

# Plural Subjects III.

# 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**.

# Is “We Intend” Self-Knowledge?

If “we intend” is subjective in the same way, it has to be self-known.

→ Does “we intend” self-identify, self-validate, self-commit, and self-authorize?

# Identification

## I intend

- leaves no room for the question “who am I thinking about?”. The identity of the agent comes with the thought
- does not “pick out”/represent an agent
- cannot misidentify



→ self-identifies

## We intend

- is in need of an answer to the question “who am I thinking about?” The identity of one’s partners does not seem to come with the thought.
- obviously picks out/represents agents (one’s prospective partners in joint action)
- misidentifies rather easily



→ does not self-identify!?

# Validation

## I intend

- Knowledge of what it is I intend is not in need of observational evidence.
- Knowledge of the form “I intend” is not – and cannot be derived from – knowledge of the form “HBS intends” (regress, petitio)
- Illeism (self-blindness) undermines reasoning capacities (Shoemaker).



→ self-validates

## We intend

- Knowledge of what it is we intend needs observational support.
- Knowledge of the form “we intend” involves - and is partially derived from - knowledge of the form “XY intends”, where XY is one’s prospective partner.
- Illiism (plural self-blindness) does not (seem to) undermine reasoning capacities.



→ does not self-validate!?

# Commitment

## I intend

- commits to action without additional motivation; I can't simply not care, as not caring destroys the intention
- is *per se* under the guise of the good; "It is bad (under any description), but I intend it" is a contradiction in commitment of the sort of Moore's paradox



→ self-commits

## We intend

- does not commit to action in the way "I intend" does; I often do not (and indeed sometimes *should not*) care about what I know we intend, and this does not destroy our intention
- is not *per se* under the guise of the good. "It is bad (under any description), but we intend it" is not a paradox, but often a very reasonable position



→ does not self-commit!?

# “I/We believe that $P$ , but not- $P$ ” vs. “ $P$ but I/we don’t believe that $P$ ”

In thinking that assent to “I believe that  $P$ ” entails assent to  $P$ , I was tacitly assuming that “I believe that  $P$ , but not- $P$ ” is paradoxical in the same way as “ $P$  but I don’t believe that  $P$ .” But there is an important logical difference between them. As I indicated earlier, the conjunction of “ $P$  but I don’t believe that  $P$ ” with the proposition that the subject, identified in a first person way, believes that proposition is self-contradictory. But no contradiction follows if we conjoin “I believe that  $P$ , but not- $P$ ” with the proposition that the subject (identified in a first-person way) believes this. It does follow that the subject has inconsistent beliefs – that she both believes that  $P$  and believes that not- $P$ . But it is not self-contradictory to say that someone has contradictory beliefs, and it is not obviously self-contradictory to say this of oneself, even if one spells out what the beliefs are. So while it is logically impossible for someone to truly believe the content  $P$  and *I do not believe that  $P$* , there is not the same case for its being logically impossible for someone to truly believe the content *I believe that  $P$ , but not  $P$* .

# Authority

## I intend

- Is not infallible predication-wise, but privileges over observers (I might be mistaken, but I usually know best.
- comes with the authority of the maker of the attitude

## We intend

- does not *per se* privilege over outside observers
- Some members may be authorized by the group to speak the shared attitude, but no such authorization is self-authorization through the mere form of thought.



→ self-authorizes



→ does not self-authorize!?



# Singularism

Knowledge of the form “we intend” does not self-identify, self-validate, self-commit and self-authorize in the way “I intend” does.

“We intend” is not self-knowledge. **“We intend” involves other people. You can’t self-know other people.**

Knowledge of intentional joint action is each participant’s self-knowledge of his or her own doing (perhaps of a special mode thereof), plus knowledge (e.g., common knowledge) of what the respective partners are doing.

“We intend” does not involve a plural subject in the sense “I intend” involves a singular subject.

**All subjectivity is singular.**

# Singularism about Joint Action

1. Content-Account:  $We_{distr}$  intend to  $\phi_{coll}$ .
- ~~2.~~ Subject-Account:  $We_{coll}$  intend to  $\phi_{coll}$ .
3. Mode-Account:  $We_{distr}$   $we_{coll}$ -intend to  $\phi_{coll}$ .

# Singularism's Discontents

Singularism cannot account for the way intentional joint action is unified (one collective action rather than a distribution of individual actions). **Singularism is the claim that there is no one intentional joint action.**

The singularist accounts are constructions of simulations of joint action (accounts of how individual actions can be suitably fitted together to look like and work like a joint intentional action without actually being jointly intentional).

# A Problem for the Pluralist

The pluralist view: There is joint intentional action which is unified in that it is a plural subject's.

- If pluralism is right, joint intentional action involves an intention which is known by us to be ours, collectively.
- How can that knowledge be the kind of self-knowledge that is (plural) subjectivity?

# Plural Self-Knowledge Revisited

**The Pluralist View:** intentional joint action is action of which there is **plural self-knowledge**. Plural self-knowledge is groundless group self-knowledge. As groundless self-knowledge, it is of the **same form** as the knowledge at work in individual intentional action, but the **plural version differs from the individual version**.

# Plural Self-Identification

1. **“We intend” does not presuppose prior representational “picking out”; it involves a sense of “us” that is pre-intentional (pre-reflective, non-thematic, groundless).**
2. **The “sense of us” is fallible, but so is the “sense of I”:** “I intend to write this paper” may **misidentify the subject** in the same way as “we intend to write this paper” can – as in the case in which writing the paper is actually something we intend to do together, but which I, forgetting about the inspiration and involvement from your part, mistake to be something I intend to do. In this case, “I intend to write this paper” **misidentifies the subject of the intention.**
  - There is a **sort of self-identification** in thought of the form “we intend”!

# Plural Self-Validation

1. No observational knowledge of other's actions plus singular self-knowledge establishes joint intention; the observational knowledge of partners presupposes the knowledge that they are partners, which has to be known "just like that".
2. It is in virtue of our joint intention that I expect (predict) you to contribute, not the other way round: it is not in virtue of my prediction of what you are going to do that we jointly intend.
3. There is not only singular self-blindness, but plural self-blindness, too ("illiism").  
→ There is a sense in which **"we intend" self-validates!**

# Plural Self-Commitment

1. It is true that attitudes of the form “X is (utterly) bad, but we intend it” are not a straightforward paradox of contradictory commitments, but often rather solid knowledge.
  2. However, a person who is plurally self-blind cannot see it as what it is: not a paradox, but still a *tension* of commitments that calls for further joint deliberation.
  3. “We intend” is not *constitutively sub specie boni* in the way “I intend” is, but it is *normatively sub specie boni*. “We intend” self-commits to joint deliberation that makes it the case that it is sub specie boni.
- **There is a sense in which “we intend” self-commits!**



# “I/We believe that $P$ , but not- $P$ ” vs. “ $P$ but I/we don’t believe that $P$ ”

In thinking that assent to “I believe that  $P$ ” entails assent to  $P$ , I was tacitly assuming that “I believe that  $P$ , but not- $P$ ” is paradoxical in the same way as “ $P$  but I don’t believe that  $P$ .” But there is an important logical difference between them. As I indicated earlier, the conjunction of “ $P$  but I don’t believe that  $P$ ” with the proposition that the subject, identified in a first person way, believes that proposition is self-contradictory. But no contradiction follows if we conjoin “I believe that  $P$ , but not- $P$ ” with the proposition that the subject (identified in a first-person way) believes this. It does follow that the subject has inconsistent beliefs – that she both believes that  $P$  and believes that not- $P$ . But it is not self-contradictory to say that someone has contradictory beliefs, and it is not obviously self-contradictory to say this of oneself, even if one spells out what the beliefs are. So while it is logically impossible for someone to truly believe the content  $P$  and *I do not believe that  $P$* , there is not the same case for its being logically impossible for someone to truly believe the content *I believe that  $P$ , but not  $P$* .

# Plural Self-Authorization

1. The “we” is no collective “I” (no integrated “moi commun” in the perspective of which the common mind is made up).
  2. Yet “we intend” does not fail to come with **some form** of first-person authority: the authority of **a participant in the making up our mind about what we intend (first-person plural authority)**.
  3. The reason why we usually privilege group members from outside observers in question concerning a group’s attitudes is not only that we assume them to be in a better position to **observe** each other; rather, we privilege the participant perspective simply because it is **a participant’s**.
- **“We intend” does self-authorize: not in the autocratic sense in which “I intend” self-authorizes, but in a participatory (democratic) way.**

# A Plural Subject Account of Collective Intention

Joint activity is intentional in virtue of **our plural self-knowledge** in the same way my individual activity is intentional in virtue of **my singular self-knowledge**.

**Joint activity is intentional in terms of collective intentionality; what's collective about collective intentionality is that it is plurally self-known. This form of the intentionality in question is the subject.**

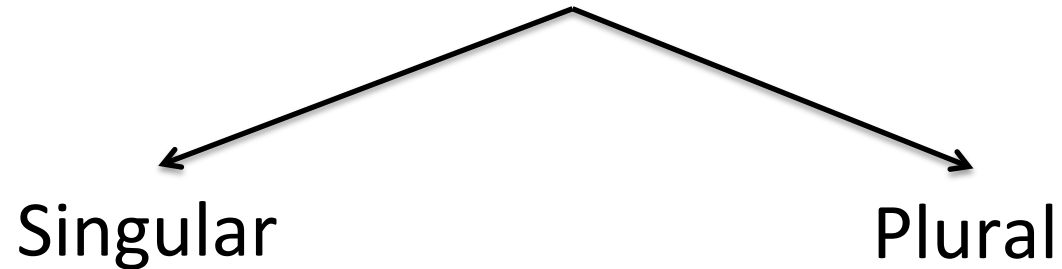
-  Content-Account:  $We_{distr}$  intend to  $\phi_{coll}$ .
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## **Subjectivity**

Pre-reflective/non-thematic self-consciousness

Immediate/first-“personal” self-awareness

Non-observational/groundless self-knowledge



# ...but isn't this spooky?

It is counterintuitive to assume that there is such a thing as “the we”; if the two of us are acting together, it's just you and I!

- If you and I intend to  $\phi$  together, it is not the case that “the we” (rather than you and I) intends to  $\phi$  (and pulls off the  $\phi$ -ing).
- There is no additional subject; If you and I go for a walk together, it's just the two of us out there, **not three**: it's not that there's a third subject somehow coming along with us.
- There's **nothing “over and above”** our heads that is or has our intention.

# „The I“ is Just as Spooky as „The We“!

## The Spooky “We”

If you and I intend to  $\phi$  together, it is not the case that “the We” (rather than you and I) intends to  $\phi$  (and does the  $\phi$ -ing).

If you and I go for a walk together, it’s just the two of us out there, not three: it’s not that there’s a third subject somehow coming along with us.

There’s nothing “over and above” our heads that is or has our intention.

## The Spooky “I”

If I intend to  $\phi$ , it is not the case that there something of the sort of “the I” that does (or has) my intending (otherwise, why should I care about what that “I” intends?)

If I intend to go for a walk, it’s just me out there, there is no such thing as “the I” coming along with me.

There is no homunculus with or within me that has my intention.

# To Conclude

- The “spookiness” of the plural subject comes from a misconception of what it is to be a subject, not from its plural form.
- Hume, Fichte, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Wittgenstein (and countless others): **The way in which mind is subjective (“somebody’s”) is not in terms of “the self”/“the I”/“the we” in terms of some extra entity that is somehow represented in the intending.**
- The subject is an immanent feature of the intending itself (its being self-knowledge).
- Conceived of in this way, the plural subject is not spooky at all.
- **No particular exorcism is needed (other than some re-reading of the classics); we can safely adopt this plural subject view of CollInt.**