



Joint commitment

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Joint Commitment

ABSTRACT – I defend some of Gilbert’s central claims about our capacity jointly to commit ourselves, and what follows from an exercise of it. I argue that, to explain these claims, we do not need to suppose, as Gilbert does, that we ever are jointly committed, that is, jointly in a state of being committed. I offer a diagnosis of why the gratuitousness of this supposition has been overlooked.

Gilbert’s guiding idea

Gilbert’s guiding idea is that a plurality of parties can jointly commit themselves to doing something.

When we talk of commitment, we might mean something normative: obligation, roughly. Or something psychological: resolve, roughly. While the two things may often go together, they can easily come apart. Gilbert uses ‘commitment’ and its cognates for the normative phenomenon:

...the notion of commitment at issue here is a normative notion, not a psychological or causal one. The broadest such notion is simply this: one is committed in some way if and only if there is something that, all else being equal, one ought to do. (Gilbert 2018, 161-2).

For Gilbert, once parties have jointly committed themselves, each is committed, hence obligated, to the others, to do her part of, or something towards, what they have jointly committed themselves to doing. She thinks, too, that once parties have jointly committed themselves, none can unilaterally relinquish her own commitment or obligation. She must do this jointly, with the others. (Gilbert 2013, *passim*).

This much is true, isn’t it? I would say, indeed, that it is *straightforwardly* true (which is not to deny that it is a truth of importance to philosophers). Consider an everyday exchange such as:

A: ‘Shall we go to Liverpool, then?’
B: ‘Ok, let’s’.

It’s true, isn’t it, that by this exchange A and B can commit themselves to taking the trip? Think of what it is like to be A or B. One is apt to be aware, as the exchange completes, and subsequently, of something’s having been settled, and of this committing one to the trip. Taking the phenomenology at face value (which I see no reason not to do) A and B commit themselves, then. But neither does this by herself. Neither would have committed herself had the other not done as she did. They make the commitment jointly, then. Typically, this too will be in the phenomenology: each will be aware of performing a self-committing act, *with* the other. Relatedly, typically, each will be aware that as she did not settle the matter by herself, but with the other, while she can ignore the commitment (and while this may, all things considered, be the right thing to do) she cannot, by herself, make it go away – that is, that unless they revisit the matter jointly, it continues to bind her.

We should, then, I think, *grant* Gilbert that we have a capacity jointly to commit ourselves, and that an exercise of it leaves individual parties committed, with an obligation to the others that she cannot by herself waive. Perhaps A and B’s joint act of committing themselves is grounded in illocutionary acts with singular subjects – acts, say, of proposal and acceptance.¹ But it remains a

¹ I wonder whether proposal and acceptance can really have singular subjects. Each is characteristically made using either words like ‘We’ or both ‘I’ and ‘you’. On some views (Rödl 2014, 2015, Thompson 2012) by such speech acts parties can *share* in a thought not shared -- and, perhaps, not shareable -- by others. For some complete or incomplete thought, they reflexively think themselves to partake or be subjects of it.

joint act of committing, of causing A and B to be committed. And it is a mistake, I would say, to see its “joint-ness” as presenting a philosophical problem, something we must have an *account* of, and, ideally, a reductive one. The fact that we *do* sometimes jointly commit ourselves is more certain, and better understood, than any proposed reduction. We should, to turn the tables, have a problem with any account of sociality on which we *never* jointly committed ourselves; it will struggle to save the appearances.²

Gilbert’s observation is important because, by jointly committing themselves, agents make available new descriptions of further acts or omissions of theirs, individual and joint: they can go on to “implement” or “violate”, “remember” or “forget” the commitment. Relatedly, they make available new explanations and justifications: one might do something *in order to* implement the commitment, rebuke another *because* she did not respect it, and so on. Hence even if, *pace* Gilbert, we cannot trace every instance of joint action back to an exercise of the capacity for joint commitment,³ parties’ exercise of it is typically of explanatory relevance to what they go on to do, and not do, both singly and jointly. Any adequate philosophy of action ought to take note of it, then.

A barnacle on the boat

How is it that when we jointly commit ourselves, this leaves each of us committed?

Part of the explanation is surely that to commit some person or persons just is to cause them to become committed, much as to open something is to cause it to become open, to empty something is to cause it to become empty, and to align something is to cause it to become aligned. The verbs here are *causatives*; they predicate a causing of some change(s), by which something comes to be some way, a way that is semantically encoded by the adjectival form of the verb.⁴

But this cannot be the whole story. To see this, contrast *emptying* with *aligning*, where the object of the verb is plural. Suppose that I empty the bins. To do so is to cause them *each* to become empty. It is not to cause them *jointly* to become empty. I do not know what it would be for bins *jointly* to be empty! Emptiness is a state that a thing can be in; not one that several things can jointly be in. When I empty the bins, I cause each of them to be in a state of emptiness; I therein cause them to be in some states of emptiness: one each. I do not cause them *jointly* to become empty, that is, to be in a single state of emptiness. To repeat, I do not know what that even would be.

When I *align* the bins, things are different. The property of being aligned can be singly had, but when it is, this is because or by virtue of the fact that it is jointly (collectively) had. A single thing *can* be aligned. It is just that its being so is derivative of the fact that some things of which it is one are jointly aligned (compare the property of being married). The property of being aligned is such that its collective instantiation is upstream, explanatorily, of its singular instantiation. To align the bins, then, is to cause them *jointly* to become aligned, and, thereby, derivatively, each to be aligned.

² See in this connection Bratman’s boast that, by showing how our actions can be guided by individuals’ plans that refer to and depend on each other in complex ways he “tries to provide a broadly reductive, multifaceted theory of that in which “joint-ness” or “shared-ness” [of intention and action] consists” whereas, by contrast “if we were to ask Gilbert what makes a commitment a *joint* commitment—in what does the *joint-ness* of the commitment consist—the answer would be that this joint-ness is a primitive, nonreducible phenomenon” (Bratman 2014, 114). I might add that to complain that Bratman’s account of sociality has *no* place for joint commitment is not to endorse Gilbert’s tendency to think that there is *always* joint commitment in sociality.

³ See for example (Gilbert 2013, 34, 89; 2006, 146; 2000, 131).

⁴ Some may balk at the idea that a normative change can be a relatum of causation. I am not wedded to the word ‘cause’, but I assume that normative changes can be brought about, produced or determined.

The contrast between emptying and aligning bins holds if we give the verb a plural subject⁵ as well as object: for *us* jointly to empty the bins is for us jointly to cause them each to become empty. For us to do this, it need not be that, for each bin, we jointly cause *it* to be empty: each of us may be tasked with a single bin. For all that, if we jointly empty the bins, we thereby jointly cause them each to become empty. For us jointly to align the bins is, by contrast, for us jointly to cause them *jointly* to become aligned, and, thereby, derivatively, for us to cause them each to be aligned.

The point holds also if we deploy the verb reflexively. We can imagine robot bins that can jointly empty and align themselves.⁶ For robot bins jointly to empty themselves is for them jointly to cause themselves each to become empty. It is not for them jointly to cause themselves *jointly* to become empty. By contrast, for robot bins jointly to align themselves is for them jointly to cause themselves jointly to become aligned, and thereby, derivatively, each aligned.

The point of this excursus on bins ought now to be clear. A good question for us is whether *committing* is more like *emptying* or more like *aligning*.

If committing patterns with emptying, we have a pretty minimal explanation of how it is that when we jointly commit ourselves, this leaves each of us committed. It is that for us jointly to commit ourselves just is for us jointly to cause ourselves each to become committed.

If committing patterns with aligning, then we have a slightly more complex explanation. It is that for us jointly to commit ourselves just is for us jointly to cause ourselves jointly to become committed, and thereby, derivatively, jointly to cause ourselves each to become committed.

Gilbert herself appears to favour the latter explanation. For her,

...we *are* jointly committed if we *have* jointly committed ourselves. (Gilbert 2018, 164).

That is, we are as self-aligning bins are: jointly aligned if they have jointly aligned themselves, and not as self-emptying bins are: each empty, if they have jointly emptied themselves.

For Gilbert, it is not simply that by jointly committing themselves, parties jointly make it the case that *each* is committed. There is an interim step. By jointly committing themselves, parties jointly make it the case that they are jointly committed, and it is by virtue of *this* fact that each is committed. Individuals' states of being committed are "derivative" of or "dependent" on a state of being committed that they are jointly in.⁷ For each party, the upshot for her of having jointly committed with the others, is that there is something that, all else being equal, she ought to do, but this is derivative of their being something that, all else being equal, the parties jointly ought to do.

The explanation favoured by Gilbert features an extra wheel, then, a joint or collective "ought" or obligation, one predicable of a plurality, and from which individually predicable "ought"s or obligations flow. It is a *directed* obligation: the parties collectively *owe* performance of the commitment *to themselves*. Gilbert doesn't, as far as I know, explicitly associate being jointly committed with collective reflexive obligation (to ourselves). However, she has associated it with the correlative idea of a collective reflexive right (against ourselves). For, in an intriguing passage, having noted that jointly committing parties "comprise the *creator* of the commitment" (Gilbert 2006, 135), she goes on to say that

⁵ I use 'plural subject' not in Gilbert's sense, but simply to mean a semantically plural subject noun phrase.

⁶ How could bins *jointly* empty themselves? One can imagine a procedure by which bin A lifts bins A, B and C onto a platform, bin B upends the three bins by lifting the platform, and bin C puts the bins back into position.

⁷ See for example (Gilbert 2013, 7-8, 32, 41).

...the creator of the joint commitment can say of the conforming actions of each one that in an important sense it *owns* these actions... Until they are possessed, they are *owed* to the one who owns them. Their owner, if anyone, has the standing to demand them. For their owner is in a position to say of each conforming action 'Give me that, *it's mine!*' (Gilbert 2006, 154).

Since the 'creator' is a plurality, this right of ownership and correlative right to possess, demand, rebuke etc. is a collective right, from which individuals' correlative rights are derivative:

Suppose, then, that I have helped to create a joint commitment whose subject I and the relevant others now comprise. Given that I owe conforming actions of mine to the creator of the commitment, as such, what about those other individuals who, along with me, comprise it? It is plausible to suppose that any one of these individuals is in a position to demand conforming actions from me in the name of this creator, by virtue of his constitutive relationship to it. Thus he does not demand it in his own name, or as this particular person, but as co-creator of the joint commitment and co-owner of the actions in question. He is thus in a position to say, 'That action is *ours!* Perform it!' (Gilbert 2006, 154-5).

Since rights *against* come with correlative obligations *to*, presumably also had by "the creator of the commitment", I assume that Gilbert also thinks that the parties to a joint commitment collectively "owe" conforming actions to the creator (themselves), hence, all else being equal, ought to deliver them, and that facts about what they individually owe to each other, and individually ought to do, derive from this. Hence "we *are* jointly committed if we *have* jointly committed".

This extra wheel, a state of being committed that agents are jointly in, strikes me as an idle one. Nothing of importance would be lost were it purged from the account. It isn't needed to explain any of the elements of Gilbert's guiding idea. The simpler, more parsimonious explanation requires only that committing patterns with emptying, i.e., that jointly to commit is jointly to cause *each* to become committed. For when we jointly commit ourselves (by an exchange such as A's and B's) we put ourselves into individual states of being committed openly, jointly and simultaneously. Is this not enough to explain both why each owes it to the others to do her part of what they jointly committed themselves to doing, and why none can unilaterally relinquish her own commitment or obligation?

One might think that committing must pattern with aligning because, when we jointly commit ourselves, what we commit ourselves *to* will typically be some action(s) the performance of which requires a contribution from each of us. It cannot be that in jointly committing to such a thing we jointly cause *each* to be committed to doing something that requires a contribution from others as well as herself. We must then jointly cause ourselves *jointly* to be committed to doing the thing.

The objection is to a strawman. No-one thinks, and nobody need think, that for us to jointly commit is for us jointly to cause each of us to be committed to doing *by herself* the thing to which we jointly committed. Everyone must allow (as Gilbert does) that it is jointly to cause each to be committed to doing that thing, to which we jointly committed, *jointly with others* -- that is, to do her part of it, or something towards it. The issue is whether we can only cause ourselves each to be committed in this way by causing ourselves jointly to be committed. And I see no reason to think so.

One might think that committing must pattern with aligning if we are to explain Gilbert's observation that once we have jointly committed ourselves, no one can unilaterally relinquish or waive her own commitment or obligation. But the simplest, most parsimonious explanation of this observation is this: the commitments were jointly undertaken. Because the parties openly jointly brought about the individual states of being committed, none can unilaterally give up her own.

One might think that committing patterns with aligning because, unless individual states of being committed derive from a collective state, each party lacks the standing or authority to be in her state. I cannot be committed to do something *with you*, unless I am committed *with you*. I don't see this. If we are put into our individual states openly, jointly and simultaneously, by a joint act of committing ourselves, is this not enough to ensure that each has the standing to be in her state?

The simpler account is also better supported by the phenomenology. My best description of what it is like to be obligated as a result of having jointly committed, with others, is simply this: one feels a debt or obligation to the others because one has, with them, jointly committed to doing something. It is not that one feels a debt or obligation to the others because one, and those others, *jointly owe it to themselves* to do that thing. The former description is pretty close to what I think the naïve but reflective non-theorist would say. The latter is an extravagant departure from this.

It might be argued, further, that the postulation of a joint state of being committed is not only gratuitous (explanatorily redundant) but incoherent. I do not press that charge. I see no reason to doubt that there are collective obligations, "ought"s and, more generally, reasons for action. For all that, it must be said that many *do* express scepticism about such things. If Gilbert's account is just as explanatory when purged of collective obligation, then she would do well to frame it in those terms, if only to ensure that it is more dialectically effective against those who harbour such doubts.

Diagnosis

I have argued that the postulation of a state of being committed that agents jointly are in, is gratuitous: an idle wheel or barnacle on Gilbert's boat. Why have people, including Gilbert, not seen that her account is much more straightforward and intuitive, and just as explanatory, without it?

The answer may be that it is easy to confuse the claim that

...we *are* jointly committed if we *have* jointly committed ourselves. (Gilbert 2018, 164).

with something else. First, I show that it is easy to confuse it with a trivially true claim. Then, I shall show it that it is easy to confuse it with a more substantial proposition, which may very well be true.

The trivial proposition

We saw that to open something is to cause it to become open, to empty something is to cause it to become empty, and so on, with causative verbs.

A present perfect predication of such a verb entails a present tense one of the adjective:

- The door is open if someone has opened it
- The bins are empty if we have emptied them

Notice that the same does not hold for the simple past tense: if someone opened the door, it may not still be open, but if someone has opened it, this implies that it is now open.⁸

⁸ Discount contexts such as this one: 'Have you ever opened the door for anyone?' 'Yes, as it happens, I have opened the door for someone: I opened the door for my headteacher when I was a child'. Here one's interest is not in the state of the door but in the experience of its opener: *she* is in a state of having had the experience. In the jargon, we are restricting our focus to the *resultative* perfect, and excluding the *experiential* perfect. See (Graham 1980).

Likewise

A We are committed if we have committed ourselves

Again, if we committed ourselves yesterday (simple past tense), it does not follow that we are now committed: we may have rescinded or discharged our commitment(s) in the interim. But if we have committed ourselves, this implies that we are still committed.⁹

Now from this alone we cannot derive Gilbert's claim.

A* We are jointly committed if we have jointly committed ourselves

This does not follow, any more than it follows from the fact that bins are empty if we have emptied them, that the bins are jointly empty if we have jointly emptied them.

But now, notice this. A present perfect predication *also* entails a passivization, thus:

- The door has been opened if someone has opened it
- The bins have been emptied if we have emptied them

Likewise:

B We have been committed if we have committed ourselves

From this we *can* move to

B* We have been jointly committed if we have jointly committed ourselves

This is trivially true, by passivization, in much the same way as it is trivially true that if we have jointly emptied the bins, then the bins have been jointly emptied.

The point now is that B* might be conflated with A*, for two reasons.

The first is that these are generic claims, and, perhaps especially in philosophy, we often make such claims using passive constructions put into a "timeless" habitual present. Hence where the passivization might more properly require the present perfect continuous, as in

- If a belief has been formed by a reliable method, then...
- When an experience has been caused by a deviant causal path...
- Once a disposition has been triggered...

It is naturally recast with a present tense copula combining with the past participle, thus

- If a belief is formed by a reliable method, then...
- When an experience is caused by a deviant causal path...
- Once a disposition is triggered...

Similarly, generic claims about what happens once we have jointly committed ourselves, might get expressed in terms of what happens when we are jointly committed (where 'committed' here serves as a past participle, not an adjective and 'are' is a timeless re-rendering of 'have been').

⁹ As per the previous note, certain contexts can be discounted.

The second point is that unlike the verbs 'to open' and 'to empty', the verb 'to commit' does not inflect for the difference between occurring as a past participle and occurring as an adjective. Even when using a "timeless" passive, we can distinguish

- Once the door is opened....
- If the bin is emptied...

from

- Once the door is open...
- If the bin is empty...

But we cannot do so with 'to commit'.

Possibly then, what moves Gilbert to write

...we *are* jointly committed if we *have* jointly committed ourselves. (Gilbert 2018, 164).

And, indeed, to strengthen the claim

...we *are* jointly committed in my sense if and only if we *have* jointly committed ourselves. (Gilbert 2018, 161).

and what moves her sympathisers to agree, is the compelling force of the trivial truth, by passivization that

...we *have been* jointly committed (by ourselves) if(f) we *have* jointly committed ourselves.

This truth must be distinguished from the claim I have argued to be gratuitous, namely that

...we *are* jointly committed if(f) we *have* jointly committed ourselves.

To say that bins have been jointly emptied (as it may be, by themselves) is not to say that they are jointly empty. Likewise, to say that we have been jointly committed (by ourselves) is not to say that we are jointly committed.

The non-trivial proposition

Gilbert holds that a state of being jointly committed is the *product* of an act of jointly committing ourselves:

...we *are* jointly committed in my sense if and only if we *have* jointly committed ourselves. That is, our being jointly committed is a state or condition that is the product of a particular process. (Gilbert 2018, 161).

There are good reasons for thinking that when we jointly commit ourselves, this joint act *does* have a product, also that this product plays a role similar the one that, according to Gilbert, is played by a state of being jointly committed. But this product is not a state of being committed that agents are jointly in. Nor does its existence suffice for the truth of "we *are* jointly committed".

Let me explain. Moltmann (reviving ideas of Twardowski) has recently argued that cognitive and illocutionary acts have products, similar to the laws and artworks produced by lawmaking and artistic activity.¹⁰ An act of deciding produces a decision, a judging a judgement, a promising a promise, a claiming a claim, and a committing a commitment. These products are, on Moltmann's account, distinct from acts, e.g. of deciding and committing, their contents, which may be act-types (e.g. *to raise my arm*) or propositions (*that I raise my arm*), and states, e.g. of being committed. One reason for thinking so is that nominals like 'request', 'decision' and 'commitment' seem to refer to things with a range of properties that no corresponding act, state or content has. Hence

... a request can be fulfilled or ignored, a decision implemented, a command executed... An act of requesting (or a speech act) cannot be fulfilled, an act of deciding (or a mental act) cannot be implemented, and an act of command cannot be executed.... Advice can be followed, but an act of advising cannot be followed in that same sense. A recommendation can be taken up or ignored, but an act of recommending cannot, at least not in the same sense. (Moltmann 2019, to appear).

Likewise, a commitment can be implemented, violated, respected, ignored and so on. An act of committing cannot. Furthermore, states and contents pattern with acts in this respect. Neither a state of being committed nor the content of the state can be implemented, violated, respected and so on. It is the commitment itself that has these features, of guiding, and being satisfied by actions.

While contents of acts and attitudes (act-types or propositions) are generally held to be abstract, requests, decisions, commitments and so on seem not to be. They are created entities, hence mind-dependent and temporally located. And they are causally efficacious also, although unlike the corresponding acts and states, they always cause things by virtue of their contents:

If Mary's claim caused a commotion, this implies that the content (conveyed by Mary) was causally responsible; by contrast, if Mary's speech act caused a commotion, this implication does not hold. If an answer caused surprise, this implies that the content was the subject of surprise; but not so if an act of answering caused surprise... A decision may cause an action on the part of the agent, and that can only be in virtue of its content. This is not so for a mental act of deciding... (Moltmann 2019, to appear).

Finally, requests, decisions, commitments and so on, despite not being abstract,

have a part structure strictly based on partial content, not the temporal part structure of events or states. This is most obvious from the way part of is understood when applying to an attitudinal object. 'Part of John's decision' cannot be 'part of the action of deciding'. 'Part of John's claim' cannot be 'part of the speech act of claiming'. 'Part of John's answer' cannot be 'part of John's act of answering'. (Moltmann 2019, to appear).

There are then, it seems, the commitment, its content,¹¹ the act of making it (of committing), and the state(s) of being committed (by it). We must keep these distinctions in mind.

It is especially important to distinguish a commitment from a state of being committed because they are both brought into being by an act of committing. One might describe each, then, as a *product*. For all that they differ. In addition to the differences already sketched, they appear to have different temporal profiles. A commitment, like a promise, judgement or decision would seem to have a momentary existence: it does not persist beyond the time at which it is made. Granted such things can *stand, remain valid, or apply* beyond this time. But for them to do so is for some

¹⁰ See (Moltmann 2019, to appear; 2017), among other articles, also (Twardowski 1999).

¹¹ (Moltmann 2019, to appear) suggests that her product ontology enables us to eliminate, or at least, show to be derivative, propositional and other abstract contents. This need not concern us here.

corresponding state(s) of being committed, or being obligated, or believing, or intending to persist. To remain in such a state is to remain, broadly speaking, *directed* by the thing (as it may be, the commitment, promise, judgement, or decision) that has been made, where the notion of *direction* could be given either a normative (deontic) or a psychological (motivational) gloss.¹²

The distinction between the momentary product and the longer-lived ensuing state is easily seen with promises, judgements and decisions, because we use different words for each. I promise, and then *am obligated*; I judge and then *believe*; I decide and then *intend*. It would be arcane to say that I *am* promised, or *am* decided, and we cannot say, in the relevant sense, that I *am* judged. But we use cognates of 'commit' to characterize both the product (the commitment made) and the ensuing state or states of commitment (of being committed). So the difference is harder to see.

If this is right, then there is a product that comes into existence if and only if, and when and only when, we have jointly committed ourselves. It is the commitment that we jointly have made. Hence, it is true, and non-trivially that

...there is a commitment that is jointly ours if(f) we have jointly committed ourselves.

But this claim is distinct from, and does not obviously entail that

...we *are* jointly committed if(f) we *have* jointly committed ourselves.

For to jointly produce, and hence acquire a commitment à la Moltmann need not involve coming to be jointly committed. Nothing rules out the possibility that when we jointly commit ourselves, we therein jointly make a commitment, and are thereby each committed, by, or because of this. A commitment is one thing, being committed another. And I see no reason to doubt (and some reason to think) that a commitment that is ours (our joint handiwork) might simply result in each of us being committed, and not in our being jointly committed.

A commitment à la Moltmann is not an idle wheel: it has an explanatory significance. It will be the commitment, not the associated act, state(s), or content, that agents implement, violate, remember or forget, the commitment that agents do things *in order to* implement, and which serves as a ground for rebukes, demands and so on. In particular, it will be the commitment that binds its parties, or that explains why it is that they are bound.

A plausible, non-trivial claim is then that once we have jointly committed ourselves, there is a product of our action that is jointly ours, and that by, or because of it we are severally committed and obligated. This claim, I submit, is easily confused with a claim I think Gilbert cannot justify, namely that once we have jointly committed ourselves, there is a product of our action that is our being jointly committed, which individual states of being committed derive from, or depend upon.

Conclusion

Gilbert has made a career out of joint commitment (this is no criticism: good on her). But while the idea has been influential, no-one I think has made the observations that I have made here.

¹² (Moltmann 2017) also thinks that, with promises and commitments, there is both a short-lived cognitive or illocutionary product (the promise or commitment) and a persisting deontic product (the obligation of the promise or commitment). But she does not, as far as I know, draw the parallel with decision and judgement as short-lived illocutionary products with further persisting *guiding* or *directing* products (states of intending and believing). Nor does she characterize the deontic product of a commitment as a state of being committed.

Some writers reject Gilbert's ideas on joint commitment. They doubt that we ever are jointly committed and that we ever have jointly committed ourselves. For them Gilbert's claim that

...we *are* jointly committed if we *have* jointly committed ourselves. (Gilbert 2018, 164).

is vacuously true, like

there *are* unicorns if we *have seen* unicorns.

I have sketched a different response. Like Gilbert, I think the antecedent of her claim is often true. But I doubt the conditional. Very often, we *have* jointly committed ourselves, but it is doubtful, and gratuitous to suppose that we *are* jointly committed. Gilbert's most important claims require only we can jointly make it the case that we are committed, not that we ever are jointly committed. The deflated Gilbertian view recommended here may seem insufficiently transformative to some friends of Gilbert. But it is, I hope, to her critics, less contentious and obscure than her actual view.

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