

# Mapping the Study of Collective Intentionality

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Collective intentionality has gradually matured into a self-contained field of study. The number of books and articles published on such concepts and phenomena as collective action, cooperation, group goals, social commitments, collective responsibility, and the like is growing rapidly, as is the number of top researchers engaged in the studies of collective intentionality. Thus now there is an apt time and a need for doing analytic self-diagnosis of the field in the form of overviews and the state of art review articles.

Some such articles have already appeared, e.g. Schmitt's (2003) and Schweikard's (2006). They, however, concentrate mainly on the substantial content of the proposed accounts, whereas we are in the beginning of a project of developing a framework for understanding the field of collective intentionality which takes a broader and more methodological point of view. It seems to us that studying the role of the studies of collective intentionality in the larger philosophical projects of the prominent figures in the field will provide an illuminating starting point for the self-diagnosing study of the field of collective intentionality.

The philosophical projects, broadly understood, philosophical backgrounds, and methodologies of the prominent figures in the field seem to differ in respects that are relevant for understanding their work focused on collective intentionality. We begin with unfolding the works of J. Searle (1995), M. Gilbert (1989), R. Tuomela (2007), M. Bratman (1999), S. Miller (2001) in light of the following questions:

- What is the role of the study of collective intentionality in his/her philosophical project?
- What are the success criteria of his or her account?
- What are the philosophical commitments and underpinnings of his or her account?

- What is aimed at with the account of the phenomena of collective intentionality?
- What is the method?

One goal of the broad project is to shed light on what exactly is the relation of the philosophical study of collective intentionality to such social scientific endeavours as social studies, evolutionary studies of human behaviour and philosophy of social sciences. We search for answers to such questions as: What do the studies of collective intentionality have to give to these empirical and theoretical fields of study? What kind of conceptual groundwork could the philosophical study of collective intentionality provide the empirical approaches with? What should the philosophical studies of collective intentionality deliver to these fields?

Our belief is that as we proceed in light of the questions above, a set of "variables" emerges as a result of the study of the most important accounts of the phenomena of collective intentionality, and that a taxonomy which provides a deeper and clearer understanding of the ongoing discussion can be developed in terms of these variables. Such a broader framework may, for instance, give some explanation for the proponents of different accounts occasionally talking past each other. By attempting to extract the general methodological commitments of the authors we hope to be able to give charitable and correct interpretations of their views in a way that does justice to all the authors involved in the debate. Such a framework will not only help in deepening the philosophical understanding of the field but will also be practically useful e.g. in structuring textbook publications of the field which are due soon if not now.

Usually classifications of the accounts are based on such household distinctions as the one between individualism and collectivism (e.g. Schmitt 2003) or on such features of the collective mental states as the subject, form and content of the attitudes in question (e.g. Schweikard 2006). Our hypothesis is that as the motivating factors of the philosophical approaches are made explicit, new interesting and explanatory groupings can be found.

As an example of one dimension emerging from such a comparative study of the central accounts of collective intentionality is a version of a distinction between top-down and bottom-up approaches. A top-down type of a study starts from a wide general perspective on what there is in the world and only after getting the general ontological categories right gradually proceeds to the details of each particular sub-area one of which is the phenomena of collective intentionality. A bottom-up approach, on the other hand, starts by first developing a detailed theoretical account concerning one particular

question, such as individual human action, and only after getting that simpler case right, proceeds by gradually adding theoretical machinery to the basic account in order to accommodate the more complex cases involving collective intentionality. As an initial hypothesis it would seem that John Searle's account exemplifies the top-down approach whereas the accounts of Michael Bratman or Seumas Miller seem to represent the bottom-up approach. Whether this initial impression survives detailed scrutiny remains to be studied in the full paper to be presented at the conference.

As to another example of a dimension that can provide new insights and interpretative keys is whether the account is oriented towards explication of ordinary language concepts or towards social-scientific concept formation. The former start by clarifying the vernacular concepts making necessary refinements only when the original notions are unclear or ambiguous, whereas the latter proceed by defining technical terminology for theoretical purposes without necessarily connecting the meanings of the terms to everyday language use. It would seem that Margaret Gilbert's methodology is close to the former approach whereas Raimo Tuomela's is close to the latter.

Part of the aim of this paper is to enrich the discussion in the literature of the ways of arguing and theorizing of the central theoreticians in the field by way of "locating" their accounts in terms of the following kinds of themes:

- the role of intuitions in the methodology,
- the role of ordinary language usage in the methodology,
- the role of the results of research in empirical sciences in their methodology,
- the kind of examples used, and
- what counts as evidence for the view by the theorists' and theories' own lights.

Our approach is not primarily a critical one in the sense that we would attempt to evaluate the approaches. We would rather like to claim that the approaches should be seen against the background of their starting points and methodological commitments, and our conjecture is that this may not have always been taken into account to a sufficient extent in the critiques of these approaches. We do, however, discuss pros and cons of the different approaches in light of the aims identified as animating the approaches in question.

## References

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