

The Group Knobe Effect Revisited. Epistemic and Doxastic Side-Effect Effects in Intuitive Judgments Concerning Group Agents.

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Can groups perform actions and take responsibility for their consequences? And if so, in what sense? Apart from being described as acting and responsible, can a group be also described as possessing beliefs, intentions and desires? These questions are widely debated in social philosophy and metaphysics, and one's answer to them determines their philosophical position in the debate on collective agency and intentionality. Many arguments made for and against the view which ascribes groups the potential of being intentional agents and holders of intentional states and, thus, treats them similarly to individual agents (which we label "realism" about collective agency) relied on the perceived intuitiveness of such a view among the laypeople. While realists argue that the widespread use of statements like 'The court *finds* the accused guilty...' or 'Amazon *plans* to cut its employment...' presupposes their intuitive truth (e.g. Tollefsen 2002), irrealists argue that collective propositional attitudes and agents are "spooky entities" created by "magic", and that such statements are, at best, metaphorical (e.g. Thomasson 2019). Another important controversy is, if realism is correct, does it stem from collectivist or distributivist intuitions regarding group agents? According to distributivism, possession of intentional states by a group agent A is reducible to the possession of relevant states by the members of A (group-*qua*-its-members), while according to collectivism, group intentional states are irreducible (group-*qua*-group). The question whether realism or irrealism is intuitive and presupposed by folk psychology – and which is revisionary – remains not settled and taking into account the role of perceived intuitiveness in philosophical argumentation, there is a need for empirical investigation into this problem.

In our talk, we will take a closer look at the effect described in the literature as the Group Knobe Effect (GKE), which, to put it shortly, is an asymmetry in ascription of intentionality of an action performed by a group agent depending on its negative or positive side-effects. One could say it is an extension of the "regular" Knobe Effect (or the side-effect effect), which is a well-documented phenomenon noticeable in folk judgments regarding agency of individual agents. The expected asymmetry (GKE) is supposed to reveal realist intuitions. If laypersons perceive group agents similarly to individual agents when it comes to the ascription of intentionality or responsibility for side-effects of their actions, a strong abductive argument for the claim that the folk tend to hold realist intuitions about group intentionality and responsibility is available. The hypothesis that the folk are realists about group intentional action is simply "the best explanation" of the existence of GKE (at least until the philosophers who claim that realism is counterintuitive come up with an

alternative explanation of the existence of GKE). The claim that the individual Knobe Effect obtains only with respect to intentional agents is assumed by various analyses of KE, which explain this effect by the folk-psychological mechanisms of belief attribution or characteristics of the folk concept of intentional action (see e.g.: Knobe 2006, Feltz 2007, Alfano, Beebe, Robinson 2012, Paprzycka-Hausman 2020). Some studies have shown that the asymmetry may be also observed in attributions of knowledge (Beebe, Buckwalter 2010, Beebe, Jensen 2012) and belief (Beebe 2013), which also supports this thesis. Therefore, if a similar asymmetry is observed with respect to group action, it would provide evidence that groups are intuitively taken by the folk to be intentional agents.

We will present the results of two experiments regarding GKE we conducted. Our experiments successfully replicated the findings reported by Michael and Sziget (2019) who first observed the Group Knobe Effect in folk judgments concerning intentionality of action and moral responsibility. We also found empirical evidence of the existence of two related effects: the Group Epistemic and Doxastic Knobe Effects (GEKE and GDKE), which show analogous asymmetry in folk judgments with respect to knowledge and belief ascriptions to groups. Observing these two effects further strengthens the claim that laypeople perceive groups as intentional agents as well as provides evidence for the claim that groups are perceived as knowers and believers in a way analogous to individuals. In our detailed analysis of the data, we will also address the issue whether the apparent realist intuitions we observed stem from a collective or distributive perception of group agents. We will argue that the empirical material available thus far does not allow to say that either of these views is common among laypersons: it rather seems that there individual differences in exhibiting collectivist and distributivist intuitions concerning group agency. In our talk, we hope to explain how the existence of the Group Knobe Effect and its epistemic and doxastic counterparts impacts the philosophical debate on collective agency and intentionality and supports the claim about the intuitiveness of realism regarding collective agency among the laypeople.

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