

444 Lecture 22

Bratman on Group Action

Brian Weatherson

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Day Plan

Bratman's Theory

Strategy

- Like Gilbert, Bratman starts with a simple case, and builds up.
- But for Bratman, the building isn't an impressionistic picture; it's a set of conditions.
- Of course, these conditions don't quite work in puzzle cases, so we add complications.
- The history of philosophy suggests this path does not have a great record of success.

Three Conditions

1. Mutual Responsiveness
2. Commitment to joint activity; i.e., we both intend to do this very activity, under something like this description.
3. Commitment to mutual support; i.e., we both intend to help the other should they falter, and not claim all the glory.

The last condition is a strengthening of the idea that cooperative activity is not side-by-side activity.

Many Person Groups

- Like with Gilbert, you might worry about the generalisation of these to many person groups.
- In a large group, I can intend that this group activity happen without having any commitment to being part of it.
- That can't happen in a two person group; if I leave, the group ceases to exist.
- So there is this tricky question about what kind of commitment is needed on the part of each individual for a large group activity to persist.

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- Another example: I can intend to holiday in Paris, although I can't

Mesh

- Bratman's idea that plans should mesh is, I think, a really nice way of splitting the difference between the views that our plans must match, and that there is no constraint on mutual plans.
- Matching plans is too strong; I don't need to have views about what you do.
- No constraints is too weak; it isn't a joint activity if I don't have some kinds of vetos.
- Mesh is a nice attempt to get something between these.

Problems for Mesh

- But as stated it feels too strong.
- Imagine that your job is to get the paint.
- I have views about where to get the paint from (as in Bratman's example), but also how to drive there.
- This feels like it shouldn't matter; it's your job to get the paint.

Mesh and Counterfactuals

From the other direction, it's fascinating to think through cases that turn on how counterfactually resilient mesh must be.

- Some level of resiliency is needed. If we are working side by side on different projects, the fact that they happen to mesh doesn't make them joint projects.
- But total counterfactual resiliency isn't needed either. I can be in a group with you, but be disposed to leave if you insist on singing arias while we work.
- I suspect there will be some vague cases in the middle here.

Coercion

- Assuming that everyone plans to stay in the group, and to be cooperative, it feels we should give each other some flexibility in how they do their jobs.
- There is something vaguely coercive about even having views about how you should get to the store to buy the paint.
- Of course, it's fine to be helpful, and there isn't really anything wrong with having views about what is better and worse.
- I don't really know to balance these considerations.

What Counts as Support

- The single possible kind of support feels really weak.
- What if there is a kind of thing I can't stand seeing anyone suffer through?
- Feels like we need a generic here not an existential.

Are Competitive Games SCAs, or Group Actions

- Last case, because this is both a problem for Bratman and an interesting puzzle that tells us something about the stakes of these questions.
- Is playing chess with a friend a shared cooperative activity?
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- But in some ways it is; a chess game involves a fair amount of coordination and cooperation.

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- But in some ways it is; a chess game involves a fair amount of coordination and cooperation.
- What turns on calling it a shared activity or not?