

# Joint Intention and the Common Mind

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Myriad impressive philosophers—Bratman, Gilbert, Searle, Tuomela, Velleman and most recently Kit Fine—have provided powerful and interesting theories of shared or joint intention, accounting for the phenomenon of activities done *together*. In this paper, I focus on the *metaphysics* required to support our notion of joint intention. So I tease out some common threads in their accounts, appropriating those portions which I think most plausible, and drawing out the intuitions they share. I develop an argument the premises of which command our intuitive assent, but the conclusion of which—though deductively implied by the premises—is paradoxically surprising, and it has been met with earnest rejection wherever it has appeared.

## The Common Mind Argument

1. Groups (collections of more than one person) have joint intentions.
2. Joint intentions are not reducible to individual intentions.
3. Intentions are mental states.
4. If mental states exist, then there is some mind which is the bearer of those mental states.
5. *Therefore*, groups have minds.

Firstly, I could perhaps have presented the Common Mind argument in a more succinct way as follows: *groups have joint intentions, so groups have minds* (that is, to proceed straight from premise 1 to the conclusion in 5). This, however, would be to obfuscate some important steps which would better be declared explicitly in order that they may be scrutinized.<sup>1</sup> I think the argument is valid,<sup>2</sup> so the truth of the conclusion can be denied only by denying one (or more) of the premises. I examine each premise in turn, eliciting its intuitive attraction, and demonstrating its theoretical plausibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Searle (Searle, *Collective Intentions and Actions* 1990, 402-404) addresses the first two intuitions in similar terms.

<sup>2</sup> That is, I think its present formulation is materially if not formally valid, and it can be made formally valid without disrupting its content.

## 1. Groups (collections of more than one person) have joint intentions

There are really two parts to this premise. First, there is the claim that there are, as matter of fact, instances of joint intention. Second, there is the suggestion that these instances belong to, or are held by a group, where a group is understood simply as a collection of more than one person.<sup>3</sup> Let's begin with the first claim. Some may suggest that this is a merely empirical matter, the settling of which requires inquiring in the world, 'is there some phenomenon such that it is a joint intention?' just as though we were asking whether there are bears in Australia. And, just as we need some sense of bear-hood to be able to recognize a bear, we need some grip on the phenomenon of joint intentions in order to theorize it. This requires something like a *taxonomy*—what is an intention, and how does the modifier 'joint' adjust the domain?

Firstly, intentions have *content*: they are directed at some state of affairs which the agent intends to obtain, or some activity the agent intends to perform (more on this in section three). Thus we begin with the bearer of the intention, specified by a name (perhaps as a noun, pronoun, or definite description), we add the verb, 'intends' (or one of its cognates), and follow it with the content of the intention. This gives us sensible sentences expressing intentions, such as, 'I intend to clean the apartment,' or 'we intend to pass the bill,' or 'the man on the roof intends to jump,' and so on. Such intentions are *individual* intentions where the subject is singular, and are *joint* intentions where the subject is plural.

Accordingly, the question then is, *are there intentions the proper expression of which commences with 'we'?* Everyone will agree then that there are joint intentions, not least because he takes himself to have participated in such a joint intention at one time or another. Certainly, playing on a team, getting married, or singing a duet *assume* the existence of joint intentions, since such activities would be impossible otherwise. I think I am not overstating the extent of the intuitive pull in suggesting that ordinary people believe it is just demonstrably obvious that there are joint intentions in this ordinary sense.

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<sup>3</sup> By 'collection,' I mean a collection of any sort—either arbitrary (like the collection of blue items on my apartment floor), or somehow unified (like the collection of Wimbledon gentlemen's singles winners). I choose this neutral term advisedly since I do not wish to beg any questions by using only collections which presuppose some kind of unity.

However, settling this question is arguably not a *merely* empirical matter. For example, it is not given in the *data of the phenomena* themselves that they are joint intentions; rather the notion of joint intentions is a classification we attach to those phenomena. It is open for one to suggest that the empirical phenomena admit of an alternative explanation, according to which the things we usually call joint intentions are not really joint intentions after all (just as if suggesting that the things we call dolphins are really a kind of walrus). However, if someone wished to deny that there are joint intentions (as presently conceived), he would be in the unenviable position of owing us all an explanation as to why our ubiquitous and deeply-felt intuitions are mistaken. For now, I simply assume I am in good company in thinking it unintelligible that string quartets and military maneuvers are not cases of joint intentions in some straightforward sense.

This leads me to the second part of the first premise: assuming there are such things as joint intentions, it is the *group* who *has* this intention. Again, I think this is the most intuitive understanding. Suppose that a battalion intends to effect a pincer attack on the enemy. How shall we express this intention? It is quite clear that we shall do so using a *plural* indexical term (such as ‘we’ or ‘they’ or some collective noun like ‘2nd Battalion 3rd Marines’), saying something like ‘we intend to effect the pincer attack.’ This demonstrates that the default position, for starters, is that it is the battalion (i.e., the group) which has the intention. But most significantly, no individual is even a *candidate* to have such an intention! No individual soldier could effect a pincer attack by himself, and no individual soldier intends it. Rather, an individual soldier in that battalion will have an intention commensurate with his *part* in the *whole* battalion’s intention to effect a pincer attack. His individual intention must attach to something which is properly ‘up to him,’ such as running the long side of the enemy’s flank and shooting the first foot soldier on the right.<sup>4</sup>

So, as far as this first premise is concerned, I think that Searle is quite correct when he observes that “[i]t seems obvious that there really is collective intentional behavior as distinct from individual intentional behavior... The problem is with... the idea that the collective behavior is somehow not analyzable in terms of individual behavior, and the collective intention is

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<sup>4</sup> Schmid characterizes this typical constraint on intentions as “The Principle of Intentional Self-Confidence: One cannot intend to do what one takes oneself to be unable to carry out” (Schmid, *Plural Action: Concepts and Problems* 2009, 5).

somehow not reducible to a conjunction of singular intentions. How, one wants to ask, could there be any group behavior which wasn't just the behavior of the members of the group?"<sup>5</sup> This point requires much more scrutiny, a firmer grip on joint intentions, and it is to this that I now turn.

## 2. Joint intentions are not reducible to individual intentions

Premise two is, I think, where most detractors are likely to take umbrage with the Common Mind argument; the other premises are easier to defend, largely because they are less complex. Accordingly, I will argue most carefully here, but I think that our intuitions and analysis should lead us to affirm premise two with similar certainty. Premise two makes a claim about the relationship of joint intentions to individual intentions, specifically that the former is not *exhausted* by the latter. It is not disputed that individual intentions are *necessary* for joint intentions: if the individuals in the group had no intentions, there would be no joint intention at all—it would not get off the ground. However, the salient question here is this: is any collection of individual intentions *sufficient* for joint intention? I believe not, and here is my claim.

### **Joint intentions bear a relation of *Holistic Priority* to their individual intentions:**

We intend to  $\phi$  just if, for each of us, I intend to play my part in our  $\phi$ -ing because we intend to  $\phi$ .

By 'play my part in our  $\phi$ -ing,' I mean I will undertake my part in our  $\phi$ -ing if and only if you will undertake your part in our  $\phi$ -ing.

The *Holistic Priority* of joint intentions is my claim that joint intentions stand in a *mereological* ordering with their component individual intentions, such that the joint intention *grounds* (is prior to) its individual parts.<sup>6</sup> Let's first examine the claim to *Holism*, before explaining the precise nature of its *Priority*. Mereology is the logic of parts and wholes. In *Reductionistic* mereological orders, parts have priority over the whole; in *Holistic* mereological orders, the whole is prior to its parts. This is not chronological

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<sup>5</sup> (Searle, *Collective Intentions and Actions* 1990, 401-2)

<sup>6</sup> My thinking about grounding is inspired by and indebted to Jonathan Schaffer's work on Priority Monism (his *Monism* papers 2009 and similar SEP entry 2010). Schaffer has never (as far as I know) discussed joint intention, but his work in metaphysics is highly illuminating here.

priority, but rather *ontological* priority.<sup>7</sup> Consider the pebbles in a pile on the shore. Intuitively, it is the pebbles which are prior to the pile. Likewise, the H<sub>2</sub>O molecules which comprise a puddle of water are prior to that puddle, and the individual items on the right hand side of my desk are prior to their sum. As Leibniz notes, “a composite is nothing else than a collection or *aggregatum* of simple substances.”<sup>8</sup> The relation to reducibility is clear: aggregates are reducible to their parts.

However, not all collections are *mere* collections: they may be *Holistic*. Some collections exhibit a natural unity—so the priority vests in the whole, and the parts are derivative. I draw my examples from Aristotle, who suggests that wholes are not always like heaps. Wholes may sometimes be prior to their parts, just as words are prior to their syllables.<sup>9</sup> When it comes to the priority structure of a whole and its parts, we must consider

the manner of their composition; for saying that it is made from these things is not enough to make the thing intelligible. For the substance of any compound thing is not merely that it is made from these things, but that it is made from them in such and such a way, as in the case of a house; for here the materials do not make a house irrespective of the way they are put together.<sup>10</sup>

Although a house may consist merely *of* bricks, it does not consist merely *in* bricks. Bricks, scattered in a heap or loaded in a truck are insufficient to count as a house, notwithstanding that this heap has no parts in excess of the house. A house requires a certain *structural organization*. Similarly, groups of agents are subject to a mereological ordering: they can be mere aggregates (like the

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<sup>7</sup> Aristotle (Aristotle, *Categories* 1991, 14b9-14b23) illustrates this with the excellent example of the dependence of truth on being: “of things which reciprocate as to implication of existence, that which is in some way the cause of the other’s existence might reasonably be called prior by nature. And that there are some such cases is clear. For there being a man reciprocates as to implication of existence with the true statement about it: if there is a man, the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, and reciprocally—since if the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, there is a man. And whereas the true statement is in no way the cause of the actual thing’s existence, the actual thing does seem in some way the cause of the statement’s being true: it is because the actual thing exists or does not that the statement is called true or false.” Interestingly, this passage indicates that priority is *asymmetrical*.

<sup>8</sup> (Leibniz 1918, 247)

<sup>9</sup> (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1991, 1041b11-1042a2): “[T]hat which is compounded out of something so that the whole is one—not like a heap, however, but like a syllable.”

<sup>10</sup> (Aristotle, *Topics* 1991, 150b22-150b27)

collection of people with an even number of coins in their pockets on Friday), or they can exhibit some structural unity or purpose (like soldiers in a battalion). In general, where groups exhibit Holism, the wholes *ground* their parts. The application of this thesis to intentions is as follows: *the joint intentions of a group are prior to their members' individual intentions insofar as the former ground the latter as Holistic wholes ground their parts.*

The thesis for consideration is that joint intentions *ground* the individual intentions which they have as parts.<sup>11</sup> The notion of *grounding* is metaphysical: it captures the way in which one thing may be said to *depend for its nature or existence* on another. Grounding is a relation of *priority*, since the former is considered prior, and the latter is considered derivative. Accordingly, where there is a joint intention, the nature or existence of the individual intentions is dependent on the nature and existence of the joint intention. This advises my use of the word *because* in my definition, "I intend to play my part in our  $\phi$ -ing *because* we intend to  $\phi$ ."<sup>12</sup> The term 'because' expresses an asymmetric relation of (i) priority and (ii) explanation. These are the keys to the claim of the irreducibility of joint intentions in premise two. I examine this through the following case.

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<sup>11</sup> It seems that Searle comes close to this sort of claim but does not explore it. Gilbert, commenting on Searle, writes "one might think he is saying this: when there is a **we-intention**, individual "I-intentions" somehow derive from it. That, however, is not what he seems to be saying... Such a derivation could occur, presumably, by something like the following route. Each party understands that the **we-intention** in question exists, and understands that given this **we-intention**, it is appropriate for him to form certain I-intentions, which he does. To say this leaves open, of course, *how* the pertinent **we-intention** renders certain I-intentions appropriate" (Gilbert 2007, 35). While Gilbert is presumably right that this is not exactly what Searle is saying, I think this is exactly what he *should* be saying. I believe my theory follows through on the unexplored point: I note the question, if joint intentions ground their individual intentions, *how* do they do so? My answer is that joint intentions grounds individual intentions as *Holistic* wholes ground their parts.

<sup>12</sup> Bratman, of course, also uses the term 'because,' and my formulation of the definition of joint intentions is in some respects quite similar to his (Bratman 1999). It is primarily in our analysis that we diverge.

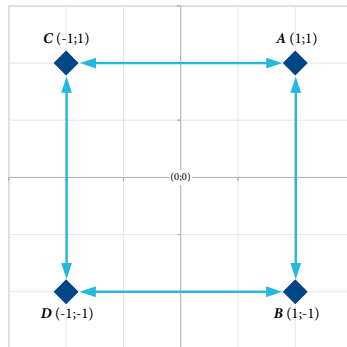


Figure 1

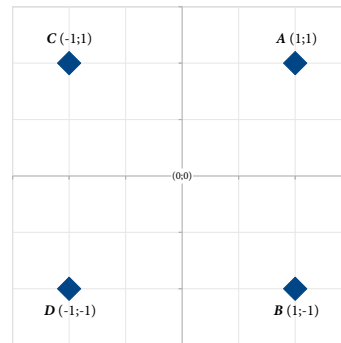


Figure 2

**The square:** Suppose four people (A, B, C and D) have the joint intention to form a square, with corners equidistant from the origin. What is A's intention? As already discussed, no individual could possibly execute this on his own, so no individual himself has the intention to form a square. Rather, A intends to: place himself at A(1;1) because they intend to form a square. Likewise, B intends to: place himself at B(1;-1), because they intend to form a square. And similarly for C(-1;-1) and D(-1;1). So placed, they form a square (figure 1).

(i) *Priority.* The joint intention has priority over the individual intentions since it asymmetrically determines the *existence* and the *nature* of the individual intention. In other words, *A has the individual intention he does ('stand over there') just because the group has the intention they do ('form a square')*. We confirm this counterfactually by considering that if the group lacked a joint intention to form a square, the individual intentions may not exist, or may exist with a distinct nature. Firstly, in the absence of a shared intention to form a square, A would have no reason to stand at his coordinate, so his individual intention presumably wouldn't *exist* at all. Of course, A might see fit to linger at that coordinate for some *other* reason, but then his lingering would have a different *nature*: he would be disposed to different actions commensurate with this other reason (such as wandering from his spot).

(ii) *Explanation.* The word 'because' in the intention, 'I intend to play my part in our  $\varphi$ -ing because we intend to  $\varphi$ ,' suggests an explanatory relation. A's intention to stand at his coordinate is *explained* by the group's joint intention to form a square. We *understand* the former in terms of the latter, and it could

not be the other way around.<sup>13</sup> The individual intentions to stand at this or that coordinate do not explain their activity as a group – as Aristotle insists, “saying that it is made from these things is not enough to make the thing intelligible.”<sup>14</sup> Again, this applies both to the existence and nature of the individual intention. That the individual intention exists and that it has the nature it does is intelligible or explicable *only* (i.e. asymmetrically) in terms of the joint intention.

My analysis suggests that joint intentions are not reducible to individual intentions—that there is no story we could tell involving only individual intentions which would perfectly capture the phenomenon of joint intention. But some theorists who suppose otherwise may argue as follows: The joint intention to form a square is merely a matter of everyone having the following complex of individual intentions. A intends to: place himself at A(1;1) because [B intends to place himself at B(1;-1), C at C(-1;-1), and D at D(-1;1)]. B intends to: place himself at B(1;-1) because [A intends to place himself at A(1;1), C at C(-1;-1), and D at D(-1;1)]. And similarly for C and D. The theorist will say, ‘look: all the people are in the right places, they behave in a way commensurate with their having a joint intention, and we haven’t said anything spooky or circular in the process—that’s all there is to it.’

My interlocutor’s analysis will not have succeeded, however. Of course I allow that we could not distinguish *from the outside* between the agents in his analysis and those in mine; both would appear precisely alike. But this is because the distinction is not given *externally*! There is similarly no telling from the outside whether, for example, Tiger Woods intended to miss the last putt or just messed up. However, there obviously is a difference—a difference in the qualitative or internal character of the phenomenon—and an account which glosses over this distinction will have left something out. If the question was, *how can we account for the behavior of joint intentions?* then my detractor’s answer will be perfectly fine. However, as we have learned from the worthwhile but ultimately failed projects of the Behaviorists, there is more to intention than behavior.<sup>15</sup> I will not rehash here the many difficulties of the

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<sup>13</sup> C.f. (Lowe 2009, §3): “‘because’ is asymmetrical, because it expresses an *explanatory* relationship and explanation is asymmetrical.”

<sup>14</sup> (Aristotle, Topics 1991, 150b22-150b27)

<sup>15</sup> I am thinking of the Behaviorist stereotypically as one who, in Sellars’ words, “confirms hypotheses about psychological events in terms of behavioral criteria” (Sellars 1963, 22).



view that “there is no knowable difference between two states of mind unless there is a demonstrable difference in the behavior associated with each state.”<sup>16</sup> Neither do I mean to impute the doctrine of Behaviorism to all theorists who think that joint intentions can be reduced to individual intentions. I simply note that this sort of argument is uncannily like the Behaviorist’s in its focus on the *form* of action without attending to its qualitative character.

Regarding the *internal* nature of joint intentions, I think our intuitions are clear: when we form and reason with joint intentions, we treat them as *really joint* intentions, not as some complex of individual intentions. Beyond attending merely to behavior, the question for us must be: *how can we account for the rich phenomena of joint intentions?* I think my detractor has told us a story about figure 2 rather than figure 1: he has all the right people in all the right places, but he has failed to include the *right relations*. The relations, I have argued, are given by *Holistic Priority*: the individual intentions relate to the joint intentions as parts to a whole where the whole is no mere aggregate, but rather exhibits an Holistic unity. Thus, just as bricks in a house are laid in accordance with its unifying structure, so the individual intentions derive their nature and existence from the joint intention, and are explicable only in terms of that joint intention. This forecloses the reduction of joint intentions to individual intentions.

### 3. Intentions are mental states

The notions of *intentionality* and *intention* are, to be sure, quite distinct concepts, though they are importantly related. In the section entitled *The Distinction between Mental and Physical Phenomena*, Franz Brentano (1874) makes this relation perspicuous:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object... Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.

This intentional inexistence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define

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<sup>16</sup> (Graham 2010, §1)

mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.<sup>17</sup>

The core of Brentano's famous passage is echoed by Sartre, when he writes that “[i]t is of the very nature of consciousness to be intentional.”<sup>18</sup> Contemporary philosophers tend to frame the point this way: intentionality is *the mark of the mental*.<sup>19</sup> In other words, all and only mental states have intentionality. Intentionality may be easily understood as a certain ‘aboutness’, that a state is an intentional state just if it is *about* something, if it has a *content* at which it is directed. When I remark, ‘I hope the arctic ice-caps do not melt,’ my remark is *about* the arctic ice caps. Certainly, it is amazing that my thoughts (and language) can attach to something so many miles away, but this is not a problem to be addressed here. What is clear is that intentionality does seem to hit on some peculiarity of the mind.

Unfortunately, stated in these terms, Brentano’s point is open to a few worrisome counterexamples. Not all mental states seem to be intentional states. As Searle observes, “there are forms of nervousness, elation and undirected anxiety that are not intentional.”<sup>20</sup> Such states fail to be intentional, it is supposed, because they are not directed at anything: they appear to lack content. However, even if we grant these counterexamples, they demonstrate only that not all mental states are intentional; so it is still sound to believe that *all intentional states are mental*.<sup>21</sup> This is what is required for this step of our argument, that the standard (and uncontroversial) intentional states of belief, desire, hope and intention are all of them mental states.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, I think it is clear that these states are mental if anything is. While we can perhaps suppose that agitation or nervousness might obtain in the absence of a mind, it is

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<sup>17</sup> (Brentano 1995, 68)

<sup>18</sup> (Sartre 2001, 98)

<sup>19</sup> (Crane 1998)

<sup>20</sup> (Searle, Intentionality 1983, 1)

<sup>21</sup> Relatively few people deny this, though some physicalist philosophers have offered very interesting arguments. Dretske (Dretske 2000, 211-2) suggests that a good compass exhibits intentionality. I think this can be resisted.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Searle: “Intentionality is that property of many mental states and events by which they are directed at or about or of objects and states of affairs in the world. If, for example, I have a belief, it must be a belief that such and such is the case; if I have a fear, it must be a fear of something or that something will occur; if I have a desire, it must be a desire to do something or that something should happen or be the case; if I have an intention, it must be an intention to do something” (Searle, Intentionality 1983, 1).

impossible to imagine that believing or intending could happen in the absence of a mind.

In this paper, I have used the phrase ‘sentences *expressing* intentions’ advisedly. I think that intentions are not linguistic items, though they may often be expressed as such. My stance on the linguistic nature of intentions concurs with Searle, and is to some extent at odds with Velleman. Searle notes that joint intentions may be formed by creatures who lack sophisticated language (e.g. when two birds build a nest), and may require no language at all (e.g. when I see you pushing your broken-down car and I just begin pushing too without uttering anything).<sup>23</sup> Velleman, on the other hand notes he is “not sure that intention is essentially mental. There are of course mental intentions, but perhaps there can also be oral or written intentions—just as there are not only mental but also oral or written assertions. Of course, talk of oral or written intentions sounds odd, but talk of oral or written decisions sounds less odd, and talk of oral or written commitments is not odd at all.”<sup>24</sup> Now, I think Velleman is quite right to think that intentions are very much like commitments. However, I think his conclusion—that intentions are possibly linguistic and non-mental items—presses the analogy too far. To my mind, strictly speaking, oral and written intentions are not kinds of intentions at all: they are speech acts which *point to* an intention. When I write, ‘I am hungry,’ *the fact of my hunger* does not consist in the ink on paper, but in the mental or biological state to which the written assertion refers. Speech acts may be *reports* of intentions; but intentions themselves are essentially mental states.

Returning to the premises of the Common Mind argument, one might wish to query the logical legitimacy of proceeding from the claim that intentions are mental states to the claim that *joint* intentions are mental states. When producing the argument, I had assumed that this was a standard case of an adjectival inference (as in *apples are fruit, so red apples are fruit*); but I think this is also worth making explicit. Such inferences, as Schaffer reminds us, are valid only for *intersective* adjectives and obviously may not hold for adjectives like ‘fake’ or ‘former’.<sup>25</sup> I assume that joint intentions are a smaller subset (or species, if you like) of intentions: that all joint intentions are intentions, but not

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<sup>23</sup> (Searle, *Collective Intentions and Actions* 1990, 402)

<sup>24</sup> (Velleman 1997, 37)

<sup>25</sup> Schaffer employs a variation of this inference – the ‘adjective-drop’ inference – but the logic seems the same (Schaffer, *On What Grounds What* 2009, 357).

all intentions are joint intentions (some intentions are individual intentions). ‘Joint’ here is obviously intersective, since it makes sense to ask, ‘what percentage of intentions are joint intentions?’ just as we could sensibly ask, ‘what percentage of apples are red apples?’ I think our analysis must proceed from the assumption that joint intentions are a *kind* of intention, and that we assess our account of them in terms of their status *qua* intentions.

But there is an objection I should address here, since its answer is given in this premise. The objection is given by Kit Fine to the formulation of joint intentions Bratman and I have in common, namely that ‘we intend to  $\phi$  just if, for each of us, I intend to play my part in our  $\phi$ -ing because we intend to  $\phi$ .’ Fine, criticizing Bratman, notes that “this condition seems to make joint intention more peculiar than it could possibly be. For it is hard to see what sense of ‘because’ might allow me to intend that we *J* because, among other things, I intend that we *J*. Something cannot be the case because it is the case.”<sup>26</sup> My response to Fine’s point is to concede that he has got the formulation quite right—it is a consequence of my view that something is a joint intention just because it is a joint intention. However, I am not yet so sure that it is a problem for my position, since I think this is precisely the kind of formulation we should expect from a *mental state*, of which intentions are one. Certain mental states are *primitive*: they admit of no further analysis. When we inquire, ‘what is pain?’ we may well say, ‘*x* is pain if and only if *x* plays the functional role of pain.’ We are not deeply surprised or discouraged that this inquiry soon becomes circular, since pain *qua* mental state is understood to be primitive, or otherwise brute. Mental states have a qualitative essence, and so there is a point at which they may resist further analysis. So, by my lights we should not be surprised that there comes a point at which the phenomenon of joint intentions cannot be analyzed in non-circular terms. Indeed, Fine seems to recognize as much, since his own account of “reciprocal intentions”<sup>27</sup> expressly defends certain circular definitions, and he thinks them indispensable to our analysis of joint intentions.

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<sup>26</sup> (Fine 2010, 5)

<sup>27</sup> (Fine 2010, 25)

#### 4. If mental states exist, then there is some mind which is the bearer of those mental states

First, let me clear up the logic of this ambiguous sentence. I am not claiming, as perhaps Berkeley may have done, that there is some *particular* mind (God's, say) which bears all the world's mental states. My claim (much more modestly!) is that all mental states belong to some mind or other. Formally, if desired:  $(\forall x)(Sx \rightarrow (\exists y)(My \wedge Bxy))$ , that is, for all  $x$ , if  $x$  is a mental state, then there is some  $y$ , such that  $y$  is a mind and  $x$  belongs to  $y$ . This claim is, I think, a conceptual truth; so I doubt very much can be said in its defense other than to restate it in intuitive terms. *Mental states are states of mind*. To be a mental state is to be a determination of some mind, a way some mind is. Minds are the bearers of mental states; they are the hosts to which mental states belong or accrue. I think Velleman is quite right in suggesting that "we cannot rule out the possibility of collective intentions on the grounds that there are no collective minds: the direction of logical dependence goes the other way."<sup>28</sup> If something is a mental state, there is *ipso facto* a mind which has it. I do not think I am smuggling much into this premise; it premise merely allows me legitimately to use the word 'mind' in the conclusion, rather than speaking solely about 'mental states' as in the preceding premises. The real argumentative work is being done elsewhere. To see this, consider that the conclusion discussed in this paper would be just as substantive if I made no mention of minds, but spoke only of mental states. If I left out premise four, I could conclude 'therefore, groups have mental states,' and this result would have essentially the same content and weight as conclusion five presently does. So, if there are objections, they are properly directed elsewhere.

#### 5. Therefore, groups have minds

The justification for this result is given in the preceding premises. While it is an interesting result, it is also the product of a logically deductive argument, so it contains no content not found elsewhere in the argument. So I shan't offer any further *justification* now; my closing will be to suggest briefly how we may understand the result.

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<sup>28</sup> (Velleman 1997, 38). Kit Fine (Fine 2010) also approves of the comparison of intentions to commitments (as do I), but it is not clear to me what stance he would take on whether they are linguistic items.

In this paper, I have tried to sustain our intuitions about joint intention and the mind. I believe that most people would intuitively (that is, pre-theoretically) assent to all of the premises of the Common Mind argument. Still, many take the reality of group minds to be an unwelcome conclusion.<sup>29</sup> But since the intuitive premises logically imply the conclusion, whence the grounds for dispute? In particular, why is there any impetus to sustain a rigidly individual understanding of joint intentions when our intuitions and experiences of the phenomena proclaim its plurality? I think such impetus stems not from direct disagreement with the intuitions or even the analysis, but indirectly, from an antecedent discomfort with the very notion of group minds. For an indication of these antecedent commitments, consider Bratman: “[t]o understand shared intention, then, we should not appeal to an attitude in the mind of some superagent.”<sup>30</sup> Searle likewise writes that talk about group minds is “at best mysterious and at worst incoherent.”<sup>31</sup>

This reaction is most puzzling in Searle’s case, since his account is one with which mine is most consonant, and so we would expect us to draw like conclusions. Indeed, I am not alone in thinking that Searle’s premises ought to lead him to a different finding—specifically, one more friendly to the reality of joint minds. Responding directly to Searle’s earlier remarks, Velleman observes, “[a] more faithful application of Searle’s fundamental conception yields the conclusion that talk of literally shared intention is neither mysterious nor incoherent.”<sup>32</sup> Searle himself acknowledges this tension: “my claim that there is a form of collective intentionality which is not the product of some mysterious group mind and at the same time is not reducible to individual intentions has plenty of problems of its own.”<sup>33</sup>

But why be so committed against group minds in the first place? Why have the express commitment Searle does that

[a]nything we say about collective intentionality must meet the following conditions of adequacy: (1) It must be consistent with the fact that society consists of nothing but individuals. Since society consists entirely of

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<sup>29</sup> While I endorse the conclusion, I still cannot quite stomach certain consequences, like the notion that the game between the Steelers and the Panthers is, in some important way, a meeting of minds.

<sup>30</sup> (Bratman 1999, 111)

<sup>31</sup> (Searle, *Collective Intentions and Actions* 1990, 404)

<sup>32</sup> (Velleman 1997, 31)

<sup>33</sup> (Searle, *Collective Intentions and Actions* 1990, 406)

individuals, there cannot be a group mind or group consciousness. All consciousness is in individual minds, in individual brains.<sup>34</sup>

There are perhaps good reasons to hold this view, but there are good reasons to deny it too. One reason is that the inference above is invalid, as this shows:

Since the bank system consists entirely of individual bank accounts, there cannot be a joint account or joint savings. All money is in individual accounts, in individual vaults.

I don't mean to pretend that Searle could not offer a more robust or counterexample-free version of his individualistic requirement. However, I do mean to demonstrate that we should not take for granted that discrete brains preclude joint consciousness. Indeed, my finding is not even at odds with Searle's original constraint. Commitment to some form of moderate Physicalism—a commitment I think Searle and I share—constrains the sort of entities we may posit in explaining empirical phenomena. It suggests that every mental state must be appropriately grounded in some physical host, and for humans and like creatures this host is usually the brain. I close with this suggestion. The reality of joint intentions entails the existence of group minds, and this may yet satisfy the constraint of Physicalism: if Physicalism requires that mental states have a physical host, then all the better for joint intentions, since for joint intentions there is a *multitude*, not a dearth, of physical hosts!

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<sup>34</sup> (Searle, *Collective Intentions and Actions* 1990, 406)

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