It is understandable why philosophers have expended so much effort in the attempt to understand the use of the personal pronoun ‘I’. Our concepts of the person and the self are, after all, derived from this use, and such concepts are central to the philosophic enterprise. But such attention to ‘I’ does not justify the neglect bestowed on the equally important plural ‘we’ and second person ‘you’. Margaret Gilbert’s recent *On Social Facts* focuses on our use of ‘we’, and must be applauded as a welcome righting of this egocentric imbalance. My aim here is to outline the features of ‘we’ selected for attention by Gilbert, note some situations in which the fail to apply, and then briefly describe some alternative uses of this pronoun.

1. *Gilbert’s Theory*
In her book (SF, 146-152) Gilbert cites the view of the sociologist Georg Simmel that human groups capable of joint action consist of members who share beliefs, wants, hopes, and other psychological attitudes. As a means for explaining and predicting group behavior such sharing is indeed a necessary condition, since we explain and predict in terms of common wants and beliefs. Why have the Russians been hoarding food this past Fall? The answer might be that they feared a shortage in the winter, and believed hoarding was necessary to provide sufficient food. To explain the behavior of the members of the group referred to by the plural ‘Russians’ is to cite shared fear and belief, and hence the use of the term would seem to presuppose at least some common attitudes and some readiness for common action, though not necessarily the fear and belief used to explain a specific action. Similar sharing would also seem presupposed by any general
term referring to groups, whether these be economic classes ('workers', 'managers'), ethnic group ('blacks', 'whites', 'Asians'), or communities ('New Yorkers'), for which explanation and prediction of group behavior is possible.

But Simmel doesn't simply require that group members share psychological attitudes and readiness for joint action. He requires also that they also be aware or be "conscious" of these attitudes and joint readiness. For Gilbert this becomes translated into the view that they be able to use 'we' sentences presupposing some sharing of attitudes. Accordingly, she describes the 'central use' of 'we' (SF,147) as that of referring to members of a social group that includes the speaker using the pronoun. Membership in this group must satisfy certain conditions that she first states in a general way. They require that members share psychological attitudes and participate together in some action, but impose no requirement of mutual awareness of these attitudes.

'We' refers to a set of people each of whom shares with oneself in some action, belief, attitude, or other such attribute (SF,201).

A more complete statement of conditions is given when she analyzes the use of 'we' as used in deliberations about collective action within sentences of the form 'Shall we do A?', as in 'Shall we clean the room (build a bridge, march together in protest, etc.)?'. For such a "full-blooded" use necessary and sufficient conditions are stated in the following form:

A person X's full-blooded use of 'we' in 'Shall we do A?' with respect to Y, Z, and himself, is appropriate if and only if it expresses his recognition of the fact that he and the others are jointly ready to share in doing A in relevant circumstances (SF, 199).

Joint readiness to perform A exists, Gilbert claims, if and only if there is common knowledge among the group's members that each has expressed willingness to participate in some joint action in the relevant circumstances. Presumably for the central use of 'we' that she is describing to be "appropriate" is for the pronoun to refer to individuals X, Y, Z, ... satisfying this set of conditions.