Thinking (About) Groups
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Center for Subjectivity Research
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Poster abstracts

1. Adam Arnold (University of Warwick)

Title: Conceptualising Authority: From I-Thou to I-We

Abstract: Let us begin with the following premise: human agents are autonomous in the sense that they *are* able to determine their own ends and purposes. In other words, human agency is essentially about self-governance. There is an important implication that can be initially troubling about the idea that human agents are essentially autonomous: If agents are autonomous then it is illegitimate for one agent to determine the ends or purposes of another agent. However, there are many cases in a practical lives that we out defer to practical authorities. This is particularly true in the case of our political lives. How can commands backed by the treat of force be permissible if agents are by their nature autonomous? The dilemma than is this: either we are autonomous agents and not subject to commands, or, we are subject to commands and our autonomy is limited.

If we accept the first horn of the dilemma then there is no such thing a practical authority. It seems that we are than forced into a position of being an *a priori* philosophical anarchist, such as R.P. Wolff. This form of philosophical anarchist is committed to the view that there can be no such thing as a command because of the conceptual incompatibility of authority and autonomy.

The other option is to deny the full autonomy of agents and hold a view in which it is acceptable at times to interfere with the autonomy of an individual. This position seems to force us into an unacceptable paternalism at best or perhaps, if take to an extreme, some form of despotism. The individual is being denied freedom which is essential for its agency.

I think both horns are unacceptable. In the following, I will argue that an essential part of an answer is to ask the question at the right level. That is, it seems to me that the dilemma gets off the ground by assuming that the only conceivable level of understanding agents is at the individual level. The question as I have posed them above presuppose that the problem of authority is a matter of how one individual can command another isolated individual. In the following I will call this the 'I-Thou' model of practical authority because of its tendency to conceptualise authority relationships between distinct individuals. This, I submit, is the predominate way of posing the problem which predominately descends from Lockean tradition. Under this conception, authority is typically seen as being transferred from one individual to another. You have authority over me because I consent to your authority.

I will defend the different tradition who want to ask the question differently. Following Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel, I will ask question of self-governance in the first person plural: how do *we* govern ourselves. I will call this alternate model the 'I-We' model because this way of conceptualising the relationship of authority is one in which the authority is created, or better arises, between individuals when they united as a group.

2. Olle Blomberg (University of Edinburgh)

Title: Joint Action and Aspectual Shapes

Abstract: What is required for several agents to share an intention, for them to intentionally act together? I argue that each party of a shared intention must believe or assume that there is a single end that each intends to contribute to. I draw on several analogies between intentional singular action and intentional joint action to show that this doxastic single end condition captures a feature that is at the very heart of the phenomenon of intentional joint action.

For instance, just like several simple actions are only unified into a complex intentional singular activity if the agent believes or assumes that there is a single end that each action is directed to, so the actions of several agents are only unified into an intentional joint activity if each agent believes or assumes that there is a single end that each intends to contribute to. Somewhat surprisingly, some of the most influential accounts of shared intention and intentional joint action fall short because they do not include or imply this condition.

Consider the following "Frege-style case": You and I are out hunting in the forest. You intend to contribute to us bringing it about that a certain prey is caught, and I intend to contribute to us bringing it about that the same prey is caught. You and I both represent the end that you intend that we bring about as "that the prey that casts the shadow (Shadow) is caught". In addition, you and I both represent the end that I intend that bring about as "that the prey that rustles the leaves (Rustle) is caught". Now, suppose that each of us falsely believes that Rustle and Shadow are two distinct individuals. Furthermore, suppose that you intend to contribute to us catching Shadow partly on the basis of your expectation that I (will) intend to contribute to us catching Rustle; you expect that my pursuit of Rustle will distract Shadow so that Shadow will be easier to catch. Likewise, I pursue Rustle partly on the basis of my expectation that you (will) pursue Shadow and that this pursuit will distract Rustle and make Rustle easier to catch.

Cases such as this will only be ruled out according to many accounts if it is assumed that each agent must aim at the single end under the same aspectual shape or manner of presentation (this assumption is explicitly made by Bratman 2014, p. 42 and Miller 1995, p. 53). However, with such a same-aspect constraint, the accounts fail to accommodate cases of intentional joint action that they ought to be able to accommodate. For example, suppose that neither of us is mistaken about whether there is a single end that each intends to contribute to in the case above. Furthermore, suppose that you are almost deaf and I am almost blind, so that we represent the single end under different aspects.

There appears to be no good reason for ruling such a case out as a case of intentional joint action. On the poster, I demonstrate how Christopher Kutz's (2000) minimalistic account of "joint action as such" as well as Michael Bratman's (2014) account of "shared intentional activity" face this dilemma. To provide collectively sufficient conditions, each needs to incorporate the doxastic single end condition. Arguably, many other accounts must do so too.

3. Sean Bowden (Deakin University)

Title: Looking at Shared Intentions through an Expressive Lens

Abstract: In the growing literature on shared activity and intentions, it is often said that a shared intention is constituted by an appropriately structured interrelationship of individual intentions. What is a matter of debate, of course, is how the structure of interrelated individual intentions is established. Bratman, as is well known, understands a shared intention to be a state of affairs consisting of a set of interrelated personal intentions and suitably intermeshed sub-plans. Velleman, by contrast, speaks of a shared intention as consisting of interdependent conditional personal intentions. Gilbert, on the other hand, understands a shared intention, not as a structure of contributory personal intentions, but as that which is formed when two or more people openly express their willingness to be jointly committed to intend as a body to perform some action.

Temporarily setting aside the differences in approach here, it seems to me noteworthy that in their discussions of shared intentions and in the examples they use, these thinkers primarily deal with intentions that aim at a specific goal, final state or end-product. Moreover, these authors tend to think of a specific-goal-oriented shared intention as something that is clear in the mind of individual group members prior to the group action which issues from it. It would thus be appropriate to ask whether such accounts are appropriate for cases in which a shared intention comes into view only once some shared activity is already underway (e.g., the apparently spontaneous emergence of coordinated activity from out of uncoordinated mob behavior), or for cases in which the content of a shared intention cannot be non-trivially specified in advance of some way of successfully realizing it in practice over time (e.g., the shared intention of two people to love each other until death do them part).

My aim in this presentation is to first of all explore the extent to which an 'expressive' approach to agency and intentionality – as seen, for example, in the work of Taylor, Pippin, Brandom, Owen, Ridley and others – might be applicable to these problem cases and thus make a contribution to contemporary thinking about collective agency and shared intentions. As I will argue, this expressive approach involves several interrelated claims: (i) that at least in some cases a shared intention is inseparable from the group action that concretely 'expresses' it; (ii) that this shared intentional action is non-isolatable from an 'expressive medium' through which group members make it clear to one another what it is they are doing; and (iii) that the full character of the shared intention is discovered only in the intersubjective recognition that the success conditions for that intentional action have been practically realized.

A secondary aim of my presentation is to ask how an expressive approach to shared action and intentions might respond to some of the concerns that have arisen in the debates surrounding Bratman's, Velleman's and Gilbert's accounts of the constitution of shared intentions.

4. Jennifer Cook (Donders Centre for Cognitive Neuroimaging)

Title: The social dominance paradox: learning from others when you believe you're self-sufficient

Abstract: Dominant individuals report high levels of self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and authoritarianism. The lay stereotype suggests that such individuals ignore information from others preferring to make their own choices. However the non-human animal literature presents a conflicting view - suggesting that dominant individuals are avid social learners who prefer to learn from the group, subordinates, in contrast, focus on learning from private experience. Whether dominant humans are best characterised by the lay stereotype or the animal view is currently unknown. Here we present a 'social dominance paradox': using self-report scales and computerized tasks we demonstrate that socially dominant people explicitly value independence but, paradoxically, in a complex decision-making task, they show an enhanced reliance (relative to subordinate individuals) on social learning. More specifically, socially dominant people employed a strategy of copying the group's response when it had a history of being correct. However, in humans two subtypes of dominance have been identified [1]: aggressive and social. Aggressively dominant individuals - who are as likely to 'get their own way' as socially dominant individuals but who do so through the use of aggressive or Machiavellian tactics: did not use social information, even when it was beneficial to do so. This paper presents the first study of dominance and social learning in humans and challenges the lay stereotype in which all dominant individuals ignore others' views [2]. The more subtle perspective we offer could have important implications for decision-making in social environments such as the boardroom and classroom.

5. Corrado Fumagalli (University of Milan)

Title: Trans-groups Duties, Common Sense or the Politics of Multiculturalism

Abstract: In the debate on multiculturalism, there is wide disagreement over which rights are basic in the relevant sense. Special rights do not guarantee a profound understanding of the relational element that distinguishes multicultural societies. Focus on identity and on membership only has been labelled as normatively poor. It is with these claims in mind that I have offered some suggestions for how to think of cultural interaction. Here, in turn, I am at investigating which duties people owe each other across groups. With this goal in mind, I put together two different but related fields in contemporary political philosophy: the dispute on moral duties and the debate on multiculturalism. In so doing, I seek to characterize what I consider as duties across groups in multicultural contexts. The initial suggestion is very straightforward. Frequent exchanges craft duties that shape our worldviews. Here, I argue that recurring interactions imply a specific conception of moral

duty - trans-groups duties- and a collective inclination, which I call common sense. At the heart of this commitment, there is the idea that multiculturalism has a dual dimension: the politics of multiculturalism and the realm of everyday interactions. In a multicultural society, many would, no doubt, spend their life to nurture the culture of their homes, but others would open their practices to hybridization. One accepts the other on the consideration that she is compatible with some overriding values, but also on the understanding that all values cannot be recognized simultaneously in the same sphere, and that, finally, one has to admit her own limitations as well as those of the others. That is, affiliation to certain groups provides some limitations that people may overcome through the recognition of these burdens as a substantial communal condition. In doing so, we do not erect a wall of separation among cultures and we deal better with the vibrant aspect of multiple belongings. Cultural boundaries exist, but they are porous. The new reality of multiple interactions justifies overlaps as well as value pluralism.

The purpose of this paper, indeed, is speculative. This attempt rests on the application of a simple definition of duty in multicultural context. Since I define duties as limits on our scopes and actions, I shall focus on how we can reflect on others' limits and on what it implies in terms of mutual respect. In order to develop my argument, I will proceed as follows. In section 1, I shall set the terms of the debate on multiculturalism and justify my appeal to moral duties in order to disentangle some shortcomings of today's literature. In section 2, I shall explore positions on special and natural duties. There, I set the terrain for the definition of what I call trans-groups duties. In section 3, I provide foundational and normative claims to defend my argument. Finally, I shall open some brief conclusions and I shall provide insights for further enquiry.

6. Lawrence Ladden (Private Practice, London) and Jale Cilasun (Southwest London & St. George's Mental Health Trust, London)

Title: Contemplative Group Dynamics: Cultivating Stable and Clear Joint Attention

Abstract: Contemplative Group Dynamics (CGD) is a group mindfulness-awareness practice that explores the nature of subjectivity and intersubjectivity using classical meditative tools coupled with contemporary group dynamic methods. By cultivating mindfulness-awareness in the group, of the group, and with the group, members become familiar with the natural limitations of any effort to establish a stable entity, *individual or group*, separate from intrinsic dynamical and relational processes. The structured practice sequences include periods of both silence and speech, wherein momentary sensory and conceptual events are apprehended as elements of an unfolding relational context.

Members' shared intention to explore mindfulness-awareness as a group by definition involves developing clarity and stability of joint attention. As Hobson has it: "What puts the jointness into joint attention? The answer to this question: intersubjective engagement" (Hobson 2005, p. 201). For Contemplative Group Dynamics this intersubjective engagement occurs with shared and co-ordinated body sensations, feelings, mental/emotional events, and experience (the four foundations of mindfulness). These objects of mindfulness are concisely articulated by group members in the above sequence (typically with three hours allotted for each). Joint attention within the group includes a developing capacity for roving

eye contact among members (whether a group of 5 or 40) as well as a developing attunement to posture and voice tones. This process discloses an increasingly complex experience of empathy among members as each foundation becomes explicated while enfolding the previous one.

7. John Michael (Central European University, Budapest) and Andras Szigeti (University of Tromsø)

Title: The Group Knobe Effect

Abstract: We present findings from an ongoing research project investigating people's willingness to ascribe intentions as well as blame and praise to group agents. The findings so far reveal an asymmetry: people are more willing to ascribe intentions - and blame - to group agents in the case of actions with negative side effects than they are to ascribe intentions - and praise - in the case of actions with positive side effects. In other words, the so-called 'Knobe effect' also occurs when evaluating collective actions.

8. Glenda Satne (University of Copenhagen)

Title: Sorting out Collective Intentionality

Abstract: In this presentation, I canvass different types of collective intentionality. I distinguish them by the kind of acts in which they take part. First, I consider actions that are performed by groups without the individuals knowing about others contributing to their goals and where individuals can succeed alone (Butterfill (2012)). Secondly, I describe actions that in their performance require individuals to know each other and know they are contributing to the same goal, but where their respective contributions are instrumental to the acquisition of the common pursued goal (this kind is described by Bratman (2007)). Thirdly and lastly, I consider cases of joint action in which the individuals know each other and know they are contributing to the same goal but where their contributions are not merely instrumental to the acquisition of the common goal. This is shown by the fact that instrumental considerations against the performing of the individual's instrumental means to achieve the goal do not override the individual's commitment to perform the joint action, and thus, carry on and do their part. I address the question of the priority of this sort of collective intentionality vis-à-vis each other considering case studies from developmental psychology, comparative psychology and evolutionary studies. First, I consider the question of whether these different kinds of actions are possible to be performed by other species that human, especially apes. I argue that using the definitions at hand apes are only able to preform the first kind of collective action and perhaps a modified version of the second (the difference being that the goal is not conceived as *common* as this model requires) (Tomasello 1999, 2014). Secondly, I argue that evidence from developmental psychology suggests that young children have a sense of collective intentionality in the third of these forms (Rakoczy and Schidmt (2013), Schmidt, Rakoczy, , & Tomasello, (2012), Rakoczy, Warneken, & Tomasello, (2008)). Finally, I compare and discuss some alternative definitions and characterizations of the full-blooded committal form of collective intentionality given in the recent literature on the topic. The issue at stake is what is the

defining feature of the groups that perform this kind of action. In taking into consideration the early stage in development in which children engage in this sort of actions a question is raised as to what cognitive tools and psychological means are required for this. This might lead to further classification of committal actions into different sorts (second personal, communitarian, etc.).

9. Anna Strasser (Berlin School of Mind and Brain; Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Title: Mental states without brains?

Abstract: After the decade of the brain we are in the middle of the decade of social cognition. Most prominently joint actions are discussed here. We talk about joint actions if two or more agents non-accidentally act together. Such agents form groups. The question under which circumstances we are legitimated to ascribe mental properties to those groups is highly questionable.

In many cases it is easy to agree about mental property ascription, like in the statement that water can be wet but not angry. We ascribe mental states to human beings. We all would agree that Bratman has many mental states. But stones, vegetables and abstract entities do not have such properties: stones and vegetables have no intentions and a mathematical formula is not thinking. Furthermore Bratman (2014) is able to share intentions with members of a group to perform a joint action. B. Schmid (2014) is even claiming that we should ascribe mental states such as intentions and emotions to groups.

At the first sight it seems quite courageous to treat groups similar to individual human beings regarding the ascription of mental properties. But the common use of language shows us that we actually do so (Knobe & Prinz, 2008). What has to be clarified is in what sense this to be understood. Aren't human beings a very different kind of entity compared to groups?

I claim that a group is an abstract entity describing a number of group members standing in a certain relation to each other. Abstract entities do not possess mental states but they can be described in a 'as if' manner – and this description does have an explanatory value without claiming ontological consequences.

Over ascription of mental states seems to be a common human ability, we even are able to ascribe intentions and emotions to moving geometrical figures (Heider & Simmel, 1944). But at the same time we are aware that this kind of ascription is not claiming in a factual sense that those entities really have mental states. We are just claiming that using the notions of mental states best characterize the observed behavior.

Comparing human beings and groups of human beings we have to clarify whether there are the same kinds of conditions at stake if we ask ourselves under which circumstances we were legitimated to ascribe mental states. In the most cases we ascribe mental states to humans we are doing that to explain or to anticipate their behavior. This may hold for groups as well. But this is only one side of the ascription. Furthermore we do claim that

humans do actually possess mental states and we even tend to claim that they are realized in our brains. But where is the brain of the group?

10. Horia Tarnovanu (University of St. Andrews)

Title: Higher-Level Causation

Abstract: Several philosophers have sought to associate agency with groups and describe them as real and robust entities, irreducible to the sets of networked individuals they are constituted of. Recent examples include arguments for group agency realism (List and Pettit 2011), group minds (Petit 2003), or autonomous collective intentionality (Toleffsen 2002, 2003), but also non-reductive versions of non-summative arguments for 'we-intentions' and joint action (Tuomela 2005, 2007), plural subjects (Gilbert 2009, 2013), or non-distributive collective responsibility (Copp 2006, 2007, List and Pettit 2006, Pettit 2007).[1] Most non-reductive views focus on the criteria required to elevate groups to the status of novel centres of judgment, intention and action, but show comparatively little interest in their actual efficacy as relatively independent entities. In this paper, I shall argue that non-reductive accounts lack an adequate causal story about how group agents impact the world.

Overview: Section 1 introduces the case for non-reductive views, using List and Pettit's (2011) group agency realism as a working example. Section 2 designs a test of efficacy and explores the concern that group agents would causally overdetermine the effects already caused by their constituent individuals. I show that non-reductionists need a coherent causal story *independently* on whether the overdetermination objection is decisive or not. In particular, I argue that non-reductive manoeuvres generate a degree of commitment to an independent source of causal efficacy and any attempt to reroute it through individuals in virtue of constitution would entail a breakdown of higher-level performance and effectiveness. Section 3 examines a non-reductionist reply based on the realisation-insensitivity of higher-level causal claims. This line of reasoning is contentious because it is connected to a *dependence* rather than to a *production* account of causation (Hall 2004), it tends to conflate explanatory role with real causal efficacy, and it leaves explanation and moral evaluation to bounce fortuitously between levels. Lastly, I discuss the practical value of group agency views – particularly their pivotal role to social explanation, prediction and design – and offer a brief recommendation concerning our stance towards group agency talk (Section 4).

[1]Summative views understand groups as aggregates or sums of individuals. Non-summative views are also individualistic but take groups to presuppose further significant interrelations amongst individuals (e.g., shared intentions, collective beliefs, the presence of mutual obligations or expectations, etc.). Non-reductive versions of non-summative views or arguments are those inclined to concede groups a certain autonomy. Along the same lines, non-distributive collective responsibility transcends the contributions of individual group members and attaches to groups as self-sufficient moral agents.

11. Sabine Thürmel (Munich Center of Technology in Society; Technische Universität München)

Title: One for All and All for One: the Second Person Perspective on Groups

Abstract: Mutual responsiveness, commitment to joint activity and commitment to mutual support form the basis of "shared cooperative activity" (Bratman 1992). Examples include groups formed in order to realize a joint project. Rational, self-governing teams display a modest sociality which may be explained based on Bratman's notion of "shared agency" ((2009), (2014)) emerging from structures of interconnected planning agency. Practical rationality forms its core. Teams built specifically for a distinc job work together until the task is fulfilled or the project is cancelled.

In contrast to such uniquely goal-directed groups the musketeers are a perfect example of a group based on shared values pursuing joint objectives. Their ethos is constitutive for being a team. Their motto "one for all" based on "pro-group intentions" in the framework of Tuomela (Tuomela 2007, p. 51) and "all for one" based on "we-mode" (Tuomela 2007, pp. 35) guides their actions. "Unus pro omnibus et omnes pro uno" is traditional leitmotiv of the Swiss federal state – as depicted in the cupola of the federal palace of Switzerland - pointing out that solidarity can even serve as a vision for whole nations. Rational trust based on common values, a joint history and shared intentions may lay the basis for long-term joint commitment and acknowledging the other as a peer. Shared fundamental values may even override individual practical goals. Such social normativity can result in group-oriented obligations and personal entitlements.

However, a community of equal agents may be even better understood from the second person perspective. According to Darwall (2006) respect and accountability are based on "second personal competence". This capability involves "instrumental rationality and a certain degree of self-consciousness as well as being able to step back from one's own perspective, and to project into others' perspective and to relate to one another second-personally" (2009, p 10). In his view any second-personally competent agent has authority as a member of the moral community. Since the authority is mutual between peers, this means to direct someone but through one's own free will. Darwell was inspired by Fichte's summons (*Aufforderung*) (2006, pp. 252) yet his concept is clearly modern. It results in reciprocal demands, claims and entitlements.

Any second person perspective focuses on the uniqueness of the second person and the uniqueness of the relationship. As Dullstein points out in a similar context based on Cavell's concept of acknowledgement (1976), interpersonal understanding is a social process between persons "who might change in the course of an interaction, persons who, together with others, co-construct their own stories" (Dullstein 2012, p. 246). Being a musketeer or just treating others respectfully and attentively in any professional or private context requires such an acknowledgement.

12. Leo Townsend (University of Oslo)

Title: Believing Groups

Abstract: In this paper I argue that collective testimony entails collective belief, or, as I prefer to put it, that believing a group that P involves recognizing it as a believing-that-P group. However, I remain agnostic on whether we can in fact believe a group that P, and hence whether we must (on these grounds) accept that there really are believing groups. This means that my conclusion, if it is correct, can still be deployed in either the *modus ponens* or the *modus tollens* manner: sceptics about collective belief will need to extend their skepticism to collective testimony, while advocates of collective testimony will need to accept the phenomenon of collective belief.

One might wonder why anyone would ever doubt that these two phenomena are connected in the way I suggest that they are. After all, in the individual case, the link seems firmly entrenched: my telling you that P is *inter alia* my telling you that I believe that P; your believing me that P is *inter alia* your believing that I believe that P. However, things are not so simple in the case of groups, because of the possibility that one or both of the phenomena can be treated in a summative fashion. If collective testimony is seen as merely an aggregate of the testimony of individuals comprising a group then believing such testimony would not require one to postulate a collective subject of belief. Even if one does end up saying that the group in this situation 'has a belief', this collective belief will be analyzable into the beliefs of the individuals in the group, so it will 'common' or 'shared' and not, I think, genuinely collective.

My argument depends on eschewing these summative approaches to collective testimony and collective belief, and adopting a view of the epistemology of testimony which is profoundly interpersonal. This view takes very seriously the idea that believing something on the say-so of another ('testimonial uptake') is matter of *believing a person* rather than just believing what that person says. That is, the primary object of a testimonially acquired belief is the speaker rather than the state of affairs about which she testifies. On this view a testifier must assume some epistemic responsibility for the beliefs her audience forms on the basis of her testimony, and this means (I argue) that groups, if they are to be recognized as testifiers, must also be recognized as believers.