

Introduction

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The main impetus for organizing this event was the publication, in 2011, of Philip Pettit's and Christian List's book, **Group Agency**. List and Pettit argue that interpreting institutions like commercial corporations, governments, political parties, trade unions, churches, and universities as group agents offers a better understanding of their internal working and their effects on social life. Pettit and List base their account of group agency on a so-called "functionalist account of agency" which assumes that an agent is constituted by a method of transforming representational and motivational states into actions. They reject essentialist conceptions of collective willing by claiming that group attitudes supervene on the individual attitudes of the group members.

The invited speakers were asked to consider the following issues arising out of List's and Pettit's work: Can and should we consider groups as agents? What normative commitments come with such an assumption? What model of agency is entailed by claiming that groups are agents? What consequences for current accounts of collective intentionality and joint willing follow? Or: How does affirming the existence of group agents shape our philosophical understanding of institutions and their legal and moral responsibility?

In addition to these questions the papers in this volume explore the following issues: Are group agents best interpreted as real or fictitious entities? Can we attribute to them first-personal authority and autonomy? How do the rights of group agents differ from individual rights? What kind of collective attitudes come with group agency?

The papers of this volume are the result of a two-day workshop entitled "Group Agency and Collective Intentionality" at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Vienna, in April 2012.

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