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# Concepts of Sharedness

Essays on Collective Intentionality



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# Concepts of Sharedness

The present volume contains a selection of papers presented at the Fifth Conference on Collective Intentionality held at the University of Helsinki August 31 to September 2, 2006. The collection includes two additional contributions, namely the invited paper co-authored by Sondra Bacharach and Deborah Tollefsen, and a contribution by Katinka Schulte-Ostermann that completes this volume.

This volume is a follow-up on earlier collections of essays on collective intentionality.<sup>1</sup> The common aim of the papers gathered here is to explore the structure of shared intentional attitudes, and to explain how they underlie the social, cultural and institutional world.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first part – entitled *Shared Attitudes* – contains papers devoted to the phenomenology of sharedness. Raimo Tuomela (*Collective Intentionality and Group Reasons*) opens the discussion by presenting his analysis of the *We-mode*, which is a strong form of collective intentionality that involves group reasons based on the group's construction of it as a reason to act qua a group member. *We-mode* acting is thus essentially based on group reasons, i.e. on what the group decides, orders, or requires. In order to be acting as group members, the individuals therefore have to transfer some of their own authority to the group. This contrasts with the *I-mode* case where an individual is fully in charge of whatever she or he undertakes.

In the second paper, Sondra Bacharach and Deborah Tollefsen (*Collaborative Art and Collective Intention*) bring the recent discussion on collective intentionality to bear on a new field, namely aesthetics. The background of their contribution is the debates in the philosophy of art concerning the role intentions play in interpretation. *Intentionalism* is the view that intentions are relevant to the interpretation of a work of art. Despite post-modern criticism, intentionalism of some form or another has maintained a healthy following. But those who advocate an intentionalist theory of interpretation have focused entirely on the intentions of an individual author. As Bacharach and Tollefsen convincingly show, the individualism presupposed in traditional intentionalist theories of interpretation poses a

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1 Selections of papers presented at previous Conferences on Collective Intentionality appeared in G. Meggle (ed.), *Social Facts and Collective Intentionality*, Frankfurt: Hänsel-Hohenhausen (2001), in A. Meijers and F. Hindriks (eds.), in: *Philosophical Explorations* (2003) VI, in L. Tummolini and C. Castelfranchi (eds.), in: *Cognitive Systems Research* (2006) 7(2&3), special issue, and in L. May and R. Tuomela (eds.), in: *Journal of Social Philosophy* (2007) 38(3): iv-503.

serious problem for interpreting those artworks, which are *collaboratively* produced. It seems that in such cases an intentionalist interpretation has to go beyond an individualistic understanding of intentionality.

In the next chapter, Clotilde Calabi (*Winks, Sighs and Smiles*) addresses a topic that has spurred considerable controversy in recent philosophical research. Developmental psychology has shown how basic joint attention is in the development of human cognition. By contrast, philosophers usually believed joint attention to involve a highly complex structure, which makes the received accounts of joint attention unfit for the purpose of explaining the base of human cognition. Calabi examines and assesses various new philosophical accounts of the structure of joint attention, and she addresses the core question of how infinite iterations in the explanation of joint attention can be avoided.

Hans Bernhard Schmid asks why emotions have received only marginal notice in the analysis of collective intentionality (*Shared Feelings – Towards a Phenomenology of Collective Affective Intentionality*). The reason, he argues, is the predominance of cognitivism in recent philosophy of the emotions. According to cognitivism, emotions are intentional only insofar they involve cognitions and intentions. If cognitivism is correct, an account of shared cognitions and shared intentions is all that is needed to understand how emotions can be shared. However, Schmid argues that the analysis of shared emotions has to extend beyond the cognitive and practical components of emotions, and has to include the phenomenal aspects, i.e. the feelings. To share an emotion, Schmid claims, people have to share a feeling. Schmid addresses the question of how feelings can be shared, and he shows how the strong conception of sharedness, which he advocates, relates to the view that feelings are essentially individual.

The second part of the volume is devoted to the analysis of the concept of sharedness. David Schweikard (*Limiting Reductionism in the Theory of Collective action*) addresses a concern that has been in the back of the mind of most philosophers of collective intentionality, namely that by reducing collective intentionality to individual intentionality, important phenomena are excluded from the analysis. Schweikard proposes a taxonomy of different types of collective action, and he examines which types of reductionism or non-reductionism can be applied to which kinds of phenomena. Schweikard concludes that there is no single reductive or non-reductive approach applicable to all types of collective action.

Frank Hindriks (*The Status Account of Corporate Agents*) aims at developing an account of collective agents from the external perspective. According to Hindriks, corporate agents may come into existence not only by

means of the participants' own taking themselves to be (and acting as) its members, but also by virtue of external assignment of status. The status account of corporate agents is refined and discussed with reference to the major competing accounts of corporate agency in the received literature.

Björn Petersson (*Collectivity and Circularity*) addresses an objection raised against some of the most successful among the received accounts of collective intentionality, especially against Michael Bratman's. In Bratman's analysis, shared intentional activity is analyzed in terms of a notion of individual intentionality that has collective action in its content. Petersson aims at showing that this does not render Bratman's account viciously circular. Petersson argues that at the basic level, the collective content can be accounted for in terms of causal structures and dispositions.

Antti Saaristo (*On the Ontology of Collective Intentionality – A Constructivist Perspective*) lays down the outlines of a social constructivist view of the ontology of collective intentionality in general, and the we-perspective, including the collective mode of beliefs, desires, intentions and actions, in particular. Saaristo seeks to combine uncompromising naturalistic materialism about the mind with strong social constructivism about the origins of intentionality and intentional agency.

Katinka Schulte-Ostermann (*Agent Causation and Collective Agency*) takes up some of the threads pursued in this second part of the volume by drawing attention to the controversy between individualistic and holistic explanations of collective agency. Her claim is that this controversy rests on the action-theoretical concept of agent causation. Only on the presupposition that the main difference between individual and collective action lies in the different nature of the subject of each action type does it become relevant to give an account of the relation between an action and a plural subject. There is an explanatory gap not only between collective actions and collective agents, but also between individual agents and their actions. Schulte-Ostermann presents two possible solutions to fill this gap: The first would be to develop a more convincing theory of agent causation, the second would be to endorse an anti causalist approach to action.

The third and final part of the volume explores various aspects of the structure of collective intentionality in general, and of the intricate relations between sharedness and normativity in particular. Facundo Alonso (*Intending the Joint Activity and Reliance*) examines the cognitive conditions of an individual's intention to participate in a joint activity. When A and B share an intention to act together, A's intention that A und B act depends on his taking B to be similarly disposed. Facundo's aim is to determine

what precisely the cognitive attitudes towards the other participants are, and he proposes a concept of *reliance* for that purpose.

Jennifer Hudin (*The Logic of External Reasons and Collective Intentionality*) argues that external reasons have different logical features from internal reasons and therefore require a different ontology. The features of external reasons involve first person plural indexicalizing rather than merely first person singular indexicalizing. Thus, external reasons are We-reasons rather than I-reasons. We-reasons do not motivate but impel action, therefore they do not require a sound deliberative route to produce intentional action. Recognition of truth conditions alone is sufficient to produce action. We-reasons impel action because of moral intuition and commitment to a social group. Moral intuition and social commitment are pre-theoretical notions an agent acquires by virtue of sharing a social background with other members of his social group.

Monika Betzler (*Valuing Interpersonal Relationships and Acting Together*) draws our attention to a particular class of reasons that play an important role in explaining joint action, which should not be ignored – as it is often done in the received accounts. These are reasons generated by a particular kind of relationship between agents. Theories of joint action that do not take these relationship-dependent reasons into account are at least incomplete. The distinct explanatory role that can be assigned to interpersonal relationships, and to the reasons generated by them, is revealed by the fact that even when persons act jointly, we sometimes believe that we are justified in criticizing them for not acting jointly in the right way. An adequate analysis of a particular class of joint action has to refer to relationship-expressive reasons.

Nikos Psarros (*Mental Non Self-Sufficiency, Sociality and Common Agency*) tries to give a theoretical account of the problems that accompany intentionalist accounts of collective activity by claiming that these problems stem from the idea of self-sufficiency underlying most classical accounts of personhood. This idea logically excludes the idea of cooperation that is essential for the concept of collective action. Building upon the concept of the needs of the human soul as analyzed by the French philosopher Simone Weil, Psarros outlines a concept of common agency that is based on the idea that human beings as persons and individual agents are mentally non-sufficient entities, i.e. that humans rely necessarily on other humans in order to develop their ability of conscious agency.

Francesca Raimondi finally (*Collective Intentionality and the Practice of Democracy*) examines some aspects of Margaret Gilbert's recent attempt to develop a theory of political obligation that is based on her plural sub-

ject account. Gilbert's approach seems promising because it does not ground political obligations on metaphysical facts, or on individualistic values such as self-preservation. Rather, Gilbert ties political obligations to shared practices. Raimondi argues, however, that Gilbert's concept of social group may be inadequate for the purpose of analyzing political collectives. Furthermore, the concept of group runs the risk of suggesting too much identity, and seem to be unfit to capture the plurality that is part of a liberal democratic ideal of political collectives.

We hope that this volume shows how rich and lively the philosophical research focused on the analysis of collective intentionality has become, and will provide further inspiration for future work in this rapidly evolving field.<sup>2</sup>

Basel, Essen and Leipzig, April 2008

The Editors

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2 We wish to thank the organizers of the fifth Conference on Collective Intentionality, especially Raimo Tuomela and Antti Saaristo, and the authors for their patience and cooperation. Special thanks go to Jan Hanisch who played a pivotal role in the preparation of the layout of this volume.