

# **Groups, Minds and Group Minds**

Thomas H. Smith  
UCL

Thesis submitted in April 2002 for the degree of M. Phil.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author.

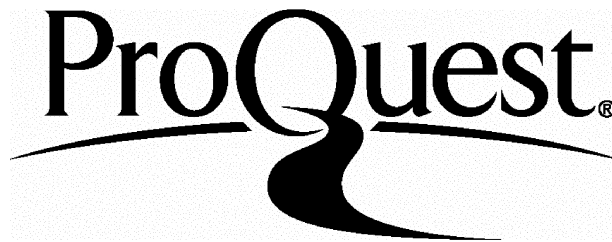
ProQuest Number: U642709

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest U642709

Published by ProQuest LLC(2015). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Michael Martin has read several drafts of this thesis and made many helpful remarks. Richard Evans read and criticised a late draft and has discussed these issues with me over many years. Parts of drafts have been read and commented upon by Sebastian Gardner and Joel Smith. I have had useful conversations with Paul Snowden, Mark Kalderon, Fabian Dorsch, Paul Sheehy, Isabella Muzio, Lucy James, Anna Thomas and Tom Lubbock. I hereby thank each and all of these.

## ABSTRACT

Chapter One sets out the orthodox view: (O<sub>1</sub>) *groups* exist; (O<sub>2</sub>) *group minds* do not exist. It summarizes the thesis: (O<sub>2</sub>) is false; the negation of (O<sub>2</sub>) is our only reason for (O<sub>1</sub>).

Chapter Two sketches a *simple argument* that apparently shows (O<sub>1</sub>) and (O<sub>2</sub>) to be inconsistent. It considers the responses available to the defender of the orthodox view.

Chapter Three discusses the *desperate* response, which renounces (O<sub>1</sub>). It argues that it is ill-motivated and ill-equipped to account for the truth of ordinary language sentences. It shows that its most convincing formulation collapses under scrutiny into a position that embraces (O<sub>1</sub>).

Chapter Four considers the *resigned* response, which denies (O<sub>2</sub>), and the *reasonable* response, which reconciles (O<sub>1</sub>) and (O<sub>2</sub>) by means of the claim that groups are *pluralities*, not *entities*. It urges that the *resigned* response is too committed to be generally acceptable, and that the *reasonable* response will fail if groups have psychological properties that can only be borne by subjects that *survive* the loss of their parts.

Chapter Five argues that our dealings with groups, including our interpretations of them, commit us to the view that *some* groups have psychological properties that can only be borne by persisting entities. It concludes that the *resigned* response is appropriate for such groups. But it does not deny that *many* groups have no such properties, and so claims that the existence of *many* groups, even those that are the

subjects of psychological predication, need not entail that group minds exist. For such groups the *reasonable* response is adequate.

Chapter Six suggests that persisting groups have no material properties, and that they bear analogies with Descartes' angels.

## **CONTENTS**

1. Introduction – The orthodox view.
  2. The simple argument.
  3. The desperate response. Appendix: the reductionist dialectic.
  4. The resigned and the reasonable responses.
  5. Corporate minds.
  6. The heterodox view: believing in angels.
- Bibliography.

# 1. INTRODUCTION – THE ORTHODOX VIEW

I call this *the orthodox view*:

(O<sub>1</sub>) There are groups.

& (O<sub>2</sub>) There are no group minds.

The argument of this thesis is that:

(T<sub>1</sub>) Conjunct (O<sub>2</sub>) is false, so the orthodox view is false.

(T<sub>2</sub>) We have good reason to judge that conjunct (O<sub>1</sub>) is true *only because* we have good reason to judge that conjunct (O<sub>2</sub>) is false.

By “groups” I mean *social* groups. I tender no definition of our everyday concept of a social group, but make two innocuous assumptions concerning it. First, that it is a concept of something (though not necessarily some *thing*), which typically has at least two human individuals sharing some property, endeavour or commitment as members or parts. Second, that it includes in its extension families, committees, clubs, societies, civic and governmental organisations, businesses, educational institutions, corporations, states and international bodies such as the UN and NATO.

By “group minds” I mean those entities (if any) which are *of the same kind* as individual minds, but which are either possessed or constituted by groups. I assume individual minds are either possessed or constituted by individuals. I neither assume nor rule out the obtaining of a part-whole relationship between an entity and its possessor. I neither assume nor rule out the putative necessity of spatial co-incidence by constituting

and constituted entities. Where an entity possesses or constitutes a mind, I say that it is *minded*.

The *orthodox* view is so-called because it has been the *dominant* view among post-war Anglophone social theorists and among philosophers who have discussed social phenomena. So, with respect to (O<sub>1</sub>), Ruben writes:

I take particular groups, nations, clubs, associations, and so on, to be entities.<sup>1</sup>

Brodbeck says that they exist *over and above* their members:

Planets may be conglomerations of atoms but no one would deny reality to planets. Likewise, crowds may be groups of individuals, but there are also crowds.<sup>2</sup>

Gilbert adds that they *persist*:

There is little doubt that from the point of view of our everyday concept of a social group, groups can change in various ways. In particular, they can change their membership... I suggest that our pretheoretical intuitions on group identity and change over time... do not present any obvious obstacle to my account of social groups.<sup>3</sup>

Gellner supplies the observation that we often seem to *refer* to groups:

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruben (1985) p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Brodbeck (1954/1973) p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert (1989) pp. 219-222.



... the grammatical subject of sentences written or uttered by social scientists is often not a man, or enumerated or characterized men, but groups, institutions, 'cultures', etc. The proper study of mankind is human groups and institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Each of these thinkers subscribes also to (O<sub>2</sub>). Brodbeck, in the context of an attack on the *truth* of the principle of methodological individualism<sup>5</sup>, defends its *value* by claiming that:

...in the light of the scientifically disreputable past of social science – its closet cluttered with 'group minds' and other suspect entities – the principle should be conditioned into every social scientist's consciousness, or better his unconscious.<sup>6</sup>

Ruben insists that:

If an entity (a nation or group, for example) is irreducibly social then no mental or material property is true of it. Thus, irreducibly social entities like groups and nations do not have beliefs and desires.<sup>7</sup>

Gilbert disagrees and thinks that we *can* make sense of ascriptions of beliefs to groups, but maintains that they do not have *minds*:

---

<sup>4</sup> Gellner (1956/1973) p. 248.

<sup>5</sup> She says (Brodbeck *op. cit.* p. 105) that the principle claims that "the behaviour of groups must be explained in terms of the behaviour of individuals". See also Watkins (1955/1973) p. 179.

<sup>6</sup> Brodbeck *op. cit.* p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> Ruben *op. cit.* p. 87.

Groups do not have minds... [But there is nothing suspect about] the conditions under which collective belief statements have an appropriate home... In particular, they do not contain any reference to a 'group mind' of any unacceptable sort.<sup>8</sup>

And Gellner dismisses a candidate explanation of our psychological predications of groups thus:

Holistic subject plus intelligible disposition. This is equivalent to a 'group mind' theory. I take it no one is advocating this seriously.<sup>9</sup>

These authors are representative of devotees of the orthodox view insofar as they hold that (O<sub>1</sub>) and (O<sub>2</sub>) are not merely true but *obviously* true, or at least not worth arguing for: scare quotes are needed for 'group minds' but not for 'groups'. I find this surprising as, given a plausible assumption, which will be argued for in Chapter Two but not fully defended until Chapter Five, (O<sub>1</sub>) and (O<sub>2</sub>) are not *obviously* consistent. The assumption is that:

(ASS) Groups act, form intentions, make decisions, and have states of knowledge and goals.

There is a *simple argument* from (O<sub>1</sub>) and (ASS) to the negation of (O<sub>2</sub>). This thesis argues for the argument's conclusion, but rejects the view that the *simple argument* is generally sound. It shows that there is no good reason to think that *all* groups capable of action, intention, decision, knowledge and the having of goals possess or constitute minds. So it has a *surprising implication*:

---

<sup>8</sup> Gilbert *op. cit.* p. 312.

(SI<sub>1</sub>) There can be non-minded subjects of psychological predication.

I argue in the thesis that where we *do* have a reason to think that some group is minded, we thereby have the only good available reason to hold that a group has an *independent* existence. So I assert (T<sub>1</sub>) and (T<sub>2</sub>).

And I tentatively claim that minded groups have no material properties, which is the second *surprising implication* of my view:

(SI<sub>2</sub>) Minded groups lack material properties.

But first I consider the *simple argument* from (O<sub>1</sub>) to the negation of (O<sub>2</sub>), and the responses to it available to the defender of the orthodox view. This is the task of Chapter Two.

---

<sup>9</sup> Gellner *op. cit.* p. 251.

## 2. THE SIMPLE ARGUMENT

Consider the following:

- (A) The committee decided to sack Jones.
- (B) The Treasury believes that joining the Euro this session is unlikely.
- (C) The corporation intended to defend itself against all allegations.
- (D) The Red Cross is committed to a policy of neutrality.
- (E) The parliamentary party knew that Evans was corrupt.
- (F) The office threw her a party.
- (G) The government produced a white paper.

There is nothing peculiar about these sentences. They are typical of countless ordinary language claims made every day. I claim that the sentences are *meaningful*, and that we therefore understand what it would be for them to be true.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, I claim that such sentences *are* often true. That is, they are not *systematically* false.

*Prima facie* each of the sentences applies a psychological or action predicate to a group subject. It apparently follows, on the assumption that the sentences are not systematically false, that groups can have psychological properties, including the having of beliefs (B), intentions (C), goals (D) and states of knowledge (E), and that they can perform both 'inner' (A) and 'outer' (F) (G) actions. And it apparently follows from this that some groups are minded. So: *pace* the orthodox view, if there are groups, then there are group minds.

This *simple argument* for group minds can be rendered thus:

---

<sup>1</sup> See Wittgenstein (1921/1978) prop. 4.024: "To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true".

- (1) Sentences (A) to (G) are of subject-predicate form.
- (2) The grammatical subject of each sentence (A) to (G) refers (if at all) to a group entity, and the predicate identifies or names an action or psychological property.
- (3) Sentences of subject-predicate form are true if and only if whatever the predicate identifies or names is true of whatever the grammatical subject refers to.
- (4) Sentences (A) to (G) are often true.
- (5) An action or psychological property is true of an entity only if that entity is minded.

Therefore:

- (6) Some groups are minded.

The argument is valid. So defenders of the orthodox view are committed to finding fault with at least one of its premises. Let me first close a loophole. “The committee”, “The Treasury”, “The corporation” etc. are *definite descriptions*. Premises (1) and (2) would be false if a Russellian analysis of sentences employing such expressions were correct.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I assume that definite descriptions are *referring* terms, i.e. that they *either* refer to entities *or* make no semantic contribution to the sentences in which they are used. This is a contentious assumption, but for present purposes it is innocuous. If sentences containing definite descriptions never *refer* but make *quantifying* claims, then the simple argument fails, but it can be easily reformulated so as to derive the same conclusion. Here’s how: Premise (1) is dropped. A reformulated premise (2) claims that each of (A) to (G)

---

<sup>2</sup> Russell (1905/1990) (1919/1970) ch. 16.

quantifies over a group entity (by predicating, given contextual restrictions, “is a unique committee”, “is a unique Treasury” etc. of a bound variable) and predicates an action or psychological property of it. A reformulated premise (3) declares that a sentence predicating anything of entities it either refers to or quantifies over is true if and only if what the predicate identifies or names is true of what is either referred to or quantified over. Premises (4) and (5) remain unchanged. The conclusion follows.<sup>3</sup>

Russellian scruples aside, there are three strategies available to the defender of the orthodox view directed at blocking the conclusion of the argument:

- Deny premise (1)
- Deny premise (2)
- Deny premise (4)

I take it that there is no good reason to deny either (3) or (5).<sup>4</sup>

### On Reductionism: the denial of premise (1)

Any denial of premise (1) will be motivated by the thought that sentences (A) to (G) admit of *paraphrases* which are not of subject-predicate form and which are revelatory of the sentences’ ontological

---

<sup>3</sup> Given that nothing turns on my excluding from consideration a Russellian account of definite descriptions, the reader is invited to read all relevant uses of “refers to” as elliptical for “refers to or quantifies over”.

<sup>4</sup> Even if we restricted (5) to a claim about ‘non-inner’ action-types such as “throwing a party” or “producing a white paper” no one could *seriously* doubt that performing such actions requires *mindedness*. Nevertheless, Stoutland (1997 pp. 58-66) makes precisely this move. He argues that action-motivating reasons are not mental causes and so is able to consistently claim that groups are sometimes the singular subjects of reasoned action, *and* that they are not minded. I find this response incredible. I do not doubt that we might reasonably deny that action-motivating states are ‘inside’ the agent (Hornsby 1997 chs. 6, 7, 12), but a denial of their *mentality* is preposterous.

commitments.<sup>5</sup> Such paraphrases will be *reductive* if they are *not* committed to the existence of groups. Each of (A) to (G), it might be thought, are thus paraphrasable i.e. they are necessarily equivalent to sentences ascribing a variety of properties to a variety of human beings. When we *understand* the sentences (the thought runs) we understand what it would be for such properties to hold of these individuals.

This line of thought, if correct, can be profitably combined with a popular application of Ockham's razor (the principle is usually formulated: "Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity"). The application requires that the less ontologically committed of two necessarily equivalent claims is construed as providing the truth-condition for the other claim. Given this requirement, and the apparent possibility of our reductively paraphrasing sentences such as (A) to (G), it arguably follows that there are no groups.

So: the reductionist claim is that the availability of paraphrase justifies, with respect to groups, an *ontological* eliminativism. This should be distinguished from both *discourse* eliminativism and *truth* eliminativism. No reductionist need make the further claim that our *discourse* about groups (or whatever) is pragmatically redundant, and so in need of replacement by a 'cleaned up' way of talking. Neither need he deny that there are *truths* containing group (or whatever) terms. Indeed, he should not deny this, given the necessary equivalence between the putative truths and their paraphrases, unless he wishes *also* to deny the truth of the paraphrases, and thereby premise (4).

Where the defender of the orthodox view resists the conclusion of the simple argument on *reductionist* grounds his response is *desperate*, for

---

<sup>5</sup> The Russellian denial has this motivation, but as we have seen, given premise (4), it cannot by itself evade ontological commitment to groups.

he thereby renounces one of his views. The embattled defender, unable to deny that (A) to (G) are often true, and convinced of the ineluctability of the step such truths warrant from *groups* to *group minds*, concludes that, all things considered, there can be no groups. So I call this the *desperate* response.

### On Pluralism: the denial of premise (2)

Premise (2) claims that the grammatical subject of each sentence (A) to (G) refers (if at all) to a group entity. One might deny this, not by denying that the expressions ever *refer* (which would require a denial of either (1) or (4)), but by denying that each expression refers to an *entity*. This blocks the argument's conclusion, but allows one to affirm that the sentences are both of subject-predicate form (1) and often true (4). The denial is motivated by the plausible thought that there is no rational support for a principle covertly assumed by (2): that to refer one must refer to a *singular thing*.<sup>6</sup> Once the principle is queried, it seems entirely natural to say of a demonstrative usage of "those men", for example, that it functions as a *referring* expression but not as a *singularly* referring one. It picks out no *entity*, but rather *some* entities. There need be no set or class of the men concerned, still less a *group*, for someone to succeed in picking them out.

This claim is made by *pluralists*. The thought behind pluralism is that there are two different ways of construing any claim that some *a* is *F*. The construal familiar to students of predicate logic views the claim as saying of some *individual* named or perhaps implicitly quantified over by

---

<sup>6</sup> The principle has thrived in spite of its lack of support. The contemporary practice of using "singular term" interchangeably with "referring expression" or "Proper name" (Dummett (1981) p. 23, p. 43, p. 78, Wright (1983), Hale (1987)), must bear some responsibility for this. Frege's (1892a/1980), (1892b/1980) "Eigenname", translated by Geach and Black as "Proper name" does not imply *singularity* of reference. See p. 30 n. 13, p. 62 n. 73.



the term ‘*a*’ that *it* is F. An alternative construal sees it as saying of some *individuals* referred to or perhaps quantified over by the term ‘*a*’ that they, *plurally*, are F.

The two construals are possible, on this view, not because a single domain contains different *types of entity*, singular and plural, but because there are two different primitively understood *ways* of referring, quantifying and predicating. In the case of referring terms the truth of this seems clear. “Those men like beer” and “that man likes beer” refer to entities of the same type (men), but in different *ways* (singularly and plurally). Equally, they predicate the same property (liking beer) of their subjects in different *ways*. The predicate “likes beer” differs in *number* just as, for example, the pronoun “you” does.

In the case of Russellian quantifying noun phrases, pluralism needs more careful exposition. The claim is that while singular descriptions make (contextually restricted) unique existence claims by quantifying in a *singular* way over a single domain, plural descriptions make (contextually restricted) maximal existence claims by quantifying in a *plural* way over the same domain. As Boolos<sup>7</sup> puts it, a use of “the ks” is legitimate just in case “there are some things such that each k is one of them and each one of them is a k”.<sup>8</sup> Again, it seems intuitive to say that “there are men and they like beer” says something of entities of the same *type* as the entity picked out by “there is a man and he likes beer”. So, for both referring terms and quantifying noun phrases, the pluralist idea is that there are perfectly proper primitively understood plural forms in

---

<sup>7</sup> Boolos (1998) ch. 10 p. 165.

<sup>8</sup> Uniqueness is a special case of maximality. So for both singular and plural quantifying noun phrases, we might say that the definite article is used to “exhaust the range of a particular predicate” (Neale (1990 p. 180), echoing Vendler (1967 p. 51)). But there is nevertheless a clear distinction between singular and plural Russellian definite descriptions depending on whether the ‘exhausted’ predicate is singular (“the present king of France”) or plural (“the present kings of Europe”).

natural language the existence of which can be used to resist the covert assumption that a group term picks out a singular entity and not a *plurality*. It is on this basis that (2) is denied.

Pluralists propose that we would benefit from a logic that explicitly incorporated these natural language resources and this proposal is *independently* motivated. Boolos<sup>9</sup> drew attention to plural quantification as a means of interpreting second-order logic without thereby incurring a commitment to second-order *entities* such as classes or sets. Consider the Geach-Kaplan sentence "Some critics only admire each other",<sup>10</sup> which can be formalised only in second-order logic:

$$\exists X (\exists x Xx \ \& \ \forall x \ \forall y (Xx \ \& \ Axy \rightarrow x \neq y \ \& \ Xy))$$

The domain is restricted to critics and  $Axy$  holds iff  $x$  admires  $y$ . The interpretation usually placed on this sentence is that there exists a class of critics each of whose members admire somebody only if that person is a member of the class and distinct from themselves. Boolos shows how it is possible to interpret the sentence *without* quantifying over any classes. The sentence is read as claiming merely that there exist some people such that they are critics and such that they admire a person other than themselves only if they are one of them. A commitment to second-order entities (classes) is avoided by interpreting the second order quantifiers as ranging over the *same* entities as the first-order quantifiers (some critics). This interpretation requires both the admission of pronouns (it, them) as logical primitives and - more germane to our purposes - that the admiration of others may be predicated not merely singularly (i.e. of each critic that is a member of class  $X$ ) but also plurally (i.e. of some critics).

---

<sup>9</sup> Boolos *op. cit.* chs. 4, 5.

<sup>10</sup> See Quine (1950/1982) p. 293.

Admiration is predicated plurally of the critics as a straightforward consequence of their being plurally quantified over. Where a sentence picks out *some entities* as its subject (and this holds for referring as well as for quantifying claims), whatever is said of this plurality applies *plurally*. It would simply be a logical mistake to predicate anything *singularly* of a *plural* subject. Notice however that to say that admiration is predicated *plurally* of the critics is *not* to say that we are saying of them that they *collectively* admired each other. Many predicates have *collective* and *distributive* usages. "The biology class dissected an eye" might mean that they did so *together* or that they *each* did so. Neither reading entails the truth of the other. It is important to register that the distinction between plural and singular predication is separate from that between collective and distributive usages of predicates. The admiration of others which we predicate plurally of some critics might be a single shared (collective) act or attitude or a variety of (distributed) acts or attitudes. Whatever we say of this particular case (and there is good reason to favour a distributive reading), it is worth noting that in the case of sentences (A) to (G), the predicates applied to groups are used *collectively*.<sup>11</sup>

In the philosophy of mathematics, the claim that second order quantification is *innocent* of commitment to sets or classes is valuable not merely to nominalists but to anyone wishing to evade Russell's paradox.<sup>12</sup> A pluralist may grant the existence of a hierarchy of sets, each of which is an *entity*, but deny that second-order quantifiers range over *sets* of such entities. He can therefore formulate the (seemingly) true sentence "there are some sets of which every set that is not a member of

---

<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein (1967 ¶ 48) thought that psychological predicates could be used collectively: "Might it not even be imagined that several people had carried out an intention without any of them having it? In this way a government may have an intention that no *man* has."

<sup>12</sup> Russell (1903) Pt. I Ch. X.

itself is one" without being compelled to singularise its subject, yielding the false sentence "there is a set of which every set that is not a member of itself is a member". The avoidance of paradox is of great value because, as the Geach-Kaplan sentence testifies, second-order logic has expressive resources that outstrip those of its first-order companion. In particular, it allows for the formulation of a mathematical induction axiom that, together with the other Peano axioms, admits of no non-standard models.<sup>13</sup> Plural logic has the same expressive power as second-order logic platonistically interpreted but (trivially) modified so as to exclude sets with single members.

So: pluralism, which is independently motivated, entitles us to understand, say, "the government produced a white paper" as referring to, or quantifying over, the individuals who make up the government and saying of *them* that they (*plurally*) produced a white paper.<sup>14</sup> Pluralists may therefore claim that there are no group entities *over and above* those entities that are group members. In this they agree with reductionists. But, against the reductionist, the pluralist thinks that *there are groups*. The reductionist holds that group terms *fail* to refer because the sentences in which they are used are reductively paraphraseable. The pluralist makes no such claim. For him, a group term will appear on both the left- and the right- hand side of any biconditional giving the truth-conditions for a sentence in which it is used. The pluralist claim is

---

<sup>13</sup> Hossack (2000 pp. 439-441) argues that second-order logic can do this *only when interpreted pluralistically* as the interpretation of 'set' is underdetermined.

<sup>14</sup> This needn't commit the pluralist to the view that *every* individual member of the government helped to produce the white paper. He can claim *either* that (say) Harry, who did not participate, nevertheless counts as one of the individuals who (plurally) produced the white paper by virtue of his group membership or causal relevance (we say in the same spirit, perhaps, that the H<sub>2</sub>O molecules plurally cracked the flask, although many of the molecules did not cause the cracking, see Pettit (1993) p. 39), or he can say that the plurality referred to is in every case derivative of the application of the plural predicate, requiring that the referent of "the government" shrinks and expands in size depending on who is, as it were, acting *qua* government.

that the groups referred to by (A) to (G) exist, but are not *entities*. They are *some entities*. We simply misunderstand our grasp of group terms if we take them to always refer to, or quantify over, singular groups.<sup>15</sup>

I consider the pluralist response to the simple argument *reasonable* for two reasons. First, it allows the defender of the orthodox view to retain his commitments to both the existence of groups (O<sub>1</sub>) and the non-existence of group minds (O<sub>2</sub>). The former commitment is *weaker* than it seemed since, according to this response, groups need have no ontological status *independent* of that of their members. We are not forced to think of them as a distinct *type*. But the letter, if not the spirit of the commitment is retained. Second, pluralism is *independently* motivated. It is reasonable to believe that we do plurally refer, predicate and quantify in ordinary language and that these natural language forms find useful application in the making of non-paradoxical sense of the commitments of arithmetic. For these reasons I call this denial of (2) the *reasonable* response.

#### On Nihilism: the denial of premise (4)

To block the conclusion of the simple argument by denying premise (4), one would have to claim that sentences such as (A) to (G) are *never* true i.e. that they are *systematically* false. This looks like an implausible claim. The denial would have to be motivated by one of the following theses:

(N<sub>1</sub>) Our discourse about groups is in massive error.

(N<sub>2</sub>) Our discourse about groups is non-assertoric.

---

<sup>15</sup> So pluralism has the resources for a diagnosis of the reductionist error: an unwarranted inference from the non-existence of *singular* groups to the non-existence of *groups*. Leibniz (1686-90/1968 p. 191) might be guilty of such an inference: "What is not truly a being is not truly a *being*".

(N<sub>3</sub>) Our discourse about groups is metaphorical.

But these theses are not very intuitive or well motivated. There is no good reason to think that we are in massive error whenever we say that the government or committee or corporation did such-and-such. We have no better reason to think that such utterances are non-assertoric and/or metaphorical.<sup>16</sup> Remember, the position we are considering is not that claims about governments or committees *qua* entities are systematically false, but that claims about governments and committees *simpliciter* are, which is surely unsupportable.<sup>17</sup> I conclude that only someone with an antecedent bias against taking (A) to (G) seriously would wish to advocate theses (N<sub>1</sub>), (N<sub>2</sub>) or (N<sub>3</sub>). I therefore reject nihilism and shall not discuss it further.

### On accepting the argument

There is one more slice of logical space available to the defender of the orthodox view. He could accept the argument and its conclusion. He might be convinced that if there are *groups*, then there must be *group minds* and retain his commitment to (O<sub>1</sub>) by renouncing his commitment to (O<sub>2</sub>). Given everything that has been said in this Chapter, it does seem that if (A) to (G) refer to group *entities* then the conclusion of the simple argument does indeed follow. So the orthodox defender cannot escape a very short step from the concession that groups may be the *singular* subjects of psychological and action predication to the conclusion that some groups are minded.

---

<sup>16</sup> According to many philosophers, metaphorical utterances *are* non-assertoric.

<sup>17</sup> Strictly speaking, a nihilist would be entitled to claim that *some* claims, namely negative existential ones, are true of social groups.

Furthermore, if *mental holism* is true the ineluctability of this step can be given a compelling presentation. I take mental holism to be the thesis that if an entity is the subject of at least one psychological predicate, it is the subject of *very many rationally related* psychological predicates. But it is analytically true that any entity that is the subject of *very many rationally related* psychological predicates is a *minded* entity.

The ingenious defender of the orthodox view might seek to adopt a strategy of accepting the argument but interpreting its conclusion so as to render it innocuous. Let us call this a *fancy* strategy.<sup>18</sup> There are at least three such strategies, all doomed to failure.

Fancy strategy (1) interprets the conclusion as being *metaphorically* true. But if nihilism is false then (A) to (G) if true are literally true. The premises of the simple argument if true are literally true. It follows that the argument's conclusion if true is *literally* true. So it simply will not do to accept the argument but re-interpret its conclusion as claiming that there are *strong analogies* between groups and minded entities, or that it is *as if* groups were minded.

Fancy strategy (2) holds that the predicate "is minded" is *ambiguous*, meaning something different when applied to groups and to individuals. But as Kripke has written, in a different context:

It is very much the lazy man's approach to posit ambiguities when in trouble. If we face a putative counterexample to our favourite philosophical thesis, it is always open to us to protest that some key term is being used in a special sense, different from its use in the thesis. We may be right, but the ease of the move should

---

<sup>18</sup> I owe the term to Tim Crane.

counsel a policy of caution. Do not posit an ambiguity unless you are really forced to, unless there are compelling theoretical or intuitive grounds to suppose that an ambiguity really is present.<sup>19</sup>

There is no independent motive for the claim that “is minded” is ambiguous in the required sense.<sup>20 21</sup>

Fancy strategy (3) concedes that there are minded groups but aims to demean this conclusion by holding that they are *abstract* entities. I have no *definition* of “abstract entity”. The best I can do is to supply two necessary conditions: (i) They are not spatio-temporally located, and (ii) They do not enter into causal relations.

Perhaps there are a couple of reasons to think that groups are abstract objects. First, one might think that as groups contain individuals they should be identified with sets. Second, one might think that group terms can be neither ostensively defined nor explicitly defined in terms of ostensively definable expressions.<sup>22</sup> Neither reason is adequate. Groups *act*, or at the very least participate in causal relations, while sets do not. And sets contain all their members essentially, which groups do not. Identifying groups with trans-worldly sets makes the

---

<sup>19</sup> Kripke (1977 p. 259). See also Grice's (1989 p. 47) “Modified Occam's Razor, *senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity*”.

<sup>20</sup> Although, as I have defined it is *disjunctive* i.e. an entity is minded just in case it possesses or constitutes a mind.

<sup>21</sup> Neither have we any reason to think that the argument's conclusion can be avoided by claiming that our psychological and action verbs are systematically ambiguous, and do not in all contexts commit us to the mindedness of their singular subjects. Nevertheless one finds this claim in much of the methodological individualist literature. See for instance Nelson (1990) p. 206.

<sup>22</sup> This latter is Quinton's view (1975-6) pp. 7-11. While he takes it to justify thinking of social objects as *constructions*, Quinton draws a distinction between *categorical constructions* and *abstractions*. Similar views can be found in Hayek (1942-3/1972) p. 45 and Popper (1957/1966) p. 135 though the latter uses “abstract” where we might today prefer “theoretical”. The thought that the impossibility of ostensive definition might be a mark of the abstract can be found in Dummett *op. cit.* ch. 14, though he does not ultimately endorse this thesis.



latter problem (arguably) more tractable at the price of making the former problem less so. There are also problems relating to the extensionality of sets. Two distinct groups could contain all and only the same members, even the same trans-worldly members. But there could not be two such distinct sets.<sup>23</sup> And as for the problem of ostension, (accepting for present purposes that the impossibility of ostensive definition is a mark of the abstract) it is no more necessary to ostend to the *whole* of an entity in order to ostend to it, than it is to perceive the whole of an entity in order to perceive it.<sup>24</sup> So: if groups are minded entities, they are concrete minded entities.

So: if the simple argument is accepted as sound, ingenious or fancy wriggling gets us nowhere. We must accept that there are group minds. Since this is a weighty metaphysical commitment, I take it that only the most *lacklustre* of defenders of the orthodox view will be inclined to accept it. I therefore call accepting the argument the *resigned* response.

## Conclusion

We saw that a simple argument seemed to show that the predication of action and psychological verbs of social groups proved that such

---

<sup>23</sup> The defender of groups as sets might reply that two distinct sets *can* contain all and only the same *human* members so long as at least one of them has a non-human member that the other does not contain. A group might for instance be identical to the set of its members *plus* some object that 'flags' its nature e.g. a token typographical entity that, in a language, *names* it. Maybe so. But the imaginary defender of this baroque view will still owe us an account of the truth of sentences that ascribe *actions* to groups.

<sup>24</sup> For the perceptual case see Chisolm (1957) pp. 153-156. For the opposite view see Moore (1918-19). The claim in the text is restricted to *entities*, but accepting the simple argument requires accepting that the group terms in our contested sentences refer to entities. Clarke (1965) argues that, where an object is (conceptualised as being) a 'compound of units', one needs to see *all* the units in order to determinately count as having seen the compound. But he does not consider the case of, in his terms, a *unit* made up of units, which is what I take a group *entity* to be.

groups possessed or constituted minds. Henceforth, sentence (G) will be used as our paradigm example of the kind of predication that seems to support this conclusion. Let's assume that the sentence is true.

Consistent with this assumption are three theses about the ontological status of the government:

- (a) There is no government.<sup>25</sup>
- (b) There is a plurality that is the government.
- (c) There is a singular entity that is the government.

Each of these theses is entailed by each of the following corresponding theses about the truth-conditions of our sentence:

- (a') (G) is true iff certain predicates are true of certain individuals.
- (b') (G) is true iff "produced a white paper" is truly plurally predicated of the plurality referred to by "the government".
- (c') (G) is true iff "produced a white paper" is truly singularly predicated of the singular entity referred to by "the government".

These three semantic and correlative ontological theses are the three responses to the simple argument worthy of further consideration: the *desperate* (a'), (a), the *reasonable* (b'), (b) and the *resigned* (c'), (c). In Chapter Three, I discuss the *desperate* response.

---

<sup>25</sup> This is a degenerate case of 'ontological status'. There is *nothing* to possess ontological status and so no status to be possessed. But as we ordinarily refer to and quantify over non-existent things I trust it is not *too* misleading to say that a purported something (e.g. a government) has *negative* ontological status if and only if there is no such thing.

### 3. THE DESPERATE RESPONSE

We saw in the last Chapter that the *desperate* response has two components: (a) the claim that sentences using apparently referential group terms are *necessarily equivalent* to sentences which are not committed to the existence of groups; and (b) the claim that Ockham's razor requires us to construe the less ontologically committed of two necessarily equivalent sentences as providing the truth-condition for the other. In this Chapter, I will give *general* reasons for doubting (b), and show why in the *particular* case of sentences about groups, the claim is ill-grounded and ill-motivated. I then consider whether Margaret Gilbert's influential account of groups<sup>1</sup> could be mobilised to show that (a) and (b) together can evade my objections to (b). I argue that such a strategy could not deliver (a), as there is no close reading of Gilbert that gives us both necessary and reductive equivalences.

#### General reasons for doubting (b).

Let us suppose that two sentences P and Q *appear* to make distinct ontological commitments and are necessarily equivalent. And let us grant that, in such a case, the *apparent* commitments of at least one of the sentences cannot be its *actual* commitments; by virtue of their equivalence, P and Q have *identical* commitments. An intuitive case against (b) is founded on the thought that the knowledge that all this is so yields no method of detecting *which* sentence, *if either*, wears its ontological commitments on its sleeve. There is no *a priori* reason to hold that whatever looks like the *more* committed of any two such sentences must fail to make perspicuous its *actual* commitments. We cannot rule

---

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert (1989) (1996a) (1996b) (1999) (2000).

out the reverse being the case: that such sentences *make explicit* commitments their 'weaker' equivalents fruitlessly shirk.<sup>2</sup>

The defender of (b) has a contrary intuition. It is roughly as follows: If it is possible to state all the expressible truths of a language L without using terms which (putatively) refer to entities XYZ then we have no reason as L-speakers to believe that XYZ exist. I call this the Ockhamite intuition.<sup>3</sup> If it is well-grounded, and if truths about groups can be expressed without *referring* to groups, it follows that we have no good reason to believe that there are groups. So the fight over (b) looks very much like a battle of intuitions. When such battles rage, one can rarely predict decisive victory for either side.

The case against (b) as considered thus far is doubtful of the Ockhamite intuition, but it lacks an argument against it. To take issue with the intuition one would have to show the following: that if it is possible to state one of the expressible truths of a language L by (putatively) referring to entities XYZ then we *thereby* have a resilient reason as L-speakers to believe that XYZ exist, where a *resilient* reason is one not *defeated* by the availability of paraphrase.<sup>4</sup> Call this the anti-Ockhamite claim. What I argue below is that Frege's Context Principle, given a further plausible assumption, entails the anti-Ockhamite claim.

Frege's thought is that one should, "never... ask for the meaning of a name in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition."<sup>5</sup> He writes:

---

<sup>2</sup> This intuitive case is made by Wright (1983 pp. 31-2) who credits Alston (1958/1964) who in turn notes his debt to Moore's so-called "paradox of analysis" (See Moore 1944/1959).

<sup>3</sup> I make no claim as to how this intuition relates to the 'razor' as normally formulated or to Ockham's own position.

<sup>4</sup> Let's say a fact *defeats* a reason to believe *p* iff the conjunction of this reason and the belief that the fact obtains is *not* a reason to believe *p*. See Pollock (1986) p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Frege (1884/1996) p. x.

...we ought always to keep before our eyes a complete proposition. Only in a proposition have the words really a meaning... It is enough if the proposition taken as a whole has a sense; it is this that confers on its parts also their content.<sup>6</sup>

Frege's "only" and "enough" make necessity and sufficiency claims. A word, and in particular a name, has meaning *just in case* it is used in a sentence that expresses a meaningful proposition. Now if we interpret Frege's use of "meaning" ("Bedeutung") in the above quotations as "reference" <sup>7</sup> the sufficiency claim made by the Context Principle entails that, so long as a *sentence* has a referent (i.e. expresses either a true or false proposition) then any expression within it functioning syntactically as a name *must* also have a referent.<sup>8</sup> If this is so, the further plausible assumption required to deliver the anti-Ockhamite argument is this: that when a sentence is not just truth-evaluable but *true* any expression it uses to putatively name an entity X *in fact* names that entity X and not another thing (such as the null-set). The assumption is warranted because, plitudinously, a true sentence says of what is, that it is.<sup>9</sup> The platitude, combined with the Context Principle's insistence that putative names used in meaningful sentences really *name*, delivers the required conclusion: names used in *true* sentences name what they *appear* to name. The existence of an expressible truth putatively referring to entities XYZ gives a reason for thinking that entities XYZ exist.

---

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* ¶ 71.

<sup>7</sup> See Wright (1983) ch. 1 pp. 6-15. The interpretation is not uncontroversial as the Sinn/Bedeutung distinction (Frege (1892b/1980)) was made *after* Frege framed the Context Principle. But it makes the best sense of the earlier Frege. The meanings of names must be objects in order to fill the n argument-places in the meanings of n-place predicate concepts (functions) that map them onto the meanings of sentences (truth-values).

<sup>8</sup> I ignore for present purposes the possibility of negative existential statements.

<sup>9</sup> See Aristotle Met IV 7 1011b25-27.

Now the reductionist may concede this, but deny that such reasons are *resilient*. His claim will be that the formulability of a sentence that does *not* putatively refer to entities XYZ but is necessarily equivalent to the expressible truth that does *defeats* our reason to believe that XYZ exist. But this misses Frege's point. His claim is that the *meaningfulness* of a sentence is sufficient to justify the inference that an expression it uses has the *semantic* role of a name (i.e. that it refers) from its having that *syntactic* role. If this is right the reductionist incurs a strict obligation to explain our understanding of the sentences he proposes to reduce, for if they are paraphraseable, they are *meaningful*. Suppose he seeks to reduce P to the necessarily equivalent Q, on the grounds that P but not Q putatively refers to some unacceptable XYZ. So long as the reductionist does not deny that we understand P, he faces a dilemma. He must say *either* that we understand P *independently* of our understanding (if any) of Q *or* that we do so *by virtue* of this understanding. If he opts for the first horn, he must deny that P has even the *syntactic* structure it appears to have, since it follows from the meaningfulness of a sentence that terms functioning syntactically as names within it *must* have a referent. This renders our *ex hypothesi* independent understanding of P utterly mysterious. Yet the second horn is no more comfortable, for it is not *in general* plausible to say that we understand some P *by virtue* of our understanding of its reductive paraphrase Q. The credibility of any proposed reduction is grounded in an antecedent understanding of both reducing and reduced sentences.<sup>10</sup>

So if the Context Principle is well-founded, the availability of a paraphrase fails to undermine the *resilience* of the reason a true sentence gives us to believe that the entities it putatively refers to exist. I have not defended the Context Principle. But *even if it is false*, the

---

<sup>10</sup> This argument is closely related to one that appears in Wright *op. cit.* pp. 64-71.

reductionist must face something like the dilemma sketched in the last paragraph. For he must claim not merely that the reducing and reduced sentences are necessarily equivalent, nor even that they are synonymous, but that the former provides a *truth-condition* for the latter. If, as I assume, to understand a sentence is to understand its truth-condition<sup>11</sup>, the dilemma recurs. Either a sentence can be understood independently of any candidate reducing sentence, in which case it is not reducible to it, or it is understood *by virtue* of our understanding of the reducing sentence, which is not *in general* plausible.

#### The implausibility of (b) as applied to sentences about groups.

I have provided a defence, founded on the Context Principle, of the anti-Ockhamite claim that truths expressed by sentences putatively referring to entities provide resilient reasons for believing that those entities exist. Now this claim rebuts the *desperate* response only if group terms putatively refer (i.e. function *syntactically* as names) when used in true sentences. I say this is so.<sup>12</sup> Dummett, Wright and Hale have established a series of syntactic tests that they claim an expression must pass in order to qualify as a singular term.<sup>13</sup> "The government", as used in our sentence (G) passes them all. That is, (i) one can infer from "The

---

<sup>11</sup> See Wittgenstein (1921/1978) prop. 4.024 "To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true".

<sup>12</sup> Of course, the Russellian disputes this. But he will not dispute the claim that definite descriptions, when used in *true* sentences, require the existence of what they describe.

<sup>13</sup> Dummett (1981) ch. 4, (see also ch.14); Wright *op.cit.* chs. 1, 2; Hale (1987) ch. 2. Though elsewhere in the text I use "referring term" or "name" instead of "singular term" here I defer to established usage as the tests do not represent necessary or sufficient conditions for *plural* termhood. "Those boys" and "Jack and Jill" fail them but can succeed in referring plurally. While I do not want to beg the question against the pluralist, I take it that the position I call reductionist has traditionally been opposed to the view that groups are *singular* entities. See p. 15 n. 6, p. 62 n. 73.

government F-s” to “There is something such that it F-s”, (ii) from “The government F-s and the government G-s” to “There is something such that it F-s and it G-s” and (iii) from “It is true of the government that it F-s or it G-s” to “The government F-s or the government G-s”. Moreover, (iv) it is *not* the case that there is an expression, which, if substituted for “the government” in all the possible sentences in which it is used, would alter the truth-value of each of those sentences. And (v) it is *not* the case that responding “Which government?” to a sentential usage of “the government” makes a grammatically well-formed but illegitimate request. That “the government”, or any other expression, passes tests (i) to (v) is not perhaps sufficient for its having singular term status, but it is necessary. The tests rule out of court expressions such as “nothing”, “something”, “everything”, “a Dundee policeman”, “the average family” etc. which may be subjects of predication but which so used make *general* claims. “The government” is not an expression of this type.

But we have seen that a rebuttal of the *desperate* response need not depend upon the Context Principle. If we accept that sentences are understood via a grasp of their truth-conditions, it will be enough to point to the implausibility of the suggestion that a grasp of sentences concerning the activities of *groups* requires understanding necessarily equivalent claims about the properties of individuals. In what follows, I expand upon this point.

Following Quinton<sup>14</sup>, we can distinguish two views as to what sort of reductive truth-conditions should be given for claims about the actions of groups:

---

<sup>14</sup> Quinton (1975-6) pp. 9-10.



(1) *Summative* - A group  $g$  F-s iff each of all or most of the  $g$ -members F.

(2) *Non-Summative* - A group  $g$  F-s iff each of all or most of the  $g$ -members G (where G-ing need not be F-ing).

Account (1) is perhaps something of a strawman. Quinton himself disavows the view on the very sensible grounds that, for many predicates true of groups, it either does not make sense or is false to ascribe them to individuals:

To say that the French middle class is thrifty is to say that most French middle class people are. Quite often to say that the  $A$  group is  $F$  is to say that all or most of the most influential people who are  $A$  are  $F$ . But the predicate  $F$  is often either not significantly or not truly predicable of  $A$  people, although significantly and truly predicable of the  $A$  group. The British aristocracy is heirarchically arranged and the Unitarian church is getting smaller but British aristocrats are physically organized much as other men are and individual Unitarians have not shrunk.<sup>15</sup>

That seems right so far as it goes. We may add that a special case of where a predicate is “either not significantly or not truly predicable of  $A$  people, although significantly and truly predicable of the  $A$  group” is when it is true of a group only in its *collective* reading. Since there is no entailment from the truthful application of a collective usage of a predicate to that of its distributive usage, where a group F-s collectively, it may well be false that *each* of all or most or some of its members F-ed.

Yet while Quinton claims that the summative account is false *per se*, he holds that it is true of the predication of propositional attitudes:

---

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p. 9.

We do, of course, speak freely of the mental properties and acts of a group in the way we do of individual people. Groups are said to have beliefs, emotions and attitudes and to take decisions and make promises. But these ways of speaking are plainly metaphorical. To ascribe mental predicates to a group is always an indirect way of ascribing such predicates to its members. With such mental states as beliefs and attitudes the ascriptions are of what I have called a summative kind. To say that the industrial working class is determined to resist anti-trade-union laws is to say that all or most industrial workers are so minded. Where groups are said to decide or promise the statements in question are institutional: the reference is to a person or persons authorised to take decisions or enter into undertakings on behalf of the group.<sup>16</sup>

I think this is wrong. There are at least two ways in which, for example, HM Treasury might believe that entry into the Euro this session is unlikely, while none of its constituent members believe this. First, the relevant members might hold the belief *qua* members of the Treasury but not, as it were, personally.<sup>17</sup> Second, the Treasury might be divided into five sub-groups each of which is responsible for assessing one of the five criteria for recommending entry. Each sub-group, let us suppose, reports not to each other but to the Prime Minister. In such a scenario, the Prime Minister could surely truly say that HM Treasury believed that entry into the Euro this session was unlikely, despite none of its constituent members holding this belief even *qua* member.

---

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Gilbert (1989 ch. V) (1996b) (1999) urges the possibility of this kind of case. But see Cohen (1966-7) for an eloquent expression of incredulity at the very idea of a role-constituted *manner* of believing. He notes (p. 20) that the idea, if coherent, would permit non-paradoxical instances of Moore's (1942 p. 543) paradox: "p, but I don't believe that p".

Quinton's view that *summative* truth-conditions apply to psychological predications of groups but that *non-summative* conditions otherwise apply is inherently unstable. For at the *individual* level, the truth-conditions of psychological and of action predication are closely related. As premise (5) of the *simple argument* testifies, they require that singular subjects of either variety of predication possess or constitute minds. With the exception of so-called "institutional" cases of promising and deciding, Quinton nowhere examines the applicability of action-predicates to groups. But his argument against summativism *per se* applies to predicates such as "produced a white paper" or "threw a party". In their *collective* usages, these action-types, truthfully predicated, do not require that *every* member of the group acted thus. Quinton therefore incurs an obligation to explain why on his view, at the level of groups, the truth-conditions for psychological and action predicates come apart, being in the one case summative and the other case non-summative.

His explanatory strategy ultimately requires the claim that talk of groups having beliefs, emotions and attitudes is "plainly metaphorical", while talk of them making decisions or promises is "institutional".<sup>18</sup> Neither notion is defined (we'll come to the latter in a moment). But we saw in Chapter Two that the claim that only metaphorical sentences can ascribe propositional attitudes to groups is *nihilistic*, entailing that such ascriptions are *systematically literally* false. So Quinton fails to discharge the incurred obligation, for he does not explain the alleged fact that group action predications may be *true* while group psychological predications are *systematically false*. Moreover, Quinton's summativism regarding propositional attitude ascription is not easily reconciled with

---

<sup>18</sup> Quinton *op. cit.* p. 17. I infer that, given his summativism regarding the propositional attitudes, Quinton subscribes to a 'paraphrase account' of metaphor such as that of Searle (1979) or Black (1979). (For others such as Davidson (1984/1990 Essay 17), metaphorical utterance is neither assertoric nor paraphraseable).

his nihilism. It is difficult to think of a non-controversial case of a predicate's being *metaphorically* true of a subject *a* just in case it is *literally* true of (at least most of the) subjects *b, c, d,...*, which are parts or members of *a*. So doubt is cast on Quinton's attempt to rescue summativism for the propositional attitudes.

Account (2) avoids the problems facing (1) and so at first blush may seem more plausible. There are two problems with the position. The first is that it can be true that a group *g* F-s by virtue of a *tiny minority* of its members G-ing, as when a nation declares war. The second is that, even where a group *g* F-s by virtue of many of its members G-ing, there are different temporal and modal contexts from the present and the actual in which not all or most *or even any* of the *g*-members G, but in which it can be true that *g* did or would have F-ed.

Quinton recognises the force the first problem. His solution is simply to say that in such cases:

The ultimate reference... is to some identifiable collection of decision-making people, the rulers or management of the institution in question, but, so described, they still constitute a social object and to express the facts in terms of individual people will require more complex and specific predicates.<sup>19</sup>

This concedes, in effect, that a group's F-ing may consist in only a few of its members G-ing *and* that this G-ing may be equivalent to or realized by another (probably highly disjunctive) predicate, (say, H-ing). But this does not quite get to the heart of the difficulty. It is not enough to say that the truth-condition for "France declares war" is "Decision-

---

<sup>19</sup> Quinton *op. cit.* p. 10.

makers XYZ declare war”, even if we are hopeful that the latter can be (disjunctively) reduced. We can conceive of situations in which the decision-makers declared war *on their own behalf*. For, say, France to declare war, its core decision-makers must declare war *qua* France. Before we consider whether *that* is reducible, we had better be clear that we understand what it means.

Quinton does not refer to the second problem. The issue should be familiar from discussions of how the *persistence-conditions* of co-incident but distinct objects may differ, as in the (contentious) cases of the statue and the clay,<sup>20</sup> the ring and its gold,<sup>21</sup> and the person and his body.<sup>22</sup> The government has different modal and temporal properties from the aggregate of ministers (and PPSs) which actually and currently comprises it. It *survives* the (actual or counterfactual) replacement of some of its members by others.<sup>23</sup> So where we say that the fact of *g*-members *G*-ing *makes it the case* that *g* F-ed this fact fails to provide a *truth-condition* for “*g* F-ed”. For it could be *true* that *g* F-ed in contexts where it is *not* the case that all or most *or even any* of its members *G*-ed. If a specification of certain predicates being true of certain individuals is to provide a reductive truth-condition for a group activity claim, it will have to be true in *all* the modal and temporal contexts in which the claim counts as true. So any candidate truth-conditions must be not merely non-summative but *highly* (and possibly infinitely) disjunctive.

The reductionist may nevertheless be confident that there *must be* a specification of certain predicates being true of certain individuals that *will be true* whenever a group activity claim is true, it is just that specifying it is difficult given its disjunctive nature. But, even if we

---

<sup>20</sup> Gibbard (1975 p. 190).

<sup>21</sup> Hornsby (1997) Essay 3 pp. 50-52.

<sup>22</sup> Wiggins (1967 pp. 46-9), (1980, p. 164), Gibbard *op. cit.* p. 213, Shoemaker (1999).

<sup>23</sup> This claim is defended in more detail in Chapters Four and Five.

discount doubts as to whether such a specification is even *in principle* possible, once the reductionist accepts that specifying the truth-condition is difficult he concedes too much. For a long and complicated disjunctive paraphrase is *simply not what is understood* when group activity sentences are comprehended. It could not be, for we learn and immediately understand very many group activity claims, and we could not learn and immediately understand many arbitrarily long disjunctive claims concerning the properties of individuals.

Of course the reductionist could claim that group terms such as "the government" are tacitly temporally and modally indexed, or that they refer to trans-worldly sets. But, quite apart from our already having ruled out an identification of groups with sets, these responses fall prey to the same essential objection. Purported facts about sets or modally and temporally indexed entities do not constitute the information conveyed and understood by our group activity claims. We have discounted the possibility that we are in massive error about what we say when we talk about groups. Nothing can justify the drawing of ontological consequences from allegedly reductive truth-conditions which we *simply do not recognise* as capturing the meanings of sentences with which we putatively refer to groups. There is no motive for such a move independent of the conviction that there could not be such things as groups. Only the most ideological of atomists would accept any such account of what is understood by claims about water, or tables, or chairs. The situation is the same for claims about groups.

Let me be clear. I am not denying that the actions, beliefs, desires and intentions of certain individuals (at least help to) *make it the case*

that the government produced a white paper.<sup>24</sup> Nor do I deny the plausible claim that the actions, beliefs, desires and intentions of groups *supervene* on facts at the 'level' of individual humans. And I do not deny that sentences putatively referring to groups are *necessarily equivalent* to sentences that do not so refer. What I deny is that such sentences, if indeed they are formulable, provide *truth-conditions* for our claims about groups.

The point should be obvious, but it is easy to conflate “make it the case” with “provide a truth condition”. Consider the case of water. Few people would wish to deny that the behaviour of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules (at least helps to) *make it the case* that the water in the flask is boiling, or that the fact of the water's boiling *supervenies* on the fact of the molecular behaviour. But that, in the actual world, the molecular activity *makes it the case* that the water is boiling does not entail that “the water is boiling” is *true* only when the molecules behave as they are actually behaving. The molecular activity is the *constitution-condition* of “the water is boiling”, not its *truth-condition*. Analogously, I deny that the fact of certain individuals behaving in certain ways can give us a *truth-condition* for (G), not that it provides a *constitution-condition*. For a reduced ontology to be warranted I would have to be wrong about the truth-conditional claim.

So: the reductionist claim that our group terms do not refer is not rationally grounded. No doubt the claim is motivated by a compelling intuition *viz.* that groups do not exist *independently* or *over and above* their members. But this intuition can be much more plausibly accommodated by the pluralist account sketched in the previous Chapter.

---

<sup>24</sup> Nor do I deny that one must possess concepts of individual belief, action and intention in order to possess the concepts used in (G). See Strawson (1959/1987) pp. 44-45.

Pluralism allows one to deny that groups are *entities*, without denying that group terms refer. Set aside such a view, reductionism look like a simple overreaction to the implications of the ontological intuition. It is a *desperate* response. Nevertheless, the response has been *at least* implicit in the writings of many of the methodological individualists.<sup>25</sup> It is difficult to find *explicit* statements of it, but that is because discussions of individualism and holism have been clouded by a systematic failure to adequately distinguish between reductionism and pluralism.

#### Why Gilbert's view is either not reductionist or not acceptable.

The non-summative reductionist faced two problems. He could not account for the possibility of a small subset of *g*-members F-ing *qua* group. And he could not give a graspable truth-condition that allowed for the many and various ways in which the group *g* might have F-ed. We concluded that reductionism was *desperate* and to be rejected.

But it might be objected that reductionism as considered thus far has been too easy a target, operating with an unnecessarily thin conception of what can be truly predicated of individuals. The objector I am imagining has the following thought in mind: that we have an understanding of what it means to act *jointly* and that this understanding suggests the possibility of a reductive account of the following naïve form:

(3) *Joint* - A group *g* F's iff each of all or most or some of the *g*-members *jointly* F.

---

<sup>25</sup> See Hayek (1949 p. 6): "There is no other way toward an understanding of social phenomena but through our understanding of individual actions directed toward other people and guided by their expected behaviour."



The objection should be dwelled upon because *joint* reductionism offers the prospect of by-passing both of the problems faced by non-summative reductionism. With respect to the first problem, it might be thought that our grasp of the concept of *joint* action can explain what is meant by acting *qua* group. As for the second, our knowing that some individuals acted *jointly* comprehends a state of affairs that could have occurred in many different ways. So despite *general* misgivings about (b), it might be thought that joint reductionism escapes *particular* problems resulting from hitherto considered applications of (b) to (putative) equivalences between group and individual claims.

To help develop the objection, I define a *joint* predicate as one that may be applied to an individual *or* a group term, but which is true of an individual just in case it is also true of a group of which it is a member. An example is "conspire".<sup>26</sup> It is true, according to this line of thought, that I conspire against William (with others) if and only if there is a group (the conspirators) of which I am a member which (jointly) conspires against William. To take another example, I marry Juliet if and only if there is a group (a couple) consisting of me and Juliet which (jointly) marries. In either case, the thought is that a correct application of the predicate *licenses* a correct referential or existential use of a group term.

This linking of the applicability of joint predicates with the appropriate use of group terms represents the main insight of Margaret Gilbert's account of 'Social Facts'.<sup>27</sup> Gilbert holds that it is possible for individuals to "join forces" and *share* in some action, belief or attitude by acting or thinking "as a body". She further claims that this is

---

<sup>26</sup> Baier (1997) pp. 31-32 notes that many English verbs (particularly those beginning "con" or "co") are true of an individual if and only if they are true of (an)other individual(s). But it is a further non-trivial step to claim that they are in such cases also true of the *group* of individuals.

<sup>27</sup> Gilbert (1989).

accomplished when and only when the individuals concerned think of themselves as constituting a social group or “plural subject”, by thinking of themselves as “we” or “us”, where:

‘We’ refers to a set of people each of whom shares, with oneself, in some action, belief, attitude, or other such attribute.<sup>28</sup>

And where the link to *action* is crucial:

...‘we’ is appropriately used not only of those actually engaged in joint action but also of those set up to share in such an action by virtue of sharing a goal.<sup>29</sup>

...plural subjecthood in general is a matter of there being a plurality of wills dedicated to something.<sup>30</sup>

For example:

A person’s full-blooded use of ‘we’ in ‘Shall we do A?’ with respect to Y, Z, and himself is appropriate if and only if it expresses his recognition of the fact that he and the others are jointly ready to share in doing A in relevant circumstances.<sup>31</sup>

“Joint readiness” for action is a shared commitment to act *jointly* which comes into existence when all of the (relevant) members of the potential group have and express (perhaps tacitly) a conditional or quasi-commitment to be so committed, under conditions of common knowledge:

---

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p. 169.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* p. 200.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p. 199.

...a set of persons are jointly ready to share in action A in circumstances C if and only if it is common knowledge among them that they have mutually expressed their quasi-readiness so to share.<sup>32</sup>

Joint commitments bring into existence non-conditional obligations; each member of the “plural subject” is obliged to participate in the action and share the burden of its consequences:

Each will then immediately be obligated to engage in whatever behaviour on his part seems called for.<sup>33</sup>

The important thing to notice about Gilbert’s position is that it relates group-ness to the applicability of joint *action*-predicates rather than joint predicates *per se*. It is true that she holds that group terms such as ‘we’ may refer by virtue of joint *beliefs* and other attitudes (such as *readiness*) being predicable of individuals. But the applicability of these non-action predicates is itself explained in terms of the key notion of a joint *commitment*<sup>34</sup> which is brought into being by acts of will, not least those acts which *express* the will:

One might say that one who expresses quasi-readiness to do A in C in effect *volunteers his will* for a pool of wills to be set up so that, in certain circumstances, that pool will be dedicated to a certain end.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* p. 197.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* p. 197.

<sup>34</sup> Strictly speaking, joint belief is accounted for by Gilbert in *On Social Facts* in terms of joint *acceptance* (*ibid.* p. 306) see also (1996b pp. 204-5). Only in more recent work does she analyse belief (1999 p. 249) (and even the feeling of remorse (2000 p.135)) in terms of joint *commitment*. But both accepting and committing are *action*-types.

<sup>35</sup> Gilbert (1989) pp. 197-8.

So we can think of Gilbert's view as an *adverbial* account of groups. A group is brought into being when some individuals act *qua* group ("as a body") or *jointly* i.e. in a particular *way*. "*Qua* a body (or group)" and "jointly" will be used interchangeably in what follows. Now, there may not be very much to choose between a view that aims to reduce groups to the applicability of *joint* predicates and one that aims to reduce them to the applicability of an adverbial modifier ("*jointly*"). But the latter does seem more plausible. It is by *doing* something jointly (which includes *committing jointly*) that you and I count as a group, rather than by our *being*, for example, (jointly) numerically two. And there is a reason independent of our inquiry into the nature of groups for thinking that we do have a use for the adverb "jointly". We have already seen that many action-predicates admit of both collective and distributive readings. "Jointly" or "*qua* a body" forces a collective reading, and so helps to render more determinate our understanding of the modified verb.

I wrote on the page before last that, for Gilbert, a joint commitment "comes into existence when all of the (relevant) members of the potential group have and express (perhaps tacitly) a conditional or quasi-commitment to be so committed, under conditions of common knowledge". The two qualifications in parentheses are essential to an understanding of how what I have termed joint reductionism aims to evade the problems non-summative reductionism seemed to confront.

First, I make it explicit that Gilbert thinks that a joint commitment to act *qua* group need not require that *every* member of the group signal their conditional commitment to act jointly. She does not stress the point, but she clearly states "a group [may] set up representatives certain

of whose decisions are to count as the group's decisions".<sup>36</sup> So long as *this* arrangement is jointly accepted, the bulk of the group members needn't signal joint readiness to participate in any *particular* decision in order to be counted as the co-author of it (and so be bound by it).<sup>37</sup>

Second, the expression of a joint commitment can, Gilbert thinks, be tacit. She claims that the mere *acknowledgement* of another by a nod or a moment of eye contact can express a joint commitment to accept that both are mutually present or sharing the same space, or some such content.<sup>38</sup> It follows that there are *very many* groups, that many of them are ephemeral,<sup>39</sup> and that the task of drawing up identity conditions for groups will be onerous. Gilbert recognises this, and is happy to postpone the task.<sup>40</sup>

So we can see how Gilbert's view offers the promise of a reductive account of what our (truthful) talk of group activity commits us to:

(MG) A group F-s iff

some individuals F jointly or *qua* a body iff

they successfully act on the basis of a joint commitment to F jointly.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* p. 234.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* p. 206.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.* p. 218.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* p. 232.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* pp. 219-221.

<sup>41</sup> See Gilbert (2000) p. 148: "*There is a group action* if and only if the members of a certain population are jointly committed to pursuing a certain goal as a body, and in the light of this joint commitment relevant members (perhaps not all) successfully act so as to reach the goal in question". I take it that, to be successful, the act must be performed *qua* body.

The adverbial character of this analysis provides us with a (minimal) account of what it must be for some individuals to act *qua* group, as when the decision-making core of a nation-state declares war *qua* the nation-state. It is to act *in a particular way* (which is a *property* of the acting, e.g. of the waging of war). As not *every* member of a group needs to actively participate in F-ing jointly in order for them (all) to F jointly or *qua* a group, we can see how the decision-making core can wage war on its nation's as well as on its own behalf. So the first problem faced by the non-summative is perhaps avoided. Also, as there are very many ephemeral groups, the guarantee of reference for any particular group term is provided by the (modified) action-verbs that are (in a use) truly predicated of it. On Gilbert's view, it is not necessary to *specify* the individuals who F-ed jointly in order to provide reductive truth-conditions for the F-ing of the group. The fact that there was a joint F-ing is (in a context) necessary and sufficient for there being a group G that F-ed. Yet the fact can be stated without making any *explicit* reference to a group *and* without *itemising* the present, past or possible individuals who either F-ed jointly or might have F-ed jointly *and* without listing the many and various individual properties that would have to be true of these actual and possible individuals for them to have so F-ed. So the second problem faced by non-summative reductionism is by-passed.

But, either despite or because of its attractions, it can be doubted whether the view I have outlined above counts as a variety of reductionism. Gilbert certainly never uses the word herself. This is a non-trivial interpretative question beyond the scope of this thesis regarding which the textual evidence is, I think, not decisive. What I argue below is that the *best sense* to be made of the account as *understood reductively* requires us to reject it, while the *best sense* we can make of it as *understood non-reductively*, requires us to see it as a

variety of either singularism or pluralism. As what I have termed joint reductionism looks like the only plausible version of reductionism left on the table it follows that reductionists can only be *charitably* understood as either singularists or pluralists. Gilbert would be wise to position herself explicitly in either camp.<sup>42</sup>

There are at least two reasons why someone might think of Gilbert's theory as non-reductive. First, the right-hand side of (MG) could be thought to provide a constitution- rather than a truth-condition for its left-hand side. Second, the right-hand side(s) of (MG) might be thought to provide a *circular* explanation of its left-hand side. In the first case, the non-reductivist reading concedes that facts regarding the joint activities of individuals help to *make it the case* that a group F-s, but denies that these facts exhaust *what is meant* by an assertion of the group's F-ing. In the second case, the non-reductivist claim is that the fact that true sentences concerning group activity co-vary with the applicability of joint predicates to individuals is not a *reducing* fact; joint predication presupposes a concept of group, and so is not explanatory of it.

With respect to the first reason, Gilbert's own words fail to decide the issue of whether she is supplying a constitution- or a truth- condition. Clearly, she thinks that the fact of some individuals acting, believing or intending *jointly* (as the result of a joint commitment so to do) *licenses* our ability to refer to those individuals with a group term. But what is less than clear is whether we are so licensed because in such circumstances *a new thing* (namely, a *group*) has come into existence, or whether we are so licensed because *all we mean* by our talk of groups is

---

<sup>42</sup> By "singularism" I only mean the thesis that groups are singular entities. Gilbert uses "singularism" differently to identify "the thesis that [collective] concepts are explicable solely in terms of the conceptual scheme of singular agency" where a *singular* agent is a human agent with "goals of his own" i.e. one for whom only individual predicates apply (*ibid.* p. 12). She disavows this view.

that individuals are acting jointly. Gilbert appears to equivocate on this issue. In *On Social Facts* she claims that “for a society to come into being is for there to be a substantial change [that] produces ‘something new’, indeed a ‘new thing.’” But the scare quotes belittle what would otherwise be a strong claim and she continues by saying that this ‘new thing’ consists in human individuals taking on “a special character, a ‘new’ character”.<sup>43</sup> Her most recent book is no more helpful. On the one hand, she writes:

[A] joint commitment binds the participants together.  
It can be argued to create [sic] a “real unity” of sorts...<sup>44</sup>

...the joint commitment involved in a plural subject in my sense serves as a single “command center” that is apt to lead the several participants to constitute - as far as is in their power - a single doubter. That is, it unifies a plurality of persons into a plural subject of doubt.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, we find:

In some places I have written that a joint commitment is the commitment of “two or more individuals considered as a unit or whole”, I do not mean to introduce the idea of a new kind of entity, a “unit” or “whole”. I could as well have written “a joint commitment is the commitment of two or more individuals considered together”, which would not carry any such suggestion. <sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> *ibid* p. 431.

<sup>44</sup> Gilbert (2000) p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* p. 34 n. 23.



Gilbert never makes explicit her view of the metaphysics of unification.<sup>47</sup> We are left in the dark as to whether jointly committed individuals are 'reconstituted' or merely 'redescribable' as a unified 'plural subject'. If the former is her view she is not a reductionist but a singularist. As we should not leave any stone unturned in making the *best sense* we can of joint reductionism, let us suppose that this is *not* the case and consider how a *truth-conditional* reading of (MG) deals with the second issue we raised, that of *circularity*.

The circularity worry – if indeed it is a worry - <sup>48</sup> is that to claim that a group F-s just in case some individuals F *qua* a body (as a result of committing so to do), is to use something very much like the concept of a group on the right-hand side(s) of the biconditional. There are at least three possible responses to this worry:

(1) F-ing jointly or *qua* a body is a *primitively understood* type of human action. There is therefore no circularity involved in explaining group activity in terms of it.

(2) F-ing jointly or *qua* a body occurs only if those involved *commit* to the project of so F-ing and *express* these commitments under conditions of common knowledge. The analysis therefore embeds its use of the concept of a group in contexts which ensure that there is at least no *vicious* circularity involved in its explanation of group activity.

---

<sup>47</sup> Quinton *op. cit.* is similarly evasive of metaphysical commitment. He says that "statements about social objects are statements about individuals, related in certain ways" and that every such object is a "construction", yet also that "the relation of a social object to its human constituents [is] that of a... whole to its parts, both of which are equally real and objective." (p. 5). This creates rather than solves a mystery as he does not explain *how* all these claims can be true, except by drawing an analogy with the wood and the trees (pp. 10-11). But the wood is *not* 'constructed' from the trees!

<sup>48</sup> It has worried some commentators, see in particular Sheehy (2001) pp. 79-83.

(3) F-ing jointly or *qua* a body occurs only if those involved form commitments or intentions, which *make no use* of the concept of a group. Commitments to F jointly or *qua* group are further reducible to commitments with no collective content. There is therefore no circularity involved in explaining group activity in terms of them.

There are traces of (1) to be found in Gilbert. She gives some sign of being dedicated to the view that there is at least *one* variety of joint activity that is primitively understood *viz.* that of joint *commitment*:

The relevant concept of a joint commitment is a holistic one in the following sense: it cannot be analyzed in terms of a sum or aggregate of personal commitments. <sup>49</sup>

This remark is initially puzzling to the close reader of Gilbert, as throughout her works she gives what appear to be analyses of just this:

...each person expresses a *conditional commitment*. In the case of joint readiness, the conditional commitment is to the joint espousal of certain goals, and appropriate action, when the time comes. Each one's understanding is that when the set of open\* <sup>50</sup> conditional commitments is common knowledge, these people will be *jointly committed* to do A together when the time comes, or whatever. <sup>51</sup>

But I think Gilbert is best understood here as giving not an *analysis* of acts of joint commitment, but a description of the means by which they are typically brought into existence, either *causally* or

---

<sup>49</sup> Gilbert (2000) p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> The asterisk indicates Gilbert's technical usage of the word; it means roughly "epistemically available" in a sense defined precisely by her in terms of the inferences drawn by idealized counterfactual counterparts. See Gilbert (1989) pp. 186-197.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.* p. 198.

*constitutively*,<sup>52</sup> by quite separate acts. This is perhaps more clear in Gilbert's more recent work:

The joint commitment of Anne and Ben is created by Anne and Ben together. A *typical way in which this is done* is for Anne to express to Ben both her readiness to be jointly committed with him in some way and for Ben to reciprocate with a similar expression of his own, in conditions of common knowledge... the joint commitment comes into being when and only when it is common knowledge that both expressions have been made. <sup>53</sup> (My emphasis).

So: joint commitments are not to be *analysed* in terms of commitments to commit jointly. On reflection this makes sense as if jointly committing required a joint commitment to jointly commit, we would face a regress problem. As she gives no independent analysis of joint commitment, I infer that Gilbert holds that we have a *primitive understanding* of the concept. It follows that at least *some* joint actions are primitively understood.<sup>54</sup>

Response (2) represents Gilbert's official view. When she considers the threat of circularity in *On Social Facts*,<sup>55</sup> she concludes that it is averted as the concept of a 'body' or a 'unity' appears in the *final* analysis on the right-hand side as an object not of *knowledge* but of *will*. I take it that she means that the ability of individuals to act *qua* a body is itself accounted for in terms of the circumstances of their *commitment* to do so, and that we can understand this commitment independently of our understanding of the concept of a body or group.

---

<sup>52</sup> I take no stand on the interpretative issue of which of these is intended.

<sup>53</sup> Gilbert (2000) p. 53.

<sup>54</sup> It follows too that for the case of a group's committing or some individuals committing jointly, the *second* analysis of (MG) does not apply.

<sup>55</sup> Gilbert (1989) pp. 222-3.

Perhaps there are two thoughts to be extracted from Gilbert's discussion. The first concerns *non-extensionality*. The context created by the factive "know that..." is *arguably* extensional. But Gilbert's analysis of group activity uses the concept of a group *only* in *non-extensional* contexts created by "commitment to" and "*qua*". Understanding the right-hand side(s) of (MG) might then require a prior *grasp* of a group concept but the circularity would not be vicious as it would not require a prior *extension-determining method* for the application of it, as it would if it were used extensionally.<sup>56</sup> The second thought concerns *temporal priority*. To *know p*, *p* must already exist, which would be problematically circular were the knowledge used to explain the existence. But *this* problem does not arise in the case of a *commitment* or *act of will*.

So: if we look again at (MG):

(MG) A group F-s iff

some individuals F jointly or *qua* a body iff

they successfully act on the basis of a joint commitment to F jointly.

Response (1) allows us to evade the circularity charge by simply insisting that F-ing jointly or *qua* a body is *primitively understood*, while response (2) takes F-ing jointly or *qua* a body to be itself explained by the latter part of the analysis and insists that *committing* to F jointly or *qua* a body embeds the relevant group concepts in contexts that render any

---

<sup>56</sup> Compare dispositionalist analyses of "being red" in terms of "being such as to standardly cause *experiences* of redness". "Experiences of..." creates a non-extensional context, which might be thought to render any circularity innocuous. See Wright (1992) pp. 132-135.

circularity innocuous. But the point I wish to stress is that response (2) explains away the circularity involved in that variety of action we call *committing* at the price of an objectionable regress. Commitments to act jointly or *qua* body must *themselves* be enacted jointly or *qua* body for the truth-condition (if that is what it is) given by (MG) to be met. But this would in turn require them to be enacted on the basis of yet more joint commitments. I suspect that Gilbert is fearful of such a regress, and that this explains why traces of response (1) can be found in her writings despite response (2)'s representing her official view. Her thought is: at least *one* variety of acting *qua* group must be primitively understood.

The foregoing explains a view expressed by Gilbert in a recent paper. She claims that her account of sociality is holistic in both an *internal* and an *external* sense:

We might now distinguish between "internal" holism and "external" holism as follows. One is an internal holist about shared intention (for instance) if, roughly, according to one's account of shared intention the *participants* in such an intention irreducibly ascribe an action (in the broad sense indicated) to something they together constitute. One is an external holist if one's account of shared intention itself irreducibly ascribes an action (in the broad sense indicated) to the participants in a shared intention.<sup>57</sup>

She doesn't expand on this point, but I suggest that we should conclude that her use of response (2) requires that the participants in a shared intention (or any other endeavour) irreducibly ascribe an action (in the

---

<sup>57</sup> Gilbert (2000) p. 157 She is here contrasting her position with that of Searle (1990) (1995 pp. 23-26) (1999 pp. 118-121) who she thinks is a mere internal holist. Searle's 'collective intentions' are the intentions of individuals with irreducibly (and quite possibly false) collective content (eg. "we intend to make a sauce") see my pp. 62-64.

broadest sense) to something they collectively constitute by their committing *to act qua a body*, (so her account is *internally holist*) while the element of response (1) I have detected in Gilbert requires that the account *itself* irreducibly ascribes this very act of *commitment* to the group of participants. I fail to see what justifies Gilbert's claiming the title of the *external* holist unless I am right about her holding that acts of joint commitment are *primitively understood*.

Response (3) is not Gilbert's response, but it is conceivable that a defender of (MG) might respond to the circularity charge in this way. If an account of F-ing jointly *could* be provided which made *no* use of the concept of a group then the circularity charge would certainly be averted. Moreover, there would then be every reason to think that (MG) formed the basis of a *bona fide* reductive account of group activity. Group actions would reduce to joint actions, which would reduce to actions successfully performed on the basis of joint commitments, which would reduce to actions successfully performed on the basis of commitments with no collective content. My strategy here is to show that where (MG) is understood reductively it is to be rejected, so I must explain why response (3) fails.

It does so because every supposedly reductive analysis of F-ing jointly must fail on its own terms, either of sufficiency or of necessity. Any analysis of F-ing jointly must make some provision for the *mutual responsiveness* amongst participants that is a crucial aspect of both the practice and the phenomenology of joint action. But any non-circular account sufficient to meet this demand will (I argue) fail to provide a necessary condition for group action, as it will demand that a complex co-ordinated web of highly specific conjunctions of disjunctive

conditional commitments are made by the participants, and this is too strong a demand.

I will not provide an analysis of the *mutual responsiveness* of joint activity but I take it that the following features are associated with it: <sup>58</sup>

- The participants are able to influence each other's role in the action during its prosecution (in response to changing circumstances)<sup>59</sup> without the action losing its essential character.
- The participants are able to amend or even abandon their own role in the action during its prosecution (in response to changing circumstances) without the action losing its essential character.
- The participants are able to amend or even abandon the goal of the action during its prosecution (in response to changing circumstances).
- At least *one* participant helps to prosecute the action partly *because of* another participant's desire that it be prosecuted.

Suppose you and I are cooking a meal together. It follows from this being a *joint* activity that I can ask and expect you to skim the fat off the sauce (even if this was not originally a task we had assigned to you) because I have to answer the phone, and that I can abandon my assigned task of chopping vegetables because I have cut my finger, without the action changing its essential character. It follows too that when I answer the phone and find that our guests have cancelled, we can abandon our goal of throwing a dinner party and simply eat all the food ourselves. It follows finally that we do not merely carry out our parts of the action in the *expectation* that the other will respond appropriately; at

---

<sup>58</sup> My remarks here are influenced by Bratman's (1999 chs. 5-8) and Gilbert's (1996a), (1989 ch. IV sec. 2) discussions of the psychology of shared intention and co-operative activity.

<sup>59</sup> These may include facts about participants as well as facts about the world.

least *one* of us (I am allowing here for bullying and begrudging participants), plays his part *because of* the other's desire that the meal be cooked together.

These are not characteristics unique to cooking. They are, I assert, associated with all joint activities. As an example of a proposed analysis of joint activity which is insufficient because it fails to provide for mutual responsiveness we can look at that of Raimo Tuomela.<sup>60</sup> He analyses all intentional actions in terms of a (causally) ordered triple  $\langle t, \dots, b, \dots, r \rangle$  where  $t$  is a willing,  $b$  is a bodily event and  $r$  is a result and where possibly  $r=b$ <sup>61</sup> He further claims that a group acts by virtue of either a conjunction or a disjunction of its members jointly performing an action (depending on the nature of the group action<sup>62</sup>) and that agents  $A_1, \dots, A_m$  jointly performed an intentional social action  $u$  iff:

- (1) the results  $r_i$ ,  $i=1, \dots, m$ , of the agents' component action tokens  $u_i$  together purposively generated  $r$ ;
- (2) there were conduct plans, say  $K_1, \dots, K_m$ , of  $A_1, \dots, A_m$ , respectively, which involved an end action the agents effectively we-intended to realize then by their bodily behaviors (of the types they took the  $b_i$ s to exemplify) such that they believed their respective behaviors will (tend to) bring it about or at least be conducive to it;
- (3) the agents' effective we-intendings (as we-willings) and the beliefs referred to in clause (2) together purposively generated their behaviors in the  $u_i$ s, and intermediately, the results  $r_i$ ; and
- (4) each agent  $A_i$  performed his subaction  $u_i$  intentionally.

63

---

<sup>60</sup> See especially Tuomela (1984), Tuomela and Miller (1988); also Tuomela (1989a), (1989b), (1991), (1992).

<sup>61</sup> Tuomela (1984) p. 84.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* p. 143.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* p. 91.



We needn't be troubled here by what is meant by "conduct plan" and "purposive generation"; the notions are as general as they sound.<sup>64</sup> The important point to notice is that (what Tuomela calls full-blown or paradigmatic) intentional joint action is analysed in terms of each of the component agents having a "we-intention" to achieve a shared end. For Tuomela, a "we-intention" is a particular kind of intention an individual may have, and it in turn is analysed (in one of the more recent of his many formulations) as follows:

A member  $A_i$  of a collective  $G$  *we-intends* to do  $X$  if and only if

- (1)  $A_i$  intends to do his part of  $X$  (as his part of  $X$ )
- (2)  $A_i$  has a belief to the effect that the joint action opportunities for an intentional performance of  $X$  will obtain), especially that a right number of the full-fledged and adequately informed members of  $G$ , as required for the performance of  $X$ , will (or at least probably will) do their parts of  $X$ , which will under normal conditions result in an intentional joint performance of  $X$  by the participants;
- (3)  $A_i$  believes that there is (or will be) a mutual belief among the participating members of  $G$  (or at least that among those participants who do their parts of  $X$  intentionally as their parts of  $X$  there is a mutual belief) to the effect that the joint action opportunities for an intentional performance of  $X$  will obtain (or at least probably will obtain).<sup>65</sup>

Notice that intentional joint activity is analysed (partly) in terms of "we-intentions", and "we-intentions" are characterised (partly) in terms of beliefs about intentional joint activity. So, strictly speaking, this analysis

---

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* p. 85, p. 87.

<sup>65</sup> Tuomela (1992).

does not count as one that would be appropriate to the variety of response (3) we are considering as it uses (albeit in a non-extensionally embedded context) the concept of F-ing jointly or *qua* a body. I suspect, however, that the word “joint” is eliminable from clauses (2) and (3) above without altering the sense of the analysis. The key notion is of a variety of agents each doing their *part* of a *single* action, not of agents acting *in a particular way* (though there is scope for questioning what Tuomela means by “as his part of X!”). But I want to set the question of the eliminability of group concepts aside for the time being to note merely that Tuomela’s account fails to provide for *mutual responsiveness*.

A plurality of agents each of whom satisfies Tuomela’s conditions will possess *well-co-ordinated* intentions and beliefs that will enable them to fulfill certain goals, perhaps goals that could *only* be fulfilled by each of the agents’ possession of those intentions and beliefs. But, first, the beliefs and intentions could be quite *accidentally* co-ordinated. Searle gives a good example. Suppose each of a collection of “invisible-hand” theorists “we-intend” (where this includes having all the relevant beliefs etc.) to do their part towards helping humanity by pursuing their own selfish interest at all times. There is nothing *joint* about either the theorists’ actions or the result achieved; any co-ordination is not achieved *by them*.<sup>66</sup> Second, the co-ordinated beliefs and intentions might be highly lacking in *resilience*. Tuomela makes no provision for the amending or abandoning of beliefs and intentions in response to the changing beliefs and intentions of others. In short, Tuomela’s so-called jointly acting agents are insufficiently *sensitive* to each other. They lack *mutual responsiveness*.

---

<sup>66</sup> Searle (1990 pp. 404-406).

How might the reductive analysis of F-ing jointly our response (3) requires 'build in' such responsiveness? *Ex hypothesi* it cannot make use of any concept of acting jointly or *qua* a group, even if it were non-extensionally embedded. What appears to be required are psychological states or acts, predicable of individuals, but sufficiently rich in content to provide for the contingencies that *mutual responsiveness* takes care of. Participating in a joint action brings with it the flexibility to change or amend one's *attitudes* to the action in accordance with how one's colleagues' attitudes and actions change. So the psychological states or acts a reduction of group F-ing must cite as the basis for successful actions will include *conditional* states. For example something fitting the schema:

*a* commits to G-ing on the condition that *b* commits to H-ing &  
*b* commits to H-ing on the condition that *a* commits to G-ing,

where it provides the basis for a successful action, might be thought to be necessary and sufficient for *a* and *b*'s F-ing *jointly*. However, as should be evident from the cooking example, what *in particular* any two participating cooks are conditionally committed to is subject to amendment in the light of changing circumstances. To be plausible, the reductivist schema above would need to be amended to something like:

*a* commits to G-ing on the condition that *b* commits to H-ing or I-ing  
or...etc.

*and*

*a* commits to H-ing on the condition that *b* commits to G-ing or J-ing  
or... etc.

*etc.*

*and*

*b* commits to H-ing on the condition that *a* commits to G-ing or J-ing  
or... etc.

*and*

*b* commits to G-ing on the condition that *a* commits to H-ing or I-ing  
or...etc.

*etc.*

In other words, the reductionist would need to cite conjunctions of commitments conditional on disjunctions of states of affairs concerning other commitments to have any hope of providing for the *mutual responsiveness* of joint activity. But it is at this point that the objection becomes clear. These complex and co-ordinated conjunctive conditional commitments (themselves disjunctively conditional) have no echo in the phenomenology or practice of joint activity. There is no support, either first- or third- personal in origin, for the idea that these kind of psychological acts are performed when agents engage in joint activity. The truth of this can be seen with especial vividness when one reflects on the fact that infants aged upwards of nine to twelve months engage in joint activities.<sup>67</sup> If having the concepts requisite for performing the

---

<sup>67</sup> See Bakeman and Adamson (1984), referred to in Tomasello (1995) for an empirical account of "coordinated joint attention" i.e. "relatively lengthy interactions in which the child actively coordinates her attention to adult and object, almost always involving a spontaneous, unprecipitated look to the adult during their joint play" (*ibid.* p. 108). See also Tomasello (1999 ch. 3).

conditional psychological acts outlined above were necessary for joint activity, this could surely not be so.

It might be thought that the psychological complexity spelled out above could be avoided by the use of *self-referential* intentions or commitments such as:

I will commit to X if you do the same.

Velleman<sup>68</sup>, for example, thinks that a *verbal* or *written* representation with the self-referential content “I hereby frame an effective intention that is conditional on your framing a (like) effective intention as well” (more simply: ‘I will if you will’) counts as an *act* of intention requiring that where two such conditional commitments of like content are openly expressed a joint commitment or plan (content: ‘we have thereby willed it’) sufficient to motivate and bind the relevant people, on account of the (contingent but actual) human desire to have not spoken falsely, is constituted.<sup>69</sup>

But the suggestion merely obscures the difficulties already considered. Either X is elliptical for ‘X-ing together’ or ‘X-ing jointly’ in which case our reductionist is helping himself to a concept he is not entitled to, or the account does not provide for *mutual responsiveness*. Even in those cases where what the participants end up *doing* can be described using the same words (eg. walking along the beach) what they are *committed to* cannot be so described without the use of a term such

---

<sup>68</sup> Velleman (1997).

<sup>69</sup> Velleman himself is not committed to the view that *all* group activity can be reduced via his account. But he *does* think that all shared intentions or commitments are (ultimately) explained by the conjoining of acts of self-fulfilling, self-describing representation. If there are not enough verbal or written acts to do this job, then, he says, we have no option other than to admit of joint mental representative acts, and that (he accepts), is to posit the existence of group minds.

as “*jointly*”. A commitment to walk on the beach *jointly* provides for all sorts of contingencies (e.g. to make alternative plans if our feet get wet) that would otherwise require specification. <sup>70</sup>

So: at least one (and perhaps the only) way of using Gilbert’s work as a basis for reductionism, that contained in what I have termed response (3) to the circularity charge, should be rejected. The defender of the *desperate* response needs to claim (a) that sentences using apparently referential group terms are *necessarily equivalent* to sentences that are not committed to the existence of groups. Response (3) cannot support this claim, since it holds that the commitment to groups implicit in the right-hand side(s) of (MG) is eliminated by further reducing the idea of F-ing jointly or *qua* body to that of acting successfully upon beliefs and commitments with no collective content. Since, as I have argued, this further reduction cannot work, the necessary equivalences required by (a) cannot be delivered by response (3).

It remains for us to examine the implications of responses (1) and (2). Response (2) deals with circularity anxieties by claiming that group actions occur only if it becomes commonly known among the participants that they have expressed a commitment to act *qua* group, where the non-extensional embedding of this use of ‘group’ renders any circularity innocuous. More generally, it requires that the participants

---

<sup>70</sup> Velleman claims at the beginning of his paper to be vexed by the question of how Gilbert’s conditional commitments might combine to create an unconditional joint commitment, but what I take to be his reductionist assumptions prevent him from speaking to his own concern. Gilbert’s conditional commitments may be predicable of *individuals* but have irreducibly *collective* content (i.e. they are commitments to F *jointly*). Velleman’s conditional commitments replace this *collective* with *self-referential* content, making them even weaker candidates than Gilbert’s for the purpose of generating *joint commitment*.

must have *psychological states with collective content* in order to qualify for group status. Thus Gilbert writes:

...individual human beings must see themselves in a particular way in order to constitute a collectivity. In other words intentions (broadly construed) are logically prior to collectivities.<sup>71</sup>

It seems that in order to proceed with proper confidence to do things together, people must already justifiably see themselves as 'us' or 'we'.<sup>72</sup>

In order to F *qua* group individuals must bear some relation of commitment to the content "we will F *qua* group". Now there is a very simple argument for thinking that this is not a species of reductionism. For the schematic content above to be meaningful the expression "we" must have sense. But it is a *referring* expression, which *must* refer if it is to have sense. So: any analysis of group activity in terms of thoughts the contents of which are specified with the use of the term "we" fails to be reductionist. <sup>73</sup>

To show that the concept of "we" is ineliminable from a commitment to act *qua* group we need only reflect upon the fact that no *individual* can so act.<sup>74</sup> But the reader may be uncomfortable with the

---

<sup>71</sup> Gilbert (1989) p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* p. 169.

<sup>73</sup> The origins of this line of argument can be found in Mandelbaum (1955/1971) p. 225: "...in attempting to analyse societal facts by means of appealing to the thoughts which guide an individual's conduct, some of the thoughts will themselves have societal referents, and societal concepts will therefore not have been expunged from our analysis." Ruben (1985) pp. 30-38 offers a related argument from the *singularity* of beliefs regarding (in his example) France. I find '*singular* belief' an unhelpful expression in this context, as it introduces issues concerning the *manner of reference* (i.e. singular or plural), whereas the key idea is simply that the belief's content is expressed by means of a *referring* expression. This kind of argument aims to defeat reductionism, not pluralism. See p. 15 n. 6, p. 30, n. 13.

<sup>74</sup> I ignore here the possibility of *degenerate* groups consisting of a single member.

idea that an individual can bear a relation of *commitment* to a content with *collective* content, and in particular to one with a *collective* subject. Surely, the discomfoting thought runs, commitment to an action requires a commitment to being the subject of that action. Searle's (minimal) account of what he calls "collective intention" is puzzling according to this line of thinking.<sup>75</sup> Searle holds that "we intend to F" has irreducible collective content, yet that it can be truly attributed to an individual and that the intentions of individuals give rise to joint intentions *just in case* these intentions are all of the form "we intend to F". The puzzle finds lucid expression in Velleman's thought that an individual freely co-operating with others could have no *discretion* over what *they* collectively do, and so could not *settle* a deliberative issue by forming an intention with a collective subject.<sup>76</sup>

The comeback to this line of thinking involves separating out those features which are essential to the idea of *a commitment to an action* from those which attach to the use of the infinitive in the expression "*a commitment to F*". A commitment to an action requiring the co-operation of other agents does *not* pre-suppose a commitment to being its sole subject. It *may* require no more than a commitment to playing one's part in making true the content "we will F (*qua* group)". But a commitment to F (where F is an action-predicate) *does* require a commitment to being the subject of the F-ing. This is a simple fact about English grammar, not a deep fact about commitment. In committing to an action of which I am not the sole subject, I intend *that* it be prosecuted by some individuals of which I am one. I do not intend *to* prosecute it myself. But this grammatical truth does not prevent me from having complete *discretion*

---

<sup>75</sup> Searle (1990), (1995) pp. 23-26, (1999) pp. 118-121.

<sup>76</sup> Velleman *op. cit.*



over my *part* in the action nor my commitment to it from *settling* a deliberative issue for me (if not for others).<sup>77 78</sup>

So: the “we-thoughts” necessary for joint activity *must* refer. Gilbert, read as embracing response (2) to the circularity worry, offers necessary equivalences between group claims and joint activity claims, which are not *reductive*. Both sides of the biconditional are *equally* ontologically committed. And notice that this leaves open the issue between singularism and pluralism. That “we-thoughts” refer does not entail that they refer to *singular* entities. Gilbert is entitled to claim that they refer *plurally*. The key point is that, on this reading, reductionism is not an option.

Finally, let us consider whether Gilbert should be read as a reductionist where response (1) is attributed to her. According to (1), a group F-s if and only if some individuals F jointly if and only if they successfully act on the basis of a joint commitment to act jointly, where joint F-ing (or F-ing *qua* group) is held to be a *way* of F-ing that is primitively understood. So: the thought is that we can understand what it *means* to F jointly or *qua* group independently of any understanding we might have of the concept of a group. Of course, that is *not* to say that we can understand it independently of our possession of any substituted concept of ‘F-ing’. What is primitively understood is the *adverbial modifier*, not every concatenation of it and a verb. In every case, the

---

<sup>77</sup> Here I borrow Bratman’s (*op. cit.* ch. 5 pp. 95-8, ch. 8) use of “intending that”. He in turn notes his debt to Vermazen (1993).

<sup>78</sup> Searle’s view contains a key ambiguity. His claim is that a collective intention is an (individual) mental state with the schematic content “We intend to p”, but he does not make clear whether the agent’s attitude to this content is one of *belief* or *intention*. If *belief*, the view is reassuringly individualistic, but subject to the same counter-example that Searle himself presses against Tuomela (see my p. 57). If *intention*, the view faces the grammatical problem of it not being correct to say of an individual (including oneself) that he *intends to* perform an action of which he is not the subject. Searle could overcome this difficulty by means of the locution “intending that...”, but until he does so his view is attractive only insofar as he can smooth over this ambiguity.

thought runs, adding “jointly” to a predicated action-verb renders more determinate our understanding of what has been said. So: the claim that some individuals F-ed jointly will entail the claim that they F-ed. We might say that the *possibility* of F-ing jointly (for any F) is *contained* in the meaning of “F-ing”.

So: response (3) commits the defender of (MG) to the thought that there is a primitively understood *way* of acting which the object-language modifier “jointly” (or “together”) draws explicit attention to. Now, recall the position of the pluralist. He holds that there is a primitively understood *way* of predicating founded on the fact that predicates may differ in *number* without changing their meaning, and that the meta-linguistic modifier “plurally” draws explicit attention to this. Through its use we can render more determinate our understanding of what has been said. The similarity between the two accounts should give us pause. Now I am *not* saying that to plurally predicate is to append the adverbial modifier “jointly”. That claim is false. For one thing, non-action predicates can be plurally predicated (we can say of the Cabinet that they are twenty-seven in number). For another, even when action-verbs are plurally predicated, they can be so in *distributive* usages (as, arguably, in the case of the acts of admiration plurally predicated of the critics), whereas “jointly”, as we have seen, forces a *collective* reading. What I *do* claim is that the appending of the modifier “jointly” *does* amount to a *variety* of plural predication, insofar as it is held that the appended adverb is *primitively understood*.

If “jointly” is primitively understood then an analysis of a group *g*'s F-ing in terms of some individuals F-ing jointly is not even *viciously* circular. There is no bar to identifying the activities of groups with the joint activities of individuals. But it would be wrong to think of this as a

*reductive* identification. It is true that, as (on this view) there are many ephemeral groups, we do not need to *specify* the individuals who acted jointly in order to *understand the claim* that some (specific) group *g* F-ed. But we do need some means of *picking them out*. The only way to achieve this end requires conceding that the term *g* either *refers* to or (maximally) *quantifies* over them.<sup>79</sup> Without a relation of reference or maximal quantification between the spoken sentence and the individuals a joint action could not be predicated *of them*. (The general fact that *some* individuals F-ed jointly would provide a truth-condition for “*some group* F-ed”, but not for “*group g* F-ed”). It follows that this view is committed to group terms having the capacity to (plurally) refer or quantify. So it is a type of pluralism, not reductionism.

## Conclusion

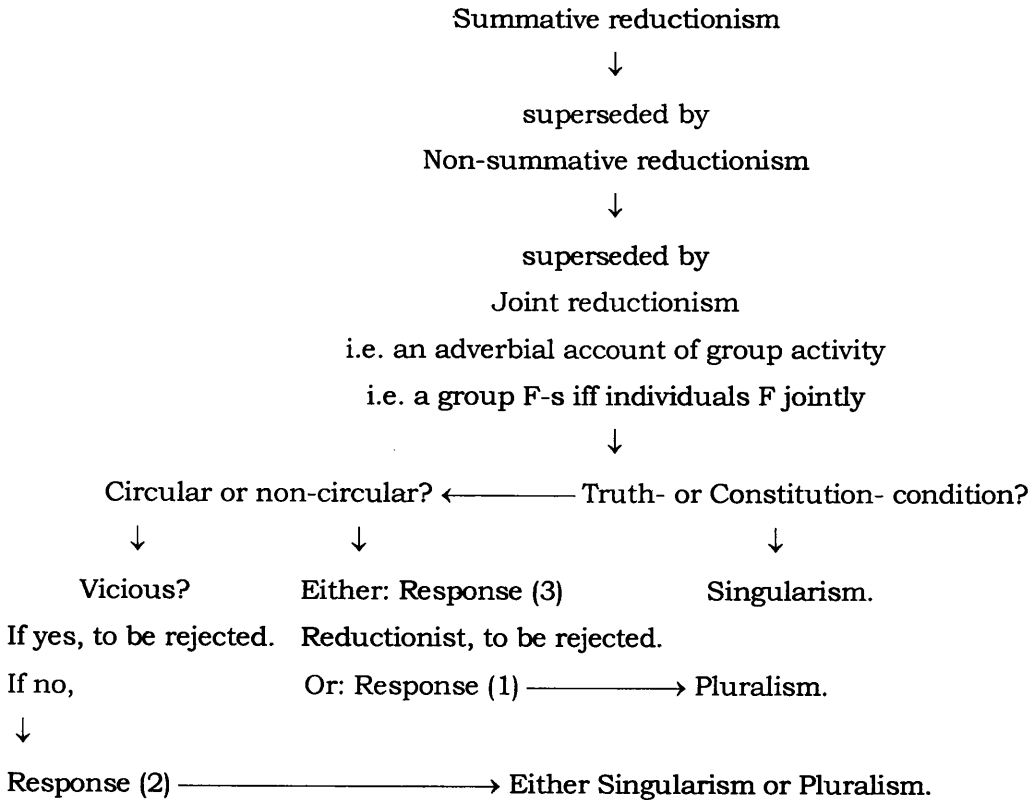
The *desperate* response has two components: (a) the claim that sentences using apparently referential group terms are *necessarily equivalent* to sentences which are not committed to the existence of groups; and (b) the claim that Ockham’s razor requires us to construe the less ontologically committed of two necessarily equivalent sentences as providing the truth-condition for the other. I began this Chapter by giving *general* reasons for doubting (b) and *particular* reasons for doubting its applicability to sentences about groups. I then considered whether Gilbert’s view offered the promise of a naïve reductive account, which could evade these difficulties. But we saw that if Gilbert is read as holding that claims about *joint* activities are reducible to claims about individual actions and attitudes with individual contents then her account cannot deliver (a) for it will fail to provide necessary equivalences. And we saw that, on any alternative reading, Gilbert

---

<sup>79</sup> Remember, for a Russellian, plural descriptive uses are (contextually restricted) *maximality* claims.

provides equivalences between *equally* ontologically committed sentences, and so again cannot deliver (a). Furthermore, we saw that joint reductionism is unstable. Any charitable interpretation of it puts emphasis on the *primitiveness* of acting jointly and so collapses into pluralism, *or* on the *unifying* power of acting jointly and so collapses into singularism, *or* it requires that group terms *refer*, and so collapses into either pluralism or singularism. I have called pluralism a *reasonable* response to the simple argument, and singularism the *resigned* response. As there is no available third way between them, no primrose path to reductionism, we must consider their relative merits. This will be the task of Chapter Four.

## APPENDIX: THE REDUCTIONIST DIALECTIC



## 4. THE RESIGNED AND THE REASONABLE RESPONSES

To restate the problem: No one can reasonably deny that sentences (A) to (G) are often true. But there is a *simple argument* from this fact, together with the claim that there are groups (O<sub>1</sub>), to the conclusion that there are *group minds*. The defender of the orthodox view wishes to assert the negation of this conclusion (O<sub>2</sub>). He can deny (O<sub>1</sub>), but this response is *desperate* as it cannot give adequate truth-conditions for sentences such as (A) to (G).

This Chapter explores the *resigned* and the *reasonable* responses to the argument and raises problems for them both.

### The resigned response

The *resigned* response to the argument accepts it and renounces (O<sub>2</sub>). It therefore incurs a weighty metaphysical commitment. Let me briefly spell out the extent of this commitment. Sentences (A) to (G) are not exceptional. We frequently make action and psychological predications of a bewildering variety of social groups, including *unstructured* and *ad hoc* groups.

By an *unstructured* group I simply mean one that lacks both natural and artificial *form* with respect to its physical and psychological properties. An example would be a mob. A mob consists of human individuals who share some locational properties, perhaps they also share some psychological properties, such as a desire to storm the Bastille. But a mob has no more physical structure than a ball of dust, and lacks the organisational structure of a government or corporation.

Nevertheless, it can be true of a mob that it wants to surge forwards, or that it supports Chelsea.

By an *ad hoc* group I simply mean one which exists in order to achieve, and was in most cases assembled for, a single purpose. An example would be a harvest festival committee, convened in order to decide upon which Sunday to hold the festival. *Ad hoc* groups can fulfill *ongoing* purposes too, as in the case of a pub quiz team. In both cases action and psychological predicates apply. The committee decides upon a date, the team knows which city is the capital of Hawaii.

The simple argument can be run for both of these kinds of groups, even though *strikingly few* psychological predicates apply to them. But the claim that every mob, pub quiz team and committee possesses or constitutes a mind is highly metaphysically committed and surely implausible.

By claiming this we need not deny that there might be independent reasons for using the predicate “is minded” more *liberally* than we tend to do. Our explanatory practices with respect to machines and animals might require that *chauvinist* assumptions concerning the extension of the predicate be revised.<sup>1</sup> But a *liberal* policy of counting minds will be motivated by the complexity of the *structure* possessed by certain non-human systems and by the *purposes* they manifest. The extending of mindedness to *unstructured* and *ad hoc* entities lacks any independent rational foundation.

And notice that if *mental holism* is true then despite appearances *very many rationally related* psychological predicates are true of the

---

<sup>1</sup> This use of “liberal” and “chauvinist” derives from Block (1980).

groups mentioned above. The defender of the *resigned* response must either embrace this consequence, or claim that mental holism is false. Either way he takes on a weighty commitment.

I conclude that the commitments incurred by the *resigned* response are too weighty to be tolerable and that the defender of the orthodox view should not adopt this response.

### The reasonable response

The reasonable response denies the second premise of the simple argument by appealing to the pluralist claim that the group terms used in (A) to (G) do not refer to *singular* entities. The fifth premise of the argument claims that an action or psychological property is true of an *entity* only if it is minded. As, on this view, the groups referred to in (A) to (G) are not entities the conclusion of the argument is blocked.

It is worth noting that the defender of the reasonable response need not deny that psychological predicates are true of groups, even of *unstructured* and *ad hoc* groups. And he has no reason not to endorse a reformulated version of the argument's fifth premise:

(5') An action or psychological property is true of *some* entities only if those entities are minded.

But all that follows from this is that *some* entities are minded.

The *reasonable* response would face difficulties if the following were true:

(5") An action or psychological property is true of *some* entities only if those entities constitute a minded entity.

But there is no good reason to think that (5") is true.

It should be conceded that an adequate account of how joint thinking and activity are possible must do more than merely appeal to plural predication. We should remember that joint predication is a special case of plural predication. Suppose we read, "Some critics only admire each other" as predicating admiration *plurally yet distributively* of some critics. This generates no particular puzzle, requiring merely that there are *some acts* of admiration. But a sentence such as "The committee decided to sack Jones" predicates deciding *plurally yet collectively* of some individuals. This *does* raise a puzzle, as it appears to require that a *single* act of deciding has *multiple* subjects. Peter van Inwagen<sup>2</sup> thinks the joint predication of psychological properties is incoherent:

...things cannot work together to think – or, at least, things can work together to think only in the sense that they can compose, in the strict and mereological understanding of the word, an object that thinks...  
planning for tomorrow or feeling pain cannot be activities that a lot of simples can perform collectively, as simples can collectively shine or collectively support a weight...

I do not agree, but I concede that we await an account of the metaphysics of multiple agency. Nevertheless there is no reason to think that the only explanation of how individuals come together to act, decide,

---

<sup>2</sup> van Inwagen (1990) pp. 118-9.



intend and know is that they constitute a minded entity. So there is no reason to endorse (5”).

The defender of the reasonable response must claim, on pain of succumbing to the simple argument, that action and psychological properties are *always* plurally predicated of groups i.e. of human individuals. But he has a choice between two strategies. He can adopt a *uniform* strategy, by claiming that *all* properties are predicated plurally of groups. Or he can adopt a *disjunctive* strategy, and claim that while action and psychological properties are predicated *plurally* of groups other properties may be predicated singularly of them. Let us consider each of these strategies.

### The uniform strategy

The uniform strategy claims that all properties are predicated *plurally* of groups i.e. of their members. In what follows I will assume that members are mereological parts of groups. I will not argue for this claim, because it strikes me as being overwhelmingly plausible, though it is not uncontentious.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of the assumption, we can point to an instructive analogy between groups on the one hand and animals and artefacts on the other. A group is composed of humans who may cease to be members of the group, and who may be, and often are, replaced. Analogously, the matter that makes up an animal or an artefact is composed of parts which may cease to be parts of the animal or artefact, and which may be, and often are, replaced. Given the analogy, we can imagine a position that claimed, analogously to the uniform strategy,

---

<sup>3</sup> Ruben (1985) ch. 2 argues against it.

that all properties are predicated *plurally* of animals and artefacts, that is, of the parts that compose them.

Let us call this position *atomist*. In what follows I will argue that the atomist cannot provide adequate truth-conditions for sentences which are often true. The question of whether there are *analogous* sentences which the uniform strategy cannot accommodate will be considered in Chapter Five.

Consider the following sentences:

(P) This chair used to have four legs but now it has three.

(Q) John has nine toes but he might have had ten.

Take (P) first. Suppose it is true. (P) gives the impression of saying of *this very chair* that it used to have four legs but now has three. But if “this chair” refers to the plurality of parts, which compose the chair, then given their three-leggedness, the sentence must be false. It is not true of these parts that they used to be four-legged but now are three-legged.

I do not say this because the parts are *individually* neither four-legged nor three-legged. Suppose the parts are quarks. It is true that quarks are individually neither four- nor three-legged. But this is no argument against a pluralist construal of (P) which holds that the sentence is true if and only if the quarks *were plurally* four-legged and *are now plurally* three-legged. The reason the pluralist truth-condition is false is that *these quarks* have not (plurally) lost a leg. The chair that had a fourth leg to lose was not *these quarks* but a larger, presumably overlapping yet *distinct* plurality of quarks.

The pluralist reading of (Q) faces similar problems. (Q) appears to say of *that very man* John that he might have had ten toes. But *the very plurality* of parts, which constitute John, might not have (plurally) had ten toes. *That* plurality would not be the plurality it is if it constituted a fully footed John but rather a larger, presumably overlapping yet *distinct* plurality. So as with (P), if (Q) is true its pluralist truth-condition is false.

(P) and (Q) ascribe *temporal* and *modal* properties to animals and artefacts. What the properties have in common is that they can only be held by things, which *survive* the actual or counterfactual loss or replacement of their parts. The atomist cannot provide adequate truth-conditions for (P) and (Q). So we should draw a *provisional moral*: atomism cannot accommodate the fact that animals and artefacts remain self-identical despite being constituted out of parts which may be lost or replaced. It cannot do this because, just as sets essentially contain their members, pluralities *essentially* contain their constituents.

Before we consider whether the uniform strategy for group terms faces an analogous problem, we must consider two replies to the argument given above. Both replies, I will argue, lack independent motivation; that is, they are both unacceptably *ad hoc*.

The *double denotation* reply reads the “it” and “he” in (P) and (Q) as picking out a plurality *distinct* from the one picked out by “this chair” (P) and by “John” (Q). Perhaps the best case to be made for this reply appeals to a neo-Russellian account of how “this chair” and “John” pick out pluralities. According to such an account, “this chair” in (P) quantifies over a plurality of parts maximally satisfying a predicate such as “were a chair at some time *t*”, while the “it” in the same sentence quantifies over a *distinct* plurality of parts maximally satisfying the

predicate “are this chair now”. (P) says of the first plurality of parts that they were four-legged and of the second that they are three-legged. In a similar fashion, (Q) can be read as saying of a *counterfactual* plurality that *he* has ten toes and of a *distinct actual* plurality that *he* does not.

That in itself will not do. (P) and (Q) make claims not about any old pluralities but about *this* chair and *this* John. But the *double denotation* reply can be expanded to take account of this intuition. It can be required that the predicate maximally satisfied by the plurality which was the *past* chair is of the following form: “constitutes a chair at some time *t* bearing relation *R* to *this* chair” where relation *R* is specified in terms of qualitative, spatio-temporal and causal continuity. And it can be required that the predicate maximally satisfied by the plurality which is the *counterfactual* John is of the following form: “constitutes a John at some world *w* bearing relation *R'* to *this* John” where relation *R'* is specified in terms of qualitative similarity.

The reply remains unsatisfactory because it reads each of (P) and (Q) as predicating properties of *distinct* pluralities. This is an *ad hoc* reading as the sentences appear to say something of a *single* subject, not of *two* subjects. There is no reason to read either “it” or “he” as implicitly introducing *second* pluralities. Of course, it is possible to reformulate the atomist truth-conditions for (P) and (Q) thus:

(P') *This chair* is *R*-related to a past plurality of parts which were plurally four-legged, and *it* is (plurally) three-legged.

(Q') *John* is *R'*-related to a counterfactual plurality of parts which is plurally ten-toed, and *he* (plurally) is nine-toed.

But each of (P') and (Q') avoids predicating properties of two *distinct* subjects only by predicating a *relational* property of a single subject. The naïve objection that we are speaking only of a single *chair* or *John* remains. The defender of the *double denotation* reply unacceptably mangles our pre-philosophical understanding of sentences (P) and (Q).

The second reply to the argument against atomism I call the *history* reply. It claims that a term such as “this chair” refers plurally *and diachronically* to a chair-history. We might define the *history* of a thing *T* as *either* (a) the plurality of parts which have ever or will ever constitute *T* or (b) the conjunction of a maximal class of facts of the form: some parts are arranged *T-wise* at time *t*, where some relation *R*’ of qualitative, spatio-temporal and causal continuity between *facts* links the conjuncts.<sup>4</sup>

The *history* reply must be supplemented if it is to deal with sentences ascribing modal properties to animals and artefacts. It would have to be claimed that a term like “John” refers to *every possible* John-history. *Every possible history* of a thing *T* might be defined as either (a) a trans-temporal, trans-worldly plurality of parts which have ever, will ever or might ever constitute *T*, or (b) the conjunction of a maximal class of facts each of the form: some things are arranged *T-wise* at *t* and at *w*, where these conjuncts are linked by relations of qualitative, spatio-temporal and causal continuity *at a world* and by qualitative continuity *between* worlds.

Once spelled out in this way, the *history* reply is revealed as *ad hoc* in two different ways. First, by claiming that animal and artefact terms

---

<sup>4</sup> The first version of the *history* reply is close to Quine’s (1996), the second is Hossack’s (2001 pp. 426-9).

refer not merely to *pluralities* but to trans-temporal and trans-worldly pluralities it radically reconfigures our pre-philosophical understanding of what animals and artefacts are. Second, in order for (P) and (Q) to come out true it must say that when we attach temporal and modal predicates to such terms we are not, as it would seem, ascribing temporal and modal *properties* to actual animals and artefacts. Rather, we are saying of a plurality of actual and counterfactual parts or facts that it *includes* some other plurality of actual and counterfactual parts or facts. There is no independent motivation for the view that this is what is understood by sentences (P) and (Q).

Furthermore, we should be sceptical of the implicit appeal made by both replies to the thought that the obtaining of a continuity relation between pluralities (or facts about pluralities) is an adequate surrogate for the self-identity of animals and artefacts across time and worlds. There is scope for a more richly specified relation in the temporal than in the modal case, as causal and spatio-temporal as well as qualitative continuity can be claimed as necessary components of it. But we can make sense of the following possibility: a chair suddenly disappears causing a qualitatively identical chair to reappear immediately in its place. We surely want to say that this possibility *contrasts* with a case in which *nothing* happens to the disappearing chair, but where it remains where it is. But any specification of identity over time in terms of qualitative, spatio-temporal and causal continuity can recognise no such contrast.

So: the view that animal and artefact terms refer to *pluralities* cannot provide acceptable truth-conditions for (P) and (Q). Atomism is therefore false. But we should consider a possible *tu quoque* from the atomist. It might be argued that there are truths about animals and artefacts that

the rival ‘survivalist’ view (i.e. the view that they *survive the loss and replacement of their parts*) finds difficult to accommodate. An example might be:

(R) This chair is a lot of quarks.

If we deny that (R) is true, we are hoist on our own petard, as such a move lacks independent foundation. If we claim that (R) is true because “this chair” refers *ambiguously* either to a singularity or to a plurality we are little better off. The ambiguity posit has no independent motivation, and as we saw earlier, we should not claim a word is ambiguous unless we “are really forced to, unless there are compelling theoretical or intuitive grounds to suppose that an ambiguity really is present”.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, we need not make either of these claims. What we should say is that “is” is ambiguous between “is identical with” and “is constituted by”. What (R) truthfully says is that this chair is *constituted by* a lot of quarks. This ambiguity posit *does* have an independent motivation as it has been recognised at least since the birth of predicate logic that “is” can be used *predicatively* as well as in *identity* statements. Constitution claims are made by *predicative* sentences. They are so routinely made that the verb-phrase “constituted by” can be silent.<sup>6 7</sup>

One final challenge can be put to the survivalist by the atomist: that it follows from the claim that singularities have different modal and temporal properties from the pluralities that constitute them that (given Leibniz’ law) two distinct things, a singularity and a plurality, can be in

---

<sup>5</sup> Kripke (1977) p. 259, see my pp. 22-23. Nevertheless Simons explicitly (1987) pp. 199-204 and Wiggins implicitly (2001) pp. 51-53 make the ambiguity claim.

<sup>6</sup> Strictly speaking, the ambiguity accrues not merely to “is” but to the verb “to be” as claim (R) can be reformulated in tenses other than the present continuous.

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph and the next owe (almost) everything to Wiggins (1968), (2001) pp. 34-53. But he (1968 p. 92) *distinguishes* the predicative from the constitutive “is”, while I see the latter as a special case of the former.

the same place at the same time. But there is no reason to find this consequence counter-intuitive. We do in ordinary language distinguish the statue from the clay of which it is made. There is no tension between this distinction and the empirical hypothesis that every material thing is *ultimately* constituted by entities of a single simple type (quarks, for example).<sup>8</sup> It is merely that different *kinds* of material entity, with different persistence-conditions, can be constituted by the same simple entities. In addition, there is no pressure to say that if the statue and the clay are scratched there must be *two* scratches. If a scratched entity or plurality *constitutes* a scratched entity, by virtue of the constitution, there is a single scratch.

So: we should endorse the *provisional moral* that artefacts and animals are self-identical individuals despite being constituted out of parts which may be lost or replaced. It is on this basis that the atomist view that our animal and artefact terms refer plurally to parts should be rejected. In Chapter Five I will consider whether the *analogous* view that group terms refer plurally to members should be rejected too. Given what has been said here, it should be clear that if groups bear temporal and modal properties that analogously show that they *survive* the replacement of their parts, then the uniform strategy regarding group terms should also be rejected. But the uniform strategy is not the only means of sustaining the *reasonable* response. Let us consider the *disjunctive* strategy.

---

<sup>8</sup> Pace Gibbard (1975) pp. 192-3 and Ruben *op. cit.* p. 77.



## The disjunctive strategy

The employer of the disjunctive strategy holds that all action and psychological properties are plurally predicated of group terms, but that other properties may be singularly predicated of them. If I am right about the ambiguity of “is”, there are two ways in which one might employ the disjunctive strategy. One might simply claim that group terms are ambiguous, referring either to singularities or pluralities, but always to the latter when attached to action and psychological predicates. Or one might say that group terms refer to singular things, but that when action and psychological predicates are attached to them the resultant sentences make claims, not about the *group* entity, but as in the case of (R), about what this entity *is constituted by*.

The disjunctive strategy has perhaps one advantage over its rival. The uniform strategy cannot admit of distinct but co-extensive groups, for a plurality of individuals will always be identical to a plurality of all and only the *same* individuals. But it follows *trivially* from the non-extensionality<sup>9</sup> of groups that nothing rules out Microsoft, McDonalds and Esso sharing all and only the same members  $m_1, \dots, m_n$ . Were this so, the following claim would be true:

(S) There are three groups of which  $m_1, \dots, m_n$  are the only members.<sup>10</sup>

Now since it holds that group terms at least *sometimes* refer to singular entities (i.e. when not the subjects of action and psychological predication), the disjunctive reply has no difficulty providing a natural truth condition for (S). The claim is true just in case there is an  $x$  a  $y$  and

---

<sup>9</sup> Which is perhaps a *defining property* of groups (it distinguishes them from sets).

<sup>10</sup> If groups are located where their members are, it follows that there are three groups in the same space at the same time. I consider the coherence of this in Chapter Six.

a  $z$  of which  $m_1, \dots, m_n$  are the only members, where  $x$  is a group,  $y$  is a group and  $z$  is a group, and where  $x \neq y$ ,  $y \neq z$  and  $x \neq z$ . The uniform strategy has the resources to say that there are some entities which plurally sell computer products, some entities which plurally sell fast food, and some entities which plurally sell petroleum and that each of *these* collections of entities is the plurality  $m_1, \dots, m_n$ . But it cannot account for the claim that there are *three* such pluralities. If it tries to ape the truth-condition given by the disjunctive strategy, it will say that some entities  $m_1, \dots, m_n$  are non-identical with some entities  $m_1, \dots, m_n$ . And this is strictly false.<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

We saw that the uniform strategy fails if groups have temporal and modal properties that show that they *survive* the actual and counterfactual loss and replacement of their members. The disjunctive strategy fails if groups have *action* or *psychological* properties that show that they survive the actual and counterfactual loss and replacement of their members. If a subject *persists* in bearing properties throughout the replacement of its parts, it must be able to survive such change, for no succession of distinct pluralities can be the persisting subject of a property-instantiation. I will call properties persistently borne *persisting* properties. If groups have *persisting action* or *psychological* properties then, both the strategies outlined above fail. In Chapter Five I argue that

---

<sup>11</sup> The defender of the uniform strategy could insist that each individual person be distinguished from the Microsoft-member, McDonald's-member, Esso-member etc., that he *constitutes*. Schematically, one could then always distinguish a plurality of  $X$ -members from a plurality of  $Y$ -members even when each  $X$ -member 'co-incides' with a  $Y$ -member. The approach would accommodate the numerical quantification over groups we've seen ordinary language commits us to (though we might find it difficult to explain how  $m_1, \dots, m_n$  themselves, as opposed to some distinct individuals, get to be members of groups). But surely the natural thing to say is that group-membership is a (perhaps lifelong) *phase* of a single individual, not the defining property of a *new* individual.

*some groups* have persisting psychological properties. I therefore advocate a *mixed* response, according to which the uniform and disjunctive strategies fail for some groups but can reasonably be expected to succeed for others.

## 5. CORPORATE MINDS

Consider the following quotations (all italics are mine):

(A) The Housing Corporation has *decided to uphold its in principle decision* to direct Clays Lane Housing Co-operative to transfer its land at Stratford, East London, to the Governors of the Peabody Trust... The Corporation had given the Co-operative *an extended period of time* to demonstrate that it could manage its affairs effectively but has concluded that the progress made fell short of the Corporation's expectations.<sup>1</sup>

(B) *Throughout our history* [since 1853], Providian *has believed* in the idea that people can use credit as a tool to reach their financial goals and improve their lives.<sup>2</sup>

(C) *It has always been, and will always be, the policy* of goodexperience.com and Mark Hurst that your privacy is very important.<sup>3</sup>

(D) *In the past four years*, Ramsey Systems has been *committed to* providing high end design automation consulting including custom CAD software development, training, and support<sup>4</sup>

(E) ...documents [posted today on the website of Environmental Working Group] explain how Monsanto *kept the public*, especially the residents of Anniston, Alabama who lived closest to Monsanto's factory, *in the*

---

<sup>1</sup> housingcorp.gov.uk 24.03.02.

<sup>2</sup> providian.com 24.03.02.

<sup>3</sup> goodexperience.com 24.03.02.

<sup>4</sup> cadgurus.com 24.03.02.

*dark for decades regarding what the company knew about PCBs.*<sup>5</sup>

(A') to (E') ascribe to social groups decisions, beliefs, intentions, commitments and states of knowledge which *persist* for significant periods of time during which we must assume that the groups could have undergone changes of personnel. But Chapter Four concluded that if groups have psychological properties that *persist* throughout the loss and replacement of their members then the *reasonable* response must be rejected. We must therefore consider whether (A') to (E') should be taken at face value.

Notice that the groups referred to by sentences (A') to (E') are neither *unstructured* nor *ad hoc*. They are all either corporations or governmental organisations, institutions with internal decision making structures and multiple purposes. In this Chapter I advocate a *mixed* response to the simple argument, according to which *some* groups, including corporations and governmental institutions are singularities, but which does not deny that *unstructured* and *ad hoc* groups are pluralities. It follows that, with respect to the former types of group, I have a *resigned* attitude towards the simple argument. It is inescapable that such groups are minded. But with respect to the many *unstructured* or *ad hoc* committees, mobs and pub quiz teams that populate the world, I take the *reasonable* view that these groups are not minded because they are not singular entities.

I will argue that there are at least three reasons for taking claims such as (A') to (E') at face value. First, corporations and non-governmental organisations have the *internal causal structure* appropriate to being the bearers of persisting psychological properties.

---

<sup>5</sup> ewg.org 24.03.02.

Second, they are *interpretable* as having such properties on the basis of publicly available though non-reductively specifiable data. Third, our *practices* of influence and accountability presuppose that such groups have persisting properties. None of these three reasons find application in the contrasting case of *ad hoc* and *unstructured* groups. Let us look in more detail at each of these reasons.

### 1. Internal causal structure

It might be thought that for an entity to have *persisting* psychological properties, it must have mechanisms for the acquiring, generating, storing and retrieving of information. Some of this information will be *self-referential*, concerning the entity's beliefs, goals, commitments and decisions. Some of it will concern the world. Corporations and governmental organisations have mechanisms of precisely these kinds. Certain of their human members are typically assigned *roles* granting them the authority to pronounce upon and document the institution's beliefs, goals, commitments and decisions, while others are assigned the *roles* of being sensitive to and reporting upon developments in the world. These institutions have procedures, both formal and informal, for the transmission and retrieval of this information. All these mechanisms for the acquiring, generating and transmission of information typically require that the members of the institution *act* jointly, for instance in the making of decisions. Crucially, where the particular humans assigned information-acquiring, -generating or -transmitting roles are *replaced* their successors are *constrained* by the pronouncements and documents of their predecessors; for instance, they may be *bound* by their decisions.

Scruton puts the point clearly:

Those who are members [of a corporation] at a time when a decision is executed may not have been members when the decision was made; while a wholly new membership may have replaced them before the legal and moral consequences of the decision are felt.<sup>6</sup>

Individuals at time  $t_1$  may (plurally) decide, intend or learn that  $p$  and this state of affairs may be causally related to a distinct plurality of individuals' acting at a later time  $t_2$  on the basis of the prior decision, intention or state of knowledge.

So: certain institutions have an *internal causal structure* that provides us with at least one reason to take seriously the persisting decisions, beliefs, policies, commitments and states of knowledge ascribed to them by sentences such as (A') to (E'). Mobs, crowds, harvest festival committees and pub quiz teams have no comparable structures.

## 2. Interpretability

There is *publicly available* evidence for the type of persisting psychological properties ascribed to corporation and governmental institutions by (A') to (E'). This evidence falls into four categories: (i) official statements and declarations made by members of an institution occupying *roles* which authorise their speaking on the institution's behalf; (ii) observations concerning the decisions, beliefs, policies and commitments of the institution made by members *not* empowered to speak on its behalf; (iii) assertions made by members of the institution which are *neither* official statements *nor* observations concerning its psychological properties but which are nevertheless interpretable as

---

<sup>6</sup> Scruton (1989) p. 246.

evidence for these properties, for instance, when a corporation's Marketing Director asserts that marketing strategy *p* remains flawed; (iv) the non-linguistic behaviour of the institution, for instance, a corporation's closing a factory in Newcastle and opening one in Nepal defeasibly justifies, given independent evidence of the corporation's goals, an ascription to it of the belief that economic conditions in Nepal are now more conducive to maximising shareholder value than those in Newcastle.

By and large, interpretations made on the basis of this evidence reveal the *present* action and psychological properties of corporations and governmental institutions to be not merely *causally* constrained by *past* properties, but *rationally* constrained by them. If an institution appears to make in the course of a year apparently *contradictory* announcements without acknowledging any conflict, our first thought is that we have made some error of interpretation, not that it has contradicted itself. And if an institution over the same period appears on the basis of evidence of the types listed above to act and make announcements *in accordance with* its prior actions and statements, our first thought is that this warrants the ascription of *persisting* decisions, beliefs, intentions, commitments or states of knowledge *despite* there being no persisting *plurality* to bear these properties. The best explanation of these interpretations is that institutions, just like individuals, subscribe to diachronic rational norms. That is, the fact of members of an institution plurally deciding, intending or learning that *p* at time  $t_1$  is *rationally* as well as *causally* related to the fact of there being a distinct plurality of individuals acting in some *p*-sensitive way at a later time  $t_2$ . Notice that *unstructured* and *ad hoc* groups do *not* manifest rationality over time, so there is no reason to hold that *these* groups are anything over and above mere pluralities. But if corporations and



governmental institutions were mere pluralities we would be unable to explain the presuppositions made by our diachronic interpretations of them. So we must conclude that the distinct, overlapping pluralities that make up the membership of corporations or governmental institutions over time may *constitute* enduring singular entities bearing persistent properties.

In what follows, I consider two reasons for doubting that the types of evidence listed above really do justify ascriptions of persisting psychological properties to institutions. A *circularity* objection will claim that evidence of types (i), (ii) and (iv) is not admissible as it is described in terms that *presuppose* the mindedness of institutions. An *underdetermination* objection will claim that evidence of type (iii) is not admissible as it is consistent with ascriptions of persisting psychological properties to individuals *alone*. I will consider these in turn.

The *circularity* objection contends that any description of publicly available facts that presents them as being cases of people *speaking on an institution's behalf*, or of their *commenting upon its psychological properties* or of the *institution's acting in a certain way* presupposes what it supposedly provides evidence for, which is that institutions can be minded. The reply to this is that the implied requirement that evidence for an entity's mindedness must be described by sentences which do not apply psychological or semantic predicates to that entity is too strong. Any such requirement prevents our justifying our surely well-founded belief that *people* are minded. This lesson can be drawn from Block's critique of functionalism.<sup>7</sup> If evidence for the mindedness of entities, in the form of arguably lawlike relations between informational inputs and behavioural outputs, is specified in non-psychologically saturated terms,

---

<sup>7</sup> Block (1980).

it must as a matter of logic be either *determinately* or *indeterminately* described. Block argues that to be *determinately* yet reductively described it must draw upon concepts exclusive to the 'hard' sciences, like neurophysiology and physiology, and that this imposes an unacceptably *chauvinist* constraint on acceptable evidence, as it conflicts with a resilient *multiple realisability* intuition that minded entities *could* fail to fall within the scope of these sciences. On the other horn of the dilemma, if the evidence is *indeterminately* specified, it provides too *liberal* a criterion of mindedness. The lesson of Block is that we cannot access a stable resting point between chauvinistic and liberal means of specifying evidence for mindedness, and so cannot formulate *any* claim that entity X is minded on the basis of reductively specified evidence which is not either false or trivial.

The moral of this, although Block does not draw it himself, is that we should give up on the idea that the evidence for mindedness should be describable in non-psychological or non-semantic terms. Philosophers of science have accepted the 'theory-ladenness' of evidence for many years. Circularity worries are only raised where sentences offered in support of a theory presuppose the truth of the *whole* theory.<sup>8</sup> But a *complete* theory of what an institution or a human thinks is *not* presupposed by a description of it as having *claimed* such-and-such or *done* such-and-such.<sup>9</sup> If it were, we would not be able to non-circularly interpret either institutions *or* humans.

An independent reason for taking psychologically or semantically described facts to be *in general* admissible evidence for interpretation is provided by McDowell's reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-

---

<sup>8</sup> See Hesse (1974) Ch. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Pace* McDowell (1998a) Essay 4 pp. 103-4: "Davidson ought not to describe facts about holding-true as *evidence* for another part of the interlocking system [of content attributions], the theory of meaning...".

following.<sup>10</sup> The following argument is extracted from the *Investigations*: we can reliably correctly interpret someone as having meant *p* by some piece of linguistic behaviour. But their behaviour described non-semantically is consistent with them having meant something other than *p*, no matter what further non-semantic and non-psychological facts are appealed to as putatively clinching further evidence. Therefore: the thought that someone meant *p* by what they said can be *salient* to us as interpreters of that person. It is “audible or visible - to those who understand the language - whenever the sentence is meaningfully uttered.”<sup>11</sup> It is simply that “command of a language is partly constituted by... a perceptual capacity; one whose acquisition makes a new range of facts, not hitherto within one’s perceptual ken, available to one’s awareness.”<sup>12</sup> Talk of perception is neither metaphorical nor non-naturalistic. We must reject “the assumption...that our genuine perceptual intake can be exhaustively described in terms that do not beg the question of the status, as knowledge, of what we ascribe to people when we say they understand utterances.”<sup>13</sup>

The reason the theory-ladenness of our evidence for mindedness is acceptable is that interpretation is both *holistic* and *provisional*. For any interpretative activity to begin, its subject must be provisionally taken to be minded. This assumption is necessary if the interpretation is to be adequately *constrained* by the requirements that the subject’s ascribed psychological properties are *rationaly* inter-related, and, in the case of beliefs, by and large *true*.<sup>14</sup> If, once enough evidence describing the subject’s behaviour has been gathered, no *charitable rational* sense can

---

<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein (1953/2001) ¶ 143-309, McDowell *op. cit.* Essay 5 pp. 114-118, see also (1998b) Essays 10-12.

<sup>11</sup> McDowell (1998a) Essay 4 p. 100.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* Essay 15 p. 332.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> For arguments that these are necessary constraints on interpretation, see Davidson (1984/1990) Essays 9-11 and (1985a) pp. 351-352 (1991) pp. 158-162.

be made of them, the *provisional* assumption that it is minded may be withdrawn. It will be concluded *either* that we were mistaken in thinking it to have psychological properties at all, *or* in the case of groups, that we were struggling to make sense of a *plural* not a *singular* subject.

The circularity objection is perhaps founded on an understandable assumption that behaviour supplies robust evidence for the ascription of persisting psychological properties only from a perspective on the world which, *per impossible* is neither endowed with mentality nor equipped with language i.e. from the standpoint of the “absolute conception”.<sup>15</sup> The assumption is well expressed by McDowell:

...[That] any intelligible activity can be described in such a way as to reveal its point or significance, from the perspective of a cosmic exile – a perspective, that is, that is not to any extent coloured or affected by the occupant’s own involvement in a form of life...<sup>16</sup>

But it is unwarranted. It does not follow from the empiricist or behaviourist insight that our undisputed knowledge of each other’s minds would be *inexplicable* were it not the case that publicly accessible facts determined the facts about mental states that these facts are *per impossible* graspable by non-minded, non-linguistic creatures.<sup>17</sup>

We should now consider the *underdetermination* objection, which claims that putative evidence for the persisting psychological properties

---

<sup>15</sup> Williams (1978).

<sup>16</sup> McDowell (1998a) Essay 15 p. 329.

<sup>17</sup> It is far from clear that even the behaviourists made the unwarranted assumption. Hornsby (1997 ch.7 p. 115) points out that Ryle (1949/1990 ch. V p. 129) happily provides psychologically saturated descriptions of behavioural dispositions such as “... to skate warily, to shudder, to dwell in imagination on possible disasters and to warn other skaters.” I conjecture that Ryle would be sceptical of the very *distinction* between descriptions of behaviour that presuppose mentality and those that do not, seeing it as a baleful legacy of the ‘Cartesian’ inner/outer distinction.

of corporations and governmental institutions of type (iii) is consistent with ascriptions of such properties to individuals *alone*. The objection relies on the plausible thought that the issue of whether an assertion that *p* by an influential member of an institution justifies ascribing a belief that *p* to the *institution* as well as or instead of to the *individual* is underdetermined by the available evidence.

Perhaps the objection is sound and evidence of type (iii) is not admissible. Whether this is so depends upon how stringent we take the *rationality* constraint upon interpretation to be. It is conceivable that apparently *irrational* behaviour manifested by members of an institution might exhibit a *pattern* that is best explained by reattributing provisionally ascribed beliefs from the members to the institution. For example, suppose members of a powerful bank sincerely assent to the sentence “financial controls should be more tightly regulated” but consistently act as if they held its negation to be true. On the basis of their total behaviour we might ascribe to them inconsistent and so irrational beliefs. But the observation that group members consistently manifested this apparent irrationality might, in accordance with a stringent rationality constraint, prompt a different interpretation. The non-linguistic behaviour could be interpreted as evidence for what the *group* believes and the linguistic behaviour as evidence for what the *individuals* believe, thus explaining away the appearance of irrationality.

What is radical about any such account is its implication that membership of a singular group may undermine one’s rational autonomy, since one’s body might be motivated to act in accordance with the beliefs and goals of a group of which one is a member, rather than with one’s own beliefs and goals. One would be a “plaything of alien

powers”,<sup>18</sup> in Marx’s words. In Durkheimian terms one’s autonomy would be subject to a “constraint”<sup>19</sup> imposed by membership of a powerful institution with an agenda different to one’s own. If the threat to autonomy included one’s failing to recognise the true causes of one’s behaviour, one would have, in Engel’s phrase, a “false consciousness”.<sup>20</sup> I am not yet equipped to defend any such view of the threat to autonomy imposed by the membership of institutions, or the *stringent* rationality constraint required for this view to be plausible. But two brief remarks can be made. First, if we grant that certain singular groups are minded, we allow that it is at least *logically* possible for them to act upon different policies, commitments and beliefs from their members. Yet they act *through* their members, so the door is opened to the possibility of a constrained individual autonomy. Second, an instructive analogy can be drawn between the neo-Marxist explanation of patterned irrationality outlined above, and contemporary ‘partition’ accounts of irrationality that do not appeal to any notion of a group.<sup>21</sup> According to such accounts, apparently irrational behaviour is explained by claiming that more than one ‘agent’ is constituted out of the flesh of an interpreted human subject. For Davidson, “there can be boundaries between parts of the mind”<sup>22</sup> which demarcate “semi-autonomous”<sup>23</sup> structures “similar to [those] needed to explain ordinary actions”.<sup>24</sup> The manner in which these sub-systems influence each other is held by Davidson to be identical to a manner in which individuals may influence each other; that is, it is causal but not rational:

---

<sup>18</sup> Marx (1844/1975) p. 220.

<sup>19</sup> Durkheim (1895/1964) pp. 101-102, 121-124.

<sup>20</sup> Engels (1893/1956) p. 541.

<sup>21</sup> See Pears (1982) (1984), Davidson (1982) (1985a) (1985b). Hurley (1992) pp. 130-170 makes the connection with collective action, but does not consider the *constraints* on autonomy group membership might bring.

<sup>22</sup> Davidson (1985b) p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> Davidson (1982) p. 303.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

[a] mental event can cause another mental event without being a reason for it... when cause and effect occur in different minds. For example, wishing to have you enter my garden, I grow a beautiful flower there. You crave a look at my flower and enter my garden. My desire caused your craving and action, but my desire was not a reason for your craving, nor a reason on which you acted... Mental phenomena may cause other mental phenomena without being reasons for them, then, and still keep their character as mental, provided cause and effect are adequately segregated. The obvious and clear cases are those of social interaction. But I suggest that the idea can be applied to a single mind and person... the mind is to be regarded as having two or more semi-autonomous structures.<sup>25</sup>

Davidson's use of such an account is motivated by precisely the same concern as the account I have sketched *viz.* the need to reconcile a *stringent* rationality constraint on interpretation with the ubiquity of apparently irrational humans. If irrationality can be explained away by positing 'agencies' which are parts of humans, perhaps it is also legitimate to explain *certain* forms of irrational behaviour by positing 'agencies' which have humans as parts.<sup>26</sup>

We might put things this way. Wherever persisting psychological properties are neither officially declared by institutional representatives

---

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* pp. 300-303

<sup>26</sup> It must be conceded that there is a powerful intuition that holds that we cannot make sense of a minded entity being a *part* of a minded entity. The point is made by Strawson (1959/1987 pp. 114-115), and is implicit in Reid's (1785/1941 Essay III ch. 4 p. 202) "a part of a person is a manifest absurdity". Perhaps this intuition underwrites our sense that Block (*op. cit.* pp 276-278) is right to claim that a 'mind of China' is absurd, although Block himself (p. 280) states that this is *not* the intuition appealed to. See also Searle's (1982 pp. 358-362) uneasiness with the "systems reply" to his Chinese Room argument, which holds that the symbol-shuffling room-bound man is a *part* of a minded system, and Sartre's (1969 pp. 49-54) 'censor' argument against psychoanalysis, which holds that a repressive mental mechanism would have to be conscious of what it repressed, and so could not be a *part* of a conscious individual.

nor ascribed to institutions by informed individuals we must operate in accordance with the *working assumption* that facts about sentences held true by the members of institutions provide evidence for the beliefs of those human individuals. But this *site* or *scope* assumption is revisable in the light of a *stringent* rationality assumption and given persistent patterned irrational behaviour by members of institutions. The point is vividly made by Hurley:

...sometimes [the values that inform interpretation] may exert such a pull that the assumptions we take as a starting point about the individual unit of agency may be suspended, as in cases of split personality or collective agency, though it is only against the background of the normal starting point assumptions, which locate agency in the biological individual, that the exceptional cases make sense.<sup>27</sup>

But even if this thought is rejected and evidence of type (iii) is judged inadmissible on grounds of underdetermination, there is sufficient evidence of types (i) (ii) and (iv) to justify ascriptions of persistent psychological properties to groups such as those given by (A') to (E'). So (A') to (E') can be *causally* and also *rationally* explained.

### 3. Practices of influence and accountability

We have seen that our interpretative practices justify taking claims such as (A') to (E') at face value. There are two other practices we engage in that *presuppose* the belief that certain groups have persisting psychological properties.

---

<sup>27</sup> Hurley (1992) p. 319 see also p. 146, p. 157, p. 263 and Rovane (1998) p. 141, (1999) p. 475. A similar point is made by Dennett (1991/1993) pp. 422-423 and (1994) p. 562.



The first practice is one of attempted rational influence. We say of human agents who engage or deal with corporations and governmental institutions (including those of which they are members) that they are *talking* to them, *negotiating* with them, *informing* them of facts, *complaining* to and of them, *appealing* to and about them, attempting to better *manage* them and so on. Such reports presuppose that the group objects of attempted influence have a *unified point of view*. Rovane explains why:

...*rational* influence does not merely *exploit* a thing's ability to exercise its rational capacities. It involves a direct *appeal* to those capacities. Or rather, it involves a direct appeal to the rational point of view from which those capacities are exercised.<sup>28</sup>

Later she considers what happens when a person rationally influences another:

When one person aims to influence another by offering a reason, it leaves it up to the other person whether to accept the reason or not. And to leave this up to another person in this way is, implicitly, to have the following intention: that the other person will accept the reason because it judges that it would be best, considering all things within its rational point of view, to do so. Which is just to say, the other person is intended to accept the reason because doing so will help it to realize its commitment to achieving overall rational unity. Furthermore, that is the *guise* in which reasons must be offered to a person in the course of rational influence, namely, as serving the person's own commitment to rational unity.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Rovane (1998) p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p. 130.

According to Rovane, this is evidence for her claim that the condition that gives rise to the commitment to achieve rational unity is the condition of personal identity.<sup>30</sup> This is an overstatement, and for two reasons. First, it follows from the multiple realisability intuition that there may be rational minded entities that are not *persons*. Second, groups which are not minded entities such as *ad hoc* committees may be committed to achieving a rationally unified point of view with respect to a very *limited* range of issues such as those relating to the question of when to hold the harvest festival. For susceptibility to rational influence to provide a criterion for being a minded entity, we must interpret rather strictly the commitment to *overall* rational unity which Rovane thinks all persons (gloss: minded entities) *must have*. The requisite interpretation must rule out the *circumscribed* commitments to *topic-* or *time-* specific rational unity which *ad hoc* groups may manifest and which allow them as well as corporations and governmental institutions to be the objects of rational influence.<sup>31</sup>

Attempts to rationally influence corporations and governmental institutions do not always appeal to a mere topic- or time- specific commitment to rational unity. They frequently take place over *extended* periods of time and concern a *variety* of topics. At each stage the agent attempting influence may introduce new topics of concern and appeal to

---

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* p. 23, p. 130.

<sup>31</sup> It is not clear whether Rovane interprets “overall” as strictly as is necessary. For her the commitment to overall rational unity is a commitment to unity *within a rational point of view* as a basis for practical deliberation (*ibid.* pp. 129-130). But her stress throughout is on the necessity, for rational unity, of the having of *unifying projects* (pp. 30-31, pp. 163-166) defined very broadly as including, as well as “personal projects... around which individual persons organize their lives” also “any project that requires a substantial coordinated effort on the part of many persons” (p. 163). Ultimately, she does not adequately distinguish between the *circumscribed* rational point of view required for the topic- and time- specific projects of an *ad hoc* committee and the *maximally* rational point of view possessed by a human individual, because she is avowedly *gradualist* about the distinction between persons and non-persons (pp. 160-161).

concessions and agreements made at a previous time. So: our practices presuppose that certain groups have an *overall* rational unity which is *diachronic* as well as a *synchronic*. We assume that they are temporally extended like us, are sensitive to a broad enough palette of reasons to share a common world with us, and are thus the 'targets' of interpersonal responses over time.<sup>32</sup>

The second practice is that of holding groups to account. In life and in law we judge that certain groups *as well as individuals* are accountable for their prior actions, and that they are so, in part, on the basis of states of knowledge, belief, intention and desire manifested prior to their prosecution of these actions.<sup>33</sup> But we would not hold either groups *or individuals* accountable for actions perpetrated by *mere pluralities of parts* distinct *both* from those which presently compose them *and* from the prior pluralities which manifested the psychological states upon which our judgements are grounded, *no matter what* causal or rational relations linked facts or events involving each of these pluralities. So it is a presupposition of our practice of holding to account that certain groups, namely corporations and governmental institutions, *as well as individuals* are diachronic unities bearing *persisting* psychological properties. With respect to this practice, any denial that there are singular groups bearing these properties is as ill-founded as the parallel Humean denial<sup>34</sup> that there are singular *individuals* bearing them.

I do not claim that susceptibility to rational influence or to a holding to account over time is *sufficient* for singular status, still less

---

<sup>32</sup> This phrase belongs to Scruton (1986 p. 55), writing in a different context.

<sup>33</sup> But the law takes a different view of the accountability of *limited companies* from that of *partnerships*. In the former case the shareholders and directors have *limited* liability, in the latter case the partners have *unlimited* liability.

<sup>34</sup> See Hume (1739-40/1978) bk. I pt. IV sec. VI.

necessary for it.<sup>35</sup> We could, no doubt, attempt to influence or hold to account mere successions of pluralities. And it is logically possible that singular minded individuals might survive drastic psychological change<sup>36</sup>, which might exempt them from responsibility for their prior actions. But that our practices, which are effective and ubiquitous, *presuppose* that the objects of our attempts at influence and holding to account over time are the bearers of persisting properties is, I claim, defeasible evidence for the truth of this presupposition.

## Conclusion

Chapter Four concluded that the *reasonable* response to the simple argument must be rejected if groups have action and psychological properties that *persist* despite the actual and counterfactual loss and replacement of their members. This Chapter has argued that certain groups, including corporations and governmental institutions have such properties. But I do not claim that *all* groups have such properties. *Unstructured* and *ad hoc* groups probably do not, just as *unstructured* and *ad hoc* objects (in the broadest sense of the word) like heaps of rice arguably have no persisting properties. One might put things this way: Microsoft is to a pub quiz team what a table is to a ball of dust.

Of course it might be claimed that in sentences (A') to (G') the terms putatively referring to persisting groups refer to possible histories or quantify over distinct pluralities of individuals maximally satisfying temporally and modally indexed predicates. But we saw that such accounts of what we say when we talk about animals and artefacts have

---

<sup>35</sup> Rovane *op. cit.* pp. 131-132 thinks that susceptibility to rational influence is at least part of a condition both sufficient and necessary for personhood.

<sup>36</sup> Pace Parfit (1984/1989) chs. 10, 11.

no motivation antecedent to a biased distaste for seeing them as *singular* entities. The same is true of analogous accounts of our discourse concerning corporations and governmental institutions.

So I advocate a *mixed* response to the simple argument: the *resigned* response for diachronically structured, interpretable, influenceable and accountable institutions, and the *reasonable* response for other types of groups. In Chapter Six, I consider some puzzling questions raised by this view.

## 6. THE HETERODOX VIEW: BELIEVING IN ANGELS

The previous Chapter concluded that some groups are the bearers of persisting psychological properties and so are *singular* entities. This raises at least three puzzling questions:

1. How could a group, which is “scattered and radically discontinuous in space”,<sup>1</sup> be a singular entity?
2. How could two singular groups that are co-extensive occupy the same space at the same time?
3. How could a group that is lacking in bodily sensations be the singular subject of psychological predication?

A *tentative suggestion* promises a solution to these puzzles; it is that singular groups have no material properties. In this Chapter I defend this suggestion. But before I do this I must rebut three possible misunderstandings of it.

First, it does not follow from the tentative suggestion that singular groups are not spatio-temporally located. This is fortunate, as it seems clear that they occupy conjunctions of spatio-temporal regions. We need to distinguish *material* from *locational* properties. Holes, rainbows and shadows have locational but no material properties. There is nothing puzzling or mysterious about these entities, and so nothing puzzling or mysterious *per se* about the claim that it does not follow from something's being located that it has material properties.

Second, it does not follow from the tentative suggestion that physicalism is false. By physicalism I mean the doctrine that every non-

---

<sup>1</sup> Quinton (1975-6) p. 20.

abstract entity supervenes on and is constituted by physical entities. According to the account provided thus far, singular groups do not provide an exception to this doctrine. Singular groups supervene upon and are constituted by pluralities of humans. It *does* follow from the tentative suggestion that both type- and token- identity theories regarding psychological properties are false. For if singular groups have no material properties, it follows that any psychological properties they have will be non-identical with material properties.

Third, it does not follow from the tentative suggestion that *groups* have no material properties.<sup>2</sup> We need not deny that a group has a weight, for instance. What is denied is that *singular* groups have material properties. Any material properties borne by groups are borne by the *plurality* of their members.

In Chapter Four we defined *persisting* properties as those borne by subjects *throughout* an actual or counterfactual replacement of their parts. The fact of a subject's bearing such properties was seen as sufficient for its having singular status. There is every reason to believe that it is also necessary, at least for those bearers of properties, which have *parts*. For if I could not persistently bear the property of being six feet tall despite the actual *or counterfactual* replacement of some of my cells by distinct ones, there would be every reason to take an *atomist* view of the bearer of the property, namely, me. Whenever my constituting matter was replaced, a *different* property of being six feet tall would be true of 'me', so it would be natural to suppose that a different 'me' (i.e. a different plurality of parts) was the bearer of each such property.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ruben (1985 p. 87) appears to make this claim, but what he actually denies is that *irreducible* groups have material properties. Perhaps this can be charitably read as meaning that *singular* groups lack material properties. If so, we agree, though not about his further claim (*ibid.*) that they also lack mental properties.

If this is right, then for material properties to be borne by *singular* groups, groups must be capable of bearing *persisting* material properties. I claim that there is no good reason to believe that they are.

Consider the following sentences:

(T) Allied Irish Banks recognises the need for a tightening of financial controls.

(U) Allied Irish Banks is located in Dublin and Seattle.

(V) Allied Irish Banks is a bank.

(W) Allied Irish Banks is at least 30 million kilograms in weight.

(T) ascribes a psychological property to a group, (U) a locational property, (V) a *kind* or *sortal* property (I use the terms interchangeably to denote properties the terms for which supply answers to a “what is it?” question)<sup>3</sup> and (W) a material property. Suppose the claims are true. We saw in the last Chapter that, given the right kind of evidence, we have every reason to think that (T) predicates a psychological property of a *singular* group, because the *internal causal structure* of groups like AIB, together with their *accountability* and susceptibility to *interpretation* and *rational influence*, means that such psychological properties can persist.

Given this evidence, we are committed to the existence of AIB as a singular group, so there is no motivation to deny that (U) ascribes a locational property to a singular entity. We have already ruled out the claim that singular groups are *abstract*<sup>4</sup>, and it would be queer to maintain that any *non-abstract* entity lacked *locational* properties. We should therefore conclude, what seems a natural thing to say in any case, that locational properties can persist.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Wiggins (2001) pp. 8-11.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 23-24.



Given that AIB has *some* persisting properties, it would be churlish to deny that its property of “being a bank” is borne by a singular entity, capable of surviving changes of personnel. The *point* about our grasp of kind or sortal properties is that it involves an understanding of those *modal* properties revelatory of the persistence-conditions of entities falling under kinds.<sup>5</sup> For this to be so, kind or sortal properties must persist.

The properties identified by (T), (U) and (V) are borne by singular groups. But I do not see any reason to suppose that (W) predicates a property of a singular group. There are three reasons for this. First, (W) unlike (T), (U) and (V) is not an *ordinary language* claim. We would be *surprised* were we to overhear someone saying it. Second, supposing we did want to make claim (W), we would be likely to formulate it in terms that explicitly predicated the material property of a plurality, thus:

(W<sub>1</sub>) The individual members of Allied Irish Banks together weigh at least 30 million kilograms.

Third, while a group might weigh at least 30 million kilograms over an extended period of time, any claim that it does so is made true by a *statistical fact* about pluralities of individuals, thus:

(W<sub>2</sub>) At any time in the last *n* years, the individual members of Allied Irish Banks have together weighed at least 30 million kilograms.

---

<sup>5</sup> Wiggins *op. cit.* ch. 2.

It just *so happens* that the combined weight of the members of Allied Irish Banks has exceeded that figure for the last  $n$  years. This statistical coincidence gives us no reason to think that (W<sub>2</sub>) ascribes a *persisting* property to a singular group, any more than the statistical coincidence that would make true the sentence “the average family has, for the last  $n$  years, had 2.412 children” would provide a reason to conclude that *having 2.412 children* persists in being true of an entity. Rather, these sentences, if true, are made true by distinct properties *happening to hold true* of distinct pluralities.

I see no reason to think that other predications of material properties to groups should be understood differently from weight predications. So I claim that groups have no *persisting* material properties, and that they consequently bear such properties not *singularly* but *plurally*. This does not force us to say that group terms such as “Allied Irish Banks” refer *ambiguously* to either *singularities*, as in (T), (U) and (V), or *pluralities* as in (W). We need say only that the “is” of (W) is implicitly *predicative*. (W) is elliptical for:

(W<sub>3</sub>) Allied Irish Banks is constituted by individuals who are *plurally* at least 30 million kilograms in weight.

And the claim, should anyone wish to make it, that Allied Irish Banks was at least 30 million kilograms in weight 10 years ago, and is still at least this heavy, is elliptical for:

(W<sub>4</sub>) Allied Irish Banks was constituted by individuals who were *plurally* at least 30 million kilograms in weight ten years ago, and it is constituted by individuals who are *plurally* at least 30 million kilograms in weight now.

If groups like Allied Irish Banks are not singular subjects of material predication, we certainly have no reason to suppose that *unstructured* or *ad hoc* groups are. Mobs and pub quiz teams do not even have persisting *psychological* properties. So we need not think they are any different from corporations and governmental institutions with respect to the bearing of persisting *material* properties.

There is *one* reason for doubting the tentative suggestion. Since human individuals are parts of groups and have material properties, if entities could be shown to *inherit* the properties of their parts, we would not be able to deny that singular groups had material properties. But it is not true that properties are thus inherited. Molecules are colourless, but entities containing them as parts need not be. For the above doubt to be warranted, something like the following philosophical principle would have to be true:

(PP) If  $x$  is an entity and  $a_1 \dots a_n$  are all of its parts, then if  $a_1 \dots a_n$  have material properties,  $x$  has material properties.

Perhaps (PP) is true of most entities. But I cannot imagine a reason to hold it true of groups that is compelling enough to outweigh what was said above, which is that in our everyday discourse we do not think of groups as having persisting material properties. I therefore make a Moorean appeal to common thought and language as being better grounded than any putative philosophical principles.<sup>6</sup>

Of course we need not deny the following principle:

---

<sup>6</sup> See Moore (1925/1959).

(PP') If  $x$  is a *plurality* and  $a_1 \dots a_n$  are all of its parts, then if  $a_1 \dots a_n$  have material properties,  $x$  has material properties.

Ruben assumes that something like (PP) *must be true* and thinks groups have no material properties, so he draws the counterintuitive conclusion that humans are not parts of groups. Had he made the distinction between pluralities and singularities that we make, he could have embraced (PP') but denied (PP), thereby undercutting any need to make this implausible denial.<sup>7</sup>

I concede that I cannot rule out the possibility that (PP) is true. So the suggestion that singular groups have no material properties is *tentative*. But in its favour, in addition to its grounding in ordinary language, is that it promises satisfactory answers to our puzzling questions 1-3. I will now explain how this is so.

#### Question 1.

We need not be worried by any non-material entity's being "scattered and radically discontinuous in space". Nor should we be worried by a plurality being *plurally* scattered and radically discontinuous in space. Cartwright claims that his copy of McTaggart's *Nature of Existence*, of which the first volume is in Cambridge and the second in Boston, is a scattered material entity.<sup>8</sup> But the right thing to say about this case is that Cartwright's copy of the *Nature of Existence* can be thought of either as a *work*, which is non-material and scattered, or as a *plurality of volumes*, which are material and scattered. Similarly, a group can be thought of either as a non-material scattered entity, or as a material scattered plurality. Only if we were *forced* to think of groups

---

<sup>7</sup> Ruben *op. cit.* pp. 74-75.

<sup>8</sup> Cartwright (1987) pp. 174-175.

as scattered and discontinuous *material entities* might we face problems. But if the tentative suggestion is right, we are not so forced.

### Question 2.

It is true that nothing rules out the possibility of two groups being composed of identical pluralities of humans. And if locational properties are held *singularly* it follows that two singular groups can occupy the same place at the same time. We need not be worried by the claim that a singularity and a *plurality* can be co-occupants of a region, for, as we have seen in Chapter Four, this can be explained by the plurality's *constituting* the singularity. And perhaps we need not be worried by the claim that two entities with *different kind or sortal properties* can occupy the same space at the same time, for such entities will have distinct *modal* properties, and our terms for them will give different answers to a "what is it?" question, despite their being constituted out of the same matter. But we cannot rule out the possibility that two groups *with the same kind or sortal properties* could share all and only the same members and so co-occupy a region.<sup>9</sup> For instance, it is logically possible that the Allied Irish and the Nat West Banks share, perhaps on a flexi-time basis, all and only the same members. We should be worried by this possibility if, following Wiggins and Locke, we hold that it is *impossible* for two entities of the same kind to co-occupy a region.<sup>10</sup>

But the focus of Wiggins and Locke is, God aside, on entities possessing material properties. It is no doubt plausible to say that *material* entities of the same kind "*compete for room in the world*"<sup>11</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ruben *op. cit* p. 76 sees this.

<sup>10</sup> Wiggins (1968 p. 93), Locke (1690/1965 Bk. II Ch. XXVII sec. 1). Wiggins has not reconciled this with his (1998 pp. 245-246) claim that certain groups may be granted something at least approximating singular status.

<sup>11</sup> Wiggins (1968) p. 94.

There is no reason to think this is so for non-material entities. Descartes is right to claim:

...we easily understand that... several angels can all be at the same time in one and the same place. So we clearly conclude that no incorporeal substances are in any strict sense extended.<sup>12</sup>

There may be a residual intuition that permitting more than one entity of a single kind to occupy a region leads to a *crowded* ontology. But Wiggins has only two real *arguments* for his excluding this possibility. The first is that:

Space can be mapped only by reference to its occupants, and spatial facts are conceptually dependent on the existence of facts about particulars and the identities of particulars. If space is to be mapped by reference to persisting particulars, then the nonidentity of particulars *A* and *B*, both of kind *f*, must be sufficient to establish that the place of *A* at  $t_1 \neq$  the place of *B* at  $t_1$ .<sup>13</sup>

But Simons is surely right to counter that:

We may agree about the mapping of space by reference to particulars in general, and yet accept cases where objects of the same kind coincide, since all that the requirement of mapping demands is that *some* continuants be unable to coincide with others of their kind. Exceptions, provided they are recognizable as such, and perhaps provided they are somewhat in the minority... are tolerable.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Descartes (1991) p. 361.

<sup>13</sup> Wiggins *op. cit.* p. 93.

<sup>14</sup> Simons (1987) p. 223.

It seems reasonable to hold that angels and corporations are exceptional in the required sense.

Wiggins' second argument is:

...no volume or area of space can be qualified simultaneously by distinct predicates in any range (colour, shape, texture, and so forth).<sup>15</sup>

This may well be true of *material* predicates. But two different *psychological* predicates could presumably be true of two angels sharing the same space. Equally, two groups sharing the same space could have different policies, commitments, intentions and states of knowledge. The tentative suggestion shows that there is no problem with distinct singular groups, even those *of the same kind*, occupying the same space at the same time.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Wiggins (1968) p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> There may be a worry concerning the *countability* of groups. Given the (I think) plausible assumptions that the question of whether a group persists can expect (at least sometimes) a determinate answer while the question of how many groups there are in a particular region may have no determinate answer (compare: how many red things are there?), what some have seen as the intimate connection between a capacity for identifying persisting particulars falling under sortals and an ability to *count* these particulars is thrown into question. Wiggins (2001 pp. 74-76) argues that an identifying capacity is necessary but not sufficient for a counting capacity, but Rumfitt (2001) shows why his examples fail to demonstrate this: it is indeterminate whether the lower two crowns of the Pope's crown of crowns constitute a single crown and so we cannot say whether the *second* smallest crown containing particle  $p_1$  (where the *smallest* crown containing it is the bottom crown) is identical with the *second* smallest crown containing particle  $p_2$  (where the *smallest* crown containing it is the next crown up), and for *this* reason we cannot count the crowns. Perhaps we are unable to answer crucial identity questions regarding groups in the same way. I aim to consider this question elsewhere.

### Question 3.

The puzzle concerned the suggestion that groups lacking in bodily sensation could be the singular subjects of psychological predication. I do not think the suggestion is incoherent. It is far from clear whether even *material* singular subjects need have bodily sensations in order to be psychologically endowed. Certain 'deafferented' subjects lose all sensations of touch and proprioception from the collarline down (though they still feel pain). They rely on visual information for knowledge about their body's position and must consciously produce, with great effort, each bodily action. But the near absence of bodily sensations experienced by deafferented subjects does not prevent them from having beliefs, goals, aims and intentions.<sup>17</sup> In fact, such subjects are reminiscent of Descartes' angels:

... if an angel were in a human body, he would not have sensations as we do, but would simply perceive the motions which are caused by external objects, and in this way would differ from a real man.<sup>18</sup>

Were there immaterial angels, and were they to be located in human bodies (supposing this is a logical possibility), their experience would resemble that of deafferented subjects. But singular groups *just are* non-material entities located in (successive pluralities of) human bodies. So if we can conceive of angels with psychological properties in the circumstances Descartes sketches, then there is no reason to think that singular groups *must* have bodily sensations (or indeed any other kind of sensations) in order to be minded. Scruton is right when he writes:

---

<sup>17</sup> See Cole and Paillard (1998).

<sup>18</sup> Descartes *op. cit.* p. 206.



...there are mental states which need not be, and which in some sense cannot be, felt; beliefs, certain kinds of deliberative desire, intentions, the recognition of duties, and the dispositions which govern our response to them. All those, I suggest, lie within the mental repertoire of corporations.<sup>19</sup>

An objector might protest that even if minded entities can lack *sensations*, they must have a *phenomenology* i.e. there must be *something it is like* to be them.<sup>20</sup> I am neutral on this issue. But nothing I have said rules out the claim that there is something it is like to be a singular group.<sup>21</sup> The claim chimes, in fact, with what was said in the previous Chapter, as the phenomena of diachronic rational influence and interpretation presuppose that singular groups have *rationally unified points of view*. It might be thought that psychological properties, no matter how they are related, do not constitute a *point of view* unless they are *felt*. But unless the ‘feeling’ appealed to is the type of *sensation* we have already seen to be unnecessary, it is far from clear that it can be prised apart from a unity of beliefs, goals and intentions.

## Conclusion

In Chapter One, I promised that my thesis would have two *surprising implications*:

(SI<sub>1</sub>) There can be non-minded subjects of psychological predication.

(SI<sub>2</sub>) Minded groups lack material properties.

---

<sup>19</sup> Scruton (1989) pp. 253-254. But he also feels forced to say that there is nothing it is like to be a group (pp. 248-249). As I say in the next paragraph, this does not follow from the absence of bodily sensations.

<sup>20</sup> Nagel (1979) claims “what-its-likeness” is necessary for mentality.

<sup>21</sup> Which must mean more than that there is something it is like to be a *member* of a group. Characterisations of the distinct phenomenology of *group membership* (see Le Bon (1920) and Freud (1921/1975)), even if accurate, are of little relevance.

Why this is so should by now be clear. *Plural* groups may be the subjects of psychological predication, but are not minded (SI<sub>1</sub>). And we have good reason to think that no persisting material properties are borne by groups and so that *singular* groups lack material properties (SI<sub>2</sub>).

Philosophers who have dismissed group minds as nonsense have often built their case upon the claim that there is something unacceptably 'spectral' about such entities. Thus Searle writes:

...if you think collective intentionality is irreducible, you seem forced to postulate some sort of collective mental entity, some overarching Hegelian World Spirit, some "we" that floats around mysteriously above us individuals and of which we as individuals are just expressions.<sup>22</sup>

But we have unearthed an irony. It would be much more puzzling if minded singular groups were *material*, for we would then find it very difficult to explain their scattered nature, the possible co-occupancy of groups of the same *kind*, and the possessing of psychological but not sensational properties by groups.

So Descartes' view of angels as "incorporeal substances" provides an attractive model for the way in which we should think about singular social groups. Such substances are causally potent, possible co-occupants, with mental, locational and sortal but no material properties. They are, if you like, as rainbows, shadows and holes would be were they to have thoughts. We can follow Descartes in making a fourfold classification of singular entities: the neither sentient *nor* sapient

---

<sup>22</sup> Searle (1999) p. 118.

(stones), the sentient but not sapient (animals)<sup>23</sup>, the sapient but not sentient (angels, corporations and governmental institutions) and the sentient *and* sapient (human individuals).

We should not be misled by the claim that a non-material singular group is a “substance”. I mean by this no more than that it is a subject of singular predication.<sup>24</sup> Descartes warns against confusing “the notion of substance with that of extended thing”.<sup>25</sup> It is precisely this conflation which would lead us to suppose falsely that the claim that there are psychologically endowed non-material *substances* commits us to the existence of spectral immaterial ‘stuff’. But as Wiggins says, “of course the only stuff there is is stuff”.<sup>26</sup> Group substances are constituted by nothing more mysterious than pluralities of human bodies. So many of the worries about “disembodied ‘group minds’”<sup>27</sup> are groundless.

The claim that corporations and governmental institutions are non-material entities is inspired by Descartes’ views on angels, but its reconciliation with physicalism draws from a broader tradition in early modern philosophy. I have claimed that singular group entities with persisting psychological properties are constituted by *successive* pluralities of people. If we substitute ‘substance’ for ‘plurality’, this recalls a claim made by Kant:

An elastic ball which impinges on another similar ball in a straight line communicates to the latter its whole motion, and therefore its whole state (that is, if we take account only of the positions in space). If, then, in analogy

---

<sup>23</sup> See Descartes (1984) pp. 287-288.

<sup>24</sup> Wiggins (1998) pp. 216-232, reads something like this modest conception of substance into Aristotle’s *Categories*.

<sup>25</sup> Descartes (1991) pp. 361-362.

<sup>26</sup> Wiggins (1968) p. 92.

<sup>27</sup> Tuomela (1984) p. 24.

with such bodies, we postulate substances such that the one communicates to the other representations together with the consciousness of them, we can conceive a whole series of substances of which the first transmits its state together with its consciousness to the second, the second its own state with that of the preceding substance to the third, and this in turn the states of all preceding substances together with its own consciousness and with their consciousness to another. The last substance would then be conscious of all the states of the previously changed substances, as being its own states, because they would have been transferred to it together with the consciousness of them. And yet it would not have been one and the same person in all these states.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, the position recalls Locke's claim that "the same consciousness... can be transferred from one thinking substance [my gloss: plurality] to another".<sup>29</sup> This early modern view of personal identity, at least in the case of Locke, was largely motivated by ethical and religious concerns, <sup>30</sup> in particular the need to accommodate the view that:

...the Apostle tells us, that at the Great Day when everyone shall *receive according to his doings, the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open*. The sentence shall be justified by the consciousness all persons shall have that they *themselves*, in what bodies soever they appear, or what substances soever that consciousness adheres to, are the *same* that committed those actions and deserve the punishment for them.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Kant (1787/1929) A364a.

<sup>29</sup> Locke *op. cit.* Bk. II Ch. XXVII sec. 13.

<sup>30</sup> This claim is argued for by Ayers (1991) chs. 17, 22, 23, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Locke *op. cit.* Bk. II Ch. XXVII sec. 26.

Similar ethical concerns make urgent the need for an account of how it is possible for Enron, the Metropolitan Police Force, Allied Irish Banks, Anderson Accounting and Railtrack to 'deserve punishment' for actions committed on the basis of persisting commitments, decisions, intentions and states of knowledge regardless of what 'successive pluralities soever they appear in'.

So: I have advocated a *mixed* response to the simple argument, according to which *some* groups are the singular subjects of psychological properties and so possess or constitute minds, while *others* are plural entities, and so are not minded even though they may be subjected to psychological and action predication. We have seen that it makes sense to think of singular groups as entities lacking material properties and that one *irony* of this position is that it is substantially less puzzling than the rival claim that they are material entities.

There is a second *irony*. The *simple argument* gets matters the wrong way round. We set it up as showing that if there are singular groups, then there are group minds. But we have seen that the only reason for thinking that there are singular groups is that, as our interpretative practices reveal, there are persisting psychological properties borne by groups. But this is to say that there are group minds. So the existence of singular groups is inferred from the existence of group minds and not *vice versa*.

To recapitulate: this was *the orthodox view*:

(O<sub>1</sub>) There are groups.

& (O<sub>2</sub>) There are no group minds.

We have seen that:

(T<sub>1</sub>) Conjunct (O<sub>2</sub>) is false, so the orthodox view is false.

And we have seen that, where “group” is understood full-bloodedly as meaning an entity *over and above* a mere plurality of humans:

(T<sub>2</sub>) We have good reason to judge that conjunct (O<sub>1</sub>) is true *only because* we have good reason to judge that conjunct (O<sub>2</sub>) is false.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alston W. P. (1958/1964) "Ontological Commitments" *Philosophy of Mathematics: selected readings* eds. P. Benacerraf, H. Putnam; Oxford: Basil Blackwell pp. 249-257.
- Aristotle (1908) *Metaphysics* trans. W. D. Ross; Oxford: OUP.
- Ayers M. (1991) *Locke Vol. II: Ontology* London: Routledge.
- Bakeman R. and Adamson L. (1984) "Coordinating attention to people and objects in mother-infant and peer-infant interactions" *Child Development* Vol. 55 pp. 1278-1289.
- Baier A. C. (1997) "Doing Things With Others: The Mental Commons" *Commonality and Particularity in Ethics* eds. L. Alanen, S. Heinämaa, T. Wallgren; Basingstoke: Macmillan pp. 15-44.
- Black M. (1979) "More about Metaphor" *Metaphor and Thought* ed. A. Ortony; Cambridge: CUP pp. 19-43.
- Block N. (1980) "Troubles with Functionalism" *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology* Vol. 1 ed. N. Block; London: Methuen pp. 268-305.
- Boolos G. (1998) *Logic, Logic and Logic* ed. R. Jeffrey; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bratman M. E. (1999) *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency* Cambridge: CUP.

- Brodbeck M. (1954/1973) "On the Philosophy of the Social Sciences" *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism* ed. J. O'Neill; London: Heinemann pp. 91-110.
- Cartwright R. (1975/1987) "Scattered Objects" *Philosophical Essays* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press pp. 171-186.
- Chisolm R. M. (1957) *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Clarke T. (1965) "Seeing Surfaces and Physical Objects" *Philosophy in America* ed. M. Black; London: George Allen and Unwin pp. 98-114.
- Cohen G. A. (1966-7) "Beliefs and Rôles" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. LXVII pp.17-34.
- Cole J. and Paillard J. (1998) "Living without Touch and Peripheral Information about Body Position and Movement: Studies with Deafferented Subjects" *The Body and the Self* eds. J. L. Bermúdez, A. Marcel, N. Eilan; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press pp. 245-266.
- Davidson D. (1982) "Paradoxes of irrationality" *Philosophical Essays on Freud* eds. R. Wollheim, J. Hopkins; Cambridge: CUP pp. 289-305.
- Davidson D. (1984/1990) *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Davidson D. (1985a) "Incoherence and Irrationality" *Dialectica* Vol. 39 No. 4 pp. 345-354.



- Davidson D. (1985b) "Deception and Division" *The Multiple Self* ed. J. Elster; Cambridge: CUP pp. 79-92.
- Davidson D. (1991) "Three Varieties of Knowledge" *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supp.* Vol. 30 pp. 153-166.
- Dennett D. C. (1991/1993) *Consciousness Explained* London: Penguin.
- Dennett D. C. (1994) "Get Real" *Philosophical Topics* Vol. 22 No. 1 & 2 pp. 505-562.
- Descartes R. (1984) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol. II ed. J Cottingham, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch; Cambridge: CUP.
- Descartes R. (1991) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol. III ed. J Cottingham, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch, A. Kenny; Cambridge: CUP.
- Dummett M. A. E. (1981) *Frege: Philosophy of Language* London: Duckworth.
- Durkheim E. (1895/1964) *The Rules of Sociological Method* ed. G. E. G. Catlind, trans. S. A. Solovay, J. H. Mueller; New York: Free Press.
- Engels F. (1893/1956) "Letter to Mehring" *Selected Correspondence* Marx K., Engels F.; London: Lawrence and Wishart pp. 540-4.

Frege G. (1884/1996) *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A logico-mathematical enquiry into the concept of number* trans. J. L. Austin; Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Frege G. (1892a/1980) "On Concept and Object" *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*; eds. trans. P. T. Geach, M. Black; Oxford: Basil Blackwell pp. 42-55.

Frege G. (1892b/1980) "On Sense and Meaning" *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*; eds. trans. P. T. Geach, M. Black; Oxford: Basil Blackwell pp. 56-78.

Freud S. (1921/1975) *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Standard ed. Vol. XVIII trans. J. Strachey with A. Freud, A. Strachey, A. Tyson; London: Hogarth.

Gellner E. A. (1956/1973) "Explanations in History" *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism* ed. J. O'Neill; London: Heinemann pp. 248-263.

Gibbard A. (1975) "Contingent Identity" *Journal of Philosophical Logic* Vol. 4 pp. 187-221.

Gilbert M. (1989) *On Social Facts* London: Routledge.

Gilbert M. (1996a) "Walking Together" *Living Together: Rationality, Sociality and Obligation* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield pp. 177-192.

- Gilbert M. (1996b) "Modelling Collective Belief" *Living Together: Rationality, Sociality and Obligation* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield pp. 195-211.
- Gilbert M. (1999) "Remarks on Collective Belief" *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge* ed. F. F. Schmitt; Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield pp. 235-256.
- Gilbert M. (2000) *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Grice H. P. (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hale B. (1987) *Abstract Objects* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hayek F. A. (1942-3/1973) "Scientism and the Study of Society" *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism* ed. J. O'Neill; London: Heinemann pp. 27-67.
- Hayek F. A. (1949) *Individualism and Economic Order* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hesse M. (1974) *The Structure of Scientific Inference* London: Macmillan.
- Hornsby J. (1997) *Simple Mindedness: In Defense of Naive Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

- Hossack K. (2000) "Plurals and Complexes" *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* Vol. 51 pp. 411-443.
- Hume D. (1739-40/1978) *A Treatise of Human Nature* ed. L. A. Selby -Bigge; rev. P. H. Nidditch; Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hurley S. L. (1989) *Natural Reasons: Personality and Polity* Oxford: OUP.
- Le Bon G. (1920) *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* London: Fisher Unwin.
- Leibniz G. W. (1687/1968) "Correspondence with Arnauld" *Basic Writings* trans. G. R. Montgomery; Illinois: Open Court pp. 67-248.
- Locke J. (1690/1965) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* London: Dent.
- Kant I. (1787/1929) *Critique of Pure Reason* Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan.
- Kripke S. A. (1977/1990) "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference" in *The Philosophy of Language* ed. A. P. Martinich; Oxford: OUP pp. 248-267.
- Mandelbaum M. (1955/1973) "Societal Facts" *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism* ed. J. O'Neill; London: Heinemann pp. 221-234.
- Marx K. (1844/1975) "On the Jewish Question" *Early Writings* ed. L. Colletti, trans. R. Livingstone, G. Benton; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin pp. 211-241.

- McDowell J. H. (1998a) *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- McDowell J. H. (1998b) *Mind, Value, and Reality* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Moore G. E. (1918-19) "Some Judgements of Perception" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. XIX pp. 1-29.
- Moore G. E. (1942) "A Reply to my Critics" *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore* ed. P. A. Schlipp; Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press pp. 535-677.
- Moore G. E. (1925/1959) "A Defence of Common Sense" *Philosophical Papers* London: George Allen and Unwin pp. 32-59.
- Moore G. E. (1944/1959) "Russell's 'Theory of Descriptions'" *Philosophical Papers* London: George Allen and Unwin pp. 151-195.
- Nagel T. (1979) "What is it like to be a bat?" *Mortal Questions* Cambridge: CUP pp. 165-180.
- Neale S. (1990) *Descriptions* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Nelson A. J. (1990) "Social Science and the Mental" *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* vol. XV eds. P. A. French, T. E. Uehling Jr., H. K. Wettstein; Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Parfit D. (1984/1989) *Reasons and Persons* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pears D. (1982) "Motivated Irrationality, Freudian theory and cognitive dissonance" *Philosophical Essays on Freud* eds. R. Wollheim, J. Hopkins; Cambridge: CUP pp. 264-288.
- Pears D. (1984) *Motivated Irrationality* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pettit P. (1993) *The Common Mind* Oxford: OUP.
- Pollock J. (1986) *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia: Hutchinson.
- Popper K. A. (1957/1966) *The Poverty of Historicism* London: Routledge And Kegan Paul.
- Quine W. V. O. (1950/1982) *Methods of Logic* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Quine W. V. O. (1996) "Whither Physical Objects?" *Essays in Memory of Imre Lakatos* eds. R. S. Cohen, P. K. Feyerabend, M. W. Wartofsky; Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel pp. 497-504.
- Quinton A. (1975-6) "Social Objects" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. LXXVI pp. 1-27.
- Reid T. (1785/1941) *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* ed. A. D. Woozley; London: Macmillan.

- Rovane C. A. (1998) *The Bounds of Agency: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics* Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rovane C. A. (1999) "Rationality and Identity" *The Philosophy of Donald Davidson* ed. L. E. Hahn; Illinois: Open Court pp. 463-479.
- Ruben D-H (1985) *The Metaphysics of the Social World* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rumfitt I. (2001) "Concepts and Counting" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. CII No. 1 pp. 41-68.
- Russell B. (1903) *Principles of Mathematics* Vol. 1 Cambridge: CUP.
- Russell B. (1905/1990) "On Denoting" *The Philosophy of Language* ed. A. P. Martinich; Oxford: OUP pp. 203-211.
- Russell B. (1919/1970) *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Ryle G. (1949) *The Concept of Mind* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Sartre J-P (1969) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* trans. H. E. Barnes; London: Methuen.
- Scruton R. (1986) *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation* London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson.
- Scruton R. (1989) "Corporate Persons" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supp. Vol. LXIII pp. 239-266.

- Searle J. R. (1979) "Metaphor" *Metaphor and Thought* ed. A. Ortony  
Cambridge: CUP pp. 92-123.
- Searle J. R. (1982) "Minds, Brains and Programs" *The Mind's I: Fantasies  
And Reflections on Self and Soul* comp. and arr. D. R. Hofstadter,  
D. C. Dennett; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin pp. 353-373.
- Searle J. R. (1990) "Collective Intentions and Actions" *Intentions in  
Communication* eds. P. R. Cohen, J. Morgan, M. E. Pollock;  
Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Searle J. R. (1995) *The Construction of Social Reality* Harmondsworth,  
Middlesex: Penguin.
- Searle J. R. (1999) *Mind, Language and Society: Doing Philosophy in the  
Real World* London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.
- Sheehy P. (2001) *The Ontological and Moral Status of Social Groups*  
London University Phd thesis.
- Shoemaker S. (1999) "Self, Body and Coincidence" *Proceedings of the  
Aristotelian Society* Supp. Vol. LXXIII pp. 287-306.
- Simons P. (1987) *Parts: A Study in Ontology* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Strawson P. F. (1959/1987) *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive  
Metaphysics* London: Methuen.



- Stoutland F. (1997) "Why are Philosophers of Action so Anti-Social?"  
*Commonality and Particularity in Ethics* eds. L. Alanen,  
 S. Heinämaa, T. Wallgren; Basingstoke: Macmillan pp. 45-74.
- Tomasello M. (1995) "Joint attention as Social Cognition" *Joint attention:  
 Its origins and role in development* eds. C. Moore, P. J. Dunham;  
 Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum pp. 103-30.
- Tomasello M. (1999) *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* Cambridge,  
 Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Tuomela R. (1984) *A Theory of Social Action* Dordrecht, Netherlands:  
 D. Riedel.
- Tuomela R. and Miller K. (1988) "We-intentions" *Philosophical Studies*  
 Vol. 53 n. 3 pp. 367-387.
- Tuomela R. (1989a) "Actions by Collectives" *Philosophical Perspectives 3:  
 Philosophy of Mind and Action Theory* ed. J. E. Tomberlin;  
 California: Ridgeview pp. 471-496.
- Tuomela R. (1989b) "Collective Action, Supervenience and Constitution"  
*Synthese* Vol. 80 pp. 243-260.
- Tuomela R. (1991) "We will do it: An analysis of Group-Intentions"  
*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. LI No. 2  
 pp. 249-277.
- Tuomela R. (1992) "Group beliefs" *Synthese* Vol. 91 pp. 285-318.

- van Inwagen P. (1990) *Material Beings* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Velleman J. D. (1997) "How to share an intention" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. LVIII No. 1 pp. 29-50.
- Vendler Z. (1967) *Linguistics in Philosophy* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Vermazen B. (1993) "Objects of Intention" *Philosophical Studies* Vol. 71 pp. 223-265.
- Watkins J. W. N. (1954/1973) "Methodological Individualism: A Reply" *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism* ed. J. O'Neill; London: Heinemann pp. 179-184.
- Wiggins D. (1967) *Identity and Spatio-Temporal Continuity* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wiggins D. (1968) "On being in the same place at the same time" *Philosophical Review* Vol. 77 pp. 90-95.
- Wiggins D. (1980) *Sameness and Substance* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wiggins D. (1998) "Substance" *Philosophy: A guide through the subject* Vol. 1 ed. A. C. Grayling; Oxford: OUP pp. 214-246.
- Wiggins D. (2001) *Sameness and Substance Renewed* Cambridge: CUP.

Williams B. A. O. (1978) *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*  
Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Wittgenstein L. (1921/1978) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* trans. D. F.  
Pears, B. F. McGuinness; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Wittgenstein L. (1953/2001) *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G. E. M.  
Anscombe; Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein L. (1967) *Zettel* ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M.  
Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe; Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wright C. (1983) *Frege's Conception of Numbers as Objects* Aberdeen:  
Aberdeen University Press.

Wright C. (1992) *Truth and Objectivity* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard  
University Press.