

COLLECTIVE BELIEF: KINDS, CONTEXTS, AND CONSEQUENCES

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HANDOUT: SECTIONS OF TALK

PART I

1. My target: everyday collective belief ascriptions

Query: Corporations

2. Two criteria of adequacy for an account of collective belief

- i. The disjunction criterion
- ii. The obligation criterion

Note that what is at issue here is not an obligation, period, but what is known as a directed---or relational, or bipolar---obligation. That is, an obligation to a person.

Note on morally obnoxious collective beliefs

3. The joint commitment account of collective belief

Two or more people *collectively believe that p* if and only if they are jointly committed *to emulate---* by virtue of their several utterances and other actions---one who believes that *p*.

Note: it is understood that the primary audience for these actions and utterances are the participants in the collective belief themselves, in the appropriate circumstances, e.g. when at a meeting of their group.

4. The joint commitment account and the two criteria

- i. The obligation criterion
- ii. The disjunction criterion

5. Modes of collective belief formation on the joint commitment account: basic versus non-basic cases.

A point about voting

6. The case of large populations

7. Response to some reactions to the joint commitment account

- i. Is it belief? (Tollefsen and others)
- ii. Can the account accommodate group lies? (Lackey)

Part Two

- i. An important context for collective belief: conversation
Relation to work of Lewis and Stalnaker
- ii. Consequences of collective belief
The creation of a given collective belief can be consequential for society, for better or for worse. The best time to intervene.

Conclusion

References

- Jennifer Lackey (2020) *The Epistemology of Groups*.
- David Lewis (1979) "Scorekeeping in a Language Game" *Journal of Philosophical Logic*.
- Robert Stalnaker, (1973) "Presuppositions." *Journal of Philosophical Logic*.
- Deborah Tollefsen (2015) *Groups as Agents*

See also:

- Margaret Gilbert, "Modeling Collective Belief" (1987) Synthese, which draws on
- Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts* (1989) ch. 5.
- Margaret Gilbert (2002) Protosociology, "Belief and Acceptance as Features of Groups"
- Margaret Gilbert and Maura Priest, "Conversation and Collective Belief" (2013) in A. Capone et al. (eds) *Perspectives on Pragmatics and Philosophy*.
- Margaret Gilbert and Daniel Pilchman (2014) "Belief, Acceptance, and What Happens in Groups" in Jennifer Lackey (ed) *Essays in Collective Epistemology* (Oxford: OUP).