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# MAKING THE SOCIAL WORLD, OR ON MAKING OUR EVERYDAY LIFE WORLD

*abstract*

*I will argue for three principal claims that found the structure of the present issue of "Phenomenology and Mind" and represent three* Leitmotive *of the papers in it collected.*
*A first claim on social world and everyday life world:*
*(i) by making the social world, we make our everyday life world;*
*A second and third claims on two essential features characterising social entities:*
*(ii) social entities existentially depend on the intentionality of individuals, and precisely on heterotropic intentionality of individuals (collective intentionality, social intentionality and inter-subjective intentionality, or social cognition);*
*(iii) social entities are essentially normative entities, i.e. social entities are bearers of a deontology.*

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**1.
Social World
and Everyday
Life World**

Famously, *Making the Social World* is the title of John R. Searle's last book on social ontology, to which the present, second issue of "Phenomenology and Mind", *Making the Social World: Social Ontology, Collective Intentionality andNormativity*, is devoted.

*Making the Social World, or on Making Our Everyday Life World* is the social ontology claim I will argue for, a claim that is shared, I believe, by Searle's account and also by many other accounts presented in this issue, as the reader herself could discover. This is essentially a phenomenological claim. Marriages, credit cards, bus tickets, euro bills, university professors, governments, football teams, the penal code, theatres, promising, rights and obligations, driver licences, taxes, etc., all are social entities, or, in Searle's terms, "institutional facts", which as such inhabit our everyday life world, our *Lebenswelt* (Husserl 1936). Therefore, the social world we make is a very relevant part of the everyday world we live in: by making the social world, we make our everyday life world, too.

This is the reason of the huge significance of social ontology today: our everyday life is even more a social and institutional life. A very important part of our everyday life is played in the social world and most of our everyday acts, actions and behaviours, as well as of our everyday ease and unease, concern or are in some way related to the social world and social entities. Think of social entities like our work contract, our marriage or divorce (and our right to get married or divorced), the economic politics of our government, the promise you made, the reservation of a medical visit through our sanitary card, the guarantee of our computer, the sentence of the judge in a trial we are involved in, our children's enrolment in the nursery school, our university diplomas, our membership to a political group, the property of our house, the bus ticket you bought, etc. Despite their extreme diversity, these are all examples of social entities our everyday living and acting depend on, is related to, deal with.

The social world creates new spaces, occasions and contexts of action, behaviour and activity of every kind. It creates new roles and functions that do not exist in a mere natural world. In the social world, we are students and professors, employed and unemployed people, musicians and audience of the Scala Philharmonic, Italian or European citizens, electors and parliamentarians, Wall Street occupants, sellers and buyers, and many other things. All of these social and institutional roles and functions imply duties

and honours, obligations and claims. It is plain that we are the bearers of these roles and functions, as well as of the duties, obligations etc. they imply, just in our everyday life world.

## 2. Two Questions and Three Topics on Social World

In other terms, it is plain that our social world pervades our everyday life world. Now, I would like to address two issues:

(i) How do we make the social world?
(ii) What does essentially characterise social entities?

These are two of the most fundamental questions on social world that the present issue of "Phenomenology and Mind" aims to answer. According to that aim, the issue is structured in three sections corresponding to three topics:

(i) "Social Ontology";
(ii) "Collective Intentionality and Social Cognition";
(iii) "Normativity and Language".

## 2.1. First Topic: Social Ontology

The first topic "Social Ontology" is the main, general topic: it concerns the question on *how we make the social world* (*Making the Social World,* as the first part of the issue's title says) and aims to answer it by displaying theories explaining such creation. The question on how we make the social world likely represents the most fundamental and general issue in social ontology. This question implies of course others questions like: What are social entities? What is their ontological status? Do social entities exist as such? Are social entities a genuine type of entities, as natural entities and ideal entities are? Is realism a justified option in social ontology?

The papers in the first section of the present issue bring forward some important answers to these questions.

First of all, Searle's paper on *Human Social Reality and Language*, which opens the section "Social Ontology", argues that language, speech acts and, first of all, *status function declarations* play a crucial role in the creation of social entities. In Searle's words:

> All of human institutional reality, and indeed all of human Status Functions, and in that sense all of human civilization, is created and maintained by repeated applications of the Declarational form of the speech act, and this is done for the purpose of creating and maintaining Status Functions. For that reason, I call these speech acts "Status Functions Declarations". For example,

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> *Barack Obama is the President of the United States, I am the owner of certain property in Berkeley, and the piece of paper in my wallet is a 20 Euro note, and all of these facts are created by linguistic representations that have the logical form of Status Function Declarations (Searle 2012, p. 26, in this issue).*

According to Searle, social entities are essentially Status Functions, like "the President of the United States", "the owner of a property in Berkeley", "the 20 Euro note", and Status Functions are created and maintained in existence by speech acts called by Searle "Status Functions Declarations". Searle's social ontological theory is very powerful and exhaustive; by this theory, Searle is also able to give an account of particular social entities, very difficult to define, like human rights.

Nevertheless, in Searle's account at least one crucial question in social ontology remains not adequately fulfilled: the question on the ontological status of social entities, i.e., at the very end, the question on realism in social ontology. According to Searle, are Status Functions "things of a new kind which come into existence"[1] or not? Searle does not directly answer this question, but in accordance with his material and physical ontology, which social reality is based upon and composed of, the answer on the real existence of social entities as things of a new kind is likely in the negative.[2]

Maybe this is the reason why Searle does not speak of social, institutional objects or entities, but only of social and institutional facts.

On the contrary, Ferraris' paper on *Perspectives of Documentality* theory stands up for realism in social ontology. Even if, according to Ferraris, the existence of social entities depends upon the intentionality of individuals, and precisely on the social acts of individuals, social entities are a third kind of entities, besides natural and ideal entities.[3] Ferraris founds social entities on inscriptions and inscribed acts: "social object=inscribed act". According to Ferraris, (Searlean) speech acts need to be inscribed or registered in people's memory and documents in order to exist and to be socially effective (a marriage, whose all participants lost their memory and all documents registering the marriage disappeared, would not exist). Thus, Ferraris' *Documentality* theory aims to represent an alternative to Searle's theory.

It is worth noticing that there are also accounts in social ontology that do not attribute any existence to social entities at all. This is, for instance, the

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1   The expression is by Lynn Baker and concerns her "Constitution Theory" (2000, 2008).
2   See Searle (2012), in this issue, and Searle (1995, 2010).
3   On this ontological three-partition, see also Ferraris (2009, 2012) and Reinach (1913).

"austere realism" argued for by Matjaž Potrč and Terry Hogan. By dealing with the question on the ontological status of social entities, Potrč's paper on *Metaphysically Lightweight Posits* in the present issue maintains a very strict form of realism that does not include social entities and defines them as "metaphysically lightweight posits".

On the other hand, I would like to point out a very interesting extension of the boundaries of social ontology to the domain of the sacred and the magic. This is proposed by Filip Buekens' *Covert Institutionality: Sacred Mountains, Witches and Exorcist*, which, by discussing an account of covert institutional facts, like sacred objects, witches, shamans and exorcists, sheds light on a very neglected category of entities in social ontology.

### 2.2. Second and Third Topics: Dependence on Intentionality and Normativity as Two Essential Features of Social Entities

The second topic, "Collective Intentionality and Social Cognition" and the third topic, "Normativity and Language", which the second and the third sessions of the issue are respectively devoted to, regard the question on *what essentially characterises social entities*. "Collective Intentionality and Social Cognition", one the one hand, and "Normativity and Language", on the other hand, represent, I think, two essential features of social entities (*Collective Intentionality* and *Normativity*, as a shortened version of the second part of the issue's title reads). Why? Because of two reasons as I will claim here.[4]

### 2.2.1. The Existential Dependence of Social Entities on Heterotropic Intentionality

Differently from natural entities and ideal entities, social entities are characterised by existential dependence on the intentionality of individuals. Without beliefs, perceptions, desires, intentions, memories, feelings and actions relating to social entities, social entities would not exist. For instance: the promise I did, and its corresponding claim and obligation, would not exist without my "social act" of promisin g.[5] The bus ticket I bought and validated to go home would not exist without our "collective beliefs" according to which that piece of paper is a bus ticket.[6] But a precise account of the existential dependence of social entities on intentionality is needed. As already showed by the examples just mentioned above, social entities depend on types of intentionality that, like collective intentionality, social intentionality and social cognition (or inter-subjective intentionality, as I prefer to say, according to the phenomenological tradition and, more importantly, according to the

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4    And I claimed elsewhere, see De Vecchi (2012a).
5    The very first and still the most complete account of social acts is Reinach (1913).
6    I am evidently referring here to Searle's account of collective beliefs or collective recognitions, see Searle (2010).

phenomena this concept means and indicates),[7] involve at least two individuals, i.e. they do not depend on solitary intentionality. I call these types of intentionality "heterotropic intentionality":[8] heterotropic intentional states, acts and actions necessarily refer to and depend on other individuals, i.e. they involve at least two individuals. For instance: collective acts like intending to go to the movies together; affective inter-subjective experiences (affective social cognition) like my feeling that you are enthusiastic about the movie we have seen; social acts like my promising to go to the movies with you again. These are all cases of heterotropic intentionality: a solitary individual cannot perform any of them; they need to be performed and experienced by at least two individuals.[9]

The claim that social entities are existentially dependent on heterotropic intentionality, i.e. they depend on an intentionality which involves at least two subjects, and not on a solitary intentionality, is connected to the question on how we make the social world. This claim, in fact, implies a precise answer to that question. What I mean is that a very significant corollary of this claim is that heterotropic intentionality is socially effective. Heterotropic intentionality (be it collective, inter-subjective or social cognition and social) contributes to the creation of the social world. In order to create and maintain in existence social entities of any type (rights, obligations, football matches, money, corporations, marriages, parties, families, theatres, etc.), at least two individuals are needed, who may deal with one another by performing social acts, by sharing collective intentions, beliefs and feelings, by one understanding the other in an act of empathy or sympathy, etc.

Many of the papers in the present issue of "Phenomenology and Mind" deal, more or less directly, with the question on the dependence of social entities on intentionality and on the role of intentionality in the creation of the

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7    In neurosciences and cognitive sciences, inter-subjective intentionality phenomena and collective intentionality phenomena are often confused and identified by the concept of "social cognition". Recently, Pierre Jacob has worked on this confusion and showed the difference between "sharing a goal" (collective intentionality) and "ascribing a goal" (inter-subj ective intentionality or social cognition"), see Jacob (2012). For an attempt of a phenomenological analysis of these two phenomena, see De Vecchi (2011, 2012).

8    "Heterotropic" is a neologism composed of two ancient Greek words: the more familiar "*héteros*" which means other/another [*autrui, Fremd, altro*] and the less familiar "*trépō*" which means turn towards [*se tourner vers, sich wenden an, rivolgersi a*]. The adjective "heterotropic" and the noun "heterotropism" are neologisms born in the philosophy of law and social ontology group of the Universities of Pavia and Milan (members of the group are: Amedeo Giovanni Conte, Giampaolo Azzoni, Paolo Di Lucia, Giuseppe Lorini, Lorenzo Passerini Glazel, Stefano Colloca, Francesca De Vecchi and others), and they are "variations on the theme" of "nomotropic" and "nomotropism", which are neologisms by Conte (2000) and Di Lucia (2002).

9    I worked on heterotropic intentionality in De Vecchi (2011, 2012, 2012a), and in De Vecchi-Passerini Glazel (2012).

social world. They do that, in particular by focusing on Searle's account of collective intentionality. I would like to mention each of these papers that point out very significant aspects, and also in some way critical or worth of developments, of Searle's collective intentionality theory.

Daniela Tagliafico's *The Paradox of Government: Explaining the Life and Death of a State* focuses on the Searlean topic of the ontological dependence of institutional facts on collective acceptance, and individuates a paradox in the ontological dependence of a government both on collective acceptance and on brute force; finally, Tagliafico shows a way out by distinguishing between a "natural collective acceptance" and "social collective acceptance".

Michael Wilby's *Subject, Mode and Content in "We Intentions"* concerns the individualism and internalism which characterise Searlean collective intentionality, and attempts to argue for the notion of "a dual-subject mental state".

Sarah Songhorian's *Is Affective Intentionality Necessarily Irrelevant in Social Cognition?* aims to rehabilitate affective intentionality–collective affective intentionality phenomena are neglected by Searle–, and points out its relevance for collective intentionality and social cognition, by means of Scheler's phenomenology of affective life.

Emanuele Caminada's *The Phenomenological Background of Collective Positionality* addresses Husserlian phenomenology from the point of view of social ontology and, despite Searle's conviction, attempts to show that phenomenology is adequate to face the problems in social ontology. More precisely, Caminada points out how collective intentionality and the Background, two of the pivotal elements of Searle's account, can be well explained by phenomenological reductions.

Angelica Kaufmann's *Collective Intentionality: A Human – not a Monkey – Business* investigates Searle's argument according to which collective intentionality is a property of animal intentionality, i.e. a property not limited to humans. By referring to Tomasello and Rakoczy's criticism to Searle, Kaufmann claims that collective intentionality is the psychological mechanism that explains the uniqueness of human cognition, its culture and society.

Guglielmo Feis' *The "Ought" Implies "Can" Principle: a Challenge to Collective Intentionality* inquires into Searle's account of collective intentionality through the "Ought Implies Can" principle; this inquiry leads to identify more conditions and requirements on the agents participating collective intentionality than those identified by Searle.

Federico José Arena's *Other Participants' Cooperative Attitudes in Legal Context* argues against the Searlean claim that, for collective actions to exist, a

belief in the cooperative attitude of the other participants is needed. Arena's argument is based on collective intentionality in legal institutional facts, which, according to Arena, do not imply this epistemological condition.

## 2.2.2.
## The Normativity of Social Entities

The second essential feature characterising social entities I will argue for (besides the first essential feature I have been arguing for: social entities existentially depend on heterotropic intentionality) is the following: social entities are essentially normative entities, i.e. they are specifically bearers of a deontology, and of reasons for action based on obligations, duties, rights etc.[10] This claim is a very important one for Searle's account. According to Searle, social entities, i.e. Status Functions imply *deontic powers* (obligations, rights, commitments, permissions, authorisations, duties, licenses, etc.). Let us consider some examples.

Promising implies a promisor's obligation and promisee's claim. A university professor has the obligation to give his lectures, according to his work contract with his university, and he has the right to examine his students and evaluate them. Your invitation to your party authorises me to come to your party. Two friends who decide to visit the Picasso Museum together are committed to go together to the Picasso Museum.

Deontic powers create "desire-independent reasons for action", i.e. reasons independent of our preferences, inclinations and vantages.[11] If I promise you to walk together with you tomorrow, then when I wake up in the morning, I have a reason for walking together with you which is independent of my immediate inclinations to stay in bed or to go to play basketball. Thus, I have to recognise that I have a prior obligation – prior to my present inclinations – which gives me a reason for action which is independent of my inclinations and which will override my inclinations.

The third section of the present issue, "Normativity and Language", deals just with this claim on normativity as a characterising feature of social entities and also focuses on Searle's claim on language as implying a deontology, as well as on Searle's account of constitutive rules.

Two papers focus critically on Searle' claim on the deontology of language. Federica Berdini's *Rationality as the Normative Dimension of Speech Acts* brings forth a criticism of the normative dimension involved in the performance of speech acts in Searle' account. Enrico Terrone's

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10   We could make the following objection: may other kinds of entities, like artifacts and works of art, also be bearers of deontic powers or at least of a sort of reason for actions, for instance exigencies, suggestions, orientations in respect of our actions? In other words, is really normativity a specifically characterising moment of social entities? I have worked on this objection and tried to reply to it in De Vecchi (2012a).
11   See Searle (2010, 2012).

*Making the Social World without Words* maintains that no language is needed to create the social world and that "the basic requirements to create an elementary social fact are the motivated representations and the normative associations between them".

One of the more interesting problems tackled by some of the papers of this section concerns the conventionality of the normativity in Searle's account. In Searle's perspective, deontic powers, language deontology and constitutive rules seem not to have a foundation or at least a limit *in rebus.* We can impose the status functions and their correlative deontic powers we want, we can create the constitutive rules and their related institution we prefer. We do not have an intrinsic bound, the only condition, necessary and sufficient for the creation and maintenance of Status Functions, deontic powers, constitutive rules, is apparently their acceptance by a collective group of people.[12]

Amedeo G. Conte and Paolo Di Lucia's paper on *Adýnaton. Four Dichotomies for a Philosophy of Impossibility,* by identifying eight ideal types of impossibility in social and legal world, and in particular by focusing on praxical impossibility (i.e. an impossibility that concerns *praxis,* action), addresses eight types of connections which are essentially impossible. This means that we cannot turn these types of impossibility into types of possibility if we, collectively, want to do it. There is, in fact, an intrinsic limit, inside "the things themselves" (Husserl 1901), that prevents us from doing it. This is, plainly, a limit to the conventionality of the social world[13]. For instance, Conte-Di Lucia present the case of the impossibility for someone to forgive himself (Reinach 1913) and the impossibility of promising feelings (Nietzsche 1878-1879, § 58).

Corrado Roversi's *Mimetic Constitutive Rules* argues against the conventionalism and arbitrariness of constitutive rules in Searle's account. Roversi brings forward the concept of "Mimetic constitutive rules": constitutive rules which are reality-context sensitive. In some way, they are constitutive rules because they are imitating reality, i.e. they constitute games, institutions etc. starting from reality. In other words, they are reality-dependent, and therefore they are less conventional and arbitrary because they are limited by reality (the problem is: what kind of reality constitutive rules are mimetic to? It should of course be a reality that has not already been socially created).

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12    I say "apparently" because this is a point that should be deepened. Searle himself could apply to the conventionality of "making the social world" at least the limits given by the semantic and logical rules of the language , as Searle does in the case of practical rationality and morality about which Searle argues for a "Semantic categorial imperative". See on this point Searle (2001).

13    This is, in other words, the phenomenological topic on "material a priori" , see Husserl (1901), and on "apriori foundations of law" and "laws of essence", see Reinach (1913).  For a very interesting analysis of Searle's conventionalism vs. Reinach's laws of essences in social ontology, see Smith-Żełaniec (2011).

A similar work on constitutive rules is offered by Gian Paolo Terravecchia's *Emergent Rules and Social Reality.* Terravecchia opposes "Instituted rules" (regulative and constitutive) to Emergent rules: rules that are effective without being instituted by us, and that emerge from the context itself–we may also say, from the phenomena themselves.

Also Barbara Malvestiti's *Human Dignity as a Status vs. Human Dignity as a Value. A Double Nature* tackles the problem of bounding and limiting Searle's conventionalism by focusing on human rights. Malvestiti does that with respect to Searle's account of human rights as Status Functions: she poses the problem of the values that human rights are based on and presents an alternative phenomenological account of human rights, the one by Herbert Spiegelberg. Finally, Olimpia Loddo's *The Background Power in Searle's Social Ontology* provides an analysis of Searle's "Background Power" and of its role in his social ontology: by introducing von Wright's concept of "normative pressure", Loddo points out some limitations of the Searlean concept of "Background Power" and proposes a way to improve this concept.

**3.**
**Conclusion:**
**Three Claims**

I will resume the three principal claims that found the structure of the present issue of "Phenomenology and Mind":

> (i)  the first claim on social world and everyday life world: by making the social world, we make our everyday like world;
> (ii)  the second claim on the first essential feature characterising social entities: social entities existentially depend on the intentionality of individuals, and precisely on heterotropic intentionality of individuals (collective and social intentionality, inter-subjective intentionality or social cognition);
> (iii) the third claim on the second essential feature characterising social entities: social entities are essentially normative entities, i.e. social entities are bearers of a deontology.

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