Lecture Thirteen: *Building Blocks, Part II*

Philosophy 462  
November 13, 2014

I. Administration
   A. Presentation today – Jennifer
   B. Questions?

II. So What?

III. The View
   A. Eight “building blocks” for construction of modest sociality – p. 84
   B. These can be glossed as follows:
      1. (i): this indicates the nature of our joint agency – our target action;
         a. Think of this as the *content* intention, while the others are *structural* intentions
         b. Without this, there is no shared agency because there is nothing to be done
      2. (ii): we want to perform this action through our mutual intentions and not some other way
         a. The paradigm here is a case where we have a particular vision of how the action will unfold, and if it departs from that, we may not wish it performed
         b. Without this, something like the target action could be performed but not in a way that is appropriately *shared*
      3. (iii): this speaks to how the action will unfold
         a. The initial description of this is weak: “The sub-plans of participants mesh when it is possible that all of these sub-plans taken together be successfully executed” (53)
b. But it is developed in a stronger form: there is a kind of mutual dependency between our plans, such that they fit together and support one another – they “interweave” (53)

4. (iv): we do not see the intentions as idle, but rather as ultimately productive of the target action, if everything goes according to plan – failure of this condition will typically undermine our ability to form the requisite intentions

5. (v) & (vi): our intentions each settle the issue of whether we J, even though we cannot be solely responsible for J

   a. This is due to the persistence interdependence of the intentions in (i), according to which “each will continue so to intend, but only if the other continues so to intend”, other things being equal (65)

   b. That one has and continues to have an intention that we J settles that we will J, given common knowledge and persistence interdependence

6. (vii): all of this is out in the open, via common knowledge

   a. This is probably too strong in general – something closer to the mark would be common belief

   b. Without this, it would be difficult to form the requisite structural intentions required for shared agency

7. (viii): this is the “connection condition”, mentioned in (ii) and (iv)

   a. The idea here is that two individuals engage in shared agency when their individual agency is connected in a certain way

   b. The type of connection required is mutual responsiveness, where this is underwritten by (vii)

   c. Mutual responsiveness is reflected in our ability to track the intentions of the other and adjust our intentions accordingly so as to keep our joint action on track

   d. The focus here is not just on the joint action, but rather on the “joint-activity-by-way-of-relevant-intentions-of-each” (80)
C. Things to keep in mind:

1. So (i) gives us the content of the action, while the rest supply the social structure; of those, (ii), (iii), and (viii) concern what glues us together as a “we”, (v) and (vi) concern an important condition on our own individual intentions that allows us to regard them as intentions, and (vii) is what makes all of the structural intentions possible.

2. In a typical analysis of this sort, you would want to list only the conditions that you need, but that is not the case here.
   a. He argues that (ii) and (viii) together imply (iii), making (iii) superfluous.
   b. He retains it, though, for emphasis.

3. He is interested in building a *sufficient* construction, which is why he isn’t too concerned about conditions (iv) and (vi), and probably also (vii), which go beyond what is true in the general case of shared agency.

4. Details from Ch. 3:
   a. (i) is cool, on MB’s view, even though it violates the “own action” condition.
   b. Concerns about overdetermination and persistence interdependence.
   c. Persistence interdependence comes in varieties: desirability-based, feasibility-based, and obligation-based.
   d. How do these intention clusters get started in the first place?