Groups, Institutions, and Recognition
Introduction

In this paper I discuss three important, distinct phenomena. In my terminology, one is common knowledge of co-presence. Another is mutual recognition. I shall spend the most time on that. The third phenomenon is joint attention. As we shall see, common knowledge of co-presence is essential to mutual recognition; this, in turn, is essential to joint attention.¹

There is reason to say that only with mutual recognition do we arrive at genuine sociality. Further, one can argue that such recognition constitutes the simplest form of existence of a social group in an important, central sense. Whether or not these points are correct, the occurrence of mutual recognition is of great practical, and theoretical, significance.

I start with three preliminary points. First, the phrases “common knowledge,” “mutual recognition,” and “joint attention” have all been defined differently by different authors. I am not concerned to argue that one or another definition is to be preferred. I believe that the phenomena I characterize