What is collective acceptance and what does it do?

Abstract

This chapter identifies several puzzles in Raimo Tuomela's (2002) Collective Acceptance View (CAV) of sociality and institutions. The chapter also briefly discusses a possible solution to each of the puzzles, but the main contribution lies in identifying the puzzles. In the introductory sections, the scope of the aspects of social reality constructed via collective acceptance is discussed; not everything is constructed according to Tuomela.

The main puzzle is: if the CAV it framed in terms of collective acceptance of sentences as true for a group, and that need not mean objective truth (as in the case of Flat Earth Society and the sentence "the earth is flat"), does collective acceptance shed any light on the ontology of institutions? Four further questions to be discussed are: Is it the CA-events or CA-states that have the possible ontological consequences for social reality? If Tuomela's theoretical claims about CA conflict, which ones should we revise: for example, the claim that there is no conceptual room between collectively *agreeing to accept* and collective *acceptance* taking place, or the claim that the collective acceptance is a disposition to act? We need to drop one of the claims, as there seems to be conceptual room for an agreement to accept to take place, without related dispositions to act being formed. How to make sense of CA-states sometimes being intentions and sometimes beliefs? To save formulations like "squirrel fur is money if and only if squirrel fur is collectively accepted as money" in cases where the related attitudes are there, but for some reason or another (say, because of lack of trust) the corresponding activity does not take place, so that squirrel fur is not used as money, should we say that collective acceptance is whatever is needed (not merely attitudes, but also related actions) for the related ontological effect to take place (e.g. that squirrel fur really is money)?

The chapter argues that Tuomela's account does have the desired ontological relevance, once suitably revised; that the events can be seen as the ontologically relevant category; that the relevant CA is to be understood at the collective level and ultimately as acceptance-beliefs concerning sentences or propositions, and so the claim that acceptance *is* a disposition to act is to be dropped (it rather is, in happy cases, accompanied by a disposition to act). Therefore, it is also better to drop the claim that CA can take the form of an intention. We can further stipulate that the iff-formulations (capturing reflexivity and performativity) are true only concerning *effective* collective acceptance. And, as Tuomela sees collective acceptance as an achievement-notion, only effective collective acceptance is collective acceptance at all.

Keywords if needed: Raimo Tuomela, Collective acceptance, Collective intentionality, Social ontology

Introduction

This chapter discusses Raimo Tuomela's (2002) Collective Acceptance approach to social and institutional reality. By way of introduction, consider the following claims:

1) A business company, as a type of organization, is an institution.
2) The existence and nature of institutions is wholly explained by collective acceptance (of constitutive norms of institutions).
3) All of social and institutional reality is constructed by humans, and the CA-theory captures such social construction.
4) (Collective) acceptance is a separate kind of mental state of its own, alongside (collective) belief, intention, desire; perhaps with a double direction of fit.

5) An institution or a social entity exists, if it is collectively accepted as existing; unlike trees and stars that exist independently. (Performativity; acceptance as an achievement - notion.)
6) An institution is collectively accepted as existing if it exists (Reflexivity)

Perhaps surprisingly, Tuomela 2002 explicitly *denies* the four first claims.

Further, instead of discussing existence-claims like 5 and 6, Tuomela in the main text applies collective acceptance mainly to something seemingly very different: to sentences being "collective-social" and correctly assertible in a group (having "forgroupness"). This is, at the surface level at least, a thesis is about sentences having some technical features, not about institutions existing:

> (*CAT*) A sentence s is *collective-social* in a primary constructivist sense in a group g if and only if it is true for group g that (a) the members of g collectively accept s, and that (b) they collectively accept s if and only if s is correctly assertable (or true) (*collective acceptance thesis*). (2002, p.132)

That something is correctly assertible in a group need not have ontological consequences and may be downright false: in a society of flat-earthers, it is correctly assertible and "true for the group" that the earth is flat (p.133). One may wonder, then, whether Tuomela's Collective Acceptance View is a view about the existence of institutions at all; and whether people interested in the social ontology of institutions, including business corporations, should read something else than Tuomela?

The pessimist conclusion is too hasty. This chapter argues first of all that Tuomela's Collective Acceptance View does indeed include claims 5 and 6. Although Tuomela 2002 discusses these ontologically committal versions only in an appendix, he certainly holds them. And further, it may be a good strategy to approach the ontologically committal theses like 5 and 6 in a roundabout way via (CAT) about sentences. The roundabout way in which Tuomela approaches the question by emphasizing that institutions are always for some group or another, and by starting from acceptance of sentences for a group, enables him to build an impressive and distinctive "weakly communitarian" theory of institutions, where especially the we-mode attitudes have a central role (For a briefer account of the main ideas, see Tuomela 2003). Thus, other central claims for Tuomela include:

7) The key to social and institutional reality is the way in which organizations, other institutions, social practices, collective goals and beliefs, are always *for a group*
8) Collective attitudes had in the we-mode (entailing collective commitment and the collectivity condition) are central in how things are for a group.

This chapter does not focus on these two claims, however, but on the nature of collective acceptance. What is it and what does it do?

Section One is introductory, explaining why Tuomela does not endorse claims 1-3 above. To anticipate, the problem with (3) is just the phrase "all of". Social and institutional reality does have important features constructed in collective acceptance, but some features are generated by unintentional consequences, perhaps by invisible hand mechanisms, and they may be theorizable for example as game theoretical equilibria. Further, the problem with (2) is the word "wholly": social institutions consist not only of collectively accepted social norms but also social practices, activities and patterned collective behaviours. What about (1)? While role-organizations from hospitals to post offices are one of the three main types of institutions (the first two being general conceptual institutions like language and calendars, and then society-wide institutions with deontic powers, like marriage or property), it follows from Tuomela's we-mode analysis that an organization must be for

the benefit of all, the whole group, to count as a collective-social institution in Tuomela's strict sense. By contrast, "A business company… may not be an institution even for its employees (and still less for the larger community within which it operates)." (Tuomela 2002, 160). I would phrase this point so that an organization is of course an institution, but it need not involve we-mode collective acceptance. In any case, Tuomela's classifications of types of institutions are very helpful for assessing the aims of CA-theory (see Section One).

Sections Two and Three of this chapter then identify puzzles about collective acceptance and try outlining answers to them, without arguing in detail for or against the suggested answers.

The claim (4) goes to the heart of the collective acceptance view: what *is* acceptance in the relevant sense? If squirrel fur is money if and only if it is collectively accepted as money, what kind of thing is the "acceptance" in question, that is reflexively and performatively related to squirrel fur being money? Is it a special kind of attitude alongside beliefs and intentions? Now it is pretty clear that Tuomela regards acceptance as involving and leading to either beliefs or intentions, so it is not a new type of attitude side by side with them with a nature of its own. It rather somehow consists in them or is realizable in them. But then again, Tuomela (2002, 127) does write about the distinction between (voluntary) acceptance-beliefs and involuntary beliefs that arise from a belief-forming mechanism, e.g. from perceptions and other experiences (see Cohen 1992,Gilbert 2002, Hakli 2006). The "acceptance" in CA may or may not be such (below I will argue that Tuomela's *states* of collective acceptance are indeed best seen as acceptance-beliefs insofar as they are attitudes at all; defending this will amount to revising some other claims made by Tuomela).

Tuomela characterizes the relevant sort of acceptance in many ways, which do not all seem compatible. For example, he writes that "An acceptance state is a disposition to act intentionally" (2002, p.127) but also that "there is no conceptual room … for agreeing to accept s and not accepting s" (2002, p.130). But if accepting s is a disposition, surely there is conceptual room for agreeing to accept s (say, agreeing that everyone at workplace stops telling jokes about mathematicians) and failing to form the related disposition. It turns out that Tuomela distinguishes between the event of coming to accept and the state of accepting, and more can be said about that distinction to strengthen Tuomela's position. The idea that acceptance is an achievement notion like knowledge, creates a further tension, as does the question of whether acceptance is a mere attitude, or includes a disposition to act, perhaps a commitment to act, or perhaps action? And While Tuomela elsewhere (e.g. 2007, 185-6) toys with the idea that the relevant attitudes might have a "double direction of fit", it is better to put aside that idea altogether, as arguably no representation can have both directions of fit with the same content (see Laitinen 2014). It is admittedly somewhat puzzling that sometimes acceptance has the direction of fit of beliefs, and sometimes the direction of fit of intentions, but it is not conceptually impossible, like the idea of having both would be.

These questions about the nature of "acceptance" in collective acceptance will be discussed in Sections 2 ("Puzzles") and 3 ("Answering").

1. Which aspects of the social reality are socially constructed?

Tuomela puts forward his CA-view as an attempt to capture *socially constructed* aspects of the social and institutional reality. He contrasts such constructed aspects, dependent on collective intentionality, with ones that arise from invisible hand mechanisms.

> "(a) Collective intentionality is required for the creation and maintenance of at least some social structures, most importantly, social institutions. (Especially, the

> maintenance of social institutions will be argued … to require strong collective intentionality.) (b) Nevertheless, there are structural features – that especially economic theory has taught us about … – which are only unintended consequences of individual actions. These latter two claims are factual claims about our social world as we now have it. We can add to them the parallel and equally obvious factual theses that (c) collective intentionality does not generate all of society (social structures) and that (d) invisible hand mechanisms do not as a matter of fact generate all of society." (2002, p.122)

Tuomela, however, continues that in principle all of social reality and collective order could result in only one of those mechanisms:

> "[I]t is conceptually possible to construct ("design") at least social institutions – if not all social structures – on the basis of collective decision making and thus collective intentionality, and, as we all know, many of our institutions have in fact been so created. On the other hand, it is also a conceptual possibility that they are created and maintained by some kind of invisible hand process that does not involve collective intentionality. Thus, collective order can in principle (as a conceptual possibility) come about either by collective intentionality or by unintended consequences of I-mode intentional and nonintentional action" (2002, p.122).

Examples of phenomena where collective acceptance plays a direct role include:

> "(a) Tom and Jane love each other. (b) Tom and John are friends. (c) Jim is our leader. (d) It is our collective goal to get our lake cleaned up. (e) Squirrel furs are money for us. (f) Marriage obligates the spouses to take care of their children. (g) The policeman shows his badge to give impetus to his order. (h) The Deutsche Bank is a bank."(2002, p.135)

Structurally cumulative features such as wealth, power or unemployment typically depend on something else being collectively accepted, but are not themselves targets of collective acceptance, and can be unintended consequences of directly collectively accepted phenomena (2002, p.136). But there are also many phenomena which are fully independent of collective acceptance; Tuomela mentions social influence, social emotions such as envy or shared fear, sociological findings about social strata or social cohesiveness. Tuomela discusses these as test cases for his Collective Acceptance Thesis. He is satisfied that it captures the phenomena which indeed are dependent on collective acceptance, but does not claim that independent phenomena would be (2002, p.136).

Similarly, when discussing social institutions, Tuomela stresses that there are two equally important aspects: collective acceptance of norms that are constitutive of the institutional entities, properties and activities, *and* behavior in accordance with those norms - social practices.

> "I take an institution at bottom to be a system of social practices governed by a system of norms. The institution is one *for* the group, viz., for the benefit and use of the group in question."(Tuomela 2002, p.171)

Tuomela's account of social institutions (in the "standard sense", by which Tuomela means that it covers the three important cases of conceptual institutions such as language or calendar system, institutions with deontic powers such as money or property, and organizations consisting of roles with tasks and rights; but all which go further than mere behavioral regularities) is as follows:

> "(SI) Sentence s expresses a social institution (in the "standard" sense) for collective g if and only if
>
> (1) s expresses or entails the existence of a social practice (or a system of interconnected social practices) and a norm or a system of interconnected norms (including a constitutive one) for g, such that the social practice generally is performed at least in part because of the norm,
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> (2) the members of g rationally collectively accept s for g with collective commitment; here it is assumed that collective acceptance for the group entails and is entailed by the correct assertability of s."(2002, p.170)

We will below discuss more about Tuomela's approach via "sentence s" and some possible misunderstandings it may create. Here the basic idea is that the system of norms (e.g. rules of a game) can be expressed linguistically in a possibly very long sentence s, and those norms are in force when the sentence is accepted by the relevant community. The social institution does not consist in those norms or rules alone, but either in the social practice guided by those norms or rules, or in the pair of the practice and the rule. Thus, a social institution is not an abstract entity (only) but consists at bottom (also) of certain kind of action. "Institutions are special kinds of ordered pairs of social practices and norms (or systems of norms)." (Tuomela 2002, p.156).[1] And as clause (2) of SI suggests, the members are collectively committed to the behavior, which is relevant for the continuing existence of the institution.

As a terminological clarification, mostly Tuomela writes so that what is collectively accepted (for example the social norms) do not include the social practices, but corresponding social practices (repeatedly performed collective social actions) are essential in satisfying and maintaining the attitudes in which the acceptance consists:

> "Social institutions conceptually depend on collective acceptance, viz., on the group members' holding a relevant we-attitude, *and* on the social practices satisfying and maintaining those we-attitudes."(2002, p.7; italics added).
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> "Central aspects of sociality (and, as a consequence, of social reality), including social norms and social institutions, are created and maintained by collective acceptance *and* the social practices that the maintenance of collective acceptance requires."(2002, p.7; italics added).

[1] Or also: "In colloquial talk a social institution can be of various ontological kinds. As examples from literature and common parlance witness, there are at least the following possibilities for what ontological kind of entity a social institution prima facie is: (a) social practice – for example the old practice of sauna bathing on Saturdays in Finland; (b) object – money (as notes, coins, etc.); (c) property of an individual – for example being an owner; (d) linguistic entity – for example natural language; (e) interpersonal state – for example marriage; (f) social organization – for example the national postal system, a university."(2002, p. 161) He continues: "I will accept that social institutions can be conceptualized in these various ways, but I emphasize that they are all related to norm-governed social practices and signify some elements in them. Indeed, one can say even that a social institution ultimately amounts to a special kind of norm-governed social practice (or set of practices)."(2002, p. 161)

This suggests that mere attitudes (something inner, mental, subjective as it were) *in the absence of the practices* (something lifeworldly, located in the shared, public, social reality, for which Tuomela coins the term "groupjective") do not suffice. It is *not* true that, say, squirrel fur is money if and only if the group members hold relevant attitudes towards squirrel fur being money. The attitudes do not suffice for *effective collective acceptance* – the attitudes must be satisfied and maintained by social practices. Should the members have the attitudes in the absence of the social practices, their (fallible) attitudes would be faulty, mistaken, unsatisfied. And as Tuomela defines collective acceptance as an achievement or success term, in those cases there would be no collective acceptance. We will look in more detail this aspect of what exactly is collective acceptance, then, in Section Two.

Before that, let us add that Tuomela is however highly critical of the game-theoretical view that "a social institution is an equilibrium point in a repeated game" (2002, p. 157). He discusses Schotter's (1981) analysis and identifies no less than ten problems in it: for example, it misses the central role of social rules or norms and the related normative requirements for members, and it misses authority-based rules, and often there may not be an equilibrium at play (2002, p. 255-6). It might be more in line with Tuomela's analysis to suggest that such game-theoretical considerations or the real-world patterns of incentives may help explain why some institutions persist, but they are not an analysis what social institutions are. (On the other hand, Tuomela is also critical of Searle's analysis of institutions, which misses out too much of social conventions.)

Tuomela distinguishes three kinds of "standard" institutions that the CA-view aims to make sense of:

(1) "Language can be regarded as the most fundamental, underlying social institution" (2002, p.159). "People must rely on the correct use of concepts in all their other institutional and conceptual activities. Concepts can be regarded as rules to be mastered by people as skills" (*ibid.*).

(2) "Money, marriage and property are examples of institutional social objects and social institutions that typically are general, viz., society-wide."(2002, p.160). They are also examples of institutions where rights and obligations of the members are relevant.

(3) "Specific organizations involve specific positions and "task-right systems." (*ibid.*)

The reason why business companies may not be institutions in Tuomela's intended sense is not that they would not come with rights, obligations or specific positions, or that they would not be socially constructed. It is rather, that they would need not be "for the use of the group, and to further the group's basic purposes" (Tuomela 2002, 133) in the relevant sense of being accepted by the group, and work in benefit for the group, to satisfy Tuomela's Collective Acceptance View.

By contrast, as quoted above, "A business company… may not be an institution even for its employees (and still less for the larger community within which it operates)." (Tuomela 2002, 160). I would phrase this point so that an organization is of course an institution, and belongs to the constructed aspects of social reality, but need not involve we-mode collective acceptance.

2. Puzzles about Collective Acceptance

So far, so good. Let us now turn to the puzzles about collective acceptance. One puzzle about collective acceptance is related to collective acceptance being an achievement- or success-notion like knowledge. Take the case that squirrel fur is money if and only if it is collectively accepted as money. There can presumably be cases where squirrel fur is agreed to be money, and when asked, people could report that this is indeed so and would have no objections to it being so, but people

would not act accordingly, or would not have dispositions to act accordingly, or would not be subjectively committed to act accordingly – for example out of lack of trust. It is conceivable that squirrel fur is in principle accepted as money, but nonetheless people are only motivated and disposed to engage in direct barter. I think Tuomela would say that in such a scenario, squirrel fur would not be money, because the practical, behavioral element is missing in people's actions. If so, we would have to conclude that squirrel fur was not genuinely collectively accepted as money in the scenario. It is not collective acceptance if it does not deliver. We can save the biconditional by stating that collective acceptance (of squirrel fur as money) is whatever is needed for squirrel fur to be money. That "something" will presumably have to include actions in one way or another, or if acceptance in the relevant sense will turn out to be an attitude of some sort, it will need to be realized, satisfied, *effective* attitude (e.g. an intention on which one has acted).[2] So, the first puzzle is: is CA some kind attitude, or "anything" that works?

Another puzzle concerning "acceptance" concerns the kind of propositional attitude that it is or involves – what sort of entities does the "acceptance box" include, to use Tuomela's metaphor? Tuomela (2002, 137-38) is clear that the acceptance can lead to adding a new item to the "subbox" of beliefs, or to the "subbox" of intentions. Acceptance is one thing, and the resulting attitudinal state is another thing – sometimes an intention and sometimes a belief. Analogously, sometimes one buys apples and sometimes oranges, and the "buying" need not be an apple or an orange. But then, Tuomela also writes that the acceptance (as a continuing state) *is* either the state of belief, or the state of intending. Tuomela further discusses "acceptance as true" as a kind of belief (acceptance-belief), but seems to relate that not to the (collective) acceptance (i.e. what leads to new items being in a box, analogous to buying), but to the beliefs that enters the "subbox" (i.e. the attitude formed, analogous to apples bought). In a later work Tuomela (2007, 185-6) toys with the idea of double direction of fit, but Tuomela 2002 is clear that acceptance is either intention-like or belief-like.[3]

A third distinction that Tuomela makes is between the *event* of accepting and the *state* of acceptance. When connected to the previous two puzzles, a solution starts to emerge: arguably it is the event of accepting that is performatively related to the institution coming to existence, whereas the continuing state of collective acceptance is at any time required for the institution remaining in existence, and finally the event of collective acceptance being withdrawn (say, because the minimal threshold of sufficient collective acceptance, or sufficient practical realization, is no longer met) has a constitutive connection to something no longer being the case. One can further propose a clarification on two kinds of CA-events: on the one hand, intentional, agreement-like events, and on the other hand, possible datable "events" of the amount of acceptance states coming to meet the criterion of sufficiency at some point in time, so that the correlated institutional effect takes place.

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[2] As in Tuomela 2002, p.152, "Genuine holding of an attitude obviously also requires appropriately acting on the attitude in question."

[3] See e.g. Tuomela 2002, p.151, where CA is linked to we-attitudes with one or another direction of fit, and the claim is made that the CA is constituted by coming to hold and holding the we-attitude: "collective acceptance always results in and involves that the members of the collective come to hold *either* a conative we-attitude (one with the world-to-mind direction of fit) or a doxastic we-attitude (one with the mind-to-world direction of fit or the world-to-mind direction of fit – the latter when the belief is a constitutions institutional one) and in general also maintain, and act (or at least are disposed to act) on the basis of, the we-attitude in question. As argued, in the context of the formula (*CAT*) the we-attitude must be in the we-mode (at least for a substantial number of group members). We can then say that collective acceptance in a sense *is constituted by* the corresponding we-attitude (or, more precisely, by coming to hold and holding it)."(italics added).

A fourth, and main, source of puzzlement in Tuomela's approach is that the collective acceptance thesis is officially about "a sentence s" being "collective-social in a primary constructivist sense" and something being "true for a group"; to repeat:

> (*CAT*) A sentence s is *collective-social* in a primary constructivist sense in a group g if and only if it is true for group g that (a) the members of g collectively accept s, and that (b) they collectively accept s if and only if s is correctly assertable (or true) (*collective acceptance thesis*). (2002, p.132)

This may, as noted above, create the impression that collective acceptance is not anything remarkable, or anything so remarkable as to be able to lead to ontological changes in social reality. It seems merely a matter of some sentences gaining a certain status or standing in some group. Well, one could say, no doubt a sentence acquires the status of being "accepted (as true) in the group" if it is accepted (as true) in the group – how could it be otherwise? Further, when Tuomela (2002, 9, 102, 128-134; 139; 142; 207), illustrates what he has in mind in something being true or correctly assertible for a group, he imagines a Flat Earth Society, that collective accepts the sentence s= The earth is flat, and the members are thereby obligated to state that view (whether objectively true or not), when asked about the shape of the earth. That makes it sound that what is at stake is merely the standing of sentences in a group. Squirrel fur need not *be* money or the Earth need not *be* flat, even though the sentences stating so enjoy some status in the group. If that is so, how would Tuomela's CAT be of help in shedding light on whether and how squirrel fur *is* money? That is the fourth puzzle, that can be further shaped by the following:

In turns out that in the appendix, Tuomela nonetheless subscribes to the relevant ontological claims:

> "If squirrel fur is money then it must be (collectively) accepted in g to be money" (Tuomela 2002, 198).
>
> "Squirrel fur is money if it is (collectively) accepted to be money" (Tuomela 2002, 198).

Thus Tuomela does think that history books written by outsiders can make true claims such as that squirrel fur was money in Medieval Finland – there are facts (facts-for-anyone as it were) about how things have been in different group contexts. Such facts are not group-independent, so their grounds are not "objective" in the same sense as facts about stars and trees, but they are not subjective either, and Tuomela coins the term "groupjective" (close to what normally is called intersubjective validity) for the relevant kind of objectivity.[4] Given this, the puzzle takes the form of what is the connection between collective acceptance of sentences (as collective-social for the group) and of institutions or entities (as existing, or having some social property)? Is it so that the latter is analyzed in terms of the former, or other way around? In the next section we will try to answer these questions.

3. Answering the Puzzles about Collective Acceptance

[4] See Schweikard and Laitinen (2022) for discussion on four definitions of "realism" in social ontology. There is ample conceptual room for realism in social ontology concerning mind-dependent (and thus not strictly speaking "objective") properties and entities; Tuomela seems here more guarded than he needs to be. Below I will suggest that the fact that squirrel fur was money in medieval Finland (F_M) makes the sentence "squirrel fur is money in group F_M" true for anyone, it is not merely true-for-the-group. Yet, the fact is grounded in something group-dependent, whereas the shape of the earth is not. As facts they are equally objective, but the ground of one involves facts about a group, whereas the other does not.

Let us now try to tackle these puzzles. The aim is to preserve Tuomela's analysis and its ontological ambitions with a reconstruction that can answer the puzzles; this will require rejecting some of Tuomela's individual claims. I will tackle the puzzles in reverse order.

Tuomela (2002, 11) introduces collective acceptance by noting the difference between collective behavior that is not conditional on what other think or do, for example everyone opening their umbrellas when it starts to rain, and *collective-social* behavior proper, where people's actions are socially dependent on others, for example on social norms that have been accepted in the group. Similarly, all action for social reasons is not collective action – individuals can act socially in some sense of the word on their own. Tuomela focuses on collective-social action, which differs from collective but not social action (such as everyone opening their umbrellas) and minimally social but not collective action (such as an individual doing something for the sake of another individual).

Tuomela approaches collective-social behavior via cases where some sentence s is accepted as true for the group.[5] Different groups have a different *realms of concern* – library committees are interested in issues related to libraries, and football teams are interested in football, stamp collectors' clubs are interested in stamps and so on (pp. 37-9). Different groups can have the very same members, if they have a different realms of concern. Two groups sharing the same general realm of concerns, say, two book-reading clubs, may nonetheless accept different beliefs and intentions; there may be different contents in their "*intentional horizon*" that consists in the adopted attitudes (pp. 82, 124, 137-9).

The mechanism by which the collective accepts beliefs and intentions is collective acceptance. Tuomela analyzes this as acceptance of sentences as true, for the group. Thus, the first context of application of collective acceptance concerns groups which gradually build up their intentional horizon, accept new entries to their "subbox" of beliefs and their "subbox" of intentions (Tuomela 2002, pp. 137-38).

In more complex cases, the accepted sentence may express a system of constitutive norms, which the collective accepts for itself, thereby creating an institution (Tuomela 2002, ch. 6). Thus, what is directly the object of acceptance is a sentence, which expresses a rule, while the rule together with the members' actions of following the rule, constitutes the institution. Accepting a sentence is accepting it as true for the group.

Thus, even though we can speak about collective acceptance being directed at entities such as squirrel furs, or at institutions such as property, or at persons in such roles as a leader, these acceptances can be analyzed via *acceptance of sentences as true* for the group. That is at least how I understand Tuomela's 2002 account, for better or worse. We can say a norm is accepted in a group, or in force in a group, and this amounts to the sentence expressing the norm being accepted as true for the group. Thus, the answer to the fourth puzzle is that acceptance of sentences is the core phenomenon, whereas acceptances of institutions as existing and norms as valid and persons as leaders are to be analyzed in those terms.[6]

[5] Cf. also Tuomela & Balzer 1999, 176: "We formulate our approach by speaking mainly of the acceptance of collective ideas and thoughts, assumed to be linguistically expressible so that we can speak of the acceptance of sentences (with certain meanings or uses)."

[6] There may be benefits to sticking to propositional attitudes, rather than attitudes towards entities (such as recognition of persons, or acceptance of institutions or recognition of norms), although for other reasons these are important attitudes to analyze. See Ikäheimo & Laitinen 2007.

How then do any interesting ontological consequences follow, if acceptances concern only sentences?

One option would be to say that in the case of specifically *collective-social* phenomena, a sentence is accepted as true for the group if the sentence *is* true, and the sentence *is* true if it is accepted as true for the group. Squirrel fur being money seems to be that kind of case: squirrel fur really is money only if it is accepted as money. By contrast, the earth being flat or not is not that kind of case. The shape of earth is not dependent on collective acceptance. Thus, the suggestion might go, concerning collective-social phenomena such as acceptance of squirrel fur as money, acceptance of sentences has important ontological consequences, but accepting sentences about phenomena that are not collective-social but natural (e.g. earth not being flat) does not have ontological consequences.[7] In many ways, this might be a good solution to the puzzle.

However, this is not the way Tuomela uses "collective-social". For him, collective acceptance of the sentence "the earth is flat" is collective-social in the relevant sense; it differs from collective non-social action such as everyone opening their umbrellas for non-social reasons. (There can of course be a group whose members independently of each other come to hold that the earth is flat, but in Tuomela's example they collectively accept the sentence as assertible and "premisible" in the group). As a result, there may be obligations for members to assert that the earth is flat, when asked; there is collective commitment to holding the sentence true. Thus, the difference between accepting "squirrel fur is money" and "the earth is flat" is not in one being collective-social the other not: the collective acceptance of either sentence leads the sentence acquiring the status of "collective-social" for the group. So, we need a slightly different way to capture the difference.

Another option (the one I would personally favour) would be to say that there are facts about group-dependent entities such as money and facts about natural phenomena such as the shape of earth. As facts they are equally objective, and they serve to make anyone's (including outsiders' and future historians') sentences or thoughts true: "squirrel fur is money for the group F_M" is not merely true for the group, but true-for-anyone; or true, period. The difference is not in their being facts, but in what grounds the facts. Institutional facts depend on collective acceptance of relevant sentences (and thus what is "groupjective" is the ground, whereas the resulting fact – if it is a fact – is equally objective as any fact), but natural facts do not depend on collective acceptance (and thus their grounds are ontologically objective in the sense of being mind-independent, and not in Tuomela's terms "groupjective"). My understanding is that this parallel between facts about institutions and facts about natural events would be too strong for Tuomela, who would have favoured some kind of "internal realism" or retained some perspectivalism about truth-for-groups; but it is one way of tying the collective acceptance of sentences and ontological consequences.[8]

[7] I thank Raul Hakli for formulating this suggestion.

[8] See the exchange between Laitinen (2017) and Tuomela (2017) about realism and perspectivalism. The view outlined above can be called realism about (facts about) institutions. Tuomela wants to retain a stronger form of group-perspectivalism: "my ontological view is a combination of the second form of realism and group-perspectivalism". A number of Tuomela's other publications, such as 2007 and 2013, characterize his way of understanding the ontological difference between group-phenomena and natural phenomena. For him, reality is tied to causality, whereas others would allow for facts that are epiphenomenal or only normatively, but not causally, relevant. For a systematic discussion of realisms in social ontology, see Schweikard and Laitinen (2023).

This takes us to the question of *events* of acceptance and *states* of acceptance, and the third puzzle.

It seems overwhelmingly plausible to link CA-events to ontological changes in the institutional world (coming to accept and squirrel fur becoming money; ceasing to accept and squirrel fur ceasing to be money) and CA-states to maintaining the ontological states in the institutional world. That is, events go with events and states with states.

Approached in this way, something comes to existence or acquires institutional properties (say, squirrel furs acquire the property of being money) because the suitable CA-*event* takes place; and it is the CA-event that is a sufficient condition for squirrel furs becoming money. The suitable CA-event can in principle be of two sorts: first, it can be an intentional or explicit agreement, where the sentence is accepted as true for the group. There is no great puzzle on how agreements can have ontological consequences (they would be rather pointless, if agreements would not bring such things as contracts into existence). But secondly, it can in principle be that a sufficient number or quota of members comes to have the suitable member-level states, at some determinate point in time. At that very point, the ontological consequence takes place and squirrel furs acquire the property of being money. No visible change in the universe need to take place, as long as the sufficient conditions for squirrel fur being money have come to be met. This can be because of psychological changes in the members, say thanks to prior communication which has now led, perhaps after time-consuming deliberation by some, to the formation of suitable attitudes and behavioral dispositions in sufficiently many operative members of the group. Squirrel fur becoming money is an ontological consequence, but of what exactly, in this latter case? I suggest that we postulate that a CA-event must have taken place (when the relevant criteria were met), and thereby collective CA-state must have come to existence, grounded in the member-level states (we will below discuss what kind of state it is; perhaps it is a merely nominal or attributed state rather than a real intentional state of the collective; but even then, there are several options as to what kind of attributed state it is). That CA-event (collective acceptance as true of the sentence “squirrel fur is money” - or of a related Sellarsian dot-sentence expressing the same content as “squirrel fur is money” expresses in English) was sufficient for it to be true for the group that squirrel fur is money. And as it is true, there is a group-relative fact that squirrel fur is money, and as the fact includes the property of being money, this property exists for the group. And that fact and property, then, are the ontological consequences – squirrel fur has (really) acquired the property of being money for the group, and future historians can state truly that squirrel fur was money and became money then-and-then. (Even though it is mind-dependent and group-dependent, it can be real; see Schweikard & Laitinen 2022).

Corresponding to the CA-state of the collective, there are further beliefs and intentions by the collective and by the members. There is a normative requirement that the acceptance of the sentence shows up in other beliefs and intentions; especially, the members should be behaviorally disposed to act accordingly. Perhaps they are not, and in that case one could say that they violate “requirements of rationality” (Broome 2013) analyzable as ought-to-be -norms (Tuomela 2002, pp. 45ff., 178ff.).

If I understand Tuomela’s view correctly, there is a collective intentional state of acceptance, had by the collective, concerning sentence s, which entails a collective commitment to act accordingly, and it leads (in the happy cases) to the formation of suitably related behavioral dispositions and beliefs in the members, as well as to member-level commitments to act accordingly and sanctions those who

do not.[9] Without the members' commitments and dispositions, they would not act accordingly, and the institution would be in danger. This leads us to the scenario of the members' dispositions deteriorating over time, and at some point it may be that so few have the required member-level states, that the collective CA-state vanishes, with the ontological consequence of squirrel fur no longer being money. Again, there are two events constitutively related: the CA-state vanishes, and squirrel fur ceases to be money. Neither the squirrel fur or the collective vanishes, but they cease to have a property or they cease to be in a state.

On this reconstruction of Tuomela's views, we have a CA-event leading to a CA-state, persisting until a negative CA-event takes place. It is the CA-events that are constitutively tied to the institutional events of squirrel fur becoming money, and in the negative case, squirrel fur ceasing to be money. (The CA-state between the events need not have any ontological constitutive relation to institutional reality – we can think of the continuing existence as automatic until cancelled by the negative CA-event.)[10]. The primary target of the CA is a sentence, but it has ontological consequences on what could perhaps be called indirect targets, such as social and institutional entities and properties. The CA-events and CA-states are located at the level of the collective, but they are constitutively and normatively related to member-level events and states. That concludes our answer to the third puzzle.

With this clarification and reconstruction of CA-events and CA-states, let us now address the question whether the CA-state is an attitude, disposition to act, an intention, or a belief. On this proposed reconstruction, it remains true that the CA-event always leads to a CA-state. Thus we side with Tuomela's claim that "there is no conceptual room here for agreeing to accept s and not accepting s" (2002, p.130). But the collective CA-state is *not* a behavioral disposition – that claim by Tuomela needs to be revised. It is the members who have behavioral dispositions, backed by commitments to act. The collective CA-state is, like the CA-event, something at the "groupjective" level of the collective; just like norms are. The collective CA-state *is* not an intention or a goal either: the collective CA-state is that of acceptance as true of a sentence, to be *accompanied by* a collective intention, and the member-level intentions that come with it. Similarly, the CA-state at the collective level is to be accompanied by member-level beliefs. The nature of the collective CA-state seems to be that of "acceptance as true" i.e. acceptance-belief, so *pace* Tuomela's formulations in which it is e.g. a disposition to act, or sometimes an intention, a coherent reconstruction takes it to be what it seems to be: acceptance as true.[11] That is the answer to the second puzzle. (Tuomela in later books and articles developed his accounts of group-level and individual-level attitudes, and their constitutive, normative and causal relations further; I take the reconstruction that locates the CA-states and CA-events at the collective level to be in line with Tuomela 2007 and Tuomela 2013; with the proviso that Tuomela 2013 regards the intentional states of collectives as fictitious.).

So far, this reconstruction has tried to make sense of collective acceptance being an attitude of sorts, perhaps involving or rationally requiring dispositions to act, or commitments to action, and

[9] In whatever sense it is that collectives have intentional states – Tuomela later makes explicit that group's attitudes are in some relevant sense fictitious (see Tuomela 2013).

[10] Promises are a good example of how events make a difference, but the state does not need to be sustained by anything. The event of promising creates the obligation, and the promisor's or promisee's attitudes are not needed for sustaining the obligation, and the obligation vanishes only when fulfilled (an event), or when the promisee releases the promisor of the obligation (an event). It is possible to argue that similarly only CA-event have ontological consequences, and not the CA-state.

[11] Even though such a state has ontological consequences and so is in the business of "making" things and not merely "taking in", the temptation to say that it thereby has the direction of fit of intentions, is to be resisted. See Laitinen 2014.

located at the level of the collective and not at the level of the members. The final challenge (or the puzzle mentioned first in the previous section) is to make sense of reflexivity and performativity: it seems that squirrel fur being money requires not only Collective Acceptance of the related sentence, but also something like action, practice or patterns of behavior. Here, it seems that the best answer, in requiring minimal changes in Tuomela's claims, is the No True Scotsman – answer. The claims about reflexivity and performativity are true of *effective* collective acceptance, that is, collective acceptance accompanied by appropriate action. It is conceivable that otherwise similar collective acceptance, with membership-level dispositions, would exist, but countering dispositions (created e.g. by distrust) would block effective action. In that case we might say that there was in all other respects "genuine" collective acceptance which led for example to the formation of the relevant dispositions and commitments, but there *effective* collective acceptance was lacking: people did not act on the assumption that squirrel fur is money, and so squirrel fur was not money. Thus, whatever the state was that the collective and its members were in, it cannot have been *effective* collective acceptance. Reflexivity and performativity are true of effective collective acceptance only. And insofar as collective acceptance is an achievement notion, we must bite the bullet and grant that only effective collective acceptance is collective acceptance at all; the otherwise "genuine" state which is not effective, can only be an attempted collective acceptance, or ineffective "collective acceptance". All collective acceptance is effective collective acceptance.

Conclusion

This reconstruction of Tuomela's 2002 views has ended up defending the following claims:

1*) Organizations are institutions, with roles that come with rights and tasks, but some organizations such as business corporations may not have been designed for the benefit of the group, or collectively accepted by the group in the we-mode, so they do not meet all of Tuomela's criteria for we-mode collective-social institutions.

2*) The existence and nature of institutions is explained not only by collective acceptance (of sentences expressing constitutive norms of institutions) but also by related social practices.

3*) Much of social and institutional reality is constructed by humans, and the CA-theory captures such social construction. Tuomela allows, that other aspects of social and institutional reality may be generated e.g. by invisible hand mechanisms.

4*) Collective Acceptance events are the formations of Collective Acceptance states (and negative CA-events are the disappearances of CA-states). The CA-states are located at the level of the collective, and the attitudes of members are normatively, constitutively, and causally related to them. The collective CA-state is a collective version of acceptance as true of a sentence, i.e. a belief-acceptance. CA may require also collective intentions and goals, but the collective CA-state of acceptance as true of a sentence is a separate state from those practical states. As nothing can arguably have a double direction of fit, the collective CA-state does not have it either.

5*) An institution or a social entity exists if it is collectively accepted as existing; unlike trees and stars that exist independently. Talk about collective acceptance of institutions, persons, objects, properties is to be understood in terms of collective acceptance of sentences as true for a group, as in CAT. "(*CAT*) A sentence s is *collective-social* in a primary constructivist sense in a group g if and only if it is true for group g that (a) the members of g collectively accept s, and that (b) they collectively accept s if and only if s is correctly assertable (or true) (*collective acceptance thesis*)." (Tuomela 2002, p.132). Of the different ways of connecting collective acceptance of sentences to the

existence of institutions, the realist version distinguishing group-dependent and group-independent grounds of facts was favored.

6*) An institution is collectively accepted as existing if it exists. There is no way for an institution to exist if it is not collective accepted. While other aspects of social reality may exist independently of collective acceptance, institutions are not among them. Further, if an institution does not exist, the corresponding collective acceptance-state does not exist. This holds only of *effective* states of collective acceptance; but as collective acceptance is an achievement-notion, there are no other forms of collective acceptance

And, to repeat, there were two other claims mentioned but not examined in this chapter:

7) The key to social and institutional reality is the way in which organizations, other institutions, social practices, collective goals and beliefs, are always *for a group.*
8) Collective attitudes had in the we-mode (entailing collective commitment and the collectivity condition) are central in how things are for a group.[12]

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