

Joint Action: Lecture 01

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1. The Question

Which forms of shared agency underpin our social nature?

A *joint action* is an exercise of shared agency.

Modest sociality: ‘small scale shared intentional agency in the absence of asymmetric authority relations’ (Bratman 2009, p. 150)

2. Contrast Cases and the Simple View

Question

What distinguishes genuine joint actions from parallel but merely individual actions?

Aim

An account of joint action must draw a line between joint actions and parallel but merely individual actions.

The Simple View

Two or more agents perform an intentional joint action exactly when there is an act-type, ϕ , such that each of several agents intends that they, these agents, ϕ together and their intentions are appropriately related to their actions.

3. Acting Together and the Threat of Circularity

‘Examples of what I shall refer to ... as “acting together” include dancing together, building a house together, and marching together against the enemy, where these are construed as something other than a matter of doing the same thing concurrently and in the same place’ (Gilbert 2013, p. 23)

‘The key question in the philosophy of collective action is simply ... under what conditions are two or more people doing something together?’ (Gilbert 2010, p. 67)

‘two or more people are acting together if [and only if] they are jointly committed to espousing as a body a certain goal, and each one is acting in a way appropriate to the achievement of that goal, where each one is doing this in light of the fact that he or she is subject to a joint commitment to espouse the goal in question as a body.’ (Gilbert 2013, p. 34)

‘any random group of agents is a group that does something together’ (Ludwig 2014, p. 128)

4. Walking Together in the Tarantino Sense

‘each agent does not just intend that the group perform the [...] joint action. Rather, each agent intends as well that the group perform this joint action in accordance with subplans (of the in-

tentions in favor of the joint action) that mesh’ (Bratman 1992, p. 332).

Our plans are *interconnected* just if facts about your plans feature in mine and conversely.

‘shared intentional agency consists, at bottom, in interconnected planning agency of the participants’ (Bratman 2011).

Bratman’s claim. For you and I to have a collective/shared intention that we J it is sufficient that:

- (1) ‘(a) I intend that we J and (b) you intend that we J;
- (2) ‘I intend that we J in accordance with and because of la, lb, and meshing subplans of la and lb; you intend that we J in accordance with and because of la, lb, and meshing subplans of la and lb;
- (3) ‘1 and 2 are common knowledge between us’ (Bratman 1993, View 4)

5. Objectives for this lecture

- understand questions about shared agency
- can use the method of contrast cases
- understand distributive and collective interpretations of sentences
- can distinguish acting together from joint action

- familiar with the Simple View
- can critically assess objections to the Simple View

References

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