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Cooperation and Trust in Group Context

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This paper is mainly about cooperation as a collective action in a group context (acting in a position or participating in the performance of a group task, etc.), although the assumption of the presence of a group context is not made in all parts of the paper. The paper clarifies what acting as a group member involves, and it analytically characterizes the “we-mode” (thinking and acting as a group member) and the “I-mode” (thinking and acting as a private person). (For these notions, see R. Tuomela, 1995, 2002, 2003, and R. Tuomela and M. Tuomela, 2003.) The cornerstone of the we-mode is the kind of collectivity idea involved in colloquial slogans like “one for all and all for one”, which can be technically explicated so as to apply to all collective attitudes, including goals, commitment, and actions.

The main task of the paper is to clarify cooperation, and this is done by dividing cooperation into I-mode and we-mode cooperation. I-mode cooperation relies on the participants’ relevantly adjusting their goals toward others’ goals and actions to the benefit of all participants. (For a previous account, see R. Tuomela, 2000a.) We-mode cooperation basically amounts to joint action in the we-mode. In we-mode cooperation the central intention-expression is “We will achieve our goal” (see R. Tuomela, 2000b). In the case of acting as a private person for the group in a group context we speak of *I-mode pro-group* thinking and acting. Here the group member is only privately committed and has full control over his actions, which contrasts with the we-mode case where the authority over a member’s action is with the group. In the I-mode case the central intention expression is “I will achieve my goal by cooperating with you”.

We-mode cooperation involves the participants’ acting as a group. When they so act as a group, there will be no collective action dilemma. For instance, in the case of a Prisoner’s Dilemma, the group is left with choosing between C (“cooperation”) and D (“defection”), and acting on dominance, C will be the collectively rational choice. Instead, in the standard I-mode case where no further interdependence adjustments between the participants are assumed, the only (individually) rational choice for them is D (defection).

The paper also investigates the relationship between cooperation and trust and, basically, argues that a two-way connection is involved. Rational intentional cooperation conceptually, rationally, and psychologically requires at least predictive trust. On the other hand, it is argued that successful intentional cooperation can be taken to promote genuine trust based on mutual respect. Furthermore, we-mode cooperation among normally rational and sincerely collectively committed members, mutually believing this have a relationship of mutual respect and genuine trust in each other regarding part-performances. (See M. Tuomela, 2003, for the components of rational trust.)

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