

PLURALITIES WITHOUT REIFIED WHOLES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO HANS BERNHARD SCHMID'S COLLECTIVISM¹

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Abstract

Collective intentions form the basis of the social world and represent a mode of experience overlooked in some phenomenological analysis: we-intentionality. Some argue that the subject of intentionality is the intending subject, but phenomenology is committed to intentionality in essence being something restricted to individual subjectivities.

The *intending* subject, the conscious subject, is not equivalent to the *subject of intention* or subject matter of acts of consciousness, i. e. it is not the syntactical subject referenced in and through an intentional act. Hans Bernhard Schmid disagrees; here I present the case for subjective individualism with respect to collective intentionality and respond to his arguments for collectivism.

Resumen

Las intenciones colectivas son la base del mundo social y representan un modo de la experiencia que ha sido dejado de lado en el análisis fenomenológico: la intencionalidad-nosotros. Aunque algunos plantean que el sujeto de la intencionalidad es el sujeto que intenta, la fenomenología está comprometida con la idea de una intencionalidad en esencia restringida a subjetividades individuales.

El sujeto *que intenta*, el sujeto consciente, no es equivalente al sujeto *de la intención* o del contenido de los actos de conciencia; no es el sujeto sintáctico al que hace referencia el acto intencional. Hans Bernhard Schmid difiere. En este trabajo sustento el individualismo subjetivo con respecto a la intencionalidad colectiva y respondo a los argumentos en favor del colectivismo presentados por Schmid.

¹ This material is also part of the author's dissertation, *Intersubjectivity: A Phenomenological Contribution to Collective Intentionality*, approved by the faculty of the department of philosophy at the University of Buffalo, State University of New York, as meeting part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in philosophy in May of 2010.

Introduction

In this paper, I respond to Hans Bernhard Schmid's criticisms of subjective individualism. Subjective individualism is the position that all collective intentions are intentions had by individuals. Collective intentions are intentional states in a plural form, as distinct from a singular form. That is, collective intentions are in the form *we-intend*, and not the form *I-intend*. The paper begins by reviewing David Carr's superb analysis of plural subjects. This serves as a point of context according to which phenomenology can more robustly interface with the collective intentionality literature. It should be noted, in addition, that Schmid too has a strong background in phenomenology. The second part of the paper reviews Schmid's arguments and outlines my response.

I

Everyday experience is intersubjectively situated; one encounters others *as* conscious experiencing subjects in their own right. One has experiences *of* others as well as experiences *with* others. Some experiences are in a *we*-mode, where one describes them accurately in the manner of *we* did or experienced such and such. Some of these experiences are not reducible to singular intentional descriptions without a loss of meaning, i. e. not reducible to what *I* experience *and* you experience as individuals. That is to say that some experiences with others are such that one cannot describe them fully where one formulates the description as you and I did, saw, heard, experienced, etc., *x*, in distinction from describing them in the manner of *we x*. Individually oriented descriptions leave open coincidental experiences, and sometimes one uses "we" to describe cases of coincidental individual experiences, experiences that are more congruent with one another than experienced as *together*. Experiencing something as part of a whole, e. g. as a member of a team or in partnership with another cannot be adequately described without regarding the *we*-mode². Such cases represent the phenomena of plural subjects.

² It is less that something is assumed here, and more that one is focused on how the phenomena are to be described, if given rich and adequate description to more than a super-

In an experience that is essentially in a we-mode, i. e. a plural subject experience, one's acts of consciousness directly reference others:

The establishment of the *we* in common perception is the simplest form of what Husserl calls the *Vergemeinschaftung der Monaden*³: when two subjects confront one another and stand in relation to the same objects they form, to that extent, a rudimentary community that can itself be considered as performing an act (*cogitamus*) through "its" diverse (and in this case simultaneous) presentations⁴.

Collective intentional or intersubjective moments of experience, instances where there is a non-reducible *we*, can be understood as foundational for higher order intersubjective meanings. The broader social world and the meanings constituted in it are based in *shared* experiential foundations. This does not imply that there is strong collectivity, i. e. that collectives themselves are subjectivities. The "we" as subject of experience, the "rudimentary community", is often referred to in contemporary literature as the plural subject. David Carr states, "the community is a '*community of*

ficial appearance. An example presents itself to me as I am working over this material. Outside my window, the park across the way, there are three individuals playing Frisbee. One cannot play Frisbee by oneself, as it is a game that requires more than one subject. One could certainly throw a Frisbee alone, and chase after it themself. But, one is not playing at Frisbee at all if that is the case, much as one is not playing tennis is one practices against a backboard or playing baseball if one takes batting practice in a batting cage. At best, one is isolating an individual component of the larger activity, one that requires others. One might say even that such practice is best when it can simulate the presence of another in absence: when the deflection off the backboard lacks predictability, simulating another's return to some extent or the pitching machine's delivery varies based upon how the seems of the ball hit the spinning wheel, leaving indeterminate the specific behavior of the pitch one faces. While on one level, it would be to commit no violence to say the three are each individually tossing the Frisbee back and forth, this ignores the larger phenomena by reducing it to its participants and their individuated manners of relation. In other words, playing Frisbee, that which binds their actions *together* falls away. In more complex cases, one might point out that a corporation is has powers and characteristics that none of its individual members alone has, and that the activities of the corporation require and are constituted through the working *together* of the individual members and the explicitly and implicitly codified practices that inform or direct their individual activities as *part* of that whole.

³ Reference is to the title of § 55 of *Cartesian Meditations*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1999, translation by Dorion Cairns: Cairns renders this "Establishment of the community of monads", Carr is clearly not happy with how Cairns renders *Vergemeinschaftung*, opting for something more like: "Monads effecting (entering into and thereby constituting) community". Carr's right to emphasize the active nature of this "community". A further alternative could be to think of Husserl's discussion as of the *communalization* of subjects or subjects entering into *community* or *commerce* with one another as the establishment of *common* ground. Italicization of those terms with shared root sense in the previous sentence is for purposeful emphasis.

⁴ David Carr, "The 'Fifth Meditation' and Husserl's Cartesianism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* vol. 34, 1 (1973), p. 30.

monads, which we designate as *transcendental intersubjectivity*. It is transcendental because it makes 'transcendentally possible the being of a world', in this case the intersubjective world"⁵. "The 'communities' of which Husserl speaks, beginning with the simplest perceptual encounter between two persons, are available to *me* only insofar as I participate in them through my communication with other persons"⁶. For phenomenology intentionality's socially constitutive role is what differentiates the cultural or social dimensions of the world from the natural world and their respective categories of meaning. It is clear that an individual subject alone is inadequate for those meanings that are fundamentally *social* in nature. Adequate analyses of specific social objects ought to reference those communities constituting of the object with the meaning that it bears in experience. "It is, as we have seen, the *cogitamus* which is the starting point of intersubjective phenomenology"⁷. The intersubjective world is not premised on "I's", but "we's"⁸. Intersubjectively situated meanings are only intelligible in relation to pluralities of subjects, that is, they receive their sense constitutions through intersubjective exchange or in intersubjective contexts, not by an individual alone⁹. Collective intentionality need not be understood as sub-

⁵ *Idem*; Carr quoting from Husserl, *op. cit.*, pp. 129f / 157f. All citations from this text of Husserl refer to the pagination of the English edition first, and the German pagination second.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

⁷ *Idem*.

⁸ To assuage my realist readers who may worry about an odd multiplication of the world, allow me to offer a disambiguation. There is but *one* world in the physical sense of that term, that sense of world is what is often used in the natural sciences. When I use 'world' or 'worlds' where the plural use makes sense, I refer to world in the phenomenological sense: a system or network of meanings. This is the sense used when one says of someone that "they are in their own world" or of a culture distinct from one's own that "it is a whole other world". Given that there are subjectively and culturally idiosyncratic meanings, it is only natural that one can speak of worlds in this sense. I do not take the plurality of phenomenological worlds to entail anything about the metaphysics of the natural world, though I do take it to have implications relating to the socially constituted objects, categories, meanings, etc.

⁹ Elsewhere I have argued that one need not reify intersubjective wholes, i. e. make them into subjectivities in their own right, in order for this to happen. The systemic level interactions between individual subjects proper is what gives rise to these types of phenomena. As such, I would argue Schmid's emphasis on relationality (cfr. Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Can Brains in Vats Think as a Team?", *Philosophical Explorations* vol. VI, 3 (2003) 201-218; *Idem*, Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Rationality-in-Relations", in David Koepsell / Laurence S. Moss (eds.), *John Searle's Ideas About Social Reality: Extensions, Criticisms and Reconstructions*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003, pp. 67-101; *Idem*, "Rationalizing Coordination: Towards a Stronger Conception of Collective Intentionality", in Mark D. White / Barbara Montero (eds.), *Economics and the Mind*, London, Routledge, 2006 (used the copy available at http://cipp.unibas.ch/index.php?id=5416&no_cache=1&file=636&uid=5128) is correct at

stantively different than intentionality in the singular, "it is based on the *cogitamus* in just the same way that individual phenomenology is based in the *cogito*"¹⁰. Given the locus and limitation of consciousness per se to the individual subject of experience and intentionality's intrinsic origin in consciousness, it is individuals who perform the *act* of intentionality with reference to the *cogitamus*, the plural subject, and not the *cogitamus* itself. The grammatical subject (the subject of syntax) does not properly speaking intend anything itself. The *intending* subject, the conscious subject, is not equivalent to the *subject of intention* or subject matter of acts of consciousness, i. e. it is not the syntactical subject referenced in and through an intentional act.

Carr observes that many analytic and phenomenological philosophers agree that "it is to the I as an *individual* subject or person, rather than to any sort of plurality, that intentionality properly belongs"¹¹. This individualism of intentionality is often paired with or seen as an obvious conclusion of definitions of intentionality. For instance, Galen Strawson's view that the concrete phenomenon of intentionality is "essentially mental and indeed essentially experiential (conscious) phenomenon"¹². That is, "we can think about things. We can target, hit, refer to, mean, intend an object, present or absent, concrete or not, in thought"¹³. Take also Searle's claim that: "Intentionality is that feature of the mind by which mental states are directed at, or are about or of, or refer to, or aim at, states of affairs in the world"¹⁴. What is not clear is how this connects to individuals. This might seem to preclude by fiat other possibilities. Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi illuminate why it is that phenomenologists connect these two things. "To the ex-

root, though I find his way of thinking about and framing the consequences of the relationality of subjects with one another and the intentional achievements expressed in and through such interactions to be problematic.

¹⁰ David Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹¹ David Carr, "Cogitamus Ergo Sumus: The Intentionality of the First-Person Plural", *Monist* vol. 69, 4 (1986), p. 523.

¹² Galen Strawson, "Intentionality and Experience: Terminological Preliminaries", in David Woodruff Smith / Amie L. Thomasson (eds.), *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 44.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 43f.

¹⁴ John R. Searle, *Mind, Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World*, New York, Basic Books, 1998, pp. 54f.

tent that phenomenology stays with experience, it is said to take a first-person approach. That is, the phenomenologist is concerned to understand the perception in terms of the meaning it has for the subject"¹⁵. "Intentionality is a ubiquitous character of consciousness, and as the phenomenologists put it, it means that all consciousness is *about* or *of something*"¹⁶. Phenomenology studies meanings from the first-personal perspective or as they are experienced, and all experience is *someone's* experience. Phenomenology's focus on experience thus directs its analyses to examinations of the intentionality of consciousness. Phenomenology appeals to consciousness as individually situated in embodied cognition; each consciousness is *someone's* consciousness. And, as Carr notes that while it is not controversial to refer to pluralities or groups as *objects*, it is rather unclear how one can consider them to be *subjects*¹⁷. Nonetheless, Carr points out that we do make attributions of *perceptual experiences and actions* to both individuals and groups. More importantly for phenomenology is that one can have experiences that are strongly identified with or attributed to a *we*, experiences that are said to be *ours*, not just *mine* or mine and yours¹⁸. For example, one speaks of *our* travels as distinct from *their own* individual travels, or of *our* nuptials, *our* battlefield maneuvers, *our* chess match, etc.

Each participant experiences the object and is aware of the others in such a way that he cannot possibly attribute the experience to himself alone. After all, it has manifold phases and perspectives, and some of these are not directly available to him at all. The experience in such cases, quite simply belongs to *us*; it is *ours*¹⁹.

In such experiences one does not leave behind a first-personal point of view, only shifting from a singular to a plural form or plural mode of experi-

¹⁵ Shaun Gallagher / Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 7.

¹⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁷ David Carr, "Cogitamus Ergo Sumus: The Intentionality of the First-Person Plural", p. 524.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 525.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 526.

encing. This works both, as Carr notes, for common *perceptual experiences* as well as common *action*²⁰.

II

To describe the plural form of experience in relation to the individually situated acts of intentionality is to assert a form of individualism relative to the ontology of mind. In the collective intentionality literature, Hans Bernhard Schmid distinguishes between two separate senses of individualism: formal and subjective. Formal individualism is that view where the *form* of one's intentionality is individualistic. It is the view that all intentions can only be in singular form, in the form of an "I intend" this or that, never in a plural form of a "we intend". Schmid identifies Descartes' view of intentionality as a formal individualist account.

Descartes' account is individualistic in that it restricts intentionality to the form "I intend", "I think". It does not seem to have crossed Descartes' mind that there could be intentionality in the first person plural form, too. I shall refer to this version of individualism with the term "formal individualism", for what is at stake here is the form of intentionality²¹.

The historical question as to whether or not this is a fair interpretation of Descartes or a caricature is here left an open question. More contemporaneously, Schmid identifies Bratman's theory of collective intentionality as being a formal individualist view²². For Bratman, the form of relevant intentions is "I intend that we *J*"²³.

Subjective individualism is the position that intentionality of any form, collective intentionality in particular, "is exclusively in the minds of individu-

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 525-527. The distinction is nice, insofar as it gets at both intentionality proper (*Intentionalität*) and the sense of intent associated with goal-directed action (*Absicht*). This distinction, it is argued elsewhere in the dissertation, is too often glossed over or collapsed in English-language philosophy.

²¹ Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Can Brains in Vats Think as a Team?", p. 205.

²² Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Rationalizing Coordination: Towards a Stronger Conception of Collective Intentionality", p. 19.

²³ Cfr. Michael E. Bratman, *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

als and independent of anything external"²⁴. "As opposed to formal individualism, subjective individualism does not limit intentionality to the singular *form*, but restricts the class of possible *subjects* or 'bearers' of intentions to single individuals"²⁵. Subjective individualism, I take to be the traditional position of phenomenology, as well as that of John Searle. This view discussed more directly in the next section. Husserl could be seen to be criticizing formal individualism where he states: "...that I can become aware of someone else, presupposes that *not all my own modes of consciousness are modes of my self-consciousness*"²⁶.

For a formal individualist, like Bratman, there are approximately three conditions to be met for something's being a *shared* intention: 1) mutual responsiveness, 2) commitment to joint activity, and 3) commitment to mutual support²⁷. One of Bratman's motivations for his individualism is shared with Searle: "a shared intention is not an attitude in the mind of some superagent consisting literally of some fusion of the two agents. There is no single mind which is the fusion of your mind and mine"²⁸. However, Bratman's view departs from Searle's on the issue of reductionism. Bratman's view is that *qua* individualism, any collective or group intending must be reducible to the intentions of individuals. The reductive stance that results in formal individualism is reached on the grounds that *shared activity* requires a plurality of participants, each required to be in a given range of mental states relative to that activity. Searle, on the other hand, is against reducibility on the grounds that the mental state that is a collective intention is not reducible to further individual mental states²⁹. A collective inten-

²⁴ Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Rationalizing Coordination: Towards a Stronger Conception of Collective Intentionality", p. 18.

²⁵ *Idem*, "Can Brains in Vats Think as a Team?", p. 205.

²⁶ Edmund Husserl, *op. cit.*, pp. 105 / pp. 135.

²⁷ Michael E. Bratman, *op. cit.*, pp. 94ff.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 111; Margaret Gilbert discusses the thesis as to whether or not groups can be said to have beliefs under the headings "psychologism about beliefs" and "anti-psychologism about groups". Her use, despite being well intended, of "psychologism" is unfortunate as it differs from what concerned Frege and Husserl in their discussions of psychologism. (Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, Princeton-NJ, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 238).

²⁹ Bratman is careful to try and distinguish his account of shared intentions, which is individualistic and expressly reductive in spirit, from Searle's collective intentions, Raimo Tuomela's we-intentions —Bratman may be incorrect on this point; see Raimo Tuomela, "Collective and Joint Intentions", *Mind & Society*, vol. 2, 1 (2000) 39-69—, and Gilbert's plural subjects (Michael E. Bratman, *op. cit.*, §§ 5-8). Bratman insists that his shared intentions

tion is singular, not compound —i. e. it is not built up out of other individual mental states. The non-reducibility of the intentional or mental state itself does not have to preclude the participation of others whatsoever. With respect to conditions for realization of action, shared intentions, and perhaps other species of collective intentions more generally, are not satisfied simply on the grounds that the activity itself is engaged in by a plurality of individual subjects. Rather, those implicated and involved must share a proper intentional stance towards the intended action in order for the fulfillment of that intention. The evidentiary action(s) relative to the content specified by a collective intention is reducible to the actions of individuals³⁰.

It is in virtue of the claim that collective intentions are decomposable or reduceable to the intentions of individuals that Schmid understands formal individualism to be a reductive thesis³¹. Formal individualism offers a reductive explanation for collective behaviors on the basis of a bias against collectivity. More to the point, it is committed to the position that all intentional states are in the first-person singular. That simply does not match experience; the experience of the first-person plural is both genuine and non-trivial. Granted, formal individualists would argue that they are not denying the phenomenology, but asserting that on analysis these types of experiences can be accounted for as sets of singularly stated intentions. But as a phenomenologist, I ask what basis the formal individualist has for this revision? If the more basic phenomena in question that the formal individualist points to is that all experience is *someone's* experience, I fail to see

are of a narrower focus than either Searle or Tuomela's objects of concern, which do not involve distinguishing between an individual's intention for a group's activity and an individual's intention for shared activity (cfr. p. 116, n17, and p. 145, n6). I have no objection to Bratman's distinction. However, I would suggest that his shared intentions be viewed as a species of collective intentions. The success conditions are more stringent, but what goes more generally for collective- or we-intentions follows with respect for shared intentions. I understand such a distinction in the following manner. The object of a shared intention is shared cooperative activity. The object of a collective intention is collective activity. I view shared cooperative activity as a species of collective activity.

³⁰ Leo Zaibert has argued that Searle is committed to formal individualism in virtue of his taking both a non-summativ approach to collective intentionality and his subjective individualism. (Leo A. Zaibert, "Collective Intentions and Collective Intentionality", in David Koepsell / Laurence S. Moss (eds.), *John Searle's Ideas About Social Reality: Extensions, Criticisms and Reconstructions*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003, pp. 209-232). I don't see why that would have to be the case, but cannot here respond to Zaibert's argument in full.

³¹ Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Can Brains in Vats Think as a Team?", p. 212; *Idem*, "Rationalizing Coordination: Towards a Stronger Conception of Collective Intentionality", pp. 18, 19, 21.

why that commits one to formal individualism —pointing to Searle and phenomenological philosophy as counter-examples³². Again, why would all experience or action be reducible to the singular form, especially if one finds oneself operating in *plural* contexts throughout one's life? I agree with Schmid that collective intentionality, plural subject experiences and actions, should not be reductively construed.

There is precedent for rejecting formal individualism in early phenomenology. Aron Gurwitsch roundly criticizes traditional ways of describing our experiences of others, whereby those experiences become philosophically problematic. In response to the philosophical motivations to recognize a problem of other minds framed in terms of access, Gurwitsch rejects formal individualism. The problem for formal individualism is that it conflates the singularity inherent in consciousness' always being someone's, the *mineness* of experience, with consciousness' being singular in the form of its intentional act: "As a result, however, the 'mental processes appertinent to We' ['*Wir-Erlebnisse*'] become unintelligible"³³. Gurwitsch offers the following alternative:

Included in the sense of every mental process, in the effecting of which we know judgmentally, let us say, that other people also effect similar mental processes, there is also the co-presence of those others which is co-apprehended through the "we" (and, more particularly, co-apprehended as effecting these mental processes together with me). On the basis of the immanental co-presence of others pertaining to the sense of these mental processes —others together with whom I effect the mental processes in question— these mental processes are determined specifically as *ours* and are distinguished from those that are specifically mine.³⁴

And subjective individualism is not in jeopardy in that "the ego is a constitutive moment in each mental process as mental process, [thus] it is then impossible that other people should effect the identically same mental process as I do"³⁵. Since consciousness is always an individual's, and essentially

³² See n.30 on Leo Zaibert, *op. cit.*, for example.

³³ Aron Gurwitsch, *Human Encounters in the Social World*. Pittsburgh-PA, Duquesne University Press, 1979, p. 28. Translation by Fred Kersten.

³⁴ *Idem.*

³⁵ *Idem.*

so, there is not identity between the *acts* with others, but with the *contents* as intended in some fashion or other.

Diagnosing the problem with traditional approaches to our experiences of others, Gurwitsch notes that a major contributing factor to how philosophy has erred so consistently is it has traditionally carried an operating assumption that all meaning is homogeneous, primarily —I add— through how we think about propositions. Gurwitsch suggests: “We should rather ask *if human encounters have indeed many different senses, if they do not occur, as it were, in many different dimensions and that the sense of a particular human encounter is determined according to that dimension in which it happens*”³⁶. His answer is affirmative. “Human encounter” is a very general category, as such it is not terribly informative, but nor is it terribly restrictive in terms of its possible fulfillments. There is a plentifully variegated set of experiential kinds and modes operating under this heading, not a singularity. Put another way, there are an indeterminate number of acts of consciousness and contents of consciousness that could be paired in the range of human experiences. The language of plural subjects and collective intentionality attempts to offer some general framework for speaking about that range of experiences.

Returning to Schmid’s arguments, Schmid believes that subjective individualists miss something crucial by leaving open the possibility for envatted brains to have collective intentions. Schmid claims that even if sharedness is part of the *content* of an envatted brain’s experience, it is not a *shared* experience. “It is obvious (and trivially true) that the sharedness of intentionality is not a matter of the form or content of one single individual’s intentionality alone”³⁷. Instead, Schmid claims that “in order for (we-) intentionality to be shared, *all* participants have to have the appropriate (we-) intentions”³⁸. Schmid believes that a certain palpable relation must hold *in fact* in order that there really be *shared intentions*³⁹. As argued above, it is not necessary for there to be experience, that reality *be* how one is experi-

³⁶ *Ibidem*: 33.

³⁷ Hans Bernhard Schmid, “Can Brains in Vats Think as a Team?”, p. 209.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 210.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 211.

encing in advance or even at all, i. e. satisfaction conditions for evidencing an intentional content need not be met *before* an experience have sense, as opposed to the satisfaction conditions' being *determined by* the sense in question. Schmid appears to invert the order of intentional constitution and intentional fulfillment in evidence.

The possibility one could be in error or fail to fulfill one's collective intention is consistent with a characteristic of intentionality as such. In cases of collectively pursued actions, intentions are not always realized through action, for example winning a baseball game. The intention to act itself is formulated *before* action, not *as a result* of action. Otherwise, it would always be correct to say of a losing sports team that they *intended* to lose. That represents a clear problem in explaining action. This is a far greater problem than if they intended to win and failed to bring to evidence their intended goal. If satisfaction conditions like an action's actually happening serve as genuine pre-conditions for intentionality and not the other way around, as Schmid's and Anthony Meijers' views appear to require, genuinely *collective* actions would be impossible⁴⁰. If true, collective actions would require a prior collective intention that could not be formed without the world's *already* matching its form and content. Fiction, dreams, memories and anticipations could never involve intentions inclusive of others, given the lack of a real-world relation. Watson and Holmes could never solve a case *together*. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza could never set out for adventure *together*. One could never imagine or dream about going on vacation *together* with others. Even the very protentive intentions constitutive in temporally extended experience would be impossible, given the future's inexistence. Instead of requiring prefigured relations as a necessary condition for collective intentions themselves, one can appeal to a shared experiential basis as grounding phenomena for intentionality in the we-mode. The sense of *we* or *our* or *together* requires some commonality at its basis, but that commonality is what's necessary for the sense bestowal con-

⁴⁰ Cfr. Anthonie W. M. Meijers, "Can Collective Intentionality Be Individualized?", in David Koepsell / Laurence S. Moss (eds.), *John Searle's Ideas About Social Reality: Extensions, Criticisms and Reconstructions*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003, pp. 167-183.

stitutive of a *plural subject* not what is intended of or in relation to that plural subject as Schmid and Meijers believe.

In order to better understand how the intention itself is not affected, one can turn to a distinction made by David Woodruff Smith between an intentional character and intentional relation. The intentional character is the correlation between the *content* intended and the subject's intending. The intentional relation is the relation between the *object* intended and the content intended⁴¹. The former is an epistemic relation, the latter an ontological relation. The content of one's intentions can fail to correlate to an object. That is, there is no object standing in relation to the content of the subject's intentional act so as to fulfill the intention, i. e. evidence is lacking. What's more, one can emptily intend what is not present. For instance, I can now direct my thoughts towards a unicorn. That intention is of something, namely the content "unicorn" which has a sense, but fails to represent any real object in the world. Error, then, can occur when a subject forms a judgment, the underlying intentional content of which has no object in correlation. The same applies in relation to collective intentions. For instance, one could intend that we all flap our arms and fly to Australia to have tea with the Queen of England. That is in the form of a collective intention, but its content represents an impossibility (our flying without technological aid) and an implausibility (our having tea with the Queen of England in Australia). Simply because the *object* intended is not satisfiable does not change that the content of the intention is of a specific sort —an intention for *collective* action. Critics of subjective individualism, like Schmid and Meijers, conflate intentional character and intentional relation, attempting to reduce the former into the latter. They do so by counting the collective intentional domain in terms of its *object*, through counting intentional contents as dependent on the objects in question. But, socially constituted objects are *constituted* by the very contents in question. With emphasis on the *object*, they thus consider the subject's *act* of intending in relation to *what* is in the world and not the content manifest in consciousness. As such, the role of the individual is effectively nullified, given the emphasis on the onto-

⁴¹ David Woodruff Smith, *The Circle of Acquaintance*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1989, § 3. 3.

logical relations, where the epistemic relations are determined in lieu of the ontology. The mistake lies in that social objects get their being *through* the epistemic relations. In other words, since epistemic relations intersubjectively extended constitute social objects, it is erroneous to count those as posterior to that which they constitute.

Regarding the first concern of Schmid's noted above, he states: "Collective intentions, however, are not intentions of the kind anybody *has* for herself —not single individuals, and not some group mind. Rather, it is something individuals *share*"⁴². I am sympathetic to Schmid's refusal to understand intentional acts as being like paper in a wastebasket: being located "in" something. However, the question of an intentional act's spatial location amounts to a category mistake. When one refers to a spatial location at all, for example neurological events in one's brain, one is changing the subject matter. Even if identity theories of mind are true, this holds: qua intentional act, it is nonsense to speak in spatial terms, even if qua neurological correlate there is sense to asking, in rough terms, about spatial extension and location. Schmid is wrong to think that intentional acts could happen without a subject. While he is correct that the strong form of a 'we' intends something shared, Schmid is collapsing the distinction between the intentional content and its conditions for satisfaction. He's collapsing what is intended with its correlate in the world. Doing so has the absurd effect of eliminating the possibility of any person's ever being mistaken about what is shared.

If Søren thinks to himself: "we are going to the zoo" where "we" ranges over himself, his parents and his teddy bear, Søren's not failing to have a collective intention because either a) his teddy bear can't have intentions or b) his parents have not formed any intention regarding the family's going to the zoo together. Søren can project forth something that is not yet *actually* shared, but which is *potentially* shared. Searle rebukes non-subjectively-individualist theories on the ground that they have trouble accounting for motivations pertaining to an individual's action. Here one sees, on the one hand, that Søren's intention could be used by him as a motivator to get his

⁴² Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Rationalizing Coordination: Towards a Stronger Conception of Collective Intentionality", p. 20.

parents to conform their plans regarding the day's activities to his. More to the point, however, Søren's intentional state alone doesn't in any clear way direct his parents' motivations. Anyone who's ever been around children can attest to the fact that children and parents often have divergent intentions regarding the family's plans for a given day(s). To say they are intending what the family does, that the individuals involved don't have collective intentions, leaves us with a very commonplace phenomena now being needlessly perplexing. Similar behavior appears to underlie many political campaigns. When a campaign states "we will win the election" they aren't failing to identify a shared expectation just because the voters have not yet determined the fact of the matter regarding the electoral results. Political campaigns seem to operate on the notion that confidence in projection of the potentiality concerning their victory is part of what comes to constitute the basis for the eventual actuality. That's probably part of why one rarely sees a political candidate or their campaign say, "I think we might win in November" or "with a bit of luck I might just win this contest".

Turning to Schmid's second concern, that social normativity cannot be adequately accounted for on a subjective individualist view of collective intentionality, Schmid specifically targets Searle's view as being "normativity free". Schmid prefers to think that: "If the sharedness of intentionality is not necessarily *in itself* socially normative, it has *socially normative consequences*"⁴³. I agree with Schmid that collective intentions can have socially normative consequences, as does Searle actually. For instance, Searle speaks clearly about the deontic powers of collective intentional achievements when they coalesce to found institutional facts throughout his writings on social reality⁴⁴. Searle's classic work on "How to Derive 'Ought' From

⁴³ Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Can Brains in Vats Think as a Team?", p. 213.

⁴⁴ In a paper published online, Leo Zaibert and Barry Smith insightfully argue that it is common in contemporary philosophy to speak of normativity as a homogenous whole and that this is clearly inadequate (<http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/articles/Normativity.pdf>). Zaibert and Smith find at least three kinds of normativity (labels mine): 1) Rule normativity – normativity derived from constitutive rules; 2) Grounding normativity – normativity which is necessary as a pretext to the possibility for social action; 3) Phenomenological normativity – normativity dependent on the essential structures of mental phenomena (Leo Zaibert / Barry Smith, op. cit., p. 17) In particular, I find the third category interesting, as the later Husserl began to give explicit treatment to such "proto-normativity" constitutive in the structure of experience (cfr. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1973. Revised and edited by

'Is'" demonstrates fairly straightforwardly, for instance, how the act of uttering a promise generates a norm by which one's success or failure to keep one's promise can be evaluated⁴⁵. Arguably what Searle is engaging in, in his work on social ontology, is assessing further how human acts generate normative structures and norms. Indeed, in that classic essay, Searle introduces the notions of institutional facts and constitutive rules, both key elements of his recent works⁴⁶. Specifically, Searle points out that there is not merely one kind of descriptive statement, counting at least the classically paradigmatic empirical descriptive statements and those that are indexed to some supporting fact of human institutions.

Though both kinds of statements state matters of fact, the statements containing words such as "married", "promise", "home run", and "five dollars" state facts whose existence presupposes certain institutions: a man has five dollars, given the institution of money. Take away the institution and all he has is a rectangular bit of paper with green ink on it⁴⁷.

What Schmid presents one with are two false dilemmas. Schmid's first false choice is that one must either choose to deny an adequate view of social normativity or deny subjective individualism. If this is a genuine choice, then it would seem that we would have to rule against the majority of philosophy and human history on the subject matter, many of the great philosophical thinkers, not the least of which includes Plato and Aristotle, succeed in both presenting subjectively individualistic theories and accounting for social normativity. Normativity can arise out of intentional relations extended intersubjectively, and indeed there are such cases of codified normative systems such as law or institutional rule⁴⁸. Schmid's second false choice originates where he claims that accepting subjective individualism requires denying the relational nature of collective intentionality. It seems

Ludwig Landgrebe; translation by James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks; and *Idem*, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston-IL, Northwestern University Press, 1970. Translation by David Carr).

⁴⁵ Cfr. John R. Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is'", *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 73,1 (1964) 43-58.

⁴⁶ Cfr. *ibidem*, § III.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

⁴⁸ *Idem*.

plausible to assume that for Schmid, the former disjunct is motivated by the latter. Yet, implicating others in one's intentional life, through the "we" form of intention, seems to rather clearly and expressly reference one's relatedness to others.

In speaking of this second concern, Schmid again appeals to the forced spatial metaphor of tradition: "Collective intentions are not intentions of the kind anybody 'has' —not single individuals, and not some super-agent. For collective intentionality is not subjective. It is relational"⁴⁹. While I agree with Schmid that no super-agent is necessary and that collective intentionality is not merely subjective in the sense of being whatever an individual wants it to be, Schmid evades offering an argument as to why being relational means not being subjectively individualist, i. e. why relationality implies that collective intentional states are not states of consciousness. I can understand wanting to avoid reifying or hypostatizing intersubjective relations or reducing all reality to predicates and subjects. One can further appreciate the desire to emphasize the dynamic nature of our inter-relatedness with one another. However, one mustn't forget the simple point that relations require *relata*. There are no free-floating relations. One doesn't need to assume that one's *relata* are static in nature. If, for instance, one's subjects-in-relation with one another are dynamic beings, it only would figure that the nature of their relations would be fluid and dynamic as well. Schmid, like many contemporary reactionaries to the Modern philosophical tradition, over plays his hand. "Subject" does not entail "static", "without relation", or "essentially preconfigured *in toto*", such that relations become superfluous or non-essential to our ontology, or whatever Modern conclusion Schmid seeks to draw regarding the nature of subjectivity.

To say from the first-personal orientation of phenomenological inquiry "that a community is primarily or essentially an intentional subject is to say that, whatever else it might be, it exists primarily through its intentional properties —its experiences and actions— which gives its the character of

⁴⁹ Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Can Brains in Vats Think as a Team?", p. 214.

being *of*⁵⁰. This is to say plural subjects, or communities, embody orientations to the world, things in the world, and other communities and individuals in the world as well. In short, communities might be understood as communally held sets of comportments. Crucially, however,

to use the third-person "it" in such descriptions is highly artificial and misleading. Better to say: for any such community of which I am a member, it is *we* who experience, believe, feel and act; it is in and through such intentional relations, and through the narrational form of reflection and self-constitution... that *we* exist and maintain our existence as a community⁵¹.

Following which Carr denies making any ontological commitments as to the status of the community itself, a view we turn critically to shortly. Key to my purposes here is that Carr is asserting that communities, plural subjects, are intentional achievements of the individuals who compose them, and which in turn affect and inform their members' perceptions or actions. "As a *world* they make up not a collection of objects and objective relations but a complex of meaning which is not detachable from the community intentionality which constitutes it"⁵². Even if a plural subject has an independent set of characteristics that are not reducible to those of their individual members, there is no plural subject independent of those members. To clarify: plural subjects are ontologically dependent on individuals, as conscious beings capable of setting up a world, and imbuing intentionality in a derived form beyond themselves —e. g. through the formation of symbols, language, artworks, etc. However, it is not the case that what is true of the plural subject can be distributed across its members. Plural subjects thus have some measure of independence from their constituent members. And, as Carr cautions, even if an analogy is available to the independence of the members (subjectivities), it does not follow that the whole is of the same nature. That would be to succumb to the fallacy of composition.

⁵⁰ David Carr, "Cogitamus Ergo Sumus: The Intentionality of the First-Person Plural", p. 531.

⁵¹ *Idem.*

⁵² *Idem.*

Carr turns expressly against the notion of the "group mind" and Sartre's example of storming the Bastille⁵³. Carr charges those who reason to the notion of strong collectivity or a group as a consciousness in its own right with *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning⁵⁴. He then denies that the Sartrean model is adequate as a paradigm of social reality, while not denying that such instances as Sartre describes might be real and dangerous⁵⁵. Such views, he argues, fail "by abandoning and subverting the individual subjectivity they take us from the I not to the *we* but simply to a putative large-scale I"⁵⁶. Instead, the position advocated here and in Carr is one that "is not opposed to the individuals who make it up but exists precisely by virtue of their acknowledgement of each other and their consciousness of the *We*"⁵⁷. Groups are not subjectivities in their own right, but depend for their powers —intentional or otherwise— on subjectivities proper. None of this means that they can't have intentionality, only that —as Searle would have it— the intentionality in question is derived and not intrinsic in nature. Indeed, Carr suggests that this is more telling about how we ought to consider individuals, less substantively, than groups as some scholars seem to emphasize⁵⁸.

Identifying the intentionality of plural subjects as an instance of derived intentionality and their sense of embodiment as the less robust sense of being dependent on physical parts doesn't diminish the status or minimize the power of complex plural subjects formalized by conventional systems of intentional agreements or acceptances like corporations or nation-states, nor eliminate their bearing meanings whatsoever (a metaphorical sense is still sense)⁵⁹. What it does is to clarify the conditions for fulfillment regard-

⁵³ *Idem.* Sartre's example also figures importantly for Larry May's treatment of groups (cfr. Larry May, *The Morality of Groups*. Notre Dame-IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

⁵⁴ David Carr, "Cogitamus Ergo Sumus: The Intentionality of the First-Person Plural", p. 532.

⁵⁵ *Idem.*

⁵⁶ *Idem.*

⁵⁷ *Idem.*

⁵⁸ *Idem.*

⁵⁹ As one moves into these more formalized intentional systems one invokes and attributes deontic powers derived from the collective intentional achievements of those involved. Searle's original account evoked constitutive rules (X counts as Y in context C) as the mechanism for this. More recently, Searle has revised his position somewhat. He now counts constitutive rules as types of performative declarative acts (by Declaration we create the Y

ing these subjects in a manner that is plausibly verifiable. Metaphorical senses have conditions for fulfillment that are complex, untidy, and that can mask their more direct descriptive elements in virtue of their distance and historical derivations from intrinsic intentionality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Schmid's mistake is to count the experiences in question as necessary conditions for collective intentionality. However, it is collective intentionality that is necessary to those experiences, not the reverse. Schmid would be correct in identifying plural subject experiences as sufficient conditions for the presence of collective intentionality. Even if collective intentionality ranges over a plurality of subjects, one need not radically revise the nature of intentionality to account for that characteristic. Rather, the important point is that collective intentions attribute meanings to non-arbitrary collectives of subjects. And, those collectives of subjects might have derived capacities in virtue of the collective intentionality of their shared endeavors.

status function), and that it is the declarative act that is the more basic species of intentional act pertinent to these powers (John R. Searle, *Philosophy in a New Century: Selected Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, Addendum to Chapter 2, pp. 48-51). This is clearly a response to the vast set of criticism surrounding constitutive rules since Searle's original formulation of his social ontology. Whether or not this adjustment satisfies his critics or not remains to be seen, though I suspect it only pushes any problems back a step. However, my own feeling is that Searle is aiming at a generally correct type of approach despite potential shortcomings.