

Lecture 05: Joint Action

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1. Aggregate Animals, Aggregate Subjects

On accounts like Bratman's or Gilbert's, 'it makes some sense to say that the result is a kind of shared action: the individual people are, after all, acting intentionally throughout.

However, in a deeper sense, the activity is not shared: the group itself is not engaged in action whose aim the group finds worthwhile, and so the actions at issue here are merely those of individuals.

Thus, these accounts ... fail to make sense of a ... part of the landscape of social phenomena' (Helm 2008, pp. 20–1)

2. Joint Commitment and Shared Intention

'joint commitment underlies a host of central social phenomena in the human realm'; (Gilbert 2013, p. 400) it is a 'precondition of the correct ascription' of acting together, collective belief, shared intention, and more' (Gilbert 2013, p. 9)

Gilbert's two-part account of joint commitment:

1. 'joint commitment is ... a commitment by two or more people of the same two or

more people.' (Gilbert 2013, p. 6)

2. 'Any joint commitment can be described in a statement of the following form:' 'A, B, and so on (or those with property P) are jointly committed as far as is possible (by virtue of their several actions) to emulate a single doer of X'. (Gilbert 2013, p. 311)

'What is a "single body" [...]? whereas a single human being constitutes a single body [...], a plurality of human individuals does not in and of itself constitute such a body. [...] however, such a plurality can emulate such a body—one with a plurality not only of limbs, eyes, and ears, but also of noses and mouths' (Gilbert 2013, p. 116)

'a "body" here is understood to be a non-collective body.'

In manifesting any collective phenomenon, we can truly say 'We have created a third thing, and each of us is one of the parts' (Gilbert 2013, p. 269)

'when two or more people share an intention, none of them need to have a contributory intention.' (Gilbert 2013, p. 103)

3. Joint and Contralateral Commitment: Objection to Gilbert on Shared Intention

'Once the idea of joint commitment has been clarified, one may find it obvious that the par-

ties to any such commitment ... owe each other such actions in their capacity as parties to the joint commitment' (Gilbert 2013, p. 400-1)

'What each is committed to, through the joint commitment, is to do his part [...] These actions are owed solely by virtue of the existence of the joint commitment' (Gilbert 2013, pp. 401–2)

'just as—in the case of a personal commitment—you are in a position to berate yourself for failing to do what you committed yourself to do, all of those who are parties with you to a given *joint* commitment are in a position to berate you for failing to act according to that joint commitment' (p. 401). (Gilbert 2013, p. 401)

'We agree with Gilbert that joint action goes, intuitively, with the sort of joint commitment that she describes.' (Pettit & Schweikard 2006, p. 32)

4. Aggregate Subjects vs Plural Subjects

Assumption: the right theory of plural quantification exemplifies *Ontological Innocence*. That is, it is a theory on which plural quantification 'introduces no new ontological commitments to sets or any other kind of "set-like" entities over and above the individual objects that compose the pluralities in question' (Linnebo 2005).

'It is haywire to think that when you have some Cheerios, you are eating a *set*—what you're doing is: eating THE CHEERIOS' (Boolos quoted

in Oliver & Smiley 2001, p. 295). For more on plural quantification, read Linnebo (2005).

A *plural subject* is some individuals who collectively have an intention or other attitude.

An *aggregate subject* is a subject with multiple parts that are subjects.

References

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