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COMMUNICATION AND RATIONALITY*

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Abstract: *Communication can mean many different things. As far as Communicative Action is concerned, here we distinguish between Communication Attempts, Successful Communicative Action (successful Communication Attempts) and Understood but Unsuccessful Communicative Action, as well as whether the respective actions already have a regular (conventional or even linguistic) meaning. What are the respective rationality presuppositions? This is resolved for all the above concepts of Communicative Action. As is the case for all actions, Communicative Actions also require us to differentiate between various rationality types: action rationality, the reasons behind an action, and situation-relative personal rationality.*

Key-words: *communicative actions; communicative understanding; rationality of belief; rationality of action; rationality of persons.*

* This is the slightly changed English version of its German counterpart *Kommunikation und Rationalität* in: Herbert E. Wiegand (ed.), *Sprache und Sprachen in den Wissenschaften. Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin/New York, De Gruyter), 1999, pp. 48-63.

I. INTENTIONAL ACTION, UNDERSTANDING AND RATIONALITY

I.1. Communicative Actions are actions by which we try to achieve our respective aims in a communicative manner. This makes them special cases of an action with intent. The characteristic feature of a Communicative Action is that in the actor's view it is successful iff it is understood by the addressee.

Communicative Actions are thus a special case of intentional or instrumental action. Before taking a closer look at the special case, let us examine what intentional actions are, when they are successful, and what understanding such an action actually means.

I.2. Let us write:

$$\begin{array}{ll} D(X, f) & \text{for: } X \text{ performs/does (at time } t) \text{ the action } f \\ B(X, A) & \text{for: } X \text{ believes (at } t) A \\ W(X, A) & \text{for: } X \text{ wants (at } t) A \end{array}$$

Everything else is then based on this minimal D - B - W alphabet. The fact that a person X does something with a certain intention can be easily explained with these three basic building blocks:¹

$$D1 \quad I(X, f, A) := D(X, f) \ \& \ W(X, A) \ \& \ B(X, A) \equiv T(X, f)$$

X intends by doing f to achieve A iff X does f , X wants A , and X believes A will come about iff X does f

¹Of course, things aren't actually quite that simple. This also goes for all the following definitions. For more details, cf. Meggle, *Grundbegriffe der Kommunikation*, 1997². For similarly simplified versions, cf. Meggle (1993) and (1996). To mention just one of the main changes necessary: in the expectation of success, real conditional relations would naturally have to be used instead of simple equivalence.

Such an action is *successful* iff X 's *expectation of success* $B(X, A \equiv D(X, f))$ is correct, i.e. iff $A \equiv D(X, f)$.

A , i.e. what person X intends to achieve with her action, is also called the *aim* of her action. Of course, one may well attach a variety of aims to one and the same action. To give a simple example: Xavier throws a stone at a window with three aims in mind: (*a*) to break the window; (*b*) to send Ms. Maier, the owner of the flat with the about-to-be-broken window, into a rage; and (*c*) to get even with Ms. Maier for complaining about him incessantly). Sometimes such aims have a certain hierarchy. If in X 's view aim (*b*) is merely a means to achieve aim (*a*), aim (*a*) is the *primary aim* compared to (*b*). For example Xavier's second aim is primary compared to the first, while his third aim is primary compared to the other two. This makes the *primary aim* the aim which is primary over all the other aims.

I.3. What does understanding an intentional action (in the above sense) mean? There are various approaches to this – for example that proposed by G.H. von Wright in his *Explanation and Understanding* (1971) that was so influential for the whole understanding debate:

(U-PS) We understand an action iff we view it as the conclusion of a (suitable) Practical Inference.

where such a conclusion can simply be imagined as follows:

- | | |
|------|--------------------------|
| (PI) | (1) $W(X, A)$ |
| (2) | $B(X, A \equiv D(X, f))$ |
| (3) | $D(X, f)$ |

As von Wright says, the two premisses (1) and (2) encompass the voluntary-cognitive aspect of the action. It is nothing more than the intention with which the action concerned is performed. Therefore an understanding can also be equivalently defined:

(U-INTENTIO) We understand an action iff we know the intention with which it was performed.

Yet intentions are something strictly subjective since one has them (the intentions) iff one is convinced one has them. This in turn exactly suits what Max Weber says about the (relevant) understanding of actions:

(U-MW) We understand an action iff we know the subjective sense of the action.

The *subjective sense* of an action is nothing more than the meaning or the function the action concerned has for the respective action-subject. We know this sense if we know the purpose attached by the action-subject to his action. Yet we know this when we know the aim with which the action was performed and how the actor thinks he can achieve this aim – in a nutshell, if we know the corresponding action intention.

I.4. Hence all the explanations of understanding considered so far boil down to the same thing. But this symmetry still has a snag: in its current form, the Practical Inference (PI) behind all these explanations of understanding unfortunately does not hold. All that does hold is the following inference to a weaker conclusion:

- (PI-RATIO) (1) $W(X, A)$
 (2) $B(X, A \equiv \Box D(X, f))$
 (3*) Rational: $D(X, f)$

From the premisses of this conclusion, it merely follows that it is or would be rational for X to do f – but not that X will actually do f . The latter only results if the ‘rationality assumption’ also applies to the situation concerned, i.e. if X behaves rationally in the situation such that he actually does what is or would be rational for him. We assume this rationality assumption holds when understanding an action.

I.5. Hence behind all the above characterizations of understanding is ultimately the following:

(U-RATIO) We understand an action iff we know the reasons for its rationality.

As well as being very much clearer than the other explanations (owing to its clear reference to the now genuinely correct Practical Inference (PI-RATIO)), this explication also has another advantage: it is also much more general. Whereas for example (U-PS) and (U-INTENTIO) are only geared towards the very narrow special case of ‘decisions under certainty’, (U-RATIO) covers not just this special case but also all the others, in particular all cases of ‘decisions under risk’. Alternatively, (U-RATIO) could also therefore be formulated as follows:

(U-RATIO*) We understand an action by X iff we know which of X ’s preferences and probability assumptions make the action concerned rational.

Despite my above praise of generality, below I shall deal not only with the naturally still indispensable (U-RATIO), but in particular with its special case (U-INTENTIO). For instead of preferences and probabilities in general, I will continue to play exclusively with our elementary strong concepts of wanting and belief – and will doctor everything with this aim in mind so that we always remain within the realm of decisions under certainty. Only thus will we be able to quickly get a rough view of what’s going on throughout this complex territory. This itself will cause us enough difficulty.

I.6. For our paradigm of an intentional action, we shall now make (U-INTENTIO) even more explicit. We simply equate knowledge with an applicable conviction (i.e. a strong belief): $K(X, A) := B(X, A) \ \& \ A$.

$$D2 \quad U(Y, I(X, f)) := W(Y, I(X, f, A^*))$$

Y understands X doing f iff Y knows everything X intends to achieve by doing f .

A^* hence represents the sum of all aims X intends to achieve by doing f .

It’s a bit much to expect us to know all the aims of the action concerned in order to understand it. Those seeking a weaker variant will doubtless start differently by initially accepting a ‘partial understanding’, for example by saying: Y understands X ’s doing f with respect to the aim A iff Y knows that by doing f X is pursuing the aim A . Of course, not every partial understanding will be equally important in this case. Those who know the primary aim or diverse primary aims will doubtless have a better partial understanding than those who are only aware of secondary aims.

I.7. On the other hand, I don't mind if things are a bit much at first. So let's stick to D2. Even this maximum-strength concept of understanding is actually still rather weak in another respect. It simply requires of understanding that we know what aims *X* has. It doesn't require us to know why *X* has these aims. So it might be the case that we understand an action by *X* but nevertheless can't imagine how *X* arrived at his corresponding preferences and assumptions. If we do know how he arrived at them, we have, to use a common phrase, a 'deeper understanding'. Our understanding introduced above cannot yet be described as 'deeper', but doesn't rule it out. Furthermore, D2 also leaves completely open how this understanding itself came about, i.e. how we arrived at the convictions we have to have in order to understand.

I.8. Understanding is knowledge and hence implies applicable belief. This distinguishes understanding *simpliciter* from what is more precisely referred to as an understanding-something-as-something. The latter is nothing more than belief that something is such-and-such – a belief which may well be false. Whereas every understanding is also an understanding-as, the reverse does not hold, of course. Not every understanding-as is also an understanding; not every belief is correct.

I.9. Moreover, a sharp distinction needs to be drawn between the understanding of actions on the one hand and the toleration, acceptance, approval or even support of actions on the other. The fact that I understand an action because I understand its rationality reasons simply means I know how the actor himself views the action, and that from this angle his action can be regarded as rational. By no means does it indicate that I share this viewpoint. By the same token it is also simply not true that in order to be able to understand an action performed by another person I have to identify with him. I needn't myself be a saint or a Nazi in order to be able to understand the action of a saint or a Nazi.

I.10. According to the above, the understanding of actions and the rationality of actions are two sides of the same coin. Every rational action is understandable, and in the sense of understanding explained here, only rational actions are understandable. The reason is trivial: we can only know rationality reasons if they exist.

Owing to the strict subjectivity of rationality reasons – i.e. of preferences and the assumptions of the action subject concerned – things can be equated even more strongly: not only are action rationality and understandability equivalent, but so are action rationality and the state of actually being understood. After all, in each rational action there is somebody who knows its rationality reasons and who hence understands the action concerned: the actor himself.

All this now also holds *a fortiori* for a Communicative Action as the special case of an intentional action.

II. COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

II.1. A Communicative Action, too, has aims. And some aims is what an action must have if it is to be regarded as an attempt at communication in the first place. Let us call the aims necessary for a communication attempt to exist *communicative aims* – in contrast to mere *communication aims*, i.e. aims which may be but are not necessarily connected to communication attempts. And let us now distinguish between two types of communication attempts, namely between *directives* and *informatives* (*directive* vs. *informative actions*). The *primary communicative aim* of the former is for the addressee to *do* something specific (i.e. what he is requested to

do); the primary communicative aim of informatives is for the addressee to *believe* something:²

$$T1.1 \quad CA(S, H, f, r) \rightarrow I(S, f, D^{\iota}(H, r))$$

S 's doing f is a communication attempt addressed at H with the content that H (according to S) should do r – only if by doing f S intends to make H (at ι) do r .

$$T1.2 \quad CA(S, H, f, p) \rightarrow I(S, f, B^{\iota}(H, p))$$

S 's doing f is a communication attempt addressed at H with the content that p – only if by doing f S intends to make H (at ι) believe p .

II.2. These aims can of course also be achieved in a non-communicative way. So what generally distinguishes a communicative action from a merely instrumental action? The answer is obvious: what's different about it is the *communicative special way* – which from the viewpoint of S (the person trying to communicate, i.e. the speaker³) looks like this:

$$T2.1 \quad CA(S, H, f, r) \rightarrow B(S, D^{\iota}(H, r) \equiv K^{\iota}(H, CA(S, H, f, r)))$$

S 's doing f is an attempt to communicate to the listener H that H should do r only if S believes (expects) that H will do r iff H realizes that S 's doing f is such a communication attempt.

² $D^{\iota}(H, r)$ or $B^{\iota}(H, p)$ expresses H doing or believing something at a time ι , which is later than t (the time of S 's doing f).

³ We shouldn't forget that being a 'speaker' doesn't necessarily involve speaking. Communication Attempts need not be linguistic utterances; the media of communication can be anything at all. The same naturally also goes for the usage of the word 'listener' here.

In other words, one characteristic aspect of communication attempts is the *expectation of communicative success* connected therewith, according to which the primary communicative aim is only achieved if the listener recognizes that what S does is an attempt at communication with this aim.

II.3. Taken together, both demands (i.e. that of primary communicative intention and that of the expectation of communicative success) lead to the following postulate:

$$(AC-CA) \quad CA(S, H, f, r) \leftrightarrow I(S, f, D^c(H, r)) \ \& \\ B(S, D^c(H, r) \equiv K^c(H, CA(S, H, f, r)))$$

I fully realize this isn't a usable definition. It's simple and hopelessly circular. But so what? After all, we've discovered something much better than a definition, namely an *adequacy criterion* for every single usable definition of CA . In other words, we now know that regardless of how CA can be more closely defined, a definition is only usable if the criterion $(AC-CA)$ is met, i.e. if $(AC-CA)$ follows as a theorem from the definition.

II.4. The main conclusion from this criterion is the "*reflexivity condition*":

$$(RC-CA) \quad CA(S, H, f, r) \rightarrow I(S, f, K^c(H, CA(S, H, f, r)))$$

Communication aims at the state of being understood.

And this reflexivity condition in turn spawns further consequences, especially that of the unlimited openness of communicative intentions. If I_1 is a communicative intention, so is $I_2 (=I(S, f, K^c(H, I_1)))$, as is $I_3 (=I(S,$

$f, K^c(H, I_2)$ – etc. In more general terms, if I_n is a communicative intention, so is I_{n+1} – for any $n \geq 1$. In other words:

$$(RC^*-CA) \quad CA(S, H, f, r) \rightarrow I(S, f, K^c(H, I^*))$$

where I^* represents a limitlessly open communicative intention.

II.5. The test question is now of course what form a usable explication of CA should take. Reviewing the various answers to this question would be a lengthy procedure, so let's cut the long story short and just look at the beginning and the end. It starts with Grice's basic model, which – tailored to our needs – can be formulated thus:

$$(GGM) \quad CA(S, H, f, r) := I(S, f, D^c(H, r)) \& \\ B(S, D^c(H, r) \equiv K^c(H, I_1))$$

where I_1 now represents $I(S, f, D^c(H, r))$ in the case of directives for the primary communicative intention.

Now let's look at the end – with I^* representing the limitlessly open primary communicative intention:

$$(D3) \quad CA(S, H, f, r) := I(S, f, D^c(H, r)) \& \\ B(S, D^c(H, r) \equiv K^c(H, I^*))$$

On the surface of it, the difference is clearly minimal – merely an asterisk. Yet this asterisk harbours entire worlds.⁴

⁴ 4 For more on these worlds, cf. Meggle (1991).

II.6. Just as communication attempts are special cases of an intentional action, successful communication attempts are also special cases of a successful intentional action. And just as an intentional action (in the sense of D1 above) is successful iff the actor's involved expectation of success is correct, a communicative action is successful iff the speaker's expectation of communicative success is correct, i.e. iff not only $B(S, D^c(H, r) \equiv K^c(H, \mathbf{I}^*))$ but also $D^c(H, r) \equiv K^c(H, \mathbf{I}^*)$ is true.

II.7. What understanding a communicative action actually means can now be stated precisely (where in the case of an information action $CAi(S, H, f) := \bigvee p CA(S, H, f, p)$):

$$D4 \quad U(Y, CAi(S, H, f)) := K(Y, CA(S, H, f, p^*))$$

Y understands S 's attempt at communication addressed at H by doing f iff Y knows everything S wanted to make H understand by doing f .

p^* is hence once again the sum of all p 's which hold for $CA(S, H, f, p)$.

II.8. Although every communication attempt is an intentional action, this does not mean that those who have understood the communication attempt have also understood *eo ipso* the intentional action accomplished by the action concerned. After all, not all the aims of the action need be communicative. Let's say, for example, that little Callum wants to get at his mum's jam jar – but knows his mum won't approve. He knows that a little more cunning is required. He also knows that his mum is eagerly waiting for a letter from his dad and keeps pricking up her ears hoping to hear the squeak of the garden gate indicating the postman has arrived. In order to make his mum believe he has arrived, Callum says, "I think

there's someone at the garden gate." And both we and Callum's mum can understand this attempt at communication – even if we (contrafactually) didn't realize what Callum was trying to achieve with this attempt. And if his mum doesn't notice either, perhaps not only Callum's attempt at communication was successful, but also the further-reaching intentional action he accomplished by it. (By the way, it was worth the trouble: it was damson jam).

II.9. Like our concept of the understanding of an intentional action above, the concept of understanding a communicative action just explained is extremely general. In particular, once again such an understanding contains no mention of the knowledge over how *S* came to acquire the convictions he must have in order to make his action a communication attempt; nor do we know anything about how we came to acquire the convictions we must have in order to have understood a communication attempt. Moreover, neither do we know anything about how *S* and *H* acquired the convictions they must have for a communication attempt by *S* addressed at *H* to be successful. And hence neither do we know anything about the other reasons on which the speaker's expectations of understanding and expectations of success are based, or the other reasons on which the listener's convictions are based on account of which these expectations are (or are not) fulfilled.

II.10. So far nothing has been said about the following convictions so aptly referred to as *normal communicative conditions*. In order to discover them, ask yourself the following question: Given that you understand an action by *S* as a communication attempt addressed at you with the content *p*, when would you actually correspond to its expectation of success, i.e. actually believe *p*? Probably only if (as you believe) both:

- (CNB-1) $CA(S, H, f, p) \supset B(S, p)$ Sincerity
 and
 (CNB-2) $B(S, p) \supset p$ Freedom of error

hold, i.e. S (as you believe) doesn't want to trick you and isn't fooling himself.

II.11. Nevertheless, all the abstraction work above is quite fortunate. After all, it is this degree of abstraction which marks a genuinely General Communication Theory. Such a theory must for example not only handle normal cases, but also deal with every single case, no matter how abnormal it may be. However, we can no longer afford this ignorance of special conditions as soon as we arrive at communication attempts which in terms of their action type already have an intersubjective communicative meaning.

III. INTERSUBJECTIVE MEANING

III.1. We shall now distinguish between actions (e.g. singing) and their products (e.g. songs) – and also between types (e.g. the action type singing) versus occurrences (e.g. my singing now):

	Action	Product
Type	<i>Types of action</i>	<i>Form of action product</i>
Occurrence	<i>Concrete action</i>	<i>Concrete action product</i>

So far we have only spoken of the sense of an action when it concerned the subjective sense, i.e. the sense which links a subject at a certain time to a concrete action. We have not yet touched upon the modes of action and their no longer purely subjective sense.

III.2. The fact that a mode of action (or an expression as its form of action product) in a population P has such-and-such an (intersubjective) meaning only holds if this meaning is also known as such in P . If we also bear in mind that modes of action (or expressions) have a meaning which is not general but always only relative to certain relevant situation types, this leads to the following adequacy criterion for meanings – and in this step we already have particular communicative intersubjective meanings in mind:

$$(AC-M) \quad M(P, \Sigma, f, p) \rightarrow \text{For all } x \in P: K(x, M(P, \Sigma, f, p))$$

In Σ situations, doing f in P means (to be attempting to communicate that) “ p is the case” – only if everybody in P knows that doing f has this meaning.

Let M_n be some condition necessary for the existence of meaning. To enable the meaning to exist, everybody from P must know that this condition has been met; and since the resulting knowledge in P about M_n is a necessary condition for meaning, everybody from P must also know that it is known in P that M_n has been fulfilled, etc. In a nutshell, the criteria (AC-M) leads directly to the following demand:⁵

$$(AC-M^*) \quad M(P, \Sigma, f, p) \rightarrow CK(P, M(P, \Sigma, f, p))$$

⁵ The Common Knowledge in P that A expressed by $GW(P, A)$ means: (i) Everyone from P knows that A , (ii) everyone from P knows that (i), ... (n+1) everyone from P knows that (n) For more on Common Knowledge and Belief, see Meggle (2002).

In Σ situations, doing f in P means (the same as) “ p is the case” – only if it holds that it is Common Knowledge in P that doing f in P in Σ situations has this meaning.

III.3. So much for our adequacy condition for each explanation of ‘meaning’. Now for the explanation itself. As intersubjective conditions imply regularities, we can determine a concept for the regular communicative meaning of a type of action in an initial step (which does not yet satisfy (AC-M)):

D5.1 $M_0(P, \Sigma, f, p)$ In P the following holds in the relevant
 Σ situations for the respective S and
 H : $D(S, f) \supset CA(S, H, f, p)$

Here’s an example. Standing on the side of a motorway slip road and looking at the approaching drivers with a more or less expectant gaze means “I want a lift”. And this holds iff whoever stands on the side of a motorway slip road here and looks at the approaching drivers ($=H$) with a more or less expectant gaze wants the approaching drivers to understand he wants a lift.

III.4. As mentioned above, this weak meaning concept is still too weak to fulfil our adequacy criterion, although the reinforcement necessary is apparent on the basis of this criterion:

D5 $M(P, \Sigma, f, p) := CK(P, M_0(P, \Sigma, f, p))$

Doing f means in P in Σ situations “ p is the case” iff it holds that it is Common Knowledge in P that whoever does f in the role of speaker in a Σ situation wants to communicate to his listener that p is the case.

It is Common Knowledge here that anyone who stands by the side of a motorway slip road and looks at the approaching drivers ($=H$) with a more or less expectant gaze wants the approaching drivers to understand he wants a lift. And this is exactly what one means by saying that this behaviour here in these situation means “I want a lift.”

III.5. As we already know from the general part of the theory of communication outlined above in **II**, every communication attempt contains the expectation of understanding:

$$(UE) \quad CA(S, H, f, p) \rightarrow B(S, B'(H, D(S, f))) \supset K(H, CA(S, H, f, p))$$

What this is based on was hitherto still open. Now we know the best reason this expectation can have: $M(P, \Sigma, f, p)$.

Similarly, every attempt at communication also contains the expectation of success:

$$(SE) \quad CA(S, H, f, p) \rightarrow B(S, B'(H, p)) \equiv K(H, CA(S, H, f, p))$$

this expectation normally being based on the above-mentioned Communicative Normal Conditions (assuming sincerity and freedom of error). But what keeps this expectation itself plus the sincerity assumptions it is based upon stable? Two things. Firstly, the common interest in $B'(H, p) \equiv p$, and secondly the Common Knowledge that this common interest is served if both stick to a joint strategy, e.g.

S strategy: $D(S, f) \equiv p$ As the speaker, do f iff p is the case.

H strategy: $B'(H, p) \equiv D(S, f)$ As the listener, believe p iff S does f .

Which results in: $B'(H, p) \equiv p$ H believes p iff p actually occurs.

If S and H stick to this common strategy (i.e. S sticks to the S strategy and H to the H strategy), what occurs is what is in their mutual interest, namely $B(H, p) \equiv p$. Regular compliance with a joint communication corresponds to a signal convention as described by David Lewis.

III.6. Instead of the regular or conventional meaning of a type of action, we can also speak of the corresponding meaning of (entire) expressions as products of such actions. This allows meanings of linguistic (i.e. structured) expressions to be introduced in action theoretical terms.

IV. COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY ASSUMPTIONS

So far, then, we have sketched out my extremely rough outline of how both a general Theory of Communicative Action and also a theory of the semantics based upon it can be developed using action theory. Let's look back at the route we took and see where and what sorts of rationality assumptions played a part.

IV.1. *General action theory.* We first came across considerations of rationality when we tried to explain a general concept of understanding an action. Understanding = knowing the rationality reasons. These reasons are the actor's preferences and belief assumptions, the yardstick by which his action appears rational. This was the concept of *action rationality*.

In doing so, we certainly assumed that these rationality reasons themselves correspond to certain standards which they have to match in order to be considered as reasons in the first place. What standards are these? Well, they certainly include the requirements that both the belief assumptions and the wantings concerned are free of contradiction, i.e. the following requirements:

$$\begin{aligned} B(X, A) &\rightarrow \neg B(X, \neg A) \\ W(X, A) &\rightarrow \neg W(X, \neg A) \end{aligned}$$

Moreover, there are also certain requirements of ‘consequential’ belief or wanting:

$$B(X, A) \& B(X, A \supset B) \rightarrow B(X, B)$$

What remains contested is whether even stronger requirements are necessary – such as for the logical closure of belief or wanting. All these are principles which concern the *rationality of our attitudes*. They also include of course principles which govern the rationality conditions among the various attitudes, such as Kant’s following bridging principle:

$$(KANT) \ W(X, A) \& B(X, A \supset \bullet B) \rightarrow \bullet W(X, B)$$

“He who wants the purpose (given that the reason has a decisive impact on his actions) also wants [according to the agent’s belief, G.M.] the means necessary for the purpose.” (*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, B 44 f.)

These bridging principles, which mediate among various attitudes held by a person at the same time, are accompanied by principles which mediate between the same attitudes at different times. Their determination has now become the subject of a whole branch of research known as belief revision.

Finally, while discussing the validity of Practical Inferences, we encountered another point where the rationality questions arises. The fact that someone has sufficient rationality reasons for an action does not mean he will actually do it. He will only do it if she *is* rational in the situation concerned.

In a nutshell, we differentiated between three viewpoints of rationality right in the action-theory lead-in: action rationality, rationality of actions reasons, and situation-relative personal rationality.

Owing to the thoroughly subjective nature of action rationality, the question of whether the actor's belief assumptions are also underpinned remains open – especially whether his action (as Max Weber puts it) is rational in not only a subjectively expedient but also an objectively correct sense. The latter is only required for a successful intentional action, but not for an intentional action in the sense of attempting to bring something about.

IV.2. *General Communication Theory.* What supplements all this as far as communicative actions are concerned? Nothing – apart from more expectations on the part of the speaker: in the form of the expectation of understanding that regarding his attempt at communication he is assumed by the addressee to have all three aforementioned rationalities; and as a result of the reflexivity of communication also the expectation that the addressee will also perceive that the speaker expects the addressee will assume him to have these rationalities, etc. Hence *communicative rationality* is nothing more than a special case of general triple action rationalities – plus their openness intended by the speaker.

In the case of communicative action, too, just how sound the reasons for communication action are is only relevant if the communicative action is successful. Nothing has yet been said within the framework of General Communication Theory about whether the expectations of understanding and success involved are sound.

IV.3. *Action-theory semantics.* As soon as the types of action carried out in communication themselves have an (intersubjective) meaning, the picture changes. If S and H belong to the relevant population, the expectation of

communicative understanding is underpinned in the relevant meaning situations, and the corresponding attempt at communication is hence not only subjectively rational with respect to its aim of understanding, but also objectively rational. Moreover, the involved expectations of communication success will also have to be underpinned with sufficient frequency – otherwise sooner or later the relevant communication regularity will collapse. Communication by means of gestures, signs or expressions with a regular, conventional or even linguistic (i.e. intersubjective) meaning chiefly differs from communication without this back-up by its complete or at least relatively frequent underpinning of the expectations of understanding and success involved.

This subjective and intersubjective security of above all the expectations of understanding opens up further communicative scope – especially for ‘communication between the lines’. But this will have to be dealt with some other time.

IV.4. Concerning the question of how communicative action can be explained as a special case of instrumental action, the same applies as for communicative rationalities. In other words, Habermas’s thesis that Communicative Rationality is a case *sui generis* is wrong. Or rather, it would be wrong if Habermas’s interpretation of communicative action were the same as that here. But conceptually speaking, this is not the case.

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