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Response to Bernhard Schmid

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Response to Schmid's paper

Schmid's account is an interesting and fine phenomenological "subject account" of the we-mode. In it the subject is a participating person's or, rather, persons' awareness, viz. "our plural pre-reflective awareness" with the content that, for example, we are intentionally walking together (in the we-mode) or that we form a (we-mode) dyad that is ours in a non-distributive, collective sense of "our".

According to Schmid, our awareness of us as a group is the subject of our we-mode walking. In this sense he regards the present awareness account as a subject account rather than as a content account. This view seems implicitly to account for the adverbial nature of we-mode thinking and acting (viz. thinking and acting in a "we-modely" and "groupish" way and thus much as in the adverbial account given in SO, pp. 36-38), although it only considers the phenomenal aspects of the we-mode, not how those features are reflected in action.ⁱ

Schmid's phenomenological account is special due to his strong reliance on the notion of pre-reflective awareness that is supposed to represent the subject aspect of the we-mode. According to the account, *the we-mode is plural pre-reflective awareness of group members' – e.g. to the effect that they form a group with a non-distributive "we" or have a certain attitude as theirs. This plural pre-reflective awareness of the members, collectively viewed, is also a pre-reflectively constituted plural subject* (pp. 25-26).ⁱⁱ

My own account of the we-mode has ingredients that fit his account as well but the same goes for Schmitz's account (that clearly differs from Schmid's phenomenological account). I will not here undertake a detailed discussion of these accounts and the precise similarities and differences between them.

Schmid speaks of something that is embedded but not explicitly analyzed in my account of the we-mode, namely the "feel of it" – and thus its phenomenology. He does not present an account of the we-mode in the same sense that I present one. In my we-mode account there is the feature (mentioned by Schmid) of the subjects' construction (viz., pre-reflective construction) of their collection as a (we-mode) group.ⁱⁱⁱ This construction gives "our" group the "status function" (much in the Searlean sense) of a group agent formed by us, and as a consequence the members' attitudes and actions qua group members as a rule become "extrinsic" in my special sense of SO. (When the same persons act outside the group context they act "intrinsically".) In the context of a we-mode group the members typically are reflectively aware of themselves as a "we" acting together, but the basic underlying case is that they are pre-reflectively aware of themselves as forming a we-mode group).

Schmid seems to have understood my account of the we-mode quite well and I agree with him that cases of we-mode thinking in many basic cases will be cases of pre-reflective awareness of ourselves as a "we", although obviously the awareness in many cases (e.g. as in cases of the collectively committed members' explicit communication of the nature of the group and its ethos) needs to be reflective at least during part of the time of the communicative activity. Schmid's approach applies to all social attitudes and actions as well as other social entities and gives a viable account of the phenomenological features that are involved in a person's functioning in the we-mode.*

*I wish to thank my wife Maj Tuomela for excellent comments on this response.

Notes

ⁱ Recall from SO that I have there presented three fundamental criteria for we-mode that I call the group reason, collectivity, and collective commitment criteria, and these should obviously be included in a fuller account that I will not here give. Schmid does not really discuss them.

ⁱⁱ See Schmid's paper "Plural Self-Awareness", 2014, *J. Phenom. Cogn. Sci.*, 13: 7-24, for a more detailed presentation of his phenomenological approach.

ⁱⁱⁱ Unfortunately Schmid does not systematically use my distinction between "reflexive" (in the logical sense) and "reflective" (psychologically understood).