

JOHN A. MICHAEL, AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO STUDYING JOINT COMMITMENT IN NON-HUMAN ANIMALS

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The ability to form joint commitments has been highlighted as a crucial factor stabilizing joint actions among humans, and thereby underpinning characteristically human forms of sociality. While similar abilities in animals may shed light on the evolution of joint commitment, they remain challenging to detect unambiguously. We revisit joint commitment in non-human animals, and suggest that progress in identifying homologous or analogous abilities has been hampered by the adoption of an approach which builds human-specific cognitive mechanisms into the definition of joint commitment. To move forward, we propose a framework which does not presuppose characteristically human forms of cognition, communication, or awareness. The framework specifies a series of criteria, each of which can be operationalised, investigated empirically, and must be met for joint commitment to be demonstrated. Our framework is sufficiently broad to include paradigmatic cases of joint action in humans as well as cases of joint commitment in non-human animals. This will enable us to identify mechanisms which humans share with other animals, as well as to home in on uniquely human mechanisms, as well as differences across species.

John Michael completed his PhD in philosophy at the University of Vienna in 2010. He has held faculty positions in philosophy and psychology at the University of Warwick and the University of Stirling (UK), and is currently an associate professor at the Cognition and Action Lab and the Philosophy Department at the University of Milan. His research interests include the sense of commitment, self-control, cooperation and joint action. He was the recipient of an ERC starting grant investigating the sense of commitment in joint action (2016-2021), and a winner of the Leverhulme Prize for Early Career Excellence in 2017.



Together with Francesco Guala, he has just begun a large-scale project, funded by the Italian Fund for Science (FIS), investigating joint commitment in great apes, canids and corvids, as well as cross-culturally in humans.

The Seminar takes place at University Vienna, UBB, Djerassiplatz 1, 1030 Vienna, at seminar room 5.1. (5th floor) or via Zoom. With the following link you can enter the Zoom meeting directly or use the Zoom-Client, Meeting-ID: 989 3919 0732, Kenncode: 033461
<https://univiena.zoom.us/j/98939190732?pwd=bEh4bGtXVE43cVc4ck1OUUFPUFVBYz09>