Collective Acceptance and Attitudes

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Many philosophers have held that the social world is created and maintained through our collective acceptance or other collective attitudes.[1] One of the most prominent and influential general theories of the social world which appeals to collective acceptance is the theory developed by John Searle in *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995). In this chapter, I present Searle's theory of social and institutional reality and then examine what I take to be the most important objections to and revisions of the theory.[2] I focus on challenges pertaining to the creation of social objects (section 2), the mind-dependence of institutional reality (section 3), and collective acceptance as a basic building block of social and institutional reality (section 4).

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[1] See, e.g., Hart (1961/2012), Gilbert (1989), Searle (1995, 2010), Tuomela (2002), Thomasson (2003a, 2003b), and Hindriks (2006).

[2] Searle modifies his original theory in later works, including *Making the Social World* (2010). I mostly focus on the theory developed in *The Construction of Social Reality*.

1. Searle's theory

In *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995), Searle develops a general theory of social and institutional facts. Social facts are facts which involve collectivity, such as the fact that you and I are dancing the tango together or the fact that a pack of hyenas are hunting a lion together. Institutional facts are social facts which require human institutions for their existence, such as the fact that Joe Biden is president of the United States or the fact that the piece of paper in my wallet is (or constitutes) a twenty-dollar bill. Searle motivates his inquiry by noting the puzzling nature of institutional facts (1995: 1–2). On the one hand, these facts depend for their existence upon human agreement. For example, the fact that the piece of paper in my wallet is (or constitutes) a twenty-dollar bill depends for its existence on the human agreement which underpins the institution of modern-day money. On the other hand, these are objective facts about the real world as opposed to subjective preferences or opinions. Thus, it is an objective fact and not a matter of opinion that the piece of paper is (or constitutes) a twenty-dollar bill. Yet in general, objective facts are not dependent in this way upon human agreement. Searle's theory is meant to defuse this puzzle about the nature of institutional facts.

The theory draws upon a conceptual apparatus which includes three central notions: assignment of function, collective intentionality, and constitutive rules (Searle 1995: ch. 1). Assignment of function is the phenomenon whereby humans and other animals assign functions to entities in the world. For example, we can assign the function of being a bench to a log by regarding it as being for sitting. Searle distinguishes 'agentive' and 'non-agentive' functions, where agentive functions concern practical roles whereas non-agentive functions concern theoretical roles. Thus, the log's function of being a bench is an agentive function, whereas the

heart's function of pumping blood is a non-agentive function. While non-agentive functions are always assigned to natural entities, agentive functions can be assigned to both natural and human-made entities.

Collective intentionality is the phenomenon of shared intentional states, such as shared beliefs, desires, and intentions. For example, our intention to dance the tango together involves collective intentionality. In Searle's view, collective intentionality is irreducible to individual intentionality.[3] That is, the concept of collective intentionality cannot be analyzed in terms of individual intentionality and something else, such as mutual beliefs. At the same time, Searle holds that collective intentionality can only be ascribed to individuals and not collectivities or groups as such.[4] What makes the intentionality collective is the form that it takes in each individual's mind, namely 'We intend to …', 'We believe that …', 'We desire that …', and so on. For example, if you and I intend to dance the tango together, then you have the intention that we dance the tango together and I have the intention that we dance the tango together. Searle uses this notion of collective intentionality to refine his initial characterization of social facts as follows: a fact p is a social fact just in case it involves collective intentionality.

Constitutive rules are rules which are constitutive of some form of activity, in that one must follow at least most of the rules to count as engaging in the activity. For example, the rules of chess are constitutive rules because one must follow at least most of these rules to count as playing chess. In Searle's view, constitutive rules may be contrasted with regulative rules such as the rules of driving, which merely regulate an antecedently existing form of activity.

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[3] See Bratman (1999) for an opposing view which analyzes collective intentionality in terms of individual intentionality.
[4] See Gilbert (1989, 1990) for an opposing view according to which collective intentionality can be ascribed to groups as such.

Furthermore, Searle maintains that all constitutive rules have the same form, namely '*X* counts as *Y* in context *C*'. For example, such-and-such counts as a checkmate in the context of a chess game. Searle uses this notion of a constitutive rule to define an institution as a system of constitutive rules. And he uses this definition of an institution to refine his initial characterization of institutional facts as follows: a fact *p* is an institutional fact just in case it requires a system of constitutive rules for its existence.

Searle employs the apparatus of assignment of function, collective intentionality, and constitutive rules to provide an account of the creation of social and institutional facts (1995: ch. 2). The case of (non-institutional) social facts is straightforward: these facts are created through collective beliefs, desires, intentions, and so forth. For example, the fact that you and I are dancing the tango together is created through our collective intentions. It is worth noting that social facts can be created by non-human animals as well as humans, since some non-human animals are also capable of collective intentionality.

The creation of institutional facts is the more interesting case. Searle argues that these facts are created through the assignment of 'status functions', which are statuses with associated functions, where the function cannot be performed solely in virtue of physical features but requires human agreement or cooperation. And status functions are assigned through the collective acceptance of constitutive rules of the form '*X* counts as *Y* in *C*', where *X* is a token or type of material object or person, *Y* is a status function, and *C* is a context. To illustrate, consider Searle's example of a line of stones which constitutes the boundary between two communities (1995: 39–40). In this case, the line of stones is assigned the status of a boundary, with the associated function of demarcating the territories of the two communities and keeping individuals within their respective territories. And this status function of being a boundary is

assigned to the line of stones by the members of the communities, through their collective acceptance of a constitutive rule which says, 'This line of stones counts as a boundary in the context of our communities'. Unlike in the case of (non-institutional) social facts, only humans can create such institutional facts because the acceptance of constitutive rules requires full-blown language.

While the case of the boundary involves an assignment of status function to a token object, many other cases involve an assignment of status function to a type of object. Searle gives the example of US paper money (1995: 45–6). In this case, the status of being money—with the associated functions of being a medium of exchange, store of value, and unit of account—is assigned to pieces of paper which meet certain conditions, such as being made of certain material ingredients, having a certain pattern, and being issued by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. And this status function is assigned to the pieces of paper through the collective acceptance of a constitutive rule which says, 'Pieces of paper that are made of such-and-such material ingredients, have such-and-such pattern, and are issued by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing count as money with the associated functions of being a medium of exchange, store of value, and unit of account in the context of the United States'.

Finally, Searle posits a tight connection between status functions and powers (1995: ch. 4). Specifically, he argues that at least in most cases, the collective assignment of a status function involves the conferral of new powers onto individuals. These powers are deontic, and they take the form of rights, duties, obligations, responsibilities, privileges, entitlements, penalties, authorizations, permissions, or the like. The powers are also conventional insofar as they are conferred through collective acceptance. In cases where the status function is assigned to persons, the relevant powers are conferred onto these individuals. For example, when the

status function of being a US citizen is assigned to an individual, that individual acquires the rights and duties of US citizenship. In cases where the status function is assigned to material objects, the relevant powers are conferred onto individuals who use these objects. For example, when the status function of being money is assigned to certain pieces of paper, the bearers of these pieces of paper acquire certain rights, such as the right to use the pieces of paper to settle public and private debts.

We have seen that in Searle's view, institutional facts are to be understood in terms of statuses, functions, and conventional powers. Since facts about statuses, functions, and conventional powers are objective facts, so too are institutional facts. And since statuses, functions, and conventional powers are by their very nature such that their instantiation depends upon collective acceptance, so too do institutional facts depend upon collective acceptance. It is in this way that Searle's theory resolves the initial puzzle about how institutional facts can be both objective and dependent upon human agreement.

2. Social objects

One important objection to Searle's theory is that it cannot account for the creation of some parts of social and institutional reality. Barry Smith (2003) and Amie Thomasson (2003a) have both pressed this objection, arguing that Searle's theory cannot account for the apparent creation of seemingly abstract social objects, such as the US Constitution, electronic money, and the border of Colorado. For in these cases, there is no material object which may serve as the X onto which the relevant status function Y is collectively assigned. Consider, for example, the US Constitution. The most plausible candidate for the X in this case would seem to be the original

document. However, as Thomasson points out, the US Constitution would continue to exist even if a fire destroyed the original document (2003a: 273). This suggests that the US Constitution is neither identical to nor materially constituted by the original document, and so its creation cannot be understood in terms of the assignment of a status function to this original document.

Smith and Thomasson both propose that in such cases, a new abstract social object is created *ex nihilo* through collective acceptance (Smith 2003: 287–91; Thomasson 2003a: 282–3). But if social objects are 'out there' in the real world, it would be metaphysically mysterious if we could create them simply out of thin air. An alternative proposal which does not endow us with such godlike powers of creation has it that in such cases, there is an abstract, immaterial, or quasi-material object which serves as the X onto which the relevant status function Y is collectively assigned (cf. Passinsky 2021: §6.1). The relevant X may be taken to be a set of propositions in the case of the US Constitution, a line in space in the case of the Colorado border, and a block of data in the case of electronic money.

A further issue is that it is unclear how Searle's theory is meant to account for the apparent creation of seemingly concrete social objects, such as river borders, dollar bills, and states with a physical territory. Searle's brief remarks on this topic suggest that he subscribes to an identity view according to which any token concrete social object is numerically identical to a token ordinary material object.[5] Thus, he writes:

> Such material objects as are involved in institutional reality, e.g. bits of paper, are objects like any others, but the imposition of status-functions on these objects creates a level of description of the object where it is an institutional object, e.g., a twenty dollar bill. The

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[5] Cf. Passinsky (2021: §3.1).

object is no different; rather, a new status with an accompanying function has been

assigned to an old object (Searle 1995: 57).[6]

In this passage, Searle maintains that the expressions 'twenty-dollar bill' and 'bit of paper' are just two different ways of describing one and the same object. Thus, a twenty-dollar bill is numerically identical to a bit of paper. And likewise for other concrete social objects. Given this identity view, Searle can explain away the apparent creation of seemingly concrete social objects: Such objects are not genuinely created, except insofar as the corresponding ordinary material objects are created. What is genuinely created are facts about the social statuses and functions of ordinary material objects.

However, the identity view of seemingly concrete social objects faces a familiar problem, namely the problem from Leibniz's Law. According to Leibniz's Law, *a* and *b* are identical only if they share all properties. But arguably, the twenty-dollar bill and the bit of paper do not share all properties. For example, the bit of paper could survive the demise of the US government, whereas the twenty-dollar bill could not. And the twenty-dollar bill may be a counterfeit, whereas it does not make sense to ascribe this property to the bit of paper. By Leibniz's Law, it follows that the twenty-dollar bill is not identical to the bit of paper. Similar arguments may be advanced to show that other seemingly concrete social objects are not identical to ordinary material objects.[7]

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[6] Elsewhere, Searle writes that "there is only one object that is both a piece of paper and a dollar bill, but the fact that it is a piece of paper is not the same fact as that it is a dollar bill, even though they are both facts about one and the same object" (2003: 302).

[7] See Uzquiano (2004), Hindriks (2013: 419), Ritchie (2013: §§2–4), Hansson Wahlberg (2014: 545–6), Korman (2020: §2.1), and Passinsky (2021: §3.1).

Searle could reply to this problem by arguing that the apparent divergence in properties is merely apparent.[8] However, this response is particularly implausible when it comes to seemingly concrete social objects such as states and universities, which are spatially located and bear a close relation to multiple ordinary material objects (e.g., territories or premises, buildings, etc.) as well as persons. In these cases, it is even harder to deny that there is a genuine divergence in the properties of the social object and any putative material candidate for identification. For example, it is hard to deny that the United States fought in World War II while its territory did not, and that the United States is the fourth largest country by area while its citizenry is not. A viable option for Searle would be to concede that seemingly concrete social objects are not identical to ordinary material objects and maintain instead that they are materially constituted by ordinary material objects and/or persons, where material constitution is an irreflexive and asymmetric dependence relation that can be one-one or many-one.[9] Such a 'non-reductive materialist' view could account for the creation of seemingly concrete social objects in terms of the collective acceptance of constitutive rules of the form 'X counts as Y in C' or 'the Xs count as Y in C', while avoiding the problem from Leibniz's Law.

3. Mind-dependence

Another challenge to Searle's theory is that it does not adequately capture the way in which social and institutional reality depends upon human minds. In particular, some critics have

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[8] See Fine (2003) for an influential argument against this monist strategy.
[9] See Hindriks (2012, 2013) and Passinsky (2020, 2021) for a view along these lines.

argued that Searle's theory makes institutional reality too mind-dependent, whereas others have argued that it does not make institutional reality mind-dependent enough.

Before delving into these objections, it will be helpful to present Muhammad Ali Khalidi's tripartite distinction between kinds of social kinds, where each kind exhibits a different sort of mind-dependence (Khalidi 2015: §3). The first kind of social kind is such that its existence and the existence of its instances depends upon our having some or other propositional attitudes, but these attitudes need not be directed towards that very kind or its instances. The second kind is such that its existence depends upon our having propositional attitudes towards it, but the existence of its instances does not depend upon our taking them to be instances of the kind. And the third kind is such that its existence depends upon our having propositional attitudes towards it, and the existence of its instances depends upon our taking them to be instances of the kind. Let us call these kinds 'weakly mind-dependent', 'moderately mind-dependent', and 'strongly mind-dependent', respectively.

As Khalidi observes, Searle takes all institutional kinds to be either moderately or strongly mind-dependent. That is because in Searle's view, all institutional kinds depend for their existence upon collective acceptance of a constitutive rule which involves a concept of that very kind. Searle explicitly takes some institutional kinds to be only moderately mind-dependent. For example, he says that an individual dollar bill can exist without anyone's even being aware of its existence (1995: 32). And he explicitly takes some other institutional kinds to be strongly mind-dependent. For example, he says that an event can only be a cocktail party if it is regarded as such (1995: 33–4). More generally, Searle suggests that institutional kinds which are codified in the law or in some other form are moderately mind-dependent, whereas those that are uncodified are strongly mind-dependent (1995: 53).

Thomasson (2003a) argues against Searle that there are institutional kinds which are only weakly mind-dependent. She gives the examples of recessions and racism:

> [A] given economic state can be a recession even if no one thinks it is, and even if no one regards *anything* as a recession or any conditions as sufficient for counting as a recession. The concept of a recession is recent—the first recorded use of the term was in a 1929 article in the *Economist*—but there could have been recessions long before then. … Racism is another social phenomenon that depends on certain beliefs (e.g. about the abilities and appropriate roles of people of differing races) and practices (such as differential legal, housing, or employment practices). But something or someone can be racist without anyone regarding anything as racist—racism clearly existed long before anyone took any activity or pattern of behavior to be racist (Thomasson 2003a: 276, emphasis in original).

Recession and *racism* are weakly mind-dependent institutional kinds because their existence depends upon human institutions (e.g., the banking system, the housing market, legal institutions, language, etc.), but not upon propositional attitudes towards those very kinds. Thomasson contends that Searle's theory is inadequate insofar as it cannot accommodate such kinds. And she proposes to accommodate these kinds by taking them to be unintended byproducts of our intentional activities, which are 'generated' rather than 'created' (2003a: 287–9).

Francesco Guala pushes this objection further, arguing that even Searle's central example of money involves only a weakly mind-dependent kind (2016: 167–71). Pointing to the standard definition of money in economics textbooks, Guala maintains that to be money is to be something which fulfills the characteristic functions of money, viz., being a medium of

exchange, store of value, and unit of account (2016: 35). And he argues that something can fulfill these functions without collective acceptance of any constitutive rule involving the kind *money*. For example, cigarettes can fulfill these functions in a prisoner-of-war camp without the prisoners collectively accepting any constitutive rule to the effect that cigarettes count as money in the camp. Thus, there is no good reason to suppose that *money* is moderately (or strongly) mind-dependent. A possible response for Searle would be to distinguish the kinds *money* and *currency*, and clarify that his account is meant to apply to the latter and not the former. More generally, Searle could distinguish *de facto* and *de jure* counterparts of many familiar institutional kinds—such as borders, states, and governments—and clarify that his account is meant to apply to the latter and not the former kinds. Searle could then maintain that on the *de jure* reading, his central examples all involve moderately or strongly mind-dependent kinds.

In contrast to Thomasson and Guala, Ásta contends that Searle's account makes institutional reality insufficiently mind-dependent (2018: §1.5). In particular, Ásta argues that codified institutional kinds, such as *president*, *citizen*, and *married*, are strongly mind-dependent rather than moderately mind-dependent as Searle suggests. In Ásta's view, the membership conditions of these kinds consist in constraints on and enablements to an individual's behavior. And it is necessary and sufficient for having such constraints and enablements that an individual be institutionally regarded as a member of the relevant kind because they are regarded as having the requisite 'base properties'. To illustrate, consider the kind *US citizen*. In Ásta's view, the membership conditions of this kind consist in constraints and enablements such as having to obey the US government, having to pay US taxes, being able to reside in the United States, and so on. And it is necessary and sufficient for having these constraints and enablements that an individual be regarded by the relevant authorities as a US citizen because they are regarded as

meeting the eligibility requirements for citizenship. Thus, being regarded as a US citizen is necessary for being a US citizen. Moreover, it is sufficient for being a US citizen that one is regarded by the authorities as a US citizen because one is regarded as meeting the relevant eligibility requirements (one need not actually meet these requirements).

Searle could respond to Ásta by distinguishing constraints and enablements from deontic powers, and arguing that the membership conditions of codified institutional kinds consist in deontic powers possessed by individuals rather than constraints on and enablements to their behavior.[10] Thus, the membership conditions of the kind *US citizen* would consist in deontic powers such as the duty to obey the US government, the obligation to pay US taxes, and the right to legally reside in the United States. Searle could then argue that it is neither necessary nor sufficient for having such deontic powers that an individual be regarded as a US citizen by the relevant authorities. Rather, an individual must actually meet the collectively accepted eligibility requirements for citizenship. One advantage of this Searlean view is that it preserves the intuitive and politically important distinction between a real or legitimate US citizen and someone who merely passes as a US citizen.

4. Collective intentionality

The last challenge to Searle's theory that I will consider concerns the idea that collective intentionality is a central building block of social and institutional reality. Åsa Burman has recently pressed this challenge, arguing that it is conceivable and therefore possible for

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[10] Though see Burman (2023: ch. 5) for an argument that codified social roles such as being a professor have both a deontic and a telic aspect to them.

institutions and institutional facts to exist without irreducible collective intentionality (2023: §2.2). For example, it is conceivable and therefore possible that metal discs constitute money in a given community in virtue of certain widespread individual beliefs, such as the belief that everyone else in the community believes that metal discs have monetary value because they believe that others believe so too.[11] However, Searle could simply deny that conceivability entails possibility, as some philosophers of mind have done in the context of debates about the possibility of zombies.[12] Or he could insist that the envisioned scenario is in fact inconceivable because it is *a priori* knowable that the existence of money entails the existence of deontic powers such as the right to use the monetary items as payment for debts, and there are no such deontic powers in the envisioned scenario.

But there is a further argument against the Searlean view which appeals to actual institutions and institutional facts rather than merely possible ones. Namely, there appear to be actual institutions and institutional facts which exist in the face of significant conflict and contestation, without the sort of agreement or acceptance that is required by Searle's theory (Brännmark 2019; Burman 2023: intro, ch. 2).[13] Consider, for example, the border that separates the Spanish enclave of Melilla from Morocco. Spain conquered this territory in the 15th century. The Queen of Spain then signed several border treaties with the Sultan of Morocco in the 19th century. But ever since Morocco gained independence in 1956, it has disputed Spain's sovereignty over the territory.[14] In this real-world case, unlike in Searle's imaginary case of the

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[11] Burman borrows this example from Ylikoski and Mäkelä (2002: §2).
[12] See Kirk (2023: §5).
[13] Cf. also Epstein (2014: §4). Epstein argues that there are (relatively) non-contested institutions and institutional facts, such as the institution of contemporary money, which are 'anchored' in something other than collective acceptance of Searlean constitutive rules.
[14] See Minder (2014), Abdelhadi (2021), and Bremner (2023) for further discussion of this interesting case.

line-of-stones boundary, the requisite collective acceptance is lacking because Moroccans do not accept the alleged border. Nevertheless, it is evident that there is a border separating the Spanish enclave of Melilla from Morocco.

Another example of institutional facts which exist despite significant conflict and contestation are facts concerning sex categories in sports competitions. To take a very concrete case, in 2018 the international governing body for athletics (called 'IAAF' at the time) issued new eligibility regulations for participation in female athletics events. According to these regulations, an athlete with a 'difference of sex development' is eligible to compete in the female classification in restricted events (i.e., races between 400 meters and 1 mile) at international competitions just in case she meets the following three conditions:

(a) she must be recognized at law either as female or as intersex (or equivalent);

(b) she must reduce her blood testosterone level to below five (5) nmol/L for a continuous period of at least six months (e.g., by use of hormonal contraceptives); and

(c) thereafter she must maintain her blood testosterone level below five (5) nmol/L continuously (i.e., whether she is in competition or out of competition) for so long as she wishes to maintain eligibility to compete in the female classification in Restricted Events at International Competitions (or to set a World Record in a Restricted Event at a competition that is not an International Competition) (IAAF 2018: 3).

When these regulations were issued, a new institutional fact was created, viz., the fact that athletes with a difference of sex development who meet the above conditions count as female in

the context of restricted events at international athletics competitions. However, these new regulations were controversial, and track star Caster Semenya challenged them in the Court of Arbitration for Sport. While she lost her case, the ruling was very divisive, with doctors, lawyers, and coaches expressing different views on the matter.[15] This suggests that the institutional fact in question was not collectively accepted or agreed upon.

There are various ways in which Searleans may attempt to accommodate these two examples while retaining a central role for collective acceptance. The most straightforward option would be to adopt a threshold view according to which the existence of institutional facts only requires collective acceptance by sufficiently many people who are members of the relevant community. Thus, the collective acceptance of sufficiently many Spaniards and Moroccans would be all that is required in the first example, and collective acceptance by sufficiently many athletes, coaches, athletics officials, and fans in the second example. But given that the Moroccan people do not accept the border, it seems that no reasonable threshold for collective acceptance would be met in this case. And given that there was significant opposition to the IAAF regulations and the ruling of the Court of Arbitration for Sport, it is an open question whether any reasonable threshold would be met in this case.

Another option for Searleans would be to adopt an authority-based view according to which the existence of institutional facts only requires acceptance by the relevant authorities, where the status of being a relevant authority is itself dependent upon collective acceptance. The Sultan of Morocco's border treaties with Spain and the IAAF's adoption of the regulations could then be taken to constitute the requisite authoritative acceptance. The problem with this approach

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[15] See Block (2019) for a description of the case and a discussion of some of the arguments made on both sides.

is that the Moroccan people of today do not accept the authority of the Sultan of Morocco, and this arguably undermines his status as the relevant authority. Moreover, it is questionable whether Semenya and her supporters accept the authority of the IAAF, given that she took the organization to court over their regulations, and this threatens to undermine the IAAF's status as the relevant authority.

Finally, Searleans could embrace a relativist view according to which institutional facts exist from the standpoint of those social groups or communities that collectively accept them, but not from the standpoint of those that do not. This view would have it that there is a border separating the Spanish enclave of Melilla from Morocco from the standpoint of Spain but not from the standpoint of Morocco. And it would have it that athletes with a difference of sex development who meet the requisite conditions count as female in the context of restricted events at international athletics competitions from the standpoint of those members of the athletics community that collectively accept the IAAF regulations but not from the standpoint of those that do not accept the regulations. The trouble is that this view does not do justice to the lived experiences of Moroccans who have been fenced off from Melilla, and athletes like Semenya who have been excluded from athletics competitions. Although these people do not accept the institutional facts in question, these facts nevertheless make a real and tangible difference to their lives. This would be hard to explain if the facts did not exist for them.

A different approach for Searleans would be to give up on the idea that collective acceptance is necessary for the existence of institutional facts and maintain instead that enough people just have to go along with the facts and not actively resist or undermine them. This is the approach that Searle himself advocates in his later work, *Making the Social World* (2010). Specifically, he argues that the existence of institutional facts requires either collective

acceptance or 'collective recognition', where collective recognition need not involve active cooperation and may thus be analyzed in terms of individual recognition and mutual belief (2010: 56–8). Furthermore, he sets the bar for individual recognition quite low, allowing it to take the form of "grudging acquiescence" which is reflected in usage of the relevant vocabulary:

> One mark of recognition or acceptance is continued usage of the institution and institutional facts, and this requires the usage of the corresponding vocabulary. … By continuing to use the vocabulary of the status functions we reinforce the status functions (Searle 2010: 103–4).

This approach can arguably deal with both of our problem cases. For the Moroccan people may be said to grudgingly acquiesce to the border insofar as they continue to speak of it as a border. And while Semenya may not even grudgingly acquiesce to the IAAF's regulations, the vast majority of athletes, coaches, officials, and fans arguably do.

However, it is worth emphasizing that this approach marks a significant departure from Searle's original theory, which took irreducible collective intentionality to be a central building block of social and institutional reality.[16] Indeed, it is this aspect of Searle's theory which distinguished it most sharply from another dominant approach to the social world, namely a Lewisian game-theoretic view which construes social conventions as arising out of the strategic interactions of individuals.[17] It is an important result that real-world cases involving conflict and

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[16] Cf. Burman (2023: §2.2.2).
[17] See Lewis (1969). See also Guala (2016: chs. 2–3). For an attempt at unifying the Searlean and Lewisian approaches, see Guala and Hindriks (2015).

contestation push Searleans in the direction of this sort of more individualistic account of the social world.

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