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## Response to David Schweikard

Tuomela, Raimo

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SO response to Schweikard's paper "*Voluntary Groups, Noncompliance, and Conflicts of Reasons: Tuomela on Acting as a Group Member*"

David Schweikard has written a clear, informative, and sympathetic paper on my book I will here comment on some selected parts of the paper that contain specific criticisms of my book *Social Ontology (SO)*. I largely agree with his general criticism that asks for more realism from my theory concerning especially matters related to the reasons that groups give their members and especially to the conflicts that may arise between such group reasons and the members' personal (or, as I say, "private") reasons. In *SO* I have not gone into all the details that may be needed for a satisfactory discussion of the issues in question, but I believe that my account of group and personal reasons in various kinds of groups and of "stylized" reasoning schemas and other things I consider in the various chapters of the book, e.g. about the role of background knowledge in chapter 5 still serve to indicate how I would go about dealing with problematic cases like the kinds of normative conflicts that Schweikard considers in his paper.

Let me say already here that Schweikard's main critical points relate to normative matters such as the question whether my account of group normativity is too strict and demanding. To that question my answer is that, first, my theory in the book does not go in great detail into questions of moral or political philosophy. I only give basic ideas needed for a philosophical theory of sociality that is supposed to deal with matters in normal rather than extraordinary circumstances in the social world. Furthermore, it is a somewhat simplified account even for that kind of circumstances. As in the natural sciences, also philosophical theories of sociality are idealized and purport to give the central elements needed for understanding and explaining the social world. The task of research is ultimately to remove the idealizations and to give an as realistic account as possible (cf. the use of the notion of frictionless planes in physics). This in any case is my methodological advice for the kind of social theorizing I am engaged in.

As to Schweikard's discussion of we-mode thinking and acting, he quotes the following statement from *SO*, p. 38: "An ideal we-moder can only think and act for group-centered motives," This somewhat ambiguous claim puzzles Schweikard perhaps because it is a rather vague shorthand. What is meant by the sentence is this: Suppose we are dealing with a context which falls within the *realm of concern* of group *g* defining *g*'s context or realm of functioning (see my 2007 book, pp. 15-16) that its *ethos* (viz. constitutive goals, beliefs, standards, practices, etc.) is about and "governs". Now consider an action *X* for which there is a possible motivating reason *MR* within the realm of concern of *g*. If there is a possible ethos-based motivating reason and also another possible

motivating reason for it, be it within the realm of concern of *g* or not, then, when acting as a group member of *g*, she ought to act for MR rather than for another possibly contextually available reason that does not similarly belong to the realm of concern of *g* and is not governed by the ethos of *g*. The “ought” here is supposed to derive from a member’s very membership in *g*, viz. a member should act when acting as a member of *g*. Note that a member can be called a “we-moder” if he predominantly acts in this kind of group-centered way when acting as a group member (cf. SO, p. 38) and an ideal we-moder if he always when there is the possibility chooses to act in this way. It would seem that we-moderers in the characterized sense may exist in real life cases, depending on the kind of group in question. Whether an ideal we-moder can ever exist is a contingent problem that I will not here say more about.

Of the three criterial features of we-mode thinking and acting (briefly, the group reason, collective commitment, and collectivity criteria), Schweikard discusses only the first two. He comments on chapter 2 of SO where I discuss these criteria almost exclusively in the case of we-mode groups (briefly, groups in which the members tend to function in the we-mode). However, he also seems to be concerned with other kinds of groups without paying explicit attention to the matter. Thus in the context of his examples (A) and (B) in section 3 of his paper a discussion of the kinds of groups involved would have been important. At least (B) does not seem in general to involve a we-mode group, although Schweikard comments on it as if it were one. We-mode groups are typically voluntary groups where the members are disposed to cooperate and act together already on the basis of belonging to such a group. My theory is not concerned only with voluntary groups but also e.g. with groups to which one is born (e.g. the family) and with groups governed by an external authority (e.g. some business companies are such).

As to Schweikard’s problem about whether group-normative reasons trump other reasons I take the view in the book that they do not generally trump moral reasons (p. 119). The obligations ensuing from group membership are *pro tanto* ones – they need not apply in all cases (p. 119). Nevertheless Schweikard comments on them as if they were absolute or “come what may” obligations (see p. 9 of his paper). Analogously the group reasons that such *pro tanto* obligations ground are pre-emptive *under normal circumstances* – perhaps not in other cases (p. 116). But they do not in general trump moral reasons or private reasons in all cases. In my military example on p. 119 I argue that e.g. moral reasons may trump immoral and irrational orders by officers. So the conclusion is that my account does not make group members robots whose private and moral reasons have no significance for them or the group. Thus Schweikard’s claim on p. 7 that in my theory compliance is not just the default option but is an identity-constituting overall strategy is not warranted at least in all cases.

In section 3. on p. 8 Schweikard discusses two examples of conflicting reasons that he takes to be challenges to my account. The conflict is between group reasons and privately created moral reasons. I will not here verbatim reproduce these examples – termed A and B. In A we have a group of life guards, of which A had made a prior promise to instruct some swimmers at a certain time. But precisely at that time he is needed for rescuing another swimmer. Should he give up his promise and violate the involved moral (or quasi-moral) obligation? This is the conflict. From the point of view of my theory the answer is rather clear: obey the work obligation (here a moral one) and thus act for the group reason to participate in rescue work, unless other weightier reasons apply to the case (I assume not). In saying this I assume that the group of life guards is a we-mode group. The moral reason to rescue trumps the reason involved in promising. There is not much of a problem for my account in this case.

In Schweikard's second case B is a member of an activist group for improving the living conditions of a minority group. The group frequently engages in disobedient action (here blocking a marathon race) to further its aims. B faces a conflict concerning his participation in the disobedient action in question and regards the participatory action as possibly disproportional for the situation in question (it perhaps harms the participants too much). In this case it is unclear what kind of group is concerned if indeed it is a social group at all. It may well not be a we-mode group. If it, however, were a we-mode group, the activist group would have counted on him to take part in blocking the marathon race and might have sanctioned him for not doing that despite his excuses.

Schweikard seems to think that in my account group obligations are content independent. But my account does not assume that. At least they are not in my account independent of circumstances of application. In other respects I accept Schweikard's solution to the case B. I have not in my book considered in detail that kind of case.

As we have seen above, the members of we-mode groups in my account are not mere "immaculate sheep" (cf. section 4 of Schweikard's paper for the phrase). My account is far from strict in the sense Schweikard seems to understand strictness in his paper. Another matter is that my account involves idealized notions and may not as such, without further empirical refinements, be sufficiently realistic for explaining group life in the social world.