

Plural Subjects

I.

Claims

- Shared/Joint/**Collective Intention** is a basic feature of the social world.
- A shared/joint/collective intention is a **Plural Subject's**.
- Plural subjects of intention are the participants' **Plural Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness** of their intention *as theirs (collectively)*.
- Plural subjects are not collective singular subjects.
- Plural subject theory opens **new perspectives on core issues of Critical Theory** such as collective responsibility and (self-) alienation.

Schedule

PLURAL SUBJECTS LECTURE SERIES

University of Palermo, School of Humanities (Viale delle Scienze, ed. 12)

Hans Bernhard Schmid (University of Vienna)

Plural Subjects 1: Content, Mode, and Subject
Monday May 15th, 10:00
Aula Magna

Plural Subjects 2: Identity and Validation
Tuesday May 16th, 12:00
Aula Seminari

Plural Subjects 3: Commitment and Authority
Wednesday May 17th, 12:00
Aula Columba

Plural Subjects 4: The Problem of "The Self"
Thursday May 18th, 10:00
Aula Magna

Plural Subjects 5: A New Perspective on Self-Alienation
Friday May 19th, 12:00
Aula Magna

What Is Intentionality?

- Intentionality is a feature of some mental states (attitudes).
- Intentionality has **content** (target, object, conditions of satisfaction).
- Intentionality comes in different **modes** (formal object, psychological/intentional modes).
- Intentional attitudes have a **subject**.

What Is Intention?

- Intention is intentionality of the **practical/volitional mode**.
- Intention has a **world-to-mind-direction of fit**.
- Intention comes in two forms: **Prior/Distal/Future-directed intentions and Intentions-in-action/Proximate/Present-directed intentions**.
- The content of Prior intentions are Intentions-in-action.
- Action is intentional only if there is an intention-in-action.
- Not every intentional action involves a prior intention (spontaneous action).
- There is non-intentional action only if it is intentional under some description.

Content: What Can You Intend?

- Try to intend that Hillary Clinton is president → **only actions**, not just any propositions, can be intended (intention is action-referential)
- Try to intend that Donald Trump step down → you can intend **only your own actions** (intention is action self-referential)
- Try to intend to lift Palermo Cathedral up → you cannot intend what you take yourself to be utterly unable to do
- Kavka's toxin puzzle → you can only intend what you take yourself to have **reason** to do (a reason is a guise of the good).

THE TOXIN PUZZLE

By GREGORY S. KAVKA

YOU are feeling extremely lucky. You have just been approached by an eccentric billionaire who has offered you the following deal. He places before you a vial of toxin that, if you drink it, will make you painfully ill for a day, but will not threaten your life or have any lasting effects. (Your spouse, a crack biochemist, confirms the properties of the toxin.) The billionaire will pay you one million dollars tomorrow morning if, at midnight tonight, you *intend* to drink the toxin tomorrow afternoon. He emphasizes that you need not drink the toxin to receive the money; in fact, the money will already be in your bank account hours before the time for drinking it arrives, if you succeed. (This is confirmed by your daughter, a lawyer, after she examines the legal and financial documents that the billionaire has signed.) All you have to do is sign the agreement and then intend at midnight tonight to drink the stuff tomorrow afternoon. You are perfectly free to change your mind after receiving the money and not drink the toxin. (The presence or absence of the intention is to be determined by the latest ‘mind-reading’ brain scanner and computing device designed by the great Doctor X. As a cognitive scientist, materialist, and faithful former student of Doctor X, you have no doubt that the machine will correctly detect the presence or absence of the relevant intention.)

Kavka, Gregory (1983): „The Toxin Puzzle.“ *Analysis* 43/1, S. 33-36, S. 33f..

Subject: How is an Intention Yours?

- The subject as the **owner/bearer/source** of intention.
- The subject of intention as the agent who under suitable circumstances is **held responsible**.
- Action self-referentiality: the subject of the intention is the agent of the intended action.
- Subjectivity as self-consciousness/self-awareness/self-knowledge: under suitable circumstances, the agent knows what he or she intends in a special (non-observational, non-inferential) way, and it is in virtue of this possibility that the intention is his or hers.

What is Collective/Shared/Joint Int?

- Collective intentionality is the power of minds to be **jointly directed** at objects, matters of fact, states of affairs, goals, or values.
- Collective intentionality comes in a **variety of modes**, including shared intention, joint attention, shared belief, collective acceptance, and collective emotion.
- Collective/Shared/Joint **intention** is the feature in virtue of which a complex of behavior is a joint intentional action.

Shared/Joint/Collective Intention

- We intend to ϕ .
- Subject, mode, and content
- **distributive** vs. **collective**

Φ – distributive vs. collective

- We intend to ϕ : **each of us** intends to ϕ ; there shall be as many ϕ -ings as there are members. The ϕ -ings shall be **many token** of **one type**.
- We intend to ϕ : **all of us** intend to ϕ **together**: there shall be just one ϕ -ing, to which all of us shall contribute: one token action, many agents!

C.I. is Basic for the Social World - I

1. Historical perspectives:

- Aristotle on living together.
- Weber on „communal action“ or „consensual action“.
- Early 20th century Phenomenology on we-attitudes.

C.I. as Basic for the Social World - II

2. CI analysis solves systematic problems:

- The problem of rationalizing coordination in **rational choice theory**
- The problem of double contingency in **systems theory**
- The problem of the a priori of language in **discourse theory**.