

Plural Subjects

II.

Shared/Joint/Collective Intentionality

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

The Big Controversy: what is **collective**, what is **distributive** about CI?

1. Content-Accounts: **We** intend to ϕ .
2. Subject-Accounts: **We** intend to ϕ .
3. Mode-Accounts: **We** **we**-intend to ϕ .

Content-Accounts: **We** intend to ϕ

Advantage: parsimony (starting from singular intention).

Example: Michael Bratman's account of Joint Cooperative activity.

Bratman's Plural Content Account

You and I share an intention to J iff:

1) a) i) I intend that we J.

1) a) ii) I intend that we J in accordance with and because of meshing subplans of 1) a) i) and 1) b) i).

1) b) i) You intend that we J.

1) b) ii) You intend that we J in accordance with and because of meshing subplans of 1) a) i) and 1) b) i).

1) c) The intentions in 1) a) and in 1) b) are not coerced by the other participant.

1) d) The intentions in 1) a) and 1) b) are minimally cooperatively stable.

2) It is common knowledge between us that 1.

(cf. M. Bratman 1999, 2014 etc.)

Plural Content Account: Problems

- Intention is **action-referential**: The intention „that we J“ is the intention **to make it the case** that other people act (cf. W. Sellars). Intending to act and to make other people intend to act, too, is not the same as to intend a joint action (it is neither sufficient, nor necessary for intending a joint action).
- As intention is **action self-referential**, no individual can intend another subject's action, but only his or her own. None of us can intend our J-ing. The problem with the difference between the subject of intention and the subject of the intended action is covered up by the propositional way of putting intention.
- If a joint action is to be intended, it has to be **jointly** intended, not individually!

Subject-Accounts: **We** intend to ϕ

- The advantage: the most obvious solution to the problem of content accounts: if none of us can intend our joint action, **we, together**, can!
- Example: Margaret Gilbert's **Plural Subject Theory**.

Margaret Gilbert's Account

Individuals $A_1 \dots A_n$ form a plural subject of X-ing (for some action X or psychological attribute X) if and only if $A_1 \dots A_n$ form a joint commitment to X-ing as a body.

Joint commitments are formed when each of a number of people (implicitly) expresses his or her willingness to participate in the relevant joint commitment with the others. Once the joint commitment is established, each individual is individually 'obligated' to do his or her part to make it the case that he or she acts according to the joint commitment, and has a 'right' to expect the same from the other participants.

(M. Gilbert)

Plural Subject-Accounts: Problems

- The **petitio principii/infinite regress problem**: According to Gilbert, the formation of a Plural Subject involves a (however implicit) communication procedure. Such a procedure is an intentional joint action, and would thus presuppose the formation of another Plural Subject.
- The **metaphysical worry**: Spookiness! If the two of us jointly intend to go for a walk together, there are two subjects involved, not three: there is no additional „We“ having „our“ intention.
- The subject of collective intention is no additional entity, but a certain **way** of individuals' intending together!

Mode-Accounts: **We** **we**-intend to ϕ .

- The advantage: the **golden middle** between content and subject accounts.
- Examples: Wilfrid Sellars' we-intention, Raimo Tuomela's We-Mode, John Searle's irreducible „form“.

Raimo Tuomela's Mode Account

A member A_i of a collective g we-intends to do X iff

- (i) A_i intends to do his part of X (as his part of X);
- (ii) A_i has a belief to the effect that the joint action opportunities for an intentional performance of X will obtain (or at least probably will obtain), especially that a right number of the full-fledged and adequately informed members of g , as required for the performance of X , will (or at least probably will) do their parts of X , which will under normal conditions result in an intentional joint performance of X by the participants;
- (iii) A_i believes that there is (...) a mutual belief among the participating members of g (...) to the effect that the joint action opportunities for an intentional performance of X will obtain (or at least probably will obtain);
- (iv) (i) in part because of (ii) and (iii) (R. Tuomela, 2009)

John Searle's (Sellarsian) Mode Account (cf. Searle 1995, 27)



Mode Accounts: Problems

- What kind of mode is the we-mode? It is not a mode in the usual sense!
- Intentional modes modify the content. **The we-mode modifies the subject!**

Claims

1. An adequate account of collective intentionality is a **subject account** (Plural Subject Theory). Received Plural Subject Theory is based on a problematic account of subjectivity.
2. An adequate account of plural subjectivity will solve the regress problem.
3. An adequate account of plural subjectivity will alleviate the worry of metaphysical spookiness.

The Subject of Intention

- One way in which I am the subject of “I intend” is in the way I can “know” it.
- That “knowledge” is of a **special kind** (groundless/non-observational/de se/pre-reflective/immediate **self-knowledge/self-consciousness/self-awareness**).

→ *How does this carry over to “we intend”?*

- Are **we** the subject of “we intend” in the same sense in which I am the subject of „I intend“?
- Is there such a thing as genuine (immediate, non-reflective, non-observational, groundless) **group self-knowledge/collective self-consciousness/plural self-awareness**? Are there genuine (non-derivative, non-fictional) **plural subjects**, or is subjectivity strictly singular?

Overview

- 1. How “I intend” is self-known:** self-identification, self-validation, self-commitment, and self-authorization.
- 2. Playing the *advocatus diaboli*: Why “we intend” does not seem to be self-known** (how it seems to fail to self-identify, self-validate, self-commit and self-authorize): → **the singularist view.**
- 3. How “we-intend” is self-known after all:** singular and plural self-identification, self-validation, self-commitment, and self-authorization – **subjectivity in the singular and in the plural form** → **the pluralist alternative**

What Knowledge Is “I intend”?

1. **Self-Identification** (“infallibly” established identity): knowledge of the form “I intend” secures its own standpoint: it is immune against challenge concerning the identity of the intender.
 2. **Self-Validation** (knowing “just like that”): knowledge of the form “I intend” is immune against challenge concerning its source; I know *immediately*; it is in virtue of the *form of knowledge itself* that I know.
 3. **Self-Commitment** (being bound to act): knowledge of the form “I intend” leaves no motivational gap (blocks challenges of the form “I intend – but why should I care?”)
 4. **Self-Authorization** (the maker’s privilege): knowledge of the form “I intend” puts me in the position of the one who (usually) *knows best* - as the one who has *made up* his own mind.
- “I intend” is **self-knowledge**. Self-knowledge is **subjectivity**.