

### *Response to Michael Schmitz's paper*

Michael Schmitz has written a critical review of my account. I appreciate his ideas and his friendly way of addressing my work. In this response I will focus on some of his critical points and consider their tenability.

Schmitz claims in Section 8 that my view does not allow group agents to be real – despite my arguments to the contrary. According to my book *Social Ontology (SO)*, a group agent is at bottom a conceptual and often (e.g. in the case of corporations) legal structure of positions (a kind of placeholders). This structure generally involves a task-right system for the position holders – tasks concerning, roughly, what they ought to do in their position and rights what they are permitted to do. When the positions are filled by people the group agent is fully functional and capable of producing outcomes in the real world through those individual members despite its fictitious features (e.g. that it as a group only has extrinsic but no intrinsic, biologically based intentional features). Note that my view does not take group agents, such as we-mode groups, to be more than *partly* fictitious because group agents are still real in a causal sense, as said in so many words in *SO*.<sup>1</sup> Let me emphasize that only the intentional properties of the group agent are fictitious (and mentally created) and they express only extrinsic intentionality according to *SO*.

Group agents function only through individuals who of course have minds and are capable of full, biologically based intrinsic intentionality, but the members' purely personal intentional features cannot yet make the group agent intentional qua group. This is because a group agent's attitudes and quasi-mental states can in principle only be based on the extrinsic collective attribution to the group agent of those states by its members. This is comparable to what we have in a theater play where the actors can act in one or more roles with extrinsically created origin, as it were, but the role states are generatively based on the individual members' biological capacity for full intrinsic intentionality leading to the extrinsically intentional role state.

It thus follows that a group agent necessarily lacks an intrinsic mind qua group. Arguably, it also generally has to lack a fully *unified* extrinsic mind – it has only a set of attributed attitudes or other mental states or, for that matter, roles in Schmitz's sense. The group members cannot form the right kind of unity for that to be fully the case. As e.g. the “discursive dilemma” (see List and Pettit (2011)) and other analogous problems concerning group decision making in effect indicate, out of many individual minds one cannot at least in all cases aggregatively – or (even) by means of collective acceptance – produce a fully unified intentional “group mind” (not even an extrinsic mind

based on roles or the like). At best such a procedure might yield some kind of average of group members' wants, intentions, beliefs, etc. that may involve compromises.

Schmitz claims on p. [19] of his paper this: "That Apple has plans for the future just means that individuals have such plans *in their roles as officers of the corporation.*" (This is about what I propose in SO for the we-mode case for members acting as group members.) However, such plans are formed by the individuals in their roles only and are basically extrinsic and also extrinsically attributed to Apple. Such proposals by the individual members as group members for the group's attitudes (cf. the "we-mode proposals" of SO, chapter 2), are extrinsic in my terminology and cannot in general lead to fully intrinsic group attitudes. Furthermore, as indicated, in some cases they cannot be aggregated to give a unique group attribution but at best compromised solutions (see, List and Pettit, 2011, chapter 3, and chapter 5 of SO).<sup>2</sup>

Schmitz argues (in section 3) that the price to pay for the present kind of combination of real group agency with fictitious features is that group agents cannot cause outcomes in terms of intentional causation. I agree that in general such intentional causation is extrinsically intentional only, but it nevertheless is or can be intentional. My response, as in effect given on p. 51 of SO, accordingly is the following. Remembering that group causation requires that the members *act as group members* and can thereby causally bring about an outcome such causation can be regarded as a kind of intentional causation by the group – in accordance with its ethos and its salient motivating pro-attitudes, beliefs and what have you (even if these mental states of the members are extrinsically intentional and externally attributed to the group by the members). Acting as a group member involves that the group through its attributed attitudes is causally relevant for explaining the members' actions qua group members.<sup>3</sup>

As we know, people may share attitudes and form I-mode or we-mode groups partly in the above external fashion leading to extrinsic group attitudes. When group formation leads to the fulfillment of the central we-mode criteria (concerning group reason, collectivity, collective commitment) we get a we-mode group, where the center point is the ethos and not (the identity of) the members. This also means that in the special case where people share "private", intrinsically intentional attitudes and form a we-mode group, we get a we-mode group where the members share both intrinsically and extrinsically intentional attitudes (attitudes qua private persons and attitudes qua group members). Such a group is cohesive – it will keep strongly together due to the fact that the members' views qua group members coincide with their private views. When new members are admitted to the group, it may happen that some of them do not accept quite the same goals and views as the founding members. This may result in voting, compromises, etc. concerning the attitudes accepted for the group. Then we have a situation with less conformity concerning the

members' private views, but the group's ethos is still the center point and the members' ethos-based extrinsic views (cf. views qua group members) are what count here.

Informal social groups may be I-mode or we-mode groups (in the sense of SO) depending especially on whether they satisfy the central we-mode criteria. In the case of an informal we-mode group the members in many (but not all) cases function on the basis of their personal, intrinsically intentional mental states and may as a consequence succeed in forming a group ethos by consensus and collectively accept this ethos. To take an example, they may simply form an informal group for going together to the opera e.g. once a month if there is suitable program. This "opera group" will have as its collectively accepted goal one based on their intrinsic intentionality. This kind of informal group is not artificial in the same way that a group agent is as a member's relevant intrinsic and extrinsic attitudes coincide.

Nevertheless the collectively accepted ethos – so to speak – is the center point of the group, and thus the extrinsic attitudes (ought to) win over the intrinsic attitudes in conflict situations in the case of group members functioning as group members.

Consider now the possibility that the current members admit new members to this "opera group". When the group grows like this it might well happen that the members disagree e.g. about to which opera performance to go next. Then they perhaps vote and arrive at a compromise, but all the members, being collectively committed to the collectively agreed-to goal, go along. This ("positional") we-mode group has variable membership. The members form their specific goals for the group by means of their collective decision making where they act in their role as group members. The resulting collective goal or collective intention expresses the members' extrinsic intentionality (also in cases where their intrinsically intentional attitudes happen to coincide with their extrinsically intentional ones).

In the case of we-mode groups, the members construct a we-mode group out of their collectivity by means of their conceptualization and collective acceptance, and thus it becomes a group agent, indeed a paradigmatic one, with a non-distributive (viz. properly collective) "we". The members act as group members according to their collectively accepted ethos. This kind of action is not based on intrinsic mental attitudes even in the cases where they coincide with their extrinsic (ethos-based) attitudes that do serve as their basis for action.

As to the notion of having attitudes and acting in a certain *mode* – the central topic in Schmitz's paper – I have discussed the we-mode and the I-mode (in chapter 2 (pp. 36-38) of SO) and also in chapter 4 (especially when discussing the satisfaction conditions of various kinds of we-mode attitudes) and will not here repeat those points. My own account does not take a specific stand on how a mode psychologically appears or manifests itself to the person functioning in that mode – a central topic for both Schmitz and Schmid – see my response to Schmid in connection with his

paper and to Schmitz below. Also cf. my attempts to describe expressions of we-mode intentions and actions in chapter 3 of SO – they also concern phenomenal features of functioning in a mode.

Recall that in my view the we-mode is a mode in a different and more general sense than the Brentanoan attitude mode (that is about intending, believing, wishing, etc. a propositional content). Thus, one can e.g. intend a content in the we-mode or in the I-mode, and the same goes for all intentional attitudes. In my view, the subject of an attitude or action to which the mode is attributed accordingly may be either an individual or a collective (or a collection of people). Thus my we-mode notion can be regarded as primarily a subject account. (The analogous can be said about the I-mode, too.)

More specifically, the we-mode can be viewed as a second-order notion in the following sense. On the first attitudinal level we have standard intentional attitudes, e.g. beliefs, wants, intentions, hopes, etc. On the second level we have, so to speak, an attitudinal subject variable that in normal common sense cases takes two values, that of an *individual* subject or a *group* subject (or an individual functioning *as a group member*). The first-order level content may depend on the value of the subject variable. E.g. in the group intention case (expressed e.g. by “we will perform X together”) we have the members’ joint intention to perform X, viz. what the group’s intention requires for its satisfaction. In addition, my account also involves the kind of “adverbial” account given on pp. 36-38 of SO. That account emphasizes the *way* or *manner* that expresses (in terms of the we-mode or I-mode, etc.) how somebody intends or believes (etc.) a content. Such a way of intending or believing, etc. can be characterized partly in terms of the phenomenal features of the intender’s awareness of the group as subject (and his experiencing others as co-subjects) when intending (etc.), but also in terms of what special overt features the satisfaction of the intention involves. This is the *subject mode aspect of mode*. In any case, the we-mode involves more than what the satisfaction of the attitude in a “groupish” way strictly requires. Thus, contra Schmitz’s claim, my account of the we-mode is only partly based on attitude content, e.g. on what is intended or believed, etc. (the content-related mode aspect in Schmitz’s terms).

Furthermore, in my account the three “criteria” of the we-mode, viz. the group reason, collectivity, and collective commitment criteria have to be satisfied in the full we-mode case (see also my response to Ludwig’s paper in the present volume).

A further important feature in my account is the fact that the we-mode is conceptually connected to a group and its ethos, and that thus there is no group-free we-mode collective intentionality in my account (although there is group-free I-mode collective intentionality, see e.g. p. 70 of SO). Thus, e.g. a person’s intending in the we-mode essentially involves the intender’s salient group and its ethos, and in this sense the group serves to ground the “groupish” features that the we-mode involves. Conceptual expressions of we-mode attitudes, etc. normally have

satisfaction conditions, and they differ from those of I-mode attitudes with the same content. Those satisfaction conditions involve the *subject* of those attitudes (viz. a group member or the collection of the members functioning jointly to satisfy the intention). Thus not only the content of the attitudes is involved here.

Schmitz claims that my account of *group reason* (viz. a group member's partial or total reason for participating in the group's action or project) is a content account. However, my view, while it indeed in part is a content account, yet is as much a subject account, for according to my account the group members collectively accept the group's ethos (the group's central intentions or goals, etc.) or other goals as their group reason to perform their parts of the group's project(s) and act for this reason. While a content can be had in the we-mode or in the I-mode, in a we-mode group the members are even on conceptual grounds assumed to view the content in terms of the group's ethos or other goals that are collectively accepted by the group members. In the pro-group I-mode case, viz. the case that is based on individualistic thinking and acting but not e.g. collective acceptance of goals (cf. p. 70 of SO), there is no such tight connection between the members' thinking (and acting) and the group's goal.

Furthermore, while reasons are based on facts they are conceptual and psychological matters for the subjects who have them. They can be applied e.g. even to pre-linguistic children, as they do not require linguistic formulation. Note that a reason may be had without its motivating the person to act according to it.

In his paper Schmitz contrasts *mode as attitude* with *mode as subject* (I have above used his terms). Both are intuitively relevant (and involved in my account, as seen), for "in taking up an intentional act or performing a speech act, a subject represents not only a state of affairs that he believes to obtain or intends to bring about, but also himself and his position or attitude of believing or intention [intending, R.T.] vis-à-vis that state of affairs" (Schmitz, section 4). In the we-mode case this representation involves representing the content in we-mode terms, in terms of the group's collectively accepted ethos ("our" ethos), and other goals. The subject aspect of the we-mode is thus involved in the members' acceptance of the group's ethos (or other goal) as their group reason for participatory action. This acceptance need not be reflective but it needs to be relevantly "groupish". My notion of group reason also shows that the subject is focused on in my account, for it is the members who take the ethos and other goals as their group reasons for acting. These goals, etc. are contents that are collectively accepted by the members as their group reason for action. For Schmitz the fundamental question here is: "how is the we-mode manifested in the mind?" This seems also to be Schmid's basic problem (see my response to his paper). However, although I do not deny that giving a phenomenological account of the mode aspect is of interest, in my approach I focus less on this phenomenological problem. Rather my basic analytical problem is related, on the one hand, to

the above account of the we-mode as a second-order mode and, on the other hand, to the functionalistic adverbial account of the we-mode that I advocate in SO. So what is it to act *we-mode-ly*? I have said several things in SO in answer to this question (e.g. when analyzing and discussing the three basic criteria of the we-mode), but more should perhaps be said. E.g.: What kinds of thought processes do lead to acting in the we-mode (e.g. versus the pro-group I-mode) and help to explain the occurrence of the action? Answering this question seems to require empirical research in addition to phenomenological analysis.

Toward the end of his long paper Schmitz considers some other topics that I will not here comment on in detail. He thus considers what he takes to be *non-conceptual* phenomena – such as those involved in sensory-motor joint activities, e.g. dancing, and also how social bonds become created through them. There can indeed be bond-creating non-conceptual elements in such interactive activities. Schmitz also considers joint attention, which seemingly in its developed forms (but perhaps not in its rudimentary forms applicable to small children) may involve joint we-mode activity by the participants and also their non-distributive, properly collective “we”. (My account does not take a stand on at which age children begin to function in the we-mode or some related, more rudimentary mode.)

I discuss some similar phenomena such as prospective we-mode groups in SO, chapters 5 and 6. There is also a discussion of the positional structure and “positional mode” (rather similar to Schmitz’s “role mode”) that in principle applies to we-mode groups and especially to normatively structured groups with positions and a division of tasks and rights.<sup>4</sup> Another central similar but somewhat broader notion of role is that of *acting as a group member* (as specified in part by the group’s ethos). This is a very central notion in my theory – recall what I above said about its role in a group agent’s causing events to happen. (On pp. 18-19 Schmitz calls my conception of group agents mistaken. What I have said in this response so far should suffice to rebut this claim of his.)<sup>5</sup>

Let me finally rehash some of my above claims and provide some additional details. First, when discussing social collectives (focusing on small groups made up of interacting individuals) in Section VI (on p. 40), Schmitz says this of my account: “Tuomela is led to the view that collectives are fictional [fictitious rather, R.T.] creations of individuals that have extrinsic, derived intentionality only.” This sentence describes my view somewhat incorrectly. First, while I do claim that collectives (e.g. social groups and organizations) often, especially when they involve normative positional structure, are *partly* fictitious, in my account they yet are not completely fictitious (viz. made up or constructed) – only their intentional aspects are. The attitudes attributed to them are of course not assumed to be based on completely arbitrary attribution but on attribution based on acceptable linguistic and conceptual criteria as well as on normal action-based criteria in the culture in question (yet the attribution is arbitrary in the different sense that it could have resulted in

another outcome). Such group agents are real in that they are capable of causing outcomes in the real world (cf. my earlier remarks and see e.g. p. 47). Groups cannot act qua groups directly but only through their members. E.g. organizations such as corporations without filled positions of course are not capable of action but are capable when those positions have been appropriately filled. Second, group members of course are individuals with the normal capacity for intrinsic intentionality, but when they *act as group members*, e.g. in social or positional roles, they act on their extrinsically intentional mental states, ones that they may acquire from their group's ethos, for instance, in analogy with actors in a play acquiring their extrinsically intentional role states from a play script or the like. In any case, Schmitz's claim that according to my account they only have extrinsically intentional mental states has above been argued to be incorrect. They do act on their extrinsically intentional attitudes when playing a role or when acting as group members – but those states are based on their capacities for intrinsic intentionality that they exhibit in other contexts. Let me note that when acting in a role a person may in actual practice have internalized the role and thus approximately be acting with full intrinsic intentionality.

To end, Schmitz's paper is rich in its insights and arguments. Schmitz's account comes close to my view in the central cases (although there are several misunderstandings of my views in his paper perhaps partly due to deficiencies in my exposition). Especially, Schmitz's account of the mode concepts is important and helps to show why the we-mode is a needed element of current theorizing about collective intentionality. Note that in SO I also argued that the we-mode is useful for theorizing in the social sciences and is needed for theorizing and explanation of (especially institutional) action. The we-mode approach is accordingly needed to complement currently prevalent individualistic social theorizing.

### *References*

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I occasionally say in SO that all group agents are fictitious, but that does not mean more than that they all have some fictitious features, viz. made up features that are metaphorically described or named. E.g. a group agent's intentional features like its "wants" and "beliefs" as well as its "consciousness" are such fictitious features. Yet group agents as discussed in this book are causally real, viz. capable of causing outcomes in the real world through their members acting as group members with extrinsically intentional attitudes, e.g. role-based goals and views in something like Schmitz's sense. What Schmitz says of my view of group agents is not right and requires modification in accordance with what I say in this response (that I take to be compatible with what I say in SO).

<sup>2</sup> See my remarks on List and Pettit (2011) in SO on the "autonomous" nature of a group's mental states in relation to its members' states, also see my discussion especially in chapters 3 and 7 in SO of the discrepancy between I-mode and we-mode states (as well as other group-based properties).

<sup>3</sup> See Tuomela (2007, chapter 1) for my notions of acting as a group member in the we-mode and in the I-mode. As to a group's explanatory control, I cannot here tackle this complex matter. The recent paper by Strand (2012) shows in detail how one can feasibly combine the group's explanatory control with the group members' causal control over their actions. Briefly, the group non-causally filters for certain actions (viz. actions as a group member in the terms of my account) and thus structurally control and serve to explain those actions. Also cf. List and Pettit, 2011, chapters 6 and 7 for a somewhat different kind of account of a group's control over its activities and their intended consequences. Their account of how to combine individual level causal control with group level control seems to work in cases where the group's control depends on specific individuals but not in more general cases where that qualification does not hold.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. my account of social roles in a positional context (see Tuomela, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Schmitz criticizes my view of we-intending as being strictly group-based. If a small change in the group members occurs the members left may not any more rationally hold the we-intention. Suppose a task requires three members to satisfy the original we-intention. Suppose the group is a triad and that the three members share the we-intention but that then one of them leaves the group or otherwise gives up his we-intention. Now the two members left cannot rationally satisfy the we-intention as the task requires that three persons contribute. This gives my central intuition for claiming that the we-intention then must be re-applied for the case at hand, if possible, or otherwise the we-intention will rationally (but perhaps sometimes not psychologically) cease to exist.