Proto Sociology

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Understanding the Social II – Philosophy of Sociality

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Acting as a Group Member and Collective Commitment

Raimo Tuomela and Maj Tuomela

Abstract

In this paper we will study two central social notions, acting as a group member and collective commitment. Our study of the first of these notions is – as far as we know – the first systematic work on the topic. Acting as a group member is a central notion that obviously must be understood when speaking of the "we-perspective", group life, and of social life more generally. Thus, not only philosophy of sociality, philosophy of social science, political and moral philosophy but also the various social sciences need this notion and should benefit from our analyses and arguments.

Collective commitment is the other "we-perspective" notion studied in our paper. We have argued for its importance as representing a kind of social glue needed for group members when thinking and acting as a group. In contrast to some other studies (e.g. Gilbert, 1989, 2000, Castelfranchi, 1995) our most elementary notion of collective commitment is not intrinsically normative but is only instrumentally "normative" and intention-relative. Thus our treatment covers more ground than the previous accounts do.

On Collective Identity

Kay Mathiesen

Abstract

In this paper, I examine a particularly important kind of social group, what I call a "collective." Collectives are distinguished from other social groups by the fact that the members of collectives can think and act "in the name of" the group; they can collectively plan for its future, work for its success, and grieve at its failure. As a result, collectives have certain person-like properties that other social groups lack. I argue that persons form collectives by taking a shared first person plural perspective based on a shared collective self-concept. This collective self-concept defines the collective, and, along with the causal history of the collective, uniquely identifies it. Over time, collectives persist through changes in membership by maintaining this collective self-concept. Changes in the collective self-concept may be identity preserving, however, if they result from processes that naturally flow from the identity of the collective and which are appropriately caused by (or accepted by) the collective and are connected to previous stages of the collective via collective memories.

A Collective's Rational Trust in a Collective's Action

Maj Tuomela

Abstract

In this paper, an account of rational social normative trust (RSNTR) and a context for rational trust (Y) will be offered and briefly argued. The account concerns a person's trust in another person that he will perform a specific action. Rational social normative trust is conceived as the trustor's accepting attitude vis-à-vis his dependence on the trustee. This is an attitude that the trustor acquires non-intentionally, because of his belief, due to their relationship of mutual respect, that he is entitled to expect of the trustee, on social or (quasi-) moral normative grounds, that the trustee will intentionally gratify him by his action, and because of his belief that he will indeed do so at least in part in deference to his rights. The "trust context Y" involves the conditions for a situation where the trustor can rationally consider whether intentional gratification may be expected. Rational trust is distinguished from the more general technical concept of rational reliance by the presence of context Y and the trustor's expectation of the trustee's intentional gratification of the trustor. The trustor's social normative expectation of the trustee's intentional "acting with goodwill" towards him is the central belief of the trustor involved in rational social normative trust. This belief does not require the trustor's belief of the trustee's genuine attitude of goodwill towards the trustor. The account distinguishes social normative trust from predictive "trust" by the trustor's socially grounded normative, as opposed to only predictive, expectation of the trustee's intentional gratification of the trustor. Normative trust, and also predictive "trust," are more than an evaluation of a person's trustworthiness. In addition to expecting of the trustee and/or expecting that the trustee will intentionally gratify him, the trustor feels comfortable about being dependent on the trustee, and has an accepting attitude regarding his dependent position. Both in normative and predictive trust, the trustor may decide to depend, or to refrain from depending, on the trustee for an action. In the case of normative trust, the trustor genuinely trusts the person he decides to depend on, but in the case of predictive "trust," his "trusting" is comparable to relying on some features of the trustee or the situation. "Deciding to trust" is to make a bet on someone – to act as if one trusted. The account of rational trust (RSNTR) will be applied to a case where the trustee is a collective agent. Criteria for collective agency is then added. Collective agency is discussed, mainly, in the light of Raimo Tuomela's work. When the trustor is a collective, the criteria for collective agency should be satisfied for the trustor as well.

Social Action in Large Groups

Ulrich Baltzer

Abstract

Large Groups are not constituted simply by adding further members to small groups. There is a qualitative difference between the social actions which take place in small communities and those in large ones. Large communities are irreducibly characterized by anonymity, i.e., the members of large groups don't know of most of the other members as individual. Therefore, social action in large groups is based on a sign process: each member of a large group is understood as a representative of the other anonymous members of the group as well as a sign for the group as a whole.

What do We Mean by "We"?

Stephen P. Turner

Abstract

The analytic philosophy form of the problem of collective intentionality originated with the claim that individual statements of the form "I intend x" cannot add up to a "we intend x" statement. Analytic philosophers from Wilfrid Sellars on have pursued a strategy that construes these sentences as individual tellings of statements whose form is collective. The point of the strategy is to avoid the problematic idea of a real collective subject. This approach creates unusual epistemic problems. Although "telling" of collective intentions is parallel to the expression of individual intention, one can be deceived about them. I suggest that none of the supposed evidence could solve the problem of deception, because there is no fact of the relevant kind to be deceived about. I also argue that this strategy is unnecessary. Statements like Joe Namath's "guarantee" of victory in the Superbowl are model non-collective statements which are interchangeable with many supposed collective statements. Yet, no novel mode of "telling" and nothing epistemically anomalous is required by this statement. The statement is merely an individual statement conditional on a variety of facts, which happen to include facts about other people, whose only commitments are epistemic. Sellars's problem structure is then itself critiqued to suggest that it confuses a grammatical problem with a factual-theoretical problem about the reality of collectivities and the cognitive character of intention attributions, and further confuses collective intentionality with a problem about the nature of morality.

Collective Intentionality, Complex Economic Behavior, and Valuation

John B. Davis

Abstract

This paper argues that collective intentionality analysis (principally as drawn from the work of Raimo Tuomela) provides a theoretical framework, complementary to traditional instrumental rationality analysis, that allows us to explain economic behavior as 'complex.' Economic behavior may be regarded as complex if it cannot be reduced to a single explanatory framework. Contemporary mainstream economics, in its reliance on instrumental rationality as the exclusive basis for explaining economic behavior, does not offer an account of economic behavior as complex. Coupling collective intentionality analysis with instrumental rationality analysis, however, makes such an account possible, since collective intentionality analysis arguably presupposes a distinct form of rationality, here labeled a deontological or principle-based rationality.

Institutions, Collective Goods and Moral Rights

Seumas Miller

Abstract

In this paper I offer a teleological account of social institutions. Specifically, I argue that: (a) social institutions have as their defining purposes or ends the provision of collective goods, and; (b) participants in social institutions have moral rights to such collective goods, and the moral rights in question are individual, and jointly held, moral rights.

The Micro-Macro Constitution of Power

Cristiano Castelfranchi

Abstract

Our focus is the dialectic relationship between personal, social, collective, and institutional powers; that is the Proteus-like nature of power; "how power produces power", how one form of power founds another form of it. Even the magic, "count as", performative power of institutional acts is given from the institution to the lay-agent, but hidden is given to the institution by the acceptance and conformity of the mass of people. We pro-

vide an 'ontology' of personal powers, deriving from them (plus the interdependencies relations) the most important forms of power at the interpersonal level ('comparative power', 'power-over', rewarding power', 'power of influencing', 'negotiation power', 'collective power', 'deontic power'). In the second part, we discuss a more institutional notion of power, the process of 'empowerment' and its relation with 'permission'.

Foundations for a Social Ontology

Amie L. Thomasson

Abstract

The existence of a social world raises both the metaphysical puzzle: how can there be a "reality" of facts and objects that are genuinely created by human intentionality? and the epistemological puzzle: how can such a product of human intentionality include objective facts available for investigation and discovery by the social sciences? I argue that Searle's story about the creation of social facts in The Construction of Social Reality *is too narrow to fully solve either side of the puzzle. By acknowledging different forms of rules for constructing social reality paralleling rules for creating 'make-believe' truths, we can build a more comprehensive social ontology and allow for a more appropriate range of discovery for the social sciences. Nonetheless, I argue that despite the parallels between methods for constructing make-believe and social facts, it would be mistaken to treat talk about social reality as involving a mere pretense to refer.*

On the Objectivity of Social Facts

Antti Saaristo

Abstract

It is a commonplace that social facts are objective in the sense that we cannot change them at will. A further platitude is that in another sense social facts are not objective, since they are fundamentally dependent on human practices. This paper presents a conceptual framework for analysing these seemingly contradictory intuitions. I argue that although John Searle's distinction between epistemic and ontological objectivity takes us in the right direction, Searle's discussion is nonetheless insufficient for explaining what it is in the nature of social facts that gives rise to the opposing intuitions. I argue that a Durkheimian account, especially as developed by Uskali Mäki, can fare better. Finally, I show how the Durkheimian account serves as the conceptual basis for distinguishing between methodological individualism and different forms of methodological holism.

Explaining Practices

Petri Ylikoski

Abstract

This paper discusses Stephen Turner's recent critique of theories of social practices. It shows that his arguments are valid against common explanatory uses of these concepts, but not against practices in general. There are plenty of legitimate non-explanatory uses for practice concepts. The paper also suggests that Turner's main arguments derive from two principles that have much wider application than practice theories. Consequently, they should be considered as general constraints on every social theory.

Some Notes on Ontological Commitment and the Social Sciences

Steven Miller

Abstract

The analysis is a reflection of Alston's contention (in response to Putnam's conceptual relativity) that much of what we assert or believe carries no real ontological commitment. I place these remarks in the context of the social sciences, and attempt to show for the special sciences the condition holds true. The major reason for this is that our notions of "collective intentionality" (Searle) or "weakly conceiver-independent" (Moser) reality depends on the successful blocking of a regress problem. Because this problem has not been sufficiently addressed, what passes as an ontological commitment is in effect a clever semantic equivalence.

Two Modes of Collective Belief

Christopher McMahon

Abstract

Margaret Gilbert has defended the view that there is such a thing as genuine collective belief, in contrast to mere collective acceptance. I argue that even if she is right, we need to distinguish two modes of collective belief. On one, a group's believing something as a body is a matter of its relating to a proposition, as a body, in the same way that an individual who has formed a belief on some matter relates to the proposition believed. On the other, a group's believing something as a body is a matter of its relating to a proposition, as a body, in the same way that in individual who is forming a belief on

some matter relates to the proposition believed.

What Really Divides Gilbert and the Rejcetionists?

K. Brad Wray

Abstract
Rejectionists argue that collective belief ascriptions are best understood as instances of collective acceptance rather than belief. Margaret Gilbert objects to rejectionist accounts of collective belief statements. She argues that rejectionists rely on a questionable methodology when they inquire into the nature of collective belief ascriptions, and make an erroneous inference when they are led to believe that collectives do not really have beliefs. Consequently, Gilbert claims that collective belief statements are best understood as instances of belief. I critically examine Gilbert's criticisms of rejectionism. I argue that rejectionism is still a viable account of collective belief ascriptions. I also argue that Gilbert's most powerful criticism provides important insight into what really stands between her and the rejectionists. Gilbert and the rejectionists do not yet agree about what background assumptions can be made in developing an account of collective belief ascriptions.

Why Accept Collective Beliefs? Reply to Gilbert

Anthonie Meijers

Abstract
Margaret Gilbert has recently argued in ProtoSociology *against what she called my rejectionist's view according to which (i) we have to make a distinction between the intentional states of believing and accepting and (ii) genuine group beliefs, i.e. group beliefs that cannot be reduced to the beliefs of the individual members of a group, should be understood in terms of the acceptance of a view rather than of beliefs proper. In this reply I discuss Gilbert's objections.*

Rejecting Rejectionism

Deborah Perron Tollefsen

Abstract
There is a small, but growing, number of philosophers who acknowledge the existence of plural subjects – collective agents that act in the world and are the appropriate subject of intentional state ascriptions. Among those who believe in collective agency, there are some who wish to limit the types of intentional state ascriptions that can be made to collectives. According to rejectionists, although groups can accept *propositions, they cannot* believe *them. In this paper I argue that, given the centrality of belief and the similarities between individual belief and collective attitudes, we ought to reject rejectionism. If one believes in collective agency, one must also believe in collective belief.*

Goldman's *Knowledge in a Social World*: Correspondence Truth and the Place of Justification in a Veritistic Social Epistemology

Patrick Rysiew

Abstract
Knowledge in a Social World *(KSW) is Alvin Goldman's sustained treatment of social epistemology. As in his previous, 'individualistic' epistemology, Goldman's lodestar is the idea that it is the truth-aptness of certain processes/methods which marks them out for our epistemic approval. Here, I focus on issues concerning the framework of* KSW: *Goldman's claim that a correspondence theory of truth is favoured/required by his veritistic social epistemology (VSE); and the issue of whether a VSE of the sort Goldman elaborates and defends shouldn't be (not replaced but) supplemented by more procedural or 'justification-centred' considerations.*