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團體可以成為行動者嗎？

論李斯特與佩迪特的團體行動者實在論

Can Groups Be Agents?

On Christian List and Philip Pettit's Group-Agent Realism

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摘要



儘管人們於日常生活及社會科學研究中普遍將團體視為行動者，鮮少哲學家曾深入地考慮過這個問題：團體真的可以成為行動者嗎？李斯特與佩迪特最近提出了一個迄今最精緻且全面的關於團體能動性的實在論。本論文旨在詳述並且評估該理論。李斯特與佩迪特訴諸態度匯集理論說明團體態度之形成。然而，我指出這會遭遇一個兩難：或者團體態度與個人態度之間的關係不是函數關係，或者匯集函數在函數關係成立的條件下所產生的團體態度不是團體做為行動者擁有的態度。我根據這個兩難論證李斯特與佩迪特並未成功建立團體行動者的實在性。鑒於李斯特與佩迪特之理論為迄今最成功的理論，其失敗將迫使哲學家對團體行動者的可能性更加存疑。

關鍵詞：李斯特；佩迪特；團體能動性；態度匯集理論；社會存有論；集體責任；集體意向性

ABSTRACT



Despite the prevalence of talk of group agents in both daily life and social scientific research, few philosophers have taken seriously the following question: can groups really be agents in their own right? Christian List and Philip Pettit have recently developed a realist account of group agency, which is arguably the most fine-grained and comprehensive one up to date. The purpose of this thesis is to expound and evaluate List and Pettit's account. To explain the formation of group attitudes, List and Pettit appeal to the theory of attitude aggregation, which however puts them on the horns of a dilemma: either the functional relation between group attitudes and individual attitudes does not hold, or aggregation functions do not output attitudes held by groups as agents under the condition under which the functional relation holds. On the grounds of the dilemma, I argue that List and Pettit have not succeeded in making a case for the reality of group agents. As List and Pettit's account is the most prominent one thus far, its failure may compel philosophers to take the very possibility of group agents with a grain of salt.

Keywords: Christian List; Philip Pettit; group agency; theory of attitude aggregation; social ontology; collective responsibility; collective intentionality

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INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, I will first introduce the central question my thesis will address, and then state the purpose and significance of my research. This will be followed by a brief literature review of the key research that has been carried out in the field. Therein the gap in the literature my research aims to fill will be identified.

Research Question

People often ascribe a variety of intentional attitudes and actions to groups in both daily life and social scientific research. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the world economy to grow by 3.5 percent this year; the US Federal Reserve plans to delay a widely anticipated interest rate hike; the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) Central Executive Committee nominates Tsai Ing-wen as the party's candidate for next year's presidential election, and so on. Analogously, social scientists also speak of the utilities firms maximize, the national interests states pursue, and the values societies cherish.

Apparently, such talk treats groups as if they were agents in their own right, just like their constituent individual members are. Groups appear to be able to expect, plan, nominate, maximize utilities, pursue interests, and cherish values. But can a group of several individuals really be an agent in its own right? Are groups the kind of entity that can expect, plan, nominate, maximize utilities, pursue interests, cherish values, and the like? Should we take the ascription of attitudes and actions to groups at face value? Or should we understand the language metaphorically, treating such talk as nothing more than a *façon de parler*, that is, a manner of speech?

The issue of group agency,¹ or the reality of group agents, is scarcely new, yet philosophers used to either presume or dismiss the existence of group agents at the outset and go on from there. Against this tradition, Christian List and Philip Pettit (hereafter L&P) have recently developed, separately and jointly, a realist account of group agency.² Their efforts culminate in their 2011 seminal book *Group Agency*, which will be the focus of my thesis.

L&P's realist project consists of three parts. The first part defends the reality or logical possibility³ of group agents by identifying the conditions of agency and showing how groups can satisfy them. The second part explores how the organizational structure of a group agent may be designed for it to perform various functions better. Addressing issues regarding the normative status of group agents, the third part looks at, among other things, the extent to which group agents are fit to be held responsible and the sense in which group agents can be persons.

¹ The issue of group agency differs from that of the ontology of groups, which is concerned primarily with whether groups exist and if so what sort of entity they are. For discussions of the ontology of groups, see David-Hillel Ruben, *The Metaphysics of the Social World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985); Paul Sheehy, *The Reality of Social Groups* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006); and Raimo Tuomela, "On the Ontological Nature of Social Groups," in *Approaching Truth: Essays in Honour of Ilkka Niiniluoto*, ed. Sami Pihlström, Panu Raatikainen, and Matti Sintonen (London: College Publications, 2007), 381-98.

² Christian List and Philip Pettit, "Group Agency and Supervenience," in *Being Reduced: New Essays on Reduction, Explanation, and Causation*, ed. Jakob Hohwy and Jesper Kallestrup (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 75-92; List and Pettit, *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); List and Pettit, "Episteme Symposium on *Group Agency*: Replies to Gaus, Cariani, Sylvan, and Briggs." *Episteme* 9, no. 3 (September 2012): 293-309; Philip Pettit, "Groups with Minds of Their Own," in *Socializing Metaphysics: The Nature of Social Reality*, ed. Frederick F. Schmitt (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 467-93; Pettit, "Responsibility Incorporated," *Ethics* 117, no. 2 (January 2007a): 171-201; Pettit, "Rationality, Reasoning and Group Agency," *Dialectica* 61, no. 4 (2007b): 495-519; Pettit, "Group Agents are Not Expressive, Pragmatic or Theoretical Fictions," *Erkenntnis* 79 (April 2014): 1641-62; and Philip Pettit and David Schweikard, "Joint Actions and Group Agents," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 36, no. 1 (March 2006): 18-39.

³ For L&P, the reality of group agents amounts to their logical possibility. In proposing their realist account, L&P confine themselves to arguing that it is logically possible that group agents exist without saying this or that actual group *is* an agent. An actual group *may* be an agent in L&P's sense, but only insofar as it meets the required conditions of agency. Hereafter I follow L&P's usage.

Obviously, the reality of group agents is of prime importance to L&P's whole project, as it is the foundation on which their subsequent discussions of organizational design and normative standing build. Should the ground be shaky, so would be what rests on it. In view of this, my thesis will address the following question: do L&P succeed in making a case for the reality of group agents?

Aim and Significance

The purpose of my research is to scrutinize and evaluate the first part of L&P's realist project. The claim I will endeavor to defend is that L&P have not succeeded in making a case for the reality of group agents.

L&P's account is worth assessing since not only the issue with which L&P deal but L&P's account as such is significant. Answering the question whether groups are able to be agents is important for at least three reasons. First, it helps us decide how to understand talk of group agents. While a positive answer permits us to take it literally, a negative one requires us to treat it metaphorically. Second, it greatly affects how we should think regarding other topics of investigation. Taking a certain position on the issue of group agency will impose a significant constraint on what position one is allowed to take in other fields of research. For example, the issue of collective responsibility bears on whether a group as such can be held responsible for what it does. Given that only agents are fit to be held responsible, being unable to be agents will seem to exclude groups from the realm of responsibility. Third, it has implications for the social sciences. Talk of group agents will appear justified if groups can be agents. But if groups cannot be agents, social scientists will be under pressure to substantially reconsider how explanation of social phenomena should proceed. They may have to redescribe the explanandum if it involves a group agent's attitudes or actions, and to avoid

appealing to a group agent's attitudes or actions in the explanans. Due to the prevalence of talk of group agents in the social sciences, the unreality of group agents may invite a large-scale reformation of the existing conceptual scheme(s) social scientists currently employ. The potential implications for other fields of research, both in philosophy and the social sciences, further loom large the significance of the issue of group agency.

While several other attempts have recently been made to establish the reality of group agents,⁴ most of the accounts, excluding Carol Rovane's, do not rest their arguments on an account of agency; they are either silent about what an agent is or based on an intuitive understanding of agency. It is doubtful if such arguments are eligible to justify the reality of group agents. Some of those accounts underscore the existence of irreducible intentional attitudes⁵ and moral responsibility⁶ that are ascribable to groups but not to their members, inferring accordingly that groups are subjects of attitudes and bearers of responsibility and so are agents. Even so, those arguments have not dispelled opponents' misgivings: are groups the kind of entity that can hold attitudes and bear responsibility? After all, italicizing the existence of irreducible attitudes and responsibility alone does not grant groups the

⁴ David Copp, "On the Agency of Certain Collective Entities: An Argument from 'Normative Autonomy,'" *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 30 (2006): 194-221; Copp, "The Collective Moral Autonomy Thesis," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 369-88; Copp, "The Collective Moral Autonomy Thesis: Reply to Ludwig and Miller," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 78-95; Peter A. French, *Collective and Corporate Responsibility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Carol Rovane, *The Bounds of Agency: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Rovane, "What Is an Agent?" *Synthese* 140 (2004): 181-98; Rovane, "Group Agency and Individualism," *Erkenntnis* 79 (April 2014): 1663-84; Frederick Stoutland, "The Ontology of Social Agency," *Analyse & Kritik* 30 (2008): 533-51; Deborah Tollefsen, "Collective Intentionality and the Social Sciences," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32, no. 1 (March 2002a): 25-50; and Tollefsen, "Organizations as True Believers," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2002b): 395-401.

⁵ Stoutland, "Ontology of Social Agency," 533-51.

⁶ Copp, "Agency of Collective Entities," 194-221; Copp, "Collective Moral Autonomy Thesis," 369-88; Copp, "Reply," 78-95; and French, *Collective and Corporate Responsibility*.

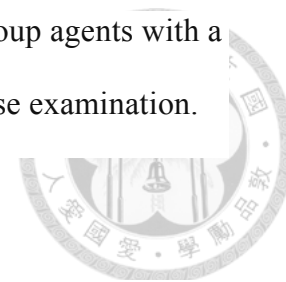
capacity for holding attitudes and bearing responsibility. An independent argument for groups' having this capacity is still called for.

In opposition to those arguments without an account of agency, L&P have presented their view of agency, identified the conditions a system must meet to be an agent, and demonstrated how groups can satisfy those required conditions and so can be agents. L&P's account deserves careful scrutiny primarily because it breaks fresh ground by introducing an initially plausible condition of adequacy that we may expect an account of group agency to satisfy: any account of group agency, realist or not, must be based on an account of agency. Though not required to develop a full-blown account of agency on one's own, one is not permitted to approach the issue without appealing to any account of agency.

Imposing this condition is beneficial in at least three senses. First, it prevents philosophers from taking it for granted that we already know what an agent is and going on from there. Second, it helps philosophers construct areas of consensus and disagreement. Few philosophers, whichever side they are on, would balk at the reality of individual agents. Putting their accounts of agency on the table allows philosophers to recognize where they agree and disagree. They may disagree on what an agent is, or agree on what agency involves yet dispute over whether groups are agents. Third, it distributes the burden of proof equally to both sides. Philosophers on either side are incumbent to base their arguments for or against the reality of group agents on an account of agency acceptable to those on the other side in order to win them over.

As L&P's account breaks new ground, its success or failure will be consequential. While its success will entitle us to acknowledge the reality of group

agents, its failure may compel us to take the very possibility of group agents with a grant of salt. In consideration of this, L&P's account deserves close examination.



Literature Review

While a large amount of literature has commented on L&P's account,⁷ the reality of group agents has received surprisingly little attention. Most of the criticisms have targeted at the third part of L&P's project. Some challenge the idea that group agents can be held responsible,⁸ others question the consistency in treating group agents as persons but not granting them equal rights on a par with individuals,⁹ and still others doubt if L&P's understanding of the normative status of group agents fits their account of agency.¹⁰ Nonetheless, as we saw earlier,

⁷ Vuko Andric, "Can Group Be Autonomous Rational Agents? A Challenge to the List-Pettit Theory," in *Institutions, Emotions, and Group Agents: Contributions to Social Ontology*, ed. Anita Konzelmann Ziv and Hans Bernhard Schmid (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 343-53; Rachael Briggs, "The Normative Standing of Group Agents," *Episteme* 9, no. 3 (September 2012): 283-91; Fabrizio Cariani, "Epistemology in *Group Agency*: Six Objections in Search of the Truth," *Episteme* 9, no. 3 (September 2012): 255-69; Gerald Gaus, "Constructivist and Ecological Modeling of Group Rationality," *Episteme* 9, no. 3 (September 2012): 245-54; Frank Hindriks, "Corporate Responsibility and Judgment Aggregation," *Economics and Philosophy* 25 (2009): 161-77; Hindriks, "How Autonomous Are Collective Agents? Corporate Rights and Normative Individualism," *Erkenntnis* 79 (April 2014): 1565-85; Martin Kusch, "The Metaphysics and Politics of Corporate Personhood," *Erkenntnis* 79 (April 2014): 1587-1600; Pekka Mäkelä, "Collective Agents and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 456-68; Herlinde Pauer-Studer, "A Constitutive Account of Group Agency," *Erkenntnis* 79 (April 2014): 1623-39; Abraham Sesshu Roth, "Indispensability, the Discursive Dilemma, and Groups with Minds of Their Own," in *From Individual to Collective Intentionality: New Essays*, ed. Sara Rachel Chant, Frank Hindriks, and Gerhard Preyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 137-56; Rovane, "Group Agency," 1663-84; Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Plural Self-Awareness," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 13 (2014a): 7-24; Schmid, "Expressing Group Attitudes: On First Person Plural Authority," *Erkenntnis* 79 (April 2014b): 1685-1701; Kenneth Shockley, "Programming Collective Control," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 442-55; Kurt L. Sylvan, "How to Be a Redundant Realist," *Episteme* 9, no. 3 (September 2012): 271-82; András Szigeti, "Are Individualist Accounts of Collective Responsibility Morally Deficient?" in Ziv and Schmid, 329-42; Szigeti, "Collective Responsibility and Group-Control," in *Rethinking the Individualism-Holism Debate: Essays in the Philosophy of Social Science*, ed. Julie Zahle and Finn Collin (Cham: Springer International, 2014), 97-116; and Paul Weirich, "Collective Rationality's Roots," in Chant, Hindriks, and Preyer, 187-205.

⁸ Hindriks "Corporate Responsibility," 161-77; Hindriks, "Collective Agents," 1565-85; Mäkelä, "Collective Agents," 456-68; Szigeti, "Individualist Accounts," 329-42; and Szigeti, "Collective Responsibility," 97-116.

⁹ Hindriks, "Collective Agents," 1565-85; and Rovane, "Group Agency," 1663-84.

¹⁰ Pauer-Studer, "Constitutive Account," 1623-39.

L&P's discussion of normative standing rests on the reality of group agents. If groups cannot be agents, there would be no question of group agents' being persons or held responsible. Should the first part of L&P's project fail, fixing our gaze at the third part would barely make sense. Thus even if the issue of normative status is interesting independently of whether L&P are right about it, the reality of group agents should be given priority as far as L&P's account is concerned.

Having said that, however, some of the literature has indeed centered on the reality of group agents. Abraham Sesshu Roth directs his attention to Pettit's earlier provocative yet somewhat underdeveloped paper—"Groups with Minds of Their Own"¹¹—and criticizes the idea that groups can have minds of their own.¹² "Groups with Minds of Their Own" marks the very beginning of the realist project, therein Pettit first introduces the idea of group agency. Nonetheless, as the idea of group agency was then still in its infant stage and has been substantially fleshed out in subsequent works, criticizing the account proposed in that paper seems unfair. While acknowledging the reality of group agents, Kurt L. Sylvan casts doubts on their non-redundancy.¹³ By drawing on earlier work on collective intentional attitudes, Sylvan contends that group beliefs are readily reducible to neat patterns of individual members' acceptance. To rebut the charge, L&P insist, among other things, that group beliefs can be produced in a variety of ways, and that it is after they are produced in some way that members are to accept, not the other way round.¹⁴ Thus, even if the acceptance on the part of members is essential to group beliefs, group beliefs are not readily reducible to patterns of members' acceptance.

¹¹ Pettit, "Groups with Minds," 467-93.

¹² Roth, "Indispensability," 137-56.

¹³ Sylvan, "Redundant Realist," 271-82.

¹⁴ List and Pettit, "Replies," 293-309.



Moreover, a small amount of the literature has focused not on any part of L&P's project but on its limitations. Adopting the phenomenological approach to self-awareness, Hans Bernhard Schmid upholds that L&P's account fails to recognize the role of what he calls "plural pre-reflective self-awareness" in constituting a group mind and so falls short in important respects.¹⁵ Observing that expressing one's attitudes with first person authority and so publicly committing oneself is a practice that plays an important role in our communication and in our understanding of what it is to be a person, Schmid maintains, in another paper, that the possibility for groups to be engaged in this practice is extremely limited.¹⁶ Despite its limitations, L&P's account is however not seriously flawed. After all, the reality of group agents remains intact. L&P could even reply that agency comes in degrees and so the sense in which groups are agents is not required to coincide exactly with the sense in which individuals are agents. Thus L&P's account is still tenable in spite of its limitations.

In sum, the literature review reveals that philosophers have either not paid due attention to the reality of group agents or launched an attack on it that can be readily defended. To fill the gap, I will zero in on the first part of L&P's project and carefully evaluate the extent to which L&P succeed in making a case for the reality of group agents in light of their account of agency. The body of my thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter one will be devoted to the exposition of L&P's account, which will be followed by a detailed evaluation in the succeeding two chapters.

¹⁵ Schmid, "Plural Self-Awareness," 7-24.

¹⁶ Schmid, "Expressing Group Attitudes," 1685-1701.

CHAPTER 1

THE EXPOSITION OF LIST AND PETTIT'S ACCOUNT



L&P can be seen as defending the following two theses:

- (1) The agency thesis: groups can be agents.
- (2) The autonomy thesis: group agents are autonomous entities.

To defend the agency thesis, L&P identify the conditions of agency and show how groups can satisfy them. L&P defend the autonomy thesis by way of two arguments, one ontological the other epistemological. The ontological argument demonstrates that group attitudes¹⁷ are not “readily” reducible to individual attitudes, and the epistemological argument maintains that recognizing group agents as autonomous entities has some epistemic gains that we would otherwise lose. This chapter will be devoted to the explication of the two theses. Readers familiar with L&P’s account can skip this chapter and turn to the next one.

1.1 The Agency Thesis

1.1.1 *Conditions of Agency*

According to L&P, an agent is a system that has the following three features:

- (1) It has representational states that depict how things are in the environment.
- (2) It has motivational states that specify how it requires things to be in the environment.
- (3) It has the capacity to process its representational and motivational states, leading it to intervene suitably in the environment whenever that environment fails to match a motivating specification.¹⁸

To put it simply, an agent is a system that has beliefs, desires, and the capacity to act

¹⁷ L&P use “group attitude,” “group-level attitude,” “collective attitude,” and “group’s attitude” interchangeably without clarifying what they denote. As we will see in the succeeding chapters, a disambiguation has profound effects on L&P’s account. For expositional purposes, hereafter I will use “group attitude” uniformly when presenting L&P’s theory.

¹⁸ List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 20.

with a view to realizing its desires in accordance with its beliefs.¹⁹

In addition to having those features, an agent must also meet what L&P call the “standards of rationality.”²⁰ There are three kinds of standards: “attitude-to-fact,” “attitude-to-action,” and “attitude-to-attitude” standards. Attitude-to-fact standards apply to the way an agent’s attitudes connect with its environment. To satisfy the attitude-to-fact standards, an agent’s beliefs must fit with how things are in the world. Attitude-to-action standards apply to the way an agent’s attitudes connect with the actions by which it intervenes in its environment. To satisfy the attitude-to-action standards, an agent must perform actions that are required or permitted by its beliefs and desires. Attitude-to-attitude standards apply to the way an agent’s attitudes connect with one another. To satisfy the attitude-to-attitude standards, an agent must hold consistent or corealisable beliefs and desires.

1.1.2 Satisfying the Conditions of Agency

How can groups satisfy the conditions of agency and standards of rationality? To answer this question, L&P appeal to the theory of attitude aggregation, which investigates ways of aggregating the intentional attitudes of individuals into attitudes held by the group as a whole.²¹

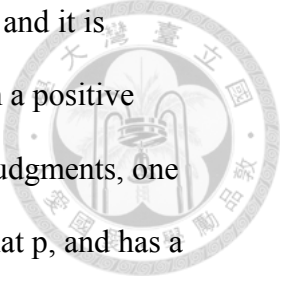
Before moving on, we need to acquaint ourselves with the basic elements of the theory of attitude aggregation.²² The members of a group are to form individual attitudes toward a set of propositions. Call the set of propositions toward which

¹⁹ Ibid., 25-26. L&P call representational attitudes in general “beliefs” and binary representational attitudes “judgments,” and motivational attitudes in general “desires” and binary motivational attitudes “preferences,” where an attitude is binary if it does not come in degrees. Hereafter I follow their usage.

²⁰ Ibid., 24.

²¹ For an introduction to the theory of attitude aggregation, see Christian List, “The Theory of Judgment Aggregation: An Introductory Review,” *Synthese* 187 (2012): 179-207.

²² The following introduction draws on List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 47-49.



attitudes are held “agenda.” Attitudes are either positive or negative, and it is assumed that for every proposition on the agenda, the members form a positive attitude toward either the proposition or its negation. In the case of judgments, one has a positive attitude toward a proposition “ p ” if he or she judges that p , and has a negative one if he or she does not judge that p ; and one either judges that p or judges that not p . The same goes for preferences. When every member forms an attitude toward every proposition on the agenda, there is a combination of individual attitudes across all members, which is called a “profile.” To form group attitudes, the group needs an “aggregation function,” which is a mapping that assigns to each profile of individual attitudes toward the propositions on the agenda the group attitudes toward those propositions. In other words, when a profile of individual attitudes toward the propositions on the agenda is inputted, the aggregation function will output the group attitudes toward them.

Now we are equipped to see how groups can meet the conditions of agency. Note that the way a group forms its group attitudes is relative to a given aggregation function. Of all aggregation functions, majority voting is probably the most seen one. According to majority voting, a group g forms a positive attitude toward a proposition if and only if a majority of g 's members does so. Thus g believes or desires that p just in case a majority of g 's members does so, and g performs an act A just in case one or some of g 's suitably authorized members perform A on behalf of g —that is, for the satisfaction of g 's desires, and according to g 's beliefs.

While they say very little about how to satisfy the first two kinds of standards of rationality, L&P dedicate a whole chapter of *Group Agency* to the attitude-to-attitude standards, as they are aware of difficulties standing in the way of meeting them. L&P are haunted by the following question: how can a group of

individuals form consistent group attitudes toward some interconnected propositions based on its members' individual attitudes toward them? When it comes to making such collective decisions, one naturally thinks of majority voting. Nonetheless, as we will see immediately, majority voting fails to guarantee consistent group attitudes; it cannot ensure that groups meet the attitude-to-attitude standards of rationality.

Consider the example L&P employ to illustrate what they call the “discursive dilemma.”²³ Suppose an expert panel is to make a prediction of global warming, and seeks to form group judgments on the following propositions:

- (1) Global carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels are above 6500 million metric tons of carbon per annum (proposition “p”).
- (2) If global carbon dioxide emissions are above this threshold, then the global temperature will increase by at least 1.5 degrees Celsius over the next three decades (proposition “if p then q”).
- (3) The global temperature will increase by at least 1.5 degrees Celsius over the next three decades (proposition “q”).²⁴

Suppose, as shown in table 1.1, expert 1 believes “p,” “if p then q,” and “q” to be true; expert 2 believes “p” but not “if p then q” and “q” to be true; and expert 3 believes “if p then q” but not “p” and “q” to be true. Each holds consistent individual beliefs.

How is the panel to form its group judgments on those propositions? Suppose, to be responsive to the experts' individual judgments, the panel forms its group judgments by taking a majority vote on each proposition.

²³ The discursive dilemma is generalized from what is called the “doctrinal paradox” identified by scholars in law. For relevant discussions, see Lewis A. Kornhauser and Lawrence G. Sager, “Unpacking the Court,” *The Yale Law Journal* 96, no. 1 (November 1986): 82-117; Kornhauser and Sager, “The One and the Many: Adjudication in Collegial Courts,” *California Law Review* 81, no. 1 (January 1993): 1-59; Kornhauser and Sager, “The Many as One: Integrity and Group Choice in Paradoxical Cases,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 32, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 249-76; and List and Pettit, “One the Many as One: A Reply to Kornhauser and Sager,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 2005): 377-90.

²⁴ List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 45.

	“p”	“if p then q”	“q”
Expert 1	True	True	True
Expert 2	True	False	False
Expert 3	False	True	False
Majority	True	True	False

Table 1.1. A set of attitudes outputted by majority voting

As table 1.1 shows, a majority judges that p, a majority judges that if p then q, yet a majority judges that not q. Thus the set of propositions endorsed by a majority—“p,” “if p then q,” and “not q”—is inconsistent. Suppose then, to secure consistency at the group level, the panel decides to endorse “q.” This, however, is at odds with the majority’s view. The difficulty involved in the discursive dilemma, as the example looms large, consists in the tension between two plausible demands: responsiveness to the members’ individual attitudes on the one hand, and consistency at the group level on the other. The moral of the story L&P draw out of the analysis is, “[M]ajority voting on interconnected propositions may lead to inconsistent group judgments even when individual judgments are fully consistent....”²⁵

Now we have seen how an initially plausible way of forming group attitudes—majority voting—does not generally work. Worse, L&P generalize the problem and demonstrate, in their more technical work²⁶ which I will not discuss, that not only majority voting but any aggregation function satisfying some initially plausible conditions that we may expect a function to satisfy will fail to guarantee consistent group attitudes. This is what they call the “impossibility result.”²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., 46.

²⁶ List and Pettit, “Aggregating Sets of Judgments: An Impossibility Result,” *Economics and Philosophy* 18 (2002): 89-110; and List and Pettit, “Aggregating Sets of Judgments: Two Impossibility Results Compared,” *Synthese* 140 (2004): 207-35.

²⁷ The idea originates from Kenneth Arrow’s impossibility theorem, which shows that any decision rule satisfying some plausible axioms will fail to guarantee rational collective preference rankings. While L&P’s impossibility result applies to the aggregation of intentional attitudes, Arrow’s theorem applies to the aggregation of preference rankings. For an introduction to Arrow’s theorem,

How are we to respond to the impossibility result? Is any attempt to secure the consistency of group attitudes thus doomed to failure? Rather than treating the impossibility result as undermining the very possibility of group agency, L&P suggest we relax some of the conditions in order for groups to form consistent group attitudes. They explore various escape routes from the impossibility result and in the end favor what they call the “premise-based procedure.”²⁸ The idea is to designate some propositions as premises and others as conclusions and prioritize the premises. A group using the procedure forms its group attitude on each premise by taking a majority vote on that premise and lets its group attitude on the conclusion be determined by its group attitudes on the premises.

Suppose the panel uses the premise-based procedure, then the experts’ individual attitudes on the two premises determine the panel’s group attitudes on them, which in turn determine the panel’s group attitude on the conclusion. Given the same profile of individual judgments, the procedure gives rise to a “True” judgment on “q” even though “q” is not endorsed by a majority, as table 1.2 shows.

We can not only prioritize some propositions over others but implement a division of labor among members, adopting what L&P call the “distributed premise-based procedure.”²⁹ The idea is to assign different premises to different members and let members form individual attitudes only on their assigned premises. The group then forms its group attitude on each premise by taking a majority vote on that premise among the assigned members, and lets its group attitude on the

see Michael Morreau, “Arrow’s Theorem,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/arrows-theorem/> (accessed April 19, 2015). For a comparison between L&P’s impossibility result and Arrow’s theorem, see List and Pettit, “Two Impossibility Results Compared,” 207-35.

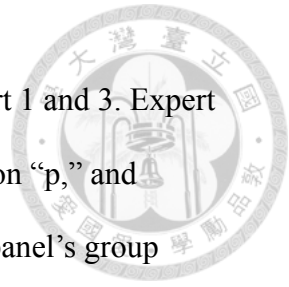
²⁸ List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 56.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

conclusion be determined by its group attitudes on the premises.

Suppose premise 1 is assigned to expert 2, and premise 2 expert 1 and 3. Expert 2's individual attitude on "p" determines the panel's group attitude on "p," and expert 1 and 3's individual attitudes on "if p then q" determine the panel's group attitude on "if p then q," each giving rise to a "True" judgment, as shown in table 1.3. Since the panel's group attitude on the conclusion is determined by its group attitudes on the premises, it judges that q.

Premise-based procedure and its variants are said to be able to guarantee consistent group attitudes, the implementation of which enables groups to satisfy the attitude-to-attitude standards of rationality. Thus the impossibility result does not preclude groups from being agents.



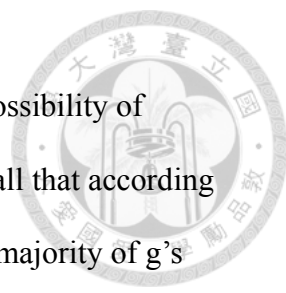
	"p"	"if p then q"	"q"
Expert 1	True	True	True
Expert 2	True	False	False
Expert 3	False	True	False
Premise-based procedure	True	True	True

Table 1.2. A set of attitudes outputted by the premise-based procedure

	"p"	"if p then q"	"q"
Expert 1		True	
Expert 2	True		
Expert 3		True	
Distributed Premise-based procedure	True	True	True

Table 1.3. A set of attitudes outputted by the distributed premise-based procedure

1.2 The Autonomy Thesis



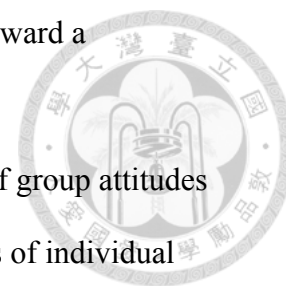
Though the impossibility result does not undermine the very possibility of group agents, we have not yet established the autonomy thesis. Recall that according to majority voting a group g believes or desires that p just in case a majority of g 's members does so. Apparently, this suggests that group attitudes are reducible to individual attitudes. If so, postulating the existence of group agents would have little ontological significance, as failing to recognize their existence would not lead us to miss out on anything. In other words, without the autonomy thesis the agency thesis could well be true but only trivially. The autonomy thesis is thus essential to L&P's defense of the reality of group agents. L&P can be seen as proposing what I call "the ontological argument" and "the epistemological argument" supporting the autonomy thesis. Let us first consider the ontological argument.

1.2.1 *The Ontological Argument*

The ontological argument argues that group agents are autonomous entities by demonstrating that group agents' group attitudes are not "readily" reducible to their members' individual attitudes. When a group implements the premise-based procedure, its group attitudes are said to be "holistically" supervenient on its members' individual attitudes: "[t]he set of group attitudes across propositions is determined by the individual sets of attitudes across these propositions."³⁰ Fix the pattern of individual attitudes and the pattern of group attitudes will be fixed as well. There cannot be any difference with respect to the pattern of group attitudes without a difference with respect to the pattern of individual attitudes. The supervenience relation in question is holistic as opposed to proposition-wise, since the relation holds between a *set* of group attitudes across the propositions on the agenda and *sets*

³⁰ Ibid., 69.

of individual attitudes toward them, not between a group attitude toward a proposition on the agenda and individual attitudes toward it.



With supervenience comes multiple realizability: a given set of group attitudes can be multiply realized by a wide variety of possible combinations of individual sets of attitudes. Take the expert panel again. Assume the panel implements the premise-based procedure. The group attitude on the first premise is determined by the experts' individual attitudes on it. The panel believes that p just in case a majority of experts does so. But a majority's believing that p can materialize in many different ways. It can come about not only when expert 1 and 2 believe that p , as shown in table 1.2, but when, say, expert 1 and 3 do so, as shown in table 1.4. The panel's believing that p can be multiply realized by various possible combinations of the experts' individual attitudes toward " p ." The same goes for the second premise.

The complexity is amplified in respect of the conclusion, where the group attitude on the conclusion is not determined by the experts' individual attitudes on it but by their sets of individual attitudes across the premises. The panel believes that q just in case it believes that p and if p then q , and it believes that p and if p then q just in case a majority of experts does so. By the same token, a majority's believing that p and if p then q can materialize in many different ways. It can come about not only when expert 1 and 2 believe that p and expert 1 and 3 believe that if p then q , as shown in table 1.2, but when, say, expert 1 and 3 believe that p and expert 1 and 2 believe that if p then q , as shown in table 1.4. Thus the panel's believing that q can be multiply realized by an even wider variety of possible combinations of the experts' individual attitudes on " p " and "if p then q ."

	“p”	“if p then q”	“q”
Expert 1	True	True	True
Expert 2	False	True	False
Expert 3	True	False	False
Premise-based procedure	True	True	True

Table 1.4. A modified set of attitudes outputted by the premise-based procedure.

The holistic supervenience and multiple realizability not only underscore the irreducibility of group attitudes but show that “individual and group attitudes can come apart in surprising ways, thereby establishing a certain autonomy for the group agent.”³¹ Under the premise-based procedure, the individual attitudes on the conclusion are both insufficient and unnecessary to determine the group attitude on it; insufficient because a majority’s believing in the conclusion does not imply that the group will believe in it; and unnecessary because the individual attitudes on the premises alone are sufficient to determine the group attitudes on all propositions. L&P call the lack of sufficiency a “weak autonomy” and the lack of necessity a “strong autonomy.”³²

Consider table 1.4. While a majority of experts does not believe in the conclusion, the panel as a whole does insofar as it implements the premise-based procedure. Moreover, the experts’ individual attitudes on the conclusion do not even play any role in determining the panel’s group attitude on it. Thus the experts’ individual attitudes on the conclusion are neither sufficient nor necessary to determine the panel’s group attitude on it.

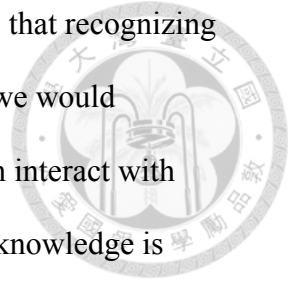
1.2.2 *The Epistemological Argument*

Interestingly, L&P regard the autonomy they ascribe to group agents as

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 70.

“epistemological” rather than “ontological.”³³ The idea seems to be that recognizing group agents as autonomous entities has some epistemic gains that we would otherwise lose. Once we acquire knowledge of group agents, we can interact with them in a manner not possible with non-agential systems. But such knowledge is unavailable in practice if we focus on the individual agents alone. Thus we are justified in viewing group agents as autonomous entities.



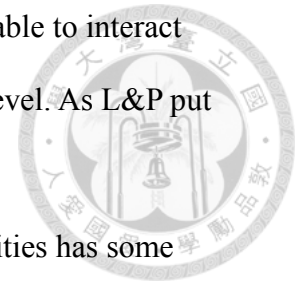
Let me now put more flesh on this skeletal idea. In what manner can we interact with group agents once we gain knowledge of them? We can not only criticize and make demands on them but predict how they are likely to perform and decide what we can do to affect them.³⁴ This way of interacting with groups would be impossible without thinking of them as agents in their own right.

While group attitudes holistically supervene on individual attitudes, we are unable in practice to know what group attitudes a group holds simply by observing its individual members' behaviors. The stylized example of the expert panel has oversimplified the complexity involved in real-world situations only for expositional purposes. Real-world situations are undoubtedly much more complex. A group may be bigger in size; a group may not explicitly use an aggregation function and implement it mechanically; the members may revise their previously formed attitudes whenever appropriate; we may not know how a majority materializes in the case of majority voting; we may not know which propositions are designated as premises in the case of premise-based procedure; we may not know which propositions are assigned to which members in the case of distributed premise-based procedure; we may not even know which procedures a group implements at all. As a

³³ Ibid., 76-78.

³⁴ Ibid., 76.

result, we will lose sight of group agents' attitudes and thus not be able to interact with them in a distinctive way if we fix our gaze at the individual level. As L&P put it figuratively, "We will fail to see the wood for the trees."³⁵



Provided that acknowledging group agents as autonomous entities has some epistemic gains which we would otherwise lose by focusing on the individual agents alone, we are justified in treating groups as "agents in their own right," "with minds of their own."³⁶

A remark before concluding. Perhaps L&P refuse to label the autonomy "ontological" for fear that they would be misunderstood as reexpressing the discredited idea espoused by the "emergentist" in an analytic idiom. Nonetheless, the ontological argument, as I construed it, is essential to their defense, since the epistemological argument alone is unable to establish the autonomy thesis. If group attitudes were ontologically reducible to individual attitudes, group agents would not be autonomous entities even if we cannot know their attitudes in practice by focusing on individual agents. Moreover, the tone in which L&P speak subtly drops a hint that they would like to do something more ambitious than just drawing our attention to the practical difficulties in deriving group attitudes from individual attitudes. In any case, I hope I have not misrepresented L&P's account.

1.3 Conclusion

So far I have drawn your attention to L&P's realist account of group agency. We started with L&P's view of agency, where an agent is taken to be a system having beliefs, desires, and the capacity to act on them. To be an agent a system must also satisfy the three kinds of standards of rationality, i.e. attitude-to-fact,

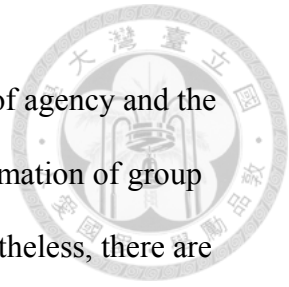
³⁵ Ibid., 76.

³⁶ Ibid., 77-78.

attitude-to-action, and attitude-to-attitude standards.

To be an agent, a group must accordingly meet the conditions of agency and the standards of rationality. But how is that possible? To explain the formation of group attitudes, L&P make use of the theory of attitude aggregation. Nonetheless, there are difficulties standing in the way of meeting the attitude-to-attitude standards. The impossibility result demonstrates that any aggregation function satisfying some initially plausible conditions will fail to guarantee consistent group attitudes, which appears to undermine the very possibility of group agents. By relaxing some of the conditions and implementing the premise-based procedure, L&P maintain that we can escape from the impossibility result.

Finally, we saw two arguments for the autonomy thesis. Ontologically, for a group implementing the premise-based procedure, its group attitudes are holistically supervenient on but not readily reducible to its members' individual attitudes. Epistemically, viewing group agents as autonomous entities has epistemic gains that we would not otherwise acquire. The upshot is thus that we are justified in recognizing groups as agents in their own right, with minds of their own.



CHAPTER 2

THE EVALUATION OF LIST AND PETTIT'S ACCOUNT PART I: A DILEMMA



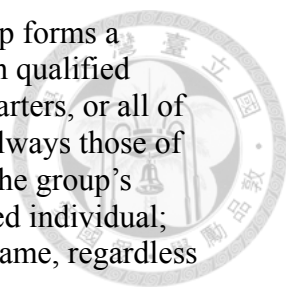
In the preceding chapter, we saw how L&P defend the reality of group agents.

The following two chapters aim to evaluate the extent to which L&P's defense is successful. Despite L&P's efforts to maintain the excitement of the idea of group agency while substantially increasing its intelligibility, I must confess to still harboring a certain amount of suspicion about the idea. What disturbs me is not their somewhat "thin" view of agency and rationality. For the sake of argument, I assume that L&P's view of agency and rationality is correct, that is, I will bracket such questions as "what is an agent?" and "what is it to be rational?" Doubts will be cast on the functional character of the relation between group attitudes and individual attitudes. My criticisms will be couched in the form of a dilemma: either the functional relation does not hold, or aggregation functions do not output attitudes held by groups as agents under the condition under which the functional relation indeed holds. As we will see, neither horn of the dilemma is palatable, which thereby forces us to take L&P's overall achievement with a grain of salt. I will concentrate on the dilemma in the present chapter, and draw out implications of it for L&P's defense in the succeeding one.

2.1 Functional Relation

I have briefly touched on the functional relation between group and individual attitudes, though not in enough detail. Recall that to form group attitudes a group requires an aggregation function and that the way group attitudes are formed is relative to a given function. While we have paid much attention to majority voting, majority voting is just one of many possible aggregation functions. Other

examples are supermajority or unanimity rules, where the group forms a positive attitude towards any proposition if and only if a certain qualified majority of group members—for example, two thirds, three quarters, or all of them—does so; dictatorships, where the group’s attitudes are always those of an antecedently fixed individual; inverse dictatorships, where the group’s attitudes are always the reverse of those of an antecedently fixed individual; and constant rules, where the group’s attitudes are always the same, regardless of its members’ attitudes.³⁷



The functional relation between group and individual attitudes may be represented more formally by the following biconditionals (focusing on beliefs):

- (1) Majority voting: a group *g* believes that *p*, if and only if, a majority of *g*’s members believes that *p*.
- (2) Supermajority: a group *g* believes that *p*, if and only if, a certain qualified majority of *g*’s members—two thirds, three quarters, and so on—believes that *p*.
- (3) Unanimity: a group *g* believes that *p*, if and only if, all of *g*’s members believes that *p*.
- (4) Dictatorship: a group *g* believes that *p*, if and only if, an antecedently fixed individual believes that *p*.

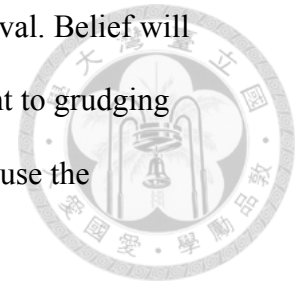
How should we make of the locution “a group *g* believes that *p*”? The locution may be understood in terms of group members’ having undergone a process of attitude shift. Members come to believe what the majority believes in the case of majority voting, and what the dictator believes in the case of dictatorship. The biconditionals may thus be redescribed as follows:

- (1) Majority voting: all members of a group *g* come to believe that *p*, if and only if, a majority of *g*’s members believes that *p*.
- (2) Supermajority: all members of a group *g* come to believe that *p*, if and only if, a certain qualified majority of *g*’s members—two thirds, three quarters, and so on—believes that *p*.
- (3) Unanimity: all members of a group *g* come to believe that *p*, if and only if, all of *g*’s members believes that *p*.
- (4) Dictatorship: all members of a group *g* come to believe that *p*, if and only if, an antecedently fixed individual believes that *p*.

A preliminary note before proceeding. By “come to” I intend to emphasize that in the process of attitude shift members normally change their attitudes not abruptly

³⁷ List and Pettit, *Group Agency*, 48-49

but gradually. In addition, by “belief” I do not mean to imply approval. Belief will be understood rather loosely, ranging from enthusiastic endorsement to grudging acquiescence. So to indicate the range of attitude, sometimes I will use the disjunction “belief or acceptance” or simply “acceptance.”



Consider the expert panel again. As table 1.1 shows, expert 3 personally does not believe that global carbon dioxide emissions are above the relevant threshold. But since a majority of experts thinks so, expert 3 is under pressure to change his or her attitude. The attitude shift may take a period of time, since expert 3’s judgment may also be based on good reasons. Finding himself or herself unable to persuade other experts, expert 3 comes to accept the result, albeit reluctantly.

2.2 A Dilemma

With this grasp of the functional relation, we are now equipped to discern the difficulties involved in L&P’s account. As mentioned earlier, I will challenge L&P’s account by bringing a dilemma to the fore: either the functional relation does not hold, and so L&P’s understanding of the relation is incorrect; or aggregation functions do not output attitudes held by groups as agents under the condition under which the functional relation does hold, and so, to be shown in the succeeding chapter, L&P have not actually established the two theses.

2.2.1 *The First Horn*

It should be uncontentious to say that there is plainly a large number of counterexamples to the biconditionals listed in the preceding section. Read the newspaper, and you will see people around the world taking to the streets protesting against the result of majority voting on whatever issues. This serves as a testament to the fact that attitude shift may not obtain. Not all members of a group will come to accept the result of aggregating their individual attitudes. In that case, the functional

relation does not hold, and so L&P's construal of the relation is not right.

Having said that, nonetheless, it would be too hasty and premature to conclude at this stage that L&P's defense fails. Perhaps we could be more charitable by taking those biconditionals to hold only conditionally rather than unconditionally; only under certain condition(s), unstated by L&P, does attitude shift obtain. The question will then be what condition(s). What makes it the case that members will change their attitudes? What makes it the case that all members will come to believe what the majority believes in the case of majority voting? In what follows I will endeavor to identify the minimal condition(s) under which attitude shift may obtain before moving on to the second horn of the dilemma.

2.2.2 *The First Explanation: Disposition*

A natural line of thought may appeal to the fact that members have the disposition to come to accept the result of aggregating their individual attitudes. The constant manifestation of the disposition is then the condition of attitude shift. Suppose the experts of the panel are disposed to come to believe what the majority believes. As table 1.1 shows, expert 3 personally does not believe that global carbon dioxide emissions are above the relevant threshold. Given his or her disposition, nonetheless, its manifestation leads expert 3 to undergo a process of attitude shift and come to believe, perhaps unwillingly, that emissions are above the threshold.

Notwithstanding its initial plausibility, this explanation falls short in important respects. The problem consists in its being in conflict with one of our normative intuitions. Intuitively, we believe or even take it that whoever is a member of our group should accept the result of aggregating our individual attitudes. There is a psychological element of the normative intuition. On the one hand, we *believe* we are required and expected to accept the result and would be criticized if we fail to do

so; on the other hand, we *believe* we are permitted and have reason to ask other members to accept the result and to condemn those who fail to do so. We normally feel pressured to change our attitudes once we perceive that our views are at variance with the result; otherwise we are usually eased. There is also a counterfactual element of the normative intuition: we believe that if anyone *did* not accept the result, we *would* be justified in blaming him or her, even if he or she *actually* accepts the result.

In what sense does the explanation go against this normative intuition? The explanation conflicts with the normative intuition not because the manifestation of the disposition is unable to guarantee attitude shift, but because we would not be justified in criticizing those who did not accept the result in counterfactual situations. In other words, it does not capture the counterfactual element of the normative intuition. In such counterfactual situations, attitude shift did not obtain due to the failure of the disposition to manifest. Nonetheless, and crucially, a disposition's failing to manifest does not seem to give us a good reason to blame those who did not change their attitudes. It is in this sense that the explanation does not accord well with the normative intuition. In view of this, we need to find something "stronger" than the manifestation of the disposition to come to accept the result of aggregation.

2.2.3 *The Second Explanation: Common Commitment*

The foregoing explanation is unsatisfactory since what makes attitude shift fail to obtain—the failure of the disposition to manifest—does not offer us a good reason to blame those who do not change attitudes. Is there anything competent to answer this need? I can think of nothing better suited to play the role than common commitment. To explicate the notion of common commitment, I must digress for a moment.

In his 2014 paper, List sorts collective attitudes—attitudes ascribed to collectives or groups—into three kinds: aggregate, common, and corporate attitudes.³⁸ An aggregate attitude “is an aggregate or summary of the attitudes of the individual members of the collective, produced by some aggregation rule or statistical criterion.”³⁹ The ascription of an aggregate attitude to a collective “carries no ontological commitment to a group agent, over and above the individual agents of which the collective consists.”⁴⁰ A common attitude—the kind of attitude by which the notion of common commitment is inspired—“is an attitude held by all individual members of the collective, where their holding it is a matter of common awareness.”⁴¹ Like the ascription of an aggregate attitude, the ascription of a common attitude carries no ontological commitment to a group agent. A corporate attitude, nonetheless, “is an attitude held by the collective as an intentional agent. To say that a collective holds a corporate belief or desire in some proposition *p* is to say that the collective is an agent in its own right, which holds that belief or desire.”⁴² As should be clear, the ascription of a corporate attitude, unlike the ascription of the preceding kinds of attitudes, carries an ontological commitment to a group agent.

A common attitude consists of two components—unanimous holding and common awareness—and is defined in terms of a particular configuration of individual attitudes. To put it more formally, a group *g* holds a common attitude if and only if

- (1) Every *g*'s member holds the attitude.
- (2) Every *g*'s member believes that every other member holds the attitude.

³⁸ Christian List, “Three Kinds of Collective Attitudes,” *Erkenntnis* 79 (May 2014): 1601-22.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1603.

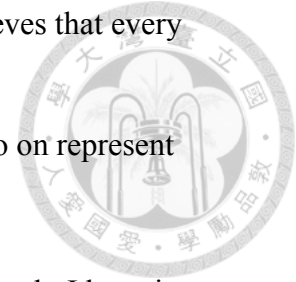
⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1608.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1609.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1615.

- (3) Every g 's member believes that every other member believes that every other member holds the attitude. And so on.⁴³

Clause (1) represents unanimous holding, and clause (2), (3), and so on represent common awareness.⁴⁴



Return to the condition of attitude shift. The second line of thought I have in mind appeals to the fact that members hold a common commitment to accept the result of aggregating their individual attitudes. Suppose the members of a group g are collectively⁴⁵ committed to accept the result of aggregating their individual attitudes. To spell the details out:

- (1) Every g 's member is committed to accept the result of aggregation.
- (2) Every g 's member believes that every other member is so committed.
- (3) Every g 's member believes that every other member believes that every other member is so committed. And so on.

The constant fulfillment of the common commitment is thus the condition of attitude shift. Suppose the experts of the panel are collectively committed to believe what the majority believes. As table 1.1 shows, expert 3 personally does not believe that emissions are above the relevant threshold. To fulfill his or her commitment, however, expert 3 has to change his or her attitude and come to believe, perhaps reluctantly, that emissions are above the threshold.

But would we be justified in criticizing those who did not accept the result in counterfactual situations? We would be, since in those situations attitude shift did not obtain due to one's failing to fulfill his or her commitment, and failing to fulfill

⁴³ Ibid., 1609.

⁴⁴ The notion of common awareness and its variants have been the subject of much controversy. Instead of being defined as an infinite hierarchy of beliefs, the notion may be defined as a disposition or simply taken as a primitive notion. For present purposes, I abstract from that issue here. For relevant discussions, see Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality: The Shared Point of View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 80-81.

⁴⁵ By "collectively" I intend to refer to common commitment in particular not to collective commitment in general. I do not use "commonly" since it typically means "usually" or "by most people," which may be misleading.

one's commitment seems to provide us a good reason to blame him or her.

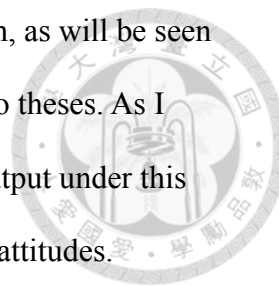
Recall the psychological element of the normative intuition: we *believe* or *take it* that whoever is a member of our group should accept the result of aggregation. To capture this psychological element, (2) and (3) are indispensable. On what ground do I *believe* I am justified in requiring you to accept the result of aggregation and blaming you if you fail to do so? I believe I have reason to do so since, given (2), I believe everyone else, including you, is also committed in the same way as I am. Moreover, I *believe* I am not exempted from the normative requirement because, given (3), I believe you also believe everyone else, including me, is committed in the relevant way. Otherwise, why do people typically feel pressured once they perceive that their views are at odds with the result of aggregation?

To sum up. The question bears on the condition under which attitude shift obtains. We have considered two explanations; one appeals to the manifestation of the disposition the other the fulfillment of the common commitment. While both can account for attitude shift, only the second explanation captures the counterfactual and psychological elements of our normative intuition and is thereby a better one.

2.2.4 *The Second Horn*

What has been achieved by the foregoing discussion? We have identified the minimal condition of attitude shift: the constant fulfillment of the common commitment. But what sort of attitude is formed when this condition is met? When the members of a group fulfill their common commitment and come to accept the result of aggregation and thus form a group attitude, what sort of attitude do they form? Are the group attitudes formed under this condition attitudes held by groups as agents, namely corporate attitudes? These questions are of paramount importance to L&P's defense of the reality of group agents. If it turns out that aggregation

functions do not output corporate attitudes under this condition, then, as will be seen in the succeeding chapter, L&P have not actually established the two theses. As I will show immediately, the group attitudes aggregation functions output under this condition are better seen as common attitudes rather than corporate attitudes.



To illustrate, suppose the experts of the panel have made and will fulfill a common commitment to believe in the proposition endorsed by the majority:

- (1) Every expert is committed to believe in the proposition endorsed by the majority.
- (2) Every expert believes that every other expert is so committed.
- (3) Every expert believes that every other expert believes that every other expert is so committed. And so on.

Consider table 1.1. A majority of experts believes that p . Expert 3 personally does not believe that p . But given (1), expert 3 is committed to believe in the proposition endorsed by the majority—“ p .” So expert 3 will change his or her attitude and come to believe that p . So it turns out that

- (4) Every expert believes that p .

Given (2), expert 1 believes that expert 2 and 3 are committed in the same way as expert 1 is and so they will believe that p ; expert 2 and 3 also think in a similar way. So it turns out that

- (5) Every expert believes that every other expert believes that p .

Given (3), expert 1 believes that expert 2 believes that expert 1 and 3 are committed in the same way as expert 2 is and so expert 2 will believe that expert 1 and 3 will believe that p , and that expert 3 believes that expert 1 and 2 are committed in the same way as expert 3 is and so expert 3 will believe that expert 1 and 2 will believe that p ; expert 2 and 3 also think in a similar way. So it turns out that

- (6) Every expert believes that every other expert believes that every other expert believes that p . And so on.

Given (4), (5), (6), and so on, it turns out that the experts form a common belief; they collectively believe that global carbon dioxide emissions are above the threshold.



A more complex but similar analysis also applies to the premise-based procedure. Recall that when implementing the premise-based procedure a group forms its group attitude on each premise by taking a majority vote on that premise and lets its group attitude on the conclusion determined by its group attitudes on the premises. To illustrate, suppose the experts implement the premise-based procedure and have made and will fulfill a more complex common commitment:

- (1) Every expert is committed to believe in, with respect to the premises, the propositions endorsed by the majority and, with respect to the conclusion, the proposition implied by the propositions having been endorsed by the majority.
- (2) Every expert believes that every other expert is so committed.
- (3) Every expert believes that every other expert believes that every other expert is so committed. And so on.

Consider table 1.2. A majority of experts believes that p and if p then q . Expert 2 personally does not believe that if p then q and q . But given (1), expert 2 is committed to believe in, with respect to the premises, the propositions endorsed by the majority—“ p ” and “if p then q ”—and, with respect to the conclusion, the proposition implied by the propositions having been endorsed by the majority—“ q .” So expert 2 will change his or her attitude and come to believe that if p then q and q . A similar process of attitude shift also goes for expert 3. So it turns out that

- (4) Every expert believes that p , if p then q , and q .

Given (2), expert 1 believes that expert 2 and 3 will believe that p , if p then q , and q ; expert 2 and 3 also think in a similar way. So it turns out that

- (5) Every expert believes that every other expert believes that p , if p then q , and q .

Given (3), expert 1 believes that expert 2 will believe that expert 1 and 3 will believe that p , if p then q , and q , and that expert 3 will believe that expert 1 and 2 will believe that p , if p then q , and q ; expert 2 and 3 also think in a similar way. So it turns out that

- (6) Every expert believes that every other expert believes that every other expert believes that p , if p then q , and q . And so on.

Given (4), (5), (6), and so on, it turns out that the experts form a common belief; they collectively believe that global carbon dioxide emissions are above the relevant threshold, that if emissions are above the threshold the temperature will increase by 1.5 degrees Celsius, and that there will be such temperature increase.

Crucially, the foregoing illustrations carry no ontological commitment to the panel as an agent, over and above the individual experts of which the panel consists, that holds the belief in question. Thus the group attitude the experts form by way of fulfilling their common commitment is not corporate attitude but common attitude.

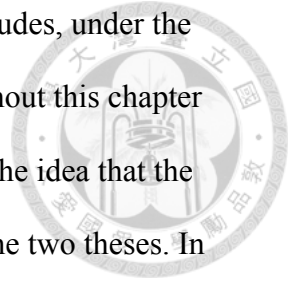
These cases generalize. Whichever aggregation function a group implements, it outputs a group attitude only when members, by way of fulfilling their common commitment, undergo a process of attitude shift. Thus a similar analysis also applies to other aggregation functions.

After a lengthy discussion, we finally arrive at the second horn of the dilemma: aggregation functions do not output attitudes held by groups as agents, i.e. corporate attitudes, under the condition under which the functional relation does hold.

2.3 Conclusion

Thus far I have spent a number of pages presenting a dilemma originating from L&P's functional construal of the relation between group attitudes and individual attitudes. Either the functional relation does not hold, or aggregation functions do

not output attitudes held by groups as agents, namely corporate attitudes, under the condition under which the functional relation indeed holds. Throughout this chapter I have occasionally mentioned but not commented in any detail on the idea that the second horn will jeopardize the tenability of L&P's arguments for the two theses. In the succeeding chapter I will devote myself to drawing out its implications, to which we now turn.



CHAPTER 3

THE EVALUATION OF LIST AND PETTIT'S ACCOUNT PART II: IMPLICATIONS



In the preceding chapter, we brought a dilemma to the front. The purpose of this chapter is to draw out implications of (the second horn of) the dilemma for L&P's account. One lesson we learned is that aggregation functions output common attitudes rather than corporate attitudes under the condition under which the functional relation holds. What implications does this have for L&P's arguments? As will be shown immediately, it invites a large-scale reinterpretation of L&P's theory, and by doing so we will discover that what they have *intended* to achieve greatly differs from what they have *actually* done.

3.1 Implications for the Agency Thesis

Recall that L&P's arguments for the agency thesis have two steps. First, they present their view of agency, and identify the conditions a system must satisfy to be an agent. Second, they show how groups can meet those required conditions and so can be agents. With regard to the second step, what L&P have intended to accomplish markedly differs from what they have actually done. To put it generally, what L&P have intended but failed to do is to show how groups are able to form *corporate* beliefs, desires, and act on them, and to satisfy the *corporate-attitude-to-fact*, *corporate-attitude-to-action*, and *corporate-attitude-to-corporate-attitude* standards of rationality. In what follows I will first state, from L&P's point of view, their intended achievement, and then offer my reinterpretation and evaluation.

3.1.1 *Intended Achievement*

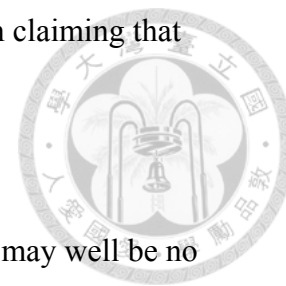
To be agents, groups must form corporate beliefs, desires, and act on them. To

form corporate attitudes, groups require aggregation functions. The way groups form corporate attitudes is relative to a given aggregation function. As an instance, according to majority voting, a group g forms a positive corporate attitude toward a proposition p just in case a majority of g 's members does so, and g performs an act just in case one or some of g 's suitably authorized members perform that act on behalf of g . From this we can see how groups can meet the conditions of agency.

To be agents, groups must also satisfy the corporate-attitude-to-fact, corporate-attitude-to-action, and corporate-attitude-to-corporate-attitude standards. L&P have devoted themselves mainly to the third kind of standards. The motivating question is, how can a group form consistent corporate attitudes toward some interconnected propositions based on its members' individual attitudes toward them? Speaking of making collective decisions, one naturally thinks of majority voting, which however gives rise to the discursive dilemma: groups will have difficulties in keeping their corporate attitudes responsive to their members' individual attitudes and consistent at the group level at once. Worse, the impossibility result demonstrates that not only majority voting but any aggregation function satisfying some initially plausible conditions will fail to guarantee consistent corporate attitudes. This seems to undermine the very possibility of group agency.

The way out is to implement the premise-based procedure (or its variants), according to which a group forms its corporate attitude on each premise by taking a majority vote on that premise and lets its corporate attitude on the conclusion determined by its corporate attitudes on the premises. Implementing the premise-based procedure enables groups to form consistent corporate attitudes. So the impossibility result does not preclude groups from satisfying the corporate-attitude-to-corporate-attitude standards. Since groups are able to meet the

conditions of agency and standards of rationality, we are justified in claiming that groups can be agents.



3.1.2 Actual Result

Have L&P achieved what they intended to accomplish? There may well be no reason to preclude groups from being agents once they *are* able to form corporate beliefs, desires, and act on them, and to meet the corporate-attitude-to-fact, corporate-attitude-to-action, and corporate-attitude-to-corporate-attitude standards. But insofar as aggregation functions output common attitudes rather than corporate ones under the condition under which the functional relation holds, appealing to aggregation functions does not seem to enable groups to meet the conditions of agency and standards of rationality.

Having said that, however, I am sympathetic to some extent to L&P's treatment of the attitude-to-attitude standards. True, if the impossibility result demonstrated that any aggregation function meeting some initially plausible conditions would fail to guarantee consistent corporate attitudes, it would despairingly pose a grave threat to the very possibility of group agency, and the premise-based procedure would undoubtedly be a marvelous escape route from the impossibility result.

Nonetheless, inasmuch as aggregation functions output common attitudes under the condition under which the functional relation holds, the very possibility of group agency has been neither undermined by the impossibility result nor saved by the premise-based procedure. Whatever threat the impossibility result may pose, it is not *to* the very possibility of group agency. Analogously, whatever escape route the premise-based procedure may direct, it is not *from* the impossibility result as L&P construe it. In view of these considerations, the conclusion at which we cannot but arrive seems to be that L&P have not actually established the agency thesis.

3.2 Implications for the Autonomy Thesis

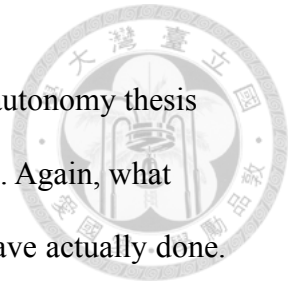
Turn now to the autonomy thesis. Recall that L&P defend the autonomy thesis by way of two arguments, one ontological the other epistemological. Again, what L&P have intended to accomplish notably differs from what they have actually done. They have intended but failed to show that *corporate* attitudes are not readily reducible to individual attitudes, and that knowing *corporate* attitudes has some epistemic gains we would otherwise lose if we direct our attention merely to the individual level. Again, I will now present, from L&P's point of view, their intended achievement, and then propose my reinterpretation and evaluation.

3.2.1 Intended Achievement

The ontological argument aims to show that group agents' corporate attitudes are not readily reducible to their members' individual attitudes. When a group implements the premise-based procedure, the set of corporate attitudes across propositions holistically supervenes on the individual sets of attitudes across those propositions. And a given set of corporate attitudes can be multiply realized by a wide variety of possible combinations of individual sets of attitudes. Thus corporate attitudes are not readily reducible to individual attitudes.

Furthermore, individual and corporate attitudes on the conclusion can come apart in surprising ways, which thereby establishes a certain autonomy for group agents. The autonomy has two senses—weak and strong—which refer respectively to the fact that the individual attitudes on the conclusion are insufficient and unnecessary to determine the corporate attitude on it. Thus we are justified in treating group agents as autonomous entities.

Buttress also comes from the epistemological argument. The idea is that recognizing group agents as autonomous entities has some epistemic gains we



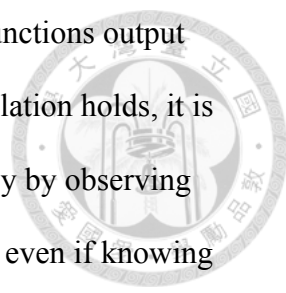
would otherwise lose. Knowing a group agent's corporate attitudes enables us to interact with it in a distinctive way. But we cannot know in practice what corporate attitudes a group agent holds simply by observing its individual members' behaviors. From an epistemic point of view, this provides a justification for thinking of group agents as autonomous entities. On the grounds of the two arguments, we are entitled to acknowledge groups as agents in their own rights, with minds of their own.

3.2.2 *Actual Result*

What are we now to make of the two arguments? Since the premise-based procedure does not output corporate attitudes under the condition under which the functional relation holds, we have to substitute common attitudes for corporate attitudes as one of the relata standing in the supervenience relation. It is a set of common attitudes across propositions that is determined by the individual sets of attitudes across those propositions. And, by the same token, it is a given set of common attitudes that can be multiply realized by a variety of possible combinations of individual sets of attitudes. Thus L&P have at most shown that common attitudes are not readily reducible to individual attitudes.

Moreover, we need to reconsider the sense in which the premise-based procedure may bring about surprise. Individual and common attitudes on the conclusion can indeed come apart, and one may be surprised to learn that the proposition in which he or she comes to believe with a view to fulfilling the common commitment differs from the proposition in which he or she personally believes before aggregating their individual beliefs. But however surprised one may be, this surprise establishes no autonomy for group agents. Thus the ontological argument is untenable.

Last but not least, knowing corporate attitudes may indeed enable us to interact



with group agents in a distinctive way. But insofar as aggregation functions output common attitudes under the condition under which the functional relation holds, it is *common* attitudes that we may not be able to know in practice simply by observing individual members' behaviors. Nonetheless, and more importantly, even if knowing a group's common attitudes is useful in some respects, being unable to acquire such knowledge by fixing our gaze at the individual level does not seem to provide a justification for taking group agents as autonomous entities. Thus the epistemological argument is also indefensible. In consideration of these, the conclusion we are compelled to draw seems to be that L&P have not actually established the autonomy thesis either.

3.3 Conclusion

So far I have been drawing out implications of (the second horn of) the dilemma presented in the preceding chapter for L&P's account. The implications proved profound. By way of reinterpreting L&P's theory, we found that what L&P have intended to achieve greatly differs from what they have actually done. It turns out that neither the agency thesis nor the autonomy thesis have actually been established. The upshot is thus that we have no alternative but to take L&P's overall achievement with a grain of salt.

CONCLUSION



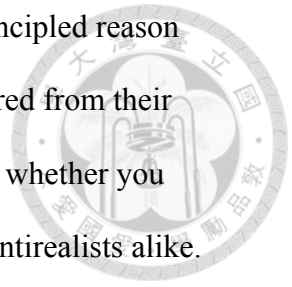
I will now draw together the various threads of my analysis. The gist of my thesis can be summarized as follows:

- (1) My thesis bears upon arguably the most fine-grained and comprehensive account up to date regarding an issue that is significant yet often not taken seriously—L&P’s realist account of group agency.
- (2) I have confined myself to the core of L&P’s account—the reality of group agents—which has peculiarly been neglected in the literature.
- (3) I have expounded the contents of L&P’s account and, by way of a dilemma, criticized it for failing to establish what L&P have intended to accomplish—making a case for the reality of group agents.
- (4) The problem consists in the fact that the theory of attitude aggregation is unable to supply one of the key elements necessary to run L&P’s arguments—aggregation functions do not output corporate attitudes under the condition under which the functional relation holds.

I must immediately warn the reader that the analysis given here should not be read as having delivered a knockdown case for the reality of group agents. After all, we have looked at only one specific account, and I have not proposed any positive argument for the unreality of group agents. In addition, due to limitations of space, I have not and will not explore the implications of the dilemma presented in chapter two for L&P’s whole project further. But we can reasonably anticipate a fairly different treatment of those positive and normative questions L&P have raised.

A final remark. Interestingly and paradoxically, antirealists about group agency could draw inspiration from L&P’s account. One lesson we learned from L&P’s account is that having its own attitudes is one of the minimal conditions a system must meet to be an agent. Antirealists have every reason to accept this. However, if antirealists are able to convincingly show that it is not logically possible for groups to form attitudes of their own, a case for the unreality of group agents will then seem to be made. To be sure, the foregoing idea will certainly not gain currency unless it is substantially fleshed out, and I will not attempt to develop it here as pursuing this

would take us too far afield. Nonetheless, there appears to be no principled reason why a conclusion that is the very opposite of L&P's cannot be inferred from their view of agency. While work remains for both sides, L&P's account, whether you buy it or not, has at any rate broken fresh ground—for realists and antirealists alike.



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