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Explorations in Contemporary Analytic Metaphysics: Mind, Identity, and Society

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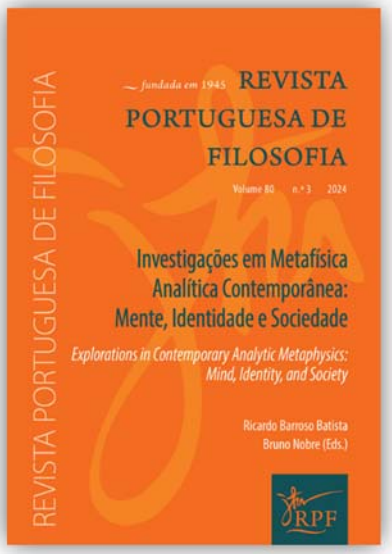

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The Social and the Individual: Reduction without Identity

PETER BAUMANN*

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between social and individual phenomena, advocating for a form of analytical individualism that incorporates both ontological and explanatory holism. The first part of the paper addresses foundational ontological questions, arguing for the reduction of social facts to individual behaviors without equating them in identity. In the second part, the discussion focuses on collective intentionality, particularly through a critical examination of John Searle's account. I argue that while collective intentionality offers useful insights into the nature of social institutions, it faces principled limitations when applied to broader social phenomena. The paper ultimately supports a non-identifying reductive individualism, which recognizes the social as grounded in individual actions while avoiding simplistic reductions. This approach, I contend, provides a more coherent framework for understanding the complex interaction between individual and social processes, as well as the ontological status of social facts.

Keywords: analytical individualism, collective intentionality, ontology, reductionism, social facts, social ontology.

What is the nature of social facts, objects, properties, events, and processes? How do they relate to non-social facts, objects, properties, events and processes – especially ones that concern individuals? In the first part of this paper, I will – after some remarks about ontology – argue for analytic individualism about the social while accepting ontological as well as explanatory holism. In the second part of the article, I will discuss recent accounts of collective intentionality, focusing on Searle's view. I will argue that a view like that suffers from principled limitations.

1. To Be, or not to Be, that Is not the Question

This paper is about social ontology. But is there such a thing as social ontology? One might respond that if this paper is about social ontology,

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then there is something it is about. If we call that which this paper is about "social ontology", then there is such a thing as social ontology. However, this response has its problems. We can think and talk about what does not exist (remember Plato's *Sophist*?): unicorns, the greatest odd number, Sherlock Holmes, and so on. So, aboutness does not entail existence of what we are thinking or talking about. So, the question remains: Is there such a thing as social ontology?

Let us not get hung up on the word "thing" here. Sure, social ontology is not a thing (whatever exactly a thing is). It is a topic in philosophy. So, our question is: Is there such a philosophical topic as social ontology? The answer to that question seems clear: Yes. There is social ontology, there is metaphysics in general, there are many other topics in philosophy. And: There is philosophy. So, what's the problem?

Compare social ontology with numbers. Are there numbers? In other words, do numbers exist? Again, one could say clearly, yes, numbers exist. There are more than 2 prime numbers smaller than 100. Hence, there are numbers. Numbers exist. For instance: 7, 13, 22 (the latter not prime, of course). But isn't this completely missing the problem? Don't we want to know whether numbers "really" exist? This question might appear deep and important but what does it mean? Is "real existence" different from "existence"? How? What does the word "real" or "really" do here? It adds to drama but not to content.[1] Apart from that, one could ask back: Why is there a problem in the case of the existence of numbers but not in the case of the existence of social ontology? Perhaps there is rather a different problem in the case of numbers: The existence of numbers can be puzzling in different ways (while the existence of social ontology is not that puzzling). For instance, there are two apples on the table now. The apples exist, number two exists but how do they relate to each other in the fact that two apples are on the table now? This leads to other interesting questions: What is the role of numbers in ordinary life or in science? Could ordinary life or science work without numbers? If not, what does it mean that they can't? These are important and difficult questions but they are not about the existence or non-existence of numbers. Still another philosophical puzzle is about the kind of entity to which numbers belong: What kind of things are numbers? One might ask back: What kind of thing is a kind of thing? But putting this question aside, it is not at all obvious

1. See, e.g., John L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Reconstructed from the manuscript notes by G.J. Warnock) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), ch.VII.

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what a kind is. If kinds are not just the extensions of the categories we come up with when we describe the world but rather the way things in themselves are sorted into major groups, then I, at least, would still be waiting for an explanation of what is meant by "major groups" or "kinds" here. But isn't it still very weird, one might repeat the original question, to assume that numbers exist? However, that tables exist does not seem nearly as weird; so, why is there a problem with numbers? It would only be weird if, for instance, numbers turned out to be a kind of furniture, like tables. However, the existence of numbers does not entail that numbers are physical objects like tables or other pieces of furniture. So, it is not clear at all why one should think there is a problem about the existence of numbers.

Back to social things. Are there such things as societies, political parties, conferences, families? Sure, one wants to say. We refer to this or that society, different political parties, our own family or some conference (say, on social ontology). All this seems to make a lot of sense and be perfectly in order but how could this be so if there weren't any societies, families, parties or conferences? We are not thinking and talking about fictional or non-existing entities, it seems. Intuitively it is very plausible to assume that there are social groups, institutions, structures and relations. Again, using a term like "really" doesn't give us a different and more pressing question here ("Do they really exist?"); it also doesn't lead to much if one puzzles over the "kind of thing" a social group etc. is (see above). Many people seem to think that if we assume that societies exist we are assuming the existence of weird entities. However, where does the weirdness come from? Sure, if one thinks of a society as a big person, for instance, then that is weird. But one does not have to think of societies as big persons or otherwise weird entities. Societies aren't persons (and they're also not pieces of furniture). As soon as one accepts that there are all sorts of differences between the entities that exist, the impression of weirdness connected with the claim that societies exist vanishes.[2]

2. Of course, not all social groups, institutions, or relations that we think exist do really exist. There is, for instance, the group of German citizens but there is no German nation if by "nation" is meant a group of people united by some very special bond (which doesn't just consist in the sharing of a language or culture or history; and it is also not to supposed to boil down to possession of the same type of passport). Belief in fictitious social entities (like a "German nation" in this sense), however, is something that exists and has very "real" consequences.

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Why then does one hear so often, especially outside of the academic discipline of philosophy, that "there is no such thing as society" but only individual human beings?[3] Are all these people eliminativists about the social? Why do they accept the existence of individual human beings – instead of insisting that there are no individual humans but just conglomerations of cells? Or just the atoms and the void, as Democritus would have it? Or just the fundamental particles? And why not go into the other extreme, take Spinoza's hand and announce that there is only one thing: no particles, no cells, no organisms, no "moderate-sized specimens of dry goods" as Austin would call them[4], and no galaxies but only just the whole of nature? Lacking a good reason why it should be incorrect to assume the existence of any of the above, one should not feel uneasy about assuming the existence of all those "things". Existence claims as such are ontologically harmless and have no special ontological depth or weight.[5]

2. To Thine Own Individualism Be True

I think that the interesting and important question here for social ontology is not whether social relations, institutions, groups, etc. exist but

3. Margaret Thatcher famously or notoriously made this claim (in an interview with the magazine "Woman's Own" (October 31, 1987): "And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families." (See also the slightly different wording on http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689: "… and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and …" …"). One wonders how she can accept the existence of families – shouldn't she rather say that there are no such things as families, only individual men and women? Thatcher also seems to assume the existence of a government in this conversation – but how can she?

4. See Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, 8.

5. I find myself in agreement here with Jonathan Schaffer, "On what Grounds what," in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, ed. David Chalmers, David Manley and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 356-362. – Assume that there are 3 holes in my bucket. Is it a problem to assume the existence of holes (3 in this case)? I don't think so. Sometimes people, especially philosophers, claim that a test for existence is the acceptability of quantifying over what is said to exist or not to exist. According to this, it is fine to assume the existence of physical objects because we may quantify over them but it is not fine to assume the existence of some other alleged entities because we shouldn't quantify over them (for instance the often mentioned "sakes", as in "for the sake of"). But what determines what we may or may not quantify over? The reason why we shouldn't quantify over some things should better not be their non-existence, given the view that questions of existence are made to depend on questions of what to quantify over.

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rather what the relation is between the social and the individual. More precisely, can social phenomena be understood in terms of facts about the behavior of (many) individuals? Is sociology (taken as a representative of all the social sciences here) in this sense reducible to psychology (taken as a representative of all the "non-social" sciences here) – is it nothing but a "macro-recapitulation" of the complex micro-level of psychology? Is, for instance, the social custom of greeting acquaintances in public nothing but an individual behavioral disposition (to greet acquaintances in public) shared by many individuals (at a certain location)? Is capitalism nothing but a system of interactions between individuals (including both unforeseen and unintended consequences)? Or are social phenomena like customs or economic systems sui generis? What are the theoretical options for thinking about the relation between the social and the individual?

I have already put aside eliminativism about the social ("There is no such thing as society") as badly motivated. Another option could be called "dualism" about the social and the individual. According to it, social phenomena are sui generis.[6] They can be taken to be sui generis in more than one sense. A first, stronger claim is that the existence and nature of social phenomena (or "facts", as Durkheim would say) does not depend on the existence and behavior of individual human beings. A second, weaker claim is that the existence and nature of social phenomena does not depend on the existence and behavior of any particular human being.[7] The strong claim I do find too strong. It is hard to see how this view could make the nature and existence of social phenomena even minimally intelligible. Society doesn't fall from the heavens like manna; even manna doesn't.[8] The

6. See, e.g., Émile Durkheim, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013). In philosophy, this way of looking at social phenomena can be traced back to Plato (for instance, his *Politeia*: Plato, *The Republic* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1992); Hegel can also be read in this way (see, e.g., Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (tr.: H.B. Nisbet; ed.: Allen W. Wood) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). In sociology, one could also think of systems theory and functionalism à la Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1951).

7. I think it is not always clear which of the two claims Durkheim, for instance, wants to make in the end (see Durkheim, Règles). But I won't go into matters of interpretation here (neither of Durkheim, nor of Plato, Hegel or anyone else).

8. It is not controversial nowadays that there would be no social life without individuals. But this does not tell us much. There would also be no (human) social life without oxygen. But that does not mean that social facts can be understood as or explained by facts about oxygen. Similarly, the fact that there would be no society without individuals does not entail that social facts can be understood as or explained by facts about individuals. The important types of questions are still open if one claims that

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weaker claim is much more plausible. Take a professional organization. Its existence and characteristics as a professional organization requires that there are individual members who are disposed to behave in a certain way. But it does not require the membership of any particular individual. An economic market requires that there are people who exchange goods but doesn't require any particular people being around to do that. Now, all this sounds so plausible and uncontroversial that one wonders whether one should call the weaker claim a "dualist" one at all.[9]

The option I favor is usually called "individualism" or "methodological individualism" or "analytical individualism"[10], in contrast to its negation "holism" or "methodological" or "analytical holism". I propose to distinguish two main varieties: reductive individualism and non-reductive individualism. Amongst forms of reductive individualism I propose to distinguish between identifying and non-identifying reductive individualism.

Non-identifying reductive individualism (which I favor here) has it that for every social phenomenon there is a set of facts about individual behavior and dispositions to behavior such that the latter constitute the former (a description of the latter entails a description of the former, given relevant definitions of terms and relevant background assumptions; I am leaving aside cases of necessary propositions which would be entailed by any proposition). A group discussion, for instance, is a social event; it is constituted by the interaction of the contributions of the participants,

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there would be no society without individuals.

9. Aren't there conceptions of the social that are both non-individualist and non-dualist? Brian Epstein, *The Ant Trap. Rebuilding the Foundations of the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), for instance, claims to hold such a view. However, in 2015 he does not attack what he calls "anchoring individualism" – and thus leaves what I take to be the core of individualism intact. I cannot go into further details here.

10. See, e.g., Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und* Gesellschaft (5. Ed.; ed. Johannes Winckelmann) (Tübingen: Mohr, 1976). One might also think of Hobbes here (his idea of the Leviathan in Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed.: Michael Oakeshott) (New York & London: Collier & Macmillan, 1977), nicely illustrated in the original frontispiece of the Leviathan) or of Marx (his idea of commodity fetishism in Karl Marx *Das Kapital* , vol.1 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962) (Marx Engels Werke, vol.23), 85-98). One can also think of Marx' remarks about how history is made by human beings, with all the unintended and unforeseen consequences of their actions in Karl Marx, "Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte," in *Marx Engels Werke, vol.8*, (Berlin: Dietz 1960), 115): "Humans make their own history but not freely and not under freely chosen circumstances but under circumstances which are immediately given and inherited from the past" [my translation] (see also Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (Berlin: Dietz 1978) (Marx Engels Werke, vol.23), e.g., 20 and 25 for methodological individualism).

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and by nothing else. There are no "further" facts, apart from the facts about individual behavior.[11] I take constitution to be an irreflexive (not just non-reflexive), asymmetric but transitive relation. Constitution thus differs from identity (which is reflexive, symmetric and transitive). If A constitutes B, then A≠B (given extensionality of "constitutes").

This explanation is still a bit rough. The claim is, more precisely, that social facts can be reduced to facts about individuals where such "individualist" facts include not just facts about individuals, their behavior and their relations but also about consequences of such behavior (including unintended or unforeseen consequences) as well as physical and other circumstances.[12] Part of the claim is that facts about individuals are essential to the reducing facts. It is not part of the individualist claim that social facts can be explained with reference to particular individuals.[13]

It is no problem for this view that the attitudes (beliefs, desires, intentions, etc.) of individuals often have social content and refer to social entities or facts. The point of reduction is not to eliminate talk about social things in favor of talk about non-social things. One can also construct a naturalist account of religion without eliminating the religious vocabulary.[14] – A reasonable individualism would also not only not involve but even reject the idea that social facts arise out of some pre-social "state of nature". Human individuals are irreducibly social animals; the (non-identifying reductive) individualist accepts this and rather insists to see social facts as constituted by facts about such individuals (socialized as they are).[15] This is the view I prefer to its alternatives.

One extreme form of reductionism would identify every (type of a) social fact with a corresponding (type of a) complex fact about individuals.[16] Identifying reduction is thus quite different from non-identifying

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11. See, e.g., D.H. Mellor, "The Reduction of Society," *Philosophy* 57 (219) (1982), 69 and sec.11.
12. See for this also Rajeev Bhargava, *Individualism in Social Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 158-162 or Brian Epstein, "Ontological Individualism Reconsidered," *Synthese* 166 (2009): sec.3.
13. Kenneth J. Arrow, "Methodological Individualism and Social Knowledge," *The American Economic Review* 84(2) (1994), 1-9 seems to assume this in his critique of methodological individualism.
14. But see, for instance, Maurice Mandelbaum, "Societal Facts," *The British Journal of Sociology* 6 (1955): sec.II.
15. But see Bhargava, *Individualism*, chs. 5 and 6 or David-Hillel Ruben, "The Existence of Social Entities," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 306-309.
16. But see, e.g., David-Hillel Ruben, *The Metaphysics of the Social World* (London

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reduction: the former but not the latter being reflexive and symmetric. However, identifying reduction seems implausible given that the same (type of) social fact could be realized by different corresponding sets of facts about individuals. The identity conditions for (types of) social facts and (types of) facts about individuals differ or can differ. The type *discussion of which movie to watch in the evening* is multiply realizable by different types of complex facts about individuals (for instance, different individuals might participate to different degrees). What if one considers the disjunction of all the types of facts about individuals which realize a given social fact as a type itself? This move seems ad hoc but there is a more serious problem with it. If one just considers the facts about individuals that realize the social fact in the actual world, then one doesn't consider enough such facts: A given social fact could also be realized by different, non-actual facts about individuals.[17] However, if one also considers all the facts about individuals that could possibly realize the given social fact, then one considers too many such facts: It is hard to imagine any type of fact about individuals that could not in some possible world realize the given social fact.[18] It seems ad hoc to restrict the relevant set of possible individuals so some but not all possible individuals.

Even a weaker form of identifying reductionism runs into problems – a form that only identifies tokens of social facts with tokens of facts about individuals. Is this token of *discussion of which movie to watch in the evening* identical with that token of an aggregate of individual behaviors (is this statue identical with this mass of clay?)? Would not even this assumption raise problems? I just want to mention that one can wonder whether identity conditions and therefore modal profiles for tokens of social facts and tokens of facts about individuals differ: Wouldn't it still have been the same token-discussion had fewer eyebrows been raised during it without being the same token aggregate of individual behav-

etc.: Routledge, 1985) who, like many others, only considers identifying forms of reductionism to be forms of reductionism.

17. For a different though similar point see Harold Kincaid, "Reduction, Explanation, and Individualism," *Philosophy of Science* 53 (1986): 501.

18. See similarly Ruben, *The Metaphysics of the Social World*, 104-105.

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iors?[19] I have to leave this question open here.[20] At any rate, it seems that non-identifying reductionism (one that identifies neither types nor tokens) is a much more plausible form of reductionism.[21]

One interesting follow-up question is whether we should rather opt for non-reductive individualism. Perhaps there are social phenomena that supervene on but cannot be reduced to facts about individual behavior? Roughly, a property (or fact) A supervenes on a property (or fact) B just in case any difference in the A-property (or fact) entails a difference in the B-property (or fact).[22] Is fashion an example? Or inflation? But don't we

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19. If anything that is a token of some type can also be considered to be a type itself (a different type), then token-identity simply inherits the problems of type-identity. If, however, some things are tokens but not types, then either the token could have been different in some way from the way it is or it could not have been different. The latter is implausible and the former pushes us back to seeing the token itself as a type (which can have different tokenings in different possible worlds).

20. Could there be contingent identity of a social fact with a fact about individuals? There is a big question about what the identity criteria for facts are; ordinary usages seem to give us little indication here. Apart from this, one could argue that since facts could not have been different from what they are, identity of facts is necessary.

21. One might propose to locate the lack of identity in the relation between the special sciences which deal with A and B rather than directly in the relation between A and B. It could thus still be the case that A=B but that the science dealing with B is simpler or has greater explanatory scope or is in other ways more impressive than the science dealing with A (one would risk begging the question if one said that the first science is more "basic" than the second). The problem with this proposal is that it changes the topic from reducing A to B to reducing one science to another science (without reducing the entities of the reduced science to the entities of the reducing science). This is not what we're interested in here. Apart from that, it is very doubtful whether a science like sociology can be reduced to another science like psychology. Even the relevant criteria (for simplicity, explanatory scope, etc.) might vary between disciplines and be hard to commensurate with each other.

22. See the overview in Brian McLaughlin and Karen Bennett, :"Supervenience," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition; ed.: Edward N. Zalta; URL: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/supervenience/). Supervenience does not entail irreducibility (even if A reduces to B it still supervenes on B). What I have in mind here is supervenience combined with irreducibility. Epstein, *The Ant Trap*, proposes the notions of grounding and anchoring as an alternative to the notion of supervenience; I don't think that this changes much here but I cannot go into this here (on the recently much discussed notion of grounding see for instance Kit Fine, "The Question of Realism," *Philosophers' Imprint* 1(1) (2001) and also Gideon Rosen, "Metaphysical Dependence: Grounding and Reduction," in *Modality. Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology*, ed. Bob Hale and Aviv Hoffmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 109-135. – If supervenience allows for identity of the supervenient and the subvenient, then the relation is not irreflexive though also not reflexive; furthermore, it is anti-symmetric and probably also transitive. If supervenience does not allow for identity of the supervenient and the subvenient, then the relation is irreflexive,

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just call the results of certain kinds of adaptive and imitative interactions between individuals a fashion? And isn't inflation what happens when economic agents act and react to each other and to economic circumstances in a certain way? Sure, there are economic institutions, groups, and organizations of which we say that they act. However, it seems very farfetched and unnecessary to assume that there are "collective agents" on top of the individual agents – when all of what we often call "collective agency" can be made sense of and understood as a complex network of individual acts and dispositions to act (see also below on collective intentionality).[23] Furthermore, if one denies that group agents have qualitative consciousness – as I think one should – , then it is hard to see how they can have desires in the sense in which humans have desires: To have such a type of attitude requires that one is able, for instance, to feel disappointment, and such disappointment involves qualitative states. So, group agents can only be said to have desires in a much thinner and less interesting sense.[24]

Apart from this, the idea of supervenience suffers from a variation of the well-known "exclusion problem" [25]: How can supervenient social facts be causally efficient on facts about individuals if the latter have sufficient non-social causes (and if overdetermination is, plausibly, not the rule)? It is not a good option to refuse to reduce social facts but stick with the idea of the causal efficacy of the latter. Finally, supervenience doesn't seem to throw a lot of light at all on the relation between the social and the non-social: What explains the supervenience between the two irre-

asymmetric and probably also transitive. In the latter case supervenience is still a relation very different from constitution.

23. But see Christian List and Philip Pettit, *Group Agency. The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) or Epstein, *The Ant Trap*.

24. List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, chs.1-3 would disagree; they argue that group agents supervene holistically on the attitudes of individuals (see List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, ch.3). However, in their case this only means that there is no proposition-by-proposition supervenience; it allows for the plausible reduction of the attitudes of group agents to individuals' attitudes combined with aggregation functions. List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 76-77 seem to accept this objection against their official view, at least implicitly. – One might try to argue for group minds using the recently much discussed extended mind hypothesis (see Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers, "The Extended Mind," in *The Extended Mind*, ed. Richard Menary (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 27-42; I cannot go into this here.

25. See, e.g., Jaegwon Kim, "The Myth of Nonreductive Materialism," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 63(3) (1989): 31-47.

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ducible realms? And isn't the relation itself a bit mysterious? Doesn't it only explain very little?[26]

One might object to reductive individualism (incl. the version that I favor) that sociological laws don't reduce to psychological laws. But if the social were to reduce to the psychological, then the sociological laws would have to reduce to the psychological laws. Hence, the social doesn't reduce to the psychological. In response to this objection, I would first say that it is very doubtful that there are any (strict) laws in sociology or in psychology. What would they be? Even if we were to allow for non-strict, statistical laws one would still have to indicate definite probabilities; I doubt even this exists in psychology or the social sciences.[27] Talk about "tendencies" is too vague to qualify as talk about laws. Apart from all this, there is another problem: Can there possibly be sociological laws? Suppose the answer is positive and consider one such law (L1). Suppose further (plausibly, I think) that it makes a difference to individuals' behavior whether they assume that the law holds or not – and a difference of the following kind: L1 only holds in cases where the relevant individuals don't assume it holds. Perhaps parents tend to think that their newborn children are outstandingly beautiful but perhaps they tend to think so only to a very high degree if they don't assume this is a law. Then we would certainly want to ask for another law (L2) that covers what happens when people assume the first law, L1. (The alternative would be to accept lawlessness exactly for those subjects who believe in such laws (e.g., L1); but then belief in a first order law like L1 would be self-falsifying – and this would not be easy to accept and would seem implausible). So, let us assume that there is such a second-order law (L2). The content of the lower order law (L1) would then presumably have to figure in the higher-order law (L2). This already strikes me as tricky but let us put this aside here. More important is another point: All of the above problems reiterate. L2 would presumably only hold for people who don't believe in it. For those who do, we would need a third-order law. This will probably not lead to an actual infinite regress simply because people's minds are finite. But the whole structure strikes me already as quite baroque and not very plausible. Apart from that: If laws don't require instantiations, then we would indeed have

26. See David-Hillel Ruben, "Beyond Supervenience and Construction," *Journal of Social Ontology* 1 (2015), 127-128 or Paul Sheehy, *The Reality of Social Groups* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 34-41.

27. But see, e.g., Mellor, *The Reduction of Society*, sec.2.

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an infinity of such laws. And this also strikes me as somewhat implausible. Similar considerations apply to the idea of a psychological law.[28]

But suppose for the sake of the argument there were such laws in sociology and psychology: Is it then independently plausible that they wouldn't reduce in the way indicated, that is, independently from whether one accepts or rejects reductive individualism? Perhaps this is indeed independently plausible. There seem to be very good reasons to doubt that, in general, laws of one science can be reduced to laws of another science. If laws involve relations between properties or between types of things and if social types are multiply realizable by individual types, then the prospects of reducing sociological laws to psychological laws look dim.[29]

My main problem with the objection above, however, is rather with its conditional premise. Why should one expect that lower-level laws entail higher-level laws, given that the higher-level facts, properties and events reduce to the lower-level facts, properties and events? Biological laws might not reduce to physical laws even if biological facts reduce to physical facts. Similarly, sociological laws might not reduce to psychological laws even if sociological facts reduce to physical facts. Analytic individualism does not entail explanatory individualism.[30]

What if one rephrases the above objection in terms of explanation (where explanation would not have to involve laws)? Sociological explanation, one could say, doesn't reduce to psychological explanation. But if the social were to reduce to the psychological, then the sociological explanations would have to reduce to the psychological explanations. Hence, the social doesn't reduce to the psychological. Why should one think that sociological explanations don't reduce to psychological ones? Perhaps there

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28. See on the absence of laws for individual action also Bhargava, *Individualism*, 89-98.

29. See for many Jerry A. Fodor, "Special sciences (Or: The disunity of science as a working hypothesis," *Synthese* 28 (1974) :97-115 or, more recently Christian List and Kai Spiekermann, "Methodological Individualism and Holism in Political Science: A Reconciliation," *American Political Science Review* 107 (2013): 629–642. The objection from multiple realizability works no matter whether one identifies social types with corresponding individual types or only assumes co-extensionality of social and individual types. – One may think of a traditional model of the reduction of laws in one science via bridge laws to the laws of another science. This should just be taken as one possible illustration of what reduction of laws might be.

30. See also Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 187, 189; Harold Kincaid, *Individualism and the Unity of Science. Essays on Reduction, Explanation, and the Special Sciences* (Lanham etc.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 4-6, 10, or Mellor, *The Reduction of Society*, 52.

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are statistical explanations of social facts which don't have any correlates at the level of individual behavior. Perhaps – but more importantly: That sociological explanation doesn't reduce to psychological explanation is compatible with the reduction of social facts to psychological facts.[31]

Given all this, I tend towards denying reductive individualism about laws and explanations. As pointed out above, I am also happy to accept ontological holism concerning questions of existence. I am, however, committed to methodological (or analytical) individualism, especially of the reductive (non-identifying) variant.

Analytical reductive individualism leaves certain questions open. It says that social phenomena reduce to complexes of individual behaviors and behavioral dispositions. But it doesn't say which complexes of that sort constitute (alternatively: realize) social phenomena. Some of them do but not all of them do. If everyone takes out their umbrella when it starts to rain, then this constitutes (alternatively: realizes) a complex of individual behaviors but no social phenomenon.[32] Apart from this, there are certainly difficult or hard cases. Sexual interaction is certainly a social phenomenon but it is not clear whether the spread of AIDS should be counted as a social phenomenon, too. Perhaps this is a borderline case; we can (and have to) live with vagueness. Weber's umbrella-example points to a different issue: the difficulty of indicating necessary as well as sufficient conditions for sociality. However, I think that a reductive individualism, e.g., of the Weberian type, does not need a definition of the social. (Rarely ever can we have definitions in philosophy; fortunately, rarely ever do we need them in philosophy).

The great advantage and attraction of a reductive individualism like Weber's is that it shows in great detail how social actions[33] can constitute stable social relations[34] which in turn build up institutions, systems and structures of all kinds.[35] That the actions of many individuals can have

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31. See the analogue reply in the case of laws above; see also Ruben, *The Metaphysics of the Social World*, ch.4 here.
32. See Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 11.
33. See Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, part I, ch.I, §§1-2.
34. See Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, part I, ch.I, §3.
35. See Weber, *Wirtschaft und* Gesellschaft, part I, ch.I. See also a side remark in Marx, *Das Kapital*, 72, fn.21: "This human being, for instance, is only king because other humans behave as subjects towards him. They believe to be subjects because he is king" [my translation]). Or consider a passage from the *Grundrisse* (Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin: Dietz 1983) (Marx Engels Werke, vol.42), 189: "Society does not consist of individuals but rather expresses the sum of relations in

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systemic consequences which are both unintended and unforeseen[36] is compatible with the individualist framework. Modern societies developed out of the actions of many individuals over a long period of time, even if nobody had even the slightest idea about what would eventually develop out of all this.

3. Collective Intentionality: What Is the City but the People?

Recently, some philosophers have proposed to think about social phenomena in terms of "we-attitudes": we-beliefs, we-intentions, we-actions.[37] Some of them are explicitly distancing themselves from Weberian and similar individualist accounts.[38] A we-intention is, roughly, an intention to do one's part in some joint action undertaken with others where those others also have an intention to do their part in the action, and where all this is common knowledge.[39] If A and B intend to go for a walk together, they have we-intentions to do so if both of them see themselves as part of a small group, are willing to do their part of the joint action, and all this is common knowledge between them. This contrasts with just happening to walk next to each other. Similarly, a collective belief is the joint acceptance of (though not belief in) a view by a plurality of individuals who think of themselves as members of one group where all this is, again, common knowledge.[40] The members of a government might disagree sharply on some issue but in the end collectively accept a view that no individual

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which these individuals stand towards each other" [my translation]). – See also Gert Albert, "Jenseits von Atomismus und Kollektivismus. Zur klassischen Traditionslinie relationaler Soziologie," in *Denkformen. Festschrift für Dragan Jakovljević aus Anlaß der Vollendung seines 60. Lebensjahres*, ed. Aleksandar Fatić (Belgrad, 2013, 253-291 here for what he calls "relational holism".

36. See the classic contribution by Robert K. Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Social Action," *American Sociological Review* 1 (1936): 894-904.

37. See, e.g., Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Raimo Tuomela, *Social Ontology. Collective Intentionality and Group Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch.1; John R. Searle, *Making the Social World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and 1995; see Michael Bratman, "Shared Intention," *Ethics* 104 (1993) for the notion of a shared intention.

38. See for instance Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, ch.II.

39. See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, ch.IV; Searle, *Making the Social World*, ch.3; Tuomela, *Social Ontology*, ch.1; Bratman, *Shared Intention*; it is not necessary to go into the details of the different accounts of we-attitudes here).

40. See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, ch.V.

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member might believe in. A collective, joint action then would be seen as based on collective intentions and collective beliefs. A government's decision to adopt a certain policy can be based on we-intentions and collective beliefs accepted and shared by the individual members.

The authors who are in favor of the idea of collective intentionality typically point out that we-attitudes are not reducible to I-attitudes.[41] This seems quite right. Mary's intention to take a walk (that is, her intention that she takes a walk at time t in location l) and Albert's intention to take a walk (that is, his intention to take a walk at time t in location l) do not constitute a joint we-intention. More is needed for the latter (see above). However, even if one adds[42] that we-intentions are characterized by a different mode of attitude than I-intentions (as, e.g., beliefs that *p* differ in mode from desires that *p*) one still hasn't said anything incompatible with methodological individualism or even with reductive individualism. [43] One can still hold (as one should, I think) that only individuals can have attitudes. Similar things hold for collective beliefs and joint actions (understood in the sense explained above).

What would, however, be incompatible with methodological individualism is the assumption that collective attitudes are collective not only with respect to their content, their modes, and their presupposed circumstances but also with respect to the subjects of these attitudes. Gilbert uses the slightly misleading term "plural subjects" but also makes it very clear that she does not want to claim that there are non-individual subjects apart from individual subjects.[44] It is, I think, hard to see how one could defend such an idea of a non-individual subject; it is also hard to see who would nowadays still want to defend such an idea.

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41. See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, passim; Tuomela, *Social Ontology*, ch.1; Searle, *Making the Social World*, ch.3; John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York etc.: Free Press, 1995), 23-26.
42. See, e.g., Tuomela, *Social Ontology*, ch.1.
43. See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, 13, ch.III, 428-431; see also Bratman, *Shared Intention*.
44. See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, passim; Searle, *Making the Social World*, ch.3 agrees but also see David-Hillel Ruben, "John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 443 vs. Jennifer Hornsby, "Collectives and Intentionality," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997) together with John R. Searle, "Responses to Critics of The Construction of Social Reality," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997), 449-458; arguably, Hegel's "Weltgeist" could be interpreted as such a collective subject – see, e.g., Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1986).

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4. There is nothing either Social or Non-Social, but Collective Intentionality Makes it so?

I don't doubt that the notion of collective intentionality (understood in the individualist way sketched above) has a useful role to play in the understanding and explanation of social phenomena. However, one can only do so much with this notion and there are principled limitations to its use in social science. Margaret Gilbert applies her idea of plural subjects and collective intentionality to groups, group action, group belief and group intentionality, including social conventions.[45] She concedes at some point that his does not cover all of social life – not, for instance, social classes or social organizations.[46] It is not just macro-level social phenomena like structures of social and political inequality that fall beyond the analytic reach of such an account of social groups; many meso-level phenomena like, e.g., the spreading of a rumour, or micro-level phenomena like, e.g., the falling in and out of love, are at most only partly constituted by collective intentionality. Apart from that, the social explanation of how plural subjects and group phenomena come into being will very often and perhaps typically not involve other kinds of plural subjects or group phenomena. The notion of social action and interaction might be needed here and might turn out to be more fundamental than the notions of collective intentionality after all. However, as long as one is aware of the limited applicability and explanatory power of a given notion, it can be very useful.

John Searle[47] uses the notion of collective intentionality (which he explains in less detail than, for instance, Margaret Gilbert) in order to explain the origin and nature of social institutions. An institution – like the institution of money, for instance – derives from the collective imposition and recognition of certain "status functions" to certain things in certain contexts. In the case of money, we all (or only most of us?) agree to treat certain pieces of paper as money (or a generalized exchange medium) in the marketplace. The general form of a status function is, according to Searle, the following (with "C" referring to circumstances): X counts as Y in C (this is a rough sketch of Searle's account but fine enough here). Even though Searle recognizes here and there that not all social facts are

45. See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, esp. ch.IV.

46. See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, 226-232 but see also 441-442.

47. See Searle, *Making the Social World*, especially chs.1-5, and Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, especially chs.1-2 but also chs.4-6.

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institutional facts and also that there are, for instance, socially relevant consequences of institutional facts which are not themselves institutional facts[48], he ends his 2010 book with a very strong claim: "all of human institutional reality, and in that sense nearly all of human civilization, is created in its initial existence and maintained in its continued existence by a single, logico-linguistic operation. … It is a Status Function Declaration." [49] However, this goes too far; a couple of remarks on the reasons why seem appropriate here.[50]

Here is a first problem for Searle's account. An explanation of how X counts as Y is not and does not entail an explanation of Y, its nature and existence; it rather presupposes Y, its nature and existence as a given. An explanation of how this green paper counts as money in this country does not amount to or even involve an explanation of the institution of money itself; it rather presupposes the institution of money as already given. The question "What is money?" or "How did the institution of money arise?" cannot be answered by identifying what counts as money. Another case: An explanation of how this person, Mary S., counts as queen in this country, does not explain but rather presuppose the institution of monarchy. The question "What is monarchy?" or "How did monarchy arise?" cannot be answered by identifying queens or kings. If Searle's aim is to give an account of institutional facts, of their nature and origin, then he seems to be missing the target and rather to be presupposing what he intends to explain.

But even if this should be too harsh, other questions create problems for Searle's account. How does the collective assignment and recognition of status functions itself come into being? How do social institutions come into being? It is very plausible to assume that this is due to social processes (at least in typical cases). So far, Searle would and could agree. There might well be cases, perhaps even many cases, in which a status function or institution comes into being on the basis of another status function or institution; we would thus have to assume hierarchies of levels of them. However, one should think that there has to be a basic level of foundational status functions or institutions. These basic ones have to be explained through social processes and structures which are not them-

48. See Searle, *Making the Social World*, 116-117, passim; Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, 120-126.

49. See Searle, *Making the Social World*, 201.

50. See also Peter Baumann, "The Social Construction of Social Reality," *Dissertatio*, 19-20 (2004), 313-322 on some of the following.

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selves institutional processes and structures in Searle's sense. The origin and dynamics of certain economic or political structures (like a market economy or monarchy) are prime examples here. It seems hopeless to assume some pre-social state of nature out of which the basic status functions or institutions develop. There is a wide variety of social factors which play crucial roles here: inequalities of economic and other kinds of resources, relations of power[51] and influence, systems of social roles and socially shared belief- and value-systems. A lot of social life is shot through with force and fraud as well as beliefs in the legitimacy of a given social order.[52]

Finally, and closely related to the above, there are a lot of social facts which are not institutional facts in Searle's sense (at micro-, meso- and macro-levels): capitalism, the fashion of wearing ponytails amongst some human males in some circles, or an unpleasant confrontation between strangers on the street. Many of these social phenomena are also presupposed for various status functions (see above). Searle's understandable focus on speech act theory as a basis for his theory of status function declarations might be responsible for a certain "intellectualist" bias in this view of social life. Searle's account covers some important social phenomena but also leaves out some others. And there is a lot his account leaves out about those phenomena he covers.

5. All's Well that Ends Well?

It is not easy to determine what one can and what one cannot do with certain tools, including conceptual tools. Notions of collective intentionality like the one discussed above have their use but a limited one. Other

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51. To be sure, Searle talks about power, both deontic powers resulting from status functions (see Searle, *Making the Social World*, passim) as well as other types of power resulting from status functions (see Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, 94-112), like political power (see Searle, *Making the Social World*, ch.7). Even though Searle acknowledges (see Searle, *Making the Social World*, ch.7) that there are forms of power not based in status functions, he does not seem to acknowledge that power relations play an explanatory role for the establishment of status functions in the first place. What, for instance, about slavery? How much collective intentionality and status functions are involved here? How much could the latter explain about slavery? See on this also the exchange between Raimo Tuomela, "Searle on Social Institutions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 440, and Searle, *Responses*, 453-454. See on power also Epstein, *The Ant Trap*, 261.

52. On the latter see, again, Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, passim.

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conceptual tools will be necessary too. The concept of social action should be mentioned here; it might be even more important for an account of the social than (almost) any other notion. This fits with the view defended here that non-identifying reductive individualism is the most plausible account of the social (so far). This form of analytic individualism is compatible with ontological holism as well as with explanatory holism. Analytic individualism might not be the most fashionable thing in social ontology these days but I would still favor it over all competing accounts I know.[53]

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