Units of Decision

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I shall introduce the *units of decision* problem in the theory of decision, which as I shall explain is a sibling to the units of selection problem in evolutionary theory. And I shall present an argument to the effect that, contrary to Bayesian wisdom on the subject, undertaking decision in group settings (in multi-individual units) violates no precepts of rationality.

1. Introduction. There are two sorts of pressure exerted on the theory of decision, which pull in opposing directions. The first is exerted by a school of neoclassical economists which utilizes decision theory as a foundation for microeconomics, and hopes that microeconomics will itself serve, ultimately, as a foundation for the scientific treatment of all macro social phenomena. This pressure comes in the form of a demand that decision theory be compatible with so-called *methodological individualism* (MI), the doctrine (roughly) that the behavior of the large-scale is a function solely of the behavior of its parts, taken as atoms. It is meant as a corollary of physical mechanics. And this doctrine is typically conjoined with a second, when the subject is human behavior—namely, that the atomic behavior attributed to an individual must be truly rational, self-serving behavior. MI is animated by the commonplace that no group can act independently of its members.[1] But despite the fact that the meaning of MI is not uniform among its adherents, and also that it is questionable whether microeconomics

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1. Buchanan (1987, 586) is most eloquent on the point: "Only individuals choose and act. Collectivities, as such, neither choose nor act, and analysis that proceeds as if they do is not within the accepted scientific canon."

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itself requires MI, or can even accommodate it,[2] commitment to MI, on the part of its friends, is resolute.[3]

The second sort of pressure on decision theory comes from political theorists, historians and legal scholars. It is the demand that decisions enacted in ritualized group settings, and especially in legislative and judicial forums, admit of being viewed as in some way expressing a legal or social intention—a collective will. This is no expression of a primordial need for (groundless) reassurance to the effect that lawmakers and judicial bodies are parental figures, acting in the interests of their political charges. Rather, it is a prerequisite of being able to conceive of law and public policy as potentially just. For to treat laws as just requires interpreting laws as more than mere inscriptions. And if there is no such thing as an aim that the law in question is to serve, which can be attributed in some shape to the body (*as* a body) in whose name laws are enacted, there can be no more to laws than mere inscriptions. This point does not in any way deny that sometimes laws are not just; rather, it is to claim that, even the mere possibility of an unjust law presupposes a legal, supra-individual standard. And this, precisely, is what presupposes a collective intention that goes beyond the individual intentions of individual lawmakers.

The philosophical majority, like the overwhelming majority of decision theorists, has tended to side with the economists, or at least to take their concerns more seriously, as scientific. I shall argue precisely the opposite—namely, that MI has to be abandoned, *precisely* because we need to explain, scientifically, the phenomenon of coordination. MI might originally deserve our allegiance, but when it fails as systematically as it has done, particularly when it comes to explaining ubiquitous coordination and collaboration, it is time to reconsider it.

2. Individualism and its Shortcomings: A Brief Sketch. Ever since Thomas Hobbes we have sought to explain certain cooperative social behavior—such extraordinarily commonplace facts as that prudent people trust each other, keep promises and succeed by and large at coordinating so as not to collide in corridors and roadways. But it is by far the success that meets us more than half way, in those instances where we aim at such things as collision-free passage, that is the most perplexing of all social phenomena. Decisions like those involved in achieving collision-free passage are known as *pure coordination* problems, because they do not involve conflict of interest. They are problems purely because we are creatures that enjoy the capability for realizing, and enjoying as

2. See Kincaid 1995.

3. See Rosenberg 1995, 359.

common knowledge, the fact that there are (inconveniently) many ways whereby to achieve the freedom from collision sought by all. However, our success in true-life pure coordination settings is absolutely stunning. We successfully pass hundreds if not thousands of strangers in passageways every day, distribute indistinguishable parcels and papers, and organize ourselves around symmetrical tables, all without appointing experts in indecision resolution or even stopping to exchange words about how to proceed. And the numbers in which we do this successfully, without missing a beat, outrun our failures in magnitudes so remarkable we hardly notice our efforts as efforts, much less as successful ones. And ever since Thomas Schelling we have been suspecting that traditional game theory, even when finally arrayed in its finest Bayesian garments, will never explain this success. (This is, for example, a goal of Harsanyi and Selten's monumental work (1988) on equilibrium selection, although as they themselves acknowledge, the goal is never reached. And more recent attempts are no more successful.[4])

More than 30 years ago Kenneth Arrow showed that there is, in principle, a barrier to obtaining a single preference ordering, as a function purely of the preference orderings of a minimally diverse group of individuals, that could in good conscience be attributed to the group as an entity. In other words, that aims construed purely individualistically do not aggregate in the right way for the legal scholars' purposes. One natural reaction—and in fact mine—is to reject MI on the strength of this result, as on it the ritualized behavior of decision-making bodies becomes unintelligible. If MI makes large-scale decision-making unintelligible, so much the worse for MI. A second reaction is to put this one on its head: so much the worse for the intelligibility of the large

4. See also Harsanyi 1975. In the Postscript to their 1988, Harsanyi and Selten write (p. 356): "This means that our theory uses two independent, and ostensibly very different, criteria of rationality. One of them, risk dominance, is based on *individual* rationality: it is an extension of Bayesian rationality from one-person decisions to n-person games involving strategic interaction among n players, each of them guided by Bayesian rationality. . . . In contrast, payoff dominance is based on *collective* rationality: it is based on the assumption that in the absence of special reasons to the contrary, rational players will choose an equilibrium point yielding all of them higher payoffs, rather than one yielding them lower payoffs. That is to say, it is based on the assumption that rational individuals will cooperate in pursuing their common interests if the conditions permit them to do so."

Brian Skyrms (1990) offers a somewhat related treatment. The basic idea of his proposal is that in order to achieve a specific enough definition of a dilemma to reach a compelling solution, we must model also the knowledge of players, as to how they assess the *other* players are initially likely to play, and also to update systematically their opinions of each others' opinions, iterating the updating process until there is convergence. This proposal, as I show in "Degrees of Freedom in the Social World" (forthcoming), is unsuccessful.

scale. And this is in fact the route taken by Arrow's successors, that school of thinking now known as Bayesian decision theory, which is guided by the idea that decision within a group setting does not deserve a separate category of its own. The Bayesian goal is assimilative: to handle the overt process of public deliberation as a series of strategic bargaining moves, in an enterprise of individual-against-individual within an apparent coalition.

But the Bayesian treatment does not serve the needs of legal or political theorists, because on the Bayesian analysis, the bargaining activity is itself viewed as governed by rules of multiple-player interaction, and therefore *not* as something which someone can undergo purely as a single, unified rational entity. Under the Bayesian proposal, it thus becomes *impossible* to view the process of deliberation with others as a potential means to reaching collective decision, and therefore as a means of forming a single but larger decision-making body aiming at a common goal. The process of deliberation is instead viewed exclusively as a means for each participant to reach an individual end, within a purely competitive framework. In this lies the individualism of conventional game theory.

A certain argument, then, becomes unavoidable: because there is no such thing as a public interest, there can be no such thing as a true public institution—and particularly not a legislative body—in service of that interest. Thus in the public choice literature, within which much of political, social and legal philosophy now moves, the arena of public legislation is sometimes portrayed as the dominion of special interests, sometimes as the passive reflection of self-interested voting, and sometimes as the casino in which any outcome whatever is possible.[5] It is an arena in which the outcome is, at its most intelligible and predictable, the result of special interest engineers (lobbyists, for example) working behind the scenes, exchanging bribes, threats and promises for votes that serve the masters whose interests it is in their own interests to serve.

I shall not argue at length here the deficiencies of Bayesian decision analysis, as I have done so elsewhere (Thalos forthcoming). Suffice it here to say that Bayesians deny themselves the ability to explain true-life feats of coordination, as well as true-life cooperation when there is conflicting as well as overlapping interests, by denying decision-makers the capacity to form *true* alliances. In this essay I will explore how we must mend our view of the human endowment, so as to make explaining coordination, among other things, possible. What I shall do here is show how, logically, problems of pure coordination can be handled

5. See Farber and Frickey 1991 and Hardin 1982.

as instances of the problem concerning the units of decision. I will also show how a solution to the problem of pure coordination can be extended to the problem of explaining cooperation when conflicting interests are also involved.

The individualist objects to the distributed (multi-minded) self. But it does not follow, from the requirement that *selves* shall remain undistributed, that decision-making *bodies* should remain undistributed as well. And by distributing decision-making, we can discharge explanatory obligations that purely individualistic accounts cannot meet. But first, a general discussion of the sort of explanations we seek to mount.

3. Why Do People Do What They Do? This, through and through, is a scientific question. And it can be raised in many ways. For example, why, *psychologically,* do people do what they do? (How does the human psyche support the sort of behavior we want explained?) Or, why, in evolutionary terms, do people do what they do? (How does their behavior promote their evolutionary advantage, and thus tend toward its reproduction in successive generations?) Or, why, in economic terms, do people do what they do? (How does their behavior maximize a return, in the terms in which they measure their own success?) The first two questions come together in the hands of those who labor in the fields of evolutionary psychology and sociobiology: how has the human psyche adapted so as to promote its own evolutionary advantage?

How are such questions answered within the human sciences? Is there a general formula? Social sciences that treat large-scale behavior are heavily influenced by the evolutionary approach to explaining natural phenomena, and population genetics in particular. Economics, evolutionary psychology and evolutionary ecology have settled on what may at first glance seem a sterile way of handling the behaviors they aspire to explain. They introduce a certain fiction—namely, that behavior is undertaken as a means to solving a certain decision problem, through maximizing a return on some investment. Now these disciplines do not view individuals as *themselves* carrying out the calculation that solves the decision problem. Nor, even, do they view individuals as understanding their situations in terms of decision problems that call for solution via a cost-benefit calculus. Nonetheless they view the behavior as *best explained* on a model that weighs certain costs and benefits. And there is a growing school of social scientists directing enormous creative energies towards founding a quantitative science of culture and anthropology, in this same vein.[6]

6. The preeminent examples of this school are Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1981, Boyd and Richerson 1985, and Cosmides and Tooby 1992.

Someone might be tempted to complain that this way of viewing human affairs presupposes what is obviously false—namely, that as a general rule, individuals are but little affected by sentiment, habits of love bestowed by caregivers, moral feeling for fellow human beings, and social relations in general. And the critic might further insist that, contrary to the proposal, these other things have more to do with explaining human conduct, in the warm world of action, than does cold, crass calculation of costs to benefits. In actual human life, according to the criticism, social decision-making, rather than individual decision-making, is the original form, or fundament, of human interaction; all other forms of human interaction, and in particular the competitive forms, flow from it, and so are derivative. However, this criticism does not take seriously the fact that, when it comes to explaining human behavior, at least on the large scale, what counts is *not* explaining why on any given occasion the individuals in question are predisposed to that behavior. For scientists of the large scale do not aspire to explain instances of this or that independently, on a case-by-case basis. Rather, what counts is explaining why, precisely, such behavior in fact *goes* large-scale. For the goal is to offer a historical account of the prevalence of such behavior, on an evolutionary time-scale. In other words, they are not so much seeking to illuminate the immediate origins of individual motivation for the behavior in question, on any given occasion, as they are after illuminating why that behavior—*as such*—prospers under the conditions of human life. And this has more to do with why people who undertake it are successful in the evolutionary sense of the term—successful, that is, in winning for themselves the opportunity as well as the license to reproduce their behavior, in larger numbers than competitors for the same opportunities. The fiction serves as a convenient shorthand for an evolutionary process, which selects the most advantageous behavior from a certain range. Thus the objection misses the point of the fiction: the fiction serves to illuminate the behavior to be explained, as undertaken by a psyche evolved through the process of natural selection to deal most cost-effectively with its environment.

Thus there is a normative component to scientific explanations of the large-scale. For explaining the prevalence of a piece of behavior is synonymous with illuminating that behavior *as surpassingly prudent in the evolutionary sense*, whether or not those who undertake it do so in the name of prudence. Thus it has everything to do with justifying or recommending that behavior to someone seeking the sort of success measured in evolutionary terms, under similar circumstances. And this fact is what justifies utilizing a model known to be fictitious (and borrowing one from that discipline—namely rational choice theory—

which famously specializes in such models). Justifying and explaining come together, when we are seeking an account of why some piece of behavior *prevails*. And it is not at all obvious that sentiment, habit of love, moral feeling, or general sociality, can be awarded the stamp of approval of a theory designed to advise individuals in the direction of how best to achieve evolutionary goals. Thus we cannot, in the course of explaining some trait *as an historically evolved social phenomenon*, assign to fellow feeling or general sociality, an explanatory role it is scarcely able to fulfill.

Now, because the theory of evolution and the theory of prudence are thus linked, the problem of identifying the appropriate decision-making unit at which to direct the mandates of prudence, is parallel to and linked with the problem of identifying the so-called *units of selection* in evolutionary theory. Identifying the units of selection consists in identifying the form of the law governing natural selection: what are the units in nature to which can belong a natural adaptation? In other words, when we say that natural selection operates by giving advantage to the most fit among an assemblage of competitors, we need to answer the question: most fit *what*? What is the category of entity, of which nature throws up variations, and on the assemblage of which natural selection acts? And can there be more than one such category?

The same set of issues precisely pertain to the theory of decision. Identifying the units of decision, then, consists in identifying the form that directives of prudence can take: what are the units in nature to which they can be directed? In other words, when we say that prudence requires such-and-such, we need to answer the question: of *whom*? What is the category of entity to which imperatives of prudence can be directed in any given set of circumstances? And can there be more than one such category?

My answer is that imperatives of prudence are directed at *every* category of entity to which the notion of utility can be said to apply, but that not every type of entity is in a position, always and everywhere, to heed an imperative directed at it by prudence. Furthermore, if an organism or individual is in a position to heed multiple (conflicting) directives aimed at units of which she is either whole or part, prudence does not *also* decree *which* of these directives is the more binding. The individual in question can choose to heed any one, without being in violation of the laws of prudence. The individual has a choice. In other words, I believe that there is no unique answer to the question of the units of decision.

My answer to the units question turns on a certain understanding of the nature of prudence, namely that it is purely instrumental: prudence does not dictate the aims, but only the means.[7] For I view the

units question as partly a choice of aims. It is, at any rate, a choice of *scale* or *perspective,* from which aims themselves are assessed and processed. Answers opposed to mine undertake to dictate also the choice of aims or perspectives. They propose to offer an account of prudence which is not purely hypothetical, but partly also categorical. In my view, the categorical should not be handled within a theory of prudence. Here is why.

The position I am espousing—namely, that the formation of units within which individuals undertake decision-making cannot be regulated by prudence—is of course in opposition to the doctrine according to which the units matter is itself to be resolved by prudence. If this *opposed* doctrine were correct, it would follow that if I make a misstep in the choice of units in which to undertake decision, I will be subject to rational censure. And this, in turn, presupposes that there can be a basis from which such a censure can be issued—namely, aims or preferences that my mischoice of units will betray. But this is precisely what is in question: the identification of aims or preferences which one cannot betray. Thus, I can think of no argument for the opposition doctrine, that does not itself presuppose a choice of units.

Here, now, is how I propose to flesh out my answer to the question of units.

4. Deciding About Units. In addition to deliberating internally about how to achieve non-negotiable aims, humans also deliberate, independently, over whether or not to collaborate with others to achieve these aims. And they do so on a level that is removed from the nuts-and-bolts deliberation about how to achieve non-negotiable aims. (This is contrary to the Bayesian analysis, which asks decision-makers to rank only outcomes, never means *as such* to the outcomes they prefer. Thus, the Bayesian views every decision to collaborate, purely as a decision to achieve such-and-such aim *through* cooperative, friendly behavior, and never on an independent plane.)

7. The doctrine descends from Hume, who held that practical reasoning is instrumental, means-ends reasoning through and through. There is no place in practical reason for figuring out what is worth wanting, and no point anyway, since one cannot want at will. One is in no position to decide to desire; one either does or does not, and deciding simply cannot swing matters one way or the other. Russell (1954, viii) is a follower of Hume on this point: " 'Reason' signifies the choice of the right means to an end that you wish to achieve. It has nothing whatever to do with the choice of ends." Simon (1983, 7–8), too: "Reason is wholly instrumental. It cannot tell us where to go; at best it can tell us how to get there. It is a gun for hire that can be employed in the service of any goals we have, good or bad."

The independent decision to collaborate does not violate any principle of rationality, as I have claimed. How could it? It comes prior to any potential application of such principles, because it comes prior to the identification of the units of decision. Thus my suggestion is that decision theory has got to separate the decision to collaborate, from the nuts-and-bolts decision about how to proceed in achieving aims. And, furthermore, to view the higher-level decision, whether to collaborate or not, as strongly outcome-insensitive and context-sensitive—that is, to view the choice of units as not testable directly by whether the selection of units (indirectly) maximizes achievement of individual aims. Thus my proposal is that we view rational decision-making as carried on at two levels, possibly simultaneously, whereas by contrast the tradition I oppose views all decision-making as carried out at a single level.

It is easy to see how my proposal will dispose of pure coordination problems. The choice of a supra-individual decision unit—no longer N units of decision but one, say—automatically dissolves such a problem. A choice to choose *as a single body* avoids the risks of miscoordination. Of course, *how* a group of individuals achieves decision *as a body* is a problem for metaphysics. And it is a difficult problem. It is the joint at which a theory of decision must meet a theory of action. What an account that handles this problem has to do is to identify a psychological process by which degrees of freedom can be reduced in a decision-making system. (I have offered an account of how this occurs in Thalos (forthcoming), so will not repeat it here.) But it is not difficult to see, logically, how once we move from N decision-making units to just one, the problems of coordination are dissolved—because, logically speaking, the very notion of miscoordination is inapplicable when we have one unit taking action and not a multiplicity. We can model the move, logically, as a move from the 2 × 2 decision-matrix of Figure 1, inter-

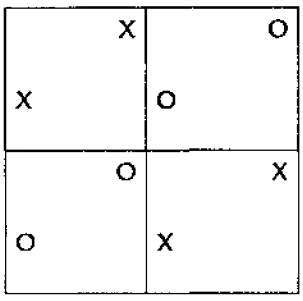

Figure 1

preted as a problem with two degrees of freedom, to the 2 × 2 decision-matrix of Figure 2, in which the problem is to choose an *outcome*. In the latter problem, the outcome dictates two individual but correlated actions.

The pure coordination problem is thus a limit point, where the burden of such an account as mine lies entirely in the theory of action which must be its natural complement. However there will be ramifications of my proposal in the arena of mixed-motive games as well—games in which there exists substantive conflict of interest, as well as overlap. And these can be glimpsed if we look at the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD).[8] The PD is a particularly poignant illustration of how, when each of a group of individuals facing similar decisions deliberates individually, in the name of advancing individual aims as far as possible, carriage of the decisions thus achieved results in a worse outcome for *each* of the individual aims concerned than would have resulted had the parties collaborated to advance combined aims. (Figure 3 is a standard quantitative representation of the PD.)

The accepted view about the PD is that neither player has incentive of any kind to cooperate. For each does better by individual aims through non-cooperation, no matter what the other does. This being the case, the matter is settled: rationality dictates non-cooperation. Thus, on this view, when I am in a PD, it does not matter in the least if I can anticipate a willingness on your part to form a coalition. For

X & X	O & O
O & O	X & X

Figure 2

1,1	4,0
0, 4	3,3

Figure 3

8. See Kuhn et al. 1995 for a discussion of the varieties of Prisoner's Dilemmas.

whatever you do, I do better *by my own aims* through unconditional non-cooperation. Precisely this is what individualists think makes it rational for me to hold myself back from forming a coalition, and irrational not, despite the predictable sub-optimal outcomes for the group as a whole.

We will do well to keep in mind that the PD does more than simply highlight the familiar fact that my personal *interests* can come into conflict with yours, in the style of *noir* tragedy—as would be suggested by the prisoner fiction that normally accompanies discussion of the PD and which gives the problem its color. To be sure, it does this as well. But what the PD does more profoundly is illustrate the difficulties for choice that arise when our *aims* come, tragically, into conflict. This can happen whether our aims are selfish or noble. Thus, a dilemma in which our interests overlap—for example, a PD-like occasion in which each of us has an interest in the other's advancement—but in which my one and only aim is to advance *your* interests and yours alone, and in which your one and only aim is to advance *my* interests and mine alone, might also take the shape of a PD, provided conditions are in the following way unfavorable: when each of us elects the option calculated solely to advance the interests of the other, our combined actions bring about a result in which each of our aims is more poorly achieved than they would have been had each of us chosen the alternative option.[9] Hence the PD brings to attention questions that must be faced by a theory of prudence—specifically, questions of how to proceed, in the name of prudence, in those circumstances where our aims come into conflict with those of prudent others, whose reasoning we are in a position to replicate because they are sufficiently like ourselves. The PD is not solved, but rather avoided, when certain aims (namely, those directed at increase of self) are abandoned in favor of others (for example, ones directed at increase of others), so long as one insists on solving the decision problem in the individual mode.

Thus, there is no way to transcend a PD by changing one's individual aims, perhaps by embracing aims of others as one's own. But does this mean that there is no way to transcend a PD? By the individualist's lights, there is not. But not by my lights: on my account, the way to transcend the PD is to change *units* in which one approaches decision-making, by moving to a higher-level decision-making body. Logically speaking, this is done through decreasing the degrees of freedom in the situation. (How this is done *metaphysically* is, once again, be-

9. O. Henry's story, "The Gift of the Magi," might be seen as an illustration of this fact. See Sen 1974 for a related discussion of these things. See also Parfit 1986 for the characterization of the Prisoner's Dilemma as an *I-We dilemma.*

yond the scope of this paper; I offer a proposal in my forthcoming.) Once the transformation is wrought, the problem becomes as depicted in Figure 4.

Thus, when we allow a choice of decision units, we can admit of cooperative solutions to the single-episode PD. This insight will help us explain how, in practice, provision of public goods as well as division of labor is achieved.[10]

5. The Economic Provision of Public Goods. There is considerable general controversy, in moral and political philosophy, over how to strike a balance between promoting the general welfare, on the one hand, and guarding individual rights and liberties, on the other hand. For advancement of the one goal tends to erode gains made on the other. There is a tension—a conflict of sorts—between the common good and the good of citizens taken individually. Politicians see this tension as a conflict between political ideals—between the ideals of the political left and those of the political right. Political and moral theorists see it as a tension between individual prerogatives or aims, on one side, and universal satisfaction of basic needs and wants on the other. Economists see it as a tension between market considerations and perfect overall economic efficiency (a perfect balance between supply and demand). Each of these tensions, I maintain, either flows from, or results in, the distinctly human capacity to conduct decision-making—whether political, moral or economic—on two distinct, independent planes. The oppositions between aims and efficiencies (to which the moral theorists and economists direct attention) are oppositions between the interests of persons and collectives, and as such *result* in problems for decision. While the oppositions between ideals and schools of political theory

2	4
4	6

Figure 4

10. This does not mean that on my account no one is ever subject to a PD. What it does mean is that individuals are subject to PD inasmuch as the aims of the *unit in which they are undertaking decision* are in conflict with the aims of another decision-making unit. So the potential for PD is with us so long as we undertake decision in any non-universal body.

are oppositions that result from having embraced certain (possibly dogmatic) positions on how those decision problems should be solved. I believe therefore that the job of working out these tensions in a non-dogmatic, or at least a reflective fashion, is, fundamentally, a job for the theory of decision. I shall discuss the subject with economics in mind. But everything I shall say applies equally, with appropriate modifications, to the moral and political.

Economists in recent times have debated the best means to providing public goods like clean air and national defense. Public goods are defined as those services which, once provided at someone's cost, can be offered to everyone at no further expense. (The economists' term for this feature is *non-excludability*.) So, once someone has paid for protection of U.S. borders, say, those within the borders, even those who have not paid, can enjoy border protection at no extra charge to anyone. Consequently, provision of such goods is subject to the potential for free-riding: each potential consumer of that good would rather be amongst those who have not paid than amongst those who have. So if we leave it up to individuals to provide themselves border protection at their own expense, the cost of national defense would never be paid, in spite of there being a high demand for it (and hence a distributed preparedness to contribute a total in excess of the cost of its provision). This is a market failure: a sub-optimal allocation of resources. Market failure here is an under-production of the good to meet demand. But there can also be a government failure. Suppose only a mere handful of citizens value border protection: the total value of such a good to those who want it is less than the cost of providing it. Then providing national defense, by any scheme, would be another sub-optimal allocation of resources. It can come only through an expenditure of political capital on the part of those who do want it. And the result can only be overproduction of a good not in much demand.

Economists have defined two categories of alternative means to provision of public goods—market and government—in such a way as suggests that the two categories are mutually exclusive. For example, James Buchanan (1978, 7) writes, "Since the alternative to the market is in practice the state, and both are imperfect, the choice between them is made on the judgment of the comparative consequences of market failure and government failure."

I am arguing that we need to carve out a domain of analysis, within the theory of decision, in which the tensions between the two types of analysis receive a fundamental sort of attention. I propose that there must be a higher level of decision-making, at which the choice is made either to advance or to retard the general welfare, in preference to advancing or retarding the individual good or aim. The difference be-

tween what I am proposing and treatments I oppose is that I deny the proposition that the decision to collaborate is always an individual decision, and remains so at every stage of analysis. Thus I oppose the doctrine according to which collective decision-making on the one hand, and individual decision-making on the other, are mutually exclusive enterprises, and with it the doctrine to the effect that humans ought to undertake decision in units of one. I view each form of decision analysis as alive and well, and as distinct, each from the other, but also as coming together at a fundamental level of decision-making. There is conflict between them, to be sure, but not complete and utter incompatibility. And the evidence is simply that human beings routinely and seamlessly integrate collective and individual decision-making within a single, unified social psyche.[11] (Those humans who don't do so are routinely categorized as suffering some form of cognitive deficiency—some form of autism that disables normal social functioning.) How humans achieve this integration, precisely—which no doubt will have to include how individuals trade off the benefits of individuality, in psychological rather than concrete (utility) terms, against the benefits of group membership—has yet to be worked out. But do it they do, and no mistake. Can a theory of decision embrace the principles underlying this human capacity? This question needs to be wrestled with.

Of course, someone might object that each domain of analysis (economics, ethics, politics) faces working out its respective tension *in its own terms*, because there is no general, domain-neutral formula for handling tensions of this sort. So, for example, the economist will have to trade off market failure against political failure, in economic terms. (If market failure brings about a more sub-optimal outcome, reckoned in economic terms, than would a political failure, then presumably we should go with the political solution in preference to the market solution. We shall have to proceed in these things on a case-by-case basis.) Likewise, the moral theorist will have to handle tensions between the collective and the individual in moral terms. But I reply that we cannot hold an autonomy thesis of this magnitude without argument. The best argument would be that we have tried to handle the tensions together but failed. To my knowledge, as of this date, that argument cannot be made.

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