

SOCIAL ONTOLOGY & COLLECTIVE INTENTIONALITY

2022 VIENNA

Keynote Speakers

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ISOS Essay Prize Winner
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INTERNATIONAL
SOCIAL ONTOLOGY
SOCIETY



Memory slices by Anna Strasser
DISCLAIMER: JUST MEMORIES – AIMING FOR CORRESPONDENCE WITH REALITY BUT CANNOT GUARANTEE IT.

Thomas Bugnyar: Testing social cognition in ravens

keynote



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE HYPOTHESIS → SOCIAL LIFE = DRIVING FORCE FOR THE EVOLUTION OF COGNITION

- long-term social relationships like 'friendships' (key feature of primates)

RECENT DATA FROM CAPTIVE & WILD RAVENS CORVUS CORAX

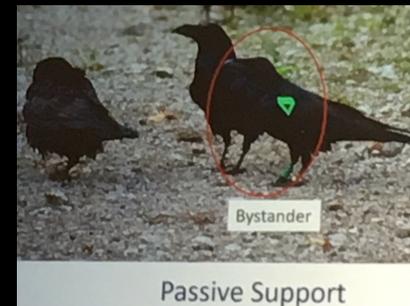
1. quality of social relationships of ravens is comparable to that of primates
2. ravens are aware of their own & others' relationships
3. ravens use this knowledge selectively & strategically

two social classes: territorial breeders & non-breeders
'open' groups: aggregations of food / fission-fusion dynamics

social knowledge: acoustic communication, behavioral observation

- can discriminate friends from foes
- bond through support or interventions
- Machiavellian Intelligence & Social Intelligence

USE OF KNOWLEDGE: SOCIAL SUPPORT



Boucherie et al. (2022). Dominance in a socially dynamic setting: hierarchical structure and conflict dynamics in ravens' foraging groups. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B* 377. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.0446>

ONE OF THE FACTORS DRIVING THE COGNITIVE EVOLUTION IN RAVENS:
NEED FOR & USE OF BONDING PARTNERS

Tobias Störzinger & Tom Poljanšek: Social Ontology and the manifest image of man?

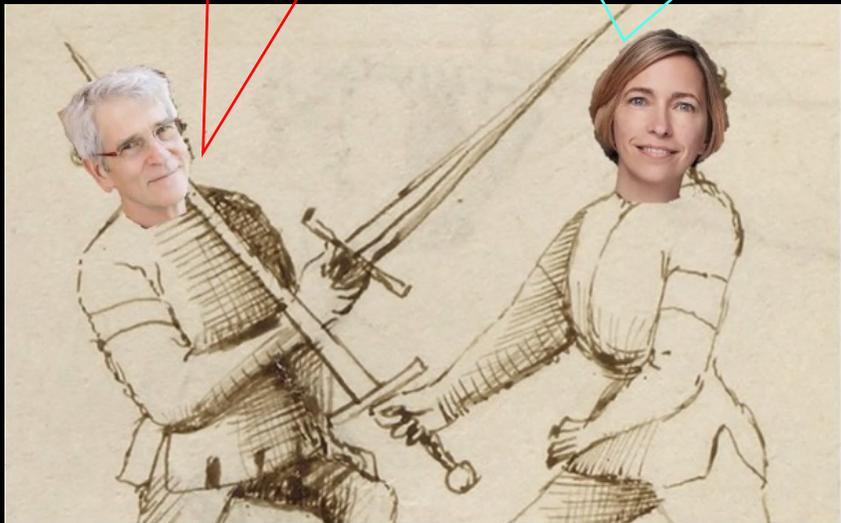
A Sellarian Perspective on the Relationship between Social Ontology and the Social Sciences



INTERPRETATIVISM VS. REDUCTIONISM

There is never a group agent but only a group of agents who coordinate & cooperate in a specific way!

Interpretivism does not start with metaphysical speculations about the nature of the mental, but with our practice of attributing intentional states.



Ludwig

Tollefsen



Wilfrid Sellars
"Philosophy & the Scientific Image of Man"

relationship between
manifest image &
scientific image

understanding of ourselves &
the world as we encounter
them in our everyday
practice

reconstruction of phenomena
through the introduction of
theoretical concepts

My ultimate goal is
unifying these different
perspectives into a
"stereoscopic vision where
two differing perspectives on
a landscape are fused into
one coherent experience."

Bill Wringe:

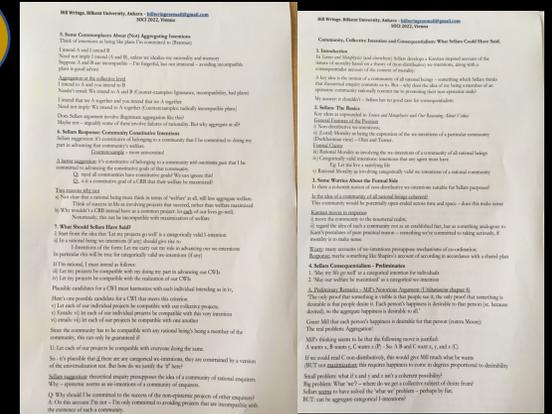
Collective Intentions, Consequentialism and Community: What Sellars Could Have Said

SELLARS ARGUMENT FOR CONSEQUENTIALISM BASED ON HIS CONCEPTION OF MORAL NORMS AS THE WE-INTENTIONS OF AN IDEALISED COMMUNITY.



Wilfried Sellars
"Philosophy & the Scientific
Image of Man"

Kantian-inspired account of the nature of morality based on a theory of (non-distributive) we-intentions, along with a consequentialist account of the content of morality.



Sellars attempt to derive consequentialist conclusions from formalist considerations about the nature of morality fails, but that his position contains resources which could be developed to support a more Kantian view of the content of morality. Although the formal dimension of Sellars account is highly promising, his substantive proposal – and in particular the proposal that ‘It shall (we, CRB) be that our welfare is maximized’ is categorically rational involves a straightforward fallacy of aggregation.

If there are any categorical we-intentions, they must take a particular form.

Olof Leffler:

Agent-Switching, Plight Inescapability, and Collective Action



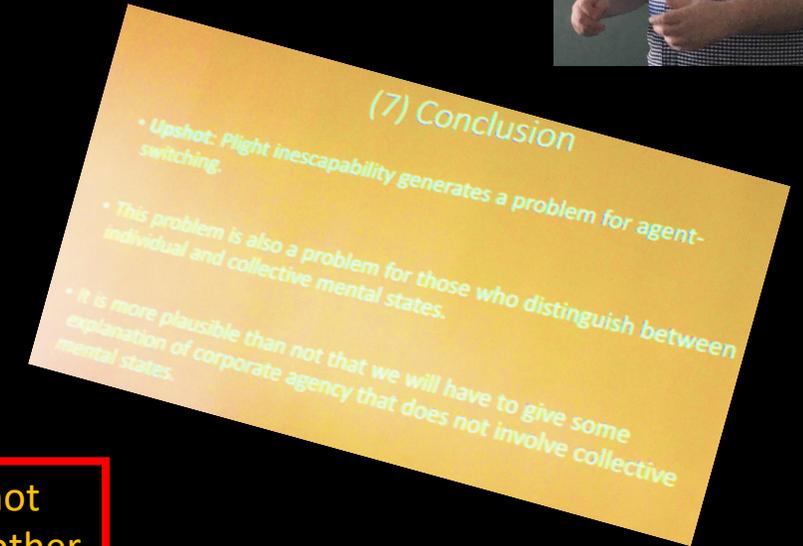
Individual agents cannot switch into participating in other form of agency (e.g. collective) if their commitments differ.

PREMISES

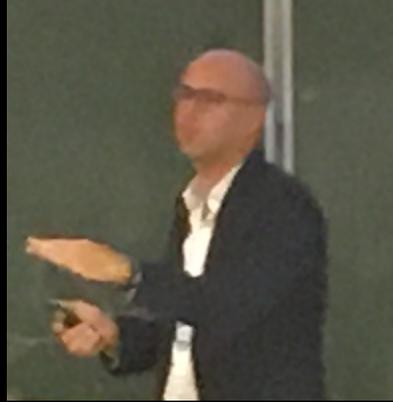
- (1) Individual agency is plight inescapable.
 - *continuously faced with performing new actions, so even choosing not to act is still to act*
- (2) If PREMISE 1 THEN individual agents are continuously faced with fully exercising their own agential capacities (absent limits external to agency).
 - *Facing acting is to face acting fully successfully, and acting fully successfully involves making full use of one's capacities.*
- (3) If PREMISE 2 THEN they cannot switch into participating in other forms of agency (e.g. collective) if their commitments differ.

(C) Individual agents cannot switch into participating in other form of agency (e.g. collective) if their commitments differ.

- However, if collective agents are not treated like separate entities but are treated reductively as constituted by individuals' attitudes, individuals need not switch when acting collectively, for their commitments constitute the collectives. As collective agency is possible, the argument against agent-switching supports thinking of it reductively, for example like Bratman (2013).



Nikos Nikiforakis: Predicting social tipping and norm change



QUESTIONS:

1. Why do societies fail to abandon detrimental norms?
2. Can we predict norm change?
3. What types of policies are best for socially beneficial change?
4. Does social diversity increase the likelihood of socially beneficial change?

SOCIAL TIPPING: INSTANCES OF SUDDEN CHANGE THAT UPEND SOCIAL ORDER

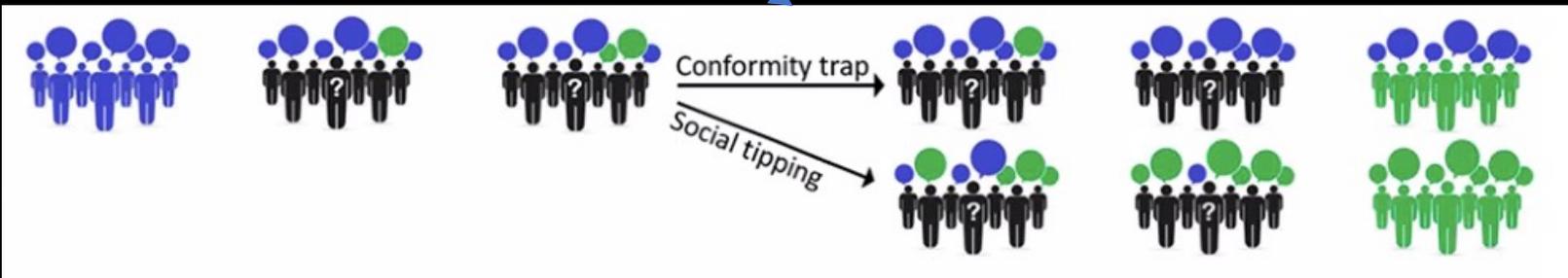
- rarely anticipated & usually understood only in hindsight
- significant implications for welfare

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PREDICTING SOCIAL TIPPING

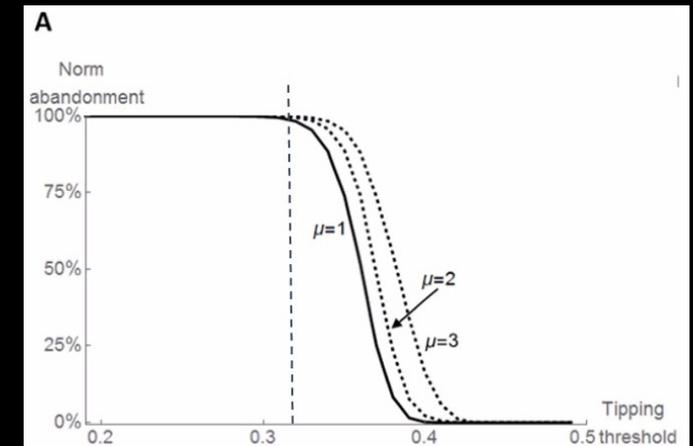
- Data from large-scale laboratory experiments used to
- evaluate theoretical predictions,
 - test policy interventions,
 - explore the characteristics of leaders of social change

FIRST MOVER DILEMMA



SOCIAL TIPPING THRESHOLD:

$$f_{TT} = 0.5 - 0.5b/p$$



BENEFIT-COST RATIO OF NORM CHANGE IS A KEY DETERMINANT OF THE PROBABILITY OF SOCIAL TIPPING

Mattias Gunnemyr: Sartorio and the Thirsty Traveller



A traveller fills his canteen with water before taking a trip into the desert. He needs the water to survive. He has two enemies who want him dead, A and B. A secretly replaces the water in the canteen with sand. Later, B steals the canteen thinking that it contains water. The traveller then dies of thirst. Who is responsible for the traveller's death?



NEITHER ENEMY **CAUSED** THE TRAVELLER'S DEATH
BUT WE HAVE THE INTUITION THAT AT LEAST ONE OF
THEM IS **MORALLY RESPONSIBLE** FOR HIS DEATH

DISJUNCTIVE FACT
— THE STEALING-OR-SUBSTITUTING —
CAUSED THE DEATH OF THE
TRAVELLER

Sartorio (2016): It is possible to be morally responsible for an outcome without having caused it.

THE COMPARISON ARGUMENT

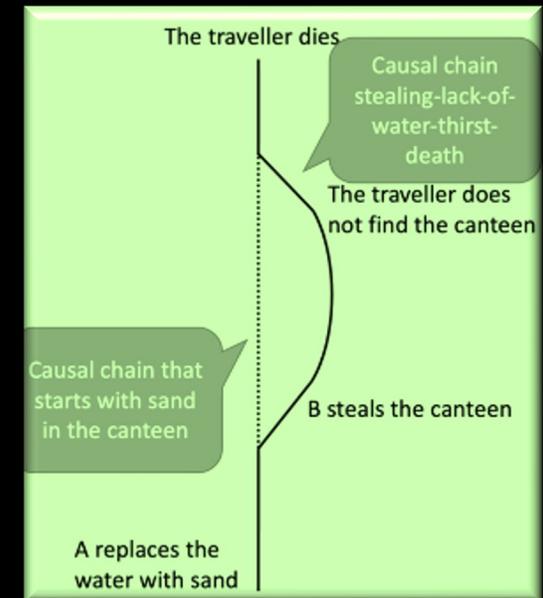
- parallel cases where our intuitions are clearer

OBJECTION: BUT they do not have the same structure (e.g., not counterfactually depending on B's plan)

THE MERE SWITCHES ARGUMENT

- what each enemy does works as a mere switch, and mere switches are not causes

OBJECTION: BUT neither what A did nor what B did protrudes as a mere switch



McLaughlin (1925-27), Mackie (1980), Hart & Honoré (1985), Wright (2013), Talbert (2015), Sartorio (2015, 2016), Bernstein (2019)

B did cause the death because his action build a causal chain

Franz Altner: Why care about a corporate will?



WIDESPREAD CLAIM: STRUCTURED GROUPS CAN MEET THE CONDITIONS FOR MORAL AGENCY

List, Petit, Björnsson, Hess, Hindrick, Toleffson

Strawsonian understanding:

PARTICIPATE IN OUR PRACTICE OF RESPONSIBILITY
CONSTITUTED BY REACTIVE ATTITUDES
(which express how much we care about the quality of will)



Davidsonian understanding:

GROUPS ACT IF THEY RESPOND TO REASONS, WHICH
ARE CONSTITUTED BY A BELIEF & DESIRE PAIR



Watson (1994). "Two faces of responsibility"

The "belief-desire account of action [...] obscures the relevant distinction between [...] voluntary conduct and operant conditioning, between structural defects and virtues. [...] We can't be rightly blamed unless we have control of the causes of our conduct. If we lack control of our desires [...] we lack control over our wills."

TWO CHALLENGES for most accounts of group action

- How to avoid failing to do justice to structural defects of groups, which undermine their capacity to be capable of a will.
- How to avoid failing to distinguish between activities that are due to the agent and other activities that are external to it and in which the authorship of the group is undermined.

Robert Williams: What in Ludwig's world are institutions?



plural groups: abundant | membership essential & eternal
singular groups: sparse, membership contingent & temporary

LUDWIG:= singular groups are plural groups, standing in 'e-membership' relations

- when an institution acts, all of its members are agents of that action

- "The supreme court sang"

[The X: X is a supreme court][Exists event E][Exists past time t]
(Each and only x which is an e-member of X at t is an agent of E)
& (E is an event of singing) & At(E,t)).

OBJECTION TO LUDWIG'S IDENTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS WITH THE SET OF THEIR MEMBERS

PROBLEM

Monday: The Knights have members A,B. The Knaves have members B,C.
Tuesday: A leaves Knights and joins Knaves. C leaves Knaves and joins Knights
Ludwig: The Knights = The Knaves = {A,B,C}.

BUT Suppose A and B sing a duet on Monday.
True: "On M, the Knights sang a duet". False: "On M, the Knaves sang a duet".

no unique e-membership relation associated with {A,B,C}
not determinable ! ambiguous / content sensitive

Natalie Sebanz

keynote



EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR

- including the partner's action in planning
- anticipating joint outcomes
- Task partners consider joint action cost
 - minimizing joint movements cost
- handling joint pauses
- co-actors facilitate coordination by increasing the predictability of their actions

Task partners do not just plan their actions around others; their own planning includes the planning of the task partner's actions by relying on motor representations. This can solve problems of relating own and other contributions (Butterfill & Sinigaglia, 2022).

More adaptation increases commitment towards a partner (McEllin, Felber, & Michael, 2022).

Co-actors who invest effort into coordination through sensorimotor communication are trusted more (McEllin & Michael, 2022)

High coordination signals group cohesion and commitment (McEllin & Sebanz, in prep.; Michael, Sebanz, & Knoblich, 2016)

It also raises the need to keep self and other apart (e.g. Novembre et al., 2012)

Conclusion

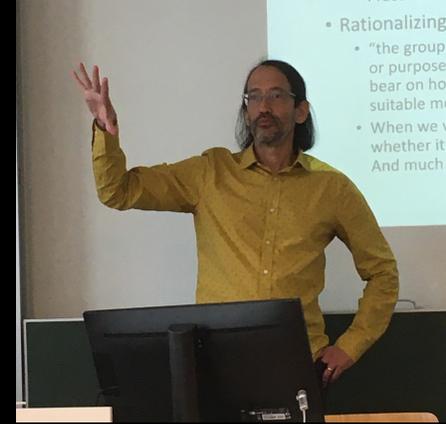
Experimental research has shed light on the cognitive mechanisms involved in joint action:

People have a tendency to include the actions of their task partners and related environmental constraints in their action planning.

Their action planning and monitoring is guided by representations of joint action outcomes, and they consider what is efficient from a group perspective.

Abe Roth:

What is it for collective attitudes to be implemented & acted on, and why does it matter?



1

ENTITLEMENT THESIS:

Some of one's beliefs are rationally warranted by reasons that one is not in a position to generate, reasons that one might not even possess.

2

SOME REASONS CAN ONLY BE CREATED BY GROUPS

These reasons, and the warranted status of the corresponding beliefs, can only be generated by certain supra-individual social entities such as groups, communities, enterprises, institutions etc.

3

ONLY MINDS HAVE REASONS

Reasons (in the relevant sense) are only generated by minds with agency.

GROUPS HAVE AGENCY AND MINDS

The groups generating (many of) one's reasons for belief (and action) are entities with agency and minds of their own.

Cansu Hepcaglayan: Aristotle on Joint Commitment



	Gilbert' joint commitment	Aristotle's homoneia
single body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> constitute a single body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can be ascribed to a city (=single body)
agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mutual understanding (intended goal & how to reach this) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all parties have to agree on collectively advantageous ends
commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all parties should be committed to jointly espoused goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all parties have to commit to those ends
acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fulfill the behavioral conditions to reach the goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all parties have to act according to this collective decision
the extent of the agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> non-basic / derived commitments do not require the knowledge how a goal can be achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agreement on important ends regarding collective interest

homonoia → like-mindedness

- agree on what things are collectively advantageous
- choose (prohaireo) those things
- act according to this collective decision

citizens

1. deliberate and come to a consensus on which goals to pursue as a body to bring about collective advantages
2. commit to these goals
3. act in way that accords with their roles in the city to realize this commitment

Michael Schmitz:

"Go for a walk?" - Initiating joint commitments through questions



NEW ACCOUNT OF QUESTIONS: THE HIGHER-LEVEL ACT ACCOUNT

- not like assertions & directions | no force-content distinction | no forceless propositions as their contents
BUT **HIGHER-LEVEL ILLOCUTIONARY ACT OF QUESTIONING**
 - put forward assertions or directions themselves in order to elicit yes-no responses
 - AS (it rains)" / "? DIR (go for a walk)"
 - context created by the **higher-level illocutionary act of questioning**
 - assertoric or directive force indicators present knowledge positions the subjects seek

EXPLAIN PRACTICAL COMMITMENT & JOINT COMMITMENT:

- experience of joint attention, deliberation, communication (VIA eye contact, alignment, posture, attunement, intonation contour ...)
→ nonconceptually determine that what is being proposed or under consideration is a joint action and a joint commitment.

overcoming the force-content distinction – and thus a picture of intentionality centered around the idea that all content is propositional and conceptual – is crucial for a proper understanding of collective intentionality.

Arto Laitinen: Normativity of social conventions

keynote



- 1) **GENUINE NORMATIVITY**
normative reasons providing justification speak in favor of acting
- 2) **SOCIAL PRESSURE / NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS**
other sense of normativity often not based on genuine normative reasons
- 3) **REQUIREMENTS OF RATIONALITY**
means-ends-rationality / modus ponens may be normative but do not generate normative reasons

BOOTSTRAPPING OBJECTION
contra the idea that intentions or desires would be reasons for action



THE MERE FACT THAT I DESIRE OR INTEND SOMETHING DOES NOT MAKE IT DESIRABLE*

*intending sth. IS NOT THE SAME AS having a normative reason to intend

BUT EXERCISES OF NORMATIVE POWERS* SEEM TO CREATE NORMATIVE REASONS SEEMINGLY EX NIHILO IN A (RELATIVELY) CONTENT-INDEPENDENT WAY

**promises, democratic decisions, authoritative commands*



Is the normative significance of social conventions dependent on A or B?

- A: how good or bad they are - **value-based**
- B: some content-independent normative significance **normative power (joint commitment)?**



MERGE VALUE-BASED & JOINT COMMITMENT
→ **role-obligations to criticize bad conventions & comply with conventions at the same time**



Raul Hakli: How to formulate team reasoning

ROLE OF TEAM REASONING IN COLLECTIVE INTENTIONALITY

