2022

Analyzing and Defining Collective Weakness of Will

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Acknowledgements

Before I start, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Randall Harp for his help on this thesis. Without his crucial contributions, edits, and patience, this thesis would not have been possible. I am also thankful to Professors Catalina Vizcarra and Tyler Doggett for their place in my committee and their overall support. I would also like to thank my friends for listening to my incessant ramblings about my thesis. Finally, I am grateful for my parents and their love and support from afar.

Abstract

In my thesis, I will attempt to define and analyze the concept of collective weakness of will. The idea of weakness of will, which is often called akrasia, is defined as acting against your better judgement. Most of the existing research on weakness of will is focused on the individual, but I'd like to explore it on a larger scale. Similar to the individual, groups sometimes seem to act intentionally against their better judgement. First, I will introduce the concept of collective weakness of will with practical examples in Section I. In Section II, I will present Philip Pettit's account of collective weakness of will and explain why it is imperfect. Although his account is important, I ultimately reject it. For this reason, I proceed to develop an alternate theory of collective weakness of will. This involves an analysis of the literature on weakness of will, found in Section III, and theories on collective attitudes and action, found in Section IV. I summarize these findings in Section V, along with a theory of collective weakness of will and return to the examples presented in the introduction.

I. Introduction

This thesis will attempt to analyze and define collective weakness of will. This phenomenon stems from weakness of will, which has been documented as a human experience for millennia. It was discussed in Aristotle's work, which is why it is also often called by the Greek term, akrasia. Weakness of will, or akrasia, is when a perfectly rational agent acts freely and intentionally against their better judgement. This phenomenon is interesting because agents typically act according to their judgements or beliefs. For example, a student judges they should finish their homework. Thus, they act accordingly and work on their homework until it is completed. Additionally, when faced with multiple options, the agent will still typically act on what they deem best. The student may have a choice between watching TV and doing homework, but since they judge homework as the better option, they opt to work on their homework. This situation makes logical sense and is how we typically consider actions. However, there are certain puzzling cases in which the agent acts against their better judgement. Perhaps the student again judged homework as the best thing to do, but instead found themselves sitting down in front of the TV and flipping through the channels. In this case, the agent watched TV despite thinking homework was the better choice. It is important to note the student wasn't threatened or compelled to act in this way. It was of the student's own volition that he decided to act against his better judgement. This is the phenomenon of weakness of will.

Philosophers have found a particular interest in weakness of will because it challenges our typical notion of an agent. We expect an agent's actions, at least when freely undertaken, to be in accordance with their judgements. Agents usually evaluate a situation, determine what would be best to do, and act accordingly. When agents' judgements don't correspond with their actions, it is usually due to something that intervened or a change in judgement. For example, an

agent may judge it is best to drive to work, but their car doesn't start. In this case, the car's malfunction deterred the agent from acting according to their best judgement. There was no mistake in the agent, it was merely an obstacle that was outside of the agent's control. Additionally, the agent may change their judgement based on new information. Perhaps the agent learns gas prices are exceptionally high, so they now judge it is best to walk to work instead of driving. The agent again acts against what they originally judged best, but this was because of new information. However, in the case of weakness of will, the agent's action is not interfered with, nor have they learned new information to sway their judgement. For example, the agent did not drive to work despite having reasons and the ability to drive. The agent purposefully and freely acts against their best judgement. In other words, they don't act according to judgement even though they could. This is why weakness of will is particularly interesting to the philosopher. It contradicts the typical descriptions of agents. Although deeply puzzling, this phenomenon is certainly witnessed in real life. Perfectly rational, reasonable people find themselves acting, freely and intentionally, contrary to what they deem best. Thus, the study of weakness of will can help uncover more about the nature of agents.

However, the discourse on weakness of will has been centered around the individual and mostly ignored group agents. Group agents, also dubbed collective agents, refers to when a group of people work together and act as a group. The members of the group will all participate in the group action and contribute to the group's agreed-upon goals. For example, a chorus who has the collective goal of singing a song. Each member of the group has a specific part, perhaps soprano or bass, that contributes to the goal. The group may also have plans and desires, such as practicing every day and wanting to sound good. These are all basic features of agents, which can be considered agents, similar to individual agents. This isn't the only group that can

potentially be considered an agent. But group agents could also be much smaller—for example, two people carrying a table would be a group agent. Although only composed of two people, the members have a shared goal and collaborate to achieve this goal. On a larger scale, one may consider an army troop to be an agent. The group as a whole seems to have collective intentions and goals that can only be met with coordination. If it is indeed the case that certain groups can be considered agents, it would also make sense for groups to experience weakness of will. Thus, weakness of will may not only be an individual phenomenon, but also collective. Studying weakness of will for group agents, like individual weakness of will, may tell us more about the nature of group agents.

Similar to weakness of will at the individual level, we witness what seems to be group akrasia in real life. Groups often declare goals that don't come to fruition, despite the group judging it as best and the group being capable of achieving the goal. The clearest way to know what a group judges best is through explicit agreements. For example, take the "Roommate Agreement" that is distributed to dorm students each year. This contract is distributed to students to confirm they will do their part to curate a healthy living environment. The roommates write down specific actions they will both take, such as cleaning the room regularly. By signing the agreements, the roommates indicate their willingness to contribute to the collective goal of creating a clean, healthy living environment. This goal requires the participation of all the roommates. However, the group may display a weakness of will if their shared living space becomes too messy. This shows the group has not acted on their best judgement, which was explicitly laid out in the agreement. This case is akin to weakness of will for the individual. Although the group as a whole expressed their judgement that cleaning is best, as expressed in the "Roommate Agreement," they failed to do so.

However, the agreement does not have to be a formal contract to still be explicit. Take two members of an organization, for example. One of their jobs is to post on social media. This action requires two agents because one person designs the posts and the other has the passwords to post them on social media. The agents meet to discuss how often they should post on social media, and together they determine they should post five times a week. They even write down over email, "we will post on social media five times a week." As seen here, although the agents didn't sign an official contract, there is still a clear agreement between the two. They designated a specific goal that can only be met with a contribution from both members. This agreement expresses their judgement about what is the best thing to do. They clearly judge posting on social media the best action. By the end of the week, however, the group members have failed to post on social media despite having the ability to do so. This would be a situation in which the group members acted in a weak-willed manner because they freely and deliberately acted against their better judgement. Although they expressed their judgement by agreeing to post, and they could post, they didn't. Thus, the group experienced weakness of will.

The group's agreement about what is judged best could be even less explicit. An example of this may be a group of students working on a project. Although there is no formal agreement or constitution, they share an interest and mutual goals, namely, to do well on their project. They may express their mutual goals through an informal exchange, such as saying to each other, "We should work on this project so we can do well," or, "I want all of us to do well on this project." Also, each group member needs to contribute for their project to go well, thus they resemble a group agent. As part of their plans, the students get a study room for one hour and collectively agree to work on their project for the entire hour. This agreement was founded on discussion, but no written down materials. Each member has a specific task that contributes to their goals.

Overall, the group intends to work on their project during the allotted study time. The alternative action the group can take is talking casually and hanging out. The group is free to choose either option. But the group judges working on their project as the best thing to do, all things considered. At the end of the hour, however, the group looks at the time and says, “oh no, we got very little work done.” The group’s consensus is that they did not work on their project, and they regret spending the time talking instead of working. Their regret shows the group acted contrary to what they judged as best. This case certainly corresponds with individual weakness of will. Like the individual student who watched TV despite believing homework was a better action, the study group talked despite believing working on their project was better. In both cases the agent, whether that be an individual or group, acted contrary to their best judgement.

A sports team is another example of a smaller group who does not have a formal, written down agreement but still functions as a group agent. The players need to work together to perform well in their games and it requires significant coordination. Although they never wrote down their goals, this sports team collectively judges it is best to work hard and practice frequently. An example may be the sports team judging it is best to wake up early for a practice because of their upcoming game. The players will help each other get up on time and put in effort while they’re at practice. The night before, they discuss and agree that waking up early is the best course of action. However, none of the team players show up the next morning. There were no unforeseen interventions, such as rain, that prevented the players from acting as they originally intended. Although the players were able to act according to their best judgement, they didn’t. This seems to be a case of collective weakness of will because the group did not go to the early morning practice despite judging it was the best thing to do. As seen with this example, a

formal agreement is not a requirement for the group to be considered an agent, and subsequently experience weakness of will.

A group's shared judgements can occasionally be inferred based on the group itself. Since the group is founded on certain ideals, their judgements inherently reflect that. Thus, one can assume what the group judges as best instead of requiring a specific agreement. An example of this could be the Green Party, a political organization specifically dedicated to promoting environmentalism and "green" policies. Since the group is founded on these ideals, it is inferred that the group judges it is best to advocate for environmental policies. There may not be an explicit agreement, but it is clear the group judges promoting green policies as best. It may be spelled out in the party's platform or other documents. The Green Party would thus be weak-willed if they do not effectively lobby for environmental policies despite having the ability to do so, for example. It is important to note that the Green Party would only be weak-willed if they were capable of lobbying, for example there are no financial barriers, but they failed to act as they judged best. Therefore, groups founded on certain ideals, such as the Green Party, may encounter instances of collective weakness of will.

However, groups can also be formed with an even weaker connection between the members. A group of strangers with no formal agreement, just a mutual understanding, may constitute an agent in certain situations. As long as the strangers work together in harmony and share beliefs about what is the best course of action, they could be considered group agents. An example of this would be a group of strangers helping victims of a car crash. A severe car crash requires multiple people with designated roles. One person would need to call emergency services, another needs to look after the victims, a third needs to make sure the oncoming traffic is aware of the crash, and other duties. Despite not knowing each other beforehand, strangers are

often inclined to work together and help in a situation such as this. The people all judge it is best to pull over and help with the car crash situation. However, if the car crash remains unattended despite the presence of onlookers who collectively judge helping as best, this may be weakness of will. Or perhaps the onlookers stop but do not take adequately helpful actions to manage the situation. It appears the group collectively judges helping the car crash victims as the best action but fails to act accordingly. Therefore, collective weakness of will is also observed in groups with little connection between members.

This type of group can also be seen on a much larger scale. An example of this is mitigating climate change in the U.S. According to Pew Research Center, two-thirds of U.S. citizens think the country should do more to combat climate change.[1] However, we see little to no actual change in policy. This may be a case of weakness of will. The group appears to be not acting on what they collectively view as best. Although the group has no explicit or written down forms of agreement, they do share beliefs. These beliefs can be confirmed through surveys, like the one conducted by Pew Research. Also, the group's goals require participation from every, or at least the vast majority, of members. These two factors seem to make the group function as an agent. Since the group's actions do not correspond with their shared judgement, it resembles a case of weakness of will.

As seen here, group weakness of will certainly seems to occur in real life situations. Like the individual agent, group agents find themselves acting against their better judgement. This phenomenon has not been adequately explored in philosophy. But these examples show collective weakness of will is a real phenomenon. Like individual weakness of will, it is certainly worth exploring because it challenges our typical view of agents. Usually, agents act according

[1] Cary Funk and Meg Hefferon, "US Public Views on Climate and Energy," *Pew Research Center*, Nov. 25, 2019

to their best judgements. We expect the same with group agents. When an agent exhibits weakness of will, however, they are freely and deliberately going against their better judgement and thus contradicting our typical view of agents. But the presence of weakness of will, even for group agents, is undeniable. Therefore, it is worth exploring group akrasia because it challenges our views on group agents. When exploring the topic of group agents, it's imperative to include collective weakness of will. Fully exploring the topic will not only give us a better understanding of what is occurring when groups act contrary to their best judgement but also a better understanding of group agents in general.

II. Philip Pettit on Group Akrasia

In Philip Pettit's article, titled "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," he discusses the necessary requirements for a group to be considered an agent capable of akrasia. In doing so, he analyzes and rejects three possible group agents before presenting a group agent capable of akrasia. He discusses what characteristics the first three group agents lack and the specific requirements for a group agent capable of akrasia. He also explains what occurs when the group agent acts akratically. Once he argues this group is capable of akrasia, he proceeds to explain what steps can be taken to practice self-control and prevent akrasia. Finally, he discusses important lessons that can be learned about individual akrasia from his account of group akrasia. Overall, Pettit's article provides a thorough account of group-level akrasia and what characteristics a group needs in order to be considered an akratic agent.

Before delving into group agents, Pettit first defines akrasia, which may also be called weakness of will. The agent in question holds intentional states, such as beliefs, desires, judgements, or intentions, that require a specific response. However, the agent fails to act

accordingly. What is particularly interesting about akrasia is that the circumstances are normal. There is no agent malfunction or external pressures. Nevertheless, the agent fails to act as they intend.[2] An example of akrasia on the individual level may be a student who intends to do homework, but they find themselves watching television instead. In this case, there was nothing preventing the student from doing their homework. She got a full night of sleep, she had access to all the materials, and she had ample time. But the student still finds herself acting against her judgement and watching television instead. Simply, the circumstances were normal; the failure was not due to internal malfunctions or external changes. This is the extent of the definition Pettit gives in this article, he does not attempt to discuss the nuances of the akrasia phenomenon here. The group agent Pettit develops in his article displays akrasia as he defines it.

Before establishing a group capable of akrasia, Pettit looks at three possible group agents that are incapable of akrasia on his view. A group can be considered an agent when it forms attitudes such as beliefs, desires, judgements, and intentions and acts on them. Only the group that satisfies the most elaborate, demanding account of agency is capable of akrasia. The first group Pettit considers is what he calls "collections." A collection is a group of people whose only commonality is their similar intentional properties.[3] Pettit claims this view was suggested by Anthony Quinton in 1975. In this account of group agents, individuals are only randomly related by similar beliefs, desires, or judgements. This colloquially may be called a group of like-minded individuals. For example, a group of people across the country with different backgrounds and political beliefs all believe the turkey should be the national bird. According to this view, these turkey-endorsing individuals form a collection. However, Pettit points out that

[2] Philip Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," in *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality*, ed. Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 69
[3] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 70

similar intentional properties is too general of a requirement. Since anyone could feasibly hold this belief, there is a large chance members of the group have other conflicting attitudes. Additionally, there is no real connection or coordination between the members, rendering the group inactive. Thus, the collection does not meet the requirements of an agent.[4] The group does not have cohesive attitudes and they do not act on these attitudes. Since the group does not constitute an agent, it is incapable of akrasia.

The next group Pettit ultimately rejects are "cooperatives." He derives this account of group agency from philosophers Gilbert, Searle, Tuomela, and Bratman. It serves as a slight improvement from the "collections" theory.[5] On this view, the group does not have one shared group intentional attitude, instead the members have corresponding individual attitudes. However, this is not the only requirement. The group members must also cooperate to bring group attitudes into existence. They must form intentions about intended actions and reveal these intentions to each other. Last, the group must adopt measures to bring their intentions to fruition. The cooperative essentially needs to share a mutual intention and act in a coordinated way to fulfill these intentions. According to Pettit, joint intentions come to fruition through common beliefs. This could be spontaneous, for example two people have the belief they should go for a walk, so they have the shared intention to walk, and they do. Joint intentions could also form through procedures, for example an editorial board votes on which story should be printed on the front page. The voting process will determine what the majority shared belief is, thus determining the shared intention, and the editors will print the story. The "cooperative" is a step up from "collections" because the group has an intention and acts on it, instead of merely a compilation of common attitudes.

[4] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 70
[5] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 71

However, Pettit asserts "cooperatives" are incapable of akrasia. This is because the groups often fail to display *rational unity*, which is required of an agent. Pettit defines rational unity as when a group preserves and forms intentional attitudes in a rationally consistent manner.[6] To illustrate an agent being rationally consistent, consider a person who believes *p*. If this person learns "if *p* then *q*," then it would be logically sound for them to conclude *q* is true. Similarly, if they learn *x*-ing can bring about *p*, they reasonably want to pursue *x*-ing. The conclusions "*q* is true" and "I should do *x*-ing" are rationally consistent because they logically conform to the person's beliefs. Conversely, if the person learns "if *p* then *q*" and rejects *q*, this would be irrational; it does not logically follow that *q* is false in this statement. This rational type of thought process must be present in the group to display rational unity. In the cooperative group, the members determine their joint intentions through common beliefs. However, the group must ensure these beliefs match up or conform in a rationally consistent manner. If they do not, the group fails to have rational unity, and thus cannot be considered a true agent.

The "cooperative" group often operates in a way that fails to achieve rational unity, according to Pettit. These groups "will allow the formation of judgements and intentions that fail to cohere with one another as a whole."[7] In order to illustrate this possibility, Pettit asks the reader to consider a group attempting to make decisions about a set of rationally connected issues. Consider the people in this group A, B, and C and the connected propositions *p*, if *p* then *q*, and *q*. The three people cast their own logically consistent answers, but it may differ between them and result in a majority decision that is illogical. For example, A could accept *p*, reject if *p* then *q*, and reject *p*. Meanwhile, B can reject both *p* and *q*, while logically accepting if *p* then *q*. Last, C could accept all three premises. Each member cast individually rationally consistent

[6] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Indivudal" 73
[7] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Indivudal" 73

decisions, as seen here. However, aggregating the votes results in an inconsistent answer. Based on the majority, the group accepts *p*, accepts if *p* then *q*, and rejects *q*. This makes no logical sense. The group has thus committed themselves to a rationally inconsistent view. Pettit dubs this issue the "discursive dilemma."[8] This occurs when individuals are perfectly consistent, yet the majority supports a set of incoherent judgements. The existence of the discursive dilemma shows us that even if the individuals are rational, well-informed, and free to vote, the group may display rational disunity. The existence of irrational intentions undermines the group as an agent. Pettit claims this leads to the conclusion that "cooperatives" do not constitute an agent, and thus, cannot act akratically.

The third and final group agent Pettit rejects is called the "unified cooperative." The group resembles a "cooperative," but it manages to unify their beliefs to form a rational intention.[9] Pettit asserts this group unifies their thoughts in a mechanical manner. He compares this mechanical mechanism to an animal, such as a dog. They form attitudes, act on them, update their attitudes accordingly, and satisfy the consistency requirement. For example, the dog can be hungry, so they bark at their owner. However, the process is mechanical because the dog is never aware of the rationality behind the thought process. The dog can only understand so much. This is what occurs in the "unified cooperative." The group can unify their intentions, but it never becomes aware of rationalities. Pettit admits this group is rare, perhaps even nonexistent. But he still considers, and rejects, the possibility.

Pettit argues if this group does display akrasia, failing to act even if conditions are normal, it would undermine the group's status as an agent. Since the group forms their intentions in a purely mechanical manner, they cannot recognize the irrationality that occurred when they

[8] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 74
[9] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 76

did not act appropriately. The group must not be an intentional agent because their intentions were not formed based on rationale. Upon reflection, this conclusion makes sense, for we most often do not consider animals as capable of akrasia. Pettit writes, "anything that might be taken as evidence of akrasia in such an animal will tend to undermine our confidence that it is an intentional system."[10] In other words, an act that resembles akrasia in an animal brings their status as an agent into question. The same applies to the "unified cooperative." In sum, the "unified cooperative" is incapable of akrasia because they cannot recognize rationality when achieving unity, so they must not constitute an intentional agent.

After rejecting three possible group agents, Pettit presents a group that counts as an agent in its own right and is capable of akrasia. This group, called the "integrated group," has qualities that were lacking in the groups incapable of akrasia. Pettit took these faults into account when developing the "integrated group." There are two main requirements for this group. First, the cooperative requirement states the group must be able to form states fit for the role of intentional attitudes such as judgements and intentions. Second, the self-unifying requirement says the group must unify these states, and the group's behavior, in a rational manner. These requirements most likely sound familiar; they were discussed in the previous groups. Pettit proceeds to describe how the integrated group operates. Similar to the previous groups, the "integrated group" has common purposes due to the members' common beliefs. They also face a variety of issues to be resolved in order to achieve the group's purpose. These issues are resolved through majority voting. However, this is where the group starts to differ from the previous cases. Unlike the cooperatives, the integrated group takes steps to guard against rational disunity and only endorses views that are rationally integrated. The group will be sensitive to the requirements for

[10] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 77

rational unity, and act accordingly. In sum, Pettit states, "the group envisaged will have an intentionally unified vision of the world and will generally act as that vision requires."[11] This group differs from the previous group because it recognizes the constraints associated with being rational and they adjust to accommodate these constraints. This group can be found in real life, Pettit asserts, such as public bodies, business organizations, or enterprises.

Pettit defends his claim that the integrated group is capable of akrasia by arguing the group does not face the same problems as the cooperative. Unlike the cooperative, when the integrated group fails to achieve rational unity, it does *not* undermine their status as an agent. This is because the integrated group proves itself capable of agency by recognizing and denouncing rational disunity.[12] What sets the integrated group apart is their ability to remedy the situation. When the integrated group disavows their akratic action, they are showing the behavior does not reflect its intentional states. The cooperatives, on the other hand, do not have the same capabilities and thus cannot be considered agents.

After describing the integrated group, Pettit proceeds to explain how akrasia occurs in the integrated group and why it makes sense. The akratic action occurs when there is a failure of coordination, which prevents the group from achieving what they intend. This may be due to one, or a few, recalcitrant votes, or the integrated group may run into the discursive dilemma, as Pettit discussed previously. Even if the group is under normal circumstances, debates fully and rationally, and take a majority vote on every issue, they still may run into this failure. Now the group must decide whether to reject the majority view or face irrationality. In the case of the integrated group, the discursive dilemma constitutes an akratic action. However, this is perfectly

[11] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 79
[12] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 81

intelligible because the integrated group can recognize the failure and change it for the future. Thus, the group can be considered an agent while acting akratically.

Pettit uses an example of an editorial board to illustrate how an akratic action may occur in an integrated group.[13] This editorial board consists of three members with equal standing who resolves their issues through a majority vote. In this case, the group is operating under normal circumstances. The members are called to vote yea or nay on three issues: a price freeze, submitting for external review, or including technical papers. To be logically consistent, the group must only vote yea on two of the issues. In other words, the group is incapable of performing two actions, so the group can only vote yea on two of the three options. However, even if the individual group members cast logically consistent votes, the overall vote may be illogical. Perhaps person A votes yea for the price freeze and technical papers, person B votes yea for the external review and technical papers, and person C votes yea for the price freeze and external review. As seen here, each member voted according to logic because they only voted for two of the three options. However, each option has a majority vote, which means the group holds the view that they should perform all three actions, although this is impossible. Therefore, the group, although functioning normally, arrives at a logically inconsistent view. According to Pettit, this is an example of group akrasia.

Overall, Pettit argues only the group possessing the richest requirements of agency are capable of akrasia. He considers and rejects three possible groups before concluding the only group capable of akrasia is the integrated group. This group is formed on the basis of common beliefs, integrates their attitudes into a collective intention through rational voting, and is able to recognize potential irrationalities and implement methods to prevent failures. The group

[13] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 83

experiences akrasia when they attempt to vote on a decision, but it results in a logically inconsistent view.

Although Pettit's view is compelling and provides a good base for group agents, it is not flawless. His account of group akrasia does not seem to capture what we usually view as weakness of will. Pettit, along with other philosophers, characterizes akrasia as when an agent acts contrary to their intentional state.[14] The agent's intentional state may consist of judgements, beliefs, desires, or intentions. In the case of weakness of will, there was nothing abnormal about the circumstances. But the agent still acted contrary to what they decided was best. For example, an agent may judge it best to do their homework. Despite being capable of doing their homework, the agent watches TV instead. This definition of weakness of will conflicts with Pettit's description of group akrasia for the integrated group. He seems to be more concerned with the formation of joint intentions and possible theoretical inconsistencies. The discursive dilemma, which plays a crucial role in his argument, addresses aggregating judgements and how the group connects their individual intentions. However, his account does not adequately capture what occurs when a group acts in a weak-willed manner. In other words, he focuses on how the group forms their intentional states, such as judgements and beliefs. But Pettit is missing the other aspect of weakness of will, which is the agent's action. He does not discuss the group's actions and how they may conflict with the group's intentional states, despite the crucial role they play in weakness of will. Therefore, although interesting in its own right, Pettit's account does not capture the phenomenon we are concerned with when we discuss weakness of will.

To illustrate this point, let us reflect on the example of the editorial board. The characterization of weakness of will tells us the agent experiences akrasia when they act contrary

[14] Pettit, "Akrasia, Collective and Individual," 69

to what they deem best. However, this does not align with the example Pettit gave when he described the editorial board's group akrasia. Pettit discussed the group's failure to arrive at a cohesive vote. His description involved how the editorial board's vote may not be logically consistent. He never dwelled on the agent's actions or whether they conflicted with the agent's intentional states. A better description of group akrasia would be if editorial board's intentions about what they should do conflicted with their actions. Perhaps the editorial board determined it would be best to implement a price freeze. The board is capable of implementing a freeze and they have every intention to do so. But the editorial board ultimately applies for an external review instead, driving their prices up. This example is a better fit with the definition of weakness of will because the agent failed to freeze their prices despite judging it best. As seen here, Pettit does not tell the entire story of weakness of will in his account of group akrasia. Therefore, although his account is interesting and important, it does not completely capture the phenomenon of weakness of will. More exploration is needed to determine a clear account of weakness of will.

Additionally, Pettit claims the main difference between the cooperative group and the integrated group is the ability to recognize and remedy irrationalities. However, it is unclear why the cooperative does not have this ability. Both groups consist of perfectly rational members with converging beliefs. Additionally, both groups merge their beliefs to form joint intentions through majority voting and act on these intentions. The only difference is the integrated groups' reflection and ability to recognize rational inconsistencies. But it is ambiguous why the cooperative doesn't have this ability, especially considering every other aspect of the group is similar. The cooperative group is based on literature from other philosophers such as Bratman, Gilbert, Searle, Tuomela, and Miller. Further exploration is needed to decipher the difference

between the cooperative and the integrated group. It seems at least some of these philosophers have the resources needed to allow groups to recognize rational inconsistencies; I will discuss this at further length in the third section. This will help more clearly define the group agent capable of akrasia.

To conclude, in Pettit's article, he defines and analyzes a group capable of committing akrasia. This group, dubbed the integrated group, forms joint intentions based on common beliefs and generally acts as the intention requires. Pettit claims the group commits akrasia when they fail to combine their ideas to form a rationally consistent joint intention. However, this failure does not undermine their status as an agent because they can recognize and remedy the inconsistency. Although this conception of group agency is important, it is not perfect. Pettit does not clearly define the qualities that separate group agents as defined by other philosophers from the integrated group. The largest flaw in Pettit's view, however, is that he doesn't seem to adequately capture the phenomenon of weakness of will. He focuses on the group's ability to unify their beliefs into a cohesive, rational judgement. But he fails to recognize whether the group is acting contrary to their judgement, which is essential for weakness of will.

III. Analyzing accounts of weakness of will

Although Philip Pettit provided good insights into group agency, he does not completely capture the phenomenon of weakness of will. Pettit is primarily concerned with the group's ability to coordinate their votes and arrive at a logical decision. But he does not discuss whether or not the group agent's action conflicts with their judgements. In order to obtain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of weakness of will, it is imperative to analyze other accounts

of weakness of will. Inspecting these philosopher's works will provide a better explanation of weakness of will to make up for what Pettit lacks.

To obtain a fuller account of group akrasia, we must first define weakness of will at the individual level. This section will briefly look at the works of philosophers Aristotle, Donald Davidson, Michael Bratman, and Frank Jackson. These philosophers study weakness of will at an individual level instead of a group. But they convey the necessary components of weakness of will which is helpful for exploring the weakness of will phenomenon on a group level. These philosophers all give varying accounts of how weakness of will arises, but they all follow the same basic schema. They define weakness of will as when a person acts contrary to his better judgement. An agent is weak willed when they know it is best to do their homework instead of watching TV, but they find themselves watching TV anyway. Also, the person freely chooses to act, he is not hindered by anything outside his control. For example, he does not have an addiction to TV or he doesn't know he has homework.

The weakness of will schema has two main parts: mental states or processes and actions. The akratic person has mental states or processes, such as practical reasoning or judgements, that allow him to realize one action is better than another. According to these mental states or processes, he concludes he should do action *a*, such as doing their homework, instead of action *b*, watching TV. However, the akratic individual acts contrary to their best judgement. This is the second aspect of weakness of will, an action. The person does action *b*, even though he believes *a* to be better. Therefore, akrasia essentially includes contradicting mental states or processes and an action. All the philosophers we will explore believe akratic actions are fully real and happen to perfectly capable people. Each philosopher attempts to reconcile the puzzle of weakness of will—why does the action contradict the mental state? But for our study on weakness of will, we

will not focus on these explanations. Instead, it is important to gather an understanding of weakness of will at an individual level so it can be applied to groups.

One of the first philosophers to define and analyze weakness of will was Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7.[15] He presents akratic actions as one of three bad states of character, along with vice and brutishness. Socrates, who came before him, asserted akratic actions merely arise through ignorance. In other words, he didn't believe akratic actions were authentic; he thought people only acted akratically when they didn't know all the information about what the better choice was. However, Aristotle said it is "plainly evident" that the akratic person knows it isn't the best course of action before he acts. These actions are observed in real life; thus, Socrates must be wrong. Like modern philosophers, Aristotle struggled with the akratic action puzzle. How could a perfectly knowledgeable, practical person act against his better judgement? Aristotle presented four ways people could act akratically. First, the person may know what is wrong but doesn't fully reflect on it so he acts without thinking. Second, the person may make a false inference, causing him to act contrary to what he believes is best. Third, he may be emotionally excited, which prevents him from thinking clearly. Fourth, desires may cloud his judgement and make him act hastily or without careful reasoning. In all four of these explanations, there is a common thread. Aristotle clearly believes akratic actions involve certain mental states or processes that lead the person to act. The person must be aware of what he deems best, but for some reason, acts contrary to this judgement. In sum, Aristotle's account of weakness of will includes a person who is not ignorant, who has perfectly capable mental states, and an action that the akratic person takes. This account of weakness of will served as a base for the succeeding accounts. Modern philosophers followed in Aristotle's footsteps, which is evident

[15] Aristotle, W.D. Ross, and Lesley Brown, "Book 7," *The Nichomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2009

in their accounts of weakness of will. They also assert akratic actions involve mental states or processes and contradicting actions.

In 1969, Donald Davidson also presented an influential article, titled "How is Weakness of the Will Possible?" It opened the door for many philosophers to discuss the topic and provided the building blocks of weakness of will. The article set out to argue weakness of will is possible and presented a novel analysis of akratic actions. Davidson does this within the bounds of general views of practical reasoning and intentional action. To start, he outlines a clear definition of weakness of will, which doesn't differ significantly from Aristotle. Davidson states akratic actions occur when an agent acts intentionally counter to his best judgement. He writes, "If a man holds some course of action to be the best one, everything considered, or the right one, or the thing he ought to do, and yet does something else, he acts incontinently." [16] In other words, an akratic action is when someone acts contrary to their better judgement.

Davidson also specifies three criteria for akratic actions. First, the action (x) must be intentional. Second, the agent must believe there is a different action (y) he could choose. Third, the agent judges it would be best, all things considered, to do the alternative action (y) instead of the action he does do (x). Davidson asserts there seem to be incontinent actions that meet these criteria in real life.[17] For example, a person may know it is best not to buy an expensive item, but they find themselves buying it anyway. However, the existence of these actions is inconsistent with the commonly held conception of intentional actions. This conception follows the natural assumption that people will intentionally act in light of what he judges best. Davidson presents two principles to illustrate his point.

[16] Donald Davidson, "How is Weakness of Will Possible?" in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21.
[17] Davidson, "How is Weakness of Will Possible?" 22

P1: If an agent wants to do *x* more than he wants to do *y* and he believes himself free to do either *x* or *y*, then he will intentionally do *x* if he does either *x* or *y* intentionally.

P2: If an agent judges that it would be better to do *x* than to do *y*, then he wants to do *x* more than he wants to do *y*. [18]

As seen here, the first principle expresses the relation between wanting and action. The second connects judging better with motivation or wanting. Taken together, they seem to falsify the existence of akratic actions, for it would be incoherent for an agent to *intentionally* act against what he judges best or wants more. However, Davidson takes both principles and the existence of incontinent actions as "self-evident." Thus, he spends the article proving why akratic actions do not contradict the two principles.

Davidson ultimately concludes akratic actions are logically coherent, even when P1 and P2 are taken as true. He arrives at this conclusion by analyzing the term "all things considered," which is used to describe akratic actions. An agent is weak willed when he acts against his better judgement, *all things considered.* Davidson points out that "all things considered," or "*prima facie*" as he calls it, is merely conditional, not unconditional. In other words, all things considered really means considering only a few related propositions. It involves considering a few reasons for action, but not every single reason for action. This is an important distinction for analyzing practical reasoning. A typical agent practicing practical reasoning does not arrive at an *unconditional* judgement that one action is better than the other. Instead, the agent accepts a set of reasons that help him judge one action is better than the other. For example, take an agent that is deciding between eating broccoli or a slice of cake. The agent may conclude eating the slice of cake is better, *all things considered*, because it tastes better. In this case, the agent has evaluated

[18] Davidson, "How is Weakness of Will Possible?" 23

a set of reasons pertaining to taste in order to conclude she should act in a certain way. However, this conclusion does not represent her overall judgement. When every single reason is taken into account, such as health, she might judge broccoli is better than a slice of cake. These two conclusions, which will be dubbed the "*prima facie* conclusion" and the "overall conclusion" are both logical. Both use reason to form a logical conclusion. Acting on either of these conclusions would be consistent with the principles Davidson outlined above. The agent acts intentionally and her reason for acting was identical with the reason why she judges that action better than the alternative.

When an akratic action occurs it's because the akratic person is acting on a *prima facie* conclusion, not the overall conclusion. The person is still acting logically—they're eating the cake because it tastes better than the broccoli—but it does not correspond with their overall judgement. In other words, it's still logically consistent because the agent is still acting on reason, which is consistent with the two principles of intentional actions. Thus far, Davidson has shown that akratic actions are logically coherent with the principles of intentional action. However, there still seems to be something amiss about incontinent actions. He writes, "What is wrong is that the incontinent man acts, and judges, irrationally, for this is surely what we must say of a man who goes against his own best judgement."[19] Davidson posits the incontinent action, albeit plausible, is irrational. Although the agent has reason for acting, and is consistent with P1 and P2, these reasons aren't sufficient. In light of all the reasons for action, he should do something else. The agent acts irrationally because there are better, overriding reasons to act differently, which he did not take into consideration when acting intentionally. Thus, incontinent actions are logically possible but irrational in nature. What is particularly interesting about

[19] Davidson, "How is Weakness of Will Possible?" 41

incontinent actions, Davidson asserts, is that the agent recognizes this failure; "he recognizes, in his own intentional behavior, something essentially surd." [20]

Davidson's account of akratic actions is important to the study of weakness of will. He vindicated the possibility of weak-willed actions and explained how they are logically coherent. This spurred discussion on how akratic actions occur. Despite the differing accounts of how weak-willed actions form in the individual, the philosophers' accounts have basic similarities. The successive philosophers, including Michael Bratman and Frank Jackson, came to a consensus of what is involved in weak-willed actions. Their criteria for weak-willed actions mirror Davidson's, which was outlined above. Although they may disagree on the specifics of what causes weakness of will, they agree that the phenomenon involves mental states, such as beliefs or judgements, and an action.

In his article, "Practical Reasoning and Weakness of Will," Michael Bratman takes a similar approach to Davidson on the weakness of will phenomenon. He defines weak-willed actions, and it follows Aristotle and Davidson's definitions. He writes, "In the case of weak-willed actions the agent acts—freely, deliberately, and for a reason—in a way contrary to his best judgement, even though he thinks he could act in accordance with his best judgement." [21] As seen here, Bratman's account of weak-willed actions follows the same basic schema as the other philosophers. The agent has certain mental states that cause him to judge one action better than another, but he acts contrary to this belief. His account differs in his analysis of these mental states and how he thinks akratic actions occur.

Bratman asserts intentional actions, or as he calls them "full-blown actions," correspond to practical reasoning. For example, perhaps an agent is deciding between eating a slice of cake

[20] Davidson, "How is Weakness of Will Possible?" 42
[21] Michael E. Bratman, "Practical Reasoning and Weakness of the Will," *Noûs* 13, no. 2 (1979), 153

or a plate of broccoli as a snack. The agent will consider reasons from both sides; cake is certainly more delicious, but broccoli is healthier. Based on these arguments, the agent arrives at a conclusion and acts on it, for example broccoli is better and so the agent eats the broccoli. In this case the agent acted deliberately and with reason. If the agent was presented with additional evidence, it would change their conclusion and subsequently their action. However akratic actions are seemingly incompatible with Bratman's explanation of "full blown actions." In the case of weak-willed actions, the agent acts contrary to what they determined best. Similar to Davidson and Aristotle, Bratman grapples with the puzzle of akrasia. He attempts to resolve the issue in his article, but more importantly he has given a clear definition of weakness of will. As seen here, Bratman's account of weakness of will involves certain mental states or processes, specifically practical reasoning, and an action that was contrary to their conclusion.

Davidson and Bratman's accounts of weakness of will are similar, but this isn't the only way to approach the problem. Frank Jackson, in his article "Weakness of Will," poses an alternative explanation for what causes the phenomenon. He focuses on situations where bodily feelings, such as appetite, hunger, or craving, play an "unduly significant role" in causing action.[22] He specifies "unduly" because not every circumstance when someone acts on their bodily feelings should be considered akratic actions. If someone is thirsty and subsequently drinks water, this is not deemed akratic. But the problem arises when an agent judges an action should not be done, but intentionally acts anyway because of bodily influences.

Akratic actions, Jackson claims, arise from wants and desires that have not evolved according to the agent's reason. These feelings, specifically cravings and appetite, will overcome the agent and cause them to act contrary to their reasons.[23] Take the example of the dieter. This

[22] Frank Jackson, "Weakness of Will," *Mind*, New Series, 93, no. 369 (1984), 2
[23] Frank Jackson, "Weakness of Will," 17

agent knows cake is unhealthy, thus they want to avoid eating cake. Normally, this want will case the intentional action of not eating the cake. However, when the agent is hungry or has a craving for sugar, this may affect their desire and subsequently their intentional action. The dieter acts akratically when their desires, like hunger, push them to act against reason. Jackson writes, "Before the onset of appetite, passion, craving yearning or whatever, [the agent] does not want to smoke, eat, drink, make love, or whatever. After the onset, he does; and does."[24] In sum, Jackson argues akratic actions stem from undue feelings that overcome reason and push the agent to act counter to his best judgement. Although Jackson's account differs from Bratman and Davidson on how weak-willed actions are caused, there are still important similarities that speak to the nature of weakness of will. Similarly, Jackson argues weak-willed actions require mental states that determine one action better than the other. It also includes an action that contradicts the better judgement.

After analyzing these brief overviews of different philosopher's accounts of the weakness of will phenomenon, there is evidently a consensus. The philosophers assert weakness of will fundamentally involves two main aspects. This includes a certain mental state that the agent holds and a subsequent action the agent takes. The "mental state" aspect of the phenomenon takes different forms, depending on the philosopher. According to Davidson and Bratman, this involves judgements or reasons in which one action is determined better than the other. Although Jackson's explanation of weak-willed actions is focused on bodily feelings, it also requires the agent has reasons for action. He claims weak-willed actions occur when bodily feelings do not evolve to the agent's reasons, thus mental states are essential for his account as well. Overall, each philosopher asserts the weakness of will phenomenon requires the agent to hold certain

[24] Frank Jackson, "Weakness of Will," 17

mental states that deem one action better. Additionally, in each account the agent reflects on his weak-willed action and has regret. A weak-willed action thus requires the agent to be capable of recognizing the course of action as best. Again, this may take different shapes depending on the philosopher. Regardless, these mental states involve some sort of reasoning or desire that allow the agent to judge one action as better than the other.

The second essential component of the weakness of will phenomenon is action. According to each account, the agent must *act* in a certain way in order for the phenomenon to occur. The agent cannot merely consider a course of action or fail to do anything. For example, an agent is weak-willed if he eats a slice of cake even though he intended otherwise. But the agent is *not* weak-willed if they merely considered eating the cake. The weakness of will phenomenon necessarily involves an action.

Actions involved in weakness of will are limited to a certain type of action, namely ones that are within the agent's control. For weak willed actions in particular, the action needs to be undertaken freely and deliberately. In other words, the agent was not forced or coerced into taking the action, nor were there any outside interference. The agent chose this particular action.[25] For example, if an agent judges it best to drive to work but their car broke down, this would not be an instance of weakness of will. This is because the agent did not choose to act contrary to their best judgement. Instead, the car broke down, making it impossible, or at least significantly harder, for the agent to drive to work. Conversely, it *would* be weak-willed if the agent's car worked perfectly fine, yet the agent walked, despite judging it best to drive. This is considered a display of weakness of will because the agent had the power to choose to act contrary to their best judgement. The difference between these two cases concerns what is within

[25] Frank Jackson, "Weakness of Will," 4

the agent's control. In the first case, the agent didn't have the choice to drive, he was essentially forced to act contrary to his best judgement. Weakness of will occurs when it is within the agent's control, but he still acts against his better judgement.

However, there seem to be cases where the agent arguably has control, but it doesn't constitute a case of weakness of will. An example of this would be a nicotine addict. This agent judges it best to not smoke, but when he is presented with a cigarette, he can't help but smoke the cigarette. The agent arguably had control over the situation. Unlike the broken-down car, the agent was still able to choose whether or not to act. The agent had the power to decide, there was nothing forcing him to act. However, due to his addiction, we are inclined to say this is *not* a case of weakness of will. This shows we need to be more careful with our definition of weak-willed actions. It would be more precise to say the action must be undertaken freely and without constraint. The nicotine addict, for example, had the power to choose between smoking and not, but he was constrained by the effects of his addiction. Similarly, the agent who walked instead of drove was not free to choose either option. When analyzing weakness of will, it is important to note that the actions must be taken by the agent freely and without constraint.

Many of the cases we encounter in real life are long-term or extended actions that face a multitude of obstacles. There are many factors that influence these extended actions, so it's often difficult to determine if they should be defined as weakness of will. Due to the plethora of influences, it often does not appear that the agent is free to act, thus extended actions are usually not weakness of will. An example of a potential weak-willed extended action is an agent who judged it best to graduate on time but ended up graduating a semester late. Although the agent acted contrary to their best judgement, we cannot simply say this was a case of weakness of will. There are many factors that could have prevented the agent from acting freely. For instance,

perhaps the agent was unable to take a required class because it was not available until a later semester. Or maybe the agent needed to take a leave of absence. Due to moving parts such as these, it's difficult to evaluate extended actions in terms of weakness of will.

A solution to this could be breaking down these extended actions into the smaller decisions that lead to the long-term action. These decisions can be examined to see if they are cases of weakness of will, which will help determine the nature of the extended action. For example, registering for classes is one of the smaller actions that contributed to the extended action of graduating on time. If the agent had the option to sign up for the classes they needed and judged it best to sign up for these classes but didn't, this would be an example of weakness of will. The nature of the overall extended action can be determined through the smaller decisions as such. If all of the smaller decisions were weak-willed, one could then conclude the extended action was weak-willed. Overall, examining weakness of will works best for smaller actions that contribute to an extended action.

However, one may argue that weakness of will should be understood in a completely different way. This view may assert that weakness of will is due to inconsistent preferences over time. Their short-term preferences simply do not align with their long-term preference. The student, for instance, has the short-term desire to watch TV and the long-term desire to do their homework, but they need to choose one. Since the short-term desire is more persuasive in the present than the long-term desire, the student will decide to watch TV. Once this desire has been fulfilled, they still hold the preference to do their homework. On this view, weakness of will is not irrational because the agent is always acting to maximize their preference. The problem merely arises when the preference timelines are inconsistent. However, this alternate view does not seem to encapsulate the true phenomenon of weakness of will. When an agent is weak-

willed, they judge an action as best in the moment. The student will continue to judge doing their homework as best despite watching TV. As they watch TV, they think to themselves, "I should be doing my homework right now." This type of inconsistency is not implausible, as humans experience this frequently. A person may tell themselves, "I should go to bed," but continue reading a book. This is not a case of inconsistent preference timeline because they do not deem reading a book as best. Therefore, one may argue that weakness of will should be understood in terms of preference timeline, but it does not capture what agents actually experience during weakness of will.

To conclude, an analysis of different accounts of the weakness of will phenomenon reveals commonalities. Although these philosophers have different accounts of what causes an incontinent action to arise, the components of the phenomenon—mental states or processes and actions—are consistent. The agreed-upon definition, which originated in Aristotle, asserts weak-willed actions are when an agent acts contrary to his best judgement. The agent determines through some mental processes that one action is better than the other. But he acts, deliberately and without outside influence, contrary to this judgement. In his analysis of group akrasia, Pettit fails to adequately capture this phenomenon. He does not account for one of the constitutive features of weakness of will, namely the group acting contrary to their judgement. Pettit focuses solely on the group agent's ability to form judgements in a rational manner. As we discovered in this section, it is imperative to discuss not only the group agent's judgements, but also their actions. Thus, the next section will explore alternative approaches to group agents. These other accounts of group agents will hopefully encapsulate the aspects of weakness of will that Pettit lacks.

IV. Analyzing accounts of collective action

As the previous section revealed, weak-willed actions necessarily include two main aspects. First, weakness of will is characterized by one or more mental states which represent an agent's judgement of their reasons. It is also characterized by an action which is believed by the agent at the time of action to not correspond with their judgement of reasons. Pettit attempted to give an analysis of collective weakness of will, but his account was missing these important aspects. Since Pettit's approach failed to capture those two components, it is worth considering an alternate approach to analyzing collective weakness of will. This alternate approach lies in providing an analysis of collective mental states, such as collective beliefs and intentions, and of collective actions. Understanding group-level actions and their relevant mental properties may allow us to understand akrasia for group agents. To that end, we can now evaluate what philosophers of collective action have to say about collective mental states and collective actions in general. We will consider accounts of group agents and how they work within the context of weakness of will. There is a plethora of theories that detail group actions and intentions. Some of the most influential theories of collective action include accounts from philosophers Gilbert, Bratman, Searle, Tuomela, and Velleman. It is important to analyze these different accounts within the context of weakness of will to understand which one best fits the description of weakness of will.

First, we will look at Michael Bratman's account, as found in his article "Shared Intention," to see if it can be used to analyze collective weakness of will. In his article, Bratman asserts shared intentions consist of the interrelations of individual intentions. When two agents share an intention, each individual has their own intentions that coordinate with the other in a certain way. In other words, according to Bratman, shared intentions are reducible to individual

intentions with aspects of coordination. The shared intention differs from the typical individual intention because they have three interrelated jobs. [26] First, the shared intention must coordinate the actions or activities of the participants so they can achieve the goal. For example, if two agents intend to paint a room together, they must coordinate their actions. One will paint from left to right while the other paints from right to left, for instance. Second, the shared intention coordinates planning, such as one person will buy paintbrushes and the other will buy paint. Last, the shared intention provides the background for bargaining. Although the agents have the shared intention to paint together, they might have conflicting preferences about who starts on the left. The shared intention must structure bargaining such that it resolves these conflicts. In order to meet these criteria, the shared intention has "special contents."[27] These special contents include, first, both participants intending to act together. For example, I intend *we* paint the room, and you intend *we* paint the room. Next, the shared intentions include subplans that mesh with the other participant. This will resemble someone thinking, "I intend we paint the room in accordance with the subplan that I buy the paint and you buy the brushes." Thus, meshing subplans is a component of shared intentions, according to Bratman. Last, these is common knowledge between the participants. Both participants know the other person also intends to paint the room together and both know it is in accordance with certain plans. Overall, the shared intention looks like this: "I intend that *we* paint the room together. I intend we paint the room by going left to right and taking breaks periodically. I know the other participant has the same intention and similar plans." Intentions with these three special contents should lead to the coordinated actions, planning, and bargaining of the participants. In sum, Bratman claims shared

[26] Michael Bratman, "Shared Intention," *Ethics* 104 no. 1 (Oct. 1993), 99
[27] Bratman, "Shared Intention," 108

intentions are merely individual intentions with special contents that lead to coordinated actions, planning, and bargaining which constitute a shared activity.

Although Bratman's account of group intentions and actions is compelling, it does not seem to work with the preconceived notion of weakness of will. The theory does not seem to work within the context of weakness of will as we previously defined it because it cannot account for judgements. As we asserted before, weakness of will necessarily involves a judgement about the best course of action. On Bratman's view, however, the shared intention emphasizes meshing plans and coordination. It has no mention of evaluative judgements. Since shared intentions are simply special individual intentions, one may argue the evaluative component can be found within the individual intentions. Perhaps a closer look at Bratman's account on individual intentions will reveal the evaluative judgements required for weakness of will. However, Bratman's description of individual intentions also emphasizes planning with no mention of evaluative judgements. He writes, "Intentions, then, are normally stable elements of partial plans."[28] In other words, individual intentions mainly motivate the agent to coordinate activity and plan to achieve their goal. For example, if an agent intends to do homework, their intention will involve setting aside time to get the work done. To achieve the goals of the intention, one needs to plan. Thus, individual intentions involve planning, but Bratman doesn't explore much else. In sum, Bratman's account of group intentions and actions does not serve the purposes of the study of collective weakness of will. This is because it does not adequately capture the evaluative judgements required for weakness of will.

Ramio Tuomela gives a similar account of collective intentions and actions in his article titled, "We-Intentions Revised." However, he also includes a view of how these intentions arise,

[28] Bratman, "Shared Intention," 101

which may provide the evaluative judgements Bratman's account lacked. But first, it is imperative to discuss Tuolmela's account of collective intentions. Like Bratman, Tuomela asserts collective intentions can be reduced to individual intentions plus special contents. Tuomela's description of these special contents is different than Bratman's. Tuomela asserts collective intentions include beliefs about what the other participants will do and what they believe. More specifically, the agent holds an intention to do his part in the collective action. On top of that, the agent believes the other group members will most likely do their part as well. The agent and group members hold the mutual belief that each will do their part.[29] For example, I hold the collective intention to watch a movie with another person if I intend to go to the movie theater. Also, I believe the other person will go to the movie theater as well. Last, I believe we both know the other will go to the movie theater. To put it simply, collective intentions stem from individual intentions plus beliefs about other group members' contribution.

Thus far, Tuomela's account of collective intentions does not appear to differ significantly from Bratman's. But Tuomela's account may be better suited for studying weakness of will because of his Bulletin Board View.[30] This view attempts to discover how collective intentions are formed. He uses the example of a group of people signing up to participate in cleaning a park on a bulletin board, hence the name. In this example, a person came up with the idea of cleaning a park. Cleaning the park is considered a collective action, as it requires the work of many coordinated people. The person proposes this action on a bulletin board, where members can sign their name, indicating their willingness to participate. The bulletin board reads, "Members of group g will clean the park next Saturday. Those who will participate, please

[29] Ramio Tuomela, "We-Intentions Revisited," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition,* 123 no. 3, 327
[30] Tuomela, "We-Intentions Revisited," 335

sign up here." [31] As seen here, the bulletin board expresses the group's intention to clean the park. It includes information about the specific action and who will participate in the action. When members sign, they are indicating their acceptance of the proposal, given mutual knowledge. Thus, their collective intention is formed. This fits with Tuomela's account of collective intentions because the individual has expressed their intention to do their part and they hold beliefs about the other members' contribution. The addition of the Bulletin Board View sets Tuomela's account apart from Bratman because it describes the agents explicitly expressing their commitment to action. This puts him in a better position to show a collective judgement of what is the best action. When the members sign the Bulletin Board, it can be understood as their judgement as a group that cleaning the park is the best course of action. Therefore, Tuomela's account, although similar to Bratman's, is better suited for studying collective weakness of will because it includes an element of judgement, which is seen with the Bulletin Board View.

Although Tuomela's account is an improvement over Bratman's in terms of weakness of will, it is still not perfect. In addition to an evaluative judgement, weakness of will also involves an action. In order to adequately explore weakness of will, we need to have a good grasp of group actions and behavior. In his article titled, "Collective Intentions and Actions," John Searle argues Tuomela incorrectly analyzes collective behavior. Tuomela claims collective behavior comes from collective intentions, which are reducible to simply individual intentions plus beliefs. Searle, however, asserts collective behavior cannot simply be explained by individual intentions.[32] Searle supports his claims by asserting group members' intentions can satisfy all of the conditions Tuomela laid out for collective intention without behaving as a group. In other

[31] Tuomela, "We-Intentions Revisited," 336
[32] John Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," in *Intentions in Communication*, ed. Philip R. Cohen, Jerry Morgan, and Martha Pollack, (MIT Press, 1990): 404

words, a group of people can intend to contribute to a goal, believe others are also contributing, and this belief is mutual, but they still don't act as a group. Searle uses the example of a group of businessmen from a school that studies Adam Smith's theory of the invisible hand.[33] Learning this theory caused them to believe the best way to help humanity is by pursuing their own best interest and not cooperating with each other. These businessmen graduate and practice this theory in the business sector. This situation satisfies Tuomela's conditions for collective intention. Each group member holds an intention, to help humanity by acting selfishly. They are playing their part in the collective goal. Also, the group members believe their fellow graduates also intend to follow Smith's theory and act selfishly. Last, this belief is mutual. The group members all know the others are doing their part to satisfy the goal of helping humanity. This example lines up with Tuomela's account of collective intentions. However, the business school example does not exhibit the features of what we would consider collective behavior. The group members are clearly all working separately with no regard or coordination with the other members. Searle has shown agents can hold intentions that resemble Tuomela's account without behaving as a group. Therefore, Searle argues Tuomela's account of collective intentions does not adequately capture collective behavior. For studying collective weakness of will, it is essential the account of collective intention adequately analyzes and describes collective actions. Since Tuomela's account is not precise enough to describe collective action, it is not the best option for the project.

Searle considers possible counterarguments to his claims. Tuomela could argue that the agent is simply "doing his part" and contributing to the collective goal. In this explanation, the agent has his own intention that motivates him to do his part in achieving the collective goal. If

[33] Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," 405

this is true, then collective intentions could be reducible to individual intentions. However, Searle points out that the notion of "doing his part" is included in the notion of collective intentions. If we include "doing his part" as part of the definition of collective intentions, then we would be defining collective intentions as collective intentions. The counterargument thus fails because it is circular. Searle asserts Tuomela's account must ultimately face vicious circularity, so it is rendered unacceptable.[34]

Tuomela formulates a response to Searle's argument in his 2001 article. He denies his argument falls into a viciously circular cycle, although he admits it's mildly circular. Tuomela asserts Searle's claims about circularity stem from his fundamental misunderstanding of Tuomela's account. According to Tuomela, there are two versions of his view: the analytic view, and the precatalytic view. The first is the theoretical, fleshed-out account of collective intentions, whereas the latter is the common-sense view for ordinary people to understand. Searle apparently fails to distinguish between the two versions of the view, as he focuses primarily on the preanalytical view instead of the analytical view.[35] The preanalytical view states that an agent holds a collective intention if and only if he intends to do his part and he believes others also intend to do their parts.[36] Still, according to Tuomela, this preanalytical view does not succumb to vicious circularity because it does not directly refer to collective intentions in terms of collective intentions. He does admit, however, there is an implicit reference to collective intentions in the definition. But Tuomela claims it is not viciously circular because it does not precisely define collective intentions in terms of collective intentions. Although this common-sense account is vague, it is not viciously circular as Searle claims. After defending his

[34] Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," 405
[35] Tuomela, "We-Intentions Revisited," 359
[36] Tuomela, "We-Intentions Revisited," 356

preanalytical view, Tuomela proceeds to explain why his analytical view is also not viciously circular. To define his view in simple terms he writes, "In general terms, jointly intending participants have collectively committed (bound) themselves to jointly seeing to it that X is—directly or indirectly—brought about by them."[37] As seen here, this account is slightly different than the preanalytical view because it includes collective commitments. Again, Tuomela admits this is mildly circular, but not viciously so.

However, Tuomela's account still seems to be unclear. The notion of collective commitments he uses to define collective intentions is not made explicit. Tuomela doesn't completely explain these commitments. In fact, even in his analytical view, he seems to be defining collective intentions in terms of other collective terms that he has not adequately defined.[38] For this reason, it appears Tuomela's account of group agents is not fit for the study of weakness of will. Although his view is insightful, Searle's argument calls his view into question. Tuomela's account cannot easily be used to analyze collective weakness of will because he does not clearly define collective actions. As we previously discovered, collective weakness of will requires the agent to take an action contrary to their judgement or intention. However, as Searle argued, Tuomela's account of collective action is flawed. The circularity of Tuomela's view renders it imperfect, thus it not the best account for the study of collective weakness of will.

Since Tuomela's account is also not the best for analyzing collective weakness of will, we can turn to Searle's account to see if it would work better. It is imperative we discuss his theories on collective judgement and intentions to see if they are helpful for analyzing collective

[37] Tuomela, "We-Intentions Revisited," 360
[38] Randall Harp, "Social Ontology: Collective Intentionality and Group Agents, written by Raimo Tuomela," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 14, 5 (2017): 608-611

weakness of will. Unlike Tuomela and Bratman, Searle asserts collective intentions are a primitive form of intentionality, and it cannot be reduced to individual intentions. He asserts these intentions are held in the mind of the individual agent but make reference to the collective action. Searle writes, "We need only note that all the intentionality needed for collective behavior can be possessed by individual agents even though the intentionality in question make reference to the collective." [39] In other words, the collective intention is held by the individual but is divergent from individual intentions. Searle sets out to outline the structure of these intentions, but he first outlines individual intentions. He asserts collective intentions have "two components- a 'mental' component and a 'physical' component. The mental component both represents and causes the physical component."[40] In other words, the intention includes both an action and the mental representation that causes the action. For example, when someone intends to raise their arm they think to themselves, "I will raise my arm" and then their arm physically raises. For collective intentions, it will consist of the individual's action that contributes to the group action. For example, two people have the intention to mix a sauce which is achieved by person A stirring and person B pouring ingredients. In this case, the individual acts are part of the collective act of mixing. Both individuals hold, in their own mind, the group intention to do their contribution and thus act as a group.

In addition to this overall structure, Searle also introduces background information that is included with collective intention. He asserts collective intentions presuppose a background for other candidates for cooperative agency. In other words, as part of a collective intention, the agent assumes other agents are able to cooperate and contribute to the collective action. This is another way in which Searle's account of collective intentions is set apart from individual

[39] Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," 407
[40] Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," 408

intentions. For example, if two fighters are boxing in a ring, they have the intention to hurt one another. But these intentions are only in the context of cooperating with each other to engage in a sporting event. Both fighters understand the other also has the intention to fight and expects the other to contribute to the overall fighting match. This is much different from one man simply assaulting another man.[41] As seen here, collective intentions must involve an assumption that other agents also have awareness and may be part of the collective action. This also applies to strangers, such a group of strangers pushing a car. Each agent helping to push the car regards the other agents as candidates to form part of a group agent. Therefore, Searle's account of collective intention not only involves a novel theory of intentionality, but also a conception of the role of background. He asserts collective intention involves presupposing other agents are part of the group agent. Searle's account of collective intention seems to be sufficient for exploring collective weakness of will. He explains why collective intentions cannot merely be the summation of individual intentions and proposed an alternative account. This account includes collective intentions, which can be interpreted as sufficient mental states for weakness of will.

David Velleman offers a similar account in his article, "How to Share an Intention." In this essay, Velleman rejects other accounts, such as Bratman and Tuomela, who claim shared intentions stem from distinct, individual intentions that come together to form joint intentions. Instead, Velleman wants to show that intentions can be literally shared. He draws on Gilbert's account, which will be discussed later, that individuals share the discretion of how an outcome will occur and combines it with Searle's theory that an intention is a mental representation that causes behavior. According to Velleman, people share an intention, which in and of itself causes a certain behavior to occur. When two people are going for a walk, for example, they both

[41] Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," 413

literally share the intention to go for a walk and because of this intention they will take the actions required to walk together. According to Velleman, the subject holds one single intention.[42]

Many philosophers are hesitant to support this claim because an intention is a mental state and minds belong to individuals. By asserting that we literally share an intention, it seems to imply we also share a mind, which is unreasonable. However, Velleman gets around this idea by claiming intentions may not be essentially mental. They may be oral or written out, such as someone saying, "I am going to take a walk." In a sense, they are committing themselves to a certain course of action. If this is true, then we cannot rule out the possibility that collective intentions can occur without a collective mind. Thus, if someone says, "I will take a walk if you will," and the other person says, "I will," they are stating an effective joint intention between the two members. This is divergent from the two statements, "I am going for a walk," and "I am going for a walk, too," because these don't account for what they are doing *together.* Instead, these are merely expressing individual intentions. But when two people make statements about what they intend to do together, this can be considered a shared intention, according to Velleman.[43] Therefore, Velleman asserts intentions can be shared, but not by a collective mind. He asserts that shared intentions occur when members make their mind up together, not one mind made up. This account seems to work well in the context of collective weakness of will. Since the group as a whole shares one intention, it seems they fulfill the mental state or process requirement of weakness of will. Additionally, his account adequately explains the group's

[42] David Vellemann, "How To Share An Intention," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 57 no. 1 (March 1997), 29
[43] Vellemann, "How To Share An Intention," 47

actions. For these reasons, it appears Velleman has presented a useful account of group attitudes and actions for the study of collective weakness of will.

This brings us to the last account of group action. In her essay, "Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon" Margaret Gilbert presents a novel account of group intentions and actions that does not merely involve coordinated individual intentions. In this essay, Gilbert attempts to examine the concept of a social group by observing two people taking a walk together. She examines the different criteria needed for a situation be considered "two people walking together." First, she asserts that simply because two people's proximity is close, that doesn't mean they are walking *together.* For them to be walking together, they need to have the goal of continuing to walk near each other.[44] She takes it further to assert that the goal to continue walking should be common knowledge between the members. Last, she claims when two people are walking together they are obligated to take actions that fulfill the goal. For example, they are obligated to keep a steady pace so one person doesn't get left behind. If one member starts walking fast, the other has the right to call out and say, "wait, you're going too fast." However, this obligation cannot be achieved with common knowledge alone. Simply because two members have the same goal doesn't give them the right to rebuke the other for failing to fulfill the goal.[45]

According to Gilbert, a transaction needs to occur between the two members, which will look something like this: "do you want to walk together?" "yes, I would like some company." The transaction has two main criteria. First, each person must express a willingness to "join forces" with each other to achieve the goal of walking together. Second, each person has certain

[44] Margaret Gilbert, "Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 15 (1990), 3
[45] Gilbert, "Walking Together," 5

set of conditions of action for achieving the goal. In other words, the transaction lays out the relevant obligations of the individuals to achieve the goal. Once this occurs, the "individual wills are bound" to achieve a collective goal, thus creating a shared intention.[46] The individuals hold intentions that together create a single intention, jointly held. Gilbert uses the walking together example to make claims about the concept of social groups overall. She claims that to form a social group, the set of humans need to constitute a "plural subject." On her view, they need to have an agreement that each person will act in ways that will fulfill their collective goal.

In sum, not every account of group agency works in the context of weakness of will. The phenomenon of weakness of will requires the agent has some mental state that indicates their judgement about what is best to do and a group action. Bratman and Tuomela's accounts, albeit strong, are not perfect in the face of weakness of will. However, Searle, Velleman, and Gilbert encapsulate the requirements of weakness of will in their respective accounts of group agency. Although the specifics of these accounts may differ, the fundamental idea is similar. According to these philosophers, members of a group share group intentions, which cause them to take a particular action. A group is an agent if each member holds a group intention which involves an action that requires the participation of the entire group. It is unclear whether Gilbert thinks this intention is held in the individual mind or a collective mind, as her definition of "plural subject" is uncertain. But all three philosophers believe the group intention is its own notion, divergent from individual intentions. The group intention resembles something like this: "*We* intend to take a walk *together*." It also may involve specifics about what each member of the group is doing. For example, "We intend to make dinner together, by way of me cutting the vegetables and you boiling the pasta." Note these intentions are different from individual intentions that merely

[46] Gilbert, "Walking Together," 7

coincide. It is not, “I intend to take a walk and you intend to take a walk.” Instead, group intentions are a special kind of intention that involves not only what the individual’s intended action is, but the entire groups. These group-level intentions fulfill the mental state requirement of weakness of will. When a group agent holds a group intention, they are showing they want and aim to take a particular action. They are effectively expressing they judge an action as best. If the group acts contrary to this intention, they are going against their best judgement, thus acting in a weak-willed manner. Therefore, the philosophers Searle, Gilbert, and Velleman’s accounts of group agency are the best suited for weakness of will because they involve mental states and group actions.

After looking at all these theories of collective attitudes and collective actions, it seems the most appropriate theories for analyzing collective weakness of will are from Searle, Gilbert, and Velleman. They are most suitable for the following reasons. The theories all give a clear account of what it means for a group to act. Also, they have the clear resources needed to determine under what conditions a group can be said to judge one action as better—or more rational—than another action. If this is correct, then the next step will be to synthesize the analysis of weakness of will with these group agency theories to determine an account of collective weakness of will. Once a theory of collective weakness of will has been obtained, we will apply such theories to the punitive examples presented in Section I. The theory of collective weakness of will and its application to real-life examples will be explored in the next section.

V. A Better Approach

Before delving into the examples of collective weakness of will that were presented in Section I, it is imperative we summarize the analysis we have conducted thus far. Once we have

condensed the conclusions, we can apply the analysis to examples of collective weakness of will. After looking at different accounts of weakness of will and group agency, we have analyzed important aspects of both phenomena which aided in uncovering a theory of collective weakness of will. This section will discuss conclusions from our analysis of weakness of will and collective agency. After a summary of these analyses, I will present a theory of collective weakness of will and use examples to illustrate this theory.

First, let us discuss the phenomenon of weakness of will. The different accounts of weakness of will revealed fundamental commonalities. According to the philosophers, weakness of will necessarily involves two components. First, mental states, specifically evaluative judgements, are essential for weakness of will. The agent, through some mental process determines or judges one action as better than another. The agent judges a certain course of action as preferable because of a set of reasons. For example, an agent judges it is best to do their homework because they want to get a good grade and it's due the next day. This mental judgement seemingly motivates them to act accordingly. This is where the second component of weakness of will comes in. The agent not only has to make a judgement about what is the best action, they also must act. However, the action is contrary to what the agent deemed best. For example, although the agent judged it best to do their homework, and they were capable of doing so, they watched TV instead. Additionally, these philosophers do not consider an action weak-willed if it was fueled by something outside of the agent's control. It would not be a weak-willed action if the agent intended to throw frisbee in a straight line, but the wind blew it astray. Conversely, it would be weak-willed if the agent judged it best to throw the frisbee but threw a ball instead. In sum, our analysis of weakness of will reveals weak-willed actions necessarily

involve mental states, such as judgements, and a particular type of action. These actions must be undertaken freely and deliberately but are contrary to the agent's judgement.

Next, we analyzed different accounts of group agency to see which one best fit the requirements of weakness of will. Not every account of group agency works in the context of weakness of will because it either did not capture the group agent's mental state or their action. Although there were many good accounts of group agency, the ones that fit best with the phenomenon of weakness of will are Searle, Velleman, and Gilbert's accounts. According to these philosophers, group agents hold intentions which motivate them to act. These group intentions serve as the "mental states" required for weakness of will. The group intention indicates what the group aims or wants to do, which also shows what they deem the best action. It resembles something like, "we intend to bake a cake together." As seen here, the intention specifies what action the group wants to do together. It thus serves as the mental state required for weakness of will. The group agent also needs to act. These accounts of group agency adequately capture the group agent acting as a unified whole. Since their intentions cannot merely be reduced to individual intentions, it is clear they are acting as a group agent. When the members of the group act, it is coordinated and clearly in union. Therefore Searle, Velleman, and Gilbert provided accounts of group agency that best fit with weakness of will.

A synthesis of these analyses reveals a theory of collective weakness of will. This phenomenon occurs when a group agent acts contrary to their shared intention. The group's shared intention indicates what they judge as best. Thus, if the group agent does not act according to their shared intention, they are exemplifying the phenomenon of weakness of will. For example, if a group of two agents hold the shared intention, "we intend to go on a walk together," but they stay seated on the couch instead, this would be a case of collective weakness

of will. It is important to note in this case, the agents were free to go on a walk. There was nothing stopping them, it wasn't raining nor were either of them injured. Instead, the group agent freely and deliberately acted contrary to their shared intention, thus displaying a weakness of will.

As seen here, in this theory of collective weakness of will, I assert the group's judgements about what is best can be determined through their collective intention. In other words, the group agent's intentions align with their best judgements. The group's judgements about what is best can therefore be obtained through their collective intention. This intuitively makes sense, for the agent's intentions are usually formed on the basis of reason, which is also how judgements arise. However, one may argue judgements and intentions are not always related, in fact they may diverge completely. If this is true, then we would not be able to determine the group's judgements through their collective intention. To entertain this thought, consider an example on the individual level. Perhaps an individual agent's friend encouraged them to read a book. The agent looked up the synopsis of the book and decided it didn't look particularly interesting and they probably would not enjoy the book. For these reasons, the agent judges it best to not read the book. However, the agent still intends to read the book in the future. Despite their judgement that reading the book will be a waste of time and not enjoyable, the agent still declares they *will* read the book their friend recommended. In this example, the agent's judgement and intention are in conflict. Their judgement about what is the best thing for them to do does not line up with what they intend to do. Since this example is observable in real life, one may be inclined to conclude judgements and intentions are not always aligned.

However, upon further reflection, this case is counterintuitive. It is confusing for an agent to purposefully intend to do something in the future they don't deem best. Not only is it puzzling

to comprehend, but it also undermines their status as an agent. An agent should have the capacity to act as they would like. But in this scenario, the agent already plans on not acting on what they judge best. The agent knows they will willingly act against their best judgement in the future. This makes little sense. But then one can question how the case presented above is explained. Calling this case, and others, an example of diverging intentions and judgements must be a misinterpretation. The analysis of the judgement or intention must be wrong. It might be true that the agent does judge reading as best, but the analysis was too focused on the reasons not to read. It is true the agent has reasons for not reading the book. But it seems like the agent has overriding reasons for the alternative, which is why they hold the intention to read it. Perhaps they want to make their friend happy, or they have a morbid curiosity for the book. These reasons to read overpower the reasons not to read, causing the agent to hold the judgement that reading the book is best. Therefore, the agent's judgement and intention never truly differed. Although one may claim judgements and intentions can differ, upon further reflection this seems to be a mistake. It would be counterintuitive for an agent's judgement to diverge from their intention about a future action. Therefore, it must be true that judgements can be derived from an agent's intention. This same notion can be applied to group agents. Since the group agent holds collective intentions, we can assume the intention does not stray far from the group's judgement. We can use knowledge about their collective intentions to discover the group agent's judgements about what is best.

However, it is often difficult to ascertain what the group's intention is. If you don't know what the group originally intended, it is impossible to know if the group was acting contrary to their best judgement and subsequently in a weak-willed manner. Luckily groups often make their shared intentions known. In order to more fully understand the theory of collective weakness of

will, it is important to apply the theory to groups we observe in real life. The next step in our discussion of collective weakness of will is to revisit the examples given in Section I. We will analyze these examples in terms of the theory of collective weakness of will presented above.

Collective weakness of will is most understandable in groups that have explicit agreements. According to Velleman, when group members make statements about what they intend to do together, they are forming a group intention. Gilbert also claims a transaction should occur between the group members to outline what the group's intention is. With an agreement, it is perfectly evident what the group's intention is and thus what they judge as the best course of action. For example, dorm students sign a specific "Roommate Agreement" at the beginning of the year stating they will take the necessary measures to curate a good living space. This agreement laid out the steps the roommates would need to do to contribute to the goal of having a preferred living space. This included cleaning the room weekly. By signing the agreement, the roommates indicated they judged having a clean room as best. The members of the group thus form a collective intention – "We intend to maintain a good room by way of both of us cleaning weekly." Maintaining a clean room is a group action because it requires both the roommates' participation to achieve it. Therefore, the roommates who signed the "Roommate Agreement" formed a group agent because they clearly held a group intention and acted together. However, if the group did not clean weekly, even though they could, the group would be acting weak-willed. This is because they did not act as they intended. In this group, the shared intention was clear, so when they did not act accordingly, they experienced weakness of will.

However, a contract such as the "Roommate Agreement" isn't the only way members of a group can come to an agreement that ultimately comprises a shared intention. Both Velleman and Gilbert discuss agreements that are more casual, such as one person saying, "Do you want to

go for a walk together?" and the other person agreeing. The philosophers assert that these group members arrived at a shared intention. Since they agreed to walk together, they now hold the intention, "we intend to go on a walk together." This notion of casual agreements can also be applied to different groups. For example, a group is working on a school project together. One group member may suggest, "We should get a study room for an hour to work on this project." The other members of the group say, "Yes, we should do that." Since they came to an agreement, it is clear the group holds the intention to work on their project together for an hour in the study room. However, it is quite possible the group members, despite holding this intention and clearly judging studying as the best action, end up not studying. Perhaps they talked about other things instead of working on their project. In this case, it seems like the group agent was weak willed. Although they held a shared intention to work on their project, they didn't act accordingly. Therefore, collective weakness of will can be observed in groups that have casual agreements such as this one.

Agreements between group members may be even less clear but still indicate what the group's shared intention is. An example of this are sports teams. They certainly seem to be group agents since they all coordinate to achieve a certain goal, namely winning the game. On first glance, it seems they lack a clear agreement, thus it's difficult to determine what their shared intention is. However, upon further reflection, one can ascertain their shared intentions. First, when a player joins the sports teams, they are agreeing to do their part to achieve the collective goal of winning. Since every member agreed to do their part, it seems the team holds the shared intention to win together. Additionally, the team expresses their shared intention through statements such as, "We should work to win this game" and the group members' resounding "yes, we should." Even though there are no explicit agreements, like in the cases of the UVM

community or group project members, the sports team still holds a shared intention. The sports team could experience collective weakness of will if they do not act in accordance with their shared intentions. Therefore, even without explicit agreements, group agents can still fit into the theory of collective weakness of will.

There are other group agents, however, that do not even have loose agreements, like the sports team, but still seem to function as a group agent. It is important to consider whether these group agents fit into the theory of collective weakness of will we have defined. For example, members of the Green Party do not have clear agreements, but still seem to act as a group. They all attempt to lobby against climate change, for example. It is debatable whether the group can hold collective intentions without an agreement. But Searle's role of background can tell us about collective intentions. He asserts collective intentions involve background information, wherein the agent presupposes other agents are participants in the group action. In other words, as part of collective intention, the agents assume other members are also cooperating and contributing to the action. In the case of the Green Party, it seems like when someone becomes a member of the party, one can assume they will adopt the ideals of the party and thus act in accordance with them. It is assumed members of the Green Party will all contribute to their action of lobbying against climate change. Therefore, we can ascertain the Green Party's group intention through this presupposed background knowledge. As part of the Green Party, we assume the members adhere to the group's ideals and attempt to mitigate climate change. In this case, the group's intention looks like, "We intend to lobby against climate change together." The group would therefore experience weakness of will if they were capable of lobbying but failed to act.

According to Searle, this presupposed background knowledge even applies to strangers. He writes, “What you must suppose is that the others are agents like yourself, and that they have a similar awareness of you as an agent like themselves, and that these awareness coalesce into a sense of *us* as possible or actual collective agents. And these conditions hold for total strangers.” As seen here, Searle posits even strangers are assumed to be potential or actual parts of a collective agent. This means when strangers work together, they could form a group agent despite not having an explicit agreement. For example, a car crash occurs and multiple people pull over to help the victims. The people who pulled over are complete strangers, yet they worked together and coordinated their actions to help. This occurred because the agents presupposed the other people were members of the group agent. This background knowledge can tell us something about the group intention. Since we assume the strangers are part of the group agent, we can also assume the group agent holds a collective intention. In this case, the collective intention was, “We intend to help the victims of the car crash together.” Collective weakness of will happens when the group agent does not act according to their collective intention. In this case, the group of strangers would be weak-willed if they did not help the victims of the car crash despite having the ability to. It is more difficult to determine if the group agent is truly acting against their best intention if they never stop to help in the first place. But since the people who drive by can be assumed as possible collective agents, then it seems like they are acting contrary to what they collectively intend.

For larger groups of strangers, discovering the group’s intention is also difficult. If we are unaware of the collective intention, we cannot know for sure if the group had weakness of will. But there are ways to learn the group’s collective intention. An example of a group of strangers who are working as an agent is U.S. citizens who believe we should mitigate climate change.

There are few commonalities between members of this group, rendering it difficult to discover the collective intentions. But there are surveys and votes that can be used to gauge the group's thoughts. For example, the Pew Research Center found that two-thirds of U.S. citizens believe we should do more to mitigate climate change. This group of people has converging beliefs about what they should do to act. Through the study, we can determine what the group's collective intention is. In this case, the group agent holds the intention, "We should do more to mitigate climate change together." The action of mitigating climate change requires most, if not the entire, group's participation, which makes it a group action. Therefore, we can also obtain a group agent's collective intention through research and surveys when there is no clear agreement or presupposition. When the group does not act on this intention, such as the U.S. citizens doing little to mitigate climate change, the group agent is weak-willed.

In sum, the theory of collective weakness of will states group agents are weak-willed when they act contrary to their collective intention. On the individual level, agents are weak-willed when they act contrary to their best judgement. For group agents, this best judgement is expressed through their collective intentions, which indicates the actions the group aims to do. The collective intentions are divergent from individual intentions that merely coalesce, according to Velleman, Searle, and Gilbert. Gauging a group agent's collective intention is different based on the group itself. Some agreements may express the group's collective intention, whereas sometimes the group's intention is presupposed based on the nature of the group itself. Tools such as research, surveys, and votes can also reveal the group's collective intention. In order for the group agent's action to be considered weak-willed, they must freely and deliberately act contrary to their collective intention. This means the group was not hindered by any outside influences nor did new information become available that made them change their mind. Instead,

they deliberately chose to act against what they deemed best, or their collective judgement. Determining whether a group acted in a weak-willed manner depends on the group. The group's failure to act on their shared intention depends on the specific characteristics of the group in question. For this reason, more research would need to be done on the specific group to determine if it was acting in a weak-willed manner.

In conclusion, this thesis aims to gather a better understanding of collective weakness of will. Pettit attempts to give an analysis in his article, but it did not seem to completely capture the phenomenon of weakness of will. After analyzing accounts of weakness of will, we conclude there are two necessary components: mental states, such as judgements or beliefs, and an action. Since Pettit's account does not encapsulate these two components, I attempted to discover an alternate account of group agency. I analyzed different accounts of collective attitudes and action to see which best fit with the phenomenon of weakness of will. A synthesis of weakness of will and collective action revealed a theory of collective weakness of will. Although still a work in progress, this theory attempts to apply the necessary components of weakness of will to group agents. The theory of collective weakness of will asserts that group agents are weak-willed when they act, freely and deliberately, contrary to their shared judgement.

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