

Editorial Manager(tm) for The Review of Philosophy and Psychology  
Manuscript Draft

Manuscript Number: ROPP58R2

Title: Playing one's part

Article Type: Joint Action: What is Shared?

Keywords: joint; shared; action; participation; intentional.

Corresponding Author: Thomas H Smith, Ph.D.

Corresponding Author's Institution:

First Author: Thomas H Smith, Ph.D.

Order of Authors: Thomas H Smith, Ph.D.

**Abstract:** The consensus in the philosophical literature on joint action is that, sometimes at least, when agents intentionally jointly  $\varphi$ , this is explicable by their intending that they  $\varphi$ , for a period of time prior to their  $\varphi$ -ing. If this be granted, it poses a dilemma. For agents who so intend either severally or jointly intend that they  $\varphi$ . The first option is ruled out by two stipulations that we may consistently make: (i) that at least one of the agents non-akratically believes that, all things considered, the agents ought not to  $\varphi$ , and (ii) that an agent is akratic, if she intends a thing that she believes, all things considered, ought not to be done. But the second option seems to entail the existence of a mental state with multiple subjects, which, in turn, seems to commit us to the existence of a "group mind" modified by that state: an incautious posit to say the least. I resolve the dilemma by noting that 'They jointly intend' is indeterminate between 'They intend, jointly', which does indeed entail that some mental state is an intention with multiple subjects, and 'Jointly, they intend', which entails a weaker claim, viz. that some mental state or states is an intention with multiple subjects. I then sketch an account of how a plurality of mental states, distributed among subjects, might, collectively, do service as their intention that they  $\varphi$ . It makes novel use of notions of participation and of doing a thing jointly with others. A corollary is that either intentions are not attitudes towards propositions, or propositions are individuated more finely than is often assumed.

**Response to Reviewers:** The guest editor's request for "small editing", and for a conclusion prompted a rearrangement of the material from the section 'Way out' onwards. There aren't any new ideas here, but the material is better organized, and easier to follow, I think. The requested conclusion has added a few hundred words, but the paper is otherwise no longer.

# Playing one's part

Thomas H. Smith

*Philosophy  
Arthur Lewis Building  
University of Manchester  
Oxford Road  
Manchester, M13 9PL*

Tel: +44 (0)161 275 7886

Fax: +44 (0)161 275 4925

[thomas.smith@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:thomas.smith@manchester.ac.uk)

*Keywords: joint, shared, action, participation, intentional.*

## Playing one's part

**ABSTRACT** – The consensus in the philosophical literature on joint action is that, sometimes at least, when agents *intentionally* jointly  $\varphi$ , this is explicable by their *intending* that they  $\varphi$ , for a period of time prior to their  $\varphi$ -ing. If this be granted, it poses a dilemma. For agents who so intend either *severally* or *jointly* intend that they  $\varphi$ . The first option is ruled out by two stipulations that we may consistently make: (i) that at least one of the agents *non-akratically* believes that, all things considered, the agents ought not to  $\varphi$ , and (ii) that an agent *is* akratic, if she intends a thing that she believes, all things considered, ought not to be done. But the second option seems to entail the existence of a mental state with multiple subjects, which, in turn, seems to commit us to the existence of a “group mind” modified by that state: an incautious posit to say the least. I resolve the dilemma by noting that ‘They jointly intend’ is indeterminate between ‘They intend, jointly’, which does indeed entail that some mental state is an intention with multiple subjects, and ‘Jointly, they intend’, which entails a weaker claim, *viz.* that some mental state *or states* is an intention with multiple subjects. I then sketch an account of how a plurality of mental states, distributed among subjects, might, collectively, do service as their intention that they  $\varphi$ . It makes novel use of notions of *participation* and of doing a thing *jointly with others*. A corollary is that either intentions are not attitudes towards propositions, or propositions are individuated more finely than is often assumed.

*Keywords:* joint, shared, action, participation, intentional.

## Introduction

Stan and Ollie jointly decide to carry a piano, and jointly execute this decision. Plausibly, their piano-carrying is thereby *intentional*, and explained by some *intention(s)* of theirs. But what is it that they intend? On the face of it, either they *severally* intend that they carry the piano, or they *jointly* so intend. The first option is ruled out by two stipulations that we may consistently make: (i) that Ollie *non-akratically* believes that, all things considered, they ought not to carry the piano, and (ii) that one *is* akratic, if one intends a thing that one believes, all things considered, ought not to be done. The second option seems to entail the existence of a mental state with multiple subjects, which, in turn, seems to commit us to the existence of a “group mind” modified by that state: an incautious posit to say the least. In this paper, I try, first to carefully present, and then to resolve, this puzzle.

I proceed as follows. First, I sketch a distinction between unintentional and intentional joint activity. Then, to forestall misunderstandings, I sketch a background metaphysics of action, activity and jointness. Then, having made explicit what I take to be the folk psychological role of *decision* (singular and joint) and, in particular, its connections with intention and intentional activity, I explain why it is plausible that at least some intentional joint activities are explained by both decisions and intentions. I then present the puzzle of Stan and Ollie. A partial solution is presented: for Stan and Ollie to jointly intend that they carry the piano, it need not be, I argue, that a mental state is jointly borne by them; rather some mental *states*, borne by them, may serve as their instance of intending. I then hypothesise that each such state is an intention to *play one's part*, jointly with the other, in carrying the piano – an intention with a content that I try to precisify. The precisified hypothesis entails that either intentions are not attitudes towards propositions, or propositions are individuated more finely than is often assumed. I sketch some independent reasons to believe that this is the case.

## Intentional joint activity – an informal sketch

When one does a thing, one may do it either intentionally or unintentionally, and when, jointly, agents do a thing, they may likewise do it either intentionally or unintentionally – I depict the point with this matrix:

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Joint</u>
<u>Unintentional</u>	(i) A thing is unintentionally singly done.	(iii) A thing is unintentionally jointly done.
<u>Intentional</u>	(ii) A thing is intentionally singly done.	(iv) A thing is intentionally jointly done.

Examples of the difference between (i) and (ii) are familiar. There is a difference between, say, raising your arm at an auction and thereby unintentionally placing a bid – when all one meant to do was to stretch, say – and raising your arm (in apparently much the same way) and thereby *intentionally* placing a bid. Examples of the difference between (iii) and (iv) will be familiar to some readers, but may be less familiar to others. I give three from the literature.

First, there is Adam Smith’s idea that, by each pursuing his own gain, jointly, we secure the public interest. Smith (1981: *IV.ii*) is explicit that while the promotion of his own interest is intentionally singly done, by each of us, and whilst the securement of the public interest is, thereby, jointly done by us, the securement of the public interest is not *intentionally* jointly done by us. So here we have a (iii)-type case. Searle (1990: 404-5) has described a contrast case where

...[some] business school graduates [educated at a business school where they learn Adam Smith’s theory of the hidden hand] all get together on graduation day and form a pact to the effect that they will all go out together and help humanity by way of each pursuing his own selfish interests.

I shall take it that the “pact” here is not, or not merely, a *promise exchange* but a *joint decision* – a notion that I shall shortly elucidate.<sup>1</sup> Intuitively, such a decision (if it controls its execution) ensures that the securement of the public interest is *intentionally and jointly* done by the graduates, i.e., that this is something that they mean to do. So Searle’s case contrasts with Smith’s: it is a (iv)-type case.

Second, consider Hayek’s (1973: 41) account of agents who severally make their way through “wild broken country... [each] seek[ing] for himself what seems to him the best path” and, by so doing, over time, together create a track. The agents imagined by Hayek “produce an order which is no part of their intentions”. But we can imagine a contrast case where this is not so, because the agents, like Searle’s graduates, make a joint decision to create a track, and to do so *by the same method* as is employed by Hayek’s agents, i.e., by each seeking for himself what seems to him the best path, whenever he passes through the area. In both cases, best path seeking is a thing intentionally singly done by each of the

<sup>1</sup> It is a nice question – which I do not here attempt to address – whether *agreements* are more plausibly modelled on promise exchanges or on joint decisions. See (Gilbert 1996, ch. 13).

agents, and track-creating a thing that is jointly done by those agents. But it is in the latter case only that track-creating is *intentionally* jointly done by those agents.

Third, consider a case of Frank Jackson's (1987: 83):

Suppose – *contrary* to fact – that Lerner and Lowe [sic] never exchanged a word. They worked quite independently in ignorance of each other – one on the words, the other on the music – and by an incredible fluke the two independently produced parts fitted together to make up *My Fair Lady*. It would still be true that they together wrote *My Fair Lady* without either writing it alone. Writing *My Fair Lady* would still have been something that they did together, without it being the case that they had a common goal, or indeed that one's action in any way affected the other's.

In both Jackson's counterfactual case, and the contrast case that actuality supplies, the writing of *My Fair Lady* is jointly done by Lerner and Loewe. But in actuality alone is this *intentionally* jointly done by them. No doubt, in both cases, various things (lyric writing, music writing) are intentionally singly done by one or other artist. But only in actuality do they intentionally do what, jointly, they do.

Some may resist the gloss that I put on the difference between Smith's, Hayek's and Jackson's cases, and the cases with which I contrast them, on the grounds that it is built into the notion of a thing's being *jointly done* by agents, that it is *intentionally* jointly done by them. Hence (the thought runs) as nothing is intentionally jointly done by Smith's, Hayek's or by Jackson's agents, nothing is jointly done by them. If it is so (as perhaps is not settled by usage in the joint action literature) then whatever the difference between each case and its contrast case, it is not captured by (iii) and (iv), which is a distinction without a difference. To explain my disagreement with this way of thinking, I must make explicit some of my background metaphysical assumptions about action, activity and jointness.

## Background metaphysics

I assume that *the things we do* are types – act-types. To do a thing is to instantiate some act-type: an agent  $\phi$ s just if the act-type  $\phi$  is a thing that he does, a thing that he instantiates, and several agents  $\phi$  just if the act-type  $\phi$  is a thing that they do, a thing that they instantiate. Hence, an agent dances just if dancing is a thing that he does, and several agents dance just if dancing is a thing they that do.

There are two ways for several agents to  $\phi$ : severally and jointly. (They can also  $\phi$  *variously*, e.g. by some of them  $\phi$ -ing jointly and the others also  $\phi$ -ing jointly, or by some of them  $\phi$ -ing jointly and the others  $\phi$ -ing severally). When agents  $\phi$  severally we cannot in general infer either that they  $\phi$  jointly, or that they do not (if, on some occasion, we dance severally, it may be that we also dance jointly, but it may be that we do not). And when agents  $\phi$  jointly we cannot in general infer either that they  $\phi$  severally, or that they do not (if, on some occasion, we dance jointly, it may be that we also dance severally, but it may be that we do not – if I am still, and you shuffle around me, we may dance jointly but not severally).<sup>2</sup> It is hard, then, to see how we might take one of 'severally' and 'jointly' as primitive, and define the other in terms of it. A better approach, to my mind, is to elucidate these concepts in terms of type-*instances*, thus, where ' $(\forall X)$ '

<sup>2</sup> I owe the example to Mike Martin.

is, following a number of writers (Boolos, 1984, 1985; van Inwagen, 1990; Lewis, 1991; Hossack, 2000; McKay, 2006) used as a *plural universal quantifier*, meaning *for any thing or things*, binding a plural variable, meaning *they* or *them*:

$$(S_I) \quad (\forall X) (\forall \varphi) (X \varphi \text{ severally} \leftrightarrow ((\forall x) x \text{ is one of } X \rightarrow ((\exists i) i \text{ is an instance of } \varphi \ \& \ i \text{ is } X\text{'s } \varphi\text{-ing})))$$

$$(J_I) \quad (\forall X) (\forall \varphi) (X \varphi \text{ jointly} \leftrightarrow ((\exists i) i \text{ is an instance of } \varphi \ \& \ i \text{ is } X\text{'s } \varphi\text{-ing}))^3$$

Hence, you and I dance severally just if there is an instance of dancing that is *my* dancing, and an instance of dancing that is *yours*; you and I dance jointly just if there is an instance of dancing that is *our* dancing.

The background assumption here is that some one or more agents do a thing, i.e. instantiate an act-type, just if some one or more instances of that act-type are possessed by – proper or attributable to – the agent(s) in question, such that they may be designated by genitive noun phrases like ‘my dancing’, ‘my dancing and your dancing’, ‘our dancing’ etc. I see no reason to doubt this assumption. Such expressions bear all the hallmarks of designating expressions, and feature in apparently true sentences (e.g. ‘My dancing was none too elegant’). And since such expressions occur as subjects of apparently true causal predications (e.g. ‘My dancing caused him to faint’), act-type instances are unimpeachable on naturalistic grounds. Furthermore, we customarily refer to and quantify over actions, and anything that we would ordinarily call an action is, it would seem, designatable by some such expression. I propose, then, that in addition to the things we do, which are types, there are *actions*, which are instances of those types. What (S<sub>I</sub>) and (J<sub>I</sub>) implicitly do, then, is elucidate the difference between some agents’ doing a thing severally, and their doing that thing jointly, by showing how it correlates with distinct allocations, or distributions, of *actions* to the agents in question.

It will be useful to expand upon (S<sub>I</sub>) and (J<sub>I</sub>) so as to make explicit their quantification over actions:

$$(S_A) \quad (\forall X) (\forall \varphi) (X \varphi \text{ severally} \leftrightarrow ((\forall x) x \text{ is one of } X \rightarrow ((\exists a) a \text{ is an action} \ \& \ a \text{ is an instance of } \varphi \ \& \ a \text{ is } X\text{'s } \varphi\text{-ing})))$$

$$(J_A) \quad (\forall X) (\forall \varphi) (X \varphi \text{ jointly} \leftrightarrow ((\exists a) a \text{ is an action} \ \& \ a \text{ is an instance of } \varphi \ \& \ a \text{ is } X\text{'s } \varphi\text{-ing}))$$

Since an action is not a thing we *do*, but an instance thereof, it helps to reserve a verb other than ‘do’ for the relation that agents bear to their actions. ‘Perform’ will do. Agents do things, by performing actions.

I have been using ‘jointly’ as an *adverbial* modifier (or at least as one occurring in post-predicate position). When transformed into a *sentential* modifier, it arguably functions differently. Consider:

<sup>3</sup> An innocent enough corollary of (J<sub>I</sub>) is that when any *one* agent  $\varphi$ s, he (degenerately) jointly  $\varphi$ s.

(T<sub>adv</sub>) Löwenheim and Skolem proved the theorem jointly (collectively, together).

(T<sub>sen</sub>) Jointly (collectively, together), Löwenheim and Skolem proved the theorem.

Suppose that Löwenheim and Skolem collaborated on a proof of the theorem. Then both (T<sub>adv</sub>) and (T<sub>sen</sub>) are true. Now suppose that they worked in isolation, ignorant of each other's existence, that Löwenheim proved a lemma of the theorem, and that Skolem deduced the theorem from it. Then, to my ear, (T<sub>adv</sub>) is false but (T<sub>sen</sub>) true. (J<sub>A</sub>) accounts for the fact that the truth-value of (T<sub>adv</sub>) changes from the first case to the second. In the first case, some action of Löwenheim and Skolem's exists to serve as their instance of *proving the theorem*, but in the second case, nothing that we would ordinarily call an action of theirs exists to play this role. However, what is true in the second case is that some things (plural) that we would call some actions of Löwenheim and Skolem's – viz. Löwenheim's proving of the lemma and Skolem's conditional proof from that lemma – exist to serve as their instance of *proving the theorem*. That suggests that 'Jointly,  $X \varphi$ ' has a weaker truth-condition than ' $X \varphi$  jointly', one we may formulate thus, where ' $(\exists A)$ ' is (again, following Boolos, 1984, 1985; van Inwagen, 1990; Lewis, 1991; Hossack, 2000; McKay, 2006) used as a *plural existential quantifier*, meaning *there is or are some thing or things such that*.

$$(J_A^{wk}) \quad (\forall X) (\forall \varphi) (\text{Jointly, } X \varphi \leftrightarrow ((\exists A) A \text{ is/are some action(s) \& } A \text{ is/are an instance of } \varphi \text{ \& } A \text{ is/are } X\text{'s } \varphi\text{-ing}))$$

A corollary is that whilst every action is an instance of an act-type, the converse is not true – an instance of an act-type may be a *plurality* of actions. I see no problem with holding that an instance of an act-type may be numerically many things. Certainly, instances of *substance* types (or *sortals*) are sometimes likewise numerically many: my boots are an instance of *pair*, my parents an instance of *couple* (Smith, 2006).

Sometimes a type instance is called a *token*. This may imply that every instance is a *particular*, so I reserve 'token' for an instance that is one particular.

It matters little if readers do not share my ear for the difference between (T<sub>adv</sub>) and (T<sub>sen</sub>). For, plainly there is *some* sense in which 'jointly' is an inapt modifier of 'Löwenheim and Skolem proved the theorem', in the case in which they worked in isolation, and another "weaker" sense in which it is apt. It is helpful to distinguish these senses and (J<sub>A</sub>) and (J<sub>A</sub><sup>wk</sup>) help us to do this, even if they mistakenly correlate the distinction with one between adverbial and sentential modification. For ease of expression, I will, however, continue to distinguish between adverbial and sentential 'jointly', in the manner outlined.

To my ear, *adnominal* (or at least, pre-predicate) 'jointly', as is found in

(T<sub>adn</sub>) Löwenheim and Skolem jointly (collectively, together) proved the theorem.

is semantically indeterminate. ( $T_{\text{adn}}$ ) can be heard as having the truth-conditions of either ( $T_{\text{adv}}$ ) or ( $T_{\text{sen}}$ ). However that may be, it will be useful to reserve adnominal ‘jointly’ for such indeterminate usages.<sup>4</sup>

Four more remarks are called for.

First, when agents do a thing jointly, they perform some action – we may naturally call such an action a *joint action*. When, however, it is the case that jointly, agents do a thing, it does not follow that they perform some action – they may perform some actions. I shall stipulate, however, that they engage in *joint activity*. It is the broader category of *joint activity* which is my topic in this paper.

Second, since it is not just *act*-types that are jointly instantiated, since instantiations of other types make available genitive noun phrases designating *states* and *events* (instances of state- and event-types), that are, like ‘our dancing’, causally efficacious and hence unimpeachable on naturalistic grounds (e.g. ‘the brackets’ supporting of the shelf’, ‘the falling boulders’ destruction of the hunting lodge’), and since actions are (as I shall assume) *events*, I take ( $J_A$ ) and ( $J_A^{\text{wk}}$ ) to be corollaries, or restrictions, of a quite *general* account of ‘jointly’ or, as may be more natural, ‘collectively’, as modifiers of adjectival and verbal predications:<sup>5</sup>

( $J_G$ )      ( $\forall X$ ) ( $\forall F$ ) ( $X F$  jointly  $\leftrightarrow ((\exists \mathcal{S}) \mathcal{S}$  is a state or event &  $\mathcal{S}$  is an instance of  $F$  &  $\mathcal{S}$  is  $X$ ’s  $F$ -ness/ $F$ -ing))

( $J_G^{\text{wk}}$ )    ( $\forall X$ ) ( $\forall F$ ) (Jointly,  $X F \leftrightarrow ((\exists \mathcal{S}) \mathcal{S}$  is/are some state(s) or event(s) &  $\mathcal{S}$  is/are an instance of  $F$  &  $\mathcal{S}$  is/are  $X$ ’s  $F$ -ness/ $F$ -ing))

We are, perhaps, not as interested in, or competent to adjudicate upon, the individuation of non-agentive states and events as we are the individuation of actions. If, jointly (or collectively), some trees shade a region of grassland, is there *one* or *many* states or events that is (or are) their shading of that region? I cannot say. Nevertheless, I presume that such questions have determinate answers, so we ought to distinguish between a stronger and a weaker use of ‘jointly’ in the non-agentive, as well as in the agentive case. And it will help to reserve adnominal ‘jointly’ for an indeterminate use in non-agentive cases too.

Third, ‘joint’, like its near synonyms ‘shared’ and ‘together’, can connote contiguity, composition, cooperation and coordination.<sup>6</sup> But the foregoing suggests that these are, at most, occasional and inessential features of jointness. Neither our imagined trees, nor the shadows they cast, need be *contiguous* (the region could be discontinuous). Nor need they *compose* a further thing (a copse or

<sup>4</sup> My comments on adverbial, sentential and adnominal ‘jointly’ are influenced by Moltmann (2004). Her topic is ‘together’ and her linguistic intuitions do not chime with mine on ‘jointly’.

<sup>5</sup> I exclude *nominal* predications, such as ‘My boots are a pair’ and ‘They are baboons’. Adding ‘jointly’ or ‘collectively’ to these seems to me to be always either otiose or incongruous, unless the modified sentence is idiomatic shorthand (e.g. for ‘When they get together they act like baboons’).

<sup>6</sup> Re: ‘together’, Lasersohn (1998: 278) distinguishes “collectivizing”, “spatial”, “temporal”, “coordinated action”, “social accompaniment” and “assembly” readings, whilst Moltmann (2004: 289-90, 308, 313) distinguishes “cumulative numerical measurement”, “collective-action”, “coordinated-action”, “spatiotemporal-proximity”, “temporal-proximity”, “mixture” and “configuration” readings. Moltmann thinks (290) that “[w]ith an appropriate generalization of the notion of measurement”, her readings are subsumable under a “cumulative measurement” reading.



composite shadow).<sup>7</sup> Nor need they *cooperatively* shade, or *coordinate* their shading. The same applies to the special case of *activity*. Recall, if Smith (1981: IV.ii) is right, jointly, we secure the public interest, by each pursuing his own gain. It does not follow that either we, or our individually self-interested actions, are *contiguous*, that we, or they, *compose* a further thing, that we, or they, are *cooperative*, or that we, or they, *coordinate* the securing of the public interest.

Fourth, as no cognate of ‘jointly’ occurs on the right-hand sides of (J<sub>A</sub>), (J<sub>A</sub><sup>wk</sup>), (J<sub>G</sub>), and (J<sub>G</sub><sup>wk</sup>), they may seem to offer *definitions* that could be used to introduce the concept *jointness* to one who lacks it. I think this is doubtful. For states and events, being causally embedded, are plausibly concrete, and it is built into a proper understanding of possession that to possess some one or more concreta is to exclude their concurrent possession by anything else. (It is of course, otherwise, with possession of *abstracta* such as universals). Hence, if some things *X* (e.g. the Brontë sisters) possess some concreta *C* (e.g. Haworth parsonage), this excludes *C*’s possession by any thing or things among *X*. Hence, *X* cannot possess *C* severally, or by some of *X* possessing *C* jointly and the others also possessing *C* – the only way for *X* to possess *C* is jointly. More particularly, if some *F*-ness or *F*-ing (e.g. some shading of a grassland, some proving of a theorem) is possessed by some *X*, i.e. is *X*’s *F*-ness or *F*-ing, then it is jointly theirs. So, a full understanding of our right-hand sides may require a grasp of the *jointness* concept, even though they do not explicitly deploy it. No matter. I have tried here to elucidate the *jointness* concept, not to introduce it to one who lacks it.

## The three cases revisited

We are now in a position to understand two reasons why one might *wrongly* think that if something is jointly done by agents, it is intentionally jointly done by them.

First, one might think (following Davidson 1990: Essay 3) that something can be an instance of more than one act-type, and that every action is an instance of at least one act-type *relative to which* it is intentional.<sup>8</sup> But these theses – which I feel no pressing need to deny – do not entail that whenever an act-type is jointly done, it is intentionally jointly done. For, first, as Davidson’s thesis is restricted to *actions*, its only relevant consequence is that whenever an act-type is jointly done (i.e. instantiated), the relevant instance, *if it be an action*, is intentional *qua* instance of some act-type. But we have seen that not every instance of an act-type *is* an action. Plausibly, neither Smith’s, nor Hayek’s nor Jackson’s agents perform any joint *action*; rather, in each case, a joint activity, consisting of a plurality of actions, is performed. Furthermore, it would not be plausible to extend the scope of Davidson’s thesis from actions to instances of act-types. For in Smith’s, Hayek’s and Jackson’s cases, whilst each action in the plurality performed is, perhaps, intentional (*qua* instance of some act-type), the *plurality* is not obviously so (*qua* instance of any act-type). Finally, even if it be granted that whenever an act-type is jointly done, the relevant instance of that act-type, *whether it be an*

<sup>7</sup> Pace what is suggested by Frege (1979: 227-8): “[Regarding the sentence ‘Siemens and Halske have built the first major telegraph network’] ‘Siemens and Halske’ designates a compound object about which a statement is being made” and Armstrong (1978: Vol. 1, 32): “On the natural interpretation of ‘Tom, Dick and Harry lifted a girder’ the phrase ‘Tom, Dick and Harry’ refers to a single entity: the team which Tom, Dick and Harry made up for the purpose of lifting the girder.”

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Davidson would make the point using the notion of a *description*, not that of a *type* – also that he does not (as far as I can determine) discuss any multiply-agented actions.

*action, or a plurality of actions*, is intentional (*qua* instance of some act-type), it would be a fallacy to infer that whenever an act-type is jointly done, *that act-type* is intentionally jointly done. All I have presupposed, in my account of the Smith, Hayek and Jackson cases, is that an act-type, such as *securement of the public interest*, may be unintentionally, as well as intentionally, jointly done. Only if we confuse the doing of a type, with the performance of an instance of a type, will we hold that a thing cannot be unintentionally jointly done.

Second, as has been said, ‘joint’, like ‘shared and ‘together’, can connote cooperation and coordination. Misled by these connotations, we may be driven to assume that a thing is jointly done only if the doing of it is cooperative and coordinated. And it may not be implausible to infer from *this* that a thing is jointly done only if it is intentionally jointly done. However, as I have urged, the mentioned connotations are *mere* connotations. Our three examples hammer this point home: Smith, Hayek and Jackson each describe a case in which a thing is jointly done, but one in which the doing of it is neither cooperative or coordinated.

## Joint decision, intention and intentional activity

Smith, Hayek and Jackson give descriptions of unintentional joint activities, with which I have contrasted cases of *intentional* joint activity. In Smith’s and Hayek’s cases, at least, there is a further difference: the activity executes a *joint decision*. As joint decision will be central in what follows, I should say something about it.<sup>9</sup>

Just as agents make, say, a joint declaration just if they jointly declare something, so they make a joint decision just if they jointly decide something. These claims may seem truistic. For all that, they are indeterminate. For they feature an *adnominal* ‘jointly’. Hence the truisms can be heard as saying *either* that a joint decision (or declaration) is made just if some *action* of its makers is their decision (or declaration), *or*, more weakly, that one is made just if some *action(s)* of theirs is/are their decision (or declaration). Alternatively put, they can be heard as saying *either* that every joint decision (or declaration) is a *joint action*, one performed by any agents who decide (or declare) *jointly* (adverbial ‘jointly’), *or* that it is a *joint activity*, one performed by any agents who are such that *jointly* (sentential ‘jointly’), they decide (or declare). I frame the truisms thus, not because I am certain that claims of joint declaration- and decision-making have indeterminate truth-conditions, but because I am uncertain as to how to determine these truth-conditions, and because, for my purposes here, I have no need to do so.

In particular, I do not wish to rule out (or in) the apparent possibility that a joint decision *just is* a plurality of actions, and, more particularly, a plurality of *decisions*, each singly made, and expressed, by one of the parties to the joint decision. For it is, perhaps, not implausible that a joint decision to do a thing is made whenever each of its parties singly makes, and expresses, a decision directed towards the doing of that thing, *provided certain other conditions are met*, e.g. that these decisions are *interdependent* (such that the occurrence of each depends on the occurrence of each of the others)<sup>10</sup> and/or that they are *interconditional* (such that the content of each is conditionalized upon the

<sup>9</sup> I was pressed to say more by two anonymous referees.

<sup>10</sup> Bratman argues that *intentions* that meet a similar interdependence condition are a necessary part of a sufficient condition for ‘shared intention’. See his condition (v) in (Bratman, 2009b: 159).

occurrence of the others).<sup>11</sup> If it is so, a joint decision may simply *be* a plurality of appropriately interdependent and/or interconditional singly-agented decisions.

However that may be, I simply assume that there *are* joint decisions. ‘Joint decision’ is a *folk* psychological expression for a *folk* psychological concept, and as with other such expressions, there is no reason to doubt that it has an extension.

I also assume that, whatever joint decisions are, they are *decisions*, and hence play the roles that, according to our folk psychology, decisions play. In particular, I assume that to decide is to come to intend, and that to decide and then *remain* decided is to *persist* in intending (to *continue* to intend), i.e. to maintain a *settled view* of the practical question that the decision closes. I assume, too, that a decision to  $\phi$  has the capacity to *control* its agent or agents’ subsequent  $\phi$ -ing – where to *control* is not merely to cause, but to cause non-accidentally (i.e. not against the odds) and non-deviantly (i.e. not by means of any “deviant causal chain”).<sup>12</sup> And I assume that when an agent or agents’ decision to  $\phi$  does thus control their  $\phi$ -ing,  $\phi$  is *intentionally* done by them, and, in addition, that the controlling influence of the decision is *contrastively explanatory* of  $\phi$ ’s being done intentionally rather than unintentionally – such that (no doubt *inter alia*) had the agent(s)  $\phi$ -ed unintentionally, rather than intentionally, then, whilst they may or may not have made their decision, no such decision would have controlled their  $\phi$ -ing.<sup>13</sup> Finally, I assume that explanations of this sort are *distal*, and that whenever they are available, more *proximal* ones are too. For when decisions control, and hence explain, intentional activities, they do so by launching (or renewing) *intentions* that persist (albeit perhaps intermittently) up until the time of these activities, and which themselves control (i.e. non-accidentally and non-deviantly cause) these activities. It is, as it were, by triggering states of intention that decisions are able to “reach across time” and exert their controlling influence. Hence, when an agent or agents’ decision that they  $\phi$  controls, and hence explains, their subsequent intentional  $\phi$ -ing, the more *proximal* explanation of why the agent(s)  $\phi$ -ed intentionally, rather than unintentionally, is that they persisted in intending that they  $\phi$ , and were controlled by their so intending (such that, *inter alia*, had they  $\phi$ -ed unintentionally, then, whilst they may or may not have so intended, it would have not have been the case that such intending controlled their  $\phi$ -ing). Indeed, this explanans serves, not only as a proximal explanation of why  $\phi$  was intentionally, rather than unintentionally, done, but also as an explanation of why it is that the decision serves as a distal explanation of that very explanandum.

There is, then, a tight link between decisions (joint and singular), intention, and intentional activity. But whilst it is safe to assume that there are joint decisions, and that, being decisions, they trigger states of intentions, it is *not* safe to assume, at least at the outset of inquiry, that there are joint intentions, despite the ubiquity of that expression and its near synonyms in the joint action literature.<sup>14</sup> This is so for two reasons. First, no cognate or near synonym of ‘joint intention’ is a *folk* psychological expression for a *folk* psychological concept. My experience teaches that such expressions are the preserve of *theorists* of joint action. Second, we are not obviously committed to the existence of joint

---

<sup>11</sup> Something like this idea is entertained by Gilbert (1996: 185, 308 n. 25) and Velleman (1997).

<sup>12</sup> For discussion, see Peacocke (1979).

<sup>13</sup> Worries raised by Lewis (1979) about such ‘backtracking’ conditionals must here be bracketed.

<sup>14</sup> See for example (Tuomela, 2007 ch. 4; Gilbert 2006a; Bratman 1999b ch. 6, 2009a, 2009b).

intentions by that of joint decisions, and by the decision-intention connection. For, whilst to jointly decide is *inter alia* to come to intend, it does not follow that it is to come to *jointly* intend. On the face of it, there is no reason to rule out the possibility that any agents who jointly decide that they will do a thing thereby come to *severally* intend that they will do that thing. Indeed, if, as hypothesised above, any agents' joint decision that they do a thing *just is* a plurality of interdependent and/or interconditional decisions, directed towards their doing of that thing, then to jointly decide may just be *inter alia* to come to *severally* intend.

## Explaining intentional joint activity

Let us return to Smith's, Hayek's and Jackson's cases, and to their contrast cases. As it is good method to refrain from positing brute, inexplicable facts, a good question to ask, of each case and its contrast case is: *what explains the difference between them?* We should expect the answer to be psychological in nature. For we might have added to our descriptions of our contrast cases that in (as it may be) securing the public interest, creating a track, and writing *My Fair Lady*, the agents perform the exact same bodily movements as in Smith's, Hayek's and Jackson's cases.<sup>15</sup> If there is no bodily difference between two cases, there can be no bodily explanation of their difference. We must look then, for psychological explanantia.

Given the foregoing, two such explanantia appear to be available, at least with respect to Smith's case and Hayek's: a prior joint decision (which we may presume to have controlled its execution) and the intention(s) that it launched. Take Searle's business school graduates. We may be confident that the control exerted by their joint decision that, jointly, they secure the public interest, over their subsequent securement of it, explains, distally, why the securement of the public interest was intentionally, rather than unintentionally, jointly done by them. We may be confident too that the control exerted by their persisting in intending that jointly, they secure the public interest, over their subsequent securement of said public interest explains, proximally, the same explanandum. Generalising:

### (DECISION)

For some  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  and  $\varphi$ ,  $\varphi$  is jointly done intentionally, rather than unintentionally, by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ , and this is explained by the control exerted by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ 's prior joint decision that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

### (INTENTION)

For some  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  and  $\varphi$ ,  $\varphi$  is jointly done intentionally, rather than unintentionally, by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ , and this is explained by the control exerted by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ 's persisting in intending that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

These are very *modest* claims. Contrast these *immodest* variants:

### (IMMODEST DECISION)

For any  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  and  $\varphi$ , if  $\varphi$  is jointly done intentionally, rather than unintentionally, by  $a_1, \dots,$

<sup>15</sup> Similar points are made in (Searle 1990; Bratman 2009a).

$a_n$ , then this is explained by the control exerted by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ 's prior joint decision that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

*(IMMODEST INTENTION)*

For any  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  and  $\varphi$ , if  $\varphi$  is jointly done intentionally, rather than unintentionally, by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ , then this is explained by the control exerted by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ 's persisting in intending that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

Perhaps *(DECISION)* and *(INTENTION)* lend *some* support to their immodest counterparts. After all, it is good method to assume, at least provisionally, that like explananda have like explanantia. I have not seen either of the immodest claims *thus formulated* defended in print, but several authors (see for example Tuomela and Miller, 1988; Searle, 1990; Kutz, 2000; Roth, 2004; Gilbert, 2006a; Pettit and Schweikard, 2006; Ludwig, 2007; Bratman, 2009a; Alonso, 2009).<sup>16</sup> have defended views very similar to *(IMMODEST INTENTION)*.

Were the immodest claims true, we would be able to answer the entirely general question: *what explains the difference between unintentional and intentional joint activity?* This is a question frequently raised in the literature on joint action – see for example Ludwig (2007: 356) and Bratman (2009a: 41) – and it would of course be good to have an answer to it. I am sceptical, however, of the answers offered by *(IMMODEST DECISION)* and *(IMMODEST INTENTION)*.

Here's why: our modest claims were grounded in assumptions that I find hard to doubt, *viz.* that there are joint decisions, and that joint decisions *are decisions*, and hence play the roles that, according to our folk psychology, decisions play. I see no way to ground our immodest claims in such assumptions.

Let us consider *(IMMODEST DECISION)* first of all, and restrict our focus to the case of *singular* decision. It is a folk psychological truism that an agent who  $\varphi$ s under the control of his decision that he  $\varphi$  thereby  $\varphi$ s intentionally. But the converse claim is far from truistic. On the face of it, one who  $\varphi$ s intentionally may have decided to do something *else* to which  $\varphi$ -ing is a means, or of which it is a constituent or side effect. Or he may have decided to accept the authority of some policy or person that, in the circumstances, demands of him that he  $\varphi$ . Or he may have decided merely to "sleep on" the question of whether to  $\varphi$ , and risen feeling certain that he shall. Or he may have decided merely to try to  $\varphi$ , believing that he has at least a good chance. Or he may have made no relevant prior decision and simply have habitually or spontaneously  $\varphi$ -ed. Hence, folk psychology does not favour, but disfavors, the claim that for any *agent*, if he  $\varphi$ s intentionally, then his doing so is explained by his prior decision that he  $\varphi$ . So it also disfavors the stronger claim that for any *agent or agents*, if they  $\varphi$  intentionally, their doing so is explained by their prior joint decision that they  $\varphi$ .

Now, it may be said that whilst joint decisions are *decisions*, any decision made by *multiple* agents has a different psychological role from any made by a single agent. In particular, it may be said that whereas, when, singly, one intentionally does a thing, one frequently does not execute *any* prior decision, whenever, jointly, we intentionally do a thing, we typically execute *some* prior

---

<sup>16</sup> I here gloss over a number of important differences between these authors' views.

joint decision, even if it is not one to do what, jointly, we do, and even if it is never verbalised, but consists in nods and winks, or in one of the parties “leading by example”, and the others following suit. No doubt it is often thus. Certainly, there is a sense (albeit hard to specify) in which, whilst, jointly, as well as severally, we *can* engage in intentional activity, such activity is not jointly, as it is, severally, *native* to we agents: it is not, for example, something that, jointly, we can *snap into*, but something that we must negotiate and construct. But it does not follow that intentional joint activity must be the construct of a prior *joint decision*. Whilst we may not be able to *snap* into it, it is, like intentional singular activity, something that we can *fall* into, and then *find ourselves* engaged in, ignorant of how we got started. Gilbert (2006b: 140) nicely describes how this may happen:

...two like-minded factory workers... find themselves chatting ... for a few moments outside the factory one evening. After this has happened a few times, one might conclude their chat by saying ‘Talk to you tomorrow’, and the other may concur. If that happens a few times, it may become unnecessary to say anything... These people have, if you like, fallen into this practice. They have not set the *practice* up by agreement, even if they made one or two agreements on specific meetings along the way.<sup>17</sup>

Likewise – for all that I know – Lerner and Loewe may merely have “fallen into” the intentional joint activity of writing *My Fair Lady*. I infer that (*IMMODEST DECISION*), even if it is restricted to multiply-agented cases, is doubtful at best.<sup>18</sup>

If we now consider (*IMMODEST INTENTION*) and, again, restrict our focus to the case of *singular* intention, we may draw some similar conclusions. It is a folk psychological truism that an agent who  $\phi$ s under the control of his persisting intention that he  $\phi$  thereby  $\phi$ s intentionally. But the converse claim is far from truistic. For sometimes, when what one intentionally does is done spontaneously, or habitually, or done as a foreseen means to, or constituent or side effect of, a different thing that one intends, or done because it is called for by some policy one has, or by one whose authority one accepts, then, plausibly, one has not intended *it*. Also, as Bratman (1999a: ch. 8) has argued, if we grant that, for any agent guilty of no criticizable irrationality, some world in which his beliefs are true is one in which he executes all of his intentions, then if ever one’s intentional  $\phi$ -ing follows a period of trying to  $\phi$ , one during which one (i) tried to  $\phi$  and tried to  $\psi$ , (ii) believed that one could not  $\phi$  and  $\psi$ , and (iii) was guilty of no criticizable irrationality, one will not have intended to  $\phi$ . For one will not have intended to  $\phi$  and also to  $\psi$ , and it would be arbitrary to attribute either intention to one. Hence, folk psychology does not favour, but disfavors, the claim that for any *agent*, if he  $\phi$ s intentionally, then his doing so is explained by his intending that he  $\phi$ . So it also disfavors the stronger claim that for any *agent or agents*, if they  $\phi$  intentionally, their doing so is explained by their intending that they  $\phi$ .

Something more than our modest claims, may, however, be asserted. For whilst (*IMMODEST INTENTION*) looks false, it is true of a restricted domain of intentional  $\phi$ -ings, namely those controlled by decisions to  $\phi$ . For it is part of our

<sup>17</sup> Whilst Gilbert here speaks of *agreement*, the point holds if we substitute talk of *joint decision*.

<sup>18</sup> An additional problem for (*IMMODEST DECISION*) is presented by the fact that *deciding* is, plausibly, an intentional activity. If it is so, then (*IMMODEST DECISION*) faces a regress worry.

folk conception of intentional  $\varphi$ -ings of *this* sort that the decisions they execute control them by launching persistent states of intention – directed towards the act-type  $\varphi$  – that themselves control and proximally explain them. It follows that any values of  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  and  $\varphi$  that furnish us with a true substitution instance of (*DECISION*) also furnish us with a true substitution instance of (*INTENTION*). Furthermore, for any such values, the explanans reported by the *latter* substitution instance will serve, not only as a proximal explanation of why  $\varphi$  was intentionally, rather than unintentionally, done, but *also* as an explanation of why it is that the decision serves as a distal explanation of that very explanandum. So we may frame:

*(RIDI – Restricted Immodest Decision-Intention)*

For any  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  and  $\varphi$ , if  $\varphi$  is jointly done intentionally, rather than unintentionally, by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ , and this is explained by the control exerted by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ 's prior joint decision that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ , then this explanatory connection is explained by  $a_1, \dots, a_n$ 's persisting in intending that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

Since a decision is, *inter alia*, an intention acquisition (or renewal), this may seem to amount to an, at best, trivial claim *viz.* that when a certain sort of intention explains an intentional joint activity, then this explanatory connection is explained by that intention.<sup>19</sup> But (*RIDI*) is more contentful than this. For, first, deciding is not identical with, but merely sufficient for, intention acquisition (or renewal), for it is *active* intention acquisition (or renewal) – and it is the former notion that features in (*RIDI*)'s antecedent. And, second, intention acquisition is not identical with, but merely necessary for, the *persistence* of the intention in question – and it is the latter notion that features in (*RIDI*)'s consequent. (*RIDI*) says, truistically but non-trivially, that the explanatory role of those intention acquisitions (or renewals) that are controlling decisions, is itself explained by the *persistence* of those intentions, from the time of decision to the time of execution.

In short, whilst it is, at best, doubtful that intentional  $\varphi$ -ings (singular and joint) are, in general, explained by their agents' intending that they  $\varphi$ , *decision-controlled* intentional  $\varphi$ -ings *are* thus explained. Alternatively put, intentional  $\varphi$ -ings (singular and joint) that are not explained by their agents' intending that they  $\varphi$ , are not explained by their agents' prior decision (singular or joint) that they  $\varphi$ .

It is now time for our puzzle. It is raised by (*RIDI*) – more carefully, by the assumption that (*RIDI*) is non-vacuously true, i.e. by (*RIDI*) together with (*DECISION*). I should add, though, that, it is *also* raised by the assumption that (*IMMODEST INTENTION*) is non-vacuously true, i.e. by (*IMMODEST INTENTION*) together with (*INTENTION*). Whilst I think that (*IMMODEST INTENTION*) is, at the very least, a *premature* attempt to alight upon a quite general form of explanation of intentional joint activity, others in the literature seem to disagree. So it is worth noting that my puzzle is a puzzle for them as well.

---

<sup>19</sup> Two anonymous referees objected in this way to an earlier, less precise, formulation of (*RIDI*).

## The puzzle

The puzzle is generated by two observations. First, the consequent of (*RIDI*) entails that  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$  – and this is indeterminate between

- (S)  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  severally intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .
- (J)  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  jointly intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .
- (V)  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  variously intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ , i.e. they intend this by some of them jointly intending it, and the others also intending it.<sup>20</sup>

Second, one can imagine a substitution instance of (*RIDI*) that looks false, because whilst its antecedent is true, the relevant agents seem not to *severally* or *jointly* or *variously* intend what, if the consequent holds, it is entailed that they intend. I proceed to sketch the case.

---

<sup>20</sup> An (S)-type determination of (*IMMODEST INTENTION*), or something close to it, is defended by Pettit and Schweikard (2006: 23):

...a plurality perform a joint action in enacting a certain performance together only if... they each intend that they enact the performance;

Roth (2004: 361) defends a similar view:

...each participant in some shared or joint activity, such as walking together, is *committed* to that activity.

where (361):

...each participant is committed in that at least for now, the participant can answer the question of what he is doing or will be doing by saying for example “We are walking together” or “We will/intend to walk together”.

and where (352):

...the intention and commitment being expressed, for example, by “We will walk together” is not, or not merely, the intention of a group comprising everyone encompassed by the ‘we’. Rather, the intention must be *distributive*, so that it will attach to each of the individuals referred to by the ‘we’. Only then would “We will walk together” as thought or uttered by me express a participatory commitment / have to the activity.

A (J)-type determination of (*IMMODEST INTENTION*), or something close to it, looks to be defended by Gilbert (2006a: 12):

Persons A and B are *collectively doing A* if and only if they collectively intend to do A... and each is effectively acting... so as to bring about fulfillment of this intention.

Bratman (2009a: 42) defends a similar view:

Our painting together is a shared intentional activity, roughly, when we paint together because we share an intention so to act.

An anonymous referee assures me that a (V)-type determination of (*IMMODEST INTENTION*), or something close to it, is defended by Tuomela (2007: ch. 5). I have not been able to verify this.



## The case of reluctant Ollie

Stan and Ollie buy a piano. After discussing the matter, they jointly decide that, jointly, they will carry it home. They never rescind this decision, and proceed to act under its control. At no point is either man rendered, or revealed to be, *unfree* or *criticizably irrational*. But throughout the period from their discussion to their piano-carrying, Ollie believes that, in the circumstances, all things considered, they ought not to carry the piano. To be absolutely clear, Ollie's belief is not the *evaluative* belief that Stan and he have a *better option* for piano delivery than piano-carrying, and not the *deontic* belief that the two of them are *under an obligation* not to carry the piano; it is the *normative* belief that, all things considered, they *ought* not to carry the piano.<sup>21</sup> It seems to Ollie that what they ought to do is pay the shop to deliver the piano, as they can easily afford to do this, and are accident-prone. Ollie did *put* this to Stan, but Stan strongly disagreed, countering that they are fit, that the house is just up the road from the shop, that the delivery men employed by the shop have no insurance and so on. After a while, it became clear to Ollie that, for anything that he might say to Stan, were he to say it, Stan would not change his mind. And so, he (Ollie) concluded that it would be churlish to prolong the dispute, and that by accepting Stan's arguments and signing up to his plan, he would be able to claim reciprocal favours in the future. And so, despite Ollie's continuing reservations, the joint decision has been taken, and Ollie has allowed himself to be governed by it. (He "goes along with it", all the time muttering, 'I don't think we *should*, still and all, we've decided').

So the two men freely and rationally carry the piano home, under the control of their joint decision that, jointly, they so act, even though this overrides Ollie's "better judgement" on the issue. I take it that such cases are *widespread*.

By hypothesis, then:

- (i) Ollie is neither unfree nor criticizably irrational.
- (ii) Ollie believes that, all things considered, Stan and he ought not to carry the piano.<sup>22</sup>

Given the folk psychological role of decision:

- (iii) Piano-carrying is intentionally, rather than unintentionally, jointly done by Stan and Ollie, and this is explained by the control exerted by their prior joint decision that, jointly, they carry the piano.

Now, given the standard view of *akrasia*:

- (iv) Necessarily, if one intends something that one believes, all things considered, ought not to be done, then one is either unfree or criticizably irrational.

---

<sup>21</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous referee for forcing me to clarify this.

<sup>22</sup> I omit 'jointly' from the description of Ollie's belief, as I would wish to use a sentential 'jointly', and there is no natural way to add one. (My best attempt: Ollie believes that, all things considered, Stan and he ought not to be such that – or ought not to see to it that – jointly, they carry the piano).

By (i) (ii) and (iv):

- (v) Ollie does not intend that Stan and he carry the piano.<sup>23</sup>

But (iii) and (v) entail that there is a substitution instance of (*RIDI*) that has a true antecedent, but a false consequent, *on the determination that is specified by (S)*.<sup>24</sup>

(iv) is the key premise, so let me defend it. It may be said, against (iv), that the standard view of *akrasia* is restricted to intentions and normative beliefs that regard what *one alone* shall do, and is impermissibly generalised to ones that regard what *some agents* (of whom one may or may not be one) shall do. I grant that expressions of the standard view are normally implicitly thus restricted, but I see no reason for the restriction. For first, one often freely wills that some agents (of whom one may or may not be one) do something: CJ, as the boss of Webster and Harris-Jones, can intend that they go to Minsk on Monday; Schoeman, as the leader of the LPO, can intend that he and his fellow first violinists ignore a *diminuendo* in the score. Second, one often freely neglects to bring such willings into conformity with one's normative beliefs: we can easily imagine that CJ and Schoeman bear the described intentions *against their better judgements*. Third, when such disconformity obtains, one is *at odds with oneself* and, since one is free, criticizably irrational, in the manner characteristic of the *akrates*, as standardly conceived.

Still, an objector might try to argue that one's relations with others differ from one's relations with oneself, in ways that make free, rational disconformity between *other*-regarding intentions and normative beliefs a possibility, even whilst such disconformity between *self*-regarding states is excluded.

One disanalogy that may be adduced concerns *respect*. Arguably, the respect that one owes others allows for disconformity of the sort described, because (absent relations of institutional authority) it imposes an obligation, or at least a permission, to *not* adopt intentions that regard what others shall do, no matter what one's normative beliefs regarding them are, on the grounds that (absent relations of institutional authority) to adopt such intentions is to disrespect others' autonomy. No such consideration allows for a like disconformity between *self*-regarding intentions and normative beliefs. The point may be granted, for it is a *non sequitur*: (iv) is consistent with the obligation, or permission, described. For (iv) entails, not that one is unfree or irrational if one *fails* to intend something that one believes ought to be done, but that one is unfree or irrational if one *intends*

---

<sup>23</sup> I omit 'jointly' so as to ensure an isomorphism with the belief in (ii). See the previous note.

<sup>24</sup> A similar argument – albeit one that does not explicitly invoke *akrasia* or normative belief – is sketched by Kutz (2000: 26): "...many cases of collective action involve contexts where agents are alienated from the end to which they contribute, whether because of coercion, willful ignorance, or moral qualms. A pacifist takes a job at the nuclear weapons plant, because it is the only job available; an accountant processes the astonishingly large receipts of a pizza parlor, not inquiring too carefully into their explanation. These are cases in which the collective activity is jointly intentional and the product of individual intentional participation, for they involve individuals who see themselves as acting in concert, contributing to a collective end though they disavow that end. Participating individuals necessarily orient their conduct around a collective end, and so participatory intentions must have collective content. But participants need not intend to achieve that collective end". As we shall see, my solution to the puzzle will also draw on Kutz's paper.

something that one believes ought *not* to be done. Even if one has no business intending anything for others, all that (iv) entails is that *if* one does, then one is unfree or irrational if the intention is out of kilter with one's normative beliefs.

A second disanalogy concerns *love*. Arguably, love borne for others allows for disconformity of the sort described, because it imposes a permission, and perhaps even sometimes an obligation, to *adopt* intentions that regard what others shall do, which do not conform with one's normative beliefs regarding them, provided that the execution of these intentions would, in the view of the beloved, serve some desire or interest of his. Self-love, by contrast, does not seem to allow for any such disconformity. No matter how much I love myself, if I freely intend, against my better judgement, that I go to the circus, then, even if I desire to go, I am irrational. But if I love my son and he desires to go to the circus, then, it may seem, I may freely and rationally intend, against my better judgement, that he go. I make two replies. First, even if (iv) must be qualified to account for this point, nothing in our description of the case of Ollie entails that Ollie loves or even likes Stan: his deliberations are entirely egoistic. Second, it is doubtful that (iv) does require qualification. For Frankfurt (1988: Essay 7, 1999: Essays 7, 9, 11, 14, 2004) plausibly claims that love and care are apt to impose "volitional necessities" upon agents, such that they do not *freely* intend what their love determines them to intend (which is not to deny that they identify with and endorse the intentions that they lovingly adopt). And *ex hypothesi*, Stan and Ollie are not unfree.

A slightly different objection<sup>25</sup> alleges that (iv) is inconsistent with (i), (ii) and (iii). Hence either (iv) is false, or I have told an inconsistent story about Ollie.

The objection proceeds from the assumption that, given the decision-intention link, (iv) entails that *decision*, as well as *intention*, cannot freely and rationally disconform with normative belief. The claim is then that this contradicts what (i), (ii) and (iii) entail *viz.* that a free, rational decision does thus disconform.

The objection fails. It may be granted that, given the decision-intention link, (iv) entails that a decision, like an intention, cannot freely and rationally disconform with any normative belief *that is held by the maker(s) of the decision*.

So (iv) entails that

(iv') Necessarily, if one *decides* to do something that one believes, all things considered, ought not to be done, then one is either unfree or criticizably irrational.

And, if sense can be made of "joint belief", (iv) also entails that

(iv'') Necessarily, if some agents *jointly decide* to do something that they jointly believe, all things considered, ought not to be done, then those agents are either unfree or criticizably irrational.

---

<sup>25</sup> Suggested by an anonymous referee.

What ought not to be granted is that, given the decision-intention link, (iv) entails that a decision cannot freely and rationally disconform with a normative belief that is held by an agent or agents *distinct* from the maker(s) of that decision.

In particular, then, (iv) does not entail that

(iv''') Necessarily, if one and some other(s) *jointly decide* to do something that one believes, all things considered, ought not to be done, then one is either unfree or criticizably irrational.

Now, (i), (ii) and (iii) contradict (iv'''). For it rules out something they entail, *viz.* that *Stan and Ollie* freely and rationally jointly decide to do a thing that *Ollie* believes ought not to be done. But (iv) does not entail (iv'''), so there is no problem on that score. And whilst (iv) may be granted to entail (iv') and (iv''), (i), (ii) and (iii) contradict neither claim. For, again, (i), (ii) and (iii) entail that *Stan and Ollie* freely and rationally jointly decide to do a thing that *Ollie* believes ought not to be done, not – as is ruled out by (iv') – that *Ollie* freely and rationally decides to do a thing that *he* believes ought not to be done,<sup>26</sup> and not – as is ruled out by (iv'') – that *Stan and Ollie* freely and rationally jointly decide to do a thing that *they* jointly believe ought not to be done. And so, again, there is no problem.

No doubt more could be said in defence of (iv). This must suffice for now.

As far as I can see, the only other way reasonably to object to the argument is to straightforwardly deny the consistency of (i), (ii) and (iii). A quick way to do this would be to insist that (ii) and (iii) together contradict (i): if Ollie really does partake of an intentional joint activity whilst believing that it ought not to be done, then he is unfree or criticizably irrational. A longer way to make the same denial would be to provisionally accept (i), (ii), and (iii), infer (v) via (iv) as per the argument, and then insist that (v) and (iii) together contradict (i): if Ollie really does partake of an intentional joint activity, whilst not intending that it be done, then he is unfree or criticizably irrational. But these arguments are not persuasive. For the case does not seem incoherent; it seems *banal*. There is a simple reason why: *one has to make the best of a bad world*. We social animals both need and like to get along, and one way we do is through intentional joint activity. Yet each of us engages in such activity against a background of circumstances, including the actions and states of others, which we do not choose, and cannot control. For these reasons, one often freely and rationally partakes of intentional joint activity, of which one does not really approve, and which one does not intend. Such is life!

A persistent objector might try to argue, however, that, given the decision-intention link, (i) and (ii) support

(ii<sub>D</sub>) Ollie believes that, all things considered, Stan and he ought not to jointly *decide* that they carry the piano.

---

<sup>26</sup> Since this *is* ruled out, must I withdraw the hypothesis (entertained earlier in the text) that any agents' joint decision that they do a thing *just is* a plurality of (as it may be) interdependent and/or interconditional decisions, directed towards their doing that thing? No. What is ruled out is that any agents' joint decision that, jointly, they  $\phi$  is a plurality of singly made decisions that, jointly, they  $\phi$ . What is not ruled out (for reasons that shall become clear) is that any agents' joint decision that, jointly, they  $\phi$  is a plurality of singly made decisions that *one*  $\phi$ , jointly, with the others.

From (i) (ii<sub>D</sub>) and (iv) one can further infer that

- (v<sub>D</sub>) Ollie does not intend that Stan and he jointly *decide* that they carry the piano.

It may also be said that, since any decision is an act of will,

- (iii<sub>D</sub>) *Deciding* to carry the piano is intentionally, rather than unintentionally, jointly done by Stan and Ollie.

It may now be argued that (ii<sub>D</sub>) and (iii<sub>D</sub>) together contradict (i): if Ollie really does partake of an (intentional) joint decision whilst believing that it ought not to be made, then he is unfree or criticizably irrational. Alternatively, it may be argued that (v<sub>D</sub>) and (iii<sub>D</sub>) together contradict (i): if Ollie really does partake of an (intentional) joint decision, whilst not intending that it be made, then he is unfree or criticizably irrational. But these arguments are no more persuasive than their predecessors. Again, one way we get along is through (intentional) joint decision-making. And again, each of us engages in such decision-making against a background of circumstances, which we do not choose, and cannot control. For these reasons, one often freely and rationally partakes of (intentional) joint decisions, of which one does not really approve, and which one does not intend.

A final argument may seem to show that the case as I described it is inconsistent. For it is a folk psychological truism that unrescinded decisions *commit* their parties. (More carefully, perhaps, unrescinded decisions not made under duress, or influence of coercion or deception, commit their parties – but we may omit these caveats as they do not apply to the case of Stan and Ollie). So:

- (1) Stan and Ollie are committed by their unrescinded decision to their carrying of the piano.

And a plausible way to unpack the relevant notion of commitment is as follows:

- (2) If some agent(s) are committed by their unrescinded decision to  $\varphi$ , then at least *pro tanto*, they ought to  $\varphi$ .

From (1) and (2) we can infer:

- (3) Stan and Ollie at least *pro tanto* ought to carry the piano.

I say ‘*pro tanto*’ because, arguably, whilst an unrescinded decision to do something pointless, or wicked, commits its parties, it does not ensure that *all things considered* they ought to perform the commitment. Arguably, they *pro tanto* ought to perform it, but the pointlessness or wickedness of doing so overrides this ‘ought’.<sup>27</sup> However that may be, in Stan and Ollie’s circumstances, piano-carrying is neither pointless nor wicked, so we are entitled to further infer:

---

<sup>27</sup> It may be thought that an unrescinded decision to do something pointless or wicked does not even *commit* its parties, and that, we should, accordingly, expand the list of caveats (coercion etc.) in the truism from which we inferred (1). I think this is mistaken. It is precisely because a decision to do something pointless or wicked *does* commit one that other “things” ought to be “considered”.

- (4) All things considered, Stan and Ollie ought to carry the piano.

By (i), Ollie is not criticizably irrational, so may be presumed to know the truism that entails (1), to know (2), and to have inferred (3) and (4). But then, given (ii), he believes that something all things considered *ought*, and all things considered *ought not* to be done, and so is criticizably irrational, *contra* (i).

I reply by denying (2). The *right* way to unpack the relevant notion of commitment is as follows:

- (2\*) If some agent(s) are committed by their unrescinded decision to  $\phi$ , then, at least *pro tanto*,<sup>28</sup> they ought either to  $\phi$  or to rescind their decision.

The reason is simple, if some agent(s) make a decision and then, by rescinding it, *change their mind(s)*, they do not thereby fail to be as they ought to be.<sup>29</sup> Like a promise, and unlike a desire, a decision commits its subject(s). But unlike a promise, and like a desire, it is permissibly repudiated by its subject(s).

If (2) has the appearance of truth, this may be explained away, for it is easily confused with:

- (2<sub>G</sub>) If it is *given* to some agent(s) (i.e. beyond their control) that they are committed by their unrescinded decision to  $\phi$ , then, at least *pro tanto*, they ought to  $\phi$ .

(2) and (2<sub>G</sub>) might be confused, as both are eligible readings of:

- (G) *Given* that some agent(s) are committed by their unrescinded decision to  $\phi$ , then at least *pro tanto*, they ought to  $\phi$ .

(2<sub>G</sub>) *is* true, by “ought entails can”. If a commitment set in train by an unrescinded decision really is *unpreventable* by its agent(s) – e.g. because, once the decision is made, they have no opportunity to get together to discuss and implement its rescission<sup>30</sup> – then their only options are performance and non-performance. In such circumstances, they ought, at least *pro tanto*, to perform.<sup>31</sup>

Since (2<sub>G</sub>) is true, it may be rationally believed by Ollie; indeed, it may be a consequence of his rationality that he *does* believe it. This is no problem, for his

---

<sup>28</sup> ‘Pro tanto’ because of the concerns regarding pointlessness and wickedness already mentioned.

<sup>29</sup> Here I closely follow Broome (2001: 112) – although his focus is intention, not decision.

<sup>30</sup> I follow Gilbert (2003: 50) in thinking that a *joint* decision – or, as she prefers to say, joint “commitment” – “is not rescindable by [any] party unilaterally, but only by the parties together”.

<sup>31</sup> The point generalises. It may appear that *if* I murder, I ought to do so gently, that *if* I will not submit the paper on time, I ought to decline the invitation, that *if* I smoke, I ought to smoke low tar cigarettes etc. But if I have the power to render false the antecedents of these conditionals, then *that* is what I ought to do, not what the consequents prescribe, even if the antecedents are true. If, however, the antecedents’ truth is *given* to me, then I ought to do what the consequents prescribe. See Humberstone (1991).

so believing does not commit him to the problematic (3). There is no valid argument from (1) and (2<sub>G</sub>) to (3), and whilst (3) follows from (2<sub>G</sub>) and

- (1<sub>G</sub>) It is *given* to Stan and Ollie (i.e. beyond their control) that they are committed by their unrescinded decision to their carrying of the piano.

(1<sub>G</sub>) is false – Stan and Ollie have the power to rescind their decision. So there is no reason to attribute belief in it to Ollie.

## The other horn

The case of Stan and Ollie furnishes us with a *false* substitution instance of an (S)-type determination of (*RIDI*). Since we assume (*RIDI*), the case must provide us with a *true* substitution instance of a (J)- or a (V)- type determination. However, as Stan and Ollie are but two, they cannot *variously* intend that they carry the piano. So (*RIDI*) is rescued only if Stan and Ollie *jointly* intend that they carry it. The apparent difficulty we now face is that agents *never* jointly intend anything. Why so? Because, it may seem, for agents to literally jointly intend a thing, some state, or attitude, of intention must be jointly borne by them, and this, it may seem, *never happens*. Every mental state is a state that a single mind is in, every mind is the mind of a single agent; therefore, every mental state is a state of a single agent.

The point has struck a number of philosophers as just *obvious*. Here is Ludwig (2007: 365-6)

A state of intending cannot be shared by distinct agents... Each such state is a state of an agent... It is a conceptual truth that intentions are not shared between agents... There are no collective intenders, and there is no collective intending.

van Inwagen (1990: 5):

In the case of any particular episode of thought or sensation, there must be a thing, one thing, that is doing the thinking and feeling.<sup>32</sup>

Korsgaard (2009: 18):

... it is essential to a thought that it be thought by a thinker.

Velleman (1997: 30):

What has made some philosophers skeptical about literally sharing an intention is that intention is a mental state or event, and minds belong to individual persons.

And here is Searle (2002: 5)

...all human intentionality is in the brains of human individuals.

---

<sup>32</sup> van Inwagen recapitulates the point at 118, where he adds that he uses ‘think’ in a “very liberal sense” in which it applies to, among other things, “feeling pain” and “planning for tomorrow”.

Admittedly, not everyone seems to agree. Gilbert and Bratman appear to postulate the existence of, respectively, *collective* and *shared* intentions, as explanantia of intentional joint activity.<sup>33</sup> However, the “intentions” they posit would not, by ordinary speakers, be recognized as such, i.e. as instances of the mental type *intention*. For in their view, a collective or shared intention is a partly psychological, partly non-psychological *state of affairs*.<sup>34</sup> Thus Gilbert (2007: 46):

One can say, perhaps, that since “I intend . . .” refers to a state of an individual’s mind or brain, then “We intend . . .” may well do so, or it may well refer to a series of individual minds in certain states. It may, but it seems a mistake to assume a priori that it must. It is in fact entirely plausible to expect that, when coupled with the . . . plural pronoun . . . the verb “intend” refers not just to facts about individual minds, if it refers to those at all, but to facts about the relationship of certain human beings one to another. Such relationships may involve their minds, but also their bodies, their perceptions or knowledge of each other, their communications, and so on.<sup>35</sup>

And thus Bratman (1999b: 122-3):

Shared intention . . . is not an attitude . . . It is not an attitude in the mind of some fused agent, for there is no such mind; and it is not an attitude in the mind or minds of either or both participants.

who continues (111),

. . . we should . . . understand shared intention, in the basic case, as a state of affairs consisting primarily of appropriate attitudes of each individual participant and their interrelations.<sup>36</sup>

These writers do not explain why we should, or even may, accept that states of affairs of the kind they describe are *intentions*. Perhaps they think that ‘intend’ and its cognates are semantically indeterminate and do not predicate instances of mental types when modified by words like ‘jointly’. But there is no evidence for this in ordinary usage – indeed, as I have said, there is *no* folk usage of ‘joint intention’ and its near synonyms and cognates. More likely, they mean to use ‘collective intention’ and ‘shared intention’ as *theoretical place-holders* for *whatever it is* that – at least sometimes – contrastively explains intentional joint activity. No harm done, if it is so – but, of course, it rather nullifies the content of the suggestion that it is *intention*, as ordinarily conceived, that is thus explanatory.

I confess that I do not share the widely held scepticism about jointly borne psychological states. No doubt, if there are such states, some familiar generalizations about mentality must be reviewed, and probably revised. But I do not see that any of these generalizations are immune from revision, or that the

---

<sup>33</sup> For references, see my fn. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Something similar looks to me to be true of Tuomela’s (2007, ch. 5) view of joint intention, but there is no space here for a fair and proper discussion of Tuomela’s complex account. Neither can I here discuss Velleman’s (1997) view that a shared intention can be constituted by speech-acts.

<sup>35</sup> I have elided a paragraph break.

<sup>36</sup> In (Bratman, 1999b: 121, 131) a description of such “attitudes . . . and their interrelations” is put forward as a condition necessary and sufficient for shared intention. In more recent work (Bratman, 2007: 291, 2009a, 2009b), Bratman withdraws the claim of necessity. The details of his description have developed over the years, but a constant feature of it is that the parties *severally* intend the act-type that they “share” an intention to do. So whilst Bratman may seem to offer a (J)-type explanans of intentional joint activity, the explanans offered has an essential (S)-type element.



required revisions should confound us. Even the apparent truism that every mental state is a state that a mind is in would require only a modest revision *viz.* that at least one mental state is a state that some *minds* are in. However that may be, for the purposes of this paper, I will fall in with the prevailing consensus, because I think that the claim that Stan and Ollie jointly intend that they carry the piano – a claim that seems forced upon us by (*RIDI*), and by the case of reluctant Ollie – can be understood, not à la Gilbert and Bratman, as describing some partly non-psychological state of affairs, but, in the ordinary way, as predicating a instance of the mental type *intention*, but, at the same time, as not entailing that any mental *state* is jointly borne by the subjects of that predication, that is, by Stan and Ollie.

## Way out

Readers will have anticipated why. The proposition that Stan and Ollie *jointly* intend that they carry the piano can be heard as claiming *either* that Stan and Ollie intend *jointly* (adverbial ‘jointly’) that they carry the piano, *or* that *jointly* (sentential ‘jointly’), they so intend. The former claim is true just if some token state of Stan and Ollie’s is their intention. The latter makes a weaker claim, one true just if some token state *or states* of Stan and Ollie’s is/are their intention. No special pleading is needed for me to discriminate between these two determinations. I merely exploit our earlier, quite general, distinction between a weaker and stronger reading of ‘jointly’ as a modifier of adjectival and verbal predications. (Compare: ‘The trees jointly shade the grassland’). In particular, the discrimination does not require us to claim *ex cathedra*, as Bratman and Gilbert appear to wish to claim, that to jointly intend is not, or is not merely, to instantiate the mental type *intention*. Still, when ‘jointly’ is determined *sententially*, the claim that Stan and Ollie jointly intend does not predicate any token state or attitude of intention of a plurality of agents. It does not require that any state is a state that several minds are in, still less that any state is a state of a mind, had by several agents – it requires only that some intention is some states, borne by some agents.

But what states (plural) could serve as Stan and Ollie’s intention that, jointly, they carry the piano? Any such plurality must be directed towards the satisfaction condition <Jointly, Stan and Ollie carry the piano>, and in the manner characteristic of intentions. My best guess, then, given our embargo against jointly had mental states, is that the states we seek are a pair of states of *intention*, one Stan’s, one Ollie’s, which – whilst they need not *each* have the stated satisfaction condition – are such that, necessarily, *both* are satisfied just if, jointly, Stan and Ollie carry the piano. Generalising, whenever free, intentional joint  $\varphi$ -ing survives the rational dissent of at least one party, it is explained by intentions, one for each agent, such that, necessarily, *all* are satisfied just if, jointly, the agents  $\varphi$  – intentions that thereby serve, or count, as the agents’ intention that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

But what sorts of states might fit this schematic bill? I want to draw on a suggestion that has been made by a number of writers, but which remains, in the literature, under-developed and -discussed, namely that, as Kutz (2000: 16) has it:

[intentionally] jointly acting groups consist of individuals who intend to contribute to a collective end...

That is, individuals each of whom intends (6-7):

to do his or her part of promoting the group activity or outcome.

Or, as Pettit and Schweikard (2006: 23) put it, individuals who

each intend to do their bit...<sup>37</sup>

Or, as Tuomela (1995: 128) likewise claims, individuals each of whom

intend[s] to do his part *as his part*...

My hypothesis is as follows: Stan and Ollie intentionally jointly carry the piano, because, jointly, they intend so to do, where the truth of that *psychological* predication consists in their *each* intending that he *partake* of their piano-carrying.

The attribution of such partaking intentions is intuitive enough: just as, jointly, Stan and Ollie carry the piano, by each partaking of their carrying of it, so, I propose, jointly, they intend that they carry it, by each intending that he partake of their carrying of it. Such intentions seem to meet the requirement of being such that, necessarily, both are satisfied just if, jointly, Stan and Ollie carry the piano.

Let me avert a misunderstanding. I do not here say, with e.g. Kutz, that *any* – even any decision-controlled – intentional joint  $\varphi$ -ing is explained by intentions (one for each agent) that one do one's part. Where there is no free and rational dissent, there may be no need to favour the attribution of such partaking intentions over that of intentions (one for each agent) that, jointly, the agents  $\varphi$ .<sup>38</sup>

In short, my hypothesis (generalisable, I take it, to other cases of free, rational, decision-controlled, dissent-surpassing, intentional joint activity) is that the explanation of Stan and Ollie's intentional joint activity is not that, for each of them, a state of intention that they carry the piano is borne by *him* (for that is ruled out by Ollie's dissenting normative belief) and not that a state of intention that they carry the piano is jointly borne by *them* (for that is ruled out by our embargo against jointly borne psychological states) – it is that some *states* of intention, *namely Stan's state of intention that he partake of their piano-carrying, and Ollie's like state of intention*, are jointly borne by them, and, taken together, serve, or count, as their – Stan and Ollie's – intention that, jointly, they carry the piano.

The pivotal notion of an intention *that one partake* remains imprecise, however, and whilst Tuomela and Kutz essay precisifications of it (as Pettit and Schweikard do not) I am bound to say that I find them obscure, and shall not comment on them here.<sup>39</sup> Instead, I hope to precisify the notion in my own terms,

---

<sup>37</sup> As we have noted in fn. 20, Pettit and Schweikard *also* hold (23) that those who intentionally jointly act “each intend that they [the plurality of agents] enact the performance”.

<sup>38</sup> I here take no stand on Kutz's claim (2000: 26) that even when *dissent* is absent, attributions of partaking intentions may be warranted “in... circumstances of routinized cooperation, hierarchical authority, and compartmentalized information”. In his (23) view: “It would ring false to attribute to an individual cellist in an orchestra the intention that ‘we play the *Eroica*,’ or to a single running back the intention that ‘we win the football game.’ (A cellist or running back who said this might be thought to take too grandiose a view of his or her role.) Rather, it is far more natural to attribute to the cellist an intention to perform his or her part in the symphony, and likewise to the running back.” As I see it, it is at least not obvious that these are cases of intentional joint activity.

<sup>39</sup> See Tuomela (1995: 128-9), which cross-refers to a number of other passages in the same text, and Kutz (2000: 10, 25-6). Insofar as I understand these passages, I suspect that neither Tuomela's

by making two orthogonal distinctions among intentions to partake or “play one’s part”. First, there is a difference between intending the doing of one’s bit *towards* a joint activity (i.e. the making of a *contribution* towards it), and intending the doing of one’s bit *in* a joint activity (i.e. *participation* in it): in the former case what is intended is something that is sufficient for the joint activity *if*, and only if, others likewise contribute; in the latter case what is intended is something that is thus sufficient *since*, in the circumstances, others likewise participate.<sup>40</sup> Second, there is a difference between intending something *of which it is true* (and/or believed true) that it *is a doing of one’s bit* (in either the contributory or the participatory sense) and intending *that* one does one’s bit (again, in either sense).

In which of the available senses, then, do Stan and Ollie intend to partake, and thereby make it the case that, jointly, they intend that they carry the piano?

We should doubt, first of all, that the intentions that serve as their intention that, jointly, they carry the piano, are intentions to do things *of which it is merely true* that they are partakings (in either specified sense) of Stan and Ollie’s piano carrying. For it is hard to think of some such pair of intentions regarding which, *necessarily*, both are satisfied *just if* Stan and Ollie carry the piano. Consider, for example, the act-type *take hold of the piano, with both hands, whilst exerting upwards pressure*. It is, we may suppose, true of it that each man does it, and that his doing of it is, in the circumstances (which include what the other man does) sufficient for their joint piano-carrying. It follows, by truth-tables, that his doing of it is thus sufficient if, and only if, the other does it. In this sense, it is both *participatory* and *contributory* with respect to the piano-carrying. But whilst an intention to thus *take hold and exert pressure* is, we may suppose, had by Stan, and by Ollie, no such pair serves as their intention that they carry the piano. For whilst, necessarily, if they carry it, such intentions are both satisfied, the converse is not true – after all, were both to take hold of the piano’s left-hand side, and exert upwards pressure, they would not carry the piano. Now consider the act-types *lift the left-hand side of the piano* and *lift the right-hand side of the piano*. We may suppose that Stan and Ollie respectively do them, and that Stan’s doing of the former, and Ollie’s doing of the latter are each, in the circumstances, sufficient for their joint piano-carrying. It follows, by truth-tables, that Stan’s doing of the former is thus sufficient if, and only if, Ollie does the latter (and likewise *mutatis mutandis* for Ollie). So these types are both *participatory* and *contributory* with respect to the piano-carrying. Still, an intention of Stan’s to *lift the left-hand side* and an intention of Ollie’s to *lift the right-hand side* will not serve as Stan and Ollie’s intention that they carry the piano. For whilst (it is at least arguable that) necessarily, if both intentions are satisfied, then the two men carry the piano, the converse is not true – were Stan to lift the right-hand side, and Ollie the left, the piano would be carried, but neither intention would be satisfied.

---

nor Kutz’s conception of an intention to partake is mine. Tuomela’s conception appears to be of an intention to do something *of which it is believed true* that it is a doing of one’s part. Kutz’s is – his interchangeable uses of ‘participate’ and ‘contribute’ notwithstanding – of an intention to *contribute*.

<sup>40</sup> Compare: in one “contributory” sense, a suitably fashioned piece of wood is a part of a chair, even if no chair exists that (at any time) has it as a part. In another “participatory” sense, the same piece of wood is not a part of a chair unless there exists a chair of which it is (at some time) a part.

And so it goes for countless other types *of which it is merely true* that they are partakings (in either specified sense) of Stan and Ollie's piano carrying. Now, it may be said that this shows only that each man intends something of a complex conjunctive and conditional structure, e.g. that Stan intends that he (Stan) lifts the left-hand side of the piano just if Ollie lifts the right-hand side, and that he (Stan) lift the right-hand side just if Ollie lifts the left-hand side, and so on etc., and that Ollie has a like intention. But first, one might puzzle over whether such intentions would ever motivate either man, on the grounds that as each cannot know what to do until some condition on some conjunct of his intention is met, *they can't get started*. And second, as even the conceptually unsophisticated (infant children, as well as infantile Hollywood clowns) seem to engage in decision-controlled intentional joint activity,<sup>41</sup> we should be wary of attributing any such logically complex intentions to those who so engage, if a simpler course is available to us.

What, then, of intentions *that* one partakes (in either sense)? Well, on the face of it, we should doubt the attribution, to either Stan or Ollie, of an intention *that he contribute towards* their piano-carrying. For such intentions are also prohibitively complex: conditional and self-referential in content. To intend that one contributes towards an activity is to intend that one does something that is sufficient for that activity if, and only if, every other relevant agent does *just this* (i.e. something that is sufficient for the activity if, and only if, every other relevant agent does *just this*).<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, any attempt to further specify the *referent* of the self-reference looks to be infinitely regressive. Hence in the case of Stan and Ollie, the suggestion would be that Stan intends that he do something that is sufficient for Stan and Ollie's joint piano-carrying just if Ollie does the same; more specifically, just if Ollie does something that is sufficient just if *Stan* does the same; more specifically, just if *Stan* does something that sufficient just if *Ollie* does the same etc. (and the same *mutatis mutandis* for Ollie). As self-reference and regress puzzle even the conceptually sophisticated, we should avoid attributing even an implicit grasp of such concepts to the untutored, if we can.

That leaves only one option: the attribution, to each of Stan and Ollie, of an intention *that he participate in* Stan and Ollie's piano-carrying. Now, as glossed above, for, say, Ollie to intend that he thus participate is for him to intend that he do something that, in the circumstances (which include Stan's participation) suffices for their piano-carrying. Now, even this may seem to be a prohibitively complex content. But as to participate, in this sense, is just to *join in with*, an intention to participate may be more simply described, such that for Ollie to so intend just is for him to intend that he carries the piano, jointly with Stan.

But this formulation raises a different worry: at first blush, the difference between the proposition that Ollie carries the piano, jointly with Stan, and the proposition that Stan and Ollie jointly carry the piano, is without a difference. If it

---

<sup>41</sup> Certainly, it seems plausible that infantile joint *attentional* activity (e.g. pointing or showing, with some communicative intention) is, sometimes, also *intentional* joint activity. Work on joint attention includes (Bakeman and Adamson, 1984; Moore and Dunham, 1995; Eilan *et al*, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> I take it that the content of such an intention is not: if, and only if, others do likewise, then I will do something sufficient for the activity. Rather it is: I will do something that is such that if, and only if, others do likewise, then it is sufficient for the activity. One key difference is that agents could execute intentions of the former type – but not ones of the latter type – by doing nothing.

is indeed so, then since we have already shown that Ollie does not intend the latter proposition, we have surely thereby shown that he does not intend the former one.

The problem may seem intractable, as the mentioned propositions are, even if not identical, more than merely necessarily equivalent. They are *constitutively* related. It is not just that, necessarily, Ollie carries the piano, jointly with Stan just if, jointly, Stan and Ollie carry the piano. Part of *what it is* for either proposition to be true is that the other be true. One might develop the point thus: *\_carries the piano with\_* and *\_carry the piano* are not two relations, the former with two argument places (each plurally occupiable) and the latter with one argument place (also plurally occupiable). They are *one* relation that is of variable -adicity, in that it can be both monadically and dyadically occupied. Furthermore, this is a relation that is, to use Oliver and Smiley's (2004: 618) term, *globally symmetric*, i.e. such that if, for some  $n$ , it is  $n$ -adically occupied by  $n$  things, in some order, then it is, for any  $n^* \leq n$ , also  $n^*$ -adically occupied by those things in *every* possible order.<sup>43</sup> Hence, just as the propositions <Quine is paid the same as McX> and <McX is paid the same as Quine> are constitutively related – indeed, arguably, identical – by virtue of the fact that they are compounded out of the same objects, and the same symmetric relation, only in different orders, so <Ollie carries the piano with Stan> and <Stan and Ollie carry the piano>, and, for that matter, <Stan carries the piano with Ollie> and <Ollie and Stan carry the piano>, are constitutively related – again, arguably, identical – by virtue of the fact that they are compounded out of the same objects, and the same *globally* symmetric relation, only in different orders. The seemingly intractable worry, then, is that even if <Ollie carries the piano with Stan> and <Stan and Ollie carry the piano> are distinct, the distinction between (as we hypothesise) Ollie intending the former, and (as we have ruled out) his intending the latter, is without a difference.

It is this last claim, in my view, that we ought simply to deny. Even though the propositions <Ollie carries the piano with Stan> and <Stan and Ollie carry the piano> are constitutively related, and, arguably, identical, there is a difference between Ollie's *intending* that he carry the piano with Stan and his *intending* that Stan and he carry it. I argue the point by analogy with cases involving simple (i.e. non-global) symmetric relations. Let us grant that <Quine is paid the same as McX> and <McX is paid the same as Quine> are necessarily equivalent and constitutively related, and arguably identical, for the reasons given. Nevertheless

- (Q1) Quine intends that he is paid the same as McX.
- (Q2) Quine intends that McX is paid the same as him.

may, I submit, differ in truth-value. If what matters to Quine is that his salary tracks that of McX, not that McX's salary tracks his own, then (Q1) may be true but (Q2) false. Similar examples are easily come by:

- (L1) Leonato intends that Hero (his daughter) marry Claudio.
- (L2) Leonato intends that Claudio marry Hero (his daughter).
- (F1) Foreman intends that he fight Ali.
- (F2) Foreman intends that Ali fight him.

---

<sup>43</sup> Oliver and Smiley also distinguish, as I here do not, between argument places and “positions” *within* them.

If Leonato is concerned that Hero honour her pledge to Claudio, but less concerned that Claudio honour his pledge to Hero, then (L1) may be true but (L2) false. And if Foreman is driven by an ambition to fight with Ali, and has no converse, vicarious, ambition for Ali, then (F1) may be true but (F2) false.

As a symmetric relation is, by virtue of its symmetry, identical with its converse, the point can be seen to be a special case of a more general point about relations and their converses. For consider:

- (G1) God intends that Christ is betrayed by Judas.
- (G2) God intends that Judas betray Christ.

<Christ is betrayed by Judas> and <Judas betrays Christ> are necessarily equivalent and constitutively related, and, arguably, identical, because one is compounded out of two objects and a non-symmetric relation in one order, and the other out of those same objects and the converse relation, in the opposite order.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, if it is part of God's plan that Christ be sacrificed, but no part of his plan that any man sin, then (G1) may be true but (G2) false.<sup>45</sup>

What follows? Most probably, that intentions are best construed as attitudes towards ordered pairs made up of the intended *type* and the *object(s)* for which one intends it. The suggestion is consonant with natural language. The form <X intends for  $y_1, \dots, y_n$  to  $F$ > is, to my ear, at least as natural an English form as <X intends that  $p$ >. <X's plan for  $y_1, \dots, y_n$  is that they  $F$ > may be even more natural.

This is not necessarily to deny the standard view that intentions are attitudes directed towards propositions. It is to claim, rather, that if the standard view is right, then ordered pairs of the sort described are identifiable with propositions. Neither is it to deny that for any dyadic  $R$  and its converse  $R^*$  (with which  $R$  may or may not be identical) < $aRb$ > and < $bR^*a$ > are identical. But it is to claim that, if they are, then at least some such self-identical proposition admits of alternative decompositions into ordered pairs, which – bracketing the question of whether *these* are propositions – may serve as objects of our intentions.

If these points hold of simple symmetric cases, then I do not see why they do not generalise to *globally* symmetric relations, such that, while it is true that

- (SO1) Ollie intends that he carry the piano, jointly with Stan.

It is false that

- (SO2) Ollie intends that, jointly, Stan and he carry the piano.

Generalising, for some globally symmetric relation  $R$  of variable -adicity, one can intend that  $aRb$ , and yet (where  $P$  is a plural term, or string of singular terms, for the plurality of  $a$  and  $b$ ) not intend that  $PR$  – e.g. Ollie may intend as per (SO1), but not as per (SO2). Again, this is not to deny that such intentions are attitudes towards propositions. It is claim that *if* they are, then ordered pairs of the

<sup>44</sup> For relevant discussion, that may throw doubt on the identity claim, see (Fine, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> I here adapt a claim of Anselm's. See (O'Neill, 1994) for discussion.

form  $\langle a, Rb \rangle$  and  $\langle P, R \rangle$  are identifiable with such propositions. Neither it is to deny that, for any globally symmetric  $R$ ,  $\langle aRb \rangle$  and  $\langle PR \rangle$  are identical. But it is to claim that, if they are, then at least some such self-identical proposition admits of alternative decompositions into ordered pairs, which – bracketing the issue of whether *these* are propositions – may serve as objects of our intentions.

It is often observed that an agent can fail to possess an intention that shares its satisfaction condition with an intention that he does possess: even if, necessarily, I kill the patient just if I harvest his organs, or bomb the school just if I bomb the factory, I might merely *foresee* the former, whilst *intending* the latter. I hazard that it is not too great a stretch to further allow that an agent can fail to possess an intention that has satisfaction conditions that are *constitutively* related, in the manner outlined, to those of one he does possess: our Ollie may merely *foresee* that Stan and he carry the piano, but *intend* that he carry it with Stan.

## Final objection

Isn't my proposal vulnerable to an amended version of the argument from *akrasia* already given? All we need do is substitute (ii\*) below for (ii):

- (ii\*) Ollie believes that, all things considered, he ought not to carry the piano jointly with Stan.

We can then derive, by (iv):

- (v\*) Ollie does not intend that he carry the piano jointly with Stan.

I make two replies.

First, if *intention* is best construed as relating agents to ordered pairs of object(s) and a type, then *normative belief* is likewise best construed. Here's why: it is at least possible that there is a perfectly rational God ( $\alpha$ ) whose intentions are governed, non-akratically, by his beliefs, and ( $\beta$ ) who, as already proposed, intends that Christ is betrayed by Judas, but not that Judas betray Christ. By ( $\alpha$ ) and ( $\beta$ ) God believes that Christ ought to be betrayed by Judas; if this entails that He believes that Judas ought to betray Christ, then by ( $\alpha$ ), He intends that Judas betray Christ, *contra* ( $\beta$ ). So this is not entailed. So normative belief is best construed on the model of intention, as relating agents to pairs of object(s), and a type. So (ii) does not entail (ii\*). And nothing else in our story appears to entail it.

Second, it is plausible that

- (ii\*\*) Ollie believes that, all things considered, he *ought* to carry the piano jointly with Stan.

Here's why: when one considers what some agent(s) ought to do, one is rationally obliged to consider *only* those things that they have the power to do (on pain of violating "ought entails can"), and *all* of those things that they have the power to do (on pain of being in Sartrean "bad faith"). We've already seen that, if Ollie considers what *Stan and he* ought to do, he cannot (as it were, on pain of bad faith) "screen off" the possibility that they rescind their joint decision, for it is in

their power to do this. Hence, given (ii), it would be not be rational for him to infer from the truism that unrescinded decisions commit their parties that Stan and Ollie ought to carry the piano, what he should instead infer is that they ought to rescind their decision. No like consideration, however, prevents Ollie from inferring from the truism that *he*, Ollie, ought to carry the piano jointly with Stan. Indeed, he is, plausibly, rationally obliged to infer this. For recall that Stan was quite intransigent: for anything that Ollie might say to him, were he to say it, Stan would not change his preference for piano-carrying. So, once the joint decision is made, its remaining in place is *given* to Ollie, as it is not given to *Stan and* Ollie – Ollie has no power to rescind it, or to talk Stan into rescinding it with him, even though Stan and Ollie together have such a power. Hence, when Ollie considers what *he* ought to do, he should (on pain of violating “ought entails can”) “screen off” the possibility that he bring about a rescission of the decision made jointly with Stan. So he cannot infer from the truism that he ought to bring about a rescission; all that he can infer from it is that he ought to carry the piano, jointly with Stan. (Proof, were it required, that *one has to make the best of a bad world*).

If, however, as the foregoing makes likely, (ii\*\*) is true, then given Ollie’s rationality, (ii\*) is false.

## Conclusion

In reluctant Ollie’s case a thing is intentionally jointly done by a pair of agents who do not intend, severally, and do not intend, jointly, that they do it. It might seem to follow that they do not intend that they do it! I have argued that, on the contrary, they do so intend. For *jointly* (sentential ‘jointly’) this is so. And I have said that it is so by virtue of Stan and Ollie bearing a *participatory* intention each.

It follows that (*RIDI*), which I have here defended, is not refuted by Ollie’s (in no way unusual) case. Nor, incidentally, is (*IMMODEST INTENTION*), which approximates to the views of several writers in this area, thus refuted. (Nevertheless, as I have indicated, there are other reasons for rejecting that view).

How may we generalise upon this result? Recall: we saw that the consequent of (*RIDI*) entails a claim that is indeterminate between

- (S)  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  severally intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .
- (J)  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  jointly intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .
- (V)  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  variously intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

I think we are now in a position to see that it is more than arguable that (*RIDI*) should be given a (J)-type determination, where (J) is glossed sententially, thus:

- (J<sub>sen</sub>) Jointly,  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  intend that, jointly, they  $\varphi$ .

For it is more than arguable that (J<sub>sen</sub>) *subsumes* both (S) and (V). After all, (S) describes one way for  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  to bear a plurality of intentions – one each – such that, necessarily, all of them are satisfied just if, jointly,  $a_1, \dots, a_n \varphi$ . And, given our sentential glossing of ‘jointly’ in (J), (V) describes another such way.



But whilst (*RIDI*), it seems, can be given a ( $J_{\text{sen}}$ )-type determination, it is, as far as I am concerned, an open question whether the thesis admits of a further precisifying gloss, one that reads its consequent as entailing, not just ( $J_{\text{sen}}$ ), but

(P) Each of  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  intends that he *play his part* in their joint  $\varphi$ -ing.

and which is further precisifiable, thus:

(P\*) Each of  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  intends that he  $\varphi$ , jointly with the others.

This may be true of a *restriction* of (*RIDI*) to Ollie-type cases, i.e. to cases of free, rational, dissent-surpassing, intentional joint activity. As far as this paper is concerned, however, the jury is out as to whether it is true of (*RIDI*).<sup>46</sup>

## References

- Alonso, F. M. 2009. Shared Intention, Reliance, and Interpersonal Obligations. *Ethics* 119: 444–475.
- Armstrong, D. M. 1978. *Universals and Scientific Realism* Cambridge: CUP (two volumes).
- Bakeman, R. and Adamson, L. 1984. Coordinating attention to people and objects in mother–infant and peer-infant interactions” *Child Development* 55: 1278–1289.
- Boolos, G. 1984. To Be is to be a Value of a Variable (or to be Some Values of Some Variables) *Journal of Philosophy* 81: 430–49.
- Boolos, G. 1985. Nominalist Platonism. *Philosophical Review* 94: 327–44.
- Bratman, M.E. 1999a. *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. Stanford: CSLI.
- Bratman, M.E. 1999b. *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Bratman, M.E. 2007. *Structures of Agency*. Oxford: OUP.
- Bratman, M.E. 2009a. Shared Agency. In C. Mantzavinos (ed.) *Philosophy of the social sciences: philosophical theory and scientific practice*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Bratman, M.E. 2009b. Modest sociality and the distinctiveness of intention. *Philosophical Studies* 144: 149–165.
- Broome, J. 2001. Are intentions reasons? And how should we cope with incommensurable values? In C. Morris and A. Ripstein (eds.) *Practical Rationality and Preference: Essays for David Gauthier*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Davidson D. 1990. *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Elian, N. et al (eds.) 2005. *Joint attention: communication and other minds; issues in philosophy and psychology* Oxford: Clarendon.
- Fine, K. 2000. Neutral relations. *Philosophical Review* 109: 1–33.
- Frege, G. 1979. *Posthumous Writings*. Eds. H. Hermes, F. Kambartel, F. Kaulbach. Trans. P. Long, R. White. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Frankfurt, H. G. 1988. *The Importance of What We Care About: philosophical essays*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Frankfurt, H. G. 1999. *Necessity, Volition, and Love*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Frankfurt, H. G. 2004. *The Reasons of Love*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gilbert, M. 1996. *Living Together: rationality, sociality and obligation*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gilbert, M. 2003. The Structure of the Social Atom: joint commitment as the foundation of human social behavior. In F. F. Schmitt (ed.) *Socializing Metaphysics: the nature of social reality*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gilbert, M. 2006a. Rationality in Collective Action. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 36: 3–17.
- Gilbert, M. 2006b. *A Theory of Political Obligation: membership, commitment, and the bonds of society*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Gilbert, M. 2007. Searle and Collective Intentions. In S. L. Tsohatzidis (ed.) *Intentional Acts and*

<sup>46</sup> Thanks to audiences in Helsinki, York, Konstanz, London, Cambridge, Southampton, and Manchester, where some of this material was presented. Many others, too numerous to thank, have helped along the way. Special thanks to the editors and to my Ph.D. thesis supervisor Mike Martin.

- Institutional Facts: Essays on John Searle's Social Ontology*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Hayek, F. A. 1973. Selection from 'Scientism and the Study of Society'. In J. O'Neill (ed.) *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism*. London: Heinemann.
- Hossack, K. 2000. Plurals and Complexes. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 51: 411-43.
- Humberstone, I. L. 1991. Two Kinds of Agent-Relativity. *Philosophical Quarterly* 41: 144-166.
- Jackson, F. 1987. Group Morality. In P. Pettit, R. Sylvan and J. Norman (eds.) *Metaphysics and Morality: Essays in Honour of J. J. C. Smart*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Korsgaard, C. M. 2009. *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*. Oxford: OUP.
- Kutz, C. 2000. Acting together. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61: 1-31.
- Lasersohn, P. 1998. Events in the Semantics of Collectivizing Adverbials. In Rothstein S. (ed.) *Events and Grammar* Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Lewis, D. K. 1979. Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow. *Noûs* 13: 455-476.
- Lewis, D. K. 1991. *Parts of Classes*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ludwig, K. 2007. Collective Intentional Behavior from the Standpoint of Semantics. *Noûs* 41: 355-393.
- McKay, T. 2006. *Plural Predication*. Oxford: OUP.
- Moltmann, F. 2004. The Semantics of *Together*. *Natural Language Semantics* 12: 289-318.
- Moore, C. and Dunham, P. J. (eds.). 1995. *Joint attention: its origins and role in development*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Oliver, A. and Smiley, T. J. .2004. Multigrade Predicates. *Mind* 113: 609-681.
- O'Neill, J. 1994. 'The Same Thing Therefore Ought to Be and Ought Not to Be': Anslem on Conflicting Oughts. *Heythrop Journal* 35 312-314.
- Peacocke, C. 1979. Deviant Causal Chains. *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 4: 123-155.
- Pettit, P. and Schweikard, D. 2006. Joint Actions and Group Agents. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 36: 18-39.
- Roth, A. S. 2004. Shared Agency and Contralateral Commitments *Philosophical Review* 113: 359-410.
- Searle, J. R. 1990. Collective Intentions and Actions. In P. R. Cohen, J. Morgan, M. E. Pollock (eds.) *Intentions in Communication*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Searle, J. R. 2002. *Consciousness and Language*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Smith, A. 1981. *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Vol. I*. Eds. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, vol. II of the Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund. Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/220/217458> on 2010-08-30.
- Smith, T. H. 2006. Out of the Closet – Frege's boots. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106: 399-407.
- Tuomela, R. and Miller, K. 1988. We-Intentions. *Philosophical Studies* 53: 115-137.
- Tuomela, R. 1995. *The Importance of Us: A Philosophical Study of Basic Social Notions*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tuomela, R. 2007. *The Philosophy of Sociality: the shared point of view*. Oxford: OUP
- van Inwagen, P. 1990. *Material Beings* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Velleman, J. D. 1997. How To Share An Intention. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57: 29-50.