The main focus of this book about social ontology is collective intentionality (as expressed by joint intentions, wants, beliefs, and action) and group agency. The theory presented starts from the intuitive distinction between thinking and acting as a private person (“I-mode”) versus thinking and acting as a group member who identifies with the group and typically engages in “we-thinking’’ and joint acting (“we-mode”). The conceptually group-based we-mode framework expresses full-blown we-thinking and we-acting. A group with we-mode members is regarded as a functionally organized group agent whose intentional states are externally constructed normally by the group members. The group agent account has practical descriptive and explanatory value especially in the case of large organized groups (e.g. states and corporations) concerning group action as well as intergroup cooperation and conflict. The we-mode approach is extended to cover groups controlled by external authority such as is the case in many corporations. The book gives the first full-blown theory of group reasons in the sense of members’ participatory reasons as distinguished from a group agent’s reasons for action. Importantly, the book argues in terms of game-theoretical group-reasoning that the we-mode approach is both conceptually and rational-functionally different from what an individualistic approach is capable of even in group-friendly “pro-group I-mode” cases. Other central topics covered in the book are the ontological nature of group agents (such as corporations and states) and large groups in general, group solidarity, cooperation in groups, and relevant aspects of the history of collective intentionality. In all, the book accordingly offers major contributions to the study of social ontology from a philosophical perspective.
This chapter explains how Durkheim constructed and justified his life's project: the development of a new, scientifically grounded understanding of social reality. It considers his published book, Les Regles de la Method Sociologique, to draw a sharp line between social science and other methods of discourse concerning social affairs. The book reflects that philosophical discourse about social affairs is arbitrary and undisciplined by a systematic reference. On the other hand, the first commitment of science is to ascertain facts. Durkheim then formulated the principle that social facts should be considered as things. The chapter then moves onto the role of sanctions, observation, and speculation in social discourse. The final sections try to explain the emergence argument, the differences between psychology and social science, and individualization as a process.

The chapter creates a theory of group-social facts and social institutions relying on the we-mode approach and the notion of collective “pattern-governed” behavior. The central notion in this account is we-mode collective acceptance. The account of this chapter is applied to social organizations and compared with John Searle’s recent theory of “making the social world”.

The chapter explains how Durkheim constructed and justified his life's project: the development of a new, scientifically grounded understanding of social reality. It considers his published book, Les Regles de la Method Sociologique, to draw a sharp line between social science and other methods of discourse concerning social affairs. The book reflects that philosophical discourse about social affairs is arbitrary and undisciplined by a systematic reference. On the other hand, the first commitment of science is to ascertain facts. Durkheim then formulated the principle that social facts should be considered as things. The chapter then moves onto the role of sanctions, observation, and speculation in social discourse. The final sections try to explain the emergence argument, the differences between psychology and social science, and individualization as a process.

The chapter creates a theory of group-social facts and social institutions relying on the we-mode approach and the notion of collective “pattern-governed” behavior. The central notion in this account is we-mode collective acceptance. The account of this chapter is applied to social organizations and compared with John Searle’s recent theory of “making the social world”.

The chapter explains how Durkheim constructed and justified his life's project: the development of a new, scientifically grounded understanding of social reality. It considers his published book, Les Regles de la Method Sociologique, to draw a sharp line between social science and other methods of discourse concerning social affairs. The book reflects that philosophical discourse about social affairs is arbitrary and undisciplined by a systematic reference. On the other hand, the first commitment of science is to ascertain facts. Durkheim then formulated the principle that social facts should be considered as things. The chapter then moves onto the role of sanctions, observation, and speculation in social discourse. The final sections try to explain the emergence argument, the differences between psychology and social science, and individualization as a process.

The chapter creates a theory of group-social facts and social institutions relying on the we-mode approach and the notion of collective “pattern-governed” behavior. The central notion in this account is we-mode collective acceptance. The account of this chapter is applied to social organizations and compared with John Searle’s recent theory of “making the social world”.
Chapter 12 evaluates, in the light of the analysis of status functions in previous chapters, a recent claim by Searle that all institutional facts, and so all status functions, are created by declarative speech acts. An example of a declaration is an employer saying “You’re fired” to an employee and thereby making it the case that he is fired. The chapter argues that while declarations are often used, given background conventions in a community, to impose status functions on objects, they are not necessary, and that more generally the idea that status functions are imposed by representing that object as having them is mistaken, in the light of the earlier analysis of collective acceptance as a matter of members of a community having appropriate we-intentions or conditional we-intentions directed at the relevant things.

Self-Consciousness, Self-Ownership, and Natural Rights
S. Adam Seagrave

in The Foundations of Natural Morality: On the Compatibility of Natural Rights and the Natural Law

This chapter elaborates on the Lockean idea of self-ownership through self-consciousness, arguing for the derivation of the idea of natural rights from the idea of self-ownership, and the derivation of self-ownership in turn from an analysis of the phenomenon of self-consciousness. The idea of self-ownership, it is argued, constitutes an “ordering fact,” that is, a special type of descriptive proposition that possesses normative implications. The idea of a natural right is defined as a basis for moral claims residing within or deriving from the individual, and three primary objects of natural right are identified and explained: the Lockean triad of life, liberty, and property.

From Natural Rights to the Natural Law
S. Adam Seagrave

in The Foundations of Natural Morality: On the Compatibility of Natural Rights and the Natural Law
This chapter argues that the derivation of natural rights in the previous chapter necessarily entails an account of natural law. This connection is forged through a second “ordering fact” consisting in the hierarchical relationship between one’s humanity and one’s unique selfhood. The moral implications of this second ordering fact, it is argued, are accurately described in terms of natural law. The account of natural law provided herein accords, moreover, with the natural tradition as properly understood to have its beginnings in Aristotle and Cicero and its culmination in St. Thomas Aquinas. The differences between this account of natural law and that provided by the New Natural Law theory are explained and the superiority of the former to the latter is argued.

Why Ought Implies Can
Sebastian Rödl
in Kant on Practical Justification: Interpretive Essays
Published in print: 2013 Published Online: May 2013
Item type: chapter

In his famous presentation of the fact of reason, Kant asserts that, recognizing that I must do something, I know that I can. Knowing that the moral law requires that I act in a certain way, I know that I have the power to act according to my knowledge. I shall seek to explain why this is true. The contemporary literature on Kant has failed to bring out this truth, I think, because for the most part contemporary moral philosophy lacks the concept of a practical thought. As the thought "I must do this" represents an unconditional necessity, reason is its origin. This shows that reason is practical because the thought is a practical thought. This is something Kant presupposes and the meaning and significance of which fails to be appreciated in the current empiricist environment.

Relational Facts in Liberal Political Theory: Is There Magic in the Pronoun ‘My’?
Christopher Heath Wellman
in Liberal Rights and Responsibilities: Essays on Citizenship and Sovereignty
Published in print: 2013 Published Online: September 2013
Item type: chapter
A standard communitarian/nationalist criticism of liberalism is that its individualist principles provide no normative room for the civic obligations necessary to sustain a liberal state. The problem, according to some, is that liberalism’s disregard for the ethical significance of relational facts leaves its adherents unable to account for the special obligations among compatriots. This defect is thought to be fatal because no state can survive without requiring its citizens to make special sacrifices on behalf of their fellow citizens. In this essay, Wellman considers whether liberals must embrace “associativism,” the view that relational facts have a basic moral significance. He argues both that (1) associativism is not necessary to explain why we owe more to fellow citizens and that (2) we should be wary of associativism even if it were the only way to account for the special responsibilities thought to exist among compatriots.

**Investigating the Investigations**
John G. Gunnell

in Social Inquiry After Wittgenstein and Kuhn: Leaving Everything as It Is

Published in print: 2014 Published Online: November 2015
Publisher: Columbia University Press
DOI: 10.7312/columbia/9780231169400.003.0005
Item type: chapter

This chapter gives a detailed reading of the Philosophical Investigations from the perspective of social theory. In this text, Wittgenstein continued expounding his theories about meaning; language and mental concepts; the relationship between interpretation and understanding; the distinction between words and concepts; the epistemic relationship between inquiry and its subject matter, along with the problem of materializing the vehicle of interpretation; and various other issues that are vital to any mode of social inquiry. The chapter is mainly concerned with how the text, when viewed at the basic level, is really about issues that are central to the social and human sciences. Wittgenstein's analysis applies not simply to language narrowly construed but to conventional phenomena as a whole, and to what Max Weber regards as the meaningful actions that constitute social facts.

**The General Theory of Institutions and Institutional Facts**
John R. Searle

in Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: May 2015
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780195396171.003.0005
This chapter states that institutional facts are developed by language; however, human beings are oblivious to the role of language in creating social reality, especially when one is at home and familiar with the social structures, in contrast to being immersed in another culture. That being said, the chapter focuses on nonlinguistic institutional facts like marriage, government, money, and property, but not without explaining the meaning of being “nonlinguistic”. Also included are discussions about the construction of institutional facts and various questions regarding the formulated general theory.

System of Ethics
Frederick C. Beiser

in Hermann Cohen: An Intellectual Biography
Published in print: 2018 Published Online: November 2018
Item type: chapter

This chapter is an examination of Cohen’s major work on ethics, Ethik des reinen Willens. It tries to explain its subtle and unstated relation to Cohen’s Judaism: Cohen saw his ethics as laying the groundwork for Judaism, although it was not explicitly apologetic. Cohen attempts to justify two central concepts of Judaism: God and messianism. In addition to these interests, Cohen develops a theory of the will which attempts to be a synthesis of voluntarism and rationalism: the will exists independent of reason as primitive feeling; but it reaches its highest development in reason. Cohen devotes much attention to the relations between ethics and religion, anthropology and law. He thinks that ethics is best grounded on law, which proved to be a controversial doctrine.

Basic Premises and Method
Alec D. Walen

in The Mechanics of Claims and Permissible Killing in War
Published in print: 2019 Published Online: April 2019
Item type: chapter

The reigning method in moral philosophy is the search for reflective equilibrium. An interesting feature of contemporary moral philosophy is how much weight most theorists put on matching intuitions in test cases, rather than finding plausible, relevant, high-level moral principles that
can be used to generate mid-level principles and judgments in particular situations. This chapter covers four themes in two groups. The first group concerns the author’s general approach to moral theory. It includes the role of theory and cases in the author's own work and the role of evidence and facts in justification. The second group concerns two topics specifically relevant to just war theory: reductive individualism and the distinctive causal structure of eliminative killing.

On the Messy “Utopophobia vs. Factophobia” Controversy
Laura Valentini

In recent years, political philosophers have been fiercely arguing over the virtues and vices of utopian vs. realistic theorizing. Partly due to the lack of a common and consistently used vocabulary, these debates have become rather confusing. This chapter aims to bring some clarity to them and, in doing so, it offers a conciliatory perspective on the “utopian vs. realistic theorizing” controversy. It is argued that, once the notion of a normative or evaluative theory is clearly defined and distinguished from the desiderata that any good theory should satisfy, many of the disagreements between supporters and opponents of “utopian” or “ideal” theorizing can be easily dissolved. The chapter concludes that, in general, political philosophers should be cautious when theorizing at the extreme ends of the “utopian-realistic” spectrum, but that, setting extremes aside, the correct level of realism or idealism depends on the particular question a theory aims to address.

Will the Real Principles of Justice Please Stand Up?
David Wiens

This chapter develops a “nesting” model of deontic normative principles (that is, principles that specify moral constraints upon action) as a means to understanding the notion of a “fundamental normative principle.” The chapter shows that an apparently promising attempt to make sense of
this notion, such that the “real” or “fundamental” demands of justice upon action are not constrained by social facts, is either self-defeating or relatively unappealing. The chapter concludes that political theorists should treat fundamental normative principles not as directive principles that specify fundamental constraints upon action, but as specifying basic criteria for comparatively evaluating and ranking possibilities.

Free Will, Rationality, and Institutional Facts
John R. Searle

in Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: May 2015
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780195396171.003.0006
Item type: chapter

This chapter looks at how institutional facts operate in certain human experiences and claims that these institutions impart deontology along with deontic faculties upon human beings. Among these deontic abilities are permissions, duties, requirements, and authorizations, all of which brings forth desire—Independent grounds for action. The chapter illustrates these reasons for action emanate in relation to the existence of institutional facts. It also discusses the interrelationship between deontology, freedom, and rationality as the latter two are indications of human participation.