

Submission Title:

WE-INTENTIONS AS INTENTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS

Abstract:

If I intend to build a raft with you, I intend to do my part of building the raft. Raimo Tuomela has argued that I could, however, intend to do my part without taking part in collective intending: I could intend to do my part without intending to do it *as my part*. Thus, Tuomela argues, in order to we-intend I must also intend to do my part of building the raft *as my part* of building the raft. Though Tuomela has conceded that this requirement is circular, he maintains that it is not a case of vicious circularity. The present paper argues that it is possible, however, to create an account of we-intending which avoids this circularity entirely.

Let us imagine a case in which I do not intend to build a raft with you but rather I intend to build a raft with a machine. Suppose the machine cannot build the raft on its own, and that I cannot build the raft on my own. Suppose also that the machine periodically requires input from me, the human operator, and that the machine is in no way an intentional agent (perhaps it has limited capabilities such that it can only move large logs and tie certain knots in the ropes used to lash the logs together).

Such a case of intending exhibits a structure that is parallel and comparable to the structure of a paradigmatic we-intention. Most importantly, in both cases an individual A intending to accomplish some X must believe, immediately before forming an intention, that certain circumstances in the world allow A to accomplish X if A decides to do so. In a human-machine dyad, these circumstances include the working condition of the machine (the machine must have enough oil, etc.), while in a human dyad they include the willingness of another person (in addition to physical ability and other circumstances)

As a consequence of this view, that which is intended by an agent can best be described as the *whole X*. Thus in the case of the machine-human dyad, my *X* is that I and the machine build a raft, and in the human dyad it is that you and I build the raft.

This move avoids the circularity of the Tuomela account and results in the following:

(WI) A we-intends (a special type of general intention) to accomplish *X* iff:

(a) A intends to accomplish *X* (entails (GI) 1 and 2).

(b) A believes that the circumstances in the world to which A appealed in A's decision to intend to accomplish *X* were dependent on (i.e. included), for every other member of a group *G*, either the intention of that member to accomplish *X* or the notion that the member's intention to accomplish *X* was engagable at A's will.

(c) A believes that all group *G* members' intentions to accomplish *X* are engaged.

This account refers to (GI), which gives two necessary conditions of intention and which applies to cases of we-intending as well as to individual intending.

(GI) The following conditions are necessary (perhaps also sufficient) features of an agent A's intending to accomplish *X*:

1. A believes that the circumstances in the world make it possible for A to accomplish *X* at the will of A.
2. A decides that *X* will be accomplished. The issue of whether A will accomplish *X* is settled: A plans to not deliberate any longer.

In addition to avoiding the circularity of the Tuomela account, (WI), as given here, offers an intuitively pleasing treatment of what Michael Bratman calls meshing sub-plans. On his view, it is essential to we-intentions that the sub-plans of the agents mesh. With (WI), though it may be *true* that the sub-plans of each agent mesh, such meshing is not one of the necessary and sufficient conditions

which make we-intending special. Since agents helping an agent A in a dyad or group function in a way parallel to the way tools function, the sub-plans of agents mesh in the same way a machine meshes with my plans to operate it while building a raft.