



Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization

By John Searle

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Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization By John Searle

There are few more important philosophers at work today than John Searle, a creative and contentious thinker who has shaped the way we think about mind and language. Now he offers a profound understanding of how we create a social reality--a reality of money, property, governments, marriages, stock markets and cocktail parties.

The paradox he addresses in *Making the Social World* is that these facts only exist because we think they exist and yet they have an objective existence.

Continuing a line of investigation begun in his earlier book *The Construction of Social Reality*, Searle identifies the precise role of language in the creation of all "institutional facts." His aim is to show how mind, language and civilization are natural products of the basic facts of the physical world described by physics, chemistry and biology. Searle explains how a single linguistic operation, repeated over and over, is used to create and maintain the elaborate structures of human social institutions. These institutions serve to create and distribute power relations that are pervasive and often invisible. These power relations motivate human actions in a way that provides the glue that holds human civilization together.

Searle then applies the account to show how it relates to human rationality, the freedom of the will, the nature of political power and the existence of universal human rights. In the course of his explication, he asks whether robots can have institutions, why the threat of force so often lies behind institutions, and he denies that there can be such a thing as a "state of nature" for language-using human beings.

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Review

"stimulating and vigorous" --Colin McGinn, *New York Review of Books*

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"The present [book] may be recommended to newcomers to [Searle's] philosophy as a lively introductory overview of many of his current research themes and of some of his past research achievements." --*Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*

"wonderfully clear and wonderfully ambitious" --*American Journal of Sociology*

"*Making the Social World* has no doubt been greatly anticipated by Searle's many colleagues and critics, as his project has generated considerable interest. Searle's project should make a significant contribution to the philosophy of the social sciences." --*Metapsychology*

About the Author

John Searle is the Slusser Professor of the Philosophy of Mind and Language, University of California, Berkeley. His eighteen books include *Mind*, *Speech Acts*, *Intentionality* and *The Construction of Social Reality*.

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John Ashton:

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