

## Ibn Khaldūn and John Searle: The Construction of the Social World through Reason and Language

### *İbn Haldun ve John Searle: Sosyal Dünyanın Düşünce ve Dil ile İnşası*

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**Abstract:** This article undertakes a comparative examination of the social ontologies, or theories of civilization, proposed by John Searle and Ibn Khaldun. It suggests that a careful juxtaposition of Searle and Ibn Khaldun's social ontologies yields complementary perspectives on the emergence and nature of social reality. They both delineate a distinction between two categories of entities: human-independent and human-dependent. The former makes up the natural world, while the latter constitutes the social world. Both scholars attempt to understand the second category of entities, which Searle refers to as human civilization and Ibn Khaldun calls 'umrān. Although Searle and Ibn Khaldun share a common understanding regarding the importance of human activity in shaping social reality, their perspectives diverge when it comes to elucidating the mechanisms behind this phenomenon. Does the social world arise primarily from cognitive processes, or is it predominantly a consequence of linguistic expressions and speech acts? Searle asserts that language forms the basis of social reality, whereas Ibn Khaldun puts forth a social ontology based on reason. While Ibn Khaldun's social ontology explains the construction of tangible social entities such as buildings, Searle's theory can explain how is it that a mere physical structure transforms into an epistemologically objective fact—a university. Ultimately, this paper suggests that viewing the social world through the lenses of these two theories provides an intriguing and holistic perspective. This article suggests that the juxtaposition of these two ontological frameworks enriches our comprehension of the processes that give rise to the ontological-physical and epistemological-institutional dimensions of social entities.

**Keywords:** Social ontology, theory of civilization, human society, 'umrān, institutional facts, language, reason, Ibn Khaldūn, John Searle.



## Introduction

Social ontology, as defined by Epstein (2021), pertains to the examination of the essence and attributes of the social world. Also referred to as the "metaphysics of society," social ontology delves into the foundational principles that constitute the social reality (Görgün 2006, 169). Its focus rests on investigating the diverse entities within the world that spring forth from human endeavors and interactions (Epstein 2021). Hence, social ontology is concerned with two fundamental questions: the first deals with the constituents of social reality, while the second question pertains to the origin of social entities.

According to a classification made by Tiziana Andina, in contemporary social ontology, there are three paradigmatic theoretical positions: P-ontologies, I-ontologies, and O-ontologies (Andina 2016, 57). These approaches to social ontology are based on different starting points and perspectives on social reality. The P-ontologies, which draws inspiration from Aristotle's philosophy, focus on people and their relationships, as exemplified by the work of Margaret Gilbert (2015). The I-ontologies concentrate on institutions and regulations as the foundation of social reality, as suggested by John Searle and Herbert Lionel Hart. Conversely, the O-ontologies are concerned with the role and function of social objects, as illustrated by the research of Maurizio Ferraris (Andina 2016). Each approach provides a different lens through which to analyze and understand social phenomena. A comprehensive examination of debates in social ontology would necessitate more space than I have here. While the aim of this discussion is not to determine which of these categories Ibn Khaldun belongs to, it is worth noting that his theory can be interpreted through all these three approaches.

Searle's social ontology, expounded in his works "The Construction of Social Reality" (1995) and "Making The Social World" (2010), needs to be contextualized within his broader philosophical framework. According to Searle, humans are entities endowed with the ability to use language, a perspective that underpins his comprehension of social reality. For him, the emergence of social world, or in other words human civilization, is an inevitable consequence of their linguistic capacity to communicate. His contention is rooted in the premise that humans are inherently language-



speaking beings, leading him to dismiss the notion of a 'state of nature,' a hypothetical scenario positing humans in a pre-social, uncivilized condition (Searle 2010, 62). However, Searle's perspective resonates with Ibn Khaldūn's interpretation of social ontology. Long before Searle's time, Ibn Khaldūn proposed a theory of the social world rooted in reason and dismissed the concept of a state of nature. He contended that human beings are inherently social and political beings. Through his exploration of the inherent nature of social entities, Ibn Khaldūn endeavors to unveil the construction of social reality.

Searle's inquiries extend beyond the realm of ontology into the epistemology and social sciences, as he raises questions about how we extract epistemologically objective knowledge from ontologically subjective facts (Searle 2010, 18). Some may argue that such subjectivity lies outside the realm of science, but Searle claims that a better understanding of the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity in both ontology and epistemology is necessary (Searle 2010, 17). This understanding can shed light on the science of consciousness as an ontologically subjective field, while also addressing Searle's questions about how we have objective knowledge of social reality, human society, and civilization. This article provides an overview of the notions of objectivity and subjectivity within ontology and epistemology, delving into their relevance with the formation of social reality and the development of human civilization.

The fact that Ibn Khaldun engaged in social ontology before John Searle does not necessarily require us to position him as a precursor of social ontology or align him with the predominant Orientalist view of Ibn Khaldun as the forerunner of social sciences. Instead, this article asserts that Ibn Khaldun represents an alternative to social sciences in general and the field of social ontology in particular.<sup>1</sup> Labeling him as a precursor could imply that his ideas are outdated and less relevant to contemporary discourse.

The first part of this article will focus on John Searle's perspective on the nature of human civilization and his theoretical framework regarding

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<sup>1</sup> This viewpoint is credited to Professor Recep Şentürk, who contends that "Ibn Khaldun is not simply a forerunner of modern social thought, but has the potential to provide an alternative to it" (Şentürk, 2008).



the construction of social reality, as outlined in his seminal works, "The Construction of Social Reality" (1995) and "Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization" (2010). Subsequently, the article will delve into Ibn Khaldun's social ontology, presented within the sixth and the last chapter of the *Muqaddimah* on the sciences (Ibn Khaldun 2020). By conducting a comparative analysis of these two scholars' perspectives, the intention of this article is to highlight the distinctive and valuable insights that Ibn Khaldun brings to modern discussions concerning social ontology. Moreover, it suggests that the juxtaposition of their social ontologies offers a comprehensive perspective that enhances our understanding of the mechanisms underlying the ontological-physical and epistemological-institutional dimensions of social entities.

### **Constructing the Social World through Language: John Searle**

Searle asserts that the emergence of the social world is through language. He proposes that language assumes a vital function in shaping both social and institutional reality. Language does not merely depict an already existing reality; instead, it actively contributes to the construction of the reality it portrays (Searle 2010, 69). In other words, language forms and sustains institutional facts. He explains this through his account of intentionality and the theory of speech acts, which suggest that all institutional facts, created through language, constitute human society and civilization.

Searle begins with a straightforward observation regarding the nature of reality. He points out that certain aspects of reality, such as social reality, have foundations that are not fully accessible through the methods advanced and established by the natural sciences (Andina 2016, 68). He suggests two research directions: exploring ordinary language's role in social reality through speech acts and performatives, and examining intentionality—a characteristic of living beings, especially humans—to better understand the foundations of social reality (Andina 2016, 68–69).

This initial insight propelled him to devise a novel categorization for entities, accompanied by a crucial differentiation between two categories of facts: brute and institutional. Brute facts, exemplified by phenomena like the ice covering Mount Everest, trees, and the count of electrons residing in a hydrogen atom, exist independently from the observer and the



human mind (Searle 2010, 17). These facts are observer-independent, ontologically objective, and pre-language. Institutional facts, on the other hand, like money, marriage, traffic lights, and elections, are mind-dependent, ontologically subjective, observer-relative, and language-dependent (Searle 2010, 17). Institutional facts arise from collective intentionality within a group, representing a mutual accord among humans. Searle asserts that the emergence of institutional facts is exclusive to humans, as animals lack the capability to establish such constructs due to their inability to communicate through language (Searle 2010, 72).

It is commonly accepted that we can reach epistemically objective knowledge of ontologically objective brute facts. What creates puzzlement in Searle's mind is the fact that we can also reach epistemologically objective knowledge of social facts which are actually ontologically subjective (Searle 2010, 18). Searle raises inquiries into the existence of phenomena like consciousness, intentionality, free will, language, society, ethics, aesthetics, and political responsibilities within a universe, for him, solely composed of physical particles and fields of force (Searle 2010, 3). These inquiries are addressed by Searle himself through the development of a social ontology, aimed at unveiling the inherent structure of the social world and the process of the construction of human civilization (Andina, 2016).

To explore and gain insight into the foundational aspects of social reality, Searle recommends three tools: assignment of function, collective intentionality, and constitutive rules. The assignment of function is used to explain how objects are given a function based on the observer's perspective (Searle 2010, 42). For example, a chair's function is assigned by humans, and it is not inherent in its physical structure. Normativity is also a key aspect of this device as it explains how social norms are created and maintained through collective recognition.

Secondly, the concept of collective intentionality emphasizes that social reality emerges from the shared beliefs, desires, and intentions of individuals (Searle 2010, 8). This basic ontological fact explains how social behavior is different from individual behavior and how individuals can coordinate their actions to achieve a common goal.

Thirdly, constitutive rules are fundamental elements in the process of shaping social reality through the establishment of regulatory frameworks



that govern patterns of social behavior. These rules can take the form of either regulatory or constitutive rules, and they determine what is considered as social reality within a particular setting. To illustrate, a rule designating a specific document as a legally binding contract serves as an example of a constitutive rule.

### *Collective Intentionality*

Both brute and institutional facts play a crucial role in constructing the social reality, thus constituting integral components of societal structure and human civilization. Institutional facts rely on the existence of brute facts for their foundation. For instance, the conception of money, an institutional fact, necessitates the presence of a piece of paper, a brute fact. The progression from brute facts to institutional facts involves specific processes, which Searle explains through his speech acts theory. It is important to highlight that the establishment of institutional facts serves a purpose within the human context. Searle (1995) contends that institutional facts come into being through human consensus, a concept he terms 'collective intentionality,' and maintain their existence solely due to our belief in them. Consequently, the emergence of institutional facts is propelled by the collective intentionality shared among humans. In instances where only individual intentionality is present and collective intentionality is absent, this alone is insufficient to facilitate the transformation of a fact into a social reality. Searle (1995) also disagrees with methodological individualism, a perspective contending that social reality can be simplified to the behaviors of individual agents. Searle introduces the "we-intend" concept to illustrate the process by which social reality emerges from collective intentionality, rather than being solely the sum of individual intentions.

Thus, collective intentionality stands as the foundational principle underpinning an institutional fact. Our collective agreement shapes our recognition of a specific piece of paper as currency, our acknowledgment of residing in Turkey, or the identification of a place as a university. Despite their inherently observer-dependent nature, the existence of collective acceptance and intentionality allows us to possess epistemologically objective knowledge about them. Those who do not align with this collective perspective are simply mistaken.



*Assignment of Function through Constitutive Rules and Speech Acts*

Collective intentionality, which is the prerequisite for the emergence of institutional facts, is for the assignment of function. Functions are assigned through the utilization of constitutive rules. As outlined by Searle, the ability to assign functions to objects based on their requirements is a capability possessed by both humans and certain animals (Searle 1995, 7). The objects which are to be assigned functions should have the capacity or nature to perform that function. Before the assignment, the function is not performed in virtually physical structure of that object, although it has the necessary characteristics, capacity, and status to perform that function.

Human beings collectively assign a certain status to a person or to an object. These functions in accordance with the status of objects or people which are only performed in virtue of collective acceptance are called 'Status Function' by Searle (Searle 2010, 151). We can have ontologically subjective but epistemologically objective status functions. The imposition of status function relies on a specific rule, outlined as follows (Searle 2010, 151):

"X counts as Y in context C."

X: brute fact

Y: institutional fact

The application of this principle is the driving force behind the establishment of all status functions. For example, a green piece of paper (X) is considered as twenty liras (Y) within the context of the Central Bank of Turkey (C). Or, uttering 'yes' (X) signifies marriage (Y) during a wedding ceremony (C). Additionally, it is important to highlight that something is assigned a Y status function by fulfilling a specific X condition. Taking a broader perspective, we bestow status functions upon brute facts by employing the principle of "X counts as Y in context C," leading to the creation of institutional facts that are collectively acknowledged.

Searle asserts that the application of the status function, guided by this equation, is executed through the utilization of language. In this regard, Searle emphasizes the pivotal role of language in shaping institutional facts and, more broadly, in the establishment of human civilization. The concept of language, as Searle refers to, is not necessarily a proper language



such as French, Russian, or English as we understand today, but a system of symbols, or at least the capacity to symbolize.

Searle (1969) also makes distinction between *performative* and *constative* utterances, similar to the linguist J. L. Austin (1962). Performative utterances, which are similar to *insbā'ī* statements in Ibn Khaldun's philosophical framework, are speech acts where saying something actually carries out an action or performs a specific function. Constative utterances, on the other hand, like *ikbbārī* statements, just reports something and describe a given fact which can be either true or false.

Searle asserts that the creation of many institutional facts is through performative utterances. He calls this as *speech acts*, since speech creates actions (Searle 1969). His main thesis regarding Speech Acts theory is that speaking a language is actually to behave in accordance with some certain rules. Searle (1969) classifies these rules into two parts: *regulative* and *constitutive rules*. Regulative rules regulate the behaviour before the presence of the rule, for example, etiquette, traffic rules and etc. On the other hand, the constitutive rules regulate some courses of action and also create new ones, such as the rules of football and chess. It is noteworthy that constitutive rules establish the very existence of the fact they govern. For instance, playing chess hinges on the presence of these rules; without them, the concept loses its significance. Consequently, after differentiating between regulative and constitutive rules, Searle asserts that institutional facts can exclusively manifest within the framework of *constitutive rules*, established by *performative utterances*. Thus, performative utterances give rise to constitutive rules, these rules in turn engender speech acts, and through these speech acts, the imposition of a status function is achieved, leading to the transformation of brute facts into institutional realities. By repeatedly applying the constitutive rule "X counts as Y in context C," an extensive network of status functions emerges, ultimately forming the structure of human society and civilization.

#### *Language and Status Function Declarations*

The fundamental component of assignment of function and speech acts theory is language. According to him, it is impossible to have institu-





tional facts without language and all human institutions are essentially linguistic. So, to be able to understand the creation of human civilization through language, he explains how language works. Here Searle uses S (P) formula to explain the structure of intentional states. S is a pre-linguistic form of intentionality or the psychological mode such as believing, fearing, and hoping. (P) is a situation or the propositional content. For example, one believes (S) that there is ice on top of the Everest ((P)). Speech act has the same structure as F(P) which means intentionally stating or the type of speech act (F) that there is ice on top of the Everest ((P)). Through these speech acts, human beings learn to make sounds and create meanings. Human beings represent how things are by intentionally making sounds through which people represent how things are. These sounds either depict a ↓ word-to-world relationship, describing the state of the world as constative utterances, or an ↑ world-to-word relationship, leading to performative utterances and speech acts that do not just portray reality but can also transform it. He claims that language has five distinct purposes or actions: assertives (word-to-world relationship); directives (world-to-word relationship); commissives; expressives; and declarations (Searle 1976). Declarations are unique as they offer a two-way fit. Declarations both describe the current state of the reality and have the power to alter it. Searle suggests that human institutional reality are shaped by continuous uses of declarations, which give rise to status functions. Assigning such roles through declarations is termed as Status Function Declaration (Searle 2010, 88). Institutional facts are not only formed by Status Function Declarations, but also maintain their existence through repeated application of representations. Thus, Searle not only emphasizes the foundational role of language but also its significance in sustaining human civilization.

#### *Deontic Powers*

According to John Searle's theory of social ontology, language requires a deontology, which makes human forms of society and civilization possible. Institutional facts, such as governments, legal systems, and economic systems, provide human beings with deontic powers, including duties, permissions, authorizations, requirements, and certifications. These powers create and distribute power relations and explain human rationality, free will, political power, and human rights (Searle 2010, 123). Searle (2010) calls



status functions, which are the bearers of rights and obligations as "deontic powers" that carry these powers and hold human civilization together. Deontic powers are a crucial aspect of social reality that enable individuals to create and maintain social institutions through the collective intentionality of society.

Deontic powers can be seen as a form of normative power, as they are concerned with creating and enforcing rules and norms within society. They are not physical powers like the power of gravity or the power of a moving object, but rather they are powers that are granted and recognized by individuals within a social system. For instance, a police officer's authority to uphold the law stems from a deontic power, given and acknowledged by the collective society (Searle 2010, 163). Thus, the deontic powers inherent in status functions act as a glue holding human civilization intact (Searle 2010, 9). Every institutional fact that came into existence through the use of language maintains its existence thanks to these powers. In essence, language facilitates the establishment of shared norms, principles, and convictions on which social institutions depend and enable the recognition and enforcement of deontic powers.

In conclusion, Searle (2010) made three significant assertions. First, a single logico-linguistic process creates and upholds all human institutional reality, encompassing almost the entirety of human civilization. Second, this process is characterized as a Status Function Declaration. Finally, the diverse and complex nature of human civilization is attributable to the unrestricted scope of this process, allowing it to be used recursively, leading to the intricate structures of human societies.

### **Constructing the Social World through Reason: Ibn Khaldūn**

While studies on Ibn Khaldun are increasingly expanding and forming a vast literature, as far as I am aware, none of them address his theory of civilization in the context of the newly emerging discipline of social ontology, except Tahsin Görgün's works in Turkish (2006). Therefore, in this section, I seek to unearth Ibn Khaldun's views on social reality for its potential contribution to the contemporary discussions on the issue.

Ibn Khaldun's views on society aligns with modern social research in various ways. Firstly, he acknowledged society (*al-ijtimā' al-insānī*) as a distinct subject of study (Görgün 2006). Secondly, he proposed to describe



and explain society in a methodologically non-normative manner, but it is important to keep in mind that does not mean that his theory is completely free from normativity. Many scholars consider these similarities in other fields adequate to classify him as a “modern” social scientist.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's dualistic distinction of created beings—some being a direct manifestation of God's omnipotence and others stemming from human endeavors—resonates with the views of Hobbes and later Western philosophers, including John Searle.

#### *Multiplex Ontological Relationality*

Before delving into Ibn Khaldun's social ontology, it is important to first introduce his general ontological views briefly, as these are closely interconnected, and many of the same principles apply to both. According to Ibn Khaldun, the existence is multi-layered. There are different levels of reality that are ordered in a hierarchical manner. He says (Ibn Khaldun 1967a, 419–20):

We observe in ourselves through sound intuition the existence of three worlds. The first of them is the world of sensual perception. We become aware of it by means of the perception of the senses, which the animals share with us. Then, we become aware of the ability to think which is a special quality of human beings. We learn from it that the human soul exists. This knowledge is necessitated by the fact that we have in us scientific perceptions which are above the perceptions of the senses. They must thus be considered as another world, above the world of the senses. Then, we deduce (the existence of) a third world, above us, from the influences that we find it leaves in our hearts, such as volition and an inclination toward active motions. Thus, we know that there exists an agent there who directs us toward those things from a world above our world. That world is the world of spirits and angels. It contains essences that can be perceived because of the existence of influences they exercise upon us, despite the gap between us and them.

Ibn Khaldun held the view that all of existence with different degrees is arranged in a natural order of ascent and descent, creating an uninterrupted continuum (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 423). At the end of each stage, the essences are prepared to be transformed into the adjacent essence, either

<sup>2</sup> See Kayapınar (2011), for a detailed analysis of the arguments of those scholars.



above or below them. This concept applies to simple material elements, plants, animals, and even to the relationship between monkeys and humans, and humans, prophets, and angels. The preparedness for transformation on either side of each stage of existence is what is meant by their connection (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 423).

Ibn Khaldun distinguishes two types of beings: those created directly by God and those resulting from human actions (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 413–14). The former includes natural phenomena and human beings, while the latter includes social structures and cultural practices that are subject to change over time.

#### *An Endless Pattern in Creation*

Ibn Khaldūn's thought can be understood through four main principles that explain the concept of multiplex relationality in his ideas. First, he stresses the importance of order, organization, and robust structure, referred to as *al-tartīb wa al-iḥkām*, a cornerstone of his philosophical thought. As previously noted, every entity, whether simple or composite, is organized in a natural sequence of ascent and descent, forming an uninterrupted continuum (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 423). Second, he draws attention to the connections between causes and their effects, termed as *rabṭ al-asbāb bi al-musabbabāt* (Ibn Khaldun 1967a, 194). This principle highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between causes and their effects. This principle, as will come below, applies in the social world as well, and constitute the ontological basis of formation of the social world. Thirdly, Ibn Khaldūn emphasizes the connection between parts of the creation, or *ittiṣāl al-akwān bi al-akwān*, which is a central theme in his understanding of the natural world (Ibn Khaldun 1967a, 194). Finally, he highlights the transformations of some entities into others, or *istiḥālat ba'd al-mawjūdāt ilā ba'd*, which emphasizes the dynamic nature of the universe and the constant change that occurs within it (Ibn Khaldun 1967a, 194).

Ibn Khaldun justifies his multiplex epistemology, including the knowledge of the prophets, through this final ontological principle. Integrating these principles provides a thorough insight into Ibn Khaldūn's beliefs about existence, encompassing his interpretations of both the social and natural realms, which form a continuous sequence in creation.

#### *Society as a Being Qua Being*



To begin with, I would like to zoom in to his concept of *'umrān* first. *'Umrān* is usually translated as human society or civilization. It means the environment that emerges from the actions of individuals, which in turn shape their attitudes, behaviors, and natures. It is the totality of facts and institutions that humans construct. Certain things emerge as long as humans exist. Ibn Khaldun calls them as *'umrān*. Imagine our world as consisting only of natural elements such as trees, mountains, and oceans, without any human life. The difference between that world and the one we have built and inhabit today is *'umrān*.

One of Ibn Khaldun's most innovative contributions is the introduction of a novel discipline termed *'ilm al-'umrān*, which focuses on the social realm emerged from human activities. He viewed the social world as an ontological entity, as a *being qua being*, predating John Searle in his accounts of social ontology. However, it is important not to position him simply as a precursor to social ontology or to the Orientalist view of him as the forerunner of social sciences, as previously mentioned. Instead, Ibn Khaldun offers an alternative perspective to both social sciences and social ontology.

Ibn Khaldun views society as a self-contained entity that has its own nature and existence, as a being in its own right, with its own being-ness or essence. Ibn Khaldun classified created beings (*al-kā'imāt*) into two distinct categories (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 413–14). The first category encompasses the individual entities (*zawā'it maḥḍa*), which include elements and their derivatives, like minerals, plants, and animals. These entities are linked to divine power. The subsequent category pertains to actions derived from living entities (*al-af'āl al-ṣādira an al-ḥayawānāt*). These actions arise from their intentions and are linked to the divine authority granted to them. While human actions tend to be orderly, the actions of the animals lack this orderliness (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 414). He says (1967b, 413–14):

It should be known that the world of existent things comprises pure essences, such as the elements, the things resulting from their influence, and the three things that come into being from the elements, namely, minerals, plants, and animals. All these things are connected to the divine power. It also comprises actions proceeding from living beings, that happen through their intentions, and are connected to the power that God has



given them. Some of their actions are well arranged and orderly. Such are human actions. Others are not well arranged and orderly. They are the actions of living beings other than man.

In this context, Ibn Khaldun perceives human actions as a distinct category in the realm of ontology. This categorization serves as the philosophical foundation for the subject of his pioneering discipline.

*The Pivotal Role of Thinking for Orderly Actions*

Ibn Khaldun suggests that the structured nature of human actions stems from the mind's ability to discern the inherent order in things, whether they arise naturally (*tabi'i*) or through deliberate design (*wad'i*). He claims that before one strives to bring something into existence, they must first comprehend its underlying factors and the conditions leading to its existence. These factors are the principles of that particular thing and cannot be arranged in a different order. Each principle relies on another preceding it, to which its existence is posterior, either continuously in an upward progression or until a certain point. When an individual sets out to create an entity, they begin with the furthest principle discerned by their cognition. This principle then initiates their actions, guiding them through the chain of causes back to the primary element that sparked their contemplative journey. In sum, this methodology highlights the significance of grasping foundational principles and their interrelations in the formation of the social reality.

*Orderly Human Actions Construct the Social World*

Through their cognitive abilities, humans discern the organization and order inherent to entities that emerge, whether through natural processes (*tabi'i*) or deliberate configurations (*wad'i*) (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 414). Ibn Khaldun claims that before one intends to create something, they should grasp the underlying origin and causes, as well as the conditions steering its formation, ensuring its emergence in an orderly manner. These causes or origins serve as the fundamental principles of the entity in question and necessitate adherence to a particular sequence. He continues (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 415-16):

When it intends to create something, it must understand the reason or cause of that thing, or the conditions governing it, for the sake of the order that exists among the things that come into being. (Reason, cause,



or conditions) are, in general, the principles of that particular thing, since it is secondary to them, and it is not possible to arrange for something that comes earlier to come later, or for something that comes later to come earlier. Such a principle must have another principle to which its own existence is posterior. This (regression) may go on in an ascending order (from principle to principle), or it may come to an end. Now, when man, in his thinking, has reached the last principle on two, three, or more levels, and starts the action that will bring the (planned) thing into existence, he will start with the last principle that has been reached by his thinking. Thus, (that last principle) will be the beginning of action. He, then, will follow things up to the last element in the causal chain that had been the starting point of his thinking activity.

As understood from the above quotations, the reasons or causes are the principles of the thing being created, and they must be followed in a specific order. For instance, when someone aims to construct a roof, they must first consider the wall that will bear the roof's weight, followed by the foundation supporting that wall. After finalizing their thought sequence, they initiate the tangible construction, commencing with the foundation, progressing to the wall, and culminating with the roof.

The beginning of an action marks the conclusion of contemplation, and the onset of contemplation signifies the termination of an action (Rosenthal, 1958). Adhering to this sequence ensures the systematic progression of human endeavors. Conversely, actions of non-human living entities aren't as structured, attributed to their inability to rationalize and grasp the sequence that governs their actions. Take animals, for instance: their understanding is confined to sensory perceptions, devoid of the interconnectedness facilitated by thought. As a result, they are incapable of shaping a societal realm like humans.

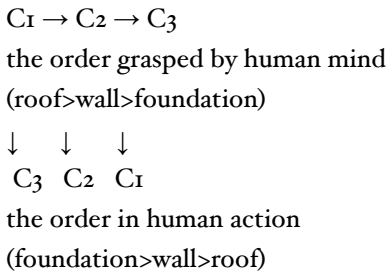
Let us try to symbolize this process. As we already mentioned Ibn Khaldun claims that there is an order (*tartīb*) in the outside world, which includes both natural (*tabi'ī*) and arbitrary (*wad'ī*) orders (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 414). This can be represented as:

$$C_1 \rightarrow C_2 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow C_4,$$

(*sabab, illah, shart*)



Here, each element is connected to the next in a specific sequence. However, this order is only grasped by the human mind through thinking, and it is the reason behind the orderly actions that make up the social world. And the human mind recognizes this order. Ibn Khaldun suggests that prior to bringing about a social entity, one should understand its source, causes, or the conditions that determine its existence to recognize the intrinsic structure among entities (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 414). This can be symbolized as follows:



Consider the scenario where a human decides to construct a roof. In this process, they must initially contemplate the wall that will support the roof's weight, and further consider the foundation that will uphold the wall (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 414). Following this sequential thought process, the construction would begin with the foundation, followed by the wall, and eventually culminate with the roof. This principle embodies the idea that the beginning of action is the end of thinking, and the beginning of thinking is the end of action (Ibn Khaldun 1967b, 415). This sequence indicates both the arrangement of the external world and the order discerned by intellect, which subsequently mirrors the sequence of human actions. In this case, the sequence of human actions—foundation, wall, and roof—runs counter to the natural arrangement of the external world and the sequence discerned by intellect.

This demonstrates that human action in the external world only materialize subsequent to a contemplation (*fikr*) of the arrangement and interrelation of elements. This signifies that human actions in the world can only come about by first thinking about the order in which things are connected, as things are interdependent. Once a person has finished thinking about the order of things, they can start taking action.





The person's thinking process will start from the end of the causal chain, while their actions will start from the beginning. By considering this order, human actions can proceed in an organized manner and construct the social world.

### Conclusion

One of the main conclusions and arguments of this article is that the social ontologies of Searle and Ibn Khaldūn, or in other words, their civilization theories, substantially complements each other and provide a comprehensive insight into the nature of the social reality. Their social ontologies offer distinct but complementary perspectives on the creation and nature of social reality. Although Ibn Khaldūn's social ontology offers a comprehensive understanding of the creation of physical social entities like buildings, it is not concerned with explaining the attribution of significance and value to such structures, as essential parts of social reality. Conversely, Searle's ontology concentrate on the epistemology of social structures, providing an insightful account of how we assign meaning and intentionality to them via language and collective intentionality. Yet, one of the limitations of Searle's theory is that it assumes tangible social entities, like buildings composed of individual stones, without offering an explanation for how these brute facts are assembled by human hands prior to human speech.

Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of social reality requires an integration of both ontologies, acknowledging the strengths and limitations of each theory. The creation of tangible social entities involves not only the physical construction but also the attribution of meaning and intentionality through language and collective intentionality. The integration of these perspectives can provide a more holistic understanding of the complex interplay between reason and language in the making of the social world.

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**Öz:** Bu makale, John Searle ve İbn Haldun tarafından önerilen iki sosyal ontolojinin veya medeniyet teorisinin bir karşılaştırmasını sunmaktadır. Her ikisi de iki tür varlık arasında bir ayırım yapmaktadır: insandan bağımsız ve insana bağımlı varlıklar. Birincisi doğal dünya, ikincisi ise sosyal dünyadır. Her iki düşünür de Searle'ün insan medeniyeti, İbn Haldun'un ise umrân olarak adlandırdığı ikinci



kategorideki varlıkları anlamaya çalışır. Searle ve İbn Haldun insan faaliyetlerinin sosyal gerçekliği inşa ettiği konusunda hemfikir olsalar da bunun nasıl gerçekleştiğine dair teorilerinde farklılık gösterirler. Zihinsel bir süreç aracılığıyla mı? Yoksa söz edimleri aracılığıyla mı? Gelişmekte olan sosyal ontoloji alanının kurucusu olarak kabul edilen Searle, sosyal gerçekliğin temelini dil olduğunu savunurken, İbn Haldun akıl temelli bir teori sunar. İbn Haldun'un sosyal ontolojisi, binalar gibi somut toplumsal varlıkların inşasını açıklarken, Searle'ün teorisi salt fiziksel bir yapının nasıl objektif epistemolojik bir gerçek olarak—üniversiteye—dönüştürebileceğini açıklayabilir. Sonuç olarak, bu makale, toplumsal dünyayı bu iki teorinin lensinden görmeyi ilginç ve bütünsel bir perspektif sunacağını önermektedir. Dil ve akıl temeline dayanan bu ontolojileri eş zamanlı olarak kullanmak, toplumsal varlıkların ontolojik-fiziksel ve epistemolojik-vaz'î yönlerinin nasıl var olduğunu anlamamıza katkıda bulunur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal ontoloji, medeniyet teorisi, insan toplumu, umrân, kurumsal olgular, dil, akıl, İbn Haldūn, John Searle.



