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Edited by Ivana Markova, Carl F. Graumann and Klaus Foppa

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CHAPTER I

*Commonality, mutuality, reciprocity:
A conceptual introduction**Carl F. Graumann*

SHARING

Whenever two or more people meet and engage in a dialogue or conversation they share something. Sharing, i.e. having something in common, will be used here in two ways: (1) Interactants must have something in common in order to be able to enter into and sustain a dialogue; (2) the dialogue itself is a special kind of sharing or of establishing and maintaining commonality, namely by means of symbolic exchange in face-to-face situations (Luckmann, 1990).

Two brief introductory examples may be sufficient to illustrate this distinction between sharing as a prerequisite, and sharing as the essence of dialogue, i.e. as a 'symbolic face-to-face oral and gestural communication' (Marková, 1990, p. 6).

The first example,

A: Hi!

B: Hi!

is one of the shortest verbal types of greeting and, in a given linguistic community, a possible opening to a dialogue. It is easy to show that this adjacency pair presupposes, as well as establishes, commonality. By greeting B with 'Hi!', A presupposes that

in A's and B's common culture 'Hi!' is an informal way of greeting, B is one of those persons who can and may informally be greeted with 'Hi!', and

the present setting is a proper situation in which to approach and speak to B. (Other presuppositions will be discussed below.)

However, only when B reciprocates with 'Hi!' (or with some other mode of greeting), is the commonality of A's knowledge dialogically confirmed. Or, more carefully phrased, B's 'Hi!' indicates that B is able and willing to share A's politeness by reciprocating it. Taking 'Hi!' as a

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sign of politeness or even of friendliness, we understand that this brief greeting sequence is a symbolic exchange, the symbolic value here being politeness. Since politeness, as any other manner of interpersonal relationship, implies a set of rules, the knowledge common to A and B is both the knowledge with regard to contents and to procedure (procedural knowledge). At least, for our understanding of dialogue our knowledge of *how* to say something is just as important as knowing *what* to say.

One may debate whether or not this first example is dialogical. It certainly is a symbolic face-to-face oral and (usually) gestural communication. However, equally certain, a mere exchange of greetings lacks the content or topic of a normal dialogue. To approach an initial understanding of what sharing a topic presupposes a further example is necessary. For our introductory purposes the second example can again be very brief:

A: That's a pretty one.

B: You really think so?

While the three types of presupposition identified above that make the greeting sequence intelligible also hold for our second example, a few additional specifications must be made:

A's utterance refers B to an object X that A knows to be perceived by B. For A's statement to be understandable and answerable, X must be in the common, i.e., perceptually shared environment of both A and B;

A's statement is the expression (or disclosure) of a specific (aesthetic) position or perspective that A takes with respect to X;

Expressing this perspective *vis-à-vis* B signifies that A thinks that B is both capable and willing to pass (aesthetic) judgement on X;

At the same time, in addressing B, A is inviting B, however casually, to reciprocate by either sharing or, at least, responding to A's judgement;

B's utterance, in turn, confirms (a) the commonality of X, (b) that A's perspective has been understood as a possible position from which to evaluate objects like X, (c) that B feels able and willing to reciprocate, namely to react to A's judgement;

B's interrogative type of response, however, is ambiguous. It either leaves open the question as to whether B will share A's judgement, or it is a hedged way of B's disagreeing with A.

However, whether agreement or disagreement emerges in the

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further course of the dialogue, in both cases the prerequisite is that B takes the perspective set by A, either to adopt, to reject, or to modify it (Graumann, 1990). Sharing is an activity. It is not restricted to what A and B *have* in common. It involves what A and B *do* with respect to each other.

These two examples were meant to introduce into a problem-field what the contributors to this volume have tried to indicate with the hypothetical plural form 'mutualities in dialogue'. Why mutuality has been chosen as the key concept should become evident in the arguments and chapters that follow.

MUTUALITY – A KEY ISSUE IN THE STUDY OF SOCIAL LIFE

Judging from the ubiquity of mutuality terms in the social sciences, mutuality, however defined, must be a central issue in the study of social life. Although phenomena of mutuality are the subject of interest in such diverse disciplines as anthropology, ethology, sociology, social psychology, economics, political science and ethics, they are described in different and frequently fuzzy terms. Why this is so can be apparent even from the most general meaning of 'mutuality' as the term is used in ordinary language. If mutuality refers to actions and feelings of all individuals as long as they are related to others and, hence, if it characterizes social interaction and interdependence, any science dealing with social life, with how society is realized in and through social action, must necessarily make use of terms taken from the 'mutuality' family.

At least, for a social psychologist who is concerned with the dialectics of the individual and society, 'social' always means what Wundt, the author of *Völkerpsychologie*, called *die Wechselwirkung der Individuen* (Wundt, 1975, p.20), a term which we may translate either as 'mutual' or as 'reciprocal' interaction. In any case it is the term for an 'active mutual other-orientation'.

Mutual other-orientation is also a constituent of dialogues since in dialogues, as in any fully-fledged communication, participants are mutually related to each other through discourse. The question is how?; or, more precisely, how many discernible kinds of mutual other-relatedness are there? Hence, the plural form of 'mutualities in dialogue'.

We may gain a first impression of this plurality by way of a brief and selective review of the major usages of 'mutuality' terms in ordinary language (a dictionary and encyclopedia approach restricted to three

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languages: English, French and German).¹ We will then consider, again selectively, the conceptual and theoretical uses of ‘mutuality’ terms in some of the social and behavioural sciences. In both sections the inevitable selectivity is justified by our desire to present evidence for a differential usage of terms of mutual ‘other-directedness’ in the study of dialogues.

THE GENERAL LINGUISTIC USAGE: A SELECTIVE USAGE OF
‘MUTUALITY’ TERMS IN ORDINARY LANGUAGE.

The most common and the least specific term in the heading of this chapter is *common*. It usually refers to *joint* participation or possession; it denotes the quality of being *shared* by a community or by a number of individuals, often implying a notion of equality, i.e. that which is shared equally by the members of a category or community. What is generally shared by the community at large is also what is encountered frequently or regularly and, hence, *known widely* as usual. In this sense, the common lacks peculiarity, i.e. it lacks distinguishing features.

More specific than ‘common’ and, in many instances, even a special case of commonality is the term ‘mutual’. Its usage, however, is quite common in English (*mutual*), French (*mutuel*) and German (*gegenseitig*, *wechselseitig*). Leaving aside the occasionally practised quasi-synonymity of ‘mutual’ with ‘common’ (e.g. a mutual friend) or ‘joint’ (e.g. mutual advantage), a traditional (cf. Latin *mutuus*), but still basic and frequent use of ‘mutual’ concerns the states or behaviours shared by given two or more individuals with respect to one another. Hence, if we speak of mutual respect or mutual aid, this state or this action is not merely shared by two or more people but is entertained and offered *with respect to one another or each other*. As distinguished from mere sharing or commonality, mutuality stresses the ‘respective’ relationship between two or more people as having something in common, be it mutual love or mutual hate, mutual assistance or mutual property.

One aspect or, rather, one function of mutuality is that one person’s contribution is *complementary* to that of another person’s. The idea of designating individual contributions within a mutual relationship as complementary is that they ‘fill in’ and make up for what is lacking: they mutually round off. Whether in action or in discourse, such contributions literally make something complete (as in the German verb *ergänzen*). The notion that in a social relationship each partner

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provides what the other lacks, is both more specific and more postulatory than mutuality, as the traditional but controversial cliché of the alleged ‘complementarity of the sexes’ may demonstrate. In any case, complementarity testifies to *asymmetry* as an inherent characteristic of dialogues (Marková and Foppa, 1991).

In cases of mutual aid or mutual property the notion of mutual benefit suggests itself, and here the meaning of ‘mutuality’ fuses with that of ‘reciprocity’. The mutual benefit, normally and normatively implied in mutual aid, is reciprocal to the degree that whatever is shared or done jointly is associated with a notion of balance or equity or equivalence of sharing. Hence, ‘reciprocity’ very often refers to activities of *reciprocating*, i.e. *returning in kind or in degree*. With respect to such cases of mutual dependence (interdependence) and mutual exchange, ‘reciprocal’ refers sometimes to the mere *give-and-take* as practised by partners in exchange; sometimes to the recognition by the partners that a principle of reciprocity prevails which makes them expect reciprocations. Hence, both the descriptive give-and-take and the intentional *do ut des* (giving *so that* something may be received) are referents of ‘reciprocity’.

This brief excursion into the general linguistic usage of some key terms of the ‘mutuality’ family must be read with all due caution. First, the variety and the interchangeability of related terms is irritatingly larger than the rather simplified order or classification presented here. Secondly, the few examples given here were taken from the field of human experience and social action while the application of the above terms to the fields of mathematics (e.g. common denominator, reciprocal ratio), physics (e.g. mutual induction) or biology (e.g. reciprocal crosses) has been bypassed. The major interest of this paper is in the applicability of terms like ‘common’, ‘mutual’ and ‘reciprocal’ to the structure and dynamics of dialogues.

A SELECTIVE USAGE OF ‘MUTUALITY’ TERMS IN THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

We may enter this field by considering some technical, though everyday, usages of ‘mutuality’. Most of them have something to do with the old idea of mutual cooperative aid as opposed to competitive forces operating in a given social group or community. Taken as a principle, mutual aid has frequently become institutionalized, as in mutual insurance, i.e. a system of insurance by which all policy-holders

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become *company members by contract*, similarly, the Mutual Savings Bank, the Mutual Fund, etc.

It is important that in this context mutuality (or reciprocity) is recognized as a *principle* that *obliges* those who acknowledge it and adhere to it to perform certain actions, usually prescribed in a contract. Since individuals are motivated to take part in this contract (invest), believing that others act similarly or even equitably and, hence, expecting an equitable return, such systems of mutual aid are practically cases of reciprocity under the *do ut des* principle. To illustrate the (mutually) obligatory character of this principle, two contrastive historical cases will be cited, one sinister and the other humorous. In the darkest period of the Cold War the very apt abbreviation ‘MAD’, short for Mutual Assured Destruction, referred to a ‘US doctrine of reciprocal deterrence resting on the US and Soviet Union each being able to inflict unacceptable damage on the other in retaliation for a nuclear attack’ (*Random House Dictionary*, 1983, p. 1,270). On the other hand, scholars and artists will be familiar with the quasi-technical but satirical term of the ‘Mutual Admiration Society’, which, according to the OED, is ‘a coterie of persons who are accused of over-estimating each other’s merits’. As a close relative we recognize the mutual citation ‘trusts’ in most scientific communities.

What we may take from these few examples is that if ‘mutual’ and ‘reciprocal’ are applied to social situations, there is more involved than just common knowledge and beliefs. Both terms refer to a person’s (or group’s) belief (or knowledge) that the other person (or group) also knows or believes whatever is shared or what is to be done jointly. Hence, the expectation is that what I feel or do with respect to another person will somehow be reciprocated. Knowledge, belief, and expectation would then make ‘mutuality’ as applied to social situations a cognitive or even an intentional term. However, that this is not necessarily so we can gather from the last linguistic example of the technical term ‘mutualism’. It is used in two different fields. In its sociological meaning it refers to the doctrine, associated with Proudhon and the French *mutualistes* that the individual and social well-being is attainable only by means of mutual dependence (as, for instance, by common ownership). However, ‘mutualism’ is also a biological term for a mutually beneficial association between different kinds of organisms (symbiosis), i.e. an ‘objective’ term with no reference to the mental states of the organisms under consideration. Yet the biologist’s insight that for two different kinds of organisms ‘a shared way of life is

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obligatory ... if the population of each is to increase' (*Webster Dictionary*) brings this animal mutuality functionally close to the analogous human example. Since we know that any human mutuality or reciprocity can also be described (however unsatisfactorily) in purely behavioural terms, we conclude that 'mutual' and 'reciprocal' can be and are being used in both ways: with and without any reference to awareness and intentionality. Together with the frequent interchange of 'common' and 'mutual' and with the occasional synonymy of 'mutual' and 'reciprocal', the conceptual status of these terms is unsatisfactory, all the more so if they are used to convey socially significant meanings.

The question is whether the situation is better in the context of social science theories. Again, only a brief selection of concepts can be presented, restricted to usages that are likely to have relevance for a theory of dialogue.

Though controversial, the most comprehensive and influential concept that gave rise to a series of models and theories is that of *social exchange*. Since dialogues are often referred to as exchanges of ideas or, at least, verbal exchanges, the question may be asked whether there is an exchange theory that may explain what is going on in dialogues. Conceptions of social exchange have been developed, for a long time quite independently, both in anthropology and in psychology. Befu (1980, p. 199) even speaks of a 'mutual disregard'. In social anthropological conceptions of social exchange the notion of reciprocity has been central from the beginning. While Thurnwald (1936/1957) and Malinowski (1922) have given early examples of reciprocity as 'a cohesive form holding societies together' (Gergen et al. 1980, p. 126), it was Mauss (1925/1954), Becker (1956), Gouldner (1960) and Sahlins (1965) who gave 'reciprocity' a theoretical status. It was Gouldner (1960) who proclaimed a *universal norm of reciprocity*. This norm

makes two interrelated, minimal demands (1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them. Generically, the norms of reciprocity may be conceived of as a dimension to be found in all value systems and, in particular, as one among a *number* of 'Principal Components' universally present in moral codes. (Gouldner, 1960, p. 171)

Without trying to transfer these demands to our problem we should make a note of the *intrinsically moral character* of this principle whose universality, however, has been questioned as a 'myth' (Pryor and Graburn, 1980).

A typology along the continuum of solidarity has been proposed by Sahlins (1965). According to his scheme there are the following types of reciprocity: (1) *generalized reciprocity*, involving unstipulated reciprocating: a contribution is made without the expectation of immediate return; (2) *balanced reciprocity*, involving direct and equivalent return; and (3) expressing the least degree of solidarity, *negative reciprocity*, in which each individual tries to maximize his or her 'reward' at the other's expense. With all due caution one may try to exemplify these types by different kinds of dialogue: (1) A dialogue between close friends who, after a long separation, meet again and take turns in 'pouring out their hearts'; (2) a dialogue as a means of getting acquainted with the other partner. Each individual discloses his or her self only if the other reciprocates; and (3) a negotiation between representatives of competing corporations.

What is true for reciprocity in general also holds true for dialogues. Balance or symmetry is not a constitutive feature of dialogues. On the contrary, it has been argued that reciprocity is a necessary condition for balance (Zajonc and Burnstein, 1965) and that asymmetry is an inherent feature of dialogues (Marková and Foppa, 1991).

Following Kantor (1929), who had introduced the concept of 'interbehaviour', *role theory*, almost by definition, deals with interbehaviour. Hence, Sarbin and Allen (1968, p. 68) state that a person's conduct takes into account the role behaviours of other positions, the specific nature of the conduct varying with the position held by the other interactant. This is an unambiguous description of a reciprocal and perspectival other-orientation. The notion of role complementarity (or of 'role set'), too, refers to such reciprocity which, if disturbed by incompatibilities, overload, or other forms of imbalance, gives rise to role conflict. Of the two major types, inter-role and intra-role conflict, the latter is the more relevant for studying the dynamics of dialogue. In conversations with three or more participants, a set of reciprocal interactions may entail mutually incompatible role expectations held by different participants with respect to one and the same interlocutor. For example, in a given conversation, B expects A to be witty, whereas C would rather have A to be serious (for a change). A, either knowing or misjudging her different partners, holds two partner-hypotheses the consequences of which cannot be easily reconciled. Similarly, in so-called arbitration talks, two genuinely reciprocal relationships cannot coexist without conflict.

Whereas the anthropological approach to social exchange has been highlighted as structural, the psychological approach focuses on the

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motivational factors involved in social exchange (Befu, 1980). In addition to Thibaut and Kelley (1959; cf. Kelley, 1979; Kelley and Thibaut, 1978) and Blau (1964), it was mainly Homans (1974) who conceived of social behaviour as an exchange of ultimately 'rewarding' activities or even as an exchange of rewards, punishments and costs. In this basically hedonistic framework, 'reward' is everything that is satisfactory for a person in the unspecific psychological sense of the word. Moreover, each reward is also evaluated on its own merits. Homans argues that the more valuable to B is A's activity or sentiment given to him, the more valuable to A is an activity given to him by B. This reciprocity of values is also expressed in Homans' concept of *distributive justice*. The conditions of this rule are met when the ratio of the measures of two (or more) persons' contributions to a social exchange are equal to the ratio of the measures of their respective rewards (Homans, 1974, p. 249). Although sometimes distributive justice and reciprocity have been used interchangeably, they are not synonyms. Homans has demonstrated how the expectation of distributive justice may lead to different reciprocal norms.

Homans' conception of distributive justice has been criticized on several grounds (Chadwick-Jones, 1976; Deutsch and Krauss, 1965; cf. Gergen, Greenberg and Willis, 1980). Here it may suffice to indicate why it is difficult to apply reciprocity based on distributive justice to dialogues. It is not that distributive justice as such would be alien to conversations. It may well be the case that a person A invests time and energy in a dialogue and, hence, will expect some kind of return or satisfaction from this expenditure. Homans (1974, pp. 54–7) himself gives examples of an exchange of advice for approval. Thus any question–answer, reproach–apology, demand–comply sequence in verbal communication may also serve as an example of the exchange character of dialogues.

However, the difficulty arises in the usage of the unspecified elementary constructs such as reward and punishment, and cost and profit. The pairs of terms referring to these constructs have been taken out of their original educational, psychological or economic contexts where they may have had a more definite usage. In the context of social exchange theories, including that of Homans, they are used in so generalized a fashion that their choice appears almost arbitrary. For instance, when A talks to B or to a group of others, the activity of talking may be considered to be an expenditure of mental and physical energy, i.e. an investment of time (which for some may mean money).

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Yet, simultaneously, talking to B may be highly rewarding for A. It is even possible that talking *per se* and listening to himself could be a libidinous affair for A, while listening to A may be a kind of punishment for B who, however, may be rewarded by learning from A about the latter's motives, plans, etc. Even if this makes sense and, at a conceptual level, we are able to construct cases and degrees of reciprocity in such verbal exchanges and to determine whether distributive justice or injustice obtains in a given dialogue, we are left with the following empirical problem. How can the speaker, the addressee and ultimately both interactants identify the meaning of a word as a 'reward' rather than a 'punishment', as a 'profit' rather than a 'cost'? This dilemma has not been settled in a satisfactory manner. Hence, the 'costs' of going into the details of an exchange-theoretical approach to the study of dialogues still outweigh the recognizable 'profit'. Yet, as we shall see, some communication theorists, who work with exchange notions, seriously discuss 'conversational profit-seeking' (Roloff and Campion, 1985).

In a related approach to the study of social interaction (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Kelley and Thibaut, 1978; Kelley, 1979) we come across the technical term of *mutual outcome control*, originally introduced into the analysis of power in interpersonal relations. It deserves a brief consideration since a dialogue in general, rather than only that of a debate type, may be a prototypical referent of this term. At least, asymmetry in dialogues frequently implies the exertion of social power (Marková and Foppa, 1991). What 'outcome control' means is best exemplified by two of its major manifestations, 'fate control' and 'behaviour control'. If, by varying his or her behaviour, person A can affect person B's outcomes regardless of what B does, A is said to have a *fate control* over B (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959, p. 102). If, however, by varying his or her behaviour, A can make it desirable for B to vary his or her behaviour, A has a *behaviour control* over B (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959, p. 103). In both cases mutuality is obtained if B can exert as much control over A as A does over B. Turn-taking would be the rule.

What we can gain from this concept of 'mutual outcome control' for the study of dialogue is easier to recognize in cases when mutuality is not attained or is disturbed, i.e. when dominance of one interactant prevails. At least, we should be able to distinguish a 'fate control' from a 'behaviour control' dialogue. In the former one interlocutor holds the other one in a kind of 'doublebind' position; the addressee is always 'wrong', in whatever way he or she may answer. In the latter case one