currency or a university degree, for example, does not emerge from any analysis of the paper and ink that constitute such an item. As in the simpler cases of joint action rehearsed above, individuals on their own, as individuals, cannot create status functions. Rather, declarations serve to explain why institutional facts can and do exist. “*The claim that I will be expounding and defending in this book is that all human institutional reality is created and maintained in existence by (representations that have the same logical form as) SF [Status Function] Declarations, including the cases that are not speech acts in the explicit form of Declarations*” (13; see also 12). Social ontology consists of status functions that people collectively recognize as assigned to things; assignment takes place through SFDs.

Just as with the case of a person who begins to walk together with another, or who puts his or her name to a negotiated document, status functions come with associated norms, what Searle terms their “deontic powers” (see, for example, 8-9). “It is because status functions carry deontic powers that they provide the glue that holds human civilization together” (9). That is, the very act of assigning a function introduces the normative component as well. “The clue that there is a normative component to the notion of function is that once we have described something in terms of function we can introduce a normative vocabulary” (59). The key term in this remark concerns Searle’s use of “can.” For hominids have not just the ability to do so, but, he claims, must do so as part of having a language at all. “Language is the basic form of public deontology. . . . I am now arguing that once you have language, it is *inevitable* that you will have deontology” (82; emphasis mine). SFDs therefore create both social institutions and norms simultaneously.

But the intentional moment and the linguistic moment, although having for Searle a preordained harmony, must be held separate and distinct. Intentionality in both of its forms—individual and collective—exists for Searle in what he terms a prelinguistic state. And so they must, for only in this way can they turn out to possess the necessary semantic features that Searle requires of them to make his account of meaning robust enough to do the conceptual work that he requires from it. The use of particular linguistic forms will be a contingent result of social conventions, but the forms and conventions must warp to fit a necessary and prior semantic structure.

The viability of Searle’s conceptual enterprise requires that language *not* be just one social formation among others. “*With the important exception of language itself*, all of institutional reality, and therefore, in a sense, all of human civilization, is created by speech acts that have the same logical form as Declarations” (12; emphasis mine). At least two reasons mandate that Searle establish

the conceptual priority assigned to language in the formation of the social. First, absent the special constitutive role assigned to language by virtue of this linking function, no reason exists to accept Searle's repeated claim that ontology and norms must be conceptually bound together.¹⁵ Intentionality makes shared meaning possible; language makes it actual. Second, in order to avoid the charge of regress, language must fulfill a special role in which it both constitutes the social and yet links conventional expressions to a presocial, individual, and necessary account of meaning. The foundation of meaning in intentionality breaks the threatened regress. Because although language actualizes the sharing of meanings, the meanings so actualized exist prior to language, incarnate in prelinguistic intentionality.¹⁶

How then does "language itself" come to play its constitutive role, that is, not be one more social institution among others? As noted before, Searle's favored account of intentionality provides the conceptual stuff used to breed the turtles supporting Searleworld. An intentional state 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" (25). To appreciate the highly selective nature of the conceptual breeding needed to produce the turtles of Searleworld, consider again Searle's favored example of something that such turtles support, an institutional fact, namely, money.

Money is money because the actual participants in the institution regard it as money. . . . What I want to convey is that people's attitudes are necessary to constitute something as money, government, political parties, or final examinations. So on this account, in addition to the traditional distinction between "mental" and "nonmental," you need to identify a category of entities that are not, so to speak, intrinsically mental in a way that intentions and pains are, but are dependent for their existence on the mental in the sense that they are intentionality-relative, and these would include our favorites such as money, property, marriage, and government. . . . All of these phenomena we will be investigating are intentionality-relative. (17)

In short, all things social—ontological and normative—presuppose Searle's view on intentionality. And although of fundamental importance to his project, in order to apprehend the critical role that the concept of collective intentionality plays in Searle's overall argument, his analysis of individual intentionality must first be canvassed.

15. Turner aptly characterizes Searle's move here as follows: "Searle's argument for the role of collective intentionality comes down to the quasi-transcendental claim that the normative character of institutions is explicable only by reference to collective intentions" (Turner, "Searle's Social Reality," 229). I agree, but I focus on the causal/explanatory aspect of Searle's account, rather than the norm-introducing aspect that Turner makes his primary concern.

16. Again, despite his homage to thinkers in the tradition of analytic philosophy of language, a list that includes the names of Quine and Wittgenstein, Searle's entire philosophical orientation is absolutely antithetical to the views found in, for example, Davidson, Quine, Sellars, and the later Wittgenstein. In particular, Searle's view, as I detail below, represents the antithesis of the views on meaning expressed by Quine. "Language is a social art. In acquiring it we have to depend entirely on intersubjectively available cues as to what to say and when" (Quine, *Word and Object*, ix). Ditto, with some variations, for the others on my list. Searle cannot be unaware of this, so his remarks on p. 6 about his relationship to that tradition strike this reader as disingenuous.

The mental intentional stuff found on Searleworld nonetheless can be certified as meeting rigorous scientific standards. For that ontology of the intentional, whatever else it is,

must respect the basic facts of the structure of the universe. These basic facts are given by physics and chemistry, by evolutionary biology and the other natural sciences. We need to show how all the other parts of reality are dependent on, and in various ways derive from, the basic facts. . . . Our mental life depends on the basic facts. . . . Collective mental phenomena of the sort we get in organized societies are themselves dependent on and derived from the mental phenomena of individuals. This same pattern of dependence continues higher as we see that social institutions such as governments and corporations are dependent on and derived from the mental phenomena and behavior of individual human beings. This is the *basic requirement* of our investigation: the account must be consistent with the basic facts and show how the nonbasic facts are dependent on and derived from the basic facts. . . . We have to show how everything we say is not only consistent with but in various ways derived from and dependent on the basic facts. (4)

But, alas, although consistency with and derivation from “basic facts” of natural science constitutes a “basic requirement” for Searle, nowhere does he specify how to separate the natural from the social. Yet any hope of testing the viability of his view on this point would seem to presuppose this critical distinction.

For the moment, however, pretend we have in hand an accepted method for demarcating the natural from the social, and so have a sure grip on the accompanying distinction between basic and nonbasic facts. Searle takes his account of intentionality as at least consistent with the natural sciences. Now consistency with Searle’s basic facts represents a very weak constraint. It permits anything imaginable that nonetheless does not obviously contradict science as presently conceived. Searle’s requirement that what he terms nonbasic facts be “derived” from those labeled “basic” promises a potentially more interesting way to rein in claims. For questions can then be raised regarding the plausibility of the promised derivation.

How does he lay claim to the “derivation” of his linguistic mechanism for social ontology from those of the sciences he recognizes as natural? Searle realizes that the structure he imputes to intentionality has no obvious or necessary ties to the basic facts of natural science that he lists. He makes a key move to try to bring together the imputed *mental* structure of intentionality, which underwrites his claims about the origins of status functions, and the *nonmental* biological features of humans, which underwrites his claim that the ontological account of the social falls out from our knowledge of the natural. “It is important,” he writes, “to keep reminding ourselves that natural brain processes, at a certain level of description, have *logical semantic properties*. They [the nonmental states] have *conditions of satisfaction*, such as truth conditions, and other logical relations; and these logical properties are as much a part of our natural biology as is the secretion of neurotransmitters into synaptic clefts” (42; emphasis mine). On this view, because any thought (mental state) must have instantiation as a brain state, that nonmental state, that is, the neurobiological process, must have as well the very same logical properties as the propositional states that it physically instantiates. “I

am insisting that, as you read this sentence, the thoughts going through your mind are also neurobiological processes in the brain, and those processes have logical properties, exactly the same logical properties as those of the thoughts, because they are simply the neurobiological realization of the thoughts” (42). Call this Searle’s neurosemantic thesis about brain states.¹⁷

Two points deserve notice here. First, his account of language can be termed “naturalistic” only in the empty sense of being apparently compatible with his natural sciences. So imagined, it represents “an extension of biologically basic, prelinguistic forms of intentionality, and meets our basic requirement of showing how the human reality is a natural outgrowth of more fundamental—physical, chemical, and biological—phenomena” (61) only because although it is entirely an *ad hoc* addition to what his natural sciences count as basic, his analysis retains

17. Searle advocates a type of semantic holism. “My intentional states do not come to me as isolated units. I cannot intend to go to the movies unless I have a whole lot of other beliefs and desires” (31). If having intentional states involves what Searle terms this “Network,” and a network as a whole must stand in the proper relation to an environment, this might seem to count against my claim that his view entails semantic determinacy. For the determiners are whole networks of beliefs and desires, and perhaps much more. But Searle singles out intentional states within their networks to do a special job. Intentions *per se* cannot be true or false; but intentional states incorporate representational states, and those have truth conditions (28). “[W]e can think of intentional states that have a whole proposition as content, and a direction of fit, as representations of what must be the case in the world if the fit is to come about. I introduce a name for the conditions in the world which must be satisfied if the intentional state is to be satisfied: *conditions of satisfaction*” (29). So intentional states are units analogous to beliefs: a “belief represents its truth conditions . . . [and] an intention represents its carrying out conditions. . . . The intentional state represents its conditions of satisfaction” (29). This sounds very much as though these things, beliefs and intentional states, actually are semantically evaluable as “isolated units” after all.

So what is the role of the Network, and the additional, even less accessible stuff called the Background? Roughly, Searle’s Network consists of other intentional states, whereas capacities and practices at an individual’s disposal comprise the Background. But this Background, *qua* Background, does not have truth conditions—it “does not consist in a set of intentional states” (31). It lacks that sort of representational explicitness. The stuff in the Network, beliefs, have “directions of fit with conditions of satisfaction” (32), meaning that they are the sorts of thing that can be true, and as isolated units. This gives the holism associated with the Network a specific meaning that ultimately serves only to underscore Searle’s commitment to semantic determinacy. For if the relations of beliefs within the Network were not semantically determinate, if the isolatable units that make up the network were not semantically determinate on their own, no representational state could be either.

The difference between a Searlean Network and a Quinean web of belief, in this key respect, consists precisely in the fact that altering the truth-value of one belief in Quine’s web leaves undetermined which other truth values might be altered. Searle, to the contrary, can claim only that representational states have a determinate world–belief relationship provided that the truth conditions have been fixed. No structure, no inference, that is, no determining the semantic relations among states. This applies to Searle because he claims that all representational states do have explicit conditions of satisfaction. “Anything that has conditions of satisfaction, that can succeed or fail in a way that is characteristic of intentionality, is by definition a representation of its conditions of satisfaction” (30).

Searle’s neurology embodies, literally, these mind-made conditions of fit of semantic representations, and moreover, he claims, all beings like us have mutually recognizable conditions of satisfaction for their representational states. As a result there can exist just one semantically and neurologically determinate state for all. Indeterminacy in the semantic realm would render it impossible to have this mutual recognition of conditions of satisfaction. This key point receives discussion later in this essay. If there were no mutual recognition of conditions of satisfaction on Searle’s view, communication could not exist. But it does, because these neurological facts of semantic determination make it possible. (I owe Stephen Turner a particular debt of thanks here for helping me to clarify this point.)

a seeming consistency with those sciences. Second, the phrase “the human reality” can only be read here as a definite description. For it must be a consequence of matters as Searle has sketched them that there can be exactly one such reality. Since semantic structure must be built into the very structure of the brain, and since he posits that humans share this semantic structure, there can be just one science, one mechanism. For if the structures did not mesh from individual to individual, communication as Searle envisions it could not occur. Everything needed for creating the social, including intentionality, comes prepackaged in this respect. The basic structures of the mental, the physical, logic, language, and the social all thus happily coincide.¹⁸

The full extent of this prepackaging becomes clearer when Searle expounds on the account of meaning to which he entitles himself based on his account of intentionality. Here it becomes explicit that the notion of intentionality contains by Searlean definition a notion of propositional content, all of which comes with an infant as part of its heritage. In addition, in building as he does on the notion of intentionality, a deeply antisocial aspect of Searle’s work emerges strikingly in his account of meaning.

I need to introduce the notion of meaning where meaning consists in the imposition of conditions of satisfaction on signs or marks. . . . [W]hen we say that any utterance of the sentence “Snow is white” counts as a statement to the effect that snow is white, the “counts as” does not in this case specify an operation; rather the fact that the utterance counts as a particular statement is constitutive of the meaning of the utterance. The meaning of the sentence is already such that its appropriate utterance, by itself, is constitutive of the making of the corresponding statement. . . . The notion of meaning that we are using here is the notion of something having a propositional content in an illocutionary mode. (111)

Searle’s “conditions of satisfaction” include conditions of representation (74; 76). Further, shared meaning can only emerge from intentional states and propositional contents that exist as part of each individual’s cognitive birthright prior to any introduction of language.

The whole investigation proceeds on the assumption that mental states exist in people intrinsically in a non-intentionality-relative fashion. I have my intentional states of hunger and thirst, for example, regardless of what anybody else thinks. But the intentionality of language, of words and sentences, called “meanings,” is intentionality-dependent. The intentionality of language is created by the intrinsic, or mind-independent, intentionality of human beings. (66)

18. For example, “Our prelinguistic hominids already have perception, intentional action, and prelinguistic thought processes. All of these are intentional states with full propositional contents. And when one such creature intentionally communicates to another, it tries to reproduce its own intentional content in the head of the other person.” (71). How does one respond to such flatfooted assertions, ones that ignore not only the data of anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences, but also philosophical criticism developed from work beginning in the 1930s by Wittgenstein and Quine and carried through to the present day? For an overview of aspects of this debates, see my “Beyond Understanding,” in *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, ed. S. P. Turner and P. A. Roth (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 311-333. Although Searle styles them conceptual claims, his remarks indicate that in fact he has on offer his own transcendental architectonic. The details remain sketchy, and Searle does not pause to provide an actual deduction of the categories in play.

For Searle, the significance of having intentional states as innate and intrinsic cannot be overemphasized, for individual intentional states already have propositional content, that is, they have a representative function and so can be evaluable as either true or false. “But the capacity of a sentence to represent linguistically does not require additional power of linguistic representation. They are already built into the semantics of the sentence” (114). In this way, intentionality comes to rank as *the* basic fact of Searleworld.

These semantically preconfigured, individual, innate conditions of satisfaction in turn ground Searle’s claim that there must exist “conceptual relationships between linguistic structures and prelinguistic intentionality” (86). That is, the analysis just assumes for purposes of argument “a race of hominids who have consciousness and prelinguistic intentionality and who are endowed with a capacity for free action and collective intentionality” (87). “Endowed” here does much work for Searle’s argument, since Searle’s account requires that language instantiate a notion of purpose that itself does not reflect mere conventions of use. His repeated claims regarding the meaning as “internal” and as “necessary” to language presuppose precisely this (84).

“Speaker meaning,” as Searle has now defined it, “is the intentional imposition of conditions of satisfaction onto utterances, the imposition of the same conditions of satisfaction as those of the intentional states expressed in the utterance” (81). This ability too he assumes as part of the riches of human conceptual “endowment.” “We have to assume that they [the hominids] are capable of evolving procedures for representing states of affairs where the representations have speaker meaning, as I have defined it” (87). So as Searle unfolds (conceptual) evolution, speakers may begin by making sounds that have meaning even if the speaker does not intend to communicate (for example, imagine a young child who knows no French but sings “Frère Jacques”). But the structure is already there, and once speakers (on their own) decide to use these very words to communicate, everything is in place (structure, intentionality, propositional content) to move from uttering sounds to employing utterances for the purpose of expressing truth conditions to others.

Our animals already have unstructured propositional contents. But corresponding to these are structured features of the real world, and the animals have the capacity to recognize these structures and their elements. So we are not begging any questions when we give the hominid a sentential structure that corresponds to the conditions of satisfaction that it already has. *The semantic function comes for free because we already introduced meaning.* Here is the basic idea: the animal has perceptual and belief contents that lack syntactic structure. . . . The animal has feature placing, but not yet reference and predication. . . . But it already has the material to construct those components from its prelinguistic intentionality. It can see something coming toward it now and thus believe that something is coming toward it now. And that is enough to give us the possibility of introducing devices that can perform the functions of reference and predication. . . . It does not much matter how we construct these subsentential elements or how we combine them as long as they break up the sentences into repeatable components, and as long as the components match the components of the prelinguistic intentional contents. (77-78; emphasis mine)

Once one has the assurance that the logical structure of the mind (including, *mirabile dictu*, the very processes in the neurology of the brain) is at one with

the logical structure of language, the conditions of the possibility of meaning too must coincide. By this means as well all of epistemology, and so empirical inquiry in any substantive form, becomes irrelevant to Searle's conception of the origins of the social and makes possible social theory as mere conceptual explication. One does not need history, sociology, psychology, or any the rest of it. No other options for the creation of meaning exist.¹⁹

Indeed, Searle casually stocks the mind in its prelinguistic moment with everything needed to move from having individual representations to communicating with others. Thus, it should come as no surprise that those who did not see meaning as a process that "comes for free" had to imagine that language plays a different role than Searle takes it to. Absolutely nothing about Searle's account qualifies as naturalistic, since he offers no empirical evidence for his fundamental claims about the structure of the mind/brain, and none of the claims he makes could be put to empirical test. Calling them "conceptual" simply means that he has spun out a logical "just so" story.

Summarizing Searle's argument to date:

1. Intention is the essence of meaning. Prelinguistic intentionality has its own semantic/propositional structure. Since its biological basis must instantiate just this inherent mental structure, and humans share a biology, this yields a "naturalistic" explanation of the communicability (sharing) of individual intentional structure (meanings).

2. Language results from the marriage of individual intentionality and utterances that have conventionally (that is, contingently) expressed but biologically and semantically prelinguistically determined satisfaction conditions. That is, exactly how syntax evolves may be a historical accident, but any language fit for communication will of necessity warp itself to shared semantic structure.

Steps 1-2 supposedly explain how intentionality exists prelinguistically and yet makes shared meaning possible.

Yet Searle's analysis of the existence and necessity that he attributes to intentionality and so prelinguistic meaning depends upon both aspects of this intentionality instantiation thesis: nonmental instantiation in the neurology; mental instantiation in the form of propositional content. On the nonmental side, Searle asserts that the "naturalizing" of intentionality poses no real problem inasmuch

19. An obvious alternative to the Searlean approach that Searle himself never pauses to explore or consider, as Turner also complains (see, for example, "Searle's Social Reality," 224-229), would be to provide some history of the "status functions" under consideration. In this regard, the work of Ian Hacking stands as the philosophical contrast to the type of apriorism championed by Searle. As Hacking's own work and his writings on Foucault testify, he takes "normalizing" practices seriously. Searle summarizes and then dismisses one observation of Foucault's in this regard as follows: "Suppose all of the prisoners can see the guard, but he can't see them. As long as they remain locked up, this does not reverse the power relationships" (154). As an empirical claim, this is just false. Just ask, for example, any parent whether it would affect their power over their children if they could not observe what their children were doing but the children knew exactly where the parents were and what they were doing. That Searle gives voice to such a view indicates his need to rethink just who has been blinded and bewitched by their understanding of the role of language.

as “Intentionality is already naturalized because, for example, thinking is as natural as digesting” (43). The problem here does not reside in the fact that the instantiation Searle describes remains undiscovered, a yet-to-be-identified skin in the neurological web of the brain. Rather, the problem is the fact that no one literally has any idea to what the sentential entity correlates. What would it look like? What could it mean to say that a neurobiological process represents the realization of a specific logical structure? What science vouchsafes the claim that propositional content must be confined to processes that find their realization in some isolatable state of a specific physical structure such as the brain? No science testifies to the necessary existence of the asserted neurological correlate. The assertion that it must exist can only be read as sheer puffery, a seemingly empirical claim that lacks any possible hint of how it could be tested and evaluated.

On the mental side, Searle simply makes Kant-like assumptions regarding the structure of the mind and its intentional capacities *ab initio*. “The mind has a beautiful and symmetrical formal structure. By ‘formal’ I just mean that the structural features of beliefs, desires, perceptions, intentions, and so on can be specified independently of any particular contents” (15). Unsurprisingly, then, the prior structure of the mind just is the structure that finds its realization in natural language. “The structure of the speech act is as beautifully simple and elegant as the structure of mental states. Once you see how the nature of meaning creates the possibility of speech acts, you can see that the limits set by language are already limits set by the mind” (16). By judicious choices of assumptions and definitions, Searle procures what he needs to make magic happen. Upon examination, then, one discovers that the advantages of theft over honest toil pale by comparison to Searle’s methods for counterfeiting ontological riches.²⁰

The normative works itself in for Searle at the next step. Many traditional philosophers and social theorists imagined that a chief puzzle to be solved concerned the commitment of individuals to a collective—the social in its many guises. For Searle the requisite commitment emerges coevally, and necessarily so, with the sharing of language.

This commitment to mean what we say for Searle can only come in the pre-linguistic moment; otherwise, it has nothing that links it to any sense of being necessarily encoded in the resulting linguistic expression. “The animal has the intention both to impose conditions of satisfaction on conditions of satisfaction (and thus, to create meaning) and to communicate those conditions of satisfaction to other animals. It does this [the communication] according to conventional procedures. Those collectively accepted conventional procedures enable the hominids to create a type of commitment that is internal to the procedures but is not present without the conventional procedures” (82). These “imposed conditions of satisfaction” yield:

3. Since communication presupposes a communication of a purpose, this “builds in” the normative by the very act of speech. For no one could literally

20. Turner too notes Searle’s troubled relationship with the scientific model of how the mind does what it does, for example, in “Searle’s Social Reality,” 212-213. What I term Searle’s instantiation thesis represents a regress even in light of Searle’s own thought.

mean anything by utterances without having imposed conditions of satisfaction on conditions of satisfaction.

Self-imposed conditions of satisfaction explain why for Searle one cannot make a meaningful utterance without having “committed” to its truth conditions.

In creating a language we found that we needed speaker meaning, conventions, and internal syntactic structure. But if you understand these as relating in a certain way to human intentionality, . . . you already get the commitments that typically go with those types of illocutionary acts. Nothing further is necessary to guarantee that speakers will be committed by their utterances. (84)

The innate, “given,” intentional structure has an integrity all its own. Both semantic content and deontic power derive from purposiveness, the essence of intentionality. For one cannot make a meaningful utterance without being aware of—and in that intentional sense committed to—what one makes. That is what it is to impose conditions of satisfaction on a string of sounds—we “commit” ourselves to playing midwife to the meaning with which the intentional thought is already pregnant. In sum: Intention begets purpose; purpose begets meaning; meaning begets deontic powers.

The missing link in Searle’s story of the descent of language remains the needed conceptually determinate transitional element from the individual to the social. For as Searle himself emphasizes, individuals cannot, *qua* individuals, create and sustain a status function that others must recognize. Indeed, Searle’s account of SFDs depends on a logically prior element, the one that, on analogy with the case of individual intentionality, provides the conceptual glue that unites both the ontological and the normative, but now in addition binds individuals in their turn to a *group* purpose. What Searle terms “collective intentionality” confers these status functions by a specific kind of speech act. Indeed, status functions “require collective intentionality both for their initial creation and for their continued existence” (59). *In short, the bonding agent on which all things social thus rely consists of this notion of collective intentionality, for by this means alone does the requisite notion of purpose distribute beyond individuals.*

Searle realizes that he needs a story about collective intention/purpose that ties collective intentionality back to a biological root. Searle’s intoning of collective intentionality as a prelinguistic “capacity” (noted above) proves of no avail here. For the “collective” bit of the “collectively intentional” does not receive instantiation in any individual’s brain. But without the instantiation story, it would appear that the inhabitants of Searleworld cannot be shown to necessarily share prelinguistic communicable purposes rooted in their shared biology. This would allow the conventional to precede the collectively intentional, and so leave Searleworld without a turtle to stand on.

The story must begin with status function declarations that set up the conceptually determinative network of obligations and expectations. For the happy marriage of the intentional and the conventional yields a language that could not exist without already expressing a meaning and, by expressing, creating obligations and commitments. Semantics makes deontology analytic both individually and collectively; if someone speaks meaningfully, he or she must speak committedly

(87-88). In lieu of the categorical imperative as a way that reason binds a rational person to the mast of the moral, Searle discovers he needs only declarative sentences.²¹

Thinkers in the social philosophical tradition that Searle maligns, for example, Hobbes, pose cooperation as a type of trade-off. But this locates purposiveness exogenously, and for Searle that will not do. Purpose must be grounded in intentionality, and so can only come from within. If it does not come from within, it will lack necessity. Without such necessity bred of a metaphysically basic intentionality, Searle's entire conceptual construction has no support. Despite how much Searle assumes about the structure of human intentionality, it cannot yet get him where he needs to go. For that account stops where individual intentionality ends. He needs, rather, a purely conceptual account of how language comes to serve a *collective* purpose, and so justify his repeated claim that language alone serves to constitute institutional reality (93, 109, 122). Such an analysis must also reveal his semantic principle as the magic glue that bonds speakers to the social institutions that collective intentions make it possible for them to create.

On the one hand, collective intentionality must exist as a prelinguistic capacity for Searle, because otherwise it could be purely an artifact of conventions, and so one more social creation among others. On the other hand, even Searle acknowledges that collective intentions *per se* receive no instantiation in an individual's mind/brain. How then does collective intentionality too come to wear its cloak of linguistic convention over a meaning nonetheless somehow preordained to be recognizable in public view?

The argument given so far is that intentional acts of meaning—that is, the intentional imposition of conditions of satisfaction on conditions of satisfaction, performed according to accepted conventions—necessarily involve a deontology. Now, once that deontology is *collectively* created by these intentional actions, then it is very easy—indeed, I believe inevitable—that it should be extended to social reality generally. I am not claiming that the extension is logically entailed but that it is empirically inevitable. Once you have the capacity to represent, you already have the *capacity* to create a reality by those representations, a reality that consists in part of representations. (84; emphasis mine)

Searle concedes that the extension from the “capacity” to collectively intend to its actually being collectively intended does not follow conceptually on his account of language. But labeling collective intentionality a “capacity” simply renames the mystery; it offers no hint of a solution of how individuals move from capacity to actuality.

Yet without a *conceptual* bridge from individual to conceptual intentionality, Searle has no story to tell, consistent with his demand that language precede the social, that moves language from a possibility for a species like ours to something that people choose to engage in. Put another way, nothing yet links his neurosemantics to anything like collective intentionality. Collective intentionality must also be naturalized, otherwise he cannot tie it as he claims he must back to basic science. Yet Searle seems to have cast collective intentionality into some

21. As if echoing Kant, Searle writes, “The concept of rationality is not the same concept as the concept of freedom, but their area of application is coextensive” (143; also 130-131).

nether world between intentionality understood as a prelinguistic capacity and the convention-dependent language formations that result.

So if the evolution of cooperation must for Searle *presuppose* a shared language, what then explains why language comes to be shared?²² Now, as noted, Searle does not say exactly what makes the creation of collectively intended social facts “empirically inevitable,” but his remarks on the increase in power that comes with social institutions would help explain why he maintains this view. That is, the final step in the Searlean story of the origin of society from language goes like this. People use language to create social reality in order to regulate their relations. “Let us constantly remind ourselves that the whole point of the creation of institutional reality is not to invest objects or people with some special status valuable in itself but to create and regulate power relationships between people” (106). But, contrary to the philosophical tradition that holds that social arrangements represent a trade-off between satisfaction of needs (for example, safety) and some loss of freedom, Searle holds that being in a society increases one’s powers. “Why do people accept institutions and institutional facts? The most general answer is that most of the institutions one can think of work for our benefit by increasing our powers” (107). He attempts to justify this assertion as follows: “Some social theorists have seen institutional facts as essentially constraining. That is a very big mistake. . . . But the very institutions of money and baseball increase our powers” (106). Baseball and money allow people to do things that they could not do prior to their existence—for example, fake a bunt or save for a car. Therefore, their existence constitutes an increase in what lies within human compass to accomplish. QED.

An initial motivation for each individual to forge a shared language, and so participate in shared meaning—the Ur-form of a collective intentional object—thus would presumably arise on the above scenario from this resulting increase of powers. Searle’s way out then is to picture humans generally, like a people of the Kalahari who find a Coke bottle dropped among them, joyously and creatively making use of a capacity that they happen to discover that they can share. Economic and evolutionary logic argue strongly that advantages, however happenstance, sustain themselves. Status function declarations would thus proliferate like uses of that proverbial soda bottle.

On this scenario, then, language comes to be because it alone provides the royal road to creating the social, and a motivation to create the social for each individual comes from the increase in power that the social bestows on each individual. However a group of individuals happen upon this, once it occurs, it will likely be sustained. But this only circles back to the problem and does not represent its solution. The problem concerns how to make the case that people come to cooperate linguistically. Searlean purposes, unlike the Coke bottle in the Kalahari, must come from within in order to have the semantic structure that legitimates claims to necessity. Searle insists, fairly enough, that people need not

22. “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 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*” (62; see also 134).

be conscious of any advantages of the social. Moreover, most institutions, from language to government, are always already there for us. But Searlean collective intentionality must be an outgrowth of individual intentionality as Searle imagines it, and so far nothing said determines that social cooperation must partake of Searle's semantic necessities, even if one grants to him his story about individual intentionality. He must rule out collective intentionality coming about through some mechanism other than SFDs, and nothing said so far even hints of an argument in that direction.

Searle voices an awareness that his claim above stands in tension with well-known facts of human existence.

[P]eople recognize or accept institutions and institutional facts . . . even in cases where they are aware of the arbitrariness or even the injustice of the institutional phenomena, [for] they despair of ever being able to change it. Yes, the distribution of property is unjust, and perhaps there is something unjust about the institution of private property itself, but there isn't much that an individual can do about it, so the individual tends to feel helpless in the face of the institution. (107-108)

But Searle betrays no recognition that this concession effectively impugns his constitutive argument.

By situating language as constitutive of the social, and intentionality as a necessary conceptual precursor to language, Searle claims to join by semantic necessity philosophical projects that the philosophical tradition that he rejects held distinct. Searle's notion of the social comes for free once one has language as a conventional cloak for prelinguistic, semantically well-formed intentional contents, individual and collective. But upon examination, Searle's "increase of powers" argument sits uneasily beside those arguments it means to displace. For displacement of the tradition depends upon the viability of his linguistic mechanism, and that in turn requires prelinguistic necessity for all forms of intentionality. But he can produce no compelling connection, conceptual or empirical, to establish the role that collective intentionality supposedly must play.

Like Kant, Searle asks after the conditions of the possibility of the social. Like Kant, he insists that humans could not achieve what they have without the mind providing the structure it does to experience.²³ Unlike Kant, however, Searle remains in a dogmatic slumber. For Kant had Newton in view. Newton had achieved something not only unique, but also seemingly impossible given then current epistemologies. Searle assumes only the uniqueness of Searle, and then ask how his insights could be possible. Thus unlike Kant, Searle needs to motivate the view that his theory does what others *could* not. And this he simply fails to do. It comes down to demonstrating conceptual necessity to collective intentionality, but in the end Searle acknowledges that no such necessity can found.

Despite Searle's invocation of the mighty dead of twentieth-century philosophy of language (for example, 6), and for all his talk of arguments and conceptual analysis, his philosophical antecedents do not trace back to the founding paradigms of analytic philosophy or even their near relatives. Bertrand Russell's

23. "What I am claiming is that the prelinguistic conscious experiences of animals such as ourselves . . . are already *structured* by metaphysical categories such as space, time, individuation, object causation, agency, and so on" (67-68).

cases remain instructive for many reasons. One reason that Russell's "The present King of France is bald" or musings about who authored *Waverley* have paradigmatic status for purposes of illustrating what made logical analysis exciting is because an analysis of their semantic structure poses a very clear challenge to *any* conception of logic. But Searleworld offers no real analog to such classical problems of analysis. The statements that Searle examines constitute a puzzle of the type he poses only for those already committed to a particular philosophical psychology. Logic is then slave to this psychology. What plausibility his answers have presupposes that such statements require a solution that invokes some metaphysics of the mental. This is why there is no analogy to the Russell cases. Searle's account simply does not even begin with a clear, independently motivated, *logical* problem.

Perhaps a closer analog might be thought to be Gettier cases (that is, cases in which a belief is justified and true but not an instance of knowledge²⁴), where the only real test of a particular analysis invariably appeals to so-called "intuitions" (often unarticulated) about what knowledge must be. But this does not apply to the case in hand either, for again even Searle concedes that there exists no self-evident or intuitive notion of collective intentionality by which to test any proposed analysis. Only in the many epicycles that the various analyses have already generated do analyses of collective intentions begin to compare to Gettier cases.

Theoretical positions not sensitive to facts but only to a standard of internal consistency can be, as philosophers know too well, maintained almost indefinitely. The joke, so to speak, is on a critic who mistakenly expects that claims about reality should be tested by observations, whereas artful propounders of such metaphysical theses insist that their analyses of basic ontology are not, expectations to the contrary, about anything empirically testable at all. It just is the logical structure reality has, and one proceeds (conceptually/inferentially) from there.²⁵

In fundamental respects, the conceptual antecedent of Searle's account does not trace to classical analytic philosophy. Rather, its lineage originates in arguments from design. As with design arguments, Searle "discovers" by analysis only what he first plants in the concepts under consideration. Like design arguments, the plausibility of those basic assumptions depends on how you squint

24. Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?," *Analysis* 23 (1963), 121-123. <http://www.ditext.com/gettier/gettier.html> (accessed November 28, 2011).

25. Searle at one point does assert that his account "makes a strong prediction" (114). He "predicts" that having the ability to make certain types of apparent performative utterances, for example, "I now pronounce you man and wife," cannot be sufficient to make the statement an actual performative absent the requisite nonlinguistic convention. That is, "you could not have performative verbs for such things as adjourning a meeting, declaring war, or pronouncing somebody husband and wife where the literal meaning alone was sufficient to guarantee the successful performance, because you need some extra-linguistic convention in order to do these things" (114). First, it is far from apparent that this is a prediction at all; it appears to be just the way that Searle defines a certain type of speech act. But second, suppose that a group of thugs storms into a meeting, and suppose that no extra-linguistic conventions happen to be in place for this group for adjourning or ending a meeting. The chief thug bellows, "This meeting is over." Everyone leaves. If by saying what he does the imagined thug brings it about that the meeting is over, it would seem as if the thug has done something with words. To deny that what happens in this case is not an "actual" performative would just make Searle's account definitional, and so it would make no predictions in the probative sense.

and where you look. As in design arguments, the small ‘d’ designer inoculates the assumptions against any infection by facts. No facts can refute the alleged perception of design, for a design can invariably be found by a shift of focal point. So the argument lives on. But when a philosophical position claims to be about the world and yet cannot be tested by anything in that world, and if in addition it displays an early and strong tendency to generate epicycles of analysis, those factors should suffice to discourage its pursuit. If such factors do not represent disincentive enough, nothing said in this essay will either. *De gustibus non est disputandum.*

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