

ProtoSociology

An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

... ist seit E. Durkheim, den wir als einen Begründer des
Fachs Soziologie einstufen, ein relevanter Schwerpunkt des
Fachs Soziologie. Das heißt die Mitglieder sollten zu verstehen

The Joint Commitment Account: Critical Essays on the Philosophy of Sociality of Margaret Gilbert

Edited by Gerhard Preyer and Georg Peter

... ist, die soziale Integration als eine Differenzierung
von Mitgliedschaftsbedingungen eine bestimmte allgemeine
Theorie voraussetzt. Unter „Bedingungen“ sind dabei die Be-
dingung der Mitgliedschaftsbedingung und damit die Teil-
nahme an Kommunikationssystemen in der Ausübung von
bestimmten Rollen und Statuspositionen zu verstehen.
Die Mitgliedschaftstheorie fasst die System-Umwelt-Relati-
on nicht als unkonstitutiert (Niklas Luhmann), sondern als
die selbstreferenzielle Entscheidung über Mitgliedschafts-
bedingungen und ihre Selektion, die keine Resonanz in der
nicht-sozialen Umwelt hat. Der Verwehungen Zusammenhang
von Sinn, wenn wir das einmal unterstellen, ist in diese Dif-
ferenzstruktur einzuordnen. Gehen wir von der mitglied-
schaftstheoretischen Selbstkonstitution sozialer Systeme
aus, so sind soziale Systeme zu verstehen. Damit geht einher,
dass die soziologische Theorie die folgenden

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The Joint Commitment Account:
Critical Essays on the Philosophy of Sociality of
Margaret Gilbert with Her Comments

Edited by Gerhard Preyer and Georg Peter

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STEPS TO A NATURALISTIC ACCOUNT OF HUMAN DEONTOLOGY

Antonella Carassa and Marco Colombetti

Abstract

In this paper we outline a theory of human deontology from a naturalistic perspective. In doing so we aim to explain how human beings deal with deontic relations (like obligations and rights) thanks to a specialised psychological infrastructure, which evolved to support human cooperation. This infrastructure includes a repertoire of emotions that play a crucial role in evaluating the conformity of actions relative to a deontic relation, in displaying an agent's attitude toward their own actions or those of their deontic partners, and in motivating suitable behavioural responses. Finally we discuss the special case of interpersonal deontology, analysing its properties and relating it to Gilbert's concept of joint commitment.

I. Introduction

Human beings have the capacity to create elements of social reality in ways that are considered exclusive of our species. An important component of most (possibly all) social reality is *deontology*, that is, the complex network of obligations, permissions, rights, and so forth, that people accrue due to a variety of reasons. Part of human deontology, that we label *collective*, derives from large-scale, relatively stable sources like shared moral principles, laws, religious codes, local regulations, and social etiquette. Another part, that we call *interpersonal deontology*, is created by people in their everyday small-scale interactions, examples of this being the obligations that stem from promises, agreements, and the like.

In this paper we sketch a theory of human deontology in general, and then analyse in greater detail the case of interpersonal deontology. We find interpersonal deontology particularly interesting because, in spite of being ubiquitous in human life, it remains somewhat elusive. The main problem is to explain how it is possible for people to create such things as obligations and rights simply by interacting with other people, and to understand what types of interactions may have these effects. Most theories dealing with interpersonal deontology tend to concentrate on promises, analysed from a moral perspective: promissory obligations are thus regarded as moral obligations of some sort

JOINT COMMITMENT

Thomas H. Smith

Abstract

I defend some of Gilbert's central claims about our capacity jointly to commit ourselves, and what follows from an exercise of it. I argue that, to explain these claims, we do not need to suppose, as Gilbert does, that we ever are jointly committed, that is, jointly in a state of being committed. I offer a diagnosis of why the gratuitousness of this supposition has been overlooked.

Gilbert's Guiding Idea

Gilbert's guiding idea is that a plurality of parties can jointly commit themselves to doing something.

When we talk of commitment, we might mean something normative: obligation, roughly. Or something psychological: resolve, roughly. While the two things may often go together, they can easily come apart. Gilbert uses 'commitment' and its cognates for the normative phenomenon:

...the notion of commitment at issue here is a normative notion, not a psychological or causal one. The broadest such notion is simply this: one is committed in some way if and only if there is something that, all else being equal, one ought to do. (Gilbert 2018, 161–2).

For Gilbert, once parties have jointly committed themselves, each is committed, hence obligated, to the others, to do her part of, or something towards, what they have jointly committed themselves to doing. She thinks, too, that once parties have jointly committed themselves, none can unilaterally relinquish her own commitment or obligation. She must do this jointly, with the others. (Gilbert 2013, *passim*).

This much is true, isn't it? I would say, indeed, that it is *straightforwardly* true (which is not to deny that it is a truth of importance to philosophers). Consider an everyday exchange such as:

A: 'Shall we go to Liverpool, then?'

B: 'Ok, let's'.

JOINT COMMITMENT MODEL OF COLLECTIVE BELIEFS: EMPIRICAL RELEVANCE IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

Alban Bouvier

Abstract

*For almost three decades, Margaret Gilbert has introduced a new account of social facts taking “joint commitments”, not only explicit but also implicit, as the cement of sociality properly understood. Gilbert has used this original account of collective phenomena to clarify a variety of issues, both in the philosophy of rights and in the philosophy of the social sciences. This paper focuses on the latter domain; it argues that although Durkheim and Mauss are central references in her pioneering work, *On Social Facts*, Gilbert’s model has been underestimated in the fields of sociology and anthropology. This may come from the fact that Gilbert provides the reader with only imaginary examples. To overcome this difficulty, Bouvier investigates several historical examples in two related domains: the political and the religious. Another reason for this relative lack of interest may come from Gilbert’s very unconventional interpretation of the Durkheimian explanation of social beliefs. Although, on the one hand, her “contractualist” (or Rousseauist) interpretation permits a sharp illumination of certain social facts, it may, on the other hand, impede the recognition of the specificity of other kinds of beliefs, which sociologists and anthropologists—including Durkheim—usually consider as collective beliefs. Bouvier, by contrast, introduces alternative models, illustrating them with similar, although ultimately distinct from previous, historical examples.*

Introduction

One of Margaret Gilbert’s main explicit ambitions is to reformulate Emile Durkheim’s intuitions regarding the specificity of the *properly collective* (as she calls it) dimension of the social facts in a more analytical way. Gilbert thinks that Durkheim was deeper in his understanding, although often more obscure than Max Weber, on this specific point. However, unlike Durkheim, who strongly rejected “pre-notions” of sociality, Gilbert’s other important ambition and likely more important than the first I mentioned, is to clarify the everyday intuitions of social collective phenomena. Among the main issues that Durkheim and his nephew, Marcel Mauss, as well as the other members of the French School of Sociology founded by Durkheim, addressed was, indeed, the specificity of *collective beliefs*, although they did not use this particular word-

REMARKS ON CONVERSATION AND NEGOTIATED COLLECTIVE BELIEF

Frederick F. Schmitt

Abstract

Gilbert (1989) and Gilbert and Priest (2013) have argued that paradigmatic conversations involve a collectivity of the conversers who participate in the conversation, in the sense that the conversers put forth and negotiate proposals of propositions to be collectively believed by them. Here I explore the plausibility of this Negotiated Collective Belief (NCB) thesis. I begin by supporting a more basic claim, that the nature of conversation itself entails that a conversation always involves a collectivity of the conversers. I then endorse and supplement Gilbert and Priest's argument for the NCB thesis. I trace resistance to the thesis to the view that collective belief plays no important role in two primary social ends of conversation, exchanging information and making personal connections. I concede that this is so, but I endorse the view (with roots in Taylor 1985) that collective belief does play an important role in a different primary social end of conversation, the creation of a public space of thought. Thus, the NCB thesis is supported by argument and contributes to an explanation of how conversation fulfills one of its primary social ends.

Remarks on Conversation and Negotiated Collective Belief

A conversation is patently a social activity in the sense of entailing that at least two conversers make utterances or communicative gestures, grasping the meaning of these utterances and recognizing the others' communicative intentions. But is it a social activity in some stronger sense than merely entailing that at least two individuals act with mutual recognition? In *On Social Facts* (1989), Margaret Gilbert argued that in a paradigmatic conversation the conversers "are doing something like negotiating a position they can jointly accept" (Gilbert 1989: 295). She has developed this argument in recent work with Maura Priest: "in a paradigmatic conversation, whatever else is going on, *the parties are negotiating the establishment of one or another collective belief on the basis of proposals put forward by one or another interlocutor*" (Gilbert and Priest 2013: 14). I will follow Gilbert and Priest (2013) in calling this the Negotiated Collective Belief (NCB) thesis. On this view, a paradigmatic conversation is social in a sense that goes beyond a mere plurality of participants engaged in mutual recognition. It involves a collectivity of the conversers in two ways: a negotiation

TELLING AND MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS IN COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Marija Jankovic

Abstract

In telling the utterer enters into a relationship with an addressee. This relationship appears to be a normative one, i.e., it entails that an utterer has certain obligations to the addressee. But how can an act of telling create such obligations? In this paper, I propose what I call a collectivist account of telling. On this account, the core notion of telling is that of an utterer's contribution to a joint action. Margaret Gilbert's rich work on joint action emphasizes the obligations agents of joint action have to one another. This normatively robust view of joint action, coupled with the conception of core telling as a participatory act, points toward the possibility of explaining the obligations speakers have to their addressees as, at least in some cases, the sort of obligations participants in joint action quite generally have to each other to act in a way appropriate to the joint activity.

Possibly someone will say, perhaps to me, 'There are no plural subjects *really*. It is a human *fiction* that there are.' What should I say? Am I to play ball and listen to this person? What's playing ball? What's listening to this person? *Is there such a thing?* You cannot *tell me* there are no plural subjects and be right. You cannot sensibly set out to tell me that. What is telling?

(M. Gilbert, *On Social Facts*)

Introduction

It's been widely observed that in telling the utterer enters into a distinctive relationship with an addressee. He undertakes a "commitment to the truth of a proposition" (Searle 1969, 29) or "makes [himself] responsible for its truth" (Peirce 1934, 384) and gives the addressee "the right of complaint" should what he said turn out false (Moran 2005b, 22). This relationship appears to be a normative one, i.e., it entails that an utterer has certain obligations to the addressee. But how can an act of telling create such obligations? In this paper, I propose what I call a *collectivist* account of telling. On this account, core telling is an utterer's contribution to a joint action. Margaret Gilbert's rich work

HOW WE FEEL: COLLECTIVE EMOTIONS WITHOUT JOINT COMMITMENTS

Felipe León and Dan Zahavi

Abstract

This article engages critically with Margaret Gilbert's proposal that joint commitments are necessary for collective emotions. After introducing Gilbert's concept of joint commitment (Section 2), and the joint commitment account of collective emotions (Section 3), we argue in Section 4 that research from developmental psychology challenges the necessity of joint commitments for collective emotions. In that section, we also raise a more principled objection to Gilbert's account, independently of developmental considerations. Section 5 develops a complementary line of argument, focused on the notion of mutual recognition. While we agree with Gilbert that mutual recognition has an important role to play in an account of collective emotions, we take issue with her attempt to analyse face-to-face based mutual recognition in terms of the concept of joint commitment. We conclude by sketching an alternative analysis of collective emotions that highlights the role of interpersonal identification and socially mediated self-consciousness.

I. Introduction

In the past decades, Margaret Gilbert has developed a distinctive philosophical approach to the analysis of a wide range of social phenomena, taking as the cornerstone of her analysis the concept of *joint commitment* (Gilbert, 1989, 2013, 2018). The range of phenomena analysed by Gilbert is impressive. It includes not only collective belief and collective action, but also collective emotions, mutual recognition, joint attention, promises, social conventions, and agreements (Gilbert, 2013). If, as argued by Gilbert, joint commitment is the “structure of the social atom” and the “foundation of human social behaviour” (Gilbert, 2003, p. 39), the concept of joint commitment would have a pervasive explanatory power, and be of obvious significance for understanding the structure of sociality. Without aiming at a comprehensive assessment of Gilbert's rich and wide-ranging approach, in the following we will mainly focus on the case of *collective emotion*, a topic that Gilbert has engaged with over the years. There is a remarkable continuity in Gilbert's treatment of collective emotions, in that she has throughout sought to account for them by means of her concept of joint commitment (Gilbert, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2014). Our main aim will

COLLECTIVE EMOTIONS AND NORMATIVITY

Mikko Salmela

Abstract

There are two opposite views about the relation of collective emotions and normativity. On the one hand, the philosopher Margaret Gilbert (1997, 2002, 2014) has argued for years that collective emotions are by constitution normative as they involve the participants' joint commitment to the emotion. On the other hand, some theorists especially in sociology (Durkheim 2009, 2013a; Collins, 2004) have claimed that the values of particular objects and/or social norms originate from and are reinforced by collective emotions that are intentionally directed or associated with the relevant objects or actions. In this chapter, I discuss these opposing views about the relation of collective emotions and normativity, defending the latter view. While collective emotions typically emerge in situations in which some shared value or concern of the participants is at stake, I suggest that collective emotions may also ontologically ground norms in the manner suggested by Durkheim. I present support for this view from a recent sociological case study on the emergence of punitive norms in the social movement Occupy Geneva.

I. Introduction

There are two opposite views about the relation of collective emotions and normativity. On the one hand, the philosopher Margaret Gilbert (1997, 2002, 2014) has argued for years that collective emotions are by constitution normative as they involve the participants' joint commitment to the emotion. On the other hand, some theorists especially in sociology (Durkheim 2009, 2013a; Collins, 2004) have claimed that the values of particular objects and/or social norms originate from and are reinforced by collective emotions that are intentionally directed or associated with the relevant objects or actions. In this chapter, I discuss these opposing views about the relation of collective emotions and normativity, defending the latter view. While collective emotions typically emerge in situations in which some shared value or concern of the participants is at stake, I suggest that collective emotions may also ontologically ground norms in the manner suggested by Durkheim. I present support for this view from a recent sociological case study on the emergence of punitive norms in the social movement *Occupy Geneva*.

SOCIAL COMPLEXES AND ASPECTS

Donald L. M. Baxter

Abstract

Is a social complex identical to many united people or is it a group entity in addition to the people? For specificity, I will assume that a social complex is a plural subject in Margaret Gilbert's sense. By appeal to my theory of Aspects, according to which there can be qualitative difference without numerical difference, I give an answer that is a middle way between metaphysical individualism and metaphysical holism. This answer will enable answers to two additional metaphysical questions: (i) how can two social complexes have all the same members and (ii) how can there be a social complex of social complexes?

Is a social complex identical to many united people or is it a group entity in addition to the people? I incline to the former because I assume with Ockham that it is ontologically preferable to avoid positing additional entities if possible.¹ For specificity, I will assume that a social complex is a plural subject in Margaret Gilbert's sense (1996, 348).² Two or more people form a plural subject when they are jointly committed to acting, believing, feeling, or such, as a body. Thus, I incline to the view that a social complex is identical to the many people united by a joint commitment.³ Gilbert herself inclines the same way, I think. She writes,

In some places I have written that a joint commitment is the commitment of 'two or more individuals considered as a unit or whole'. I do not mean to introduce the idea of a new kind of entity, a 'unit' or 'whole'. I could as well have

- 1 Wikipedia gives this citation for Ockham: 'Sentences of Peter Lombard' (*Quaestiones et decisiones in quattuor libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi* (ed. Lugd., 1495), i, dist. 27, qu. 2, K), and suggests that the classic formulation of Ockham's Razor is found in Johannes Poncius's commentary on John Duns Scotus's *Opus Oxoniense*, book III, dist. 34, q. 1, in John Duns Scotus *Opera Omnia*, vol.15, Ed. Luke Wadding, Louvain (1639), reprinted Paris: Vives, (1894) p.483a. My guess is that a violation of Ockham's principle is what Sheehy has in mind when he attributes "metaphysical spookiness" to views that "[s]ocial groups are entities over which we quantify in the set of our best descriptions and explanations of the social world" (2006, 74).
- 2 I leave for future work extending the account to the kind of groups emphasized by Epstein "that are grounded by facts unrelated to group members" (2015, 257).
- 3 Even if they are now "we*" in the special sense Gilbert elucidates (1989, 152, 167–203), "we*" is still plural.

WE ARE NO PLURAL SUBJECT

Ludger Jansen

Abstract

In On Social Facts (1989) and subsequent works, Margaret Gilbert has suggested a plural subject account of the semantics of 'we' that claims that a central or standard use of 'we' is to refer to an existing or anticipated plural subject. This contrasts with the more general approach to treat plural pronouns as expressions referring to certain pluralities. I argue that (i) the plural subject approach cannot account for certain syntactic phenomena and that (ii) the sense of intimacy, which Gilbert cites as evidence for her plural subject account, has a different source than the existence of joint commitments constituting a respective plural subject. Moreover, (iii) there is a wide variety of phenomena in the linguistic record, which, while not constituting conclusive evidence against the plural subject account, nevertheless, are dealt with better by the plurality account. 'We' thus refers to pluralities, which may or may not be plural subjects. The precise analysis of 'we' thus reveals a multi-layered ontology of groups.

I. Introduction

Starting with Descartes' *cogito* argument, the first person singular has held central position in modern philosophy. In the last decades, however, there has been a certain shift of focus towards social perspectives, not only in ethics, action theory and social philosophy, but also in disciplines like epistemology and ontology. This shift of focus comes along with an increased interest in the word 'we', or, more generally, in the first person plural. As part of her seminal contribution to social ontology, Margaret Gilbert has suggested a plural subject account of the semantics of 'we' (Gilbert 1989). While acknowledging that 'we' is ambiguous, she points out that a central or standard use of 'we' is to refer to an existing or anticipated plural subject. While Gilbert's social ontology has been widely received and discussed, there is virtually no discussion of her semantic claims. The exception that proves the rule is a paper by Boudewijn de Bruin (2009), in which de Bruin argues that Geoffrey Nunberg's theory of indexicals (Nunberg 1993) deals better with the actual use of 'we' than Gilbert's plural subject account. In the present paper, I add a broader basis of evidence to the critical discussion of Gilbert's semantic account of 'we'. Moreover, while

COORDINATION AND HYPERRATIONALITY

Paul Weirich

Abstract

Margaret Gilbert (1990) argues that although the rationality of the agents in a standard coordination problem does not suffice for their coordination, a social convention of coordination, understood as the agents' joint acceptance of a principle requiring their coordination, does the job. Gilbert's argument targets agents rational in the game-theoretic sense, which following Sobel (1994: Chap. 14), I call hyperrational agents. I agree that hyperrational agents may fail to coordinate in some cases despite the obvious benefits of coordination. However, I add that fully rational agents, who rationally exercise rationality's permissions, may coordinate in these cases without jointly accepting a principle of coordination. I make this point using a model that adopts common simplifying assumptions about agents and their coordination problems.

I. Introduction

Game theory takes a game as a situation involving agents or players who interact. The players make decisions that together settle the outcome of each player's decision. The players each adopt a strategy, and their profile of strategies (a list with exactly one strategy for each player) settles their profile of utilities (a list with exactly one utility for each player). A coordination problem is a type of game. For example, the players in a coordination problem may want all-things-considered to meet at noon, and, because of their circumstances, they meet at noon if and only if they go to the meeting room at noon. They coordinate by all going to the meeting room at noon. Whether they coordinate depends not only on their rationality but also on their information about their coordination problem and about each other.

A table or matrix represents, for each profile of strategies, the outcome for each player. Suppose that there are only two players wanting to meet at noon, and rows represent strategies for player 1, and columns represent strategies for player 2. A cell of the table represents the outcome of a strategy profile, a combination of a strategy of player 1 and a strategy of player 2. The cell contains two numbers forming a utility profile; the first number indicates the utility of the outcome for player 1, and the second number indicates the utility of the outcome for player 2. In the example, only two strategies are salient

THE BOUNDS OF MORALITY: GILBERT ON PROMISSORY OBLIGATION

Jeffrey S. Helmreich

Abstract

Margaret Gilbert's 'Three Dogmas about Promising' is a paradigm-shifting contribution to the literature, not only for its account of promissory obligation based on joint commitment, but for its equally important focus on two properties of such obligation, which her account uniquely and elegantly captures: first, that the duty to keep a promise is necessary—the obligation stands regardless of the content or morality of the promise—and, second, that it is directed, with the promisee having unique standing to demand performance. A related point, implied by Gilbert's argument, is that moral requirements, alone, can never have those properties. Here I challenge that point, arguing that moral requirements, under the right circumstances, can give rise to necessary and directed obligations, after all, and I propose one such moral obligation of which the duty to keep a promise may well be an instance. Nevertheless, I conclude, it may not provide as plausible a basis of promissory obligation as joint commitment.

Margaret Gilbert's "Three Dogmas about Promising"¹ marks a transformative turn in the contemporary debate about promissory obligation that began in earnest some 30 years ago.² Among other things, it makes at least two path-breaking contributions. First, it identifies distinctive features of promissory obligation that any philosophical account should explain or at least accommodate, even as many don't try. One is that, as Gilbert sees it, promises necessarily obligate, no matter their content. If I promise to Φ , I am in at least some sense obligated to Φ , no matter what I've promised. Call it the Necessary

1 Margaret Gilbert, "Three Dogmas about Promising," in Hanoch Sheinman, ed., *Promises and Agreements* (Oxford: 2011), pp. 80–108 (hereafter Gilbert (1) followed by page numbers).

2 The literature began, arguably, with David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 2nd ed., L. A. Selby and P. H. Nidditch, eds. (Oxford: 1978) p. 455, but the debate about how to ground promissory obligation enjoyed a resurgence beginning in the 1990s. In addition to T.M. Scanlon's "Promises and Practices," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19 (3):199–226 (1990), see also Niko Kolodny and R.J. Wallace, "Promises and Practices Revisited," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 31 (2003), pp. 119–54; David Owens, "A Simple Theory of Promising," *Philosophical Review* 115 (2006), pp. 51–77; Seana Valentine Shiffrin, "Promising, Intimate Relationships and Conventionalism," *Philosophical Review* 117(4) (2008); Daniel Friedrich and Nicholas Southwood, "Promises and Trust" in Sheinman ed. (2011), pp. 277–90; and Abraham Roth, "Intention, Expectation and Obligation," *Ethics* 127:1 (2016), pp. 88–115.

PATRIOTISM: COMMITMENT, NOT PRIDE

Maura Priest

I. Introduction

This paper is about patriotism, what it is and whether it is good (morally and practically). I am working under the assumption that we might understand the term, “patriotism”, “patriotic”, and “patriot” in various ways. I doubt there is one “true” meaning to the term and its cognates. However, some descriptions better fit the word’s use in common discourse, and some descriptions are ethically and practically preferable. My concern is to argue for a conceptual understanding that meets two criteria. First, the description should latch on to a broad intuitive use of the term as is common in public discourse. In other words, I do not want to describe “patriotism” as stipulated out of thin air. That said, because the word is used in several ways, the use discussed is by no means exhaustive of how “patriotism” and its cognates might be understood. Second, the one of many definitions discussed is chosen normatively, i.e., both moral and practical reasons support this description.

The sense of patriotism defended is based on Margaret Gilbert’s conceptual analysis. Gilbert has written two pieces (one co-authored with Itzel Garcia) defending a joint commitment account of patriotism (2009 and 2018). She admittedly grounds her account in her own intuitive understanding of the term.¹ What she finds intuitive, however, is something I find intuitive as well, and something others have good reason to find intuitive too. This paper explains her account, but the greater focus is on defending the account in the two respects mentioned earlier, i.e., that it matches well with the common (broad) understanding of the term, and more importantly, that it proves morally sound and practically useful.

The plan going forward runs as follows. The next section describes a barebones account of patriotism. I then overview potential objections to patriotism itself, given that barebones definition. Section 3 describes Gilbert’s account of patriotism. Section 4 explains how her account overcomes the previously mentioned objections. Section 5 explains why Gilbertian patriotism not only

1 In her own words, “The primary basis of the claims about intuitiveness I make here is my own sense of the matter in hand: Would I myself judge that such-and-such is a patriotic act, and so on?” (2009:320).

FROM MULTIPLE MODERNITIES TO MULTIPLE GLOBALIZATIONS

Eliezer Ben-Rafael

Abstract

We draw from Eisenstadt's (2002) conceptualization of multiple modernities which he proposed to analyze processes marking modernity and their different versions in contemporary societies. These processes do not delete all pre-existing orientations, value affinities and social arrangements, and while modernity is recognizable everywhere, modern societies also differ at other respects. We formulate a similar contention for globalization. We point to three interacting and intermingling movers of social reality—globalization, multiculturalism and the national principle—which concretize everywhere, and according to contexts and a priori features, specific models qualifying for the notion of multiple globalizations. Beyond the variety of multiple globalizations, this notion underlines the newness of our time and hints the “next society”.

S.N. Eisenstadt's conceptualization

S.N. Eisenstadt passed away on September 2nd, 2010, in Jerusalem. His disappearance left a great void in the global community of social scientists. His ideas on the plurality of both the origins and the outcomes of trajectories of modernity in the world attracted the attention of social scientists. His contentions began with a strong argument against the linear teleological narrative of modernization, which equates it with Westernization: he pleaded for the recognition of the symbolic and institutional variability of modernity. Any study of modernity, he contended, must acknowledge its multiple potential paths and patterns and that it may also include violent and repressive sequences.

Reflecting on Jaspers (1953), Eisenstadt saw a major breakthrough in human history in the crystallization of Axial Age civilizations and the emergence of new ontological conceptions of transcendental and mundane orders bearing potential for further transformations. One such transformation—the most dramatic—was the growth of modernity that entered the world, in many cases, through spectacular revolutions. Eisenstadt was convinced that new types of elites were the source of Axial transformations and further changes. In his mind, social change is not bound exclusively to conflict. Change may also be

THE MEANING(S) OF STRUCTURAL RATIONALITY

Rebecca Gutwald and Niina Zuber

Abstract

Julian Nida-Rümelin's philosophical approach to rationality is radical: It transcends the reductive narrowness of instrumental rationality without denying its practical impact. Actions exist which are carried out in accordance to utility maximizing or even self-interest maximizing. Yet not all actions are to be understood in these terms. Actions that are oriented around social roles, for example, cannot count as irrational just because no underlying maximizing heuristics are found. The concept of bounded rationality tries to embed instrumental rationality into a form of life to highlight limits of our cognitive capabilities and selective perceptions. However, the agent is still situated within the realm of cost-benefit reasoning. The idea of social preferences (e.g. Rabin, Fehr and Schmidt) or meta-preferences (Sen) is insufficient to reflect the plurality of human actions. According to Nida-Rümelin, those concepts ignore the plurality of reasons which drive agency. Hence, they try to fit agency into a theory which undermines humanity. His theory of structural rationality acknowledges daily patterns of interaction and meaning.

In philosophy, questions about rationality and its normative character can be situated within two theoretical debates which have largely evolved separately from each other. First, rationality is a central topic in the philosophy of action. Prominent authors such as Thomas Scanlon, Christine Korsgaard, Michael Bratman or Joseph Raz have debated why we should be rational, how rationality constrains our beliefs, intentions and attitudes, or whether we have any reason to be rational at all. Second, rationality is a central concept in the discussion of so-called rational choice theory (RCT) in economics and classic game theory. A central question, which most authors in these areas answer affirmatively, is whether rationality is purely instrumental or whether there are forms of rationality which cannot be explained by this standard model. According to the standard model, rationality is nothing more than a tool to find the best means to one's end(s).

This text serves two purposes. First, we present Julian Nida-Rümelin's work on the concept of "structural rationality", which expands the instrumental model without denying its importance. Thus, he also criticizes theories of reason which neglect or ignore the importance of instrumentality in various aspects. We argue that his model of rationality is philosophically superior to

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