

Abstracts for Workshop on Subjectivity, Commitment and “Acting Together”

Can Group Agents Know?

Katharina Bernhard

Recent work in collective epistemology suggests that groups can form justified beliefs or even possess knowledge. I will critically discuss two suggestions of how we are to depict justified group belief or group knowledge. The first regards Christian List and Philip Pettit’s (both individually and jointly) developed account of group agents meeting what they call the “knowledge challenge.” The second is a recent proposal by Alvin I. Goldman, which roughly builds on List and Pettit’s account of group agents and attempts to utilize process reliabilism for justified belief on a group level. While both accounts provide valuable insight into the possibility of justified group belief and knowledge, I will give reasons for why both proposals should not convince us. More precisely, I will argue that List and Pettit’s account is unconvincing on epistemological grounds, and Goldman’s proposal is problematic on ontological grounds.

Normativity in Joint Action

Javier Gomez-Lavin
Matthew Rachar

One aspect of the debate about the nature of joint action has come to a stalemate, in part because of a dependence on descriptive and intuitional methods. *Normativists*, such as Margaret Gilbert, argue that action-relative normative relations are inherent in joint action, while *non-normativists*, such as Michael Bratman, claim that there are minimal cases of joint action without normative relations and that any normative relations in joint actions are based on familiar kinds of moral obligations. Each group of theorists proposes thought experiments meant to elicit intuitions in support of their view, and both camps take their examples to be conclusive.

Despite this certainty, no empirical research has been conducted on said intuitions. In order to fill in this lacuna, we conducted six survey experiments to determine whether participants attribute action-relative normative relations in cases of joint action. By isolating and varying the salient features of the thought experiments in the literature, we develop several ‘joint action conditions’. We then analyze the participants’ judgments about the presence of normative relations in the different conditions. Each study shows that implying joint action through subtle behavioral cues significantly increases the participants’ judgments about normative relations. We also show that this effect holds

in cases of morally deviant behavior, suggesting that the normativity involved in joint action is not moral obligation. Although our findings largely concur with the *normativist* account, we also found variance in the strength of different types of normative relations which leads us to recommend modifications to the normativist view and several lines of future research.

Lucky Joint Actions

Julius Schönherr

In this paper, I argue that joint actions can be lucky. The cases I have in mind exhibit the following structure: each participant believes that the intentions of each support the joint action in a modally robust way. These beliefs turn out to be false. However, due to luck circumstances, the discordance between these intentions never emerges. The discussion of these cases yields one positive and one negative upshot. The positive upshot is that the participants' intentions (but not their beliefs about these intentions) are modally unconstrained. Hence, while each participant needs to believe that the satisfaction of her intention is possible and that the intentions of each will persist under a range of counterfactual circumstances, this doesn't actually have to be the case. The negative upshot is that it is mistaken to presuppose that jointly acting agents must pursue the same joint goal under conditions of common knowledge.

It is collective all the way down?

Thomas Smith

I defend three claims and identify a tension between them. First, if we act together, then there is some amount of action, and/or number of actions, that are, collectively, ours. Second, quite generally, if something is collectively ours, then every part of it is. Third, if we act together, then the action(s) we collectively agent have singly-agented parts. To reconcile these claims we need somehow to show that, for any action(s) we collectively agent, any part of said action(s) is, *even* if singly agented, collectively ours. I consider some strategies for doing this before settling on this one. If, concerning a part of said action(s), one asks, of its agent(s), Anscombe's 'Why are you doing that?' question, one can be answered by 'Because we are doing this', where "that" is a means to, or part of, "this". Hence the part is collectively ours, because its teleological ground is collectively ours.

Plural Subjects

Hans Bernhard Schmid