



Our Word Is Our Bond: How Legal Speech Acts (The Cultural Lives of Law)

Marianne Constable

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Words can be misspoken, misheard, misunderstood, or misappropriated; they can be inappropriate, inaccurate, dangerous, or wrong. When speech goes wrong, law often steps in as itself a speech act or series of speech acts. *Our Word Is Our Bond* offers a nuanced approach to language and its interaction and relations with modern law. Marianne Constable argues that, as language, modern law makes claims and hears claims of justice and injustice, which can admittedly go wrong. Constable proposes an alternative to understanding law as a system of rules, or as fundamentally a policy-making and problem-solving tool. Constable introduces and develops insights from Austin, Cavell, Reinach, Nietzsche, Derrida and Heidegger to show how claims of law are performative and passionate utterances or social acts that appeal implicitly to justice.

Our Word Is Our Bond explains that neither law nor justice are what lawyers and judges say, nor what officials and scholars claim they are. However inadequate our law and language may be to the world, Constable argues that we know our world and name our ways of living and being in it through law and language. Justice today, however impossible to define and difficult to determine, depends on relations we have with one another through language and on the ways in which legal speech—the claims and responses that we make to one another in the name of the law—acts.

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