

Concessive Joint Action: A New Concept in Theories of Joint Action

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Abstract: Representative theorists of joint action traditionally argue that shared intention is necessary for joint action and that it must be common knowledge among participants that they share intentions (Bratman 1993; 2014; Gilbert 1996; 2014; Miller 2001; Searle 1990; 2010; Tuomela 2005; 2013; Tuomela & Miller 1985). However, minimalists criticize these conditions; many of them contend that common knowledge is unnecessary (Blomberg, 2016). In fact, the absence of common knowledge is occasionally necessary to induce the occurrence of joint action (Schönherr, 2019). Other minimalists even argue that the assertion of shared intentions is too zealous (Butterfill, 2012). In general, however, even minimalists accept or not seriously question the following assumption: The goal shared by people in initiating a joint action is the one whose realization amounts to the accomplishment of that action. I utilize a class of counterexamples that I label concessive joint action to argue that this assumption is excessive.

Keywords: social ontology, joint action, intention, shared goal, concession

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1. INTRODUCTION

Theorists traditionally argue that sharing intentions is a necessary condition for a joint action to occur (Bratman 1993; 2014; Gilbert 1996; 2014; Miller 2001; Searle 1990; 2010; Tuomela 2005; 2013; Tuomela & Miller 1985). Some might add that it must be common knowledge between participants that they share those intentions.

Among “minimalists” who investigate conditions necessary for joint action,¹ Blomberg (2016) denies that the common knowledge condition is necessary because participants can act under false beliefs that contradict the condition. Schönherr (2019) extends this point to instances wherein the *absence* of relevant common knowledge is necessary for joint action. Ludwig (2020) argues that a shared intention, which, according to Ludwig (2020), amounts to a shared plan, constitutes a minimal condition for joint action. Butterfill (2012) claims that even shared intentions are not necessary, and we should rely on the notion of shared goals instead.

However, minimalists maintain an assumption common to traditional views: the goal participants share when they are initiating a joint action—what I call *the initial shared goal*—is the one whose realization amounts to the performance of *that* joint action. I call it the *correspondence condition*. I assume that the initial shared goal does not necessarily have to be held *prior to* the initiation of the joint action, but only needs to direct the participants in the process of initiating the joint action in question.

Joint action generally is considered linear. People first set a goal for a joint endeavor and then pursue it by coordinating their actions. For people to walk together, they first must share that goal and then begin walking together. Their shared goal is to walk together, and their joint action is described as “walking together.”

The current paper aims to present a new class of cases that suggests that the correspondence condition is too strong—namely *concessive joint action*. Therefore if concessive joint action is admitted as a genuine subclass of joint action, we are left with only the condition of sharing goals in a more minimal sense. In §2, I show that the correspondence condition has been an

¹ Paternotte (2020) explicates four kinds of minimalism in joint action. This study concerns his conceptual minimalism by which “joint action boils down to a simple conceptual core” (2020, 43). Invoking Matti Heinonen’s (2016) related distinction, this study is complementarist in that it identifies “a hitherto unexplored domain for the philosophical study of joint action” instead of “challenging established philosophical accounts of shared intentional action within their paradigmatic domain of fully socialized and mature human agents” (2016, 178).

assumption in the existing literature, though there are a few exceptions. §3 presents concessive joint action as a counterexample against the necessity of the correspondence condition. In §4, I give a tentative proposal for how to revise minimal conditions for joint action, which I see as a starting point to work on the problem of concessive joint action, not as the last words.

2. THE CORRESPONDENCE CONDITION

The correspondence condition states that the goal participants share when they are initiating a joint action has a description that corresponds to the one given to the joint action itself. To put it more simply, it is the condition saying that it is the goal of doing a joint action, *J*, that its participants have to share to initiate *J*. To rephrase this further, it says that joint action consists of participants beginning to coordinate their behaviors in order to achieve a shared goal, and then finally achieving *it*.

The correspondence condition is widely assumed, or at least not seriously questioned, in the philosophy of joint action. I will first confirm this in the non-minimalist view, and then argue that this assumption is maintained by minimalists as well.

Searle is one of those who adopt the correspondence condition most explicitly. Searle (1990) first discusses individual intentional action, arguing that the structure of intentionality, in this case, has both mental and physical components and that the mental component “causes the physical component [by] way of representing it” (1990, 410). One of Searle’s basic ideas is that the intentions that direct the agent include in their content a reference to the very act that is to be realized, and his discussion of the relationship between individual intention and individual action revolves around the question of how intention includes such a reference. His discussion of joint action (which Searle calls *collective action*) applies this idea to joint action and asks, “[H]ow does this collective intention cause anything?” (1990, 410) Searle’s answer is that the intentions of the participants in a joint action have both a collective and an individual component and that the two are linked by an end-means relationship (1990, 412). His position assumes a correspondence condition, since the collective element, which includes reference to the joint action to be carried out, is said to be common to the intentions of its participants.

Gilbert is also clearly committed to the corresponding condition. This is so because Gilbert (2014) observes, through several cases of joint action, that “[e]ach party to the ensuing joint action says or does something expressive of personal readiness to participate in *that* action with the other party” (2014, 24,

italics NM). This already presupposes the correspondence condition that what each participant expresses personal readiness to in order to participate in at the beginning of a joint action is that joint action itself. Therefore, her account of joint action, which appeals to the concept of joint commitment, should also be read in the light of the correspondence condition too: “two or more people are acting together if they are jointly committed to espousing as a body a certain goal, and each one is acting in a way appropriate to the achievement of that goal, where each one is doing this in light of the fact that he or she is subject to a joint commitment to espouse the goal in question as a body” (2014, 33).

In discussing the distinction between joint action and successful joint action, Miller (2001) argues that for something to be a case of joint action, “it is necessary that the constitutive individual actions be performed,” while “it is not necessary that the end for which they were performed be realised,” but in order for something to be a case of successful joint action the latter is also necessary (2001, 59-60). The “end” here is said to be the end for which the individual actions constituting the joint action are performed. It is, in essence, the end shared by the participants in initiating the joint action, which amounts to what I call the initial shared goal. His definitions of joint action and successful joint action suggest the idea that the initial shared goal is maintained throughout the joint action, and if it is eventually realized, then it becomes a successful joint action, and if it is not realized, then it becomes a failed joint action. As long as its success or failure is measured by the success or failure of the realization of the initial shared goal, it is natural to think that the joint action in question will be given a label corresponding to the initial shared goal, and if so, his argument at least implies, if not entails, the assumption of the correspondence condition.

Tuomela is more explicit. He says that “we have the requirement in the causal ontological realm for the we-mode case [of joint action] that there be only a single joint intention token and only a single joint action token,” and that “the contents of our intentions indeed are the same and mutually truly believed to be the same and it mutually truly believed to be the same” (Tuomela 2013, 81). In addition, he argues that “our being collectively committed to satisfying the intention content by participating in our joint performance of X” (2013, 81) is also required. Summarizing this, he says, “A joint action token realizing X can be taken to be what results when a token of joint intending is successfully carried out” (2013, 81), and if (successful) joint intention implies (successful) shared goal, then we can see the assumption of the correspondence condition in this idea. I have referred to his discussion of what he calls we-mode joint action, but he also considers the relationship between intention and action in what he calls I-mode joint action is also

considered in a parallel way.

There are a few exceptions among the leading theorists of joint action. Although Tuomela and Miller (1985) claim that in order to perform a joint action “it seems necessary that [its participants] share a common intended goal” and that this common goal is normally “the goal to perform the total action,” they add a note of reservation to their claim: “not necessarily” (Tuomela and Miller 1985, 28). Bratman also explicitly states “it is not true quite generally that when I A intentionally my action is explained by my intention specifically to A [...] I think there will be analogous complexities in the shared case” (Bratman 2014, 161 n. 23), but he decides to put this issue aside. These theorists can be said to be open to the possibility that it does not necessarily hold, though later Tuomela comes to assume the correspondence condition as we have seen. However, they do not pursue this issue further.

We have seen that representative theorists in the philosophy of joint action, in general, argue from the assumption of the correspondence condition with a few exceptions. I will then cite some minimalist theorists to see that they do not question the correspondence condition either.

Among the minimalist theorists I cite, Ludwig is the clearest in his commitment to the correspondence condition. This is because, according to him, “a joint intentional action is action that results from a group successfully executing an intention to act in accordance with a shared plan” (Ludwig 2020, 36). Without the correspondence condition, this claim does not make much sense.

Butterfill, Blomberg, and Schönherr may not necessarily be committed to the correspondence condition themselves, but they at least leave it untouched. Butterfill (2012), building on Bratman’s theory, argues for replacing the notion of intention with a broader notion of goal, but in doing so he does not focus on the correspondence condition, and thus leaves this issue untouched. The same is true for Blomberg, who builds on Pettit and Schweikard’s reductionist theory of joint action, but leaves in place the condition that suggests the correspondence condition: In order to participate in intentional joint action, each of the participants must “intend that they enact the action” (Pettit & Schweikard 2006, 23, cited on p. 315 in Blomberg 2016). Similarly, Schönherr (2019) takes out from the arguments of theorists such as Bratman, Miller, and Tuomela the conditions (1) that the participants must intend the same interdependent goal and (2) that this intention must be common knowledge as necessary for joint action, but aims only to refute the latter (Schönherr 2019, 123). At least in the case of Miller and Tuomela, the former condition is presented on the assumption of a

correspondence condition, as already discussed. As a whole, it can be said that the correspondence condition has received little attention in the discussions of minimalist theorists.

The fact that the correspondence condition is widely assumed or at least not seriously questioned is not surprising. Most theorists accept the condition that participants have to share a goal in order to do something jointly. Strictly speaking, it is not the same as the correspondence condition, but if one assumes that the achievement of such a goal is required to accomplish that joint action, which appears to be a natural assumption when using the concept of goal, then it is equivalent to the correspondence condition.

In the following section, however, I argue that there is a class of counterexamples against it: Concessive joint action.

3. CONCESSIVE JOINT ACTION

A concessive joint action is one in which though a participant deviates from the initial shared goal the others concede so that they end up with achieving another goal, and the entire joint action is identified as the latter goal. This characterization contradicts the correspondence condition because, in concessive joint action cases, the description of the initial shared goal does not correspond to the description of the entire joint action. An instance of a concessive joint action follows.

Reluctant Shopping. A says, “Let’s go for a walk in the park!” and B accepts. En route, A sees an accessories store and enters without B’s permission. B says, “Aren’t we going to the park?” A answered “Yes. But wait for a minute. I want to buy a pair of earrings.” B concedes, but five minutes later says, “Let’s go!” A agrees. Before reaching the park, A again stops to enter a bakery. B shouts, “Aren’t we going for a walk?” “We are,” A insists, “but we need bread for tomorrow.” B again concedes. After shopping, both head toward the park, but B stops, telling A, “You bought what you wanted. Don’t I have a right to shop?” A protests, “You said we’d go to the park after I shopped,” but acquiesces. Hours later, hands full of shopping bags, both are too tired for the park. A asks, “We planned to visit the park, but maybe... another time?” B agrees, saying, “Shopping is enough for today.”

What have A and B done? The intuitive answer is *they shopped together*. At least, they did *not* go for a walk in the park, even if it was their initial shared goal. Reluctant Shopping thwarts the correspondence condition because it is

unneded as a criterion for the joint action A and B have done in Reluctant Shopping.

Two problems arise.² First, does Reluctant Shopping exemplify a joint action? Second, how does it differ from, for instance, lucky joint action (Schönherr, 2019), emergent coordination (Knoblich et al., 2011), or joint improvisation in music?

To answer the first question, Reluctant Shopping has a characteristic feature of joint action: interpersonal coordination of individual actions. When A entered the accessory store, B reasserted their shared initial goal, and A agreed to shop quickly. Both acknowledged the imperative to redirect behavior toward the initial shared goal. A common assumption is that participants in a joint action coordinate only their individual actions while leaving the shared goal as it is. In Reluctant Shopping, however, A and B coordinated their shared goal itself as well. A deviated from their original goal, and B reluctantly conceded. Thus, they revised their shared goal as, say, the one of walking in the park *after a few minutes of shopping at the accessory store* to harmonize it with their actions.

This instance is not a failure of joint action. Rather, A and B revised their shared goal several times in the middle of their joint endeavor. They revised their original goal to take a walk *after shopping at the accessory store*. Given that new goal, B chided A when A entered a bakery. When B conceded again, their shared goal was modified to taking a walk *after A's shopping*. When B deviated from the new goal and claimed a right to shop and A conceded, their shared goal became to take a walk *after their shopping*. After shopping, neither felt like walking. Even at that point, their joint endeavor was in progress. That is why A proposed to modify the plan instead of just leaving without saying anything, and B accepted it instead of ignoring it. They engaged in interpersonal coordination throughout this process.

Excluding cases of concessive joint action as ones of joint action costs at least as much as including them. When A and B started, their situation typified a joint action—i.e., they shared a goal and had common knowledge of it. What is unique about this case is that the participants changed their shared goal *as their activity progressed*. Such deviations can, in principle, occur in any joint action, unless it is a joint action that is completed the moment it begins. The problem is that, in principle, deviations and concessions are always possible in a joint action with a sufficient time span to make them, and thus any joint action with a sufficient time span can be transformed into a concessive one. (Note that in typical cases of joint actions such as walking together or building a house

2 I am grateful for those questions raised by Reviewer 2.

together, there standardly is a sufficient time span.) Whether a joint action is concessive or not is essentially a matter of *changing*, or in other words, it is a matter of what happens to it *after* it is initiated. Basically, the existing analysis of joint action attempts to specify the conditions of joint action based on what holds with respect to the participants at the beginning of joint action, but this approach does not sufficiently restrict what happens to the joint action *after* it is initiated. Therefore, it cannot exclude the possibility that what is a joint action according to it may later become concessive. This is because, in general, the participants in a joint action do not know in advance that they will deviate or make concessions. Deviations and concessions are often just consequential. Thus, the only way to exclude concessive cases from joint action is to add a new condition to what can be said at the time of initiation, referring to a certain kind of change over time, and saying that if such change occurs, it cannot be called joint action. However, this would be no difference in cost from admitting the change over time and including concessive cases in joint action. If the cost is the same, a theory that can explain concessive joint action is preferable to one that cannot.

The second question is: How does this case differ from existing cases? In order to clarify the characteristics of concessive joint action, I will discuss a wide range of similar phenomena, including those that do not belong to the minimalist tradition, and discuss how concessive joint action differs from them.

Concessive joint action is distinguished from what Schönherr (2019) calls *lucky joint action*. He characterizes lucky joint action as instances wherein participants mistakenly believe that each other's intentions favor the joint activity (2019, 124). He gives the following example, wherein "common knowledge of some of one's co-participants' *subplans* would undermine joint action" (2019, 124, emphasis in original).

Lucky Jog. Sarah and Bob both intend that they go jogging. Sarah believes that Bob would continue the jog even if it rained. This is important for her! Her intention that they go jogging is conditional on her belief that he wouldn't bail if it rained. . Her belief about Bob, however, who would bail if it rained, is false. Fortunately, sunny weather prevails, and they complete a happy jog. As it happens, they got lucky. (2019, 124)

This case and Reluctant Shopping differ in two respects. First, A and B did not get lucky because they did not complete their originally intended walk. Second, A and B's deviations and concessions were not necessarily among the subplans

they had when heading for the park, for they might not have noticed the possibility of their deviations at all. On the whole, Schönherr's case concerns the cognitive state that each participant must have to participate in joint action; Reluctant Shopping relates to changes in the identity of joint action.

Reluctant Shopping is not an instance of emergent coordination discussed in Knoblich et al. (2011) either. Their emergent coordination involves spontaneous synchronization of walking patterns, body sway, and mimicking of mannerisms, but it does not involve normative pressure as in Reluctant Shopping. Even if one conversationalist sways differently from the other, it does not grant the latter a right to reproach the former. A and B in Reluctant Shopping acknowledged that B had a right to reproach A for entering an accessories store. It is just that B conceded.

Saint-Germier et al. (2021) discuss a phenomenon that is even closer to a concessive joint action: Freely Improvised Joint Action (FIJA). They define it by the following separately necessary and jointly sufficient conditions:

1. The execution of the joint action occurs by way of a highly general collective intention, and
2. no shared plan is commonly known nor derivable from means-end reasoning from what is commonly known at the beginning of the joint action. (Saint-Germier *et al.* 2021, 5)

Unlike standard improvisation, where deviations lead to a course correction to the initial goal and the plan derived from that goal, FIJA has only a general purpose from which no specific plan can be derived. The lack of a specific plan means that course corrections in accordance with the plan will not occur, and as a result, FIJA will be able to proceed more freely.

They cite free improvisation in music as an example of FIJA. In free improvisation in music, they say, “[n]othing more specific than the very general intention to play some (aesthetically satisfying) freely improvised music together is common knowledge from the start and throughout the performance among all performers” (Saint-Germier *et al.* 2021, 4-5). This illustrates the difference between FIJA and concessive joint action. In FIJA, an intention, though very general, is shared and carried out consequently. The musicians began their performance with a very general intention with no specific plan but then performed in such a way as to satisfy that intention. What FIJA shows is that what people do together can be unspecific when it is initiated, and it can be embodied only later. On the other hand, what concessive joint action shows is that people can do together something different from what their initial

shared goal suggests. FIJA is concerned with the concretization of joint action with abstract identity; concessive joint action with a change of identity of joint action.

Some may argue that concessive joint action can be considered a type of FIJA if one considers the appropriate general goal. For example, it may be said that during the joint activity, what A and B in the case of Reluctant Shopping really shared was a general goal of spending the afternoon together, and as a subplan to achieve it, at first they tried to go for a walk together, but later they changed it to shopping together. If you think of it that way, however, it becomes difficult to explain that even after conceding once, B insisted again on going for a walk and accused A of trying to go to the bakery. If they really only shared a general goal of spending the afternoon together, and they could change subplans freely, it was irrational for B to insist on going for a walk when A wants to go shopping, because if B had followed A's shopping without complaining, the goal of spending the afternoon together could have more easily been achieved. The point is that it does not explain the normative forces at work in the case of Reluctant Shopping. B's condemnation of A's attempt to go to the bakery was intuitively justified. But if what they really shared was the general goal of spending the afternoon together, and if they were free to change their mind about the subplans, why would such an accusation be justified? A was just suggesting one of the subplans to carry out the general goal, so there would be no reason to blame them for that. The justification for A's later accusation against B would be even harder to explain. The legitimacy of their accusation stems from the fact that they share the goal of going shopping together and are trying to act accordingly. Nonetheless, they carry out something different. This is a feature that makes concessive joint action what it is, and it is not generally found in cases of FIJA. Even if we were to regard concessive joint action as a kind of FIJA in some way, this feature would have to be accounted for in any case. Perhaps it might be possible to assimilate concessive joint action to FIJA, but, even if so, that is not particularly helpful in explaining the former.

Once we accept concessive joint action as a type of joint action, the correspondence condition—the initial shared goal participants have when they are initiating a joint action is the one whose realization amounts to the performance of that joint action—becomes unnecessary. A and B shared the initial goal of walking in the park, but ultimately, they shopped. That is, people can initiate shopping together by pursuing the shared goal of walking in the park.

One might object that A's and B's initial joint action—walking together—failed. They then shopped as a new joint action—shopping together, perhaps—under a new shared goal. Admittedly we can say that they started a new joint action when B conceded, but this objection is insufficient because there is a reason to think that, even after B's concession, the initial joint action was still ongoing. To see this point, we can look at how the normative power of the initial joint action remains in force after B's concession. Imagine that during the time A was shopping, B kept blaming A for not going for a walk. In that case, it seems intuitive that B had the right to blame, but if the joint action of walking together had already failed, and they were just doing the joint action of shopping together, then it is hard to see where such a right comes from. It is more plausible that the joint action of walking together was still in progress at that time, and thus the normative force that directed them toward the relevant common goal remained in force.

Thus, concessive joint action cannot be taken as a sequence of shifts from one joint action to another. Rather it is the result of a struggle among multiple joint actions: the main joint action of going for a walk, which is the basis of the joint endeavor of A and B, and the several joint actions that happen and disappear in the middle of it. The initial joint action keeps its normative force even when a new incompatible joint action occurs, but after several concessions, it finally loses its force and changes into a different joint action as a result. We cannot see this change as a point where the initial joint action—walking together—fails and another—shopping together—starts because the change can happen at the very end of the relevant joint endeavor, as Reluctant Shopping suggests. The point of concessive joint action is a shift of the identity of joint action in this way. The possibility of such a shift is overlooked if the correspondence condition is seen to be required for joint action.

4. A TENTATIVE SUGGESTION: TWO-STAGE PROCESS THESIS

How do we analyze joint action so as to include cases of concessive joint action? My tentative proposal is that we can distinguish two types of shared goals involved in joint action. As Reluctant Shopping demonstrates, goals people share when they initiate joint actions and those they achieved when they complete them can differ. I call the former the *initial shared goal* and the latter the *final shared goal*. If they differ, the joint action in question is what is performed by realizing the latter, not the former. The theorists discussed in §2 assumed, or at least did not doubt, that joint action is what is performed by the realization of its initial shared goal. This assumption, which I call *the*

correspondence condition, renders concessive joint actions unexplainable. By contrast, I distinguish initial from final shared goals and assign them different roles. The initial shared goal initiates a joint action without saying what it is. The final shared goal determines the identity of the joint action performed. I call the view that a joint action involves two potentially different shared goals the *Two-Stage Process Thesis*.

Assume that a shared goal—in my term, an initial shared goal—is a minimal condition for joint action. Instances of concessive joint action indicate that an initial shared goal can be different from the one by whose realization the joint action it initiates is performed. Thus, minimal conditions for a joint action are given as follows.

Two-Stage Process Thesis. Minimal conditions for a joint action of *J*-ing that occurs at t_1 and ends at t_2 are:

1. At t_1 , participants share a goal and initiate action to achieve it, and
2. At t_2 , participants share the goal of *J*-ing together and achieve it.

The correspondence condition is weakened in this view. Participants need not share the goal of *J*-ing to initiate a joint action of *J*-ing. Sharing a goal that differs from *J*-ing is sufficient for its initiation. Note that while the second condition is necessary for a particular joint action identified as *J*-ing, the first condition is sufficient to initiate a joint action that is yet unspecified. Even when people initiate a joint action but fail to meet the second condition, they have performed *some* joint action, though it is not identified as *J*-ing and its specific identity is unclear. Accepting such incomplete cases is an advantage of the Two-Stage Process Thesis.

Two-Stage Process Thesis may appear too complex as a suggestion for the minimal conditions, but it amounts to the sharing condition minus the correspondence condition: Participants of joint action must share a goal to initiate it but that goal is not necessarily identical to the one they achieve when their joint endeavor ends. Non-concessive joint action is seen as cases where the two goals are identical.

As a corollary, the Two-Stage Process Thesis can also explain cases in which participants who share a broad goal but disagree on the specifics start a joint action and end it with the resolution of the disagreement.

Carrying a Desk. Leaving my office, I find a desk blocking the exit and try to carry it away, but it is too heavy for me alone. A worker from an adjoining office passes. We neither know each other nor share a

language. Although she understands nothing I say, she knows my office had promised to deliver her a desk. Believing I was delivering it, she begins to help. I know nothing of that promise. I intend to move the desk one meter. Her intention is to move it to her office five meters away. Lacking a common language, we cannot clarify our intentions to each other. When we have moved the desk one meter, I say, “Now it’s out of the way,” and turn to leave. She says something I cannot understand and slaps the desk angrily. I resume helping to move the desk. My arms tire when we are three meters from my office and say, “What’s the point of carrying this desk farther?” Not understanding me, she keeps trying to move the desk. This time, I am the party who loses patience. Sensing my irritation, she gives up, perhaps thinking we had moved the desk near enough to her office. We understood from each other’s expressions that we had agreed to leave the desk in its new place.

In this case, we have the broad shared goal of carrying a desk, but we disagree on how many meters to carry it. Nevertheless, the fact that we share a broad goal is enough for us to get on with the related joint endeavor. But even if it is enough to start the joint endeavor, it is not enough to finish it, and to finish it we have to dissolve our disagreement. Thus, we finally compromise with each other and form an agreement that the desk should be carried three meters and end the joint endeavor in question. In this way, this joint endeavor acquires a specific identity as a joint action of carrying a desk *three meters*. This can be explained by the Two-Stage Process Theory as a case where the initial shared goal is a broad one that encompasses the final shared goal.

Two questions about the Two-Stage Process Thesis arise.³ First, theorists have assumed that agents control individual actions in progress. For this reason, prior intentions or intentions-in-action are important in cases of intentional individual action, and final intentions are not. Suppose my prior intention to sketch my brother prompts an action. My sketch is awful, and I regret starting it. In this case, treating my regret as my “final intention” does not make my action something other than drawing. This may be why earlier studies privilege initial shared goals and disregard final shared goals.

There is a reason for privileging prior intentions or intentions-in-action over final decisions in cases of intentional individual actions—namely, agents are assumed to have complete control over their actions. That assumption fails when applied to groups. As we have seen, individuals engaged in group action might abandon their initial goals through a sequence of deviation,

3 I thank Reviewer 1 for comments concerning this issue.

disagreement, and concession to preserve group harmony. When they do, no one separately or collectively controls the joint action in the same sense as controlling individual actions.

Second, observing concessive joint action cases, I claimed that sharing a goal that is different from the one actually achieved is sufficient to initiate joint action. However, people *do* share many goals if goals are described broadly (e.g., “being helpful”). Such a goal as being helpful tends to yield unsatisfactory results. Is sharing this kind of broad goal sufficient to initiate a joint action?

The expression “to initiate a joint action” needs disambiguation. If it means “to initiate the joint action of being helpful,” sharing the goal of being helpful is insufficient to initiate it. The phrase “to initiate the joint action of being helpful” presupposes the initiated joint endeavor is to be identified as the one of being helpful. If the Two-Stage Process Thesis is correct that identification applies only when the final shared goal *is* the one of being helpful and it *is* achieved. The fact that such a goal tends to yield unsatisfactory results indicates that people rarely achieve final shared goals described as “being helpful.” Even if people share the goal of being helpful, we cannot say they initiate a joint action of being helpful, notwithstanding exceptional cases.

If the expression “to initiate a joint action” indicates “to initiate a joint action of undetermined identity,” sharing the goal of being helpful is sufficient to initiate a joint action. Suppose A and B, students in the same class, share the goal of being helpful and act accordingly. It then follows that they initiated a joint action, in my view. Suppose A kicks C, a bully, out of class. A tells B, who does not reproach A because B believes that ejecting bullies is helpful to classmates. On the other hand, suppose B confiscates classmates’ smartphones to make them focus on classwork. A does not reprove B because A thinks students should not use smartphones in class. After that, the classroom became so stressful that the teacher scolds A and B.

Regardless of A’s and B’s final shared goal, it is natural to say *they* kicked out C and confiscated classmates’ smartphones. Moreover, both actions constitute parts of a project shared by A and B. Depending on their final shared goal, their project might be described as changing the classroom environment, controlling classmates, or something else. In any case, they did initiate their project when they shared the goal of being helpful despite actually causing disruption. Broadly enough defined, a goal can initiate joint action, even if the goal fails. The Two-Stage Process Thesis captures this phenomenon.

As I said earlier, the Two-Stage Process Thesis is meant to be not the last words but a starting point to work on concessive joint action. All it says is that joint action can change its identity through its development, and nothing

is said about what is the essence of joint action which remains the same through its change, or by what mechanism joint action changes its identity. Nevertheless, I suppose it to be a good starting point in that it shows an uncultivated research area for the philosophy of joint action.

5. CONCLUSION

As we have seen in §2, theorists assume that people must share a goal to initiate a joint action, and that goal is the one whose realization amounts to the performance of the entire joint action. Cases of concessive joint action contradict this assumption, as §3 exemplified. §4 tentatively proposed minimal conditions for joint action. Under my Two-Stage Process Thesis, sharing an initial goal that is not necessarily identical to the final goal participants achieve is sufficient to initiate a joint action.

The Two-Stage Process Thesis attempts to explain concessive and non-concessive joint actions, but it does not fully capture the significance of the phenomena of concessive joint action. First, concessive joint actions may observe a balance of power among participants. If two persons act jointly and one is the other's boss, the subordinate has an incentive to concede in the joint action even if she wishes not to. If she concedes, they may conclude a joint action she does not welcome. Even in such cases, the subordinate is seen to participate in the joint action, and that bears all the normative implications of standard cases. She might be involved in further joint actions she does not welcome, or she might be blamed for the actions she joined reluctantly. In this manner, some cases of harassment or oppression can occur as a form of concessive joint action, and, if so, analyzing it is a matter of importance in contemporary society.

Second, if communication is a type of joint action and what speakers mean is (contra Grice 1957; 1969) jointly determined as Clark (1996) argues, then communication can have a concessive aspect too. Thus, what speakers mean can be determined concessively by speakers and hearers, not merely just by speakers. Supposing a joint action can involve a matter of power balance when a concession occurs, what a speaker means might even be determined concessively *through the power balance between speaker and hearer*. Thus, in some cases, what someone means by an utterance might be under the hearer's control. One manifestation of that situation might be found in Jennifer Fox's film *The Tale*, in which an adult abuser argues that a child gave sexual consent, though the child cannot even know what that means. Further studies of concessive joint action should analyze the mechanism of such abuser communications.

These implications indicate the importance of concessive joint action in philosophical research. The Two-Stage Process Thesis is the first step toward a theoretical analysis of the phenomena of concessive joint action.

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