



Constructing the World

David J. Chalmers

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David J. Chalmers constructs a highly ambitious and original picture of the world, from a few basic elements. He develops and extends Rudolf Carnap's attempt to do the same in *Der Logische Aufbau Der Welt* (1928). Carnap gave a blueprint for describing the entire world using a limited vocabulary, so that all truths about the world could be derived from that description--but his *Aufbau* is often seen as a noble failure. In *Constructing the World*, Chalmers argues that something like the *Aufbau* project can succeed. With the right vocabulary and the right derivation relation, we can indeed construct the world.

The focal point of Chalmers's project is scrutability: roughly, the thesis that ideal reasoning from a limited class of basic truths yields all truths about the world. Chalmers first argues for the *scrutability* thesis and then considers how small the base can be. All this can be seen as a project in metaphysical epistemology: epistemology in service of a global picture of the world and of our conception thereof.

The scrutability framework has ramifications throughout philosophy. Using it, Chalmers defends a broadly Fregean approach to meaning, argues for an internalist approach to the contents of thought, and rebuts W. V. Quine's arguments against the analytic and the a priori. He also uses scrutability to analyze the unity of science, to defend a conceptual approach to metaphysics, and to mount a structuralist response to skepticism. Based on Chalmers's 2010 John Locke lectures, *Constructing the World* opens up debate on central areas of philosophy including philosophy of language, consciousness, knowledge, and reality. This major work by a leading philosopher will appeal to philosophers in all areas.

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