

# Lecture 06: Joint Action

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## 1. Self-representing Aggregate Subjects

The *Intentional Stance*: ‘What it is to be a true believer is to be ... a system whose behavior is reliably and voluminously predictable via the intentional strategy.’ (Dennett 1987, p. 15)

*Cordula’s Imperative*: Theorise about shared agency from the point of view of the subject.

‘The intentional or conversational stance not only enables us to identify and understand patterns that would escape [...] an individualistic stance [...] In the case of self-representing agents, it is also responsible for generating the very patterns that appear in the interaction between them. [...] the perspective is of the greatest importance in understanding agency’ (Pettit 2014, p. 1658)

Compare Helm (2008, p. 40): ‘he is a member of a plural agent whose evaluative perspective he both shares and helps constitute; that is, we each must care about us as a plural agent.’

## 2. Aggregate Subjects vs Plural Subjects

Assumption: any adequate theory of plural quantification exemplifies *Ontological Innocence*.

That is, it is one which ‘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). Compare Boolos: ‘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).

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.

## 3. Self-representing Aggregate Subjects Presuppose Joint Action

‘A corporate attitude (of a collective) is an attitude held by the collective as an intentional agent. To say that a collective holds a corporate belief or desire in some proposition *p* is to say that the collective is an agent in its own right, which holds that belief or desire. Thus not all collectives are capable of holding corporate attitudes; only those that qualify as group agents are. For example, the United States Supreme Court and other collegial courts arguably fall into this category, as do commercial corporations, NGOs, and other purposive organizations such as cohesive political parties, universities, and especially states. In consequence, they are capable of holding corporate attitudes. By con-

trast, a random collection of individuals, such as the people who happen to be on Times Square at a particular time, does not. Such a collection cannot hold corporate attitudes.’ (List 2014, p. 1615)

‘joint actions, and the joint [shared] intentions underlying them, may play a role in the formation of group agents’ (List & Pettit 2011, n. 18, pp. 215-6)

## 4. Team Reasoning

‘The key difference between the two kinds of intention is not a property of the intentions themselves, but of the modes of reasoning by which they are formed. Thus, an analysis which starts with the intention has already missed what is distinctively collective about it’ (Gold & Sugden 2007)

‘collective intentions are the product of a distinctive mode of practical reasoning, team reasoning, in which agency is attributed to groups.’ (Gold & Sugden 2007)

‘somebody team reasons if she works out the best possible feasible combination of actions for all the members of her team, then does her part in it.’ (Bacharach 2006, p. 121)

## 5. Schmid's 'Charlie Brown Phenomenon'

'participants in joint action are usually focused on whatever it is they are jointly doing rather than on each other. Where joint action goes smoothly, the participants are not thinking about the others anymore than they are thinking about themselves' (Schmid 2013, p. 37)

'cooperators normatively expect their partners to cooperate; they do not predict their cooperation'

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'participants in a joint action represent their partners as doing their parts in the same way as individual intentions implicitly represent the agent as continuing to be willing and able to perform the action until the intention's conditions of satisfaction are reached' 'individual agents of temporally extended actions "represent" their own future intentions and actions in the same way in which cooperators represent their partners' intentions and actions.' (Schmid 2013, p. 49)

'this representation is neither (purely) cognitive nor (purely) normative, but rather a very peculiar combination of the two. ' (Schmid 2013,

p. 50)

'An individual with a purely cognitive stance toward his own future self's behavior and no normative expectation is a predictor of his behavior rather than an intender of his future action; similarly, an individual with a purely normative stance toward his own future behavior is a judge over [...] his future behavior rather than an agent.' (Schmid 2013, p. 50)

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