

COLLECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND GROUP REASONS

by

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Abstract

This paper discusses collective intentionality and group reasons starting from the intuitive distinction between acting as a private person versus acting as a group member. Accordingly one may distinguish between I-mode (or private) acting and acting as in the we-mode (as a group member). We-mode acting is essentially based on group reasons, viz. on what the group decides, orders, or requires (etc.) and where the group members qua group members give some of their "natural" authority to the group. This contrasts with the I-mode case where a person in principle is fully in charge of whatever she undertakes.

The above ideas are elaborated in the paper and discussed especially in the context where the group members jointly intend to do something together.

I The We-mode and the I-mode

Human beings are social beings living and adapted to living in groups. They can think and act as group members and as "private" persons. Functioning as a group member requires functioning on the basis of group reasons, or so I argue, and this again requires thinking based on collective intentionality ("aboutness"). Collective intentionality in its central sense is based on "we-thinking," thinking in terms of a "we-perspective."

The following two basic kinds of collective intentionality can be discerned:

(a) Full-blown or "we-mode" collective intentionality, which involves (i) shared "for-groupness" based on collective acceptance, and (ii) collective commitment to the shared content. Here for-groupness satisfies a strong kind collectivity condition (see below) making precise the intuitive idea of the

participants necessarily “standing or falling” together with respect to the satisfaction or truth or attributability (as the case may be) of the shared content.

(b) “I-mode” collective intentionality, which in the case of acting as a group member contingently involves shared “progroupness” but not the satisfaction of the (strong) collectivity condition and which the person still acting in a privately committed way, in the “progroup” I-mode, as I say.¹

Functioning as a group member in the full sense accordingly is functioning in the we-mode (in sense (a)) and is of course to be distinguished from functioning as a private person, in the “I-mode,” even in cases of kind (b) where group reasons become involved. We-mode acting is essentially based on group reasons, viz. on what the group decides, orders, or requires (etc.) and where the group members qua group members give some of their “natural” authority to the group. This contrasts with the I-mode case where a person in principle is fully in charge of whatever she undertakes. The we-mode level can be spoken of as the proper *group level* while the I-mode level gives the *private level* of social life.

Let me elaborate on the above. As said, acting as a group member in the we-mode sense *constitutively* involves acting for a collectively constructed *group reason*—the group gives a group member reasons to think, “emote,” and act in certain ways. For instance, the group’s constitutive goals, values, and beliefs provide such group reasons. Viewed from the group members’ we-perspective we have examples of group attitudes such as “We will build a bridge together” (group intention), “We believe that stars determine our fate,” or “We believe that euros are our money” (group beliefs). Such we-mode group attitudes can serve as full-blown group reasons. Thus, that “we believe, etc, that thus and so” can serve as a group member’s reason to act in certain appropriate ways amounting to his part of the group member’s collective action, broadly understood. In contrast, the I-mode is concerned *only* with “private” personal and interpersonal reasons and relations as well as with groups involving such ingredients. Group reasons in a weak sense may contingently be involved. When they are, we are dealing with I-mode collective intentionality. More typically, shared attitudes had as a private person represent I-mode collective intentionality.

A central case illustrating that the indispensability of group reasons at least in some contexts is provided by social institutions. They involve special fully collectively constructed institutional, “non-natural,” contents (e.g., “Euros are *our* money”), and this falls or at any rate seems to fall, beyond the conceptual resources of the I-mode. The important divide here is between a group thinking and acting as one agent versus some agents acting and interacting, perhaps in concert, in pursuit of their (possibly

shared) private goals. Group reasons (we-mode reasons) and I-mode reasons (private reasons) for acting and having attitudes thus are clearly of a different kind, and accordingly the group level (containing group reasons) is not reducible to the private, I-mode level, although these levels as such are compatible. Accordingly, only the we-mode can properly account for the generality that the group level involves with respect to group members (change of membership, future members, etc.) and the kind of (partial) depersonalization that group life involves.

We-mode thinking, feeling, and acting presuppose collective acceptance of the group's constitutive goals, values, norms, standards, traditions, etc., briefly its "ethos," or of some other, *nonconstitutive* content as the object of the group's "attitudes." The collectively accepted contents must be taken to be for group use, viz., to be collectively available and in force for the group members, and, when broadly conceived, for the benefit of the group's goals and interests.

It is often useful to view a group as an agent capable of acting as a unit. Thus it can be taken to accept views, form intentions, act, and be responsible. However, it is not an extra agent over and above the group members. When a group acts, its members must act as group members. In a sense, one can thus redescribe the group's functioning and acting at the group member level, in terms of the group members' functioning in appropriate ways as group members. This is basically we-mode activity. It follows from the idea of a group acting or functioning as one agent that the members ought to function appropriately. They can be said to be necessarily "in the same boat," "stand or fall together," or share a "common fate." Here what I call the "Collectivity Condition" is satisfied. Formulated for the special case of goal satisfaction it necessarily connects the members as follows: Necessarily (as based on group construction of a goal as the group's goal), the goal is satisfied for a member if and only if it is satisfied for all (other) members. Thus, if you and I have the goal to go to Alfonzo's for lunch, this goal as a we-mode goal is satisfied for me only if we both go to Alfonzo's (and similarly for you). However, if the goal is had as an I-mode goal, it becomes satisfied for me if I go to Alfonzo's—irrespective of what you do.

Another element, over and above thinking and acting as a group member, conceptually involved in the we-mode is *collective commitment*. In order for a group member to act as a group member, it must thus be required that she be committed (bound) to performing actions that further the group's ethos and other matters that the group is pursuing.² Indeed, the members should be collectively committed, viz., committed as group members, to participating in group activities. Their collective commitment involves that they are also "socially" committed (viz., directedly committed to other group members) to each other to act in the right group ways. Collective commitment has two basic,

intertwined roles here. First, it “glues” the members together around an ethos. This gives the foundation for the unity and identity of the group. Secondly, collective commitment serves to give *joint* authority to the group members to pursue ethos-related action.³ They can and must in their own thinking and acting take into account that the group members are collectively committed to the group ethos and to the group members and that they are jointly responsible for promoting the ethos. Every group member is accountable not only to himself for his participatory action but also to the other members. All this shows how group unity as formed by collective commitment to the ethos relates to action as a group member.

In view of the above, it can be said that the we-mode is constituted by two elements, a content element and a “practical” (action-related) element, viz., collective commitment. To illustrate, we consider a two-person case in which a goal (or intention, belief, etc.) is collectively accepted (constructed) and held by two persons, you and me. The case involves two elements:

- (i) G is *our* goal, where “our goal” satisfies the aforementioned Collectivity Condition;
- (ii) we (you and I together) are collectively committed to goal G (as our goal).

I claim that (i) and (ii) give the intuitive “rock bottom” of the we-mode. Actually, (ii) is part and parcel of (i) and can be regarded as entailed by it. The participants’ being collectively committed to goal G involves that they are committed to doing their parts of their joint action concerned with their achieving G. The joint goal that they here have constructed for their group serves as their reason for their performing their parts. The notion of a joint goal satisfies the Collectivity Condition. Due to its being satisfied, the notion of “we” is not reducible to the conjunction “you and I” although it entails it.⁴

The we-mode elements (i) and (ii) can intuitively be viewed as (partial) translations of group level descriptions of the following kinds:

- (i’) group g’s goal is G (where g has you and me as its sole members)
- (ii’) group g is committed to goal G (as its goal).

(i’) and (ii’) can be regarded as equivalent. Hence also (i) and (ii) are seen to be equivalent from our present group-level perspective. The present point applies, *mutatis mutandis*, also to intentions, beliefs, and other voluntary attitudes.

The concept of the we-mode in itself contains the notion of group (and expresses part of the group-perspective). It is a holistic institutional concept while ontologically it can be regarded as being about “groupishly” interrelated group members. As said, thinking and acting in the we-mode basically

amounts to thinking and acting for a group reason, i.e., a group member's taking the group's views and commitments as his authoritative reasons for thinking and acting as the group "requires" or in accordance with what "favors" it (viz., its goals, etc.). A central notion that is needed is that of a social group, and in this paper I focus on the "we-mode" group, based on the one hand on a "we" concerned with togetherness and, on the other hand, on the group's ethos. A we-mode group is one that in principle can act as one agent. If and when the members jointly intend to satisfy the ethos they are collectively bound (committed) to it, because intention can be taken to entail commitment in the relevant sense.

The full notion of the we-mode requires in addition that the group members accept the group's ethos and other goals and beliefs, etc., not only in their action but are also at least disposed to accept them in the reflective and reflexive sense that the specific constellation of goals, values, beliefs, etc., indeed is the group's ethos and that those other elements indeed are the group's non-constitutive goals and beliefs, all this being publicly available knowledge in the group. This account also applies to temporary groups such as the group formed by some persons carrying jointly a heavy object. Here the group's specific ethos can consist merely of a joint goal and a relevant mutual belief.

To end, let me present a brief characterization of we-mode and I-mode reasons in more precise terms as above. The later discussion will amplify the account of we-mode (or group) reasons. The criteria below are given for a simple case relating to the context of a specific group, assuming that a reason is a fact or a fact-like entity expressible by a that-clause:

(*IMR*) Reason R is a group member's motivating *I-mode (or private) reason* for performing an action X if and only if R is the agent's main motivating *private* reason for his performing X. Typically, R is a state that the agent wants or intends to be the case or a state that, according to his belief, obtains; and X is an action that is a means to R or an action that R requires for its obtaining such that the agent is privately committed to performing X for the reason R.

(*WMR*) Reason R is a group member's motivating *we-mode (or full-blown group) reason* for performing an action X if and only if R is the agent's main motivating group reason for his performing X. Typically, R is a state that the group in question wants, intends, or requires to be the case or is a state that, according to the group's belief, obtains; generally speaking R is a state that is "for the group." X is an action that is the individual's part of a collective action that is a means to R or a collective action that R requires for its obtaining, where the group members are collectively committed to performing the collective action for reason R and mutually believe so.

In (*WMR*) X can be, e.g., a collective (or group) action with multiple tokens (e.g., going to church on Sundays) or a joint action like cleaning up a park as a many-person action. As the group members are collectively committed to performing the collective action in question for reason R (a state expressible by a that-clause), they are also socially committed to the group members to performing their parts of the collective action for reason R. A full-blown, viz., a we-mode, group reason will have to satisfy the Collectivity Condition.

Having a private commitment means in (*IMR*) that the person privately (rather than as a group member) has psychologically bound himself to a “content,” e.g., to performing an action for a reason. In general, private commitment is dependent on an intention, e.g., the intention to reach a goal. As said, functioning in the we-mode is *necessarily* connected to a thick group reason, to what one’s group has committed itself to in the situation at hand, where the group’s commitment serves as an authoritative reason for the participants. In contrast, functioning in the I-mode is at most only *contingently* connected to a group reason—that must be an I-mode one, if there is one involved.⁵

In this the rest of this paper I will discuss group reasons by focusing on the case of group intention and joint intention (Section II) and also discuss reasoning based on group reasons (Section III).⁶

II *Joint Intention and We-intention.*

My focus in this paper will be on the case of intention, especially so-called “we-intention” and joint intention in the we-mode sense. I will next discuss them in an analytical fashion—keeping in mind such examples as the joint intention jointly to lift a table, to sing a song, or to make a contract.⁷ We can say that the participant intends to perform her part of X at least in part for the (“internal”) reason that the group intends as a group to perform X (this may simply amount to the participants’ having formed the joint intention to perform X as a group). The group’s intending can be based on some collectively authorized, “operative” agents’ intending rather than all the members’ so intending. A person intends to perform her part of X primarily because the group intends to perform X—and only derivatively because the others (distributively considered) intend to participate. The group reason here is a conceptual condition for a participant’s we-intention and a reason for her intending to perform her part (and for her performing it). That also the others or a sufficient number of them participate is both a conceptual and a rationality condition for one’s intention to participate. In the we-mode case the participants are functioning as group members and taking the group as their authority for their intention

formation. This contrasts with the I-mode case, where they are functioning merely as private persons committed to a goal.

A we-mode joint intention is expressible by “We as a group will perform X jointly.” Here the participants are assumed to take themselves to form a thick “we” (“we-together” or “we-as-a-group”), which is not a mere aggregative “we” that signifies “the two of us” (the basic I-mode sense of “we”). The “we-as-a-group” notion indicates the we-mode sense of “we.” We can say that the *intentional* subject of a we-intention is “we” while the *ontological* subject of a we-intention is a single agent.⁸

Suppose now that the joint intention to perform X together is attributed to m real agents, say $A_1, \dots, A_i, \dots, A_m$ assumed to understand what the joint action X involves. (The participants need not be identified by their standard names—but, e.g., as position holders in a group.) In this case, every participant A_i has, as his personal “slice” of the participants’ joint intention, the we-intention to perform X together with the others. The group reason that each A_i here has for participating in the performance of the joint action X is that their group so intends, which upon analysis amounts to the fact that the participants jointly intend X. They form a group here already because their having a joint intention means that they take themselves to be capable of acting as a group, and this will in effect make them a social group.

My analysis can now be summarily formulated as follows:⁹

(WI) A member A_i of a collective g *we-intends* to do X if and only if

(i) A_i intends to do his part of X (as his part of X);

(ii) A_i has a belief to the effect that the joint action opportunities for an intentional performance of X will obtain (or at least probably 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) perform their parts of X, which under normal conditions will result in an intentional joint performance of X by the participants;

(iii) A_i believes that there is (or will be) a mutual belief among the participating members of g (or at least among those participants who perform their parts of X intentionally as their parts of X there is or will be 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);

(iv) (i) in part because of (ii) and (iii).

I have assumed that the participants actually exist, but I allow that a participant might in some contexts be mistaken in his (rationally presupposed) beliefs (ii) and (iii). (On pain of not we-intending at all, he cannot be mistaken about the general situation at stake, viz., that there are some agents about to perform a joint action.) Thus, in such abnormal circumstances a single agent can in principle have a we-intention, and here a we-intention is not objectively a “slice” of a joint intention. Below I will, however, assume that the acceptance of “We will do X together” must be veridical and entail the existence of a joint intention. Thus it will be assumed below that all the agents in question really have the we-intention. As to (iv), it lays bare the fact that the presuppositional beliefs cannot be idle and serve to make the participation intention rational.

As indicated, it is a mutually believed conceptual (presuppositional) condition for an agent’s we-intending to participate in performing X with the others and for his intention to perform his part of X that also the others (of sufficiently many of them for X getting performed) similarly participate. Furthermore, that they all (or even some of them) actually have formed the intention to participate in X is a contingent fact that a rational agent will take as a proximate reason for taking part. As said, the primary reason for a participant’s intention to perform his part of X in the we-mode case—on conceptually “internal” grounds—is the *group’s intention* (here in effect made up of the agents’ joint intention). The group’s intention conceptually—and often also causally—precedes an agent’s we-intention, and it is always a partial reason for the agent’s performing his part.¹⁰ The joint intention accordingly is the participant’s *reason* at least for her intention to perform her part and will in the case of an antecedently existing joint intention be a “newcomer’s” reason for her joining in, viz., for her forming her we-intention on the basis of the group’s previously formed intention. Recall that the participants are collectively committed to seeing to it that their intention to perform X together will be satisfied. This collective commitment is a conceptual feature involved in their intention.¹¹

The presupposed beliefs (ii) and (iii), expressing the minimal rationality of the we-intender concerning what a we-intention conceptually involves, as well as condition (iv) will not be commented on in detail here.¹² Let me only say that the joint action opportunity conditions include, besides the relevant mental and physical abilities of the participants, also that the others (or at least sufficiently many of the “right” kinds of them, as required for an intentional performance of X) will indeed participate.¹³

Supposing that joint intentions can be expressed by “We as a group will do X” or its variants, in order to cover “standing” intentions in addition to directly action-generating intentions we must also

take into account dispositions to we-intend.¹⁴ The following can accordingly be regarded as a true claim:

(JI) Agents A_1, \dots, A_m have the *joint intention to perform a joint action X* if and only if

(a) these agents have the we-intention (or are disposed to form the we-intention) to perform X;
and

(b) there is a mutual belief among them to the effect that a).

The entailment from left to right is obvious. As to the entailment of the joint intention by clauses (a) and (b), notice that there is a kind of holistic interaction effect here, because the agents' we-intentions presuppose joint intention.¹⁵ This fact guarantees the truth of the entailment in question. The joint intention towards X is assumed to entail joint commitment towards X.

Another point that still needs to be made here concerns broader cases in which a group can be said to intend to perform an action. The simple intuition here is the consensus intention: a group intends as a group when its members qua group members so intend. However, in the case of structured groups the matter can be viewed somewhat differently. Here one can make a distinction between group members who are somehow authorized (typically by the group members) to form intentions for the group and possibly to realize these intentions. (There can be several hierarchical layers connected by the authority-relation but in order not to complicate issues unnecessarily only the two-layered case is considered). The authorized members are called operative members. The following summary analysis of group intentions seems adequate for groups that are externally and internally free (e.g., dictators are thus not allowed by the present formulation):¹⁶

(GINT) *Group g intends to perform action X* (or intends that a state X obtain) as a group if and only if there are operative members of g such that

(1) these agents, when acting as group members (and accordingly performing their positional tasks due to their exercising the relevant decision making system of g), intentionally collectively form the joint intention towards X (e.g., partly by accepting the conative expression "We will do X" or one of its cognates for g) and are collectively committed to bringing about X;

(2) there is mutual belief among the operative members to the effect that (1);

(3) because of (1), the (full-fledged and adequately informed) non-operative members qua members of g tend to tacitly accept with collective commitment—or at least ought so to accept—that their group g intends to perform X (as specified in clause (1));

(4) there is mutual belief in *g* to the effect that (3).

Clauses (1) and (3) express the most central ideas here. (2) and (4) express rationality conditions that might not be properly fulfilled while there still is a group intention on the basis of the fulfillment of (1) and (3).

We can see from the present account, which *mutatis mutandis* applies to all voluntary group attitudes, that the non-operative members can in a central way take part in the group's intention simply by functioning as group members and (tacitly) accepting the operatives' joint intention—or at least being normatively obligated to such acceptance. This tacit acceptance can amount to the nonoperatives' endorsing the operatives' joint intention qua members of *g* but they can be “in reserve,” e.g., concerning the execution of the intention. For instance, the sales personnel of a department store (an organization) can take part in the organization's intentions and actions just by doing their work and without perhaps knowing very much about what the operatives for decision making are doing. They may but need not actually have the we-intention in question, but only take it to be the case that the operatives have accepted “We will do *X*” for the group. They still can be said to (weakly) participate in the group's intention. It is even possible that the analysis of (*GINT*) is satisfied even when some non-operatives fail to tacitly accept “We will do *X*” for *g* and the participation intentions that this intention expression entails for them (together with other relevant information). Such persons may be dissidents, but also persons hired to help the group to achieve *X* may be a case in point.

Let me end this section by commenting on the so-called “bootstrapping” problem. In the single agent case, an agent's intention cannot at least always be her reason for the action that the intention is about. This is because one can rather arbitrarily form an intention and act on it. Such bootstrapping generally need not be involved in the case of a joint intention.¹⁷ A joint intention—as a jointness level counterpart of a group reason—can be a reason both for the members' joint action and for their performing their parts of it. To show this, consider the example of some agents forming the joint intention to paint a house together. Then the previously formed joint intention may collectively serve as their reason for their painting the house together and it also serves as each participant's reason for his performing his part of the joint action. In general, there may be a prior group intention or belief that is a group reason for each group member qua a group member to think and act according to it, and no bootstrapping is involved. But when the group member concurrently participates in the very formation of the group intention or belief—e.g., by agreeing with the others that they are to do something together or accept a view for the group—there is a kind of bootstrapping involved. However, we are here dealing with a (possibly) emergent jointness phenomenon centrally involved in the group's acceptance

and, on the group member level, collective acceptance. No single member can of course create this jointness, nor in general can mere aggregation. Thus, the jointness often is nonaggregative and emergent (“creative”) relative to the member’s I-mode attitudes (or his “proposed” we-mode attitude input). Let me add that if the participants have an underlying joint want, then that want (or its content, rather) may sometimes serve as a deeper joint reason than does the joint intention formed on its basis. But think of cases involving negotiations and bargaining between the participants that finally lead to a joint intention that is a compromise and is against some participants’ underlying wants (at least first choices). Here the jointness of the intention indeed is creative and can serve as the meant kind of group reason (and the we-mode proattitude that it involves can serve as a distant motivational reason). Once the group attitude is in existence, the group members, when functioning qua group members, can, and ought to, use it as their reason for thinking and acting. It follows that no harmful bootstrapping needs to be involved.

III Joint Intention and Group Reason

An I-mode account of joint intention is concerned with putting together individuals’ private intentions when they for some reason want to act together or achieve something together.¹⁸ To exaggerate somewhat, the basic model in the two-person case, is: I regard you as a (cooperative) part of my environment rather than as a proper fellow group member and we face a task to be solved together by our actions.¹⁹ In contrast, in my we-mode account you and I form a thick “we,” a group, which acts possibly in order to solve a jointly accepted task, or we just act together for purely social reasons (“each of us values and enjoys the company of the others, basically no matter what we are doing together”). What I will say below will apply not only to intentions but also to beliefs and actions, although I focus on the intention case.

In my we-mode account the intention-dependencies go as follows in an unstructured group g that has formed an intention:

(1) Group g , consisting of the agents A_1, \dots, A_m , intends to bring about X (or see to it that X), where X may in principle be any state or event (as long as no rationality constraints on g are imposed).

As groups are not literally agents, we must speak of the group members’ relevant states and actions:

(2) The members A_1, \dots, A_m of g jointly as a group intend to bring about X ; put in more linguistic terms, these agents jointly accept that the intention expression “We will bring about X ,” satisfying the Collectivity Condition, is true of them collectively (and also individually, see (3)) as group members.

A more general way to arrive at group members’ joint intentions here is to speak of the group’s relevant authority over them. Note that in (2) the members’ (and in the normatively structured case the operative members’) joint intentions may have been formed for the reason that the group’s previous decisions and plans play an authoritative role for them.

After (2), the next step is the following “distribution” assumption:

(3) Each one of the current members A_1, \dots, A_m of g in effect accepts, qua a member of g , in this situation that “We will bring about X ” is true of himself.

(4) Each member must reason or be disposed to reason as follows:

(i) We will bring about X

Therefore, taking (i) as my reason,

(ii) I will participate in our (viz., here A_1, \dots, A_m ’s) jointly bringing about X or jointly seeing to it that X

As a paraphrase of (ii) we have

(5) I will perform my part of our jointly seeing to it that X .

It is inessential here what exactly a part of X involves—it can even be passive and conditional, accordingly to what the functionality of the group’s performance of X requires. In general, the participants must at least rationally hope that X will come about due to their joint effort. This serves to give a partial indirect characterization of what “a part” and “participation” involve.

We can spell out (5) more fully to get

(6) I intend to perform my part of our jointly seeing to it that X as my part of X when acting as a member of g .

(6) presupposes that our jointly seeing to it that X is our jointly intentional action performed as jointly intended (that is, for the reason that we jointly intended, possibly in a rudimentary, preanalytic sense only, to jointly see to it that X).

(6) gives the main individual-level content of what my notion of we-intention involves. Its group-level content is given by (1) and its jointness-level content is basically given by (2) while (3)–(6)

concern the individual personal level of acting as a group member. Note that any collection of agents that satisfy (1)–(6) form a group capable of action, and so does a collection capable of forming a joint intention (and having mutual belief about this).²⁰

We may leave it to psychologists to find out how people in ordinary life, as it were, simplify (6) when intending and acting jointly so that the instrumentally and functionally right things come about. There is some circularity here: a person's intention to perform his part comes to depend on joint intention, although perhaps only on an unarticulated, preanalytic notion of joint intention. This does not matter much as long as people function satisfactorily in terms of the above account and produce X in about the right way.

To end, I will present a simple and stylized example related to action reasons. I-mode reasons and we-mode reasons may lead to dramatically different results in the case of strategic social action e.g. in collective dilemma situations. To illustrate, consider a simple two-person two-choice case of a Prisoner's Dilemma with the familiar choice alternatives C and D, where the row player's preference ranking is DC, CC, DD, CD and the column player's symmetric ranking is CD, CC, DD, DC. Here the agent may choose either C or D when he acts for an I-mode reason (involving I-mode intention). Thus, considering the single-shot case under uncertainty, if the agent – the row player, here "I" – thinks strategically and intends to maximize his value or utility he can reason thus: I prefer the joint outcome DC to all the other joint outcomes; however, I realize that if you are reasoning similarly and planning to go for CD, we will end up in DD. Still, wanting to avoid the worst outcome CD, I cannot rationally aim at the Pareto optimal CC. So I choose D and rationally expect DD to result in the single-shot case. In this case the agent's reason for choosing D is to secure at least the third best alternative given his beliefs of the nature of the game and the other player's rationality. Thus, as long as change of the game structure is not allowed, in a single-shot PD (under uncertainty) mutual defection is the rational outcome, and this result holds independently of how egoistic or altruistic the participants' preferences and utilities are.

In contrast, acting for a we-mode reason can lead to the group members' rationally cooperating in collective action dilemmas (on the basis of their joint intention). Considering what is a Prisoner's Dilemma situation from the point of view of the group members' private preferences, we now adopt the group's agent's point of view and assume that the group ("our group," "we") accepts the dominance principle ("higher payoff dominates lower payoff") and thus intends to choose C (over D). Thus, as the group can be taken to intend and act only if the members correspondingly jointly intend, as a group, to cooperate and accordingly jointly cooperate, it follows that the participants form the joint intention to

realize the joint cooperation outcome and perform their parts of the group's achieving it, viz. do C. As the group members are assumed to act as one agent, the joint outcomes CD and DC simply drop out as prohibited (unless there is a special division of tasks requiring them, here this is not considered). The Prisoner's Dilemma simply disappears in principle. The agents act collectively rationally when they act for a we-reason as here, and indeed there is no room for private individual action and private rationality at all. The upshot then is that while strategically acting agents acting on the basis of the relevant I-mode reason involving maximization of private value (utility) they can rationally choose only D in the single-shot case (assuming full uncertainty), but in the case of agents acting for the relevant we-mode reasons (e.g. "our group will maximize the value for the group by acting appropriately") the agents will rationally choose C. Of course, it must be added to all this that in actual practice groups may not act fully as units in the above committed way. There may be free-riders and there must be then be some sanctioning involved. Thus, from the backdoor, as it were, we may get the Prisoner's Dilemma alternatives back. Furthermore, intergroup cooperation in a collective action dilemma is not of course resolved by member level, intra-group we-mode acting, but that will require the use of a group reasons involving the "we" formed out of the groups in question (cf. the EU states cooperating with each other).

IV Conclusion

This paper has emphasized a strong form of collective intentionality called the we-mode that essentially involves a group reason, one based on the group's construction of it as a reason to act qua a group member. We-mode acting thus is essentially based on group reasons, viz. on what the group decides, orders, or requires (etc.) and where the group members functioning qua group members give some of their "natural" authority to the group. This contrasts with the I-mode case where a person in principle is fully in charge of whatever she undertakes.

The above ideas were elaborated in the paper and discussed especially in the context where the group members jointly intend to do something together.

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Notes

¹ Mere mutual belief need not involve progrouppness but may still be regarded as I-mode collective intentionality.

² In weakest cases the collective commitment need not be properly normative, e.g. morally normative.

³ This joint authority can be delegated to special members or representatives, below called “operative” members (see *GINT*).

⁴ Collective acceptance and construction relevant to our goal example are discussed in Tuomela (2007), Chapter 8, in terms of the reflexivity-involving thesis (CAT) about collective acceptance that is shown to amount to a general form of the Collectivity Condition. While one can perhaps speak of construction of goals, etc., also in the “progroup” I-mode case there is no group construction but only aggregated private construction. A we-mode group is taken by its members to form a unit capable of action, whereas this kind of collective acceptance is missing in the case of I-mode groups, which only require interaction and dependence between the members.

⁵ A group reason is a “desire-independent” reason in Searle’s (2001) sense (see Chapter 6 of Tuomela, 2007).

⁶ I have recently, in Tuomela (2007), developed and presented a detailed theory of collective intentionality that considerably improves my earlier work in this field. This paper is largely based on the ideas and formulations presented in this book and on my paper on reasons in Tuomela (2006).

⁷ The discussion in this section draws from Chapter 4 of Tuomela (2007). In that chapter I also discuss I-mode joint intentions.

⁸ However, note that in my account “we” can be represented by a predicate, WE, applying to m individuals for some m . Thus no ontologically significant plural subject is literally postulated here, seemingly contrary to, e.g., the view by Gilbert (1989).

⁹ This account is a slightly modified version of the one in Tuomela and Miller (1988).

¹⁰ The joint intention can be based on a joint decision, agreement-making, or just be what a collective acceptance of a joint plan involves. As such, the formation of a joint intention (that amounts to the group’s intention) need not be based on a group reason. This point resembles that involved in saying that agreement making need not be based on agreement making

¹¹ In Tuomela (2002) I have characterized the we-mode in terms of three features: (1) the attitude or action must be collectively accepted as the group’s attitude or action, (2) it must be for the use and, typically, benefit of the group’s interests, and (3) the participants must be collectively committed to the attitude or action.

¹² See especially Tuomela and Miller (1988), for justification.

¹³ See the account in Tuomela (1995), Chapter 3.

¹⁴ See also Tuomela (1995).

¹⁵ Intuitively, the circularity problem arises because a we-intention basically amounts to one’s intention to perform one’s part of a fully intentional, viz. joint intention-governed joint action. I have discussed the problem elsewhere (e.g. in Tuomela, 2007) and argued that the circularity is not vicious.

¹⁶ See Tuomela (2007), Chapters 4 and 6. I would like to emphasize that the present account of group attitudes (such as intentions) applies to the case of voluntary attitudes. As to nonvoluntary one’s, e.g. “experiential” beliefs or emotions, a different approach, and aggregative I-mode one, in terms of shared we-attitudes in terms of, respectively, shared nonvoluntary we-beliefs and shared we-emotions is needed (see Tuomela, 2007, chapter 3).

¹⁷ See Bratman (1987), Chapter 2.

¹⁸ Bratman’s (1999) account, discussed in Chapter 3, is a case in point.

¹⁹ One can, however, cooperate in the I-mode and to achieve a shared goal and act for a group, and one can also value the other group members’ company—see Chapter 7 for I-mode cooperation.

²⁰ Notice still that the concept of joint intention can be taken to entail: If the members A_1, \dots, A_m of g jointly intend to bring about X , then they are jointly committed (bound) to (continue) intending and to bringing about X .