

John R. Searle
The Construction
of Social Reality

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Background Abilities and the Explanation of Social Phenomena

Constitutive Rules and Causation

I have said that the structure of human institutions is a structure of constitutive rules. I have also said that people who are participating in the institutions are typically not conscious of these rules; often they even have false beliefs about the nature of the institution, and even the very people who created the institution may be unaware of its structure. But this combination of claims poses a serious question for us: Under these conditions, what causal role can such rules possibly play in the actual behavior of those who are participating in the institutions? If the people who are participating in the institution are not conscious of the rules and do not appear to be trying to follow them, either consciously or unconsciously, and if indeed the very people who created or participated

in the evolution of the institution may themselves have been totally ignorant of the system of rules, then what causal role could the rules play?

The rules are in general not codified, and even in cases such as natural language and property where linguists, legislators, and lawyers have codified many of the rules, most of us are unaware of these codifications. And even if we were aware, the codifications are not self-interpreting. We have to know how to interpret or apply the codified rules.

A standard answer to this question is given in the literature of cognitive science and linguistics. I will be rejecting this answer in the course of this chapter. The answer is: Of course we are following these rules, but we do so *unconsciously*. Indeed, in many cases the rules are not even the sort of rules that we *could* be conscious of. For example, Chomsky, in his account of Universal Grammar, says that the child is able to learn the grammar of a particular natural language only because he or she already is innately in possession of the rules of a Universal Grammar, and these rules are so deeply unconscious that there is no way that a child could become conscious of their operation.¹ This move is very common in cognitive science. Fodor says that to understand any language we all have to know the Language of Thought.² And this language is so deeply unconscious that we can never become conscious of its operation. I am very dissatisfied with these accounts. Since Freud we have found it useful and convenient to speak glibly about the unconscious mind without paying the price of explaining exactly what we mean. Our picture of unconscious mental states is that they are just like conscious states only minus the consciousness. But what exactly is that supposed to mean? I have not seen a satisfactory answer to that question—certainly not in Chomsky or Fodor and not even in Freud. To put the point crudely, I believe that in most appeals to the unconscious in Cognitive Science we really have no clear idea what we are talking about.³

However, in this chapter I am not primarily interested in the

limitations of our current explanatory models but in proposing an alternative form of explanation. To explain how we can relate to rule structures such as language, property, money, marriage, and so on, in cases where we do not know the rules and are not following them either consciously or unconsciously, I have to appeal to the notion that I have elsewhere called "the Background."⁴ This chapter has two parts. In the first part I will make some general remarks about the Background and how it works; in the second part I will apply the principles stated in the first part to the understanding of institutional reality.

What Is the Background and How Does It Work?

In my writings on issues in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language, I have argued for what I call the thesis of the Background: Intentional states function only given a set of Background capacities that do not themselves consist in intentional phenomena. Thus, for example, beliefs, desires, and rules only determine conditions of satisfaction—truth conditions for beliefs, fulfillment conditions for desires, etc.—given a set of capacities that do not themselves consist in intentional phenomena. I have thus defined the concept of the "Background" as the set of nonintentional or preintentional capacities that enable intentional states of function. But in that definition there are four difficult concepts: "capacities," "enabling," "intentional states," and "function."

By *capacities* I mean abilities, dispositions, tendencies, and *causal structures generally*. It is important to see that when we talk about the Background we are talking about a certain category of neurophysiological causation. Because we do not know how these structures function at a neurophysiological level, we are forced to describe them at a much higher level. There is nothing dispiriting about that. When I say, for example, that I am able to speak English, I am talking about a causal capacity of my brain; but there

is no objection to identifying that capacity as, e.g., "the ability to speak English" without knowing the details of its neurophysiological realization.

Enabling is meant, then, to be a causal notion. We are not talking about logical conditions of possibility but about neurophysiological structures that function causally in the production of certain sorts of intentional phenomena.

Intentional states: I will assume that intentionality is unproblematic for the sake of this discussion, though I realize it is in fact a matter of much debate. Specifically, I am going to assume that my arguments to show that all intentional states are either actually or potentially conscious are sound⁵ and therefore I will confine my discussion to conscious forms of intentionality.

Finally, *function*: We will see shortly that there is a variety of different types of functioning of the Background. I will try to explain these under the general heading of the varieties of enabling.

The simplest argument for the thesis of the Background is that the literal meaning of any sentence can only determine its truth conditions or other conditions of satisfaction against a Background of capacities, dispositions, know-how, etc., which are not themselves part of the semantic content of the sentence. You can see this if you think about any sentence at all, but it is perhaps most obvious with sentences containing simple English verbs like "cut," "open," or "grow." Think, for example, of the occurrence of the word "cut" in sentences such as "Sally cut the cake" or "Bill cut the grass" or "The tailor cut the cloth"; or think of the verb "grow" in sentences such as "The American economy is growing" or "My son is growing" or "The grass is growing." In a normal literal utterance of each of these sentences, each verb has a constant meaning. There is no lexical ambiguity or metaphorical usage involved. But in each case the same verb will determine different truth conditions or conditions of satisfaction generally, because what counts as cutting or growing will vary with the context. If you consider the sentence "Cut the grass!" you know that this is to be interpreted differently from "Cut the cake!" If somebody tells me to cut the cake

and I run over it with a lawn mower or they tell me to cut the grass and I rush and stab it with a knife, there is a very ordinary sense in which I did not do what I was told to do. Yet nothing in the literal meaning of those sentences blocks those wrong interpretations. In each case we understand the verb differently, even though its literal meaning is constant, because in each case our interpretation depends on our Background abilities.

I do not want now to develop the argument in favor of the Background, but I do want to emphasize that the phenomenon is pervasive. Consider an example of the sorts of sentences that are discussed in linguistic pragmatics: "She gave him her key and he opened the door." There is much discussion about whether when a speaker utters that sentence it is actually said (or merely implied) that he opened the door *with that key*, and whether he actually says that she *first* gave him the key and *then later* he opened the door; but it is generally agreed that there is a certain undetermination of what is said by the literal meaning of this sentence.⁶ I wish to say that there is a *radical* undetermination of what is said by the literal meaning of the sentence. There is nothing in the literal meaning of the sentence "She gave him her key and he opened the door" to block the interpretation, He opened the door with her key by bashing the door down with the key; the key weighed two hundred pounds and was in the shape of an axe. Or, He swallowed both the door and the key and he inserted the key in the lock by the peristaltic contraction of his gut.

I leave it to your imagination to produce an indefinite range of ridiculous but still literal interpretations of this or any other sentence. And the point is that the only thing that blocks those interpretations is not the semantic content but simply the fact that you have a certain sort of knowledge about how the world works, you have a certain set of abilities for coping with the world, and those abilities are not and could not be included as part of the literal meaning of the sentence.

The thesis of the Background can be extended from semantic contents to intentional contents generally. Any intentional state

only functions, that is, it only determines conditions of satisfaction, against a set of Background abilities, dispositions, and capacities that are not part of the intentional content and could not be included as part of the content.

My discussion of the Background is related to other discussions in contemporary philosophy. I think that much of Wittgenstein's later work is about what I call the Background. And if I understand him correctly, Pierre Bourdieu's important work on the "habitus" is about the same sort of phenomena that I call the Background. In the history of philosophy, I believe Hume was the first philosopher to recognize the centrality of the Background in explaining human cognition, and Nietzsche was the philosopher most impressed by its radical contingency. Nietzsche saw, with anxiety, that the Background does not have to be the way it is.

How does the Background work? I want to give you a feel for how Background capacities, though they are not and could not be construed as further intentional contents, nonetheless form the necessary preconditions for the functioning of intentional contents. One way to do this is to list several types of Background functions.

First, as already argued, the Background enables linguistic interpretation to take place.

I have claimed that the meaning of any sentence radically underdetermines its truth conditions, because the literal meaning of the sentence only fixes a set of truth conditions given certain Background capacities. Notice that in the examples the words have a common semantic content. The word "cut" does keep a common meaning in our examples, but we don't interpret the sentences at the level of bare semantic content; interpretation rises to the level of our Background abilities. We immediately and effortlessly interpret these sentences in the stereotypical appropriate way.

Second, the Background enables perceptual interpretation to take place.

What goes for semantics goes for perception. It is a familiar point that given certain Background skills, we are able to see things as certain sorts of things. Remember Wittgenstein's example of the figure that can be seen as either a duck looking to the left or a rabbit looking to the right, up at the sky.⁷ We are able to see the figure as either a duck or a rabbit, because we bring to bear on the raw perceptual stimulus a set of Background skills; in this case we bring the ability to apply certain categories. And what goes for this case goes for perception in general. I see this as a chair, this as a table, that as a glass, indeed any normal case of perception will be a case of *perceiving as*, where the perceiver assimilates the perceived object to some more or less familiar category.

These two pervasive functions, namely, the role of the Background in facilitating linguistic interpretation and the role in facilitating perceptual interpretation, are extended to consciousness generally:

Third, the Background structures consciousness.

It is an interesting fact about consciousness that our conscious experiences come to us with what we might call an aspect of familiarity. Even if I am in a strange locale, in the jungles of Mexico or in Africa, though the houses and the dress of the people look different from the way they look in Europe or in the United States still, those are familiar to me as houses and those are familiar as people; this is clothing; that is the sky; this is the earth. All non-pathological forms of consciousness are experienced under the aspect of familiarity. And this is a function of our Background capacities. Because all intentionality is aspectual, all conscious intentionality is aspectual; and the possibility of perceiving, that is, the possibility of experiencing under aspects requires a familiarity with the set of categories under which one experiences those aspects. The ability to apply those categories is a Background ability. We find this third feature of the Background by extending the first two features, namely, the features that the Background is essential to semantic interpretation and to perceptual interpreta-

tion. I am reluctant to use the word "interpretation" because it suggests something that is definitely false. The use of this word suggests that there is an act of interpreting whenever we understand something or perceive something, and of course I don't want to say that. I want to say we normally just see an object or understand a sentence, without any act of interpreting. It is a very special intellectual performance to produce an act of interpretation. With Wittgenstein⁸ I might want to reserve the word "interpretation" for cases where we actually perform a conscious and deliberate act of interpreting, e.g., where we substitute one expression for another. With that caveat, I want to say that the understanding of utterances and the experiencing of ordinary conscious states require Background capacities.

Notice the sheer intellectual effort it takes to break with our Background. Surrealist painters tried to do this, but even in a surrealist painting, the three-headed woman is still a woman, and the drooping watch is still a watch, and those crazy objects are still objects against a horizon, with a sky and a foreground. I apologize for the swiftness with which I am moving through this dangerous territory. I am trying as quickly as I can to get back to the main question of the causal explanations of institutional facts, and right now the point is to develop the tools I need for that discussion.

This leads to the next manifestation of the Background.

Fourth, temporally extended sequences of experiences come to us with a narrative or dramatic shape. They come to us under what for want of a better word I will call "dramatic" categories.

Just as our particular experiences occur to us as aspectual, i.e., with aspectual shapes, so there is a narrative shape to sequences of experiences. The Background has not only an episodic application, as in the examples that we have so far considered, but it also has what we might call a dynamic application over a series of successive events. Obvious instances of this are where the perceptual

and linguistic categories extend to long sequences of events. I not only perceive things as houses, cars, and people but I also possess certain scenarios of expectation that enable me to cope with the people and objects in my environment; and these include a set of categories for how houses, cars, and people interact, or how things proceed when I walk into a restaurant, or what happens when I shop in a supermarket, for example. More grandly, people have a series of expectations about bigger categories in their life, such as the category of falling in love, or getting married and raising a family, or going to a university and getting a degree. La Rochefoucauld says somewhere that very few people would fall in love if they never read about it; and nowadays, we would have to add if they never saw it on television or in the movies. What they get from television, movies, and reading is, of course, in part a set of beliefs and desires. The point at present, however, is that beliefs and desires only fix conditions of satisfaction against a Background of capacities that are not themselves beliefs or desires. So another manifestation of the Background is in what I call the dramatic categories that extend over sequences of events and structure those sequences into narrative shapes.

Fifth, each of us has a set of motivational dispositions, and these will condition the structure of our experiences.

Let us suppose that you are obsessed by Oriental rugs, sports cars, and fine wines. Then you will experience the streets of Paris or New York in a different way from the person who is obsessed by cloud formations and Arizona cactus. There are lots of opportunities for the collector of fine wines and Oriental rugs, not so much for Arizona cactus. Of course, collectors of Oriental rugs do have conscious beliefs and desires about Oriental rugs. I believe that Kazaks cost a lot more than Hamadans, for example, and I believe that all antique rugs nowadays cost too much. I would like to own a Chi-Chi. These and other beliefs and desires help to structure my experiences. But the important thing for the present discus-

sion is that, in addition to such specific beliefs and desires, what gives sense to those beliefs and desires is a set of motivational dispositions.

Sixth, the Background facilitates certain kinds of readiness.

At any given point I am ready for certain things and not other things. In large cities, I am ready for street noises, I am ready for the sound of cars and the sights of lots of other people, stores, and traffic. When I am on the ski slope, I am ready for other skiers coming by as potential projectiles. But when I am giving a lecture I am not at all ready for a skier to come skiing through the lecture hall; I would be absolutely astounded if a skier suddenly came through, or if an elephant simply walked into the room. But I am completely ready for the sorts of noises and responses that one normally hears in lecture halls. My Background capacities determine a set of readinesses that structure the nature of my experience. When I am skiing, I am ready for other skiers as potential sources of danger, as people likely to try to push in front of me in the lift line, as exemplars of good skiing technique, as attractive members of the opposite sex, as wearers of good or bad ski apparel, as old skiing friends I encounter on the ski slope. In a seminar, I am ready for people to raise their hand and accuse me of infinite regress arguments or fallacies of composition, but I do not have the reverse readiness. If in the deep snow at the top of Red Dog Ridge, I encountered a bunch of people seated at university desks, raising their hands and saying such things to me as "There is an infinite regress in one of your arguments," I would be astounded by that. Such things could happen, but they definitely are not the sort of thing that the Background makes me ready for. A lot of comedy is based on just such incongruities.

Seventh, the Background disposes me to certain sorts of behavior.

I am disposed to laugh at certain kinds of jokes and not others, I am disposed to speak at a certain level of loudness and not at another, I am disposed to stand at a certain distance from people

when I talk to them and not at certain other distances. I am calling all of these, manifestations of the Background.

These, then, are seven ways in which my Background abilities manifest themselves in actual occurrent forms of intentionality. I do not for a moment suppose that these are all the ways that the Background is manifested, but at least they are ones I feel reasonably confident fit the theory of the Background that I have tried to state so far.

Background Causation

Now I turn to my main topic: How can it be that the rules of the institution play a role in our dealings with the institution, even though we are not following the rules either consciously or unconsciously? Of course, in some cases we actually are following the rules. I might teach you a new card game and you might memorize the rules and follow the rules of the game. But for many institutions, particularly after I have become expert at operating within the institution, I just know what to do. I know what the appropriate behavior is, without reference to the rules.

Let me give a couple of examples of what puzzles me. Consider the skilled professional playing baseball. After he hits the ball he runs to first base. Now if we ask, Why does he do that? we can say: He wants to get a hit; he wants to get on first base; he wants to do that because he wants to score runs; and he wants to score runs so that his team can win. But what role do the rules of baseball play in this explanation? Do we also want to say that he wants to follow the rules of baseball? That seems a little odd; that is more appropriate to the beginner. Unless there is some dispute, the rules of baseball don't concern the expert at all; he is too far advanced to be worried about the rules of baseball. Consider another example. A woman takes her shopping list to the supermarket. The list is an explicit statement of a set of desires, and in the course of the shopping the woman will be dealing with money and merchandise. Do we want to say that in addition to the desire

for the items she is buying, she has a desire to follow the constitutive rules of money or that she is unconsciously following the constitutive rules of money? I find those claims implausible. And that implausibility leads me to the questions I am now trying to pose.

If we look at the recent history of the social sciences, we find roughly speaking that two kinds of causation are accepted. One is mental causation, according to which the agent is operating consciously or unconsciously, with a set of rational procedures over more or less well-defined sets of intentional states, such as preference schedules or internalized rules. There are many cases in which that sort of intentionalistic explanation is appropriate, where, for example, we have rational decision making in behavior. This happens, for example, when the leaders of a country try to decide on an economic policy that will improve the balance of payments and the rate of economic growth. That is a case of rational decision making, and something like the principles of rational decision making seem to apply. But there are also many cases where that model is very unnatural. Suppose I am driving to work, or suppose I am sitting in a restaurant looking at the menu and trying to decide what to eat. In such cases it seems implausible to say that I am performing a set of calculations to try to get myself on a higher indifference curve, given an antecedent set of well-ordered preferences.

In fact, if you look really closely at decision theoretic models of rationality, you will find that they are not satisfactory at all. Here is one example. It is a consequence of Bayesian decision theory that if you value any two things, there must be some odds at which you would bet one against the other. Thus if you value a dime and you value your life, there must be some odds at which you would bet your life against a dime. Now I have to tell you, there are no odds at which I would bet my life for a dime, or if there were, there are certainly no odds at which I would bet my son's life for a dime. I have pointed this out to several famous decision theorists, and after usually half an hour of argument, they say, "You are simply irrational." I do not think so. I think it is rather they who have a

problem with rationality. This is not the place to develop the argument, but I want to suggest that a conception of rationality as a set of specific, well-defined operations over sharply delineated, explicit intentional contents is inadequate.

Another form of causal explanation that is common in the social sciences does not appeal to intentional contents but to brute physical causation. In the United States, behaviorism was the most prominent version of this type of explanation. I had thought that behaviorism was dead, but there are some recent efforts to revive it.

How then should we think of Background causation? If we think there are these two general models of causation of behavior, one employing intentional causation and one employing what could be called billiard-ball causation, which is the appropriate model for describing the Background? I shall argue that in the end neither is an appropriate model. We need a different model for explaining how Background abilities enable us to relate to institutions.

Readers familiar with recent debates in cognitive science will recognize certain closely related problems. My problem is, How do we characterize the role of Background capacities for dealing with institutions? A related problem that has been discussed for decades concerns how to distinguish between *rule-described* behavior and *rule-governed* behavior. How are we to think of the rules of a language, for example, the rules of a syntax? On one view, we should just say that the rules do not have any reality except as a part of a theoretical description of phenomena. So the rules are a device the linguist uses to characterize the phenomena, but they just describe the behavior, they don't actually play any role in causing it. The more adventurous view says that the behavior isn't just rule-described but is rule-governed, or rule-guided. And in this case we are to think of the semantic content of the rule as actually playing a causal role in determining the behavior. So that when the agent, for example, produces an English sentence, her unconscious internalization of the rules is actually

acting causally to produce that particular syntactic structure. And when the mature adult performs speech acts, in any language, when she makes a promise or gives an order, we are to think of the rules of speech acts as functioning unconsciously in the production of the behavior.

Now, which of those is the right way to think of the Background? I am not satisfied with either. Here is the problem as I see it. If we think of the Background intentionally, then we have abandoned the thesis of the Background. We arrived at that thesis in the first place only because we found that intentionality goes only so far. The intentionality is not self-interpreting. But if, on the other hand, we say that the rules play no causal role at all in the behavior, then we must say that the Background is such that this is just what the person does, he just behaves that way. For example, he produces these kinds of sentences and not other kinds. He simply acts the way he does, and that is the end of the story. Wittgenstein often talks in this latter way. He says there just is an *ungrounded* way of acting.⁹ We reach the point where we just do it. We talk this way and not that way. We accept this and not that. But Wittgenstein's approach is very unsatisfying, because it does not tell us what the role of the rule structure is. We want to say that institutions like money, property, syntax, and speech acts are systems of constitutive rules, and we want to know the role of that rule structure in the causal explanation of human behavior. I talk and I buy things with money as naturally as I walk, but talk and money seem to have a rule structure that walking does not seem to have.

Another way in which a closely related issue comes out in contemporary intellectual life is in the current debate between the two competing paradigms in cognitive science. One is the paradigm of the traditional, von Neumann serial information processing, where a computer implements a set of linear steps of a program. The other is the more recent development of parallel distributed processing, or neuronal net modeling, where there is a meaningful input and a meaningful output, but in between

there are no symbol-processing steps; rather, there is just a series of nodes with different connection strengths between them, and signals pass from one node to another, and eventually changes in the connection strengths give the right match of inputs and outputs, without any set of rules or logical principles in between. One might say that this whole talk about the Background is certainly more in tune with, is more sympathetic with, the connectionist model of cognition. I think that's right. But it still leaves us with the challenge posed by those who oppose connectionism, namely, what are the features of the internal structure that enable the system to produce a structured output that manifests compositional and other logical properties?

Here is our paradox: We want a causal explanation that will explain the intricacy, the complexity, and the sensitivity of our behavior as well as explaining its spontaneity, creativity, and originality. But we only have the two paradigms of causal explanation, and neither seems adequate to explain the relations of individual humans to social structures. One is the paradigm of rational decision making according to rules, principles, and the like, and the other is brute physical causation and therefore non-intentionalistic and not rationalistic. Whether it is connectionism or behaviorism, this type of causation does not have a rational structure.

The key to understanding the causal relations between the structure of the Background and the structure of social institutions is to see that the Background can be causally sensitive to the specific forms of the constitutive rules of the institutions without actually containing any beliefs or desires or representations of those rules. To see this, let us start with a simple example. Suppose a baseball player learns how to play baseball. At the beginning he actually learns a set of rules, principles, and strategies. But after he gets skilled, his behavior becomes much more fluent, much more melodic, much more responsive to the demands of the situation. In such a case, it seems to me, he is not applying the rules more skillfully; rather, he has acquired a set of dispositions

or skills to respond appropriately, where the appropriateness is actually determined by the structure of the rules, strategies, and principles of baseball. The basic idea, which I will now explain, is that one can develop, a set of abilities that are sensitive to specific structures of intentionality without actually being constituted by that intentionality. One develops skills and abilities that are, so to speak, functionally equivalent to the system of rules, without actually containing any representations or internalizations of those rules.

Consider a slightly more complicated case than baseball, conditions of money. I have tried to describe some of the constitutive rules of money. How do those rules function in actual behavior? The users of money do not know those rules, and in general, I am arguing, they do not apply them consciously or unconsciously; rather, they have developed a set of dispositions that are sensitive and responsive to the specific content of those rules. So they must have the ability to use money as a medium of exchange, and they have to be responsive to the distinction between counterfeit money and real money, even though they might not be able to tell the difference without expert help. Their behavior has to be responsive to the fact that currency is valuable not because of the paper it is printed on but because it functions as a medium of exchange. And those sorts of abilities, this type of know-how, that become ingrained are in fact a reflection of the sets of constitutive rules whereby we impose functions on entities that do not have those functions in virtue of their physical structure, but acquire the function only through collective agreement or acceptance.

There is a parallelism between the functional structure of the Background and the intentional structure of the social phenomena to which the Background capacities relate. That strict parallelism gives us the illusion that the person who is able to deal with money, to cope with society, and speak a language must be unconsciously following rules. Here I am arguing, Of course there are rules and often we do follow them, both consciously and unconsciously, but

1. The rules are never self interpreting,

and

2. They are never exhaustive,

and

3. In fact in many situations, we just know what to do, we just know how to deal with the situation. We do not apply the rules consciously or unconsciously.

We don't stop and think, consciously or unconsciously, "Ah ha! Money is a case of the imposition of function through collective intentionality according to a rule of the form 'X counts as Y in C' and requires collective agreement." Rather, we develop skills that are responsive to that particular institutional structure.

We can understand these points better if we consider some analogous explanatory strategies. There is an obvious analogy between what I have been saying and certain problems in evolutionary biology. From a philosophical point of view, the marvelous thing about Darwinian evolutionary biology was not only that it drove teleology out of the biological explanation of the origin of species but that it gave us a new kind of explanation, a form of explanation that inverts the order of the explanatory apparatus. So, in pre-Darwinian biology, we would say, for example, "The fish has the shape that it does in order to survive in water." In evolutionary biology we perform an inversion on that intentional or teleological explanation, where we substitute two levels of explanation. First, the causal level: We say the fish has the shape that it has because of its genetic structure, because of the way the genotype, in response to the environment, produces the phenotype. Second, the "functional" level: We say that fish that have that shape are more likely to survive than fish that do not. Thus, we have inverted the structure of the explanation. The original structure was, the fish has this shape in order to survive; now we have inverted it: the fish is going to have this shape anyway, but fish that

do have this shape are more likely to survive than fish that do not. Notice what we have done in the inversion. Survival still functions as part of the explanation, but now it is introduced into the explanation diachronically. It functions over a period of many generations, and its causal role is inverted. Because the teleology is now eliminated, survival is not a goal that is pursued but simply an effect that happens; and when it happens it enables the reproduction of the survival-producing mechanisms.

A similar inversion should be applied to human Background capacities for coping with social phenomena. Instead of saying, the person behaves the way he does because he is following the rules of the institution, we should just say, First (the causal level), the person behaves the way he does, because he has a structure that disposes him to behave that way; and second (the functional level), he has come to be disposed to behave that way, because that's the way that conforms to the rules of the institution.

In other words, he doesn't need to know the rules of the institution and to follow them in order to conform to the rules; rather, he is just disposed to behave in a certain way, but he has acquired those unconscious dispositions and capacities in a way that is sensitive to the rule structure of the institution. To tie this down to a concrete case, we should not say that the experienced baseball player runs to first base because he wants to follow the rules of baseball, but we should say that because the rules require that he run to first base, he acquires a set of Background habits, skills, dispositions that are such that when he hits the ball, he runs to first base.

Let me give a thought experiment that will illustrate the line of explanation I am proposing. Suppose there were a tribe where children just grew up playing baseball. They never learn the rules as codified rules but are rewarded or criticized for doing the right thing or the wrong thing. For example, if the child has three strikes, and he says "Can't I have another chance?" he is told, "No, now you have to sit down and let someone else come up to bat." We can suppose that the children just become very skillful at play-

ing baseball. Now also suppose that a foreign anthropologist tries to describe the culture of the tribe. A good anthropologist might come up with the rules of baseball just by describing the behavior of these people and what they regard as normative in baseball situations. But it does not follow from the accuracy of the anthropological description that the members of this society are consciously or unconsciously following those rules. Nonetheless, those rules do play a crucial role in the explanation of their behavior, because they have acquired the dispositions that they have, precisely because those are the rules of baseball.

This was intended as a fantasy example, but in real life we are in a very similar situation regarding the rules of syntax or the rules of speech acts. Only someone who is a speech act theorist, as I am, would ever bother to codify the rules of speech acts. As the child grows up she finds out, for example, that if she makes a promise, she has to keep it, and if she breaks it she is severely criticized. The child acquires a certain know-how that enables her to cope with the institution. And what goes for baseball and promising seems to me to go for syntax as well. I am proposing, then, that in learning to cope with social reality, we acquire a set of cognitive abilities that are everywhere sensitive to an intentional structure, and in particular to the rule structures of complex institutions, without necessarily everywhere containing representations of the rules of those institutions.

To summarize: We can acknowledge the extremely complex, rule-governed structures of human institutions, and we can also acknowledge that those rule-governed structures play a causal role in the structure of our behavior, but I want to propose that in many cases it is just wrong to assume, and certainly unsupported by the evidence that has been presented in the course of these discussions, that our behavior matches the structure of the rules because we are unconsciously following the rules. Rather, we evolve a set of dispositions that are sensitive to the rule structure.

Somebody might object, "Aren't you really saying that it is 'as if' we were following the rules. But then that doesn't really explain

anything, since if there is no real intentionality, the 'as if' intentionality doesn't explain anything. As-if intentionality has no causal power because it does not really exist. As-if intentionality is just as empty as Daniel Dennett's 'intentional stance'¹⁰ and all of that is precisely the sort of behaviorism you have been militating against."

No, that is not what I am saying; rather, I am saying that if you understand the complexity of the causation involved, you can see that often the person who behaves in a skillful way within an institution behaves as if he were following the rules, but not because he is following the rules unconsciously nor because his behavior is caused by an undifferentiated mechanism that happens to look as if it were rule structured, but rather because the mechanism *has evolved precisely so that it will be sensitive to the rules*. The mechanism explains the behavior, and the mechanism is explained by the system of rules, but the mechanism need not itself be a system of rules. I am in short urging the addition of another level, a diachronic level, in the explanation of certain sorts of social behavior.

Now, one last objection. Somebody might say, "Why do you have these rules at all? Why don't you just have some kind of behaviorism? These things just happen, people just do these things." The answer is that where human institutions are concerned, we accept a socially created normative component. We accept that there is something wrong with the person who when the baseball is pitched at him simply eats it; something wrong with the person who doesn't recognize any reason to do something after he has made a promise to do it; something wrong with the person who goes around spouting ungrammatical sentences. And all these cases involve something wrong in a way that is different from the way there is something wrong with the man who stumbles when he walks; that is, there is a socially created normative component in the institutional structure, and this is accounted for only by the fact that the institutional structure is a structure of rules, and the actual rules that we specify in describing the institution will de-

termine those aspects under which the system is normative. It is precisely because of the rule that making a promise counts as undertaking an obligation that we recognize that certain kinds of behavior within the institution of promising are acceptable and certain other kinds are remiss. So there are in fact constitutive rules functioning causally, and we do in fact discover those rules in the course of our analysis. But it does not follow that a person is able to function in a society only if he has actually learned and memorized the rules and is following them consciously or unconsciously. Nor does it follow that a person is able to function in society only if he has "internalized" the rules as *rules*. The point is that we should not say that the man who is at home in his society, the man who is *chez lui* in the social institutions of the society, is at home because he has mastered the rules of the society, but rather that the man has developed a set of capacities and abilities that render him at home in the society; and he has developed those abilities because those are the rules of his society. The man at home in his society is as comfortable as the fish in the sea or the eyeball in its socket, and we do not have to account for the behavior entirely in terms of rules in any of these three cases.