

## Shared Agency Involves Changing Perspective: A Counterexample to Bratman

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Shared agency is manifested in paradigm cases where two agents move a table together, share a smile or cry together, paint a house together, change a nappy together or kiss.

**Question** Which kinds of planning mechanisms enable agents to coordinate their actions and what (if anything) do these mechanisms tell us about the nature of shared agency?

### 1. Shared vs Parallel but Merely Individual Agency

Two sisters cycling to school together exercise shared agency whereas two strangers who happened to be cycling the same route side-by-side do not (compare Gilbert 1990).

When members of a flash mob respond to a pre-arranged cue by noisily opening their newspapers, they exercise shared agency. But when others happen to noisily open their newspapers in response to the same cue, they do not (compare Searle 1990).

**Question** What distinguishes exercises of shared agency from parallel exercises of merely individual agency?

**Simple Account** Intentional joint action occurs when there is an act-type,  $\phi$ , such that each of several agents intends that they, these agents,  $\phi$ .

### 2. Bratman on Interconnected Planning

'each agent does not just intend that the group perform the [...] joint action. Rather, each agent intends as well that the group perform this joint action in accordance with subplans (of the intentions in favor of the joint action) that mesh' (Bratman 1992, p. 332).

Our plans are *interconnected* just if facts about your plans feature in mine and conversely.

'shared intentional [i.e. collective] agency consists, at bottom, in interconnected planning agency of the participants' (Bratman 2011).

*Bratman's claim.* For you and I to have a collective/shared intention that we J it is sufficient that: '(1)(a) I intend that we J and (b) you intend that we J; (2) I intend that we J in accordance with and because of la, lb, and meshing subplans of la and lb; you intend that we J in accordance with and because of la, lb, and meshing subplans of la and lb; (3) 1 and 2 are common knowledge between us' (Bratman 1993, View 4)

### 3. Counterexample to Bratman

We have an *unshared intention* that we  $\langle J_1, J_2 \rangle$  where  $J_1 \neq J_2$  just if:

(1') (a) I intend that we  $J_1$  and (b) you intend that we  $J_2$

(2') I intend that we  $J_1$  in accordance with and because of la, lb, and meshing subplans of la and lb; you intend that we  $J_2$  ...

(3') 1 and 2 are common knowledge between us.

Our individual subplans concerning our  $\langle J_1, J_2 \rangle$ -ing

*mesh* just in case there is some way I could  $J_1$  and you could  $J_2$  that would not violate either of our subplans but would, rather, involve the successful execution of those subplans.

### 4. Parallel Planning

A representation or plan is *agent-neutral* if its content does not specify any particular agent or agents; a planning process is agent-neutral if it involves only agent-neutral representations.

Practical vs theoretical reasoning: 'The mark of practical reasoning is that the thing wanted is *at a distance* from the immediate action, and the immediate action is calculated as a way of getting or doing or securing the thing wanted' (Anscombe 1957, p. 79). See also Millgram (2001, p. 1): 'Practical reasoning is reasoning directed towards action: figuring out what to do, as contrasted with figuring out how the facts stand.'

Some agents each *individually make a plan for all the agents' actions* just if: there is an outcome; each agent individually, without discussion, communication or prior arrangement, plans for that outcome; and each agent's plan specifies roles for herself and all the other agents.

Our plans are *parallel* just if we each make a plan for all of our actions.

Two or more plans *match* just if they are the same, or similar enough that the differences don't matter in the following sense. First, for a particular agent's plan, let the *self part* be those steps concerning what will be the agent's own actions and let the *other part* be the other steps. Now consider what would happen if, for a particular agent, the other part of her

plan were as nearly identical to the self part (or parts) of the other's plan (or others' plans) as psychologically possible. If the agent's self part would not be significantly different, let us say that any differences between her plan the other's (or others') are not relevant for her. Finally, if for some plans the differences are not relevant for any of the agents, then let us say that the differences don't matter.

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