

ON CREATING THE SOCIAL WORLD BY COLLECTIVE ACCEPTANCE

Raimo Tuomela

University of Helsinki
University of Munich

Collective acceptance 1

- The approach in the paper is largely a top-down one: A group (that is capable of action qua a group) accepts a goal, view, norm, etc. for itself. Most centrally, by its acceptance the group can create institutions for its use and benefit.
- On the member-level this amounts to group-based collective acceptance as true of something, and this basically consists of its members' coming to hold and holding a relevant "we-attitude" with collective commitment.

Collective acceptance 2

- The we-attitude is based either on the intention-family of attitudes (having the world-to-mind direction of fit of semantic satisfaction) or on the belief-family of attitudes (with either the mind-to-world direction of fit or the world-to-mind direction of fit—the latter when the belief is constitutive institutional one).

Collective acceptance 3

- Collective acceptance (CA) is for the use of the group (= forgroupness, FG) and based on a group reason compatible with the group's constitutive ideas and principles. This fact is due to the members' acceptance of the group's authority.
- Collective acceptance is intentional and performative (cf. "We hereby accept that squirrel pelt is our money"). Such performative acceptance has both the world-to-mind and the mind-to-word direction of fit. It can create an institutional state of affairs in the world, e.g. the fact that squirrel pelt is money in the group.

The we-mode approach

- The we-mode approach to sociality developed in Tuomela (2007) takes the group perspective, indeed “we-perspective”, to be conceptually central for sociality.
- As a summary, the group gives a group reason for the members to participate qua group members and to “be in the same boat”. Group unity requires them to be collectively committed to what they collectively accept. The primary constitutive markers of the “we-mode” are a *group reason*, a specific *collectivity condition*, and *collective commitment*, all present in group-based collective acceptance.

CAT thesis

- For an item to be money in and for a group it must reflexively be collectively accepted to be money, and conversely. This idea of collective sociality (including institutionality) has been argued in Tuomela and Balzer (1999), Tuomela (2002, 2007) to be theoretically analyzable in terms of the following Collective Acceptance Thesis with e.g. s = squirrel pelt is money:
- *Collective acceptance thesis (CAT)*: A fact-expressing sentence s is *collectively social* (or *group-social*) and expresses a collectively social or institutional state of affair in a primary sense in a group g if and only if it holds for g that (a) the members of group g collectively accept s for the group, and (b) necessarily, they collectively accept s for g if and only if s is true for the members of g functioning as group members.

CAT thesis explained

- According to clause (a), we have collective acceptance of fact-expressing sentence s that involves forgroupness (thus use for the group, group reason, and “being-in-the same boat” kind of collectivity). Assuming also collective commitment for collective acceptance, it is seen to be in the we-mode.
- Constitutive collective acceptance, according to (b), entails the “premisibility” and perspectival truth of s for the group members when they act as group members; the necessary equivalence “if and only if” expresses both conceptual and ontological necessity, the former because money being necessarily group-social and the latter because of the performative, group-made nature of much of the social world.
- Clause (b) entails that a collectively social (or “broadly institutional”) s is reflexive: squirrel pelt is not money unless it is collectively accepted as money (the converse also holds).

Logical assumptions

CA - collective acceptance operator

FG - forgroupness operator

FG distributes over implication \rightarrow , viz.:

(1) $FG(g, s \rightarrow s')$ implies $FG(g, s) \rightarrow FG(g, s')$

The implication \rightarrow is a “quasi-conceptually” *necessary* implication based on performative acceptance and construction. It also distributes over conjunction:

(2) $FG(g, s \& s')$ implies $FG(g, s) \& FG(g, s')$

(3) $FG(g, CA(g, s) \leftrightarrow s)$ (from CAT)

(4) $FG(g, CA(g, s)) \leftrightarrow FG(g, s)$ (from (1) and (3))

Performativity

- The set of all propositions s such that $FG(g, CA(g, s))$ can be taken to represent at least part of the intentional we-perspective of group g . (*CAT*) entails:
 - (*PERF*) $FG(CA(g, s) \rightarrow s)$.
 - (*PERF*) is true on the basis of the notion of collective acceptance relative to the group's perspective. From an outsider's perspective only $FG(g, s)$ is true.

Reflexivity

- The converse implication gives reflexivity:
- (*REFL*) $FG(s \rightarrow CA(g,s))$.
- This principle gives a central and often emphasized “mark of the social”: For s to be true for the members g it must be collectively accepted by them and for them. Briefly, s expresses a group-based fact and necessarily involves group members’ relevant attitudes (either in the intention family or in the belief family).

CAT* thesis

- Combining (*PERF*) and (*REFL*) and remembering the relativization to the group (viz. Forgroupness) allow us in our treatment to arrive at:
- (*CAT**) A sentence s is collective-social in a primary constructivist sense for group g if and only if (i) $FG(g, CA(g, s))$ and (ii) $FG(CA(g, s) \leftrightarrow s)$.

Social Institutions

- Social institutions (such as money, marriage, property, university) can be elucidated in terms of collective acceptance and specifically (*CAT*) (and (*CAT**)). Institutions are basically systems constituted by norms and social practices obeying (or meant to obey) the norms. The norms must contain at least one constitutive norm saying what ought to be the case on quasi-conceptual grounds specifically in the institution in question (e.g. “it ought to be the case in group *g* that squirrel pelt is money in *g*”, *g* being the group of medieval Finns). Here the predicate ‘money’ applies to the individual ‘squirrel pelt’ on the ground of having been conceptually constructed so to apply.

Referential meaning

- To account for referential meaning, let $f(S)$ be a possible “meaning function” for a predicate S and define for g :
- (1) $f(S): W \rightarrow E$.
- Here W is a set of contexts to which the concept or predicate S can be potentially applied. $F(S)$ is a meaning function for S which maps W into E , a set of sets, $E(i)$, of entities falling into the extension of the predicate in each possible context $W(i)$. Each such context consists (at least) of a set of (actual or possible) objects, and the meaning function classifies them simply as S -positive or as S -negative.
- A referential use reading of (1) shows how S is correctly applied to the members of the subsets of E in various contexts.

Meaning of group-social predicates

- We write ' $f(S^*): W \rightarrow E$ ' as a shorthand for the metalinguistic sentence ' $f(S^*) : W \rightarrow E$ is the semantically correct meaning function for S in group g' and arrive at the following conclusion (omitting the relativization to group g but here adding FG explicitly):
- (2) $FG((f(S^*): W \rightarrow E) \leftrightarrow (CA(g, f(S^*): W \rightarrow E)))$
- (2) directly mirrors the second part of the analysans of (CAT^*) and exemplifies s by a sentence saying what the correct referential use of a predicate S is.

Norms of correct predicate use

- Corresponding to (2) we have rules of language, for instance *ought-to-be* and *ought-to-do* rules of the following kind (here stated in plain English):
- (3) It ought to be the case that any full-fledged member of group g uses predicate S non-accidentally in accordance with (2).
- (4) Every full-fledged member of community g ought to obey (2) when using S .

Reflexivity as attitudinal reflexivity

- As to the case of social institutions and institutional social objects, the claim that they are reflexive can in virtue of what has been said be summarily analyzed by saying this:
- (5) A predicate (concept) S is reflexive if and only if (2) is true of it in g .
- Because of the attitudes involved in collective acceptance CA we can also speak of *attitudinal reflexivity* here. What the claim of the reflexivity of social concepts involves is precisely attitudinal reflexivity.

References

- Bloor, D., 1997, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, Routledge, London and New York
- Lorini, E., Longin, D., Gaudou, B., and Herzig, A. 2009. "The Logic of Acceptance: Grounding Institutions on Agents' Attitudes." *Journal of Logic and Computation*, preprint
- Tuomela, R., and Balzer, W. 1999. "Collective Acceptance and Collective Social Notions." *Synthese 117*, 175–205.
- Tuomela, R. 2002. *The Philosophy of Social Practices: A Collective Acceptance View*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tuomela, R. 2007. *The Philosophy of Sociality: The Shared Point of View*. New York: Oxford University Press.