Sharing Non-Observational Knowledge

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1. One can know without observation what one is up to, but can one know without observation what someone else is up to? I shall explore two strategies for defending the claim that one can. The first strategy relies on the fact that one can know what someone is doing by accepting what they tell one about what they are doing. It proposes that testimony can preserve the credentials of a piece of knowledge so that if a benefactor has non-observational knowledge, then a recipient of their testimony can acquire non-observational knowledge by accepting it. The second strategy appeals to the existence of collective activities. It proposes that where a number of people engage in a collective activity, each can know what each is up to, and that knowledge can be had without observation. My goal is to set out both strategies. A secondary aim is to suggest grounds for greater optimism about the prospects of the first strategy than the second. For concreteness, I'll develop both strategies in the context of G. E. M. Anscombe's treatment of non-observational knowledge in *Intention* (Anscombe 1957).

§2 outlines Anscombe's account of non-observational knowledge. §3–5 develop the first strategy, drawing also on work by Tyler Burge (Burge 1993, 1997). §6–7 develop the second strategy, drawing on work by Ben Laurence (Laurence 2011).

2. Anscombe's treatment of non-observational knowledge begins with knowledge of the position of one's limbs:

> ...a man usually knows the position of his limbs without observation. It is without observation because nothing *shews* him the position of his limbs; it is not as if he were going by a tingle in his knee, which is the sign that it is bent and not straight (Anscombe 1957: §8).

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Anscombe's thought has three components. The first component is a conception of observational knowledge, on which it is acquired through sensitivity to a correlation between specific appearances and specific positions. The second is that no such sensitivity underpins one's ability to know the position of one's limbs. Bodily sensations are not correlated with limb position in the way that sensible appearances are correlated with the positions of observable objects. Indeed, one's ability to locate bodily sensations seems to derive from, rather than explain, one's ability to know the position of one's limbs. The third is that insofar as bodily sensations figure in knowing limb position, they figure differently from the ways experiences of appearances figure in knowing the positions of observable objects:

> It is not ordinarily possible to find anything that shows one that one's leg is bent. It may indeed be that it is because one has sensations that one knows this; but that does not mean that one knows it by identifying the sensations one has. (Anscombe 1957: §28)

Bodily sensations support knowledge of the position of one's limbs not by presenting one with appearances of position, but by enabling an ability to know without observation. Adopting a distinction of Plato's, bodily sensations do not cause knowledge of limb position; rather, they make possible the causing of that knowledge:

> If someone said that without bones and sinews and all such things, I should not be able to do what I decided, he would be right, but surely to say that they are the cause of what I do, and not that I have chosen the best course, even though I act with my mind, is to speak very lazily and carelessly. Imagine not being able to distinguish the real cause from that without which the cause would not be able to act as a cause (Plato *Phaedo*: 99a–b).

Plato focuses on the causation of activity rather than knowledge. Anscombe connects the topics in a distinctive way. She argues that where we have non-observational knowledge of what we are doing, our knowledge is distinctively practical, in that it causes, rather than being caused by, those activities:

> Practical knowledge is 'the cause of what it understands', unlike 'speculative' knowledge, which is 'derived from the objects known' (Anscombe 1957: §48, drawing on Aquinas *Summa Theologica*: Ia IIae, Q3, art. 5, obj. 1).

Speculative knowledge—including observational knowledge and non-observational knowledge of limb position—is receptive. It is caused by the facts of which it is knowledge. Practical knowledge, by contrast, is productive. It brings about the facts of which it is knowledge. (In both cases, the mode of causation may be formal rather than efficient.)

One articulation of Anscombe's position appeals to the idea that knowing something requires holding something to be true. The form of holding true required by speculative knowledge is receptive and amounts to a form of believing. The mode of holding true required by practical knowledge is productive. It is not, therefore, a form of believing, but rather a form of holding true that one will φ, or that one will try to φ, that is essentially directed towards φ-ing, or trying to. This mode of holding true is sustained by one's intending to φ. Where one's holding true in this form, or the intending to φ that sustains one's holding true, brings about one's φ-ing, it sustains practical knowledge that one is φ-ing. It is "the cause of what it understands". So, intending to φ can sustain non-observational knowledge that one is φ-ing. (This articulation draws on Soteriou 2013: 257–316. It avoids difficulties that arise for views on which practical knowledge requires belief—for example the need to explain away the seeming irrationality of coming to believe that one will φ just in response to practical reasons for φ-ing, and the need to deal with purported cases of someone's intending to φ without believing they will succeed. For discussion of such difficulties and an attempt to defend a belief-based approach, see Setiya 2008.)

Anscombe considers an objection to the claim that intending can be a mode of non-observational knowledge:

> 'Known without observation' may very well be a justifiable formula for knowledge of the position and movement of one's limbs, but you have spoken of all intentional actions as falling under this concept. Now it may be e.g. that one paints a wall yellow, meaning to do so. But is it reasonable to say that one 'knows without observation' that one is painting a wall yellow? And similarly for all sorts of actions: any actions that is, that are described under any aspect beyond that of bodily movements (Anscombe 1957: §28).

Her reply appeals to Plato's distinction between causes and enabling conditions:

> ...the topic of an intention may be matter on which there is knowledge or opinion based on observation, inference, hearsay, superstition or anything that knowledge or opinion ever are based on; or again matter on which an opinion is held without any foundation at all. When knowledge or opinion are present concerning what is the case, and what can happen—say Z—if one does certain things, say ABC, then it is possible to have the intention of doing Z in doing ABC; and if the case is one of knowledge or if the opinion is correct, then doing or causing Z is an intentional action, and it is not by observation that one knows one is doing Z..." (Anscombe 1957: §28).

It can be a necessary condition on the execution of an intention to φ that one have observational knowledge of the matter that forms its topic. But that knowledge does not cause one's intending, or usurp its role in constituting practical knowledge. Rather, it makes possible the successful, and so knowledgeable, execution of intention. It enables one's holding true that one will φ to bring about one's φ-ing in a way that sustains knowledge without observation that one is φ-ing. One's observational knowledge does not combine with non-observational knowledge of what one intends, and of what is happening to one's body, to furnish partly observational knowledge of what one is up to. It enables one to execute intentions that go beyond mere bodily movements, and so to know without observation what one is doing.

3. Anscombe provides an account of knowledge of what one is up to that is non-observational. What account does she offer of one's knowledge of another's intentions?

> Well, if you want to say at least some true things about a man's intentions, you will have a strong chance of success if you mention what he actually did or is doing. For whatever else he may intend, or whatever may be his intentions in doing what he does, the greater number of the things which you would say straight off a man did or was doing, will be things he intends...
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> ...That is to say, in a very large number of cases, your selection from the immense variety of true statements about him which you might make would coincide with what he could say that he was doing, perhaps even without reflection, certainly without adverting to observation. I am sitting in a chair writing, and anyone grown to the age of reason in the same world would know this as soon as he saw me, and in general it would be his first account of what I was doing... (Anscombe 1957: §4).

Anscombe's proposes that one can often recognise someone's intentions by observing what they are doing and recognising that they are doing it intentionally. Now what they are doing intentionally coincides with that of which they have practical knowledge. One's initial view about what they are doing intentionally can therefore be undermined by the discovery that they lack such knowledge. Furthermore, punctate observation seems to reveal, at most, some of what someone is doing. Some of what they are doing may become apparent only later; and the further intentions with which they are currently acting might never be revealed. Thus, Anscombe continues:

> Now it can easily seem that in general the question what a man's intentions are is only authoritatively settled by him. One reason for this is that in general we are interested, not just in a man's intention *of* doing what he does, but in his intention in doing it, and this can very often not be seen from seeing what he does. Another is that in general the question whether he intends to do what he does just does not arise (because the answer is obvious); while if it does arise, it is rather often settled by asking him. And, finally, a man can form an intention which he then does nothing to carry out, either because he is prevented or because he changes his mind... (Anscombe 1957: §4)

Central to Anscombe's project is showing that there are significant controls on what someone can intend, many of which arise from connections between what they intend and what they do. The obtaining of such controls doesn't entail that people cannot authoritatively settle their intentions, but it limits the extent to which their expressions of intention are, in general, decisive. That proviso understood, it is obvious that questions about someone's intentions are often settled (only) by accepting their expressions of intention. Anscombe provides a further example:

> ...when a doctor says to a patient in the presence of a nurse 'Nurse will take you to the operating theatre', this may function both as an expression of his intention (if it is in it that his decision as to what shall happen gets expressed) and as an order, as well as being information to the patient; and it is the latter in spite of being in no sense an estimate of the future founded on evidence, nor yet a guess or prophecy; nor does the patient normally *infer* the information from the fact that the doctor said that; he would say that the doctor *told* him" (Anscombe 1957: § 2).

So, Anscombe endorses the natural view that one can acquire knowledge of what someone is up to by accepting what they tell one. The knowledge that they express is without observation. Our question is whether knowledge acquired by accepting what they say can also be non-observational.

Anscombe rejects one ground for answering negatively. It's plausible that knowledge of the fact that the doctor said that nurse will take one to theatre is observational knowledge. And it's plausible that knowledge that is inferred from observational knowledge is observationally tainted. It's therefore plausible that if one's knowledge that nurse will take one to theatre was inferred from the doctor's having said she will, then it would be observational. However, Anscombe rejects the premise that the knowledge is so inferred. Beyond that, Anscombe seems to leave the answer to our question open. (Anscombe 1962, 1973, 1979.)

4. Tyler Burge argues that a fundamental entitlement to accept what one is told is apriori and so, in our terms, non-observational. Accepting what one is told on the basis of that entitlement enables one's consequent beliefs to draw epistemic support from that accruing to one's interlocutor's beliefs. So, if what one it told expresses non-observational knowledge, the core of Burge's account seems consistent with the possibility that one might acquire non-observationally supported beliefs by accepting it.

Burge's argument is built around a defence of what he calls the *Acceptance Principle*:

> *A person is apriori entitled to accept a proposition that is [taken to be] presented as true and that is [seemingly] intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so* (Burge 1997: 287 fn.4, his italics and interpolations; the original may be found in Burge 1993: 237).

Burge's idea is that the *prima facie* intelligibility of a seeming expression of content combines with the Acceptance Principle to provide an entitlement to take it to have a source that is *prima facie* rational. And its having a *prima facie* rational source combines with the Acceptance Principle to provide an entitlement to take the content to be *prima facie* true. Thus, one's seeming comprehension of a seemingly intelligible assertion can, when undefeated, furnish one with an entitlement to accept what one seems to comprehend.

Burge holds, in addition, that where one genuinely comprehends an intelligible assertion and accepts what is asserted, one's belief can derive support from whatever further entitlements support the belief that one's interlocutor expressed in the assertion.

In particular, if one's interlocutor expressed knowledge, then one can acquire knowledge by accepting what they said. And if the entitlements supporting one's interlocutor's belief were apriori, then they retain that status in supporting one's belief.

One's entitlement to a belief formed by accepting what one's interlocutor asserted will comprise three components: one's entitlement to one's comprehension of their assertion; one's entitlement to accept what one comprehended; and one's interlocutor's own entitlement to the belief they express. We have that the Acceptance Principle that sustains the first two components is warranted apriori, and we are considering a case in which one's interlocutor's belief is warranted apriori. Let's assume that the principle connecting acceptance with inheritance of one's interlocutor's entitlements is also apriori. In that case, Burge's account will sustain the possibility of one's acquiring apriori knowledge by accepting what one is told just in case one's entitlement to one's comprehension of an assertion can itself be apriori.

The claim that one's entitlement to comprehension of an assertion can be apriori is apt to seem implausible. Burge initially sought to defend the claim by appeal to a distinction between warrant and enabling conditions akin to that exploited by Anscombe. He took it that the implausibility of the view that comprehension can be apriori derived from the essential role played in comprehension by the perception of speech or writing. Because perception is essential to comprehension, it is apt to seem obvious that comprehension itself must be perceptual. In response, Burge argued that speech perception doesn't figure as an element in one's entitlement to comprehension. Rather, that entitlement is underwritten by one's apriori entitlement to rely on the proper operation of one's capacity to understand contents. Speech perception serves to enable that operation, but doesn't add any element to one's entitlement. As he puts it,

> I acknowledged that all successful exercises of comprehension of others assertions depend causally on perception. I maintained, however, that the role of perception in comprehending another's speech or writing is sometimes purely that of an enabling condition. Although perception is necessary for the success of our comprehension, I claimed that perception does not always contribute to the force of one warrant that we have for relying on an exercise [of] comprehension (Burge 2013: 274).

Burge supported that claim about the role of speech perception in comprehension by appeal to an analogy with the role of preservative memory in reasoning:

> ...even if one's entitlement to rely upon one's seeming understanding always lapsed when one lacks entitlement to rely upon one's (apparent) perception of what the other person uttered, it would not follow that one's entitlement to rely upon one's seeming understanding is empirical. Take any piece of reasoning in which one relies upon preservative memory but (say, because it malfunctions) in which one is not entitled to do so. Such a piece of reasoning will fail to warrant acceptance of its conclusion. But preservative memory does not contribute to the justificational force of reasoning. It makes reasoning possible without contributing to its force. I think that the perception normally involved in understanding putative assertions plays a similar role in the epistemology of interlocution (Burge 1997: 293).

There is a distinction amongst the factors that explain one's being warranted in accepting something between those elements that figure essentially in one's warrant—e.g., premises in a proof—and those elements that enable the first set of elements to figure in one's warrant without themselves figuring as such elements—e.g., preservative memory of the premises. Burge's idea was that in cases in which one acquires warrant by accepting what someone asserts, comprehension supplies essential elements in one's warrant, while speech perception plays only an enabling role with respect to those elements. Just as preservative memory can figure essentially in explaining one's possession of warrant without making the warrant observational, so speech perception can figure essentially in explaining one's possession of warrant without making the warrant observational.

If Burge's defence of the possible apriority of comprehension had succeeded, then it might have provided the basis for an account of non-observational knowledge of another's intentions. Where someone told one what they were up to, perception of their speech could enable non-observational seeming comprehension of what they said. The Acceptance Principle could then sustain an apriori warrant for accepting the seeming comprehension as veridical and then accepting what one was told. That would provide a non-observational warrant for accepting what they told one about what they were up to. It would thereby enable one's consequent belief to acquire knowledge-supporting warrant from one's interlocutor's own proprietary warrant for their view of what they were up to. Since that proprietary warrant is non-observational, one's overall

warrant would include no essentially observational elements. In that way, we would have an account of the possibility of non-observational knowledge of another's intentions. However, as Burge came to accept, the proposed account fails at the first step.

The account fails at the first step because the claim that comprehension of another's speech can be apriori is indefensible. It is plausible that speech perception doesn't supply an independent element in a warrant for comprehension. It is plausible, in particular, that speech perception doesn't supply the basis for an inferential warrant for comprehension. However, it doesn't follow that speech perception plays only an enabling role. For it is consistent with that, and independently plausible, that comprehension is partly constituted by speech perception. Furthermore, even if comprehension were only enabled by speech perception, that would not make plausible that comprehension is not perceptual. The role of comprehension in delivering, or constituting, autonomous knowledge of particular episodes of others' speech would still seem incompatible with its being a non-perceptual power. (Burge 2011: 272–284 recants his earlier treatment of comprehension. See also Longworth 2008; Malmgren 2006.)

5. If Burge's proposal were the only way of securing the possibility of non-observational testimonial knowledge, then there would be no way of carrying through the first strategy. However, the failure of Burge's proposal is due not only to the fact that comprehension perceptual, but also to the specific role it gives comprehension. On Burge's proposal, the deliverances of comprehension figure as elements in a warrant for accepting what an interlocutor presents as true. Thus, the observational status of those elements is inherited by one's accepting what an interlocutor presents. An alternative would be to develop an account on which the deliverances of comprehension figure not as elements in the warrant that one acquires (or supplements) by accepting what one is told, but rather as enabling one to inherit one's interlocutor's warrant. On the alternative proposal, the status of comprehension, as observational or not, would be irrelevant to the status of attitudes formed in accepting what one is told.

Burge's own proposal treats comprehension and acceptance of what someone asserts as sorts of enabling conditions and so a natural way of pursuing the first strategy would be to develop that aspect of his proposal. Burge distinguishes one's proprietary warrant for accepting what someone asserts from an extended warrant that incorporates warrants attaching to the attitude one's interlocutor

expressed in their assertion. Consider one's purely extended warrant—that is, one's extended warrant minus the proprietary warrant provided by the interaction of seeming comprehension and the Acceptance Principle. One's acceptance of what an interlocutor asserts enables the purely extended warrant to support beliefs one forms through acceptance. Proprietarily warranted acceptance is a necessary condition for acquiring support from the purely extended warrant, rather than an element in the purely extended warrant. Attending only to the purely extended warrant, one's proprietary warrant for accepting what one's interlocutor says as an enabling condition, making it possible for one to draw support from the purely extended warrant.

Focusing still on the purely extended warrant, a natural question concerns its role in supporting beliefs formed in accepting what an interlocutor says. Insofar as the purely extended warrant is insufficient to sustain knowledge, that will suggest that a warrant that is sufficient for knowledge would have to include elements from one's proprietary warrant. In that case, the proprietary warrant couldn't play only an enabling role. So, in cases in which one's interlocutor expresses knowledge, is the purely extended warrant they thereby make available sufficient to support one's acquiring knowledge by accepting what one is told?

On the face of it, one's purely extended warrant seems sufficient to support one's acquiring knowledge. After all, one's interlocutor knows, and their warrant seems to be exhausted by one's purely extended warrant. However, that appearance relies on the idea that beliefs formed on the basis of accepting what one is told can gain support from the entirety of the purely extended warrant. A natural alternative would be that one's interlocutor's purely extended warrant divides into components sustained by the Acceptance Principle and extrinsic components, with the latter incorporating inputs to the operations of the Acceptance Principle together with properties like circumstantial reliability. Since one's beliefs would automatically draw support from the operations of the Acceptance Principle, it would be needless for the purely extended warrant supplied by one's interlocutor to also incorporate those operations. It would suffice that one drew support only from the extrinsic components of one's interlocutor's warrant, which could then combine with proprietary operations of the Acceptance Principle. On this alternative, interlocution imposes a filter on access to the purely extended warrant through which only extrinsic components of that warrant pass.

That line of thought shows that a proponent of Burge's account is not compelled to accept that the purely extended warrant

that is preserved through interlocution suffices for knowledge. However, that is so only to the extent that the Acceptance Principle and its operations figure universally—not only in helping to constitute one's proprietary warrant, but also in helping to constitute one's interlocutor's proprietary warrant. It leaves open that the purely extended warrant would suffice for knowledge in the absence of operations of the Acceptance Principle that are strictly proprietary, including those facilitating the endorsement of instances of seeming comprehension. So, even if we were willing to accept that the universal applicability of the Acceptance Principle serves as a filter on the elements of the purely extended warrant that transmit support via interlocution, that is consistent with viewing comprehension as enabling the transmission of the purely extended warrant, rather than providing elements in one's warrant.

If this proposal could be made out, it would provide an account on which it is possible to acquire non-observational knowledge of others' intentions. Where one's interlocutor gives expression to non-observational knowledge of what they intend to do, one can acquire knowledge of what they intend to do by accepting what they say. The warrant underwriting that knowledge is constituted by its purely extended warrant, the non-observational warrant underwriting the interlocutor's knowledge. Observation, in the form of comprehension of what the interlocutor says, is necessary for acquiring support from that warrant. But it figures only as an enabling condition, rather than as an element in one's warrant. Thus, the knowledge one acquires by accepting what one's interlocutor says is underwritten by a wholly non-observational warrant.

The proposal represents the first strategy for explaining the possibility of non-observational knowledge of what others are up to. A full defence of the proposal would have to say more about the distinction between elements in a warrant and enablers for those elements, as well as the specific application of that distinction according to which comprehension can play a merely enabling role with respect to warrants accessed through interlocution. However, enough has been said to suggest that the proposal is worth pursuing. In the next section, I turn to the second strategy.

6. The second strategy for explaining non-observational knowledge of what others are up to derives from the possibility of collective activities. This section begins to clarify the notion of collective intentional activity in advance of developing the second strategy in the following section.

Collective activities are activities undertaken by a number of individuals acting together. More carefully, let's follow Alex Oliver and Timothy Smiley in marking a distinction between distributive and collective forms of predicates:

> A predicate *F* is distributive if it is analytic that *F* is true of some things iff it is true of each of them separately. It is collective if it is not distributive. (Oliver and Smiley 2013: 3)

We can begin to see the importance of the distinction by considering Socrates' response to Hippias' assumption that all predication is distributive:

> HIPPIAS: ...If both of us were just, wouldn't each of us be too? Or if each of us were unjust, wouldn't both of us? Or if we were healthy, wouldn't each be? Or if each of us had some sickness or were wounded or stricken or had any other tribulation, again, wouldn't both of us have that attribute? (Plato *Greater Hippias*: 301e. There is no consensus that Plato is the author.)

Socrates responds:

> SOCRATES: But now, we have been instructed by you that if two is what we both are, two is what each of us must be as well; and if each if one, then both must be one as well. (Plato *Greater Hippias*: 301e.)

Socrates reduces Hippias' assumption to absurdity and reports:

> SOCRATES: Then it's not entirely necessary...that whatever is true of both is also true of each, and that whatever is true of each is also true of both. (Plato *Greater Hippias*: 302b.)

Socrates focuses on collective number predicates—for example, "are one" and "are two". But there are numerous other examples of collective predicates: "are many"; "live together"; "made up The Beatles"; "sung a duet"; "solved the equation". With this distinction in hand, we can characterize a collective activity as an activity undertaken by some individuals and where the most fundamental characterisation of the activity is provided by a collective predicate. Thus, where Russell and Whitehead were solving an equation together, the fundamental characterisation of their activity was "solving an equation". And that characterisation can have been true of them without its following analytically that Russell was solving the equation or that Whitehead was.

It may be that it is possible to say more about the conditions in which a given collective predicate is true of some things. For example, it may be possible to say more about what Whitehead and Russell were up to individually that made it true that they were solving the equation. Indeed, it would be consistent with a predicate *F*'s being collective that necessary and sufficient conditions for its applicability can be framed using only distributive predicates. All that is ruled out by the definition is that such necessary and sufficient conditions are both analytic and given in terms of the applicability of the target predicate, *F*. However, there is no obvious reason to expect that provision of non-analytic necessary and sufficient conditions will be possible with respect to any collective predicate. Indeed, it's plausible that insofar as necessary and sufficient conditions are available, they will essentially involve further collective predicates. For example, we might find plausible that where some individuals are collectively φ-ing, each of them must be doing something or other. And we might find plausible that each of them must be contributing to the collective φ-ing. But neither thought supports the idea that independent specifications of their individual activities will provide necessary or sufficient conditions for their collective φ-ing. For example, Russell's contribution might count as such only in light of Whitehead's, and vice versa, so that specification of their individual contributions wouldn't suffice for their φ-ing. Similarly, Russell might have made a lesser contribution while Whitehead took up the slack, so that Russell's actual contribution was not necessary for their φ-ing. And there are fewer grounds for optimism that such an account could be provided for collective predicates of activities in general. In advance of detailed inquiry, there is little reason to expect that it will be possible to say anything very general about what all and only cases of collective activities have in common beyond those following simply from their being activities that are susceptible to fundamental characterisation by appeal to collective predicates.

There are bound to be numerous differences amongst different forms of collective activities. But such differences will trace to differences in the natures of the activities, rather than to differences in the ways in which those activities are jointly undertaken. There are also bound to be numerous differences amongst instances of a given form of collective activity. Such differences will trace to differences in the specific contributions made by individual participants in the collective activity and the ways in which those contributions are integrated in pursuit of the activity. There are no obvious grounds to expect it to be useful to appeal, in addition to

these differences in activity and its implementation, to a range of different ways of being collective over and above the minimal characterisation offered here.

In light of what we should and shouldn't expect, our default position should be a form of minimalism about collective activities, according to which their being collective is wholly captured by their being susceptible to fundamental characterisation by non-distributive predicates. We shouldn't expect to be able to say anything more general about what all such activities have in common or about what all instances of some activity-type have in common. Differences amongst collective activities are differences either in the activities undertaken or in the specific ways in which instances are undertaken.

We can begin to assess this minimalist proposal about collective activity by considering an attempt to go beyond it. Ben Laurence presents an Anscombe-inspired account of a general distinction amongst cases of activities. He begins by considering pairs of cases which he takes to exemplify the distinction, e.g.:

> (2a) A band of robbers plans to knock over Mellon Bank. The getaway driver sits in an alley behind the bank with his engine idling, while inside the safecracker listens to the safe with a stethoscope. While the safe is being cracked several burly men stuff money from the teller's drawer hastily into sacks....
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> (2b) A man happens to be parked in an alley behind Mellon Bank with his engine idling. Among the sidewalk pedestrians, several men carrying sacks and one with a stethoscope—all total strangers—happen to be passing by the bank at the time when another man opening the bank door yells "It's a stick-up!" Pushing inside, each man hopes to get some money for himself. While the man with the stethoscope listens to the sage the other men stuff money into sacks.... (Laurence 2011: 273.)

Laurence characterises his task as follows:

> In...these contrasting pairs of cases the same actions (in some sense) were performed with the same outcome, but still there remains an inner difference. In the first of...these cases we have a group of agents acting together, while in the second...we have a mere diversity of agents acting on their own. What could account for this inner difference? (Laurence 2011: 273.)

Laurence aims to describe a general distinction between cases in which a group of agents acts together and cases in which a mere diversity of agents acts alone. Minimalism, by contrast, allows that there is no such single distinction between the cases. The second

case, as much as the first, involves collective activity—for example, removing all of the money from the bank, something none of individual participants achieves on their own. And the first case, by contrast with the second, involves the collective activity of planning to rob the bank.

That is apt to seem too quick. Although the group collectively removed all of the money from the bank, they did not do so intentionally. And it isn't unreasonable to hold that it was an action of theirs only insofar as it was identical with something they did intentionally. Furthermore, the idea that the first case distinctively involved collective planning raises the question whether there might not be more to say about the distinction between collective and distributed planning.

Laurence's positive proposal speaks to both concerns:

> People are acting together intentionally *if and only if their actions can all be straightforwardly instrumentally rationalized by the same action.* (Laurence 2011: 282, his italics.)

The core of Laurence's proposal is that, for example, in the collective case, the person cracking the safe is doing so because the group of robbers is knocking over the bank; and so forth for each participant in the collective activity. That is, the idea is to explain the occurrence of collective intentional activity by appeal to the possibility of rationalising each participants contribution by appeal to the collective activity. (We'll return to the question whether Laurence is right to take these explanations to sustain straightforward instrumental rationalisations.)

One worry about Laurence's proposal is that it seems to be an account not of people acting together intentionally, but rather of their intentionally contributing at an individual level to a collective activity. That is, the proposal tells us that an individual intentionally contributes to a collective activity just in case their contribution is rationalised by the collective activity. Connectedly, the proposal seems to presuppose, rather than to explain, the collective activities that figure in the required rationalisations. If we lacked an understanding of what it is for the group of robbers collectively to be knocking over the bank, we would not be able to appeal to that activity in rationalising the activities of any individual robber and so in explaining their individual activities by appeal to the end with which they are undertaken. However, both worries can perhaps be finessed by viewing the proposal as one of mutual dependence: there being a collective intentional activity requires that the collective activity serve as each participant's end; and that a collective activity

is some individual's end requires that that there be such a collective activity, at least in prospect.

When construed in that way, Laurence's proposal goes beyond minimalism in imposing a general requirement on collective intentional activities according to which they depend on distributive rationalisation. That is, Laurence rejects the possibility of collective activity that is only collectively intentional—that is, the ends of which do not derive directly from the ends of individual participants. So, Laurence rejects the possibility of collective activities that are intentional only because they are rationalised by further collective activities, or that are intentional without being rationalised by specific further activities. Relatedly, he rejects the possibility of collective ψ-ing that is intentional due to participants' distributed ends other than that of collectively ψ-ing.

7. With this broad conception of intentional collective activities in hand, we can begin to develop the second strategy for explaining non-observational knowledge of what others are up to. The strategy takes off from the idea that collective intentional activity is like individual intentional activity in involving non-observational knowledge of intention. In the individual case, one who is φ-ing intentionally thereby knows without observation that they are φ-ing. By direct analogy, then, the thought is that in the collective case, those who are collectively φ-ing intentionally thereby know without observation that they are collectively φ-ing.

Suppose that is granted, as in (I). The next thought is that it sustains (II) and thence (III):

I. The participants in a collective activity know without observation what they are collectively up to;
II. Each of the participants in a collective activity knows without observation what they are collectively up to;
III. Each of the participants in a collective activity knows without observation what each of the other participants is up to.

If (I–III) could be made out, then we would have a second explanation of the possibility of non-observational knowledge of what someone else is up to that is based on the possibility of collective intentional activity. The task facing the proponent of the second strategy is to defend (I–III).

The first and most pressing difficulty concerns the transition from (I) to (II). The difficulty is concealed by the surface form of

(I). On a distributive reading of (I), the contained attribution of knowledge is analytically equivalent to that in (II). However, the reading required by the analogy with the singular case is one on which the activity and the knowledge are treated in the same way, and so on which "The participants know" takes a collective reading. On that reading, that the participants know without observation what they are up to fails to analytically entail that each of the participants knows without observation what they are up to. That doesn't preclude a non-analytic mode of entailment, but it places the onus on the proponent of the second strategy to make its case.

It would be natural for the proponent of the second strategy to try to exploit Laurence's account of collective intentional activity. Recall that on his account, some people are participating in a collective intentional activity just in case each of them is acting in a way that is straightforwardly rationalised by the collective activity. Exploiting that account, it might be proposed that where someone's acting is straightforwardly rationalised by a collective activity, they will know about the collective activity without observation. Thus, the idea would be to appeal to a collective analogue of the following transition:

a. *S* is φ-ing because *S* is ψ-ing;
b. *S* is φ-ing in order to be (/with the intention of) ψ-ing (from a. on the assumption that it provides for a straightforward instrumental rationalisation of *S*'s φ-ing);
c. *S* knows without observation that *S* is φ-ing in order to be ψ-ing (from b. by the assumed connection between acting with an intention and knowing without observation what one is up to).

In the previous section, we accepted a partially collective analogue of (a):

a'. *S* is φ-ing because they (a plurality of individuals, including *S*) are ψ-ing.

In order for this to provide for a straightforward instrumental rationalisation, it must sustain transposition into a form analogous to (b). The second difficulty facing the proponent of the second strategy is to present and defend an appropriate transposition.

Laurence proposes (in effect) the following transposition:

b'. *S* is φ-ing in order to (/be) ψ(/-ing),

where ψ-ing is a collective activity (Laurence 2011: 281–2). The problem with (b') is that it is ill-formed. In order to be well-formed, ψ(-ing) must be attached to an appropriate subject. The only subject to which explicit reference is made is *S*, but *S* can't be the subject of a collective activity. To be well-formed, (b') must incorporate an appropriately numbered subject—say, "they". The problem now is that the implied subject cannot straightforwardly be restored. The nearest approximation seems to be (b''):

b''. *S* is φ-ing in order that they (/be) ψ(/-ing).

However, it's far from clear that (b'') supplies a straightforward instrumental rationalisation of *S*'s φ-ing. The problem is that in order for the intended end to underwrite practical knowledge, the end must be of a form that both underwrites *S*'s holding true that they will attain the end and also directly brings about that they attain it. While (b'') fulfils the first requirement, it fails the second. For its attribution of the collectively-directed intention is restricted to forms of intention captured by "*S* intends that *X* ψ-s" or "S intends *X* to ψ", where "*X*" picks out who it is that *S* intends will ψ (in (b''), the people picked out by "they"). By contrast with the singular form of intention, attributed via "*S* intends to ψ", those forms of intention can't figure in directly bringing about anyone's ψ-ing. (For relevant discussion, see Alvarez 2010; Baier 1970; Campbell 2019; Clark 2001; Higginbotham 2003; Hornsby 2003, 2016; Madden 2011; Mueller 1974, 1977; Rumfitt 1994.)

Assume that the second problem can be solved. The question now is whether it can be solved in a way that sustains a transition to (c''):

c''. *S* knows without observation that *S* is φ-ing in order that they (/be) ψ(/-ing).

Laurence is sceptical. At one point, he allows that a collective that is acting intentionally can meet operative requirements on their having knowledge without observation if at least one participant knows without observation what the collective is up to. At another, he allows that operative requirements can be met if there is purely collective knowledge without observation of what the collective is up to (Laurence 2011: 287–288, 291–294). Since he hopes to defend an appropriate analogue of (b), as part of his attempt to go beyond minimalism, he must reject the transition from it to (c'').

The claim that participants in a collective action might contribute intentionally without knowing non-observationally that they were doing so would stymy the second strategy. Independently of that, the rejection of the transition from analogue of (b) to analogue of (c) is sufficiently problematic that it would seem safer to reject the transition from (a) to analogue of (b) that took us beyond minimalism. If Laurence's attempt to go beyond minimalism by requiring that collective intentions distribute forces us to allow that collective intentional activity fails to sustain non-observational knowledge, then that would be a reason for resisting the attempt.

Be that as it may, the proponent of the second strategy is required to endorse the transition from (a) to analogue of (c). The upshot to this point is that it is not obvious that they are entitled to do so. Supposing that we nonetheless grant them the transition, will that serve to carry through the second strategy? No. At best, it takes us only to (II). The proponent of the second strategy still faces the task of explaining the transition from there to (III)—from individual knowledge without observation of the collective's activity to individual knowledge without observation of other participant's activities. The fourth difficulty is that this transition is, again, unsupported by the logic of collective predication. And the fact that there is no analytic entailment from collective to distributive predication is all the more problematic at this point, since the required transition is between contents of pieces of knowledge. An account is required of how an individual participant's knowing without observation that they are collectively ψ-ing can put the individual in a position to know of any one amongst the ψ-ers that they are φ-ing. Even if it could be made out that the required transition from collective to distributive holds of necessity, that would help only to the extent that its necessity is available to subjects without observation.

The best hope for defending such a connection would be via a very general characterisation of what individual participants in ψ-ing are up to. For example, one might try to defend the claim that (i) and (ii) are available both to, and with respect to, individual participants, and can sustain the transition to (iii):

i. They are ψ-ing;
ii. *S* is amongst them;
iii. *S* is contributing, somehow, to their ψ-ing.

One difficulty is that it is far from obvious that participants need know that any particular *S* is amongst the participants. (See Martin 2014: 30–31.) Certainly, it is not obvious that that knowledge is available without observation. Another difficulty is that the lack of specificity in the consequent knowledge is, at best, disappointing.

8. I've outlined two strategies for explaining the possibility of non-observational knowledge of what someone else is up to. The first strategy appealed to the possibility of acquiring knowledge of what someone is up to by accepting their testimony. Its central idea was that testimony can preserve the credentials of the knowledge whose propagation it enables. I considered whether that idea can be defended on the basis of Anscombe's (and Plato's) distinction between elements in a warrant for a piece of knowledge and conditions that enable those elements to figure in the warrant. More work is required to fill out that defence, but its prospects are not outrageously bleak. The second strategy appealed to the possibility of collective intentional activities. Its central idea was that just as an individual can know without observation what they are up to, a collective can know without observation what they are up to. The main challenge facing this strategy is to parlay that idea into an account of an individual's knowing without observation what another individual is up to. I suggested that a number of serious obstacles stand in the way of carrying through that project. Its prospects seem to me gloomier than the first strategy's.

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