

Joint Action: Which forms of shared agency underpin our social nature?

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Outline

Shared agency is a familiar feature of everyday life: people move tables together, walk together, play piano duets and paint houses together. Until recently philosophers of mind and action, like many cognitive and developmental psychologists, have focussed on the case of an individual acting alone and ignored the fact that people often do things together. How must models of individual agency be revised or extended to accommodate shared agency? What distinguishes events that involve shared agency from events that do not? Which planning mechanisms enable us to coordinate our plans and actions, and what if anything do these mechanisms tell us about the nature of shared agency? Does the existence of shared agency entail that there are mental states with plural subjects, or that there are special kinds of mental state (so-called ‘we-intentions’), or special kinds of reasoning (‘team reasoning’)? How, if at all, can we make sense of the idea that states like knowledge or intention can be shared by two or more subjects? What kinds of commitment, if any, are required for shared agency? When does shared agency first appear in human development? What role might it play in facilitating development? Should reflection of the motor or perceptual processes which enable us to coordinate our actions inform theories about what shared agency is?

Reading

Alonso, F. M. (2009). Shared intention, reliance, and interpersonal obligations. *Ethics*, 119(3):444–475

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1. *Theoretical Foundations: Collective Goals, Cooperation, Commitment and Experience*
 2. *Bratman's Theory of Shared Agency*
 3. *Nonreductive Theories of Shared Agency*
 4. *Psychological Foundations: Motor Representation in Joint Action*
 5. *Team Reasoning*
 6. *Joint Action and Development*
 7. *Bees, Shoals and Crowds*
 8. *Co-Representation*
 9. *A Blueprint for a Social Animal*
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Table 1: Very provisional schedule of lectures

- Bratman, M. E. (1992). Shared cooperative activity. *The Philosophical Review*, 101(2):327–341
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