Psychologism: from atomism to externalism

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The laws of the phenomena of society are, and can be, nothing but the laws of the actions and passions of human beings united together in the social state. Men, however, in a state of society are still men; their actions and passions are obedient to the laws of individual human nature. Men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance.

--John Stuart Mill

Collective mental phenomena of the sort we get in organized societies are themselves dependent on and derived from the mental phenomena of individuals. This same pattern of dependence continues higher as we see that social institutions such as governments and corporations are dependent on and derived from the mental phenomena and behavior of individual human beings. This is the basic requirement of our investigation: the account must be consistent with the basic facts and show how the nonbasic facts are dependent on and derived from the basic facts.

--John Searle

Abstract

This chapter introduces psychologism as the thesis that social facts can explained in terms of more basic facts about individuals, their psychological states, their actions, their relations, and their environments. It argues psychologism should be our default stance toward social reality. It reviews psychologistic approaches to shared intention and how shared intentions can help explain conventions, status functions, and organizations. It provides a deflationary account of corporate attitudes. It argues that neither physical nor social externalism about thought content are incompatible with psychologism. It argues that social construction views of the self that conflict with psychologism are implausible. Finally, it points out that it is no objection to psychologism that social facts can change without changes in psychological facts because this is compatible with psychologism as explained here.

Keywords: psychologism, social facts, collective intentionality, status function, organization, externalism, social construction, supervenience

1. Introduction

Since there would be no social facts if there were no people, it's natural to think that facts about people, their relations, and environment explain all the social facts. But what facts about people? This chapter focuses on the idea that the fundamental facts, from the standpoint of explanation, are facts about their psychological states—where those are ultimately characterized independently of social facts—and what follows from their having and acting on them in the material conditions in which they find themselves. We'll call this *psychologism about social facts*, or just *psychologism* for short.[1]

In what sense does psychologism hold that the facts about people explain all the social facts? We'll understand this broadly as the view that we can analyze and explain the social in terms of

(a) individual agents,
(b) their non-social properties, centrally[2] psychological properties, their non-social external[3] relations to one another, their actions, and
(c) their physical settings (as much as is relevant given (b)),

We understand non-social properties and relations to be properties and relations that can be instantiated conceptually independently of the instantiation of any social properties or relations. We analyze and explain social facts in terms of (a)-(c) when a statement about a factual situation (hence a true statement) in these terms entails the social facts.[4] This would be satisfied by a reductive analysis of social facts in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions stated in non-social terms, but it does not require this. What it requires is that, for any social fact, we can state suitable facts in terms of (a)-(c) that entail the social facts and whose obtaining is independent of social facts. If this condition holds then the social facts supervene on non-social facts of the sort specified in (a)-(c).

This chapter will offer sketch how a psychologistic account of the social might go and a defense of psychologism against some objections.

§2 gives general reasons in favor of psychologism. §3 gives an account of social facts. §4 distinguishes *game-theoretic atomism*, which treats individual agents as strategic reasoners concerned to maximize their utility, from *social-internal atomism*, which sees individual agents

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[1] Other terms often used for views in this general family are 'individualism' or 'methodological individualism'. Since these terms have been used in many different ways, and sorting out their senses and relation to psychologism as characterized here would take considerable space, we avoid their use in this chapter.

[2] The point of 'centrally' is to allow that social facts involve more than that individuals have certain psychological states. That I own a house is a social fact but it entails that there is a physical object large enough for human bodies to enter into it with a roof and walls and so on. The explanation of why a certain physical object is a house that I own, however, if psychologism is true, will trace back to facts about individuals interacting with each other and the material world in light of their intentions, beliefs, and desires, and so on. We are also here neutral on whether the psychological states are non-relational or relational. We will take up the relevance of relational individuation of psychological states in §9.

[3] An internal relation is essential to the relata; an external relation is not. Bud's sitting next to Pearl is an external relation between them. In contrast, 1's being less than 2 is an internal relation between them, since it is essential to them that they stand in that relation.

[4] Taking entailment to be fundamentally a relation between propositions, we can speak more generally of entailments between statements and facts as a matter of the proposition expressed by the statement entailing the proposition whose truth maker is the fact. We can speak of one fact entailing another when the proposition whose truth maker is the first fact entails the proposition whose truth maker is the second.

as conceptualizing their interactions with others in terms of *collective intentionality.* We will set game-theoretic atomism aside on the grounds that its resources are too impoverished to explain even simple social facts like shared intention. §5 considers views on how to analyze shared intention, which is central to many forms of collective intentionality, in terms of the attitudes of individuals. §6 explores how to analyze conventions and status functions (agential functions objects or events can perform only if they are collectively accepted as having them) in terms of shared intentions and collective action. §7 sketches how to analyze organizations such as clubs and corporations in terms of status roles. §8 gives a deflationary account of discourse about organizational attitudes (e.g., "Volkswagen believes it is too early to abandon combustion engines"). §9 considers whether the relational individuation of thought contents is a threat to psychologism (physical and social externalism about thought content), and whether the idea that the self is in one or another sense socially constructed is a threat to psychologism. §10 takes up the question of whether psychologism is committed to the claim that there can be no change in social facts without a change in the attitudes of one or more individual agents (the answer is "no"). §11 summarizes.

2. General Reasons for Psychologism

Societies consist in individual agents. If there were no individual agents, there would be no societies, and a single agent does not make a society. A simple society may be formed from a small group of agents, as in the case of groups of hunter-gathers. Even single-family units involve social arrangements, and there are social facts about them. What makes for even a rudimentary society is the fact that individual agents are interacting in certain ways with each other. Furthermore, their behavior alone, considered from the outside, is insufficient to determine whether individual agents are interacting socially. Two people may be walking in proximity to one another in the same direction. But this does not entail that their walking together (in the proximity sense) is a social action (Gilbert 1990). They may be on their own errands and unaware of each other. Merely walking in proximity to one another is not, as such, a social act. The difference between their merely walking in proximity in the same direction and walking together as a social action lies in their attitudes toward what they are doing. These observations show that among the basic building blocks of societies, and among the determinants of social facts, are individuals and their psychological states. However, why think that facts about the psychological states of individuals understood in isolation from others, together with their behavior and environment is all that is needed to give a complete account? First, it is ontologically and conceptually parsimonious. Second, and connectedly, it exemplifies a well-tried and highly successful explanatory strategy when trying to understand complex systems in general, namely, to analyze them into their components and show how the facts about the systems follow from facts about their components, their relations, and their interactions, given initial and boundary conditions. Much success in the sciences derives from the repeated application of this strategy (Wilson 1998). It should be the default stance toward any complex system.

3. Social Facts

Psychologism is a thesis about what facts explain the social facts. What it comes to depends on what social facts are. There is agreement on many examples: facts about money, marriages,

political campaigns, property, clubs, universities, inflation, competitions, languages, income, contracts, corporations, races (construed as socially constructed), contracts, presidents, professors, laws, and nation states are all social facts. When it comes to a general account, however, theorists differ on how to delimit the social. Some even deny that there is any criterion (Greenwood 1997). Thus, there can be different versions of psychologism depending on how one chooses to delimit (or not) the category of social fact. For specificity we provide a criterion that covers the examples above.

First, we say that an atomic fact is a fact about a particular thing's having a property (e.g., that Arlo is sitting) or about two or more particular things standing in a relation (e.g., that Esme is sitting next to Arlo). A molecular fact is a truth function out of atomic facts (that Esme is sitting next to Arlo or Kai is sitting next to Jude). A quantificational fact is expressed canonically using a quantifier (that someone is sitting next to Arlo). We say that an atomic fact *f* is a social fact iff its obtaining entails the instantiation of *a shared attitude*, e.g., a shared intention, belief, emotion, etc., in a non-distributive sense. These phenomena we will call *collective intentionality* (Jankovic and Ludwig 2016). This subsumes any atomic facts about the categories listed above. Money is used in joint intentional actions, marriages are entered into jointly intentionally and involve an ongoing shared form of life. Political campaigns, property, clubs, universities, competitions, languages, contracts, corporations, and national states all involve people acting together intentionally. Presidents and professors have positions in organizations designed for collective intentional action. Laws have force insofar as they are collectively recognized as governing an appropriate territory and population and sustained by legal officials working intentionally together on enforcement and adjudication. Inflation and income presuppose economic activity which presupposes joint intentionality among many other shared attitudes. Races as socially constructed categories sorting individuals into different positions in a social hierarchy on the basis of superficial features, such as skin color, presuppose both shared understandings of racial categories and collective acceptance of norms governing interactions with people in different positions in the social hierarchy. Finally, we will say that the proposition corresponding to a fact is the one it makes true, and a molecular or quantificational fact is a social fact iff among the truth makers of the corresponding proposition there is at least one atomic social fact.

4. Social Atomism

Social atomism holds that the relation of social facts to facts about individuals is like the relation of facts about gases to facts about the properties of their constituents. Psychologism requires that the explanatorily central properties are psychological. On this view, we describe individual psychological atoms in isolation from each other. What happens when they are mixed together determines causally and conceptually the social facts. We can distinguish two broadly different views about the relevant psychological facts. One takes the social-external perspective and treats individuals in society as strategic agents looking out for their own interest, who interact with others as if they were aspects of the environment that need to be taken into account in pursuit of their own ends. Societies are seen on this view as arising out of and sustained by individual strategic reasoning. There is something of this idea in the epigram from Mill at the beginning of this chapter. This is the picture of the social that emerges from decision-theoretic game theory, where agents think of the decisions and actions of other agents as states of nature. We can call this *game-theoretic atomism*. The other takes a social-internal perspective and sees individuals as

thinking of themselves and others in social terms, as doing things with others, seeing them as co-participants in activities, rather than seeing others simply in strategic terms. Societies on this view are seen as arising out of and sustained by individual intentions directed toward participating with others in joint activities. On this view, we construct the social world jointly intentionally. This is the idea expressed in the epigram from Searle. This is the picture of the social that emerges from a theory of collective intentionality grounded in individual psychology. We can call this *social-internal atomism.*

Game-theoretic atomism

According to game-theoretical atomism, agents act on their individual intentions in pursuit of their personal interests and regard others as similarly motivated. In making decisions, they take into account the likely decisions of others that may affect the outcomes their actions. This stance often enables us to predicate the ensemble of actions of a group of agents. For example, if for each member of the group, some action is best regardless of what the others do, then we can predict that each will make her contribution to the ensemble of actions that is best for everyone. In the decision matrix in Figure 1, Aaden and Bee each have two options. The intersection of rows and columns shows their combined choices. The first number in each box represents the payoff for Aaden and the second for Bee. The higher the number, the higher the payoff.

		Bee	
		1	2
Aaden	1	1, 1	6, 5
	2	5, 6	10, 10

Figure 1 Decision Matrix with one Nash Equilibrium.

In this case, option 2 dominates for each of them because it is better than 1 no matter what the other does. Thus, we can predict that the ensemble of actions will be (2, 2). When an intersection of actions is such that neither agent is better off doing anything else if the other does not change her choice, it is a Nash equilibrium. (2, 2) is a Nash equilibrium because neither is motivated to change if the other does not. This is the picture of human behavior in the aggregate we get from classical economics.[5]

Social-internal atomism

People look out for their own interests. So the game-theoretical approach has some predictive power. But it also has limitations. First, when agents are faced with several combinations of actions that are Nash equilibria, where some are strictly better for both, there is still no guidance about what to do except conditional on what the other does. This circumstance is referred to as a HiLo game. For an example, suppose that Aaden and Bee agree to meet for lunch but fail to arrange where to meet and cannot communicate. Two cafes lie between them at noon, one closer for both and one further. The closer one is better, but meeting at either is better than failing to meet. Assign a value of 3 for each if they meet at the closer café, 1 if they meet at the further one, and 0 to not their meeting. The payoffs for possible combinations of actions are shown in

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[5] For an overview, see (Ross 2021).

the matrix in Figure 2. We call Hi-Hi the meeting where benefit for each is highest (3,3). We call Lo-Lo the meeting where benefit for each is lower. It seems clear that they should both go to the nearest café.

		Bee	
		Near (Hi)	Far (Lo)
Aaden	Near (Hi)	3,3	0,0
	Far (Lo)	0,0	1,1

Figure 2: Hi-Lo game. Aaden and Bee are to meet for lunch. There are two options, one nearer and one farther. There are two Nash Equilibria, (Near, Near) and (Far, Far).

But both (Hi, Hi) and (Lo, Lo) are Nash Equilibria. Classical game theory tells us only that Aaden should go to the nearest if Bee does and to the farthest if Bee does, and vice versa. Yet in practice people have no difficulty choosing what is better for both.

Second, the main problem with game-theoretic atomism is that its conception of agents in social settings leaves out the social altogether. For we don't regard other agents only as features of the world to negotiate in order to maximize individual benefit. We regard them as partners and collaborators in joint projects. We don't only intend each to do something herself, in light of what others do. We also intend we do things together. Our intending to do something together is an instance of *collective intentionality*. We say that *we* intend, believe, hope, assert and so on, meaning not merely that each of us does, but that we do so as a group. Moreover, we can't understand institutional facts, such as facts about money, economic value, legal systems, and so on, without bringing collective attitudes into the picture. So even the application of game theory to economic decisions presupposes a much richer understanding of the social. *Social-internal atomism* holds that these kinds of facts, facts about collective attitudes and institutions, can be explained ultimately in terms of psychological states of the agents involved. For this reason, we set aside game-theoretic atomism to focus on developing a plausible psychologistic account of social facts in terms of social-internal atomism. We begin with a brief discussion of collective intentionality in informal groups, focusing on shared intention. Then we sketch an analysis of institutional facts in terms of shared intention. With this as background we will turn to the attribution of attitudes to organized groups.

5. Collective Intentionality in Informal Groups

Social-internal atomism holds that facts about *collective attitudes and institutions* can be explained in terms psychological states of the agents involved together with their relations, their actions, and their environment. In this section, we focus on attributions of actions and attitudes to informal groups and consider approaches to explaining these in terms of individuals and their psychological states. More specifically, for informal groups, we concentrate on accounts of shared intention, for two reasons. First, this is the central case because often attributions of other collective attitudes rest on or presuppose facts about shared intentions. Second, attitudes other than intention attributed to informal groups are usually straightforwardly distributive (all or most believe, want, etc.); and plausibly more complicated cases will be dealt with in the same way as

attributions to organized groups. For terminological clarity, I will use 'shared intention' for intentions attributed to informal groups (e.g., 'They intend to picnic at the beach', 'We intend to play chess') and 'corporate intention' for attributions to organizations (e.g., 'General Motors intends to build electric pickup trucks in two locations in Michigan'). We can extend this terminology to other attitudes, speaking in general of shared attitudes versus corporate attitudes—for example, shared belief versus corporate belief.

Psychologistic approaches understand shared intention in terms of some complex of attitudes of individual members of the group said to have an intention, together with (possibly) other conditions, such as the relevant attitudes being interdependent, uncoerced, subject to common knowledge, or having been arrived by appropriate reasoning. These analyses vary along several dimensions. A primary division is between accounts which see shared intention as a matter of interrelated individual intentions together with perhaps beliefs, reasoning, dispositions to aid, and other conditions, and those that see them as fundamentally a matter the normative relations between members of the group. We'll call the former intention-based accounts and the latter normative accounts.

On intention-based accounts, shared intentions are analyzed into a distribution of individual attitudes, centrally intentions, over members of the group plus (sometimes) other conditions. On this approach, minimally, when a group intends to do something, the individual members of the group intend to make contributions to their doing it. We will call their individual participatory intentions *we-intentions* and contrast we-intentions with I-intentions (Tuomela and Miller 1988). All intention-based accounts take shared intention to involve members of the group having individual intentions directed toward their joint action. Joint action can be understood as multiple agents contributing to bringing about a single event or state, like movers each contributing to lifting a piano and carrying it up upstairs (Ludwig 2016, 2007a).

We can see what motivates the normative account by considering why the simplest intention-based account fails. After an overview of the normative account and we will return to more sophisticated intention-based accounts.

The simplest intention-based account of shared intention is that for us to share an intention to lift a piano (for example) is for each of us to intend to contribute to our lifting a piano. But this turns out to be compatible with our not sharing an intention. Here is a variant on an example from (Gilbert 1990)).

Hidden Intentions

I intend we walk together. I am uncertain whether you are interested in walking with me. When I see you set out on the path to the village green, I start walking in proximity to you, slowing down when you do, and picking up the pace when you do. I pretend simply to be going in the same direction. You likewise intend we walk together. But you are uncertain whether I am interested in walking with you. You guess when you step out of your house and see me that I am going to the village green. You set out along the trail to the village green, walking in proximity to me, tracking my pace. You pretend simply to be going in the same direction.

In Hidden Intentions, we each intend we walk together (in the proximity sense), and to contribute to that, but we clearly do not share an intention to walk together. Here we have I-intentions directed at our walking together but not we-intentions. Suppose that we add that each is aware of

the other's intention. This still falls short of shared intention. For imagine that they are each spies assigned to keep track of the other and that this is common knowledge among them. In this case, they are each aware of the other's intention, but they still do not share an intention to go for a walk together.

The Normative Account

The normative account, whose most prominent representative is Gilbert (Gilbert 1992, 2013), argues that the missing ingredient is revealed by the fact that, in the cases just discussed, neither of us would be entitled to *rebuke* the other for not continuing. The missing ingredient, in other words, is that when we share an intention, we are normatively bound to each other to do our parts. If I say, "Would you like to take a walk?" and you respond, "Sure," then we have, Gilbert argues, normatively bound ourselves to the enterprise. This is not a moral commitment, on Gilbert's account, but a kind of obligation internal to the concept of joint action of the sort exemplified by going for a walk together. In Gilbert's terminology, we have made a joint commitment. On the normative account, shared intentions (and shared attitudes generally) are analyzed in terms of the notion of a joint commitment. Members of a group enter into a joint commitment when they normatively bind themselves as a group to do something. Each one then has an obligation to each of the others to do her part. They have contralateral obligations, in Roth's (2004) phrase. In principle, members of a group may so bind themselves in the absence of personal intentions directed at group actions (Gilbert 2009), though typically—else there would be no group intentional actions—they are accompanied by personal intentions directed at group actions. Thus, a joint commitment to intend to take a walk does not *entail* the members of the group individually intend to take a walk together, though Gilbert maintains it gives them a sufficient reason to do so. This is what makes it a fundamentally normative account.

 In the basic case, we form a joint commitment when we all express a "readiness for joint commitment" when it is common knowledge among us that each of us does (Gilbert 2006, pp. 138-9). In a non-basic case, we jointly commit to delegate the authority to jointly commit us to one or more others. The general form of such a commitment is "… together to constitute, as far as is possible, a single body" that ϕs (Gilbert 2006, p. 137). Different substitutions for 'ϕ' yield different shared attitudes or joint actions. For example, we have a collective belief that democracy is the best form of government if we jointly commit together to constitute, as far as possible, a single body that believes that democracy is the best form of government. We share an intention to walk together, then, provided that we jointly commit to constitute, as far as is possible, a single body that intends to take a walk. According to Gilbert, the concept of joint commitment is a "fundamental everyday concept" that is irreducible to "the concepts of an individual human person's beliefs, desires, goals, commitments and so on" (Gilbert 2006, pp. 125-6). The contralateral obligations to the other members of the group entailed by joint commitment cannot be unilaterally suspended because the subject of the commitment is the group, not the individual. They can be lifted from any only with the agreement of all. This gives members of the group the standing to rebuke any member who does not do her part. This would explain that intuitions Gilbert appeals to in support of the account.

 If Gilbert is right that the concept of joint commitment is central to our understanding of the social and not reducible to concepts of personal attitudes, doesn't this undermine the explanatory ambitions of psychologism? Not as we have defined it. For on Gilbert's account, the conditions conceptually sufficient for joint commitment are that all members of a group express

a readiness to jointly commit with the group under conditions of common knowledge. This is attributes to the members individual psychological states that they can have independently of the instantiation of any social properties or relations. Thus, Gilbert specifies the form of a statement about a factual situation in terms of (a)-(c) that entails a group has a joint commitment. Her account then counts as a version of psychologism about collective attitudes despite the content of the attitudes that individuals who express a readiness to jointly commit involving a concept that she says is not reducible to personal attitudes. For having an attitude involving an irreducibly social concept does entail that it is satisfied by anything.

Whether Gilbert's account is correct depends crucially on the claim that all instance of collective intentional action involves sui generis contralateral obligations. This has been disputed by theorists who advocate a intention-based approach to shared intention. For critical discussion, see (Bratman 2014, ch. 5, Ludwig 2016, ch. 6 sec. 5).

Intention-based Accounts

There are three basic intention-based responses to the problem of distinguishing mere I-intentions directed toward group actions from genuine we-intentions: the mode, content, and etiological approaches. We'll briefly review each one. I advocate a version of the content approach.

The first appeals to a special or sui generis mode of intending to explain the difference between we-intentions and I-intentions (Searle 1990). On this view, the mode of intending is a *sui generis* we-mode and cannot be explained adequately in terms of the concepts in play in our understanding of individual agency. This account would claim that in Hidden Intentions we deny that they share an intention because we don't think they have intentions with the right psychological mode. This counts as a version of psychologism despite the appeal to an irreducible we-mode because having such an attitude does not itself entail that there are any social facts. See (Ludwig 2007b, 2016, ch. 16§2) for a critical review of Searle's position.

The second appeals to something special in the content of we-intentions beyond their being directed at our doing something together (Tuomela and Miller 1988, Tuomela 2005, 2013, Bratman 2014, Ludwig 2007a, 2016). Often this appeal to the content of intentions is supplemented with the parties having appropriate supporting beliefs, e.g., beliefs that the others will do their parts, and that there be mutual belief among the members that the others have corresponding beliefs (Tuomela and Miller 1988, Tuomela 2005, 2013, Bratman 2014). In some cases, these additional conditions are conditions on rational shared intention (Tuomela 2005, Ludwig 2016, ch. 16.1). Additional requirements are sometimes introduced, such as that the parties' intentions be interdependent, that their intentions not be coerced, and that they are mutually responsive, but often these are in connection with highly cooperative small scale intention action and not intended to be general constraints (Bratman 1992, 2014). Content accounts may be reductive or non-reductive. They are non-reductive if they appeal to concepts of joint intentional action (Tuomela 2005, 2013). They are reductive if they hold that we can explain what is special about the content of we-intentions drawing only on concepts already at play in our understanding of individual agency (Bratman 2014, Ludwig 2007a, 2016). Bratman's account is motivated by the idea that shared intention should play a functional role for groups analogous to the role intention plays for individuals. The key idea of Bratman's account is that we-intentions are intentions that we *J* (where *J* is a cooperatively neutral joint action type) by way of our intentions that we do and associated meshing subplans. Subplans mesh when they are

consistent. This rules out Hidden Intentions because neither of us in that case intends we do it by way of our intentions that we do. My own account is motivated by an analysis of the logical form of plural action sentences and plural attributions of intention. The key idea is that we-intentions are intentions to contribute to our acting in accordance with a shared plan (Ludwig 2016, chs. 13-14, 2007a). This also rules out Hidden Intentions because neither of us intends we act in accordance with a shared plan. The shared plan account handles, without any need for modification of the basic idea, a problem case for Bratman's account, namely, shared competitive activities in which the activity type requires that not all our subplans mesh. For our intention to act in accordance the joint action plan for chess requires cooperation on our acting in accordance with the rules (meshing subplans for implementing them jointly) but also requires us to have conflicting goals, and so requires those subplans of each associated with winning not to mesh the other's (see (Ludwig 2016, ch. 16.3) for further discussion). Competitive activities are also a prima facie problem for Gilbert's account, since when we play chess we are not trying to act as a single body that plays chess, but as two bodies competing against each other in within a framework of rules.

   The third response appeals to the etiology of the intentions, the process by which we arrive at them. The primary example of this approach is the Team Reasoning approach (Gold and Sugden 2007, Gold 2018). On this approach, when we have intentions directed at our doing something together that we have arrived at from the standpoint of team reasoning, in which the members of the group seek to maximize group utility, our individual contributory intentions constitute a shared intention. See (Roth 2014, Ludwig 2016, pp. 254-6, Bratman 2014, p. 96) for responses.

   Subsuming the last of these general approaches under the term 'Etiological Accounts', we can give the taxonomy of accounts of shared intention in Figure 2, where the headings indicate the dimension along which an account seeks to identify what is special about shared intentions. See (Ludwig 2016, ch. 16) for a detailed discussion of the major positions.
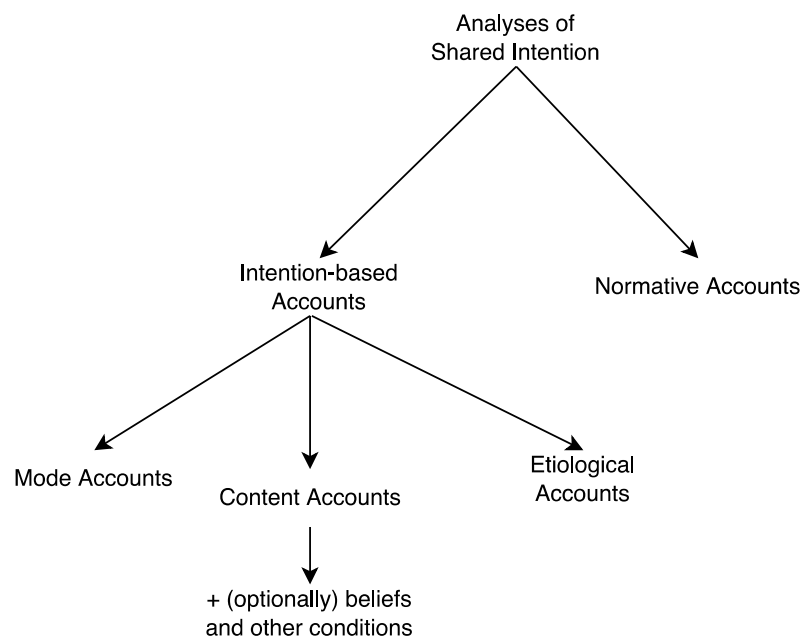
All of these accounts of shared intention are psychologistic in appealing only to individual psychological states, and they are social-internal atomistic accounts in the sense of the previous section because they focus on understanding shared attitudes rather than just explaining patterns of actions on the basis of individual strategic reasoners. Before we turn to corporate attitudes, we will consider how a social-internal atomistic analysis of institutional facts may be given on the basis of an analysis of shared intentions. This will help us to see the point of the practice of attributing attitudes to organizations. We begin with conventions and status functions such money and property. We then turn to an account of institutions as realized in a network of agents occupying status roles, a subcategory of status function, and consider whether institutions are ontically something over and above the agents who realize them at any time.

6. Conventions and status functions

A convention is a social practice that is arbitrary, social, stable and, for some important subvarieties, reciprocal, in the sense that the parties to it see their involvement and that of others in the same way. Sometimes, by calling something conventional, we mean that it is a customary practice, like eating with knives and forks vs. chopsticks—roughly, the way things are done around here, where the practice is passed on through imitation or instruction from one generation to another. Another important species of convention, however, focuses on stable group solutions to recurring coordination problems. A group faces a coordination problem when they have a common interest that can be satisfied by acting together in one of a number of (significantly) different ways each of which is roughly equally good, but which cannot be pursued together. An example is driving on the right (or alternatively the left) to avoid collisions. If everyone adopts the same rule, collisions are avoided, but each rule is equally good, provided everyone adopts it. A famous account of convention by (Lewis 1969) sought to explain conventions in terms of regularities that de facto solve coordination problems which are supported by corresponding preferences among those involved under conditions of common knowledge. Paraphrasing (Lewis 1969, p. 76),

> a regularity *R* in a community *C* in a recurrent situation *S* is an L-convention (Lewisian convention) iff it is common knowledge among them that: whenever *S,* everyone conforms to *R*; everyone expects everyone else to conform to *R*; everyone has approximately the same preferences regarding all possible outcomes of actions; everyone prefers everyone to conform *R* on the condition that everyone else does; everyone would prefer everyone conform to *R'*, on condition that everyone except one did, and members of *P* cannot conform to *R* and *R'* both in any instance of *S*.

If correct, this reduces conventions a psychologistic base. However, this *game-theoretic* notion of convention is too weak to accommodate all instances of social convention, and it is arguably not the central concept of a social convention precisely because it treats the agents involved as seeing the others as impersonal states of nature (Jankovic and Ludwig 2022).

We illustrate why a stronger notion of convention is required with status functions. Status functions are a subcategory of agentive functions—functions defined in relation to human purposes, like being a hammer, or a shelter—that can perform their functions only if they are

collectively accepted as having that function (Searle 1995, 2010, Ludwig 2017). Examples include being a $20 bill, a border, a driver's license, a contract, a judge, a senator, a professor or a president. On one view, ground level facts about institutional reality are exhausted by facts about status functions (Searle 2010). For psychologism, this requires that the ground level facts about status functions be explained in terms of the psychological states of individual agents. Once the ground level social facts are in place, there can be fallout social facts (Searle 2010, p. 22). For example, once we have money, we can have inflation. The central question about status functions is why, unlike a hammer, which can drive nails in virtue of its physical structure, even if it is not assigned that function, something with a status function must be collectively accepted as having it for it to perform that function. The answer is that the relevant functions are defined by constitutive rules for an essentially collective intentional action type (Jankovic and Ludwig 2022, Ludwig 2014, 2017, chs. 7-8).

Following constitutive rules constitutes the type of activity that they govern. The rules of chess are constitutive rules. Following them constitutes playing chess. Rules are constitutive relative to an activity type that requires that they be followed (at least roughly) for the activity type to be instantiated. Regulative rules govern a type of activity that can exist independently of the rules being followed. Traffic laws and Robert's Rules of Order (RRO) are regulative rules. Any regulative rule can be turned into a constitutive rule relative to an action type that requires it be instantiated by following the rules. If a *parliamentary meeting* is one conducted according to RRO, then RRO are constitutive rules for parliamentary meetings. We allow that the concept of the action type may require that the participants only by and large follow the rules and allow regulative rules within activity types defined by constitutive rules—rules whose violation call for penalties, for example.

When constitutive rules define a role for something, for example, the pieces in chess, but do not specify what things or types of things in the world are to play the roles, those who want to instantiate the activity face a coordination problem. They can solve it by, but only by, coordinating on the same things for those roles. When they do, we say that they *collectively accept* them for the roles. Thus, people can play chess with bottle caps or playing cards if, but only if, they collectively accept the same objects for the same piece roles. Since the relevant sort of coordination is coordination in commitment to a plan in which particular things play the piece roles, collective acceptance is constituted by their we-intentions being directed at the same things for the same roles. The same analysis applies to more complicated cases. The interchanges in which we use $20 bills their intended purposes are more varied, but they too are essentially intentional collective action types governed by constitutive rules that define roles for things without specifying which things are to play the roles. For $20 bills to play their roles we must coordinate on, that is, collectively accept, them for those roles. There may be more than one type of thing we collectively accept for the roles, such bills and coinage.

When things or types of things are going to be used on an open-ended number of occasions, we develop policies for using them in the roles whenever we engage in the relevant activities. The policy solves a recurring coordination problem by selecting one from a number of ways of solving it. These policies are realized in generalized conditional shared intentions. This is in the ordinary sense a convention: an arbitrary, social, stable, reciprocal solution to a coordination problem. Thus, status functions for recurring use are assigned to things or types of things by convention. However, L-conventions are not sufficient, since they are not sufficient for having a generalized conditional shared intention. Therefore, for very many central aspects of social life, L-conventions fall short of what is needed. Plausibly most of the ordinary conventions

that Lewis's account aimed to explain are conventions in the sense of shared policies for solving coordination problems. See (Jankovic and Ludwig 2022) for further discussion. The account is compatible with psychologism because the explanation is given in terms of individual psychological states, individual actions, and agents' interactions with their environments. In contrast to Lewis's account, which is a game-theoretic atomistic approach to social convention, this account makes explicit appeal to shared intention. If shared intention can be analyzed in terms of individual attitudes, as sketched in the previous section, then the account is a *social-internal* atomistic account.

7. Status Roles and Organizations

Constitutive rules also define roles for agents in a system of roles designed for joint intentional action whose function requires them to express their agency in the role. We will call these *status roles* (Ludwig 2017, chs. 10-11). Institutions, in the organizational sense (like the Supreme Court, Congress, or General Motors), are groups realizing systems of status roles. Henceforth I will refer to institutions in this sense as organizations. Membership in an organization is a matter of having a generic status role and then a more determinate status role in the organizational structure. For example, a university is an organization of individuals bearing interrelated roles such as being students, professors, teaching assistants, department heads, deans, provosts, and presidents. Membership in an organization is typically time indexed, with entry and exit conditions. Consequently, status roles in organizations can be successively occupied by different agents. This gives rise to the possibility of the perpetual succession (or existence) of an organization through enough of its roles being occupied by successive waves of individual agents. Organizations range from chess clubs to transnational corporations. Organizations may also be given a status role, and be embedded in a larger organization, such as the Supreme Court as a branch of the US government. Organizations may have roles only for other organizations, like the Chamber of Commerce, or for individuals and organizations, as in the case of many corporations whose stockholders include both corporations and individuals. The possibility of building organizations out of other groups or organizations with status roles enables the construction of very complex organizations. Nation states with their systems of laws and hierarchies of governmental structures, which provide the umbrella for business organizations, are a prime example.

Perpetual succession gives rise to the appearance that organizations are something over and above the individuals who realize them. Organizations persist through changes in membership. They can undertake projects that last through even a complete change in membership. They could have had, if embedded in another organization, a completely different membership than they in fact had, compatibly with being the same organization, for example, the Federal Reserve Board. They can survive (in some sense) periods in which they have no members. There can also be two different organizational groups (different organizations) with the same membership, e.g., the Department Budget Committee may have the same members as the Department Climate Committee, though we still count them two committees. Prima facie we cannot intersubstitute their designators in all context salva veritate.[6] Even if we know the Budget

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[6] This is a common theme in arguments for organizations being distinct from their members. See, for example, (Ruben 1983, Gilbert 1987, Uzquiano 2004, Ritchie 2013, Epstein 2015, Ritchie 2018).

Committee and Climate Committee have the same members, we would still refrain from asserting (2) on the basis of (1).

> (1) The Department **Budget** Committee meets every Tuesday.
> (2) The Department **Climate** Committee meets every Tuesday.

In general, it seems that the individuation and persistence conditions for plural groups of agents (picked out with plural referring terms, such as 'we' and 'they'), on the one hand, which are individuated by their members, and for organizations (picked out with singular referring terms that refer to the whole group, such as 'the Federal Reserve' and 'Congress'), on the other, are quite different.

Are organizations really ontically something over and above their members? What would this mean for psychologism? Start with the second question. Suppose a new entity comes into existence when the Bloomington Backgammon Club (BBC) is organized that is not just the group of its members (or even its members as a group over its entire existence). In the same way, when an artist forms some clay into a statue, we might say that a new entity comes into existence with different individuation and persistence conditions than the lump of clay, for the clay may persist though the statue does not. However, the existence of the statue may be explained in terms of the intentional actions of the artist and the physical properties of the clay, without residue. Those facts determine that the statue exists and all the facts about it: its shape, weight, properties, and so on. In the same fashion, the facts about the intentions and actions of the members of the BBC determine that it comes into existence, its properties, and how long it lasts.[7] This is consistent with the bottom-up approach to explaining social facts in terms of the psychological states of agents and their relations, and so with psychologism. But it is not ontically reductive and thus it is incompatible with the view that social ontology includes only individuals and natural groups.

It is not obvious, however, that new entities come into existence when existing entities acquire new properties. Why should an existing thing x acquiring a new property P result in a new thing y distinct from x that also has the property P? That x has the property P does all the explanatory work we need done. When a group of people form a club, they acquire a new set of interrelated roles (a new property). Transparently that is all that happens in the world. It is the surface forms of speech that mislead us. We say, for example, that a *new* club has been formed. In what sense could there be a new club if it is just its members, who existed before they formed the club? We mean, though, only that there is a group of individuals who have newly organized to realize a club of a particular sort—that's just what it is for there to be a new club. Compare: 'I'll just write a quick note.' The note is what is written, not the writing of it. But what is quick is the writing of it, though 'quick' in surface form modifies the noun.

The fact that organizations could have had different membership, and persist and act through changes in membership, is explained without ontic inflation by noting that we pick out organizations by description. The budget committee could have had different membership in the same way that the president could have been someone else. Someone else might have been the denotation of the 'the president'. Some other group might have been what we pick out with 'the

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[7] The BBC is a standalone organization. More generally, organizations can be embedded in other organizations or arise out of preexisting organizations. In these cases we bring into view additional facts about the intentions and actions of individual agents in the embedding institutions or those out of which the new institutions are born. See (Ludwig 2017, chapter 11§2) for further discussion.

budget committee'. Organizations persist through changes in membership in the sense in which an eddy in a stream persists through changes in the water molecules that realize the pattern. And when we say that an organization continues to act through changes in its membership, we mean that the contributors to the projects we ascribe to the organization are drawn from its membership through that period, though the membership was not the same at the end as it was at the beginning—see Ludwig 2017, chs. 3-5, 11, for a detailed discussion. An organization can in one sense survive not having members when it is embedded in another organization, but all that means is that there is a place in the organizational chart for it. In the same sense the presidency would survive the death of the president while someone is waiting to be sworn in. Thus, if we say, for example, that the Supreme Court would still exist even if its justices all died suddenly, we mean that provision is made for it in the larger institution in which it has a role. It is not thereby written out of the organizational chart and justices will be appointed in due course.

We can also explain why we count, for example, two committees, when one group of agents realizes both, without commitment to entities over and above those agents. Counting practices often focus on types realized rather than particulars. A shelf may contain thirty books, but if half are *War and Peace*, and half *Anna Karenina*, we might say there are only two books on the shelf, by which we mean that only two book types are instantiated by the books on the shelf. Further, the same pages may instance two types. Two novels can be written so that the same book may be read as either, one starting at the first left hand page, reading left to right, and the other starting at the first right hand page (conventionally the back of the book) and reading right to left (it may be easier to imagine if we suppose one written in a code). We have a printed copy before us. How many books are there? There is one, in one sense, and two, in another. The sense in which there are two is that the one book, these bound pages, instantiate two types of book, which is just to say that it has two distinct properties each independently sufficient for it to be a novel. The count of properties instantiated though does not add to the count of things that instantiate properties. Similarly, we count distinct committees when interested in distinct realizations of organizational structures, but what in the world realizes those structures may be the same group of agents. The point here is that our counting practices can be explained without treating clubs and other organized groups as distinct from their members.[8]

Then likewise when we say the group persists though the committee does not, we mean that they cease to realize the relevant structure, just as we mean the clay takes on a different shape when we say the square it forms does not persist when it is remoulded into a ball. Finally, the resistance to the inference from (1) to (2) can be explained by appeal to either a contextually determined predicational shift or a conversational implicature (Magidor 2011). Without choosing between a semantic and pragmatic approach, the basic idea is that what is conveyed by an assertion of (1) is that the Department Budget Committee meets *officially* as the Department Budget Committee every Tuesday and what is conveyed by (2) is that the Department Climate Committee meets *officially* as the Department Climate Committee every Tuesday. (1) so understood does not entail (2) so understood.[9]

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[8] See (Ludwig 2017, chapter 11§3) and (Hawley 2017). Hawley notes, as I did independently, that the same issues arise when we focus on individuals and their roles. The president of the Chess Club and the Backgammon Club may be the same. Are there two club presidents? Yes and no. There are two roles, one person filling both. In this case, we are less tempted to think the president of either club is distinct from the role filler.

[9] (Hawley 2017) makes this point; see also my similar discussion in (Ludwig 2017, ch. 11§3).

8. Corporate Attitudes

We say:

> (3) Toyota believes its new hybrid will dominate the market.
> (4) France intends to retaliate against Australia for breaking its agreement.
> (5) China is angry about challenges to its sovereignty.
> (6) The United Nations wants to end human trafficking.

We do not mean that each member of the organization has the relevant attitude. Chinese citizens are not angry about challenges to *their* sovereignty since they are not nation states. The citizens of France do not intend to retaliate against Australia themselves! We might say that French citizens intend *France* to retaliate. But we do not mean that *every* citizen France intends France to retaliate. There are differences of opinion; many citizens know nothing about the issue and care less. We might say that relevant governmental officials intend France to retaliate. However, this is neither necessary nor sufficient for France to intend to retaliate. Government officials too have differences of opinion, though France does intend to retaliate. And even if all intend France to retaliate, it may fall short of official policy, for they may have taken no official stance, and so France does not, at least yet, intend to retaliate. Similar remarks apply to Toyota and the United Nations.

Perhaps France intends to retaliate if and only if (a) most relevant officials intend France to retaliate, and for that reason (b) they have implemented an official procedure that sets as government policy that France retaliate. While (b) seems a plausible requirement, (a) is not necessary. In principle, decision makers could use a decision procedure that reaches an official position that those implementing the procedure do not individually think is best. A decision may be determined by votes on a number of independent factors. In this case, it is possible for each voter to think not all of the needed considerations are in place, though a majority thinks so for each consideration (see (Pettit 2018)).

This leaves the thought that *France intends to retaliate* means that it is official policy of France, or the French government, to retaliate, a commitment on the part of the organization expressed in an official directive for relevant members to implement a plan for that purpose. The same approach works for belief (it is an official projection of Toyota that the new hybrid will dominate the market) and for wanting (it is an official UN goal to end human trafficking). But what would it mean to say that it is China's official position that China is angry about challenges to its sovereignty? Here it is rather that the official position is for China as a state to act as would be characteristic of behavior motivated by anger, that is, with vigorous aggression.

This points to a more general perspective. We often attribute corporate attitudes when it would be implausible to think that a corporate entity has the sorts of attitudes, we would attribute to individuals using the same attitude verbs. For example, it is implausible that China as such is capable of being angry, in the sense we are, for this requires it (as opposed to its citizens and officials) to have phenomenal states. And it is not plausible that when we *say* China is angry over challenges to its sovereignty, *we think* it is angry in the same sense that we get angry. Similarly, we might say that GM intends to paint its new headquarters *blue*. But GM is not capable of having visual experience. Insofar as having the concept of blue requires having visual experience, it does not have the concept of blue. Hence, it cannot intend in the sense we might to paint something blue, since it lacks the concept *blue*. Whatever we have in mind is not what we

have in mind when we attribute such attitudes to each other.[10] This indicates a shift in purpose of attitude vocabulary applied to organizations. Organizations are agents in the shallow sense that there are true action sentences about organizations. But excepting one person organizations (an individual, for example, who incorporates), organizations are not themselves individual agents. Rather, when an organization acts, some or all of its members act in their official roles as representatives of the organization (see (Ludwig 2017, chs. 4-5) for a semantics for organizational action sentences that vindicates this view). They carry out its purposes and policies. In virtue of this, we can keep track of the likely actions of the organization by using attitude sentences appropriate for projecting organizational behavior that is analogous to individual behavior. We thereby keep track of how its members act in concert in their official roles in the organization. The point for psychologism is that the correctness of organizational attitude attributions is determined by facts about the attitudes and activities of its members, what they do, believe, intend, and so on, though it requires seeing how these give rise to action commitments on the part of organizations to see how they underpin the attitude attribution.

9. The constitution of the atoms of social reality

Psychologism requires that the atoms and properties that the account appeals to be understood independently of their social context. This is captured, in part, by the requirement that an account of the social be given in terms of the psychological properties of individuals and their external relations. In this section, we consider three different relational views about the nature and properties of the social atoms. The first is physical externalism about thought contents. The second is social externalism about thought contents. Externalism about thought content, whether physical or social, is the view that (at least some of) our thought contents are relationally individuated. The very same individual, holding fixed the person's non-relational properties, could in different physical or social environments have different thought contents. The third is the idea that aspects of the natures of the individuals in a society are partially constituted by their social relations. I will argue that neither physical nor social externalism are threats to social-internal atomism, and that it is implausible that the natures of individuals in society are constituted by their social relations in any sense that would undermine social-internal atomism.

Physical Externalism

Physical externalism holds that thought contents are at least partially determined by the physical nature of the environment. There are two different motivations.

    The first derives from the thesis that many of the words which we use to keep track of things in our physical environments are intended to track the real essences of the things to which they are applied (Putnam 1975, Kripke 1980). Thus, 'gold' is used to keep track of the kind exemplified by (most of) the substances in our environment to which we apply it whose nature explains the more or less readily observable properties by which we identify them: a dense, soft, ductile, malleable, lustrous, dark yellowish incorruptible metal that dissolves in aqua regia. We

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[10] The claim here is not that groups as such cannot in principle have phenomenal states or psychological attitudes. Whether this is in principle possible depends on one's general theory of mind: functionalist, Interpretationist, or emergentist. All that is needed for present purposes is that corporate attitude attributions are not in practice held to the same standards as those we make to one another. This is what indicates a shift in the point, and truth conditions, of the attributions.

discover the kind by investigation: the element with atomic number 79. In effect, we farm out the meaning of the terms (in the sense of what contributes to truth conditions) to the environment. There is an observational stereotype we associate with the words, grasp of which is what counts as ordinary competence together with the understanding that the property the word attributes is not given by the stereotype but by the real essences of most of the things to which we apply it on that basis. The property these terms attribute is the one that determines the basic physical, chemical, biological, etc., kind which explains the stereotype exhibited by most instances to which we apply them. *If* the thoughts we express using sentences including such terms are correctly characterized by their meanings—even before we discover the natures of what they apply to—*then* those thoughts are individuated with respect to the actual natures of the stuffs in our environment. For we can imagine a world populated by our doppelgängers—molecular duplicates, with the same linguistic practices—in which the golden incorruptible metal to which 'gold' is applied is iron pyrite (Putnam 1975). Though they are nonrelational duplicates of us, on our assumption, their 'gold'-thoughts would have different truth conditions. We'll call this Natural Kind Externalism or NK-externalism.

The second motivation for physical externalism adopts the Interpretationist approach to understanding mental states (Davidson 1984, Dennett 1987). On this view, to have mental states is to exhibit patterns of behavior *in relation to one's environment* that can be interpreted as produced systematically by an evolving but largely stable and rational pattern of mostly veridical perceptual states and psychological attitudes. Since it is (or seems) in principle possible to vary the environment while keeping the nonrelational features of individuals the same so as to yield different interpretations, this approach also leads to the conclusion that thought contents are individuated relationally (see also (Burge 1986)).

The mere fact that thought contents are individuated in relation to our physical environments (granting for the sake of argument that this is true), does not threaten psychologism. For the crucial claim is just that starting with the psychological facts about individuals and their relations to other things characterized independently of social concepts, we can explain the social facts. That the psychological facts are in part fixed by relations to the environment would not affect the form of the explanation.

The fact that classical NK-externalism presupposes a language may suggest psychologism is incompatible with it. If psychologism must appeal to thoughts whose contents are fixed by a mechanism that presupposes language, it cannot provide a *complete* explanation for social facts. The solution is to deny the antecedent. Psychologism must explain how languages can arise from the psychological states of creatures without a language. The idea that things have an inner nature that explains their observable features presupposes the ability to think and talk about observable features. First languages would therefore include observational terms whose meanings would not be fixed by the environment in the fashion of natural kind terms. On this basis, natural kind terms can be introduced. (Perhaps all that is needed is that we have observational concepts, whether or not expressed first in a language.) These would generate reports of attitudes whose contents were relationally individuated. But if we explain the basic facts of language use, on the basis of which natural kind terms can be introduced, without presupposing possession of a language, then the project of explaining social facts on the basis ultimately of psychological states of individuals specified independently can still be successful.

Interpretationism as a basis for externalism does not raise the same difficulty unless one holds, as Davidson did (Davidson 2001), that one can display a rich enough pattern of behavior

to be interpretable only if one possesses a language. Very few people have followed Davidson in this, however, so we will set this aside here (see (Lepore and Ludwig 2005, ch. 22)).

Social Externalism

Social externalism holds that the contents of many of our thoughts are fixed by facts about our linguistic community (Burge 1979, Putnam 1975). There are two ways that this can occur.

First, we can introduce social kind terms that pick out explanatory kinds in our social environment and then employ these to characterize contents of attitudes we use those words to express. Potential examples are 'psychopath', 'racism', and 'hipster' (Khalidi 2015). The points of the previous discussion apply here.

Second, we can use words whose meanings are fixed by our linguistic community and which we do not fully grasp and treat those words with their meaning relative to the community's language as giving the contents of our thoughts. This entails that at least many our thoughts are individuated in part by facts about how words are used in our linguistic community. For example, if Alex asks what uramaki is, Emily may say, "Uramaki is a kind of sushi roll," even if she does not know exactly what 'uramaki' means or even misunderstands it. Suppose when Alex asks further what kind of roll, Emily says, "Uramaki has an outer wrap of seaweed." According to the present view, Emily believes that uramaki has an outer wrap of seaweed, where we understand the complement sentence as usual in English. This entails that Emily's belief is definitionally false, for maki has an outer wrap of seaweed, whereas uramaki has an outer wrap of rice. Fixing all her dispositions and non-relational states, we can imagine varying linguistic practices in her community so that 'uramaki' means what 'maki' actually does, and vice versa. In this case, the belief Emily expresses with 'Uramaki has an outer wrap of seaweed' would be true. Consequently, her belief contents can vary though her non-relation states do not. Thus, if this account of our attribution practices is correct, the contents of our thoughts depend on social facts that determine the meanings of words in our language(s).

Psychologism requires that there be facts about psychological states characterizable independently of social facts in terms of which we can explain the social. However, psychologism does not require that *all the facts* about psychological states be stateable independently of social facts. What it requires is that there be an adequate basis in psychological facts about individuals that does not presuppose social facts. Social externalism is not a threat provided that the practice that gives rise to attributing attitude contents by using the public content of the sentences that speakers use to express them can itself be explained on the basis of independent psychological facts about agents and speakers. Since the practice itself is clearly contingent, and since we can describe what people who use words they don't fully understand or misunderstand are thinking when they use them, we can be confident that social externalism does not itself present an obstacle to psychologism.

The Social Individuation of the Self

The third relational view of the nature of social atoms rests on the idea that we could not be the kinds of being we are except as members of society. Of course, insofar as we *are* social beings, this is obvious, but also uninteresting. It leaves open that we can understand what it is for us to be both members of a society and social beings at the same time in terms that don't presuppose that. The thesis is more substantive if we say that some of our distinctively human capacities for

thought, agency, rationality, and morality, or the distinctive nature of the self, which we must appeal to in explaining at least some social facts, depend upon our being members of a society (Nelson 2003, p. 33, Schechtman 1996, Macintyre 1984, pp. 99, 103, Taylor 1989). Even if one does not think that the capacity for thought per se is dependent on social relations, one might hold that some higher-level capacities for thought and reflection plausibly do depend upon language and integration into a social community, and that the capacity for moral reflection requires interactions with others whom one regards as objects of moral consideration.

We can easily grant that many of our capacities for thought and reflection and our capacity to see ourselves and others as moral agents and as selves (narrative selves) depends developmentally, and so causally, on integration into a social community. This is compatible with psychologism, for so far this is just a story about the conditions for social atoms to acquire the characteristics that they have. The ambitions of psychologism are met if we can get from a description of the psychological facts about individuals, whatever the causal grounds for them, to a complete account of social facts.

What if the dependence is not causal but constitutive? The clearest way to express this is to appeal to the idea of an internal relation. If two things stand in an internal relation, then neither is what it is except insofar as it stands in that relation to the other. For example, *being less than* is an internal relation between 1 and 5. *Being a member of* is an internal relation between me and my singleton set. Understanding the dependence of social atoms on other social atoms as constitutive in this way means that for any particular social atom, it cannot have certain capacities for thought, reflection, and morality except insofar there are other things to which it stands in social relations (see (Pettit 1993, ch. 4) and social narrative views of the self cited above).[11] The strongest form of this view would be that there must be things now to which the self qua social atom stands in social relations (the synchronic constitution view) to be what it is. A weaker view is that either there must be things now to which it stands in social relations *or* there must have been things to which it stood in social relations (the diachronic constitution view). These would undermine the ambitions of psychologism to give an exhaustive account of the social in non-social terms.

However, the synchronic constitution view seems implausible. If everyone but you died tonight, you would surely wake up with all your capacities intact to discover it, though there would be no one to whom you would then stand in any synchronic social relations. The diachronic constitution view seems only slightly less implausible. Bertrand Russell suggested it is compatible with all our evidence that the world began five minutes ago. While we may dispute whether this is compatible with our evidence, the puzzle only arises because we recognize it as a logical possibility that the world began five minutes ago and otherwise is like the world actually is. Combine this with our previous thought experiment. You wake up in the morning to discover everyone else has died. Then you ask yourself whether it is logically possible that the world began five minutes ago. It would be no less a logical possibility in that circumstance, but that

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[11] Pettit's argument rests on the thought, derived from Wittgenstein, that thinking requires applying rules (at least in thought) and that this requires the possibility of getting it wrong, but without interaction with other rule followers we can't make sense of this possibility. The argument depends on thinking that representation is to be understood in terms of a disposition characterized behaviorally, and the problem with the argument is that this assumption is false. In any case, it is a mystery, as many commentators have said, why appeal to a community solves the problem of rule following. Why can't the community be systematically wrong as well: whatever it counts as right is right, so the question of whether it is right or wrong doesn't come up.

would be a possible circumstance in which you had all your current capacities though you had never stood in social relations with anyone.

10. Psychologism and Supervenience

Psychologism about the social has been criticized on the grounds that even the weakest supervenience claim it is committed to—that there is no change in a social fact without a change in a psychological fact—is demonstrably false (Epstein 2009, 2015). The objection depends on the observation that we can intentionally set up conditions which do not involve social properties of any sort for something having a certain social status, e.g., membership in an organization, which may obtain without our knowing or believing or suspecting that they do. In that case, someone will have a certain status, which is a social fact, though we could imagine holding fixed everyone's psychological states and varying the non-social properties so that the person did not meet the condition. We illustrate this with an artificial example. We might say that everyone who was born on a day when an even number of stars go supernova is a nova-winner and entitled to a lifetime basic income from the state. It may be compatible with holding fixed everything in the light-cone[12] of life on earth that counterfactually different people may have had that status.

However, psychologism is *not* the thesis that no facts are relevant to the social facts except facts about the psychological states of individuals. If I own a house in the woods, and it burns down in a forest fire, then I no longer own a house in the woods, even if no one learns it burned down. So varying physical facts while not varying psychological facts can effect a change in social reality. It is safe to say no one ever thought this kind of change in social fact independently of change in psychological states was an objection to psychologism. This is because what makes the physical fact relevant to the social facts are facts about our psychological states. The point extends to the example of nova winners. For the physical facts beyond our ken that become relevant to individuals having social properties, in this case, are made relevant by our *intentional* actions. The explanation of why anyone would be a nova-winner is explained by a story about individuals, their intentions, and their actions and things that those intentions and actions make relevant to a classification. There is nothing here that cannot be exhaustively explained by appeal to individuals, their psychological states, their actions, and facts about the physical world made relevant by the actions and attitudes of individuals. The case of the nova winners does show that it would be a mistake for psychologism to restrict the supervenience base even to what takes place within the light cone of any society. For we can intentionally make some social facts depend on facts that are outside the light cone. But since the explanation for this goes through our intentional actions, it does not undermine the explanatory ambitions of psychologism, and it does not collapse simply into the claim that the social supervenes on the physical. For where the physical is relevant in this way, it is because of psychological facts about us and our actions.

11. Summary

This chapter has introduced and motivated psychologism. Psychologism is the thesis that social facts can be exhaustively explained in terms of non-social facts and that the non-social facts that

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[12] The light-cone for a given region of space-time defines a region within which events can be causally relevant to what goes on in the region. Events outside the light cone cannot be causally relevant to what goes on in the region.

are explanatorily basic are facts about the psychological states of individuals and actions the flow from them characterized independently of the social. We have sketched, though hardly completed, an account of the social in terms of individual psychological attitudes. We have considered and responded to a number of objections and concluded that psychologism can plausibly respond to them satisfactorily.

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