

ERİM BAKKAL

A FICTIONALIST SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

Bilkent University 2024

A FICTIONALIST SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

A Master's Thesis

by
ERİM BAKKAL

Department of
Philosophy
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
May 2024

To my family



A FICTIONALIST SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

ERİM BAKKAL

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

THE DEPARTMENT OF
PHILOSOPHY
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

May 2024

A FICTIONALIST SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

By Erim Bakkal

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

Jonathan D. Payton
Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

Bill Wringe
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

Nurbay Irmak
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

Refet S. Gürkaynak
Director

ABSTRACT

A FICTIONALIST SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

Bakkal, Erim

M.A., Department of Philosophy

Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Jonathan D. Payton

May 2024

In this thesis, I explore how a fictionalist approach can be applied to social ontology, especially for conferred kinds, in the context of action explanation and prediction by comparing this view with various realist views. Chapter 1 is concerned with clarifying constitution accounts and the criteria for comparison. Chapter 2 gives three different kinds of problems against this realist view, which makes this view less credible. Chapter 3 introduces conferralist accounts. Chapter 4 will deal with the question of whether conferralist accounts can solve these problems. I will argue that even if the second problem is solved, the first and third problems still arise in conferralism. In Chapter 5, I propose a fictionalist social ontology. Thus, in Chapter 6, I argue that social fictionalism solves the problems in question.

Keywords: social ontology, fictionalist social ontology, constitution accounts, conferred accounts, social kinds.

ÖZET

KURGUSALCI TOPLUMSAL ONTOLOJİ

Bakkal, Erim

Yüksek Lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Jonathan D. Payton

Mayıs 2024

Bu tezde, toplumsal ontolojiye kurgusalci yaklaşımın, özellikle dayatılan türler için eylem açıklaması ve öngörüsü bağlamında nasıl uygulanabileceğini bu görüşü çeşitli gerçekçi görüşlerle karşılaştırarak araştırıyorum. 1. Bölüm’de oluşturucu açıklamaları açıklıyorum, karşılaştırma için belirli kriterler veriyorum. 2. Bölüm’de bu gerçekçi görüşün makullüğünü azaltan üç tür farklı sorun ortaya koyuyorum. 3. Bölüm’de dayatmacı açıklamaları açıklıyorum. 4. Bölüm’de dayatmacı açıklamaların bu sorunları çözüp çözemediğiyle ilgileniyorum. Bu görüş ikinci sorunu çöze de, birinci ve üçüncü sorun bu görüşte de çıkmaktadır. 5. Bölüm’de toplumsallık hakkındaki kurgusalci yaklaşımı ortaya koyuyorum. 6. Bölüm’de bu görüşün sözkonusu sorunları çözdüğünü savunuyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: toplumsal ontoloji, kurgusalci toplumsal ontoloji, oluşturucu açıklama, dayatmacı açıklama, toplumsal türler.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Jonathan D. Payton, for his insightful critiques and his support in my academic life. His guidance is always helpful to me, especially at times when I feel unsure about my thesis project and my language skills.

I thank my undergraduate supervisor, Dr. Alper Yavuz, for his comments on my thesis and his unconditional support for my philosophical journey. If I did not meet him, everything in my academic life would be more difficult. I also thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bill Wringe for both his feedback and support of my thesis. I thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Egemen Kuşçu, Asst. Prof. Dr. Alireza Fatollahi, and Asst. Prof. Dr. James Kinkaid for their feedback on an earlier draft of my thesis.

I thank TÜBİTAK for financing my participation in *the European Congress of Analytic Philosophy 11* at the University of Vienna, where I presented some contents of chapters 2 and 5 of my thesis. I also thank Emir Bakkal, my older brother, for financing my participation in *the Philosophy Students' Symposium 2023* at the University of Maribor, where I presented some contents of chapters 2 and 4 of my thesis.

I thank the members of the İnsancıl Philosophy Circle, with whom I first started reading social ontology. I also thank the entire philosophy department for their good intentions and interest in philosophy. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their financial and emotional support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: CONSTITUTION ACCOUNTS	4
CHAPTER 2: PROBLEMS WITH CONSTITUTION ACCOUNTS	10
2.1 The Problem with Action Explanation and Prediction	10
2.2 The Problem with Pragmatic Simplicity.....	14
2.3 The Problem with Contradiction	18
CHAPTER 3: CONFERRALIST ACCOUNTS	23
CHAPTER 4: DO CONFERRALIST ACCOUNTS SOLVE THE PROBLEMS?	28
4.1 The Problem with Action Explanation and Prediction: Unsolved	28
4.2 The Problem with Pragmatic Simplicity: Solved.....	30
4.3 The Problem with Contradiction: Unsolved	30
CHAPTER 5: FICTIONALISM.....	34
CHAPTER 6: SOLVING PROBLEMS	41
6.1 The Problem with Action Explanation and Prediction: Solved	41

6.2 The Problem with Pragmatic Simplicity: Solved.....	42
6.3 The Problem with Contradiction: Solved	44
CONCLUSION.....	47
REFERENCES	48



INTRODUCTION

There are two main ontological stances on the given domain: realism and anti-realism. While realists argue that entities in the given domain exist, anti-realists argue that they do not exist. Given that our domain is the social domain, including the broad category of social entities containing social properties and relations, social facts, social kinds, social groups, social institutions, social structures, and social actions (Mason & Ritchie, 2020, p. 313), social realists argue that social entities exist, while social anti-realists argue for the opposite.

One motivation for social realism is that social entities play an explanatory role in social scientific explanation. By social scientific explanation, I mean explaining and predicting people's various kinds of actions, such as economic or political actions, in various social domains. Social realists argue that without social entities, we cannot make such a well-founded explanation and prediction of people's actions.¹ For example, consider the question of why people listen to Joe Biden's decision in the political domain. We can explain the actions of people who listen to Joe Biden by appealing to the social fact that *Joe Biden is the President of the USA*. By appealing to this social fact, we make an explanation of the actions, as we wanted.

¹ For the metaphysics of social kinds and their role in explanation and prediction in the social sciences, see: Åsta (2018), Bach (2012), Boyd (1999), Daniel (2020), Epstein (2015, 2021a, 2021b), Khalidi (2013, 2015, 2016), Little (2016), Mason (2016, 2020, 2021), Mallon (2003, 2016), Passinsky (2020), Schaffer (2017, 2019), Searle (1995, 2010), Witt (2011).

Anti-realists, on the other hand, argue that social entities play no explanatory role because they do not exist. For example, fictionalists argue that in many contexts where the entities in question play a role, they actually do not play an explanatory role, but as if they did. So, fictionalists argue that while we give the intended outcome, the explanation, we also give more basic ontology than realist ontologies by pretending they exist because this ontology does not make us commit entities in the domain. So, in the anti-realist picture, because there are no social entities, it is not *literally* the case that *Joe Biden is the President of the USA*. However, still, by appealing to *the putative fact* that *Joe Biden is the President of the USA*, we can explain the actions of people without committing ourselves to these entities, as we wanted.

In this thesis, I will *only* focus on the social kinds analyzed by the proponents of the constitution and conferralist accounts.² In general, while constitution accounts argue that these kinds are instantiated when an entity satisfies the antecedent conditions of some social rules recognized by ordinary people, conferralist accounts argue that they are instantiated when people confer social status on an entity based on their perception. I will assess whether we have good reasons to commit ourselves to these social entities in the context of action explanation and prediction. I will argue that fictionalism about the conferred social kinds is better than the realist alternatives because it provides more useful tools for explaining and predicting people's actions with a more basic ontology.

² In addition to these accounts, there are pragmatic/naturalist, response-dependence, and more revisionary accounts in the social ontology literature. See, respectively: (Lauer, 2022), (Sarkia, 2021), (Sarkia & Kaidesoja, 2023); (Boyd, 1999), (Passinsky, 2020); (Haslanger, 2012), (Mikkola, 2021). However, within the scope of the thesis, I will not address these accounts in my comparison.

For clarification, it is important to note that by anti-realism, we can understand such positions that social entities are not real because they are mind-dependent, or that they exist but are not real, as Rebecca Mason points out (Mason, 2016, pp. 844-847), (Mason, 2020, p. 55). However, I frame the realism/anti-realism debate in terms of ontological commitment. For this reason, both the mind-dependency views such as John Searle's and Ammie Thomasson that Mason evaluates become realists (Mason, 2020). I also think that it is possible quasi-social realist or quasi-social anti-realist positions, i.e. the combination of realism and anti-realism in the social realm.

Clearly, while they argue for the existence of entities in some parts of the social realm, they argue against it in other parts of the social realm. With these positions in hand, I am not arguing for fully-blooded anti-realism, i.e., that social fictionalism should be preferred for all social domains. For example, I am not arguing that we should take a fictional attitude to the existence of some social kinds, such as oppression. I am only arguing for such a fictionalist view for the kinds analyzed by the proponents of these realist views in question. In this sense, my view is compatible with realist and anti-realist positions in different social realms.

Chapter 1 is concerned with clarifying constitution accounts and the criteria for comparison. Chapter 2 gives three different kinds of problems against this realist view, which makes this view less credible. Chapter 3 introduces conferralist accounts. Chapter 4 will deal with the question of whether conferralist accounts can solve these problems. I will argue that even if the second problem is solved, the first and third problems still arise in conferralism. In Chapter 5, I propose a fictionalist social ontology. Thus, in Chapter 6, I argue that social fictionalism solves the problems in question.

CHAPTER 1

CONSTITUTION ACCOUNTS

Before looking at current versions of constitution accounts, such as those of Brian Epstein and Jonathan Schaffer, let us take a look at Searle's ontology because these realist accounts are partly rooted in Searle's account.

Searle introduces three main tools for the metaphysical investigation of the social world that help social scientific explanations: the assignment of function; collective intentionality; and constitutive rules.³ The assignment of function is to impose some function that has only observer-relative features on some existents relative to a system of values that we hold (Searle, 1995, p. 15). He understands intentionality as the capacity to represent something beyond itself (Searle, 1995, p. 7). With this assignment of function in hand, the mechanism for creating institutional facts for Searle is to collectively impose some intentionality on brute physical existents to serve our purpose. For Searle, the collective imposition is via collective intentionality, which is not reducible to individual intentionality. The form of

³ A critique of Searle's view and for some revision in Searle's account, see, respectively: (Thomasson, 2003a; 2003b), (Searle, 2010).

imposing intentionality on brute facts to create institutional facts is to accept a constitutive rule in the following form collectively:

The Form of Constitutive Rule: *X* counts as *Y* in context *C*.

In this rule, *X* is brute physical existent, and *Y* is the social status, i.e., more than the sheer physical features of the object named by the 'X' term (Searle, 1995, p. 44).

To better understand Searle, let us briefly examine his example of points. For example, we can say that points exist in some sense. Searle argues that points can only exist relative to a linguistic system for representing and counting points, and it could not exist if there were no symbolic devices for representing points. Thus, if there are no rules such as 'A touchdown counts six points.' which partially constitute the existence of points, then there are no points. In this sense, he thinks that brute facts symbolize something beyond themselves, and they do so by convention, and they are public. He argues that this is true of all social reality (Searle, 1995, p. 68).

The crucial point in Searle's account is that he argues that while the *Y* term creates a status that is additional to the *X* term, the *Y* term also creates a *deontic status* that cannot be reduced to purely natural, physical terms. The reason is that all *Y* terms create institutional forms of powers, rights, obligations, duties, etc., and that status provides reasons for action that are independent of our natural inclinations (Searle, 1995, p. 68). So, the physical tokens that satisfy the conditions that are determined by being *X* begin to count as tokens of *Y*, and thus, the purely physical tokens begin to have deontic powers relative to observers, even if the physical tokens do not have such a deontic power intrinsically. For example, the fact that Biden is the bearer of the deontic status of the president of the USA explains why he has the right to take some actions, like signing legislation into law. This answers the question of why

social entities are indispensable in the social scientific explanation in Searle's account: when we explain people's actions, we appeal to the bearers of deontic powers. This fully or partially explains people's actions. Therefore, this is one of the reasons why social reality exists in Searle's account.

Epstein, as an improvement of Searle, transforms constitutive rules into frame principles, introducing the following tools: frame, grounding, and anchoring relations. For him, a frame is a structure containing a set of possible worlds in which the grounding conditions for social facts are *fixed* in a particular way.⁴ The frame is fixed in a particular way because of the frame principles. These are principles that connect a set of grounding conditions to a particular social fact or a type of social fact, i.e., they articulate the grounding conditions for social facts (Epstein, 2015, p. 76). For Epstein, the form of frame principles is as follows:

The Form of Frame Principle: For any x , the fact that x is F grounds the fact that x is G .

He also introduces the anchoring relation: what glues a set of facts and a frame principle together (Epstein, 2015, p. 81). That is, when the anchoring facts obtain, the frame principles are put into the frame in order to give social outcomes when grounds obtain. For example, we can say that the frame principle of being a dollar is this: the fact that the Bureau of Engraving and Printing prints these bills grounds the fact that these bills are dollars. While the former fact(s) in this frame principle gives the grounding condition to be money, the fact that we collectively accept or practice

⁴ For more on how to understand frames in Epstein's account, see: (Schaffer, 2019, pp. 750-751), (Brouwer, 2022, pp. 26-27).

this frame principle anchors the frame principle to give social outcomes (Epstein 2015, 2021a, 2021b).

Based on the distinction between anchoring and grounding, Epstein argues that many philosophers and social scientists have an overly anthropocentric picture of the social world. He argues that they conflate anchoring facts, which are partly mind-dependent (or human-dependent), with grounding facts, which are mind-independent (or human-independent) (Epstein, 2015, p. 7). Grounding conditions for social kinds in many cases do not concern our mental attitudes; mental attitudes play a role in anchoring the set of conditions for social kinds (Epstein, 2015). In other words, even if our mental attitudes play a role in creating a social kind by anchoring the set of conditions to a particular status, they are not included in these conditions.

Schaffer objects to the distinction between anchoring and grounding because he thinks that anchoring is not a *sui generis* relation but can be understood as a special kind of grounding relation (Schaffer, 2019, pp. 755-760).⁵ He argues that social construction can be analyzed in his grounding-only framework, arguing that to be socially constructed is to be non-fundamentally and partially grounded in distinctive social patterns (Schaffer, 2017, pp. 2450-51). He argues that the anchoring relation is a grounding relation that takes rule-setting facts as input and gives the existence of social rules as output; thus, if rule-setting facts obtain, then social rules obtain, and if social rules and conditions indicated by social rules (Epstein's grounding conditions) obtain, these facts fully ground a social fact (Schaffer, 2019, p. 752). For Schaffer, social rules are given by counterfactually robust functions —a directed mapping from whether a given thing is an instantiation of the relevant social kind—, and their

⁵ For Epstein's response, see: (Epstein, 2019).

existence is only partial grounding reason for grounded facts or entities (Schaffer, 2019, p. 751).

Although Searle's, Epstein's and Schaffer's frameworks differ from each other, they share two main common features:

- 1) The social world cannot be reduced to purely natural, physical reality. It has its own normativity that affects people's actions.
- 2) The instantiation conditions of social kinds do not include our mental attitudes *directly*. Our mental attitudes play a role in rule-setting facts and making rules into social rules.

Let us now make some clarifications in order to compare this view with other kinds of realist and anti-realist views. Following Ronald N. Giere, I argue that the following criteria can be used to compare two competing scientific products, such as theories, diagrams:

- S uses X to represent W for purposes P . (Giere, 2004, p. 743)

A scientist's use of the diagram X_1 to represent W is better than her use of X_2 if X_1 is more useful than X_2 for achieving those purposes. Similarly, social scientists use different kinds of ontologies about social reality to represent social status to explain and predict people's actions.⁶ In this sense, one view is better than another insofar as it provides better representational tools for explaining and predicting people's behavior. With this idea, the following criteria will help us to compare different views:

⁶ When we identify the purpose of social scientists in this way, a methodological question arises about what we should do in the social sciences. For example, Max Horkheimer and critical theorists argue that the aim of social theory, critical theory, is to *change* in practice rather than to explain and predict (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 188-243), (Haslanger, 2012). However, I will not address this methodological issue in this thesis because it is irrelevant to my comparison of these views.

Usefulness: One view is more useful than another iff the view better provides the tools in order to explain people's actions. That is, if an entity satisfies the condition provided by the view, the relevant community acts sensitively to this entity in a fixed pattern; otherwise, it does not.⁷

Pragmatic Simplicity: One view is pragmatically simpler than another iff it requires less investigation to explain and predict people's actions.

Ontological Simplicity: One view is ontologically simpler than another iff it commits our ontology to less controversial entities than another.

Unification: One view is more unified than another iff it is applicable to a wider range of cases than another.

Let us now begin our comparison and evaluate which of the views is better at providing an ontology to social scientific explanation.

⁷ We can make a connection between this criterion and *relevance challenge* posed by Matti Sarkia and Tuukka Kaidesoj. They argue that although there are some exceptions, many ontologies defended by social ontologists do not help social scientists in practice (Sarkia, 2021, p. 182), (Sarkia & Kaidesoja, 2023, p. 104). For a similar kind of worry for Epstein's account, see (Ásta, 2015, p. 250). In this sense, if the tools in ontology do not help to capture the social status in actual research, we can conclude that the ontology in question is not useful.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEMS WITH CONSTITUTION ACCOUNTS

2.1 The Problem with Action Explanation and Prediction

Realists think that we need to be realists about social entities/facts because of the role they play in action explanation (primarily in the social sciences). But there are cases where that is the wrong explanation; we explain in terms of the entities/facts people think there are, not the ones there really are. To see this, let us consider the following example.

Suppose there is a group of people who believe in ghosts and are afraid of them. As they walk, they come to a fork in the road. They believe that if they go the first way, the ghosts will hurt them. They also believe that they will not be harmed if they go the second way. What would be our explanation of prediction and action? *Ceteris paribus*, we would predict that they will go the second way. In this case, should we commit ourselves to the existence of ghosts to explain their actions? I do not think so, because it is not necessary that their reasons for an action always be the case.

People can do things for the wrong reasons.

We can also give a more modern social example as follows. Suppose that there are two opposing parties, *A* and *B*, and 100 voters. *A* makes a propaganda that *A* is the defender of the country and *B* is a terrorist party, and *B* cannot break this propaganda. As a result of the propaganda of *A*, 75 voters started to believe that *A* is the defender of the country and *B* is a terrorist party.

What would be our *ceteris paribus* prediction of people's actions in the election? We predict that *ceteris paribus* *A* will be the leading party after the election in this example. However, our prediction is not supported by the social fact that *A* is the defender of the country and *B* is a terrorist party because it is not the case that *A* is the defender of the country and *B* is a terrorist party. Therefore, even if we make an action explanation and prediction, these do not directly support social realism in the context of action explanation.

In the same vein, we can explain social realists' own examples. For example, consider the following example taken by Epstein:

Mrs. O'Leary authorizes her 9th grade class to have a student government, and writes the rules for it. In enacting those rules, she anchors the conditions for *x is class president*. To be class president, a member of the class must win an election, voted on by the students in the class. Mrs. O'Leary also anchors the president to have disproportionate voting power on decisions made by the class. The president gets five votes on every decision, while the other members of the class get only one vote each. (Epstein, 2015, p. 219)

If we are the defenders of constitution accounts, in order to explain and predict people's behavior, we can appeal to a social kind: the class president. The person who is the class president has a certain deontic power: the right to cast five votes in every decision. We can explain, for example, why people recognize that a particular person has the right to cast five votes in every decision by appealing to the fact that *she is the class president*. Or, if we correctly identify this social fact, this fact partially

supports our *ceteris paribus* predictions in conjunction with the president's plans and desires.

Is this true? The first problem with this approach is that we give an action explanation in social sciences by investigating the reasons in the light of which actual agents acted and they can act based on wrong reasons, as previous examples.

Suppose last year there were two candidates: Jill and Emily. Jill got the most votes, as Epstein says (Epstein, 2015, p. 219). If the social scientist has such a constitution view, she concludes that *Jill is the class president* when she finds that Jill gets the most votes. For this reason, she also concludes that the five-vote right will belong to Jill. *Ceteris paribus*, she will make her explanations and predictions about the class decision based on the fact that *Jill is the class president*.

However, assume that in the last year, the election was miscalculated. For this reason, it is a common belief among people in the class that another candidate, Emily, gets the most votes because people are misinformed due to the *miscalculation of the votes*. They do not make this miscalculation consciously, and no one knows about this miscalculation. Suppose that there is a decision process. In this decision process, people in the class recognize that Emily has disproportionate voting power in the class decisions.

When we try to explain why a given person in the class recognizes that Emily has disproportionate voting power on the class decisions, we do not, and cannot, appeal to the social fact that Emily is the class president because she is not. It is true also for predictions. From another perspective, even if the social scientist finds whether the social fact that Jill is the class president obtains, this does not support her explanation or prediction about who will have disproportionate voting power on decisions made

by the class. This shows that even if we do not commit ourselves to the class presidents, we can make explanations and predictions about people's actions sensitive to disproportionate power in the class.

I think there are at least two ways to explain these situations, neither of which supports social realism: (a) we can appeal to people's doxastic attitudes such as belief, or (b) we can appeal to the putative facts. In the first case, we are simply committing ourselves to a group of people who have a certain kind of attitude, and in the second case, we are simply abandoning the idea that the explanation of action is a factive relation. That is, because a putative fact is not a fact, it is not a social fact. So in both cases, these kinds of examples are consistent with social anti-realism.

For option (a), realists may argue that these are non-ideal cases of action explanation, and that sometimes we really do have to go beyond what people believe by appealing to the facts in order to get the correct action explanation. For example, Jonathan Dancy (2000) argues that action explanation is not of the form 'a did ϕ because a believed p' but 'a did ϕ because p.' So realists might argue that we often appeal to a normative reason, which is a fact, and that merely appealing to people's beliefs (construed as token mental states) or facts about their beliefs does not do the job.⁸

However, still, realists do not show that we should commit ourselves to these social entities in these examples. So, anti-realists argue that even if we cannot infer a conclusive argument from these examples, they support anti-realism *with other arguments* because they show a way to explain people's actions with an anti-realist ontology, even if in less weird, more ordinary cases. That is, while social entities seem important to our explanation at first glance, we can make an explanation and a

⁸ After that, when I say reason for action, I do not mean the psychologistic view of reason, but normative reason, as Dancy points out.

prediction without committing to them. Based on these examples, we expand our range and explain normal cases with this structure. Thus, we can give an action explanation of social situations without committing ourselves to additional entities. Therefore, here is an inconclusive but supportive argument for social anti-realism:

Argument From Ontological Complexity

- 3) If one view provides a more complex ontology than another for the same explanation, *ceteris paribus*, the basic is preferred.
- 4) Constitution accounts provide a more complex ontology than social anti-realism for the same explanation.
- 5) Therefore, *ceteris paribus*, social anti-realism is preferred.

Now, let us look at the second problem with this realist view.

2.2 The Problem with Pragmatic Simplicity

Before looking at this problem, note that to understand why a particular society constructs its social reality in a particular way, we can appeal to people's attitudes and practices toward moral or religious domains. However, if the mind-independent facts, but not people's attitudes toward the propositions about mind-independent facts, matter in explaining people's actions, then the mind-independent facts that ordinary people take to be important may include substantive moral or religious commitments that a social scientist needs not, and sometimes should not, take into account. For example, a social scientist may ask why ordinary people defectively construct the kinds of gender, race, or nation and impose these kinds on a variety of

agents, in order to find the reasons for various kinds of social inequalities. But sometimes, the social statuses in question can be imposed on entities that are considered religiously or morally valuable (or less valuable) by these ordinary people. For these constructions, if a social scientist has a constitution view, she should investigate whether such moral or religious entities or properties exist in order to identify social statuses, which seems unnecessary for social scientific investigation. To be clear, I mention first a religious context and then a moral one.

Consider Article 14 of Saudi Arabia's Constitution:

All natural resources that *God* has deposited underground, above ground, in territorial waters or within the land and sea domains under the authority of the State, together with revenues of these resources, shall be the property of the State, as provided by the Law.

If we analyze the situation within the constitution view, we should give the following frame principle for being a property of Saudi Arabia:

FP-SA-Property: The fact that something is a natural resource that *God* has deposited underground, above ground, in territorial waters or within the land and sea domains under the authority of the State, together with revenues of these resources grounds the fact that it is the property of the State.

In this case, however, there is a problem: a social scientist should investigate whether or not God exists and has performed such an action in order to identify whether or not the grounds obtain, which seems unnecessary for the scientific explanation. As a result of her investigation, she either commits herself to the existence of God or denies that Saudi Arabia has any natural resources.⁹

⁹ Schaffer argues that God is a fictional entity (Schaffer, 2009, p. 359). Because a fictional entity cannot deposit anything in real life, the grounds do not obtain. For this reason, there is no property of the state on Schaffer's account.

What can the defenders of constitution account say about this issue? One way for them to argue is that they can change the frame principle in social scientific discourse to explain this situation as follows:

The Changed Rule: The fact that something is a natural resource in territorial waters or within the land and sea domains under the authority of the State, together with revenues of these resources grounds the fact that it is the property of the State.

However, I think that there are two problems with this answer. First, this is an *ad hoc* answer. The reason is that if ordinary people's attitudes and practices matter in the construction of frame principles, then this example is the same as others in terms of people's attitudes. Second, this change does not help the social scientific explanation, even if it solves the problems that arose due to the constitution account. The reason is that this time, we lose the connection between people's perspectives on reality and their imposition of deontic status. However, this is crucial when we are trying to *rationalize* why they impose a deontic status on some physical entities from their perspective.

In order to understand this better, let us change our example a bit. Consider a social scientist who is trying to explain how religious stories, narratives, and 'entities' affect the way people live together. For example, she is trying to find out if there is a positive relationship between believing in a particular religion and having a defective representation of certain groups, such as women. Suppose that being a woman in this society is constructed to give a plurality of agents a defective deontic status relative to the community. This status provides such functions as increasing men's wealth, satisfying men's desires, and so on. They think that God created these things for these

specific functions. Suppose that in her research, the social scientist finds that people in a certain community collectively accept that God sets the following rule:

Defective Rule 1: If someone has a *XX* chromosome and is morally less valuable than men, then she is a woman.

Therefore, the frame principle to be a woman in this society should be as follows for the constitution account:

FP-Woman-MI: The fact that God sets the rule that if someone has a *XX* chromosome and is morally less valuable than men, then she is a woman, and the fact that someone has a *XX* chromosome and morally less valuable than men, ground the fact that she is a woman.

If we change the rule again this time, we really lose why people impose a socially defective deontic status on this plurality of agents, because the imposition of status is not *rationalized*, not by the purely physical grounding facts, but by the evaluative version of them. There is a direct connection between their defective moral and religious ideas and their imposition of a defective social status.

Furthermore, Epstein sees being a saint or a sinner as a social kind (Epstein, 2015, p. 84). For these kinds, too, there is a direct relationship between people's moral ideas and their imposition. For example, because they see a plurality of agents as sacred, they impose on those agents a socially privileged status, like a saint. Think also of such kinds: being a prophet, apostle, witch, oracle, martyr, and so on. In all these kinds, constitution accounts do not provide useful tools for identifying examples of social kinds in question because it requires a very complex investigation.

These examples show that the realist view is pragmatically not simpler because it requires one of the hardest investigations such as the investigation of the existence of

God or moral properties in order to make an action explanation and prediction.

However, as I will argue in the next chapters, we make an action explanation and prediction in these situations with social fictionalist ontology in a pragmatically simpler way. Therefore, here is an argument against social realism:

Argument From Pragmatic Complexity

- 6) If one view is pragmatically not simpler than alternatives, *ceteris paribus*, it is not preferred over them.
- 7) Constitution accounts are pragmatically not simpler than alternatives.¹⁰
- 8) Therefore, *ceteris paribus*, constitution accounts are not preferred over alternatives.

2.3 The Problem with Contradiction

As a last kind of critique, let us look at some metaphysically defective situations, such as contradictory entities or facts in the social realm.¹¹ Thomas Brouwer points out that consistent physical facts could ground inconsistent social facts (Brouwer, 2022, p. 31). To explain these situations, Brouwer, Emma Bolton, and Matthew J. Cull argue that either we can be dialetheists about the social world or anti-realists (Bolton & Cull, 2019, ft. 6), (Brouwer, 2022, p. 33). They argue for dialetheism, but, as I will claim in the fictionalism chapters, social fictionalism can explain these

¹⁰ In the next chapters, I will support this premise more when introducing conferralism and fictionalism.

¹¹ We can also make a connection between debates among social realists/anti-realists and fictional realists/anti-realists (Everett, 2005). It is also noteworthy that for those who think that vague entities do not exist, the contradiction argument can be supplemented with vagueness in the social realm. For social vagueness and vague social entities, see: (Richardson, 2024).

situations better than realistic alternatives, and thus we are not required to defend social dialethism in its realistic interpretation.

If we are the defenders of constitution accounts, then there can be some states of affairs such that people's attitudes or practices anchor or ground frame principles that allow inconsistency. And if the right kinds of grounds obtain, we are committed to some contradictory entities or facts. I think there are two possible ways for such situations. One way is that people may accept two frame principles without knowing that grounds make an entity a contradictory entity. The second way can be thought of as the violation of pragmatic rationality. If groups of people do not value non-contradiction in their daily lives, then there might be a situation where people in question willingly accept frame principles that require the possibility of contradictory entities.

Following Brouwer, we can represent these states of affairs by inconsistency-permitting frames. That is, if we take Epstein's frames as a set of grounding principles $\{G_1, \dots, G_n\}$ that take us from a set of grounds, i.e., non-social or social facts, to a set of grounded facts, i.e., social facts, then a frame f is inconsistency permitting iff its grounding principles are such that, for some set of grounding facts Γ and social state of affairs A , f makes Γ ground both the fact that A and $\sim A$. As Brouwer says, it is not necessary for such an inconsistency-permitting frame to be inconsistent itself, it is sufficient for it to give inconsistent social worlds when the right grounding facts come about (Brouwer, 2022, p. 29). Therefore, if we have such an inconsistency-permitting frame and appropriate grounds obtain, then we are committed to some contradictory states of affairs.

There are examples in the literature for contradictory social entities (Priest, 2008, pp. 127-128), (Priest, 2017, pp. 171-172), (Bolton & Cull, 2019), (Brouwer, 2022). In this thesis, I give just *arm-chair* examples to show the possibility of contradictory entities that realist social ontology allows and investigate their indispensability.

Suppose that ancient people collectively accept that stars are either sacred or cursed, but not both.¹² In their daily lives, they worship the sacred stars, and they curse the cursed stars. Now, suppose that they collectively accept the following frame principles for being sacred and being cursed:

Grounds For Being a Sacred Star: For all stars, the fact that a star appears in the eastern sky before sunrise grounds the fact that it is sacred.

Grounds For Being a Cursed Star: For all stars, the fact that a star appears in the western sky after sunset grounds the fact that it is cursed.

Now, consider that they call the star that appears in the eastern sky Morning Star. They call the star that appears in the western sky after sunset Evening Star. However, because Venus is the star that appears in the eastern sky before sunrise and appears in the western sky after sunset, Venus is both Morning Star and Evening Star. So, Venus becomes both cursed and sacred in this frame. When it is seen in the eastern, people in question worship it; when it is seen in the western, people in question curse it, now knowing that Morning Star is Evening Star. Therefore, we are committed to contradictory entities in this kind of example.

¹² One may argue that being sacred or cursed are not social properties, but *purely* religious properties. Therefore, they cannot be conferred in this way. In this thesis, I assume that these kinds and similar religious kinds are conferred religious social properties, which are the subset of conferred social properties. However, for those who insist that this is not the case, the properties in question can be changed so that they are purely social and mutually exclusive.

Now, consider that a social scientist finds that people collectively accept or practice the following *Oedipus Rex-like* frame principles:

Grounds For Being a King: For all people, the fact that a person solves the riddle of Sphinx grounds the fact that this person is a king.

Grounds For Being a Criminal: For all people, the fact that a person kills the king grounds the fact that this person is a criminal.

Being a criminal is constructed in this frame so that a criminal cannot be a king.

They do not think about the possibility of what would happen if a person solves the riddle of the Sphinx and kills the king. However, assume that it is the case that a person, Oedipus-like, kills the king and also solves the riddle of the Sphinx. When Oedipus-like does such actions, he becomes a contradictory social entity because Oedipus-like is both king and not a king in this frame. Therefore, in these kinds of cases, there might be contradictory social entities, and we are committed to some controversial entities, again.

As a last example, consider Bolton and Cull's contradiction club example. 'The first rule of contradiction club is not the first rule of contradiction club. – Official Contradiction Club Handbook' (Bolton & Cull, 2019, p. 169). The members of this club do not value non-contradictions and think with different kinds of logic in their daily lives. Suppose that they collectively and willingly select the following frame principles:

Grounds For Being a Club President: For all people, the fact that a person is voted most by the club members grounds the fact that this person is the club president.

Grounds For Being a Club President: For all people, the fact that a person is voted most by the club members grounds the fact that this person is not the club president.

Assume now that they vote for the same person willingly as a club president and not a club president. So, the same person becomes a class president and not a class president. Therefore, again, we are committed to a contradictory social entity.

We should ask ourselves the question of whether these contradictory entities are indispensable to the social scientific explanation that occurs from this kind of scenario. For similar reasons, they are dispensable entities for anti-realists, as in the case of the class presidents. Therefore, here is an argument against constitution accounts:

Argument From Contradiction

- 9) If a view commits us to contradictory entities and alternatives not, *ceteris paribus*, alternatives should be preferred.
- 10) Constitution accounts commit us to contradictory entities and alternatives not.
- 11) Therefore, *ceteris paribus*, alternatives should be preferred.

Now, let us look at why the first and third problems occur for conferralism, but it solves the second problem.

CHAPTER 3

CONFERRALIST ACCOUNTS

There are various conferralist accounts in the social ontology literature, but because Ásta's conferralist account is well-developed, I will focus on her account when I criticize conferralism.¹³

In her conferralist account, Ásta accepts the same idea as constitution accounts about social normativity, but her account differs from these accounts in explaining how social kinds are instantiated. They are the same about social normativity because all conferred social properties in question are deontic powers for Ásta: enablements and constraints (Ásta, 2018, pp. 20 and 29). They are different because 'social categories get formed and maintained through the individual actions of classifying and placing.' for Ásta (Ásta, 2018, p. 125). That is, in the constitution account, for an entity to have a social status, the entity should have the property given the antecedent of some rules collectively recognized by the right kind of people. However, this is metaphysically not sufficient for a conferralist account. In the conferralist account, individual people with the right kinds of authority or standing should individually

¹³ For various types of conferralist accounts, see: (Jenkins, 2018), (Rea, 2022), (Briggs & George, 2023).

confer a social status on an entity in order for the entity to have that status.¹⁴ Ásta calls the properties given by the antecedents of accepted social rules (or properties given in the grounding conditions) base properties and argues that it is not base properties we track that matter for having deontic status as in the constitution accounts, but people's perception of these base properties (Ásta, 2018, pp. 27 and 48). This means that the individual actions of classifying and placing social status are based on people's perceptions of base properties. For example, she argues that to be married is not to satisfy the various base properties, but to be judged by a person with authority to do so (Ásta, 2018, p. 29). So, even if an entity does not instantiate all base properties but a person with the right kind of authority misperceives its base properties and thus confers the relevant status on it, it will have that status.

Therefore, we can say that for Ásta, a social property is conferred on a person or entity by a plurality of agents, *xx*, if (i) *xx* distributively has the right kind of authority or standing in context *C* to confer *P*, (ii) *xx* distributively is aiming to track certain base properties *P*, and (iii) *xx* distributively perceives one or more relevant base properties (Ásta, 2018, pp. 21-22).¹⁵

I think the best way to understand conferralism is to accept that the social kinds in question are relational deontic properties rather than monadic deontic properties.

Schaffer also suggests that social properties can be taken as relational properties, but argues that the social properties in question are properties relative to, for example, *laws* (Schaffer, 2019, pp. 763-766). But, for conferralism, the social properties are taken properties relative to a plurality of agents that confers these properties on the

¹⁴ Ásta distinguishes institutional properties from communal ones: while the former is grounded in authority, the latter is grounded in standing (Ásta, 2018, p. 19). However, this distinction will not be relevant to my arguments. Also, for a critique of this distinction, see: (VanKammen & Rea, forthcoming).

¹⁵ Also, compare: (VanKammen & Rea, forthcoming, p. 5).

physical entities. In this sense, this view is *partly* similar to Searle's.¹⁶ Searle thinks that social properties are observer-relative properties. That is, they are relative to the intentionality of observers, users, etc. (Searle, 1995, p. 9). However, in a conferralist framework, if there is no one in the community with the right kind of authority of standing to confer the status on the entity, then the entity does not instantiate the social kind in question because the individual actions of classifying and placing are generatively relevant for instantiating conferred social kinds, not having the base properties given by accepted rules.

One main reason for arguing for such an understanding is that the social kinds in question are kinds that some people confer on physical entities, and having them is just having the *deontic powers*. But in order for a thing to have these deontic powers, people must always confer that status on it. Otherwise, it will not have deontic status, i.e., it will not instantiate that social kind, because instantiating the social kind in question is the same as having that deontic status. For example, if a person is the president of the relevant community, this means that the person has the right to regulate that community. However, if the relevant community does not confer that status on that person, then the person does not have the deontic status, i.e., having the right to regulate that community. Therefore, she cannot be the president of that community if no one imposes the status of president on her. In this sense, answering the question of how people impose statuses on entities answers the question of what the instantiation conditions for belonging to a social kind relative to a plurality of agents in question. So, for conferralism, the fact that a plurality of agents, *xx*,

¹⁶ This view is also similar to Charlotte Witt's. Like these philosophers, she defends the idea that the engendering function is a relational property. That is, it relates an individual to a function relative to other individuals (Witt, 2011, p. 18).

imposes *G-ness* on *x* metaphysically explains the fact that *x* is *G* relative to *xx*. In general, we can think of the form of relational social kinds as follows:

The Form of Relational Social Kinds: For any *x* and a plurality of agents, *xx*, the fact that *xx* imposes *G-ness* on *x* metaphysically explains the fact that *x* is *G* relative to *xx*.

Also, the question of how people confer status on entities can be answered in conferralist account as follows: when they perceive base properties. Then, for conferralism, we can say that the instantiation conditions for social kinds are actually the facts about people's doxastic attitudes that cause their conferral. That is, their perception/doxastic attitudes toward the proposition that base properties obtain causes their conferral. For example, we can say that the fact people believe in the proposition that someone with authority has judged two people to be married based on their perception of relevant base properties metaphysically explains the fact that they are married relative to these people.

Now, let us look at the saint example in order to understand the difference between constitution accounts and conferralism. Assume that people collectively accept the frame principle that being holy in a particular way grounds being a saint. The proponents of constitution accounts argue that what is generatively relevant is that she is holy in a particular way, but the proponents of conferralist accounts argue what is generatively relevant is whether a plurality of agents perceive that she is holy in that particular way, and thus confer sainthood on her. That is to say, even if she is not holy, if people misperceive that she is holy and confer the status on her, she will be a saint relative to the community. Thus, she will use this deontic status that has some functions to regulate social lives.

Now, let us look at why the problems arise in conferralism, too.



CHAPTER 4

DO CONFERRALIST ACCOUNTS SOLVE THE PROBLEMS?

4.1 The Problem with Action Explanation and Prediction: Unsolved

If conferralism is the correct view, then, in the Jill-Emily case, not Jill but Emily is the class president because people in the class confer the class presidency on Emily. In other words, a social scientist who holds a conferralist view argues what is generatively important for being president relative to the class is not people's votes in the class, but people's perception about votes. She argues that if people in the class do not recognize that Jill gets the most votes, then it is irrelevant whether Jill gets the most votes or not. She argues that people's propositional attitudes toward the mind-independent facts, not the mind-independent facts themselves, are generatively relevant to finding out who has the deontic powers of the president.

The problem with conferralism is this: if we can appeal to people's perception in explaining their conferring actions, why do not we do the same to explain people's actions? So, if we appeal to people's perceptions of base properties, but not to base properties themselves, to explain how they confer, then we can also appeal to people's perceptions of conferred properties, but not to conferred properties

themselves, to explain how they act in the context of conferred properties. That is, we can appeal to people's belief that Emily is the class president, even though she is not, in order to explain people's recognition of disproportionate power in the class.

Following Dancy, if we insist on the idea that we should appeal to normative facts in explaining people's actions, not to their psychological states, in the conferralist account, putative facts themselves explain people's conferrals on different entities. That is, the question of what explains people's conferral of the class presidency on Emily is answered by the putative fact that Emily got the most votes. If we can appeal to putative facts to explain people's motivation to confer, why do not use them to explain people's other actions?

There is no reason not to use this strategy. Using this strategy, without committing our ontology to class presidents, we can make the intended outcome, the explanation. This strategy can be extended for all conferred properties. Either appealing to people's attitudes or putative facts, we can explain these situations.

For example, as we saw, the proponents of the conferralist view argue that what is generatively relevant for being a saint is not that she is holy in a particular way but whether a plurality of agents perceive that she is holy in that particular way and thus confers the status on the relevant person. That is to say, even if a person is not holy, if people confer sainthood on her, she will be a saint relative to the community. Thus, she will use this deontic status that has some functions to regulate social lives.

In the conferralist account, a social scientist should investigate whether the community confers sainthood on the given person. If they confer, we will be committed to saints. But, it is unclear why we should commit ourselves to saints in order to explain people's various actions. The reason is that by making a distinction

between scientific context and ordinary context, a social scientist can take the existence of saints to be a kind of fiction that people believe. Thus, she can make an action explanation or prediction without further commitment to saints. In other words, a social scientist takes a fictive attitude toward the propositions that saints are holy and that the people in question correct their actions in conformity with saints for the purpose of explaining and predicting people's actions. However, she should not be forced to believe in these propositions and thus in the existence of saints. So, while the intended outcome, the explanation, is achieved, we are not committed to saints. Therefore, the same argument is valid for conferralism.

Now, let us look at the second problem.

4.2 The Problem with Pragmatic Simplicity: Solved

If conferralism is the correct view, then, it is pragmatically simpler than constitution accounts, and, as I will argue, is equal to fictionalism, because, in the context of conferred religious social kinds, it requires only the investigation of people's doxastic attitudes toward the religious and moral realm based on their perception or misperception. That is, social scientists are not forced to investigate the religious and moral realm. Therefore, this problem does not occur in conferralism.

Now, let us look at the contradiction problem.

4.3 The Problem with Contradiction: Unsolved

I think that the contradiction problem also arises in conferralism with small revisions. In the constitution accounts, there are some contradictory entities when the right kinds of grounds obtain in inconsistency-permitting frames. For conferralism, if people confer contradictory social statuses on the same entity, this entity becomes a contradictory entity. I think there are two possible ways for this kind of conferral like constitution accounts. One way is that people may confer contradictory statuses on an entity without knowing the entity is the same entity as they conferred before in the same context. So, under different descriptions of the same entity, people can confer contradictory status on the same entity. The second way can be thought of as the violation of pragmatic rationality, as in the contradiction club. If a group of people does not value non-contradiction in their daily lives, they can willingly confer contradictory statuses on the same entity in the same context. Let us look at the examples, respectively.

Recall the ancient people's example. A group of ancient people believe that stars are either sacred or cursed, but not both. In their daily lives, while they worship the sacred stars, they curse the cursed stars. Now, suppose that a star's appearing in the eastern sky before sunrise is the base property for being sacred, while its appearing in the western is the base property for being cursed. Now, suppose people in question perceive these base properties: they confer sacredness on Morning Star, while they confer cursedness on Evening Star, not knowing that Morning Star is Evening Star. In their daily life, they maintain both their conferrals.¹⁷ Then, Venus becomes a

¹⁷ This and the following example can be criticized simply because Ásta sees a social property as a context-dependent property (Ásta, 2018). However, it is important to understand that people confer contradictory statuses on the same entity *in the same context* because they maintain their conferral. As I indicated before, for Ásta, 'social categories get formed and maintained through the individual actions of classifying and placing.' (Ásta, 2018, p. 125). In the examples in question, too, the individuals do not stop classifying. For example, they classify Morning Star as sacred at the same time as they classify Evening Star as cursed. In their daily lives, they take appropriate actions according to their conferrals, i.e., according to their individual classification and placement.

contradictory social entity because Venus is both sacred and cursed. In other words, Venus is both Morning Star and Evening Star. Therefore, the same problem occurs in conferralism, too.

Now, reconsider the Emily-Jill case by assuming that Emily sometimes feels like a man. However, Emily does not reveal her identity in her daily life when she feels like a man. Suppose that in Emily's society, and thus in the class, the base property of being a communal man is having an *XY* chromosome and looking like a man by the standards of society, while the base property of being a communal woman is having an *XX* chromosome and looking like a woman by the standards of the society. Let us assume that the class goes to a queer masquerade ball party without informing Emily, and Emily goes to the same party without knowing that the class community is going to the party. Now, suppose that Emily feels like a man that day, and her subjective identity is changing from a woman to a man. For this reason, she wants to look like a man, dress like a man, and call himself Robert. The whole community is wearing a mask, and Robert does not realize that the class community is at the party. This is true of the class community: they do not realize that Robert is Emily. They misperceive Robert's base properties, and so, they confer manhood on Robert. However, they also maintain their conferral womanhood on Emily when they mention Emily at the party. So, *in the same context*, while Robert is a man, Emily is a woman according to the class community's conferrals. However, since Emily is Robert, Emily becomes both a man and a woman in the same context relative to the same people. Therefore, Emily-Robert also becomes a contradictory entity.

As a last example, reconsider Bolton and Cull's contradiction club example. 'The first rule of contradiction club is not the first rule of contradiction club. – Official Contradiction Club Handbook.' Suppose that the base properties for being a club

president and not a club president are to be selected by the club members as being a club president and not a club president. Assume now that they select the same person willingly as a club president and not a club president, and they confer two contradictory statuses on her at the same time. So, the same person becomes a class president and not a class president. Therefore, the same argument is also valid for this kind of realism.

Let us now consider whether fictionalism can solve these problems, and if so, how.



CHAPTER 5

FICTIONALISM

Before looking at social fictionalism, let us determine some general characteristics of fictionalism. Its characteristic is its linguistic thesis: the utterances of sentences of the relevant discourse are best seen not as efforts to say what is literally true but as *useful* fictions of some sort (Eklund, 2019, ch. 2.1.). In this sense, social fictionalism argues that the discourse of social realists and ordinary people' perspectives on social reality is not literally true but as *useful* fictions of some sort.¹⁸ For social fictionalism, the usefulness of this social fiction emerges from its role in action explanations and predictions. That is, as far as this fiction is useful to explain people's actions, it can be used in social scientific explanation. To make it explicit social fictionalism, let us make some clarifications.

¹⁸ There are different kinds of fictionalism, such as instrumentalist fictionalism, meta-fictionalism, object fictionalism, figuralism, etc., in fictionalism literature (Yablo, 2001). However, in this thesis, I will not argue which kind of fictionalism is better for social ontology. My aim in this thesis is to determine whether fictionalism, as a general position, is a better option than realist alternatives for conferred kinds. Moreover, fictionalism is one way of being an anti-realist. There are, however, other anti-realist paths, such as Meinongism or neo-Meinongism. In this sense, by distinguishing between being and existence, an anti-realist can argue that social entities are non-existent objects. However, I will also not compare fictionalism with other kinds of anti-realism. Finally, what is fiction itself is controversial. For example, Gregori Currie, by making a distinction between pretense and make-believe, argues that pretense is not essential to fiction but only make-believe (Currie, 1990, ch. 1). Kripke seems to be committed to the pretense view (Kripke, 2013). In this thesis, I will not argue about what is fiction. My position is open to all views that explain fiction.

First, we can appeal to Robert Stalnaker's (2014) context analysis. According to Stalnaker, people's doxastic attitudes toward propositions, such as believing, accepting, supposing, presuming, or a bundle of them, stipulate doxastic worlds. That is, the model represents the subject's cognitive situation by the set of possible states of a world that, from the subject's perspective, could be the way the actual world is. The accessibility relation holds between possible worlds x and y iff the subject's state of knowledge in world x , at the relevant time, is compatible with possible world y being the actual world. Note that the epistemic accessibility relation is reflexive since knowledge is factive, and doxastic accessibility is only transitive. Interlocking attitudes, then, can be defined as follows: for each proposition φ and knower A , a proposition that A knows that φ , and that proposition will itself be something that may be known, or not, by A , or by another agent B . And acceptance, unlike belief, will be a *fictive* attitude that can be taken simply because of the purpose of the conversation.¹⁹ The common ground, then, will be what is *presumed* to be common knowledge, and normally, one presumes that something to be common knowledge when one believes that it is (Stalnaker, 2014, p. 44).

Second, one can argue for non-cognitivism about sociality, just as one can argue for non-cognitivism about morality (van Roojen, 2024). I assume in this thesis that social sentences express social propositions, but that accepting these propositions is not believing in the propositions expressed. For fictionalists, social sentences in the social scientific context are not asserted by a truth norm, but by a norm tied to some non-truth-involving property. This non-truth-involving property is their help in the explanation and prediction of people's actions. In this sense, they are just quasi-

¹⁹ After this, I use acceptance for this kind of fictive attitude. For the Searlian acceptance, I will just use recognition.

asserted. I follow the metalinguistic view of quasi-assertion 'the quasi-assertion of S is true if real-world conditions c (which would make it the case that the fictional content of S has the non-truth-involving property p) actually obtain' (Kalderon, 2005, p. 122). The speaker is not committed to the truth of its fictional content if S's fictional content can have p independently of S's fictional content being true (Kalderon, 2005, p. 122). Thus, a social fictionalist can quasi-assert that a social entity has such and such a property without committing herself to its existence.

Third, we can argue for *hermeneutic* or *revolutionary* fictionalism based on different reasons. According to the former, actual users in the discourse do not aim for the literal truth but only pretend to do so. According to the latter, even if actual users in the discourse aim for the literal truth, they ought not to do that (Eklund, 2019, ch. 2.2.). In this thesis, I argue for revolutionary fictionalism. But I argue that not ordinary people, but social scientists ought to take a fictive attitude towards the social domain in question because of the argument I presented. In this sense, I argue for revolutionary fictionalism in social scientific discourse, not in ordinary discourse. I also make an idealization of social scientific discourse. The social scientists in question are ideal people who are completely outside of ordinary discourse and observe ordinary people for the purpose of explaining and predicting action.

Social fictionalists argue that in the social scientific context, social scientists' attitude toward propositions that contain realists' social entities will be just an acceptance because of the purpose of the action explanation and prediction. So, not social scientists' belief in social entities' existence but ordinary people's belief about their existence will be important, and social scientists will just accept their existence for

some purpose.²⁰ For example, normative fictionalists, i.e., fictionalists about normativity in general, argue that it is possible for people to accept a normative sentence without believing in the normative proposition expressed by the sentence because of its non-truth-involving property (Kalderon, 2005, pp. 117 and 122). Like normative fictionalists about morality, normative fictionalists about sociality will take a fictive attitude toward social normativity, *as if* it affects people's actions, but they do not really believe this. Then, the existence of conferred social kinds with deontic powers and their instantiations is taken to be fictional. Fictionalists accept that the social kinds in question confer rights and responsibilities or constraints. But they argue that this is not literally true, but as a kind of fiction.

Similar to this, for social fictionalists, the social realists' talk about sociality will serve as fiction. For instance, the propositions that contain the 'construction' relation will be seen as a kind of fiction rather than believing in these propositions.²¹ That is, instead of believing that social entities are constructed, social fictionalists accept their construction, even though they are not really constructed. So, social normativity, the grounding relation, imposition, constitutive rules, normative reasons, and conferral in the context of social entities will be seen as a kind of fiction.²²

²⁰ Katherine Hawley (2018) is suspicious about the existence of posited entities by social scientific theories. Richard Lauer also argues that social scientific realism should not be taken for granted on the basis of the entities posited by social scientific theories, because there can be loaded and unloaded readings of existential quantifiers in scientific contexts. He argues that the best way to understand the case where scientists talk about caloric without believing in the existence of caloric in the caloric theory is to appeal to this distinction. He also argues that existential claims in the social sciences need not imply ontological commitment in a realist sense that is beyond our linguistic and conceptual frameworks (Lauer, 2022, pp. 410-412).

In this sense, we can make a connection between Hawley's suspicious, Lauer's pragmatic approach and fictionalism. That is, we can also think of an existentially unloaded quantifier as a fictive quantifier that does not commit social scientific ontology to the entities posited by social scientific theories, but only to the existence of a proper kind of fiction that the posited entities exist.

²¹ To distinguish this kind of construction from realists' construction, we can call it doxastic construction while calling the latter fictive construction.

²² Naomi Thompson argues for a fictionalist approach to the grounding relation itself (Thompson, 2018, pp. 36-44), (Thompson, 2021). For the same insight: (Brouwer, 2022, ft. 25). If this view is correct, then while Schaffer's grounding-only framework can be taken a fictionalist view, Epstein's

Furthermore, Dancy argues that if we can act for wrong reasons, then action explanation is not a factive relation. He gives up the factivity of action explanation and argues that there are non-factive action explanations (Dancy, 2000, ch. 6). But fictionalism also offers an alternative for saving the factivity of action explanation. That is, people sometimes act not *for wrong reasons*, but *for fictional reasons*. Thus, in the fictionalist model, some fictive facts rationalize people's various actions in particular contexts. In order to understand this idea better, let us reconsider the ghost example.

Suppose there is a group of people who believe in ghosts and are afraid of them. As they walk, they come to a fork in the road. They believe that if they go the first way, the ghosts will hurt them. They also believe that they will not be harmed if they go the second way. Suppose they go to the second way in this context. Those people's actions can be explained by the following fictive fact:

12) There are ghosts which will hurt people in the first way.

That is, a social scientist just accepts (12) without believing it in order to explain and predict people's actions. Thus, she accepts the existence of ghosts and their conferred properties, but she does not commit herself to them. This will be a useful fiction in explaining and predicting people's actions. Therefore, we can give the action explanation in the form 'a did ϕ because p', while also we argue that p is fictive.

Let us look at another example. Consider we try to explain why the ancient Greeks worshiped and sacrificed to Zeus, or why they built temples to Zeus. Social fictionalists argue that in the social scientific context, social scientists' attitudes

grounding-anchoring view can be taken a half-fictionalist view. Also, for religious and gender fictionalism, see, respectively: (Scott & Malcolm, 2018), (Le Poidevin, 2019), (Joyce & Brock, 2024) and (Logue, 2021, p. 140). Even if I do not share the same reasons as these philosophers why fictionalism is good for analyzing conferred social kinds, our positions support each other.

toward propositions that Zeus is a god and he has such and such properties will be merely an acceptance because of the purpose of the action explanation. Thus, not the literal fact that Zeus is a god, but the fictive fact Zeus is a god rationalizes why ancient Greeks took these actions. In this way, the social scientist will explain people's actions without believing in the existence of Zeus and his conferred properties.

In this sense, social fictionalists make a sharp distinction between folk social ontology and scientific social ontology. That is, ordinary people in our communities may commit themselves to some social entities by believing in their existence.

However, these entities will be accepted in the context of social sciences by scientists for the purpose of rationalizing and explaining ordinary people's actions. Thus, in the context of action explanation, a social scientist accepts that there are such entities and that they favor some actions. For example, ordinary people in our communities may believe the following proposition:

13) Jesus is a prophet.

However, in the social scientific context, (13) is just accepted by the scientists. Social scientists describe what people collectively recognize or believe, and they revise their attitudes, transforming belief into acceptance. And based on this fictive fact, they give a rationalization explanation of actions.

It is the same in the case of saints. For social fictionalists, the existence of saints and the statuses conferred on them are taken to be a kind of fiction that people believe in in order to explain and predict people's actions. Thus, in the social scientific context, the doxastic construction of a religious society that confers holiness on sainthood is taken as a kind of fiction. So, why people take actions, such as respecting saints,

listening to saints' religious stories, or taking saints as role models, is rationalized by the fictive fact that saints were sanctified by God. Therefore, social fictionalism neither requires the complexity problem that the constitution account does, nor the commitments to saints that the conferralist account does, but it does help to rationalize the actions of religious society.

In the same way, fictionalists accept the existence of conferred social kinds and they are deontic powers. They treat them as if they were instantiated by different entities. And by appealing to fictive facts, they rationalize people's actions in social scientific explanations without commitment to them. That is, a social scientist accepts the following types of propositions:

- 14) There are conferred social kinds, $p_1, \dots p_n$.
- 15) $p_1, \dots p_n$ are such and such deontic powers.
- 16) $p_1, \dots p_n$ have such and such conditions to instantiate.

These will be fulfilled according to people's doxastic attitudes toward the sociality that they give different conditions and meanings to these statuses. Thus, a social scientist accepts that all this is a collective fiction, and this background fiction helps in rationalizing people's various actions.

CHAPTER 6

SOLVING PROBLEMS

6.1 The Problem with Action Explanation and Prediction: Solved

I argued that social fictionalism provides a way to explain people's actions without committing to social entities. The basic structure of the explanation in social fictionalism is as follows: a social scientist first accepts the existence of conferred kinds with their social normativity; then, she identifies who has these conferred kinds in the relevant context; finally, on the basis of this fictive fact, she makes an explanation and prediction about the people's actions and also derives further predictions from it. Thus, without committing herself to the existence of extra normativity or social entities, she makes an action explanation.

In the case of Emily-Jill, a social fictionalist first accepts that there is a conferred social kind as the class presidency. She also accepts that membership in this kind confers a deontic power: the right to cast five votes. Then, by looking at people's fictive conferral, she identifies who is conferred by people. Since Emily is conferred on class presidency by the people in question, she will accept that Emily is class president. Therefore, she will accept that Emily has the right to cast five votes.

In this context, a social scientist accepts that the normative reason for the participants' recognition of Emily's inappropriate power is that Emily is the class president. So, a social scientist will make her action explanation and prediction of participants in this context based on the fictive fact that Emily is the class president. Thus, *ceteris paribus*, she predicts that the class will recognize Emily's power until the next election. Therefore, she also makes other derivative predictions based on this fictive information.

6.2 The Problem with Pragmatic Simplicity: Solved

Because a social scientist identifies to whom social kinds are conferred by participants in the relevant context, she is not compelled to investigate whether the grounding conditions or base properties that require commitment to controversial entities hold. For this reason, it is pragmatically more basic than the constitution account and equal to conferralism.

The another advantage of fictionalism is to retain the connection between the moral and religious beliefs of the society, on the one hand, and defective social statuses in that society on the other. Because social fiction can include some moral fiction. Furthermore, on the basis of this connection, we can rationalize why a particular social status is imposed on a particular plurality of agents: because it is true that some agents are morally less valuable than others and this is the way of God's creation in the context of this social fiction, the community, even the women in this community themselves, impose this defective status on these agents. So, while we represent the moral content of the construction of people, we do not commit

ourselves to these morally defective or very controversial entities. We just accept their existence and that women have such moral properties.²³

A social scientist examines only whether the given group confers properties on women in order to explain various actions of the community. In this way, she explains why this community treats a plurality of agents, women, *as if* they were morally bad in a pragmatically simpler way and thus confer socially defective statuses on them. In this way, for example, a pattern of inequality in job selection is explained by appealing to the hiring committees' defective constructions of women as a part of this society, and thus, the oppressive actions are rationalized on the assumption that it is desirable to select morally valuable workers for the job in the practical reasoning of the committees.²⁴

In the same way, the social scientist finds out why there are other kinds of inequality, such as sex selection, i.e., the preference for male fetuses over female fetuses. More specifically, India is an example that has a sex selection problem, and Kusum shows that of 8,000 abortions preceded by amniocentesis performed in 6 hospitals in 1986, 7,999 were of female fetuses (Kusum, 1993, p. 153). He describes Indian society as having a son syndrome, i.e., a preference for male children as a result of the socio-economic and *religious conditions* prevailing in his society. The birth of a son is a welcome event, an occasion for rejoicing, whereas the birth of a female child, especially if she is not the first, is a calamity (Kusum, 1993, p. 150).²⁵ Then, a social scientist finds out whether there is a positive relationship between discriminatory

²³ This view could be seen as a combination of social, moral, and religious fictionalism.

²⁴ For more on the problem of gender inequality in job selection, see: (Neumark et al., 1996), (González et al., 2019), (Birkelund et al., 2021), (Zarb, 2022). Even if all gender construction may not have a relation to religious, moral, or defective contents, this example shows that social fictionalism explains these cases in a unified way.

²⁵ For more on the analysis of this problem: (Moazam, 2004).

actions against women and believing in a particular religion by looking at their defective constructions without further commitment or regimentation problems that face constitution accounts.

6.3 The Problem with Contradiction: Solved

The contradiction problem is solved in fictionalism because of its anti-realism. That is, because there are no conferred social entities, there are no conferred contradictory social entities.

However, it can still be argued, as Brouwer did, that the fact that there are some contradictions in the social realm does not mean that we should be social anti-realists and that fictionalism is not good at explaining such cases. The reason: a social fiction in which everything is true because of the explosion of contradictions is not really better than a social reality in which everything is true, and for this reason, this fiction would not serve its purpose. Therefore, we do not force ourselves to be fictionalists, we can better explain the situation by adopting a non-explosive logic (Brouwer, 2022, pp. 34-36).

I think that Brouwer has two misconceptions when he criticizes social fictionalism. It is not necessary for a social fictionalist to model the fiction with classical logic. The important point for social fictionalists is to explain and predict people's actions. So, if the people in question use non-classical logic to understand the world, then, this means that their fiction is already constructed with non-explosive logic. For example, when a social scientist tries to explain people's actions in the contradiction club, she will use a non-classical logic that people use for thinking to explain the actions of the

people in question. Similarly, she uses plural or modal logic to model how people reason about pluralities or modalities in the social realm, similar to her modeling of social discourse with epistemic logic.

One way for social fictionalists is to adopt a dialetheist approach. That is, in the collective fiction, contradictions can be true, but the consequence relation still is not explosive. The second way is to adopt a paraconsistent approach. That is, people's attitudes can be divided into internally consistent 'cells.'²⁶

Social dialethists may argue that social fictionalists argue against dialethism but adopt it when it comes to explaining these kinds of situations. So, they might argue that if we are not dialetheists, then there is no room for using tools from it. This is a double standard.

For clarification, it is noteworthy that I do not argue against non-standard logics but only its realistic interpretation in these situations. That is, there might be cases where our attitudes contradict each other for some reason. In these cases, to represent these contexts, we can use non-standard logics. However, these are contradictions *in our attitudes*, not *worldly* contradictions. Therefore, I only argue that we can adopt non-standard logics for modeling people's contradictory attitudes without committing ourselves to worldly contradictions.

It is also debatable how we can model these contradictions in attitudes with possible worlds, since they are impossible states of affairs. There are two ways of doing this. One way is to accept that contradictory attitudes can be modeled by an empty set. The reason is that in order to model contradictory attitudes, there must be a possible world in which a contradiction is true. But, there cannot be a possible world in which

²⁶ For an application of this approach to social ontology, see: (Priest, 2017).

a contradiction is true -if there is, it is not a possible world, it is an impossible world. So, it turns out that people's attitudes toward contradictions are basically toward the empty set. The second way is to make a distinction between the set of possible worlds and the set of impossible worlds. In these distinctions, we can use impossible worlds without quantifying over them for modeling epistemic impossibilities.²⁷ Therefore, Brouwer's criticism only shows that we should abandon classical logic in these situations. It does not show that fictionalism is not good enough to explain such cases, because there can be fiction whose logic is not classical.



²⁷ For more on epistemic possibilities and the use of impossible worlds for modeling attitudes, see, respectively: Chalmers (2011), Jago (2014).

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I explored how a fictionalist approach can be applied to social ontology, especially for conferred kinds, in the context of action explanation and prediction by comparing this view with various realist views. Chapter 1 was concerned with clarifying constitution accounts and the criteria for comparison. Chapter 2 gave three different kinds of problems against this realist view, which makes this view less credible. Chapter 3 introduced conferralist accounts. Chapter 4 dealt with the question of whether conferralist accounts can solve these problems. I argued that even if the second problem is solved, the first and third problems still arise in conferralism. In Chapter 5, I proposed a fictionalist social ontology. Thus, in Chapter 6, I argued that social fictionalism solves the problems in question.

-

REFERENCES

- Ásta. (2015). The ant trap: Rebuilding the foundations of the social sciences. *Philosophical Review*, 127 (2), 247–251. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-4326657>
- Ásta. (2018). *Categories we live by: The construction of sex, gender, race, and other social categories*. Oxford University Press.
- Bach, T. (2012). Gender is a natural kind with a historical essence. *Ethics*, 122 (2), 231–272. <https://doi.org/10.1086/663232>
- Birkelund, G. E., Lancee, B., Larsen, E. N., Polavieja, J. G., Radl, J., & Yemane, R. (2021). Gender discrimination in hiring: Evidence from a cross-national harmonized field experiment. *European Sociological Review*, 38 (3), 337–354. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcab043>
- Bolton, E., & Cull, M. J. (2019). Contradiction club: Dialetheism and the social world. *Journal of Social Ontology*, 5(2), 169–180. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/jso-2019-0035>
- Boyd, R. (1999). Homeostasis, species, and higher taxa. In R. A. Wilson (Ed.), *Species: New interdisciplinary essays* (pp. 141–85). MIT Press.
- Briggs, R., & George, B. (2023). *What even is gender?* Taylor & Francis. <https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=CZS4EAAAQBAJ>
- Brouwer, T. (2022). Social inconsistency. *Ergo: An Open Access Journal of Philosophy*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.2258>

- Chalmers, David J. (2011). The nature of epistemic space. In Andy Egan & Brian Weatherson (eds.), *Epistemic modality* (pp. 60-107). Oxford University Press.
- Currie, G. (1990). *The nature of fiction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dancy, J. (2000). *Practical reality*. Oxford University Press.
- Eklund, M. (2019). Fictionalism. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Winter 2019). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Epstein, B. (2015). *The ant trap: Rebuilding of the foundations of the social sciences*. Oxford University Press.
- Epstein, B. (2019). Anchoring versus grounding: Reply to Schaffer. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 99(3), 768–781.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12644>
- Epstein, B. (2021a). Social construction and social facts. In M. Jankovic & K. Ludwig (Eds.), *The routledge handbook of collective intentionality*. Routledge.
- Epstein, B. (2021b). Social ontology. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Winter 2021). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Everett, A. (2005). *Against fictional realism*. *Journal of Philosophy*, 102(12), 624–649. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jphil2005102129>
- Giere, R. N. (2004). How models are used to represent reality. *Philosophy of Science*, 71(5), 742–752. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/425063>

- González, M. J., Cortina, C., & Rodríguez, J. (2019). The role of gender stereotypes in hiring: A field experiment. *European Sociological Review*, 35(2), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcy055>
- Haslanger, S. (2012). *Resisting reality: Social construction and social critique*. Oxford University Press.
- Hawley, K. (2018). Social science as a guide to social metaphysics? *Journal for General Philosophy of Science / Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie*, 49(2), 187–198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10838-017-9389-5>
- Horkheimer, M. (1972). *Critical theory: Selected essays*. New York: Continuum.
- Jago, Mark. (2014). *The impossible: An essay on hyperintensionality*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, K. (2018). Categories we live by. *The Philosophers' Magazine*, 83, 107–108. <https://doi.org/10.5840/tpm201883112>
- Joyce, R., & Brock, S. (Eds.). (2024). *Moral fictionalism and religious fictionalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Kalderon, M. E. (2005). *Moral fictionalism*. Clarendon Press.
- Khalidi, M. A. (2013). *Natural categories and human kinds: Classification in the natural and social sciences*. Cambridge University Press.
- Khalidi, M. A. (2015). Three kinds of social kinds. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 90(1), 96–112. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24672852>

- Khalidi, M. A. (2016). Mind-dependent kinds. *Journal of Social Ontology*, 2(2), 223–246.
- Kripke, S. (2013). *Reference and existence: The John Locke lectures*. Oxford University Press.
- Kusum. (1993). The use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for sex selection: The indian scene. *Bioethics*, 7(2-3), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8519.1993.tb00281.x>
- Lauer, R. (2022). Motivating a pragmatic approach to naturalized social ontology. *Journal for General Philosophy of Science / Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie*, 53(4), 403–419. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10838-021-09581-3>
- Le Poidevin, R. (2019). *Religious fictionalism*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108558198>
- Little, D. (2016). *New directions in the philosophy of social science*. Rowman & Littlefield International. <https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=ozo-jgEACAAJ>
- Logue, H. (2021). Gender fictionalism. *Ergo: An Open Access Journal of Philosophy*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.2229>
- Mallon, R. (2003). Social construction, social roles, and stability. In F. Schmitt (Ed.), *Socializing metaphysics: The nature of social reality* (pp. 327–54). Rowman & Littlefield, 65-91.
- Mallon, R. (2016). *The construction of human kinds*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198755678.001.0001>

- Mason, R. (2016). The metaphysics of social kinds. *Philosophy Compass*, 11(12), 841–850. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12381>
- Mason, R. (2020). Against social kind anti-realism. *Metaphysics*, 3(1), 55–67. <https://doi.org/10.5334/met.30>
- Mason, R. (2021). Social kinds are essentially mind-dependent. *Philosophical Studies*, 178(12), 3975–3994. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-021-01633-0>
- Mason, R., & Ritchie, K. (2020). Social ontology. In R. Bliss & J. Miller (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of metametaphysics*.
- Mikkola, M. (2021). Social Ontology. In Khoo, J., & Sterken, R.K. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Social and Political Philosophy of Language* (pp. 31-41). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003164869>
- Moazam, F. (2004). Feminist discourse on sex screening and selective abortion of female fetuses. *Bioethics*, 18(3), 205–220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8519.2004.00390.x>
- Neumark, D., Bank, R. J., & Nort, K. D. V. (1996). Sex discrimination in restaurant hiring: An audit study. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 111(3), 915–941.
- Passinsky, A. (2020). *Social objects, response-dependence, and realism*. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 6(4), 431–443. <https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2019.51>
- Priest, G. (2008). *An introduction to non-classical logic: From if to is*. Cambridge University Press.
- Priest, G. (2017). Where laws conflict: An application of the method of chunk and permeate. In H. P. Glenn & L. D. Smith (Eds.), *Law and the new logics* (pp.

168–180). Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316227329.009>

Rea, M. (2022). Gender as a self-conferred identity. *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.5206/fpq/2022.2.13959>

Richardson, K. (2024). Social construction and indeterminacy. *Analytic Philosophy*, 65(1), 37–52. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/phib.12299>

Sarkia, M. (2021). A model-based approach to social ontology. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 52(3), 175–203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004839312111056952>

Sarkia, M., & Kaidesoja, T. (2023). Two approaches to naturalistic social ontology. *Synthese*, 201(3), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04105-6>

Saunders, D. (2020). Optimism for naturalized social metaphysics: A reply to hawley. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 50(2), 138–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393119894901>

Schaffer, J. (2009). On what grounds what. In D. Manley, D. J. Chalmers, & R. Wasserman (Eds.), *Metametaphysics: New essays on the foundations of ontology* (pp. 347–383). New York: Oxford University Press.

Schaffer, J. (2017). Social construction as grounding; or: Fundamentality for feminists, a reply to Barnes and Mikkola. *Philosophical Studies*, 174(10), 2449–2465. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0738-8>

Schaffer, J. (2019). Anchoring as grounding: On Epstein's the ant trap. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 99(3), 749–767. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12645>

- Scott, M., & Malcolm, F. (2018). Religious fictionalism. *Philosophy Compass*, 13(3), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12474>
- Searle, J. R. (1995). *The construction of social reality*. Free Press.
- Searle, J. R. (2010). *Making the social world: The structure of human civilization*. Oxford University Press.
- Stalnaker, R. (2014). *Context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thomasson, A. L. (2003a). Foundations for a social ontology. *ProtoSociology*, 18, 269–290. <https://doi.org/10.5840/protosociology200318/199>
- Thomasson, A. L. (2003b). Realism and human kinds. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 67(3), 580–609. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2003.tb00309.x>
- Thompson, N. (2018). Irrealism about grounding. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 82, 23–44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1358246118000206>
- Thompson, N. (2021). Setting the story straight: Fictionalism about grounding. *Philosophical Studies*, 179 (2), 343–361. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-021-01661-w>
- VanKammen, E., & Rea, M. (forthcoming). A dilemma for conferralism. *Analysis*.
- van Roojen, M. (2024). Moral Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Summer 2024). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Witt, C. (2011). *The metaphysics of gender*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199740413.001.0001>

Yablo, S. (2001). Go figure: A path through fictionalism. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 25(1), 72–102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-4975.00040>

Zarb, A. (2022). Assessing the role of gender in hiring: A field experiment on labour market discrimination. *Business and economics*, (2), 1–7.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s43546-022-00371-7>

