# Philosophical Challenges of Plurality in a Global World

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Edited by

David Díaz-Soto, Delia Manzanero and Bianca Thoilliez

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is a compilation of essays by international scholars from different fields of Philosophy, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences, written especially for this publication. The editors conceived the project of this book, entitled "Philosophical Challenges of Plurality in a Global World," with the purpose of reflecting on contemporary societies, their complexities, potentialities, and contradictions, from different perspectives and via different lines of research. This diversity of interests and approaches is reflected in the contributions included in the present volume. With it, the editors seek to establish a dialogue between the different areas of work of the contributors, in a context that requires an interdisciplinary approach, and where plurality operates as an impulse for development. A further aim of this book is to contribute to the development of scholarly dialogue with an international scope, and to support the exchange of ideas with an interdisciplinary, but nevertheless decidedly philosophical approach. The themes, subjects, and issues dealt with here address issues of the greatest concern, particularly in the delicate context of present-day Europe and of modern societies on a global scale.

The editors were inspired to undertake this project in large part due to their having taken part in organizing the 1st International Congress of Philosophy of the Bajo Palabra Philosophy Association (AFBP) of the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). That first edition of the Congress had the title "Reflections on a Plural World," and took place in Madrid in November 2011. This was a meeting of scholars, researchers, and students from around twenty different countries, with very diverse backgrounds, creating a fruitful climate for an intense exchange of ideas, which this book seeks to evoke. The massive response to the subject proposed in the Congress's call for papers also showed the interest that philosophical subjects can elicit, when they are important for the problems of present-day society. Some of the authors who have contributed to this volume took part in that Congress; the editors selected them from among the participants because of the remarkable interest and quality of the work they presented there, and thus they were asked to further develop and refine their ideas in their contributions for this book. Other contributors to the book, however, did not participate in the Congress, but were invited

independently to contribute because of the relevance of their ideas and approaches to the constellation of problems and issues addressed here.

We, the editors, would therefore like to express gratitude to the scholars and researchers who contributed to our book; to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their interest in this editorial project; to the scholars, researchers, and students who participated in the first edition of the International Congress of Philosophy of the Bajo Palabra Philosophy Association, for the inspiration they provided in conceiving this volume, as well as to the Autonomous University of Madrid, which both hosted and sponsored the Congress that inspired this book. We would also like to thank our colleagues in the Bajo Palabra Philosophy Association for their support for research in the field of Philosophy and Human Sciences, and for promoting interdisciplinary dialog. Last but not least, we would like to acknowledge Ben Young of Babel Editing for his invaluable assistance in preparing the final version of this book for publication; as well as to thanks Joel Vall Thomas, from Bennington College (Vermont, EE.UU.), who also helped us with the revision of the book's manuscript in its earlier stages.

David Díaz-Soto
Delia Manzanero
Bianca Thoilliez

Madrid, 2014

# INTRODUCTION

This volume presents a collection of essays on a range of issues concerning plurality, pluralism, and other closely related concepts; the essays adopt a variety of philosophical viewpoints, while maintaining a particular focus on the notion of dialogue. These concepts provide the framework and guiding thread throughout the whole series of essays, which address the complexities of the contemporary world and the challenges with which it confronts philosophy. The editors' basic assumption is that pluralism, as well as globality, technology, mass media, or computer networks, are distinctive traits of contemporary society in all its complexity – and therefore that such notions are the necessary conceptual tools for explaining and understanding our age. The essays included in this selection thus aim to provide a philosophical analysis of phenomena, situations, and problems that are typical of our complex present-day world. They deploy relevant notions connected to pluralism and dialogue in a philosophical spirit, but they also take into account the results of research in different fields of the human sciences applied to the study of culture, as well as the realm of experiences of art. In order to articulate such a complex and rich field of interest, the book is divided into three different sections.

Section I, entitled "Political Frameworks and Philosophy of Law," presents contributions that tackle various issues of political theory and practice, while at the same time providing a general framework in which the issues and ideas explored in the contributions included in the remaining two sections of the book can be understood and contextualized. This first section opens with "Communicative Action Theory and Social Understanding," in which author Jairo Torres analyzes and assesses philosopher Jürgen Habermas's philosophy, both as an account of how processes of social communication actually take place in modern societies, and as a normative proposal for how collective, political decision-making should be ideally made. Torres explains that Habermas's model is both descriptive and normative, that it assumes a pragmatic viewpoint, and that the conception of rationality it asserts, having both a formal and procedural character, is based on dialogue and consensus. This theoretical model, as explained in Torres's text, sets the background which is then challenged in different ways by the issues explored in several of the essays that follow. That is how the third chapter, "Voting in a Pluralistic World:

Some Democratic Paradoxes Concerning Referendums," by Przemysław Krzywoszyński, may be understood in relation to Habermas's project. Krzywoszyński examines the referendum as a peculiar kind of political institution where a direct dialogue between governing powers and governed people takes place. However, Krzywoszyński points out several paradoxes and difficulties that challenge the viability both of the referendum as a current political procedure in contemporary societies, and of widely spread ideas and beliefs about "direct" democracy. In their turn, Antonio Sánchez-Bayón and Sebastian J. Sánchez-Rivera, in their contribution entitled "Glocal Politics and Law: Why Scholars do not Understand Each Other and what are the Veils of Confusion" (chapter two) try to set up a dialogue with readers who are concerned with the world they live in. Their aim is to provide useful keys for understanding the present in order to awaken a critical sense in their readers, and to help them develop their own understanding of the present global reality. They describe the present world as an age of transition between the agony of the nation-state and the awakening of the global village. Sánchez-Bayón and Sánchez-Rivera understand the notion of "glocality" as a kind of reflection that is capable of understanding the present world at its global scale, but which is also suited for orienting the concrete action that takes place in a local context. They therefore also try to discover the hidden connections which articulate the complexity of the world at a global scale. According to the authors, this should stimulate their readers to devise possible strategies for overcoming the present situation of crisis. The closing chapter in this first section is "Judicial Virtues in the Twenty-first Century: Awareness, Empathy and Respect for Plurality," by Diana Richards. It also deals with the latest societal changes – such as the advent of the Internet and new technologies, as well as their impact and the drastic changes they have produced on modes of communication in the present time. Society, Richards explains, is now more globalized, and thus it is easier for us to compare perspectives and acknowledge a plurality of conceptions. However, at the same time, we still expect law to guide our life and mediate our interactions with other individuals, more or less in the same way as it has been doing during the past few millennia. Richards states that this is not only the case in traditional societies, but in progressive and liberal societies, too. The consequence of this is a tension between old and new realities. Currently there is a plurality of cultures, religions, personalities, and perspectives in the contemporary world, and therefore judges must learn now more than ever to take this plurality into account, trying to remain objective and avoiding any discriminatory gesture. This leads Richards to state the next challenge: "What should be

the qualities of a judge in the twenty-first century?" She tries to provide an answer by advancing some important aspects to be considered in a discussion of the issue: awareness, empathy, and respect for plurality.

Section II of the book bears the title "Mass-Media, Technology, and Society." It opens with "The Rise of New Subjectivities: Processes of Subjectivization and Power from 'Societies of Control' to the 'Network Society,'" by Paolo Vignola, providing a connection between strictly political issues and cultural-technological ones. Vignola examines several problems concerning subjectivation processes and power relations – problems that are connected to the emergence of new powers and of channels of diffusion and exchange of information. He deploys notions from Foucault's and Deleuze's critical theories, but he tries transcend their shortcomings by complementing those author's theoretical frameworks with other concepts more recently developed by authors such as Castell, Kerckhove, or Stiegler. According to Vignola, the power of the normative institutions, which characterizes "disciplinary societies" as analyzed by Foucault, assumes an increasingly pervasive and omnipresent character in the later, more densely interconnected "control societies" that were theorized by Deleuze. But these, in turn, have nowadays transformed into "network societies," which expand in a "space of fluxes" – a digital, deterritorialized space, organized by means of computer networks. Operating in the medium provided by this space, "psychotechnologies" were originally supposed to allow the plurality of active subjects to organize themselves into a "collective intelligence"; but instead of this, as Vignola warns, they are instrumentalized by global market interests and are thus turned into "psycho-powers" that control and dominate subjects. Vignola argues that resistance against such "psycho-powers" requires the development of new "technologies of the self," augmenting the subject's capacities for social interrelation, but also for circumventing the controlling intervention of psycho-powers.

As much as in Vignola's account of "network societies," Internet and mass-media technologies are important in "Terrorism and Globalization: A Philosophical and Interdisciplinary Analysis," by Laura García Portela. Portela criticizes "monocausal" theories about Islamic terrorism on account of their excessive simplifications – whether their approach is semiotic, such as Baudrillard's, cultural-religious, such as Huntington's, or from an inner-political viewpoint, such as B. Lewis's. García Portela claims that only the pluralistic, interdisciplinary approach of international relations studies can provide a satisfactory account of Islamist terrorism and of its multiple causal factors. These include cultural and religious differences between Islam and the Western world; the inner political

problems of dictatorships in Arab countries and dissident movements opposing them; as well as the additional motivation of such movements for opposing the new global geopolitic order of US domination – not to forget their symbolic dimension with its implied semiotic mechanisms.

Diana Richards's optimistic assumptions concerning contemporary society's openness to plurality are not shared by Spanish philosopher Ignacio Castro in his chapter entitled "Atlas of an Aggressive Spirituality," which closes this second section. Indeed, Castro adopts a severe moral-critical stance towards contemporary society and culture, with their technological modes of production and consumption of representations, showing them to be a severe threat to real plurality, singularity, and communication. Moreover, Castro manifests a skeptical attitude towards the heritage of the Enlightenment, as represented and defended by Habermas's project, the discussion of which opened this book. Inspired by existentialism (Heidegger, Sartre), as well as by French critics of self-deceiving collective imaginaries (Baudrillard, Virilio), Castro holds that true spiritual fulfillment implies a constant personal struggle to find an properly responsible attitude towards the world we inhabit, and towards the vital dilemmas that our fate confronts us with. In a way that bears analogies to Vignola's contribution at the beginning of this section, Castro describes contemporary society as a violent, though apparently kind and peaceful biopolitical regime, which imposes uniformity and abstractness at the expense of authentic singularity, destroying any hope of a real community and suppressing any real plurality – all while pretending to preserve an illusory form of individuality, deprived of its unwanted ontological implications. He contends that contemporary society arises from a pathological fear and inability to cope with the basic existential facts of mortality and finitude that are constitutive of authentic singularity and individuality. Therefore, for Castro, its institutions, values, and way of life are a reactive, anxiety-suppressing formation, secretly serving a structural and compulsive need to erase such uncomfortable facts of life. Castro proceeds to unmask them: an apparently sacral cult of the individual, which really hides a violent and wild form of standardization; an illusion of total transparency produced by the global, seamless flux of information, which actually masks a permanent state of alarm, turning everyone into a potential suspect and demonizing attitudes of silence or retreat that are experienced as obstructive. Castro diagnoses all this as a "metaphysics of separation" which enforces a paradoxical "connected isolation" – an illusion of permanent and universal, but actually artificial and inauthentic communication that masks and maintains a reality of total isolation. This is the expression of a violent "will to power" that produces

subtle and pervasive forms of oppression, enforced through digital technologies of image production, reproduction, and diffusion which produce the uniform, binary medial space of the contemporary iconosphere and cultural industry. Claiming a new "protestantism of existence" in order to oppose this iconically fueled regime of oppression, Castro criticizes the prevailing "structuralist ideology," which privileges form over content, medium over message, and overall relational frameworks over individual concreteness; he contends that words are mere tools for communication, and that originary meaning precedes any language or code. Consequently, Castro is critical of the contemporary artistic and cultural establishment, which for him is unhelpful in achieving the spiritual fullness and awareness that contemporary life is lacking. He claims that the ultimate value of authentic art, which does not necessarily exclude the eventual use of technological means, lies in its capacity for conveying unique, otherwise unspeakable, experiences rooted in a deep, formless ontological background. Such authentic art is capable of restoring the spiritual component of perception, arresting the delusory flow of images and information of the contemporary iconosphere and transfiguring usual ways of thought. It consists of a few exceptional artworks conforming to an "Arctic Zone" (a notion borrowed from Deleuze) which exceeds the framework of established cultural institutions and is located in a realm of time beyond any established chronology – Castro illustrates this with a rather eclectic array of examples, including poetry by Pound and Snyder, paintings by Picasso and Morandi, films by Sokurov and Loznitsa, and music by Nico and Eyeless in Gaza. All in all, Castro's conclusions are not entirely pessimistic, as he remarks that, despite all, nowadays it is easier than ever to reestablish an ethical relationship to reality – it is only a matter of keeping a quiet, distant attitude and of casting a lucid, penetrating gaze on the current social and cultural *status quo*. Castro's relatively encouraging conclusion closes the second section of the book, while his forays into issues of art and cultural analysis prepare the ground for the third.

Section III, entitled "Philosophy, Literature, and Culture," moves on to the field of cultural analysis, while keeping in sight the connection of culture and art with its broader social context, rationality, and ethics. The section opens with "The Discourse on Reason in Contemporary Spanish Philosophy," by Barbara Kazimierczak, addressing a particular period in the history of Spanish thought, from the late nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. Once again, "pluralism" is a key concept here, as Kazimierczak stresses the plurality of notions of rationality that were formulated by different Spanish philosophers from this period. She notes

that these thinkers conceived of a diversity of such notions in close connection to their respective anthropological projects, which were also characteristically plural. Such a plurality was crucially influenced by the intense debate on Spanish national and cultural identity that was taking place during those decades, triggered by a deep experience of cultural and social crisis. In order to show this, Kazimierczak analyzes three particular cases: Sanz del Río and the Krausists, with their notion of "harmonic reason" (which in itself was pluralistic, as it acknowledges a plurality of different cognitive capacities in man – though all of them coordinated by Reason); Unamuno and his concept of an "agonic reason" (pluralistic also insofar as it acknowledges that rationality is only one among several different dimensions of the human being, and maybe not even the most important one); and Zambrano's "poetic reason" (equally pluralistic, since it embraces literature as a valid source of knowledge, on equal footing with philosophy). Delia Manzanero's chapter on "The Philosophy of Law of Francisco Giner and its Philosophical Origins in the Socio-legal Doctrine of European Krausism," like Kazimierczak's essay, belongs in this same line of historical recovery of the humanist tradition from the Spanish Silver Age. Manzanero's aim here is to propose an account of the relationship between Francisco Giner's social and legal thought and the European legal doctrines of Krausism, where the germ and foundations of Giner's works is to be found. In particular, Manzanero analyzes Giner's endorsement of Krause's and Ahrens's socio-legal conceptions. In fact, as Manzanero explains, the postulates of these two authors provided the inspiration for Giner's own philosophy of law and for his ideas on educational politics. As examples of this deep theoretical connection between the Spanish and the two German authors, Manzanero points to their respective theses on the right to education: their ideas on Associationism, their theories of the State and of self-government, and so on. All of these doctrines concern central issues in the debate on the foundations of human rights and on the challenges that pluralism poses for complex contemporary societies. Both school settings and curriculum contents are an important expression of how complex our contemporary societies are, and of how challenging reaching some kind of agreement can be in plural contexts like these. Bianca Thoilliez's contribution: "A Pragmatist Reconsideration of Pluralism in Schools," addresses this particular challenge. The chapter thinks through the debate concerning whether religion should be conceived as a merely subjective experience. In the light of classic American tradition, one of whose landmarks is precisely its focus on experience as the main source of human knowledge, and of the revision of it carried out by Richard Rorty, the public/private

nature of religious experience is called into question, and consequently the convenience as well as the viability of any kind of formal religious education at schools is examined.

The following chapter, "'The Kindly Ones' (*Les Bienveillantes*): The Red Herrings in a Theory of Intercultural Rationality," by Katarzyna Gan-Krzywoszyńska and Piotr Leśniewski, is a case study taking one concrete object of study: the novel *The Kindly Ones*, by Anglo-French author Jonathan Littell, which narrates an experience of "extreme violence." Gan-Krzywoszyńska and Piotr Leśniewski, inspired by Levinas, consider Littell's work from an "erothetical" perspective – one that poses issues of dialogical rationality. They adopt the basic premises of Rorty's "reconstructionist anti-naturalism," according to which it is a constitutive feature of all humanistic disciplines (as opposed to the sciences of nature) to ask questions about values, but this fact need not imply an exclusion of art from the sphere of rationality. Equally important for Gan-Krzywoszyńska and Leśniewski are ideas drawn from Argentinian poet and thinker J. L. Borges. On the basis of all these assumptions, Gan-Krzywoszyńska and Leśniewski propose an interpretation of Littell's novel which avoids over-simplification. They hold that, rather than merely trying to depict an experience of violence, Littell's take on it was to force the reader to face his/her own unknown "other" – i.e., the novel's protagonist. This should provoke in the reader a reaction to the painful experience narrated by the novel's hero, and to that extent the reader would be enacting himself as a morally responsible subject. The dialogical character of Littell's novel exemplifies the healing and comforting effects of literature in its functions as "memory," thus showing that humanity after Auschwitz can and should be preserved by preserving the memory of the Holocaust. This notion of a dialogical activation of the reader as ethical agent by a literary text shows remarkable affinities to Stanley Cavell's ethicist conception of drama and of the artwork-spectator relations as explained by David Diaz-Soto in the following chapter, "On Human Alienation and Cultural Disappearance of Frontiers: Two Diagnoses of Contemporary Culture." Here, Diaz-Soto explores a series of issues concerning the problematic character of the experience of time in contemporary Western culture and thought, and its implications for interpersonal relations and for cultural or artistic production. According to Diaz-Soto, both contemporary philosophy and social and humanistic disciplines are marked by an obsessive revision of historical narratives, which finds its parallel in the quotation and revival strategies prevailing in contemporary artistic production. Diaz-Soto tries to shed light on this state of affairs by drawing from the analyses proposed by Stanley Cavell and Leonard B. Meyer. According to Meyer, a crucial

trait of contemporary society is the atomization and saturation of cultural space, due to the accumulation of cultural novelties and of Western and non-Western cultural heritage. Meyer contends that the apparent multiplicity and plurality of present cultural production actually amounts to uniformity and motionlessness, or "stasis" (which Diaz-Soto connects with the more recent notion of a "disappearance of frontiers," or suppression of the "outside"). Therefore, the present is now cornered by an ever more dense and extended past, as well as by an increasingly motionless image of the future, lacking an orientation toward any definite direction and filled up with novelties that are not really "new." For Meyer, this means the end of the "Renaissance," that is, of the Western metaphysics of history with its myths of teleology, progress, and of the heroic figure of the individual genius. Diaz-Soto goes on to explain Stanley Cavell's claim that an awareness of the connection of the present with the past, as well as the capacity for projecting a future, provide the basis of meaningful, ethically responsible human action. For Cavell, whose position has some affinities to Castro's as set out in his chapter of this book, ethical action takes place in a complex context of constitutive epistemic opacity and finitude – including the possibility of failure, which an ethically responsible agent should acknowledge and come to terms with. The subtle notion of "presentness," developed by Cavell in dialogue with art critic and historian Michael Fried, designates this complex texture of human action as well as the peculiar mode of access to the world of everyday life. These ethical-anthropological conditions, according to Cavell, also provide the ground for authentic artistic creation, as exemplified in Shakespearian drama or in musical forms such as the classical sonata. But Cavell warns against an increasing deterioration and impoverishment of such conditions in contemporary society, which, from its historical origins, has been undermined by the tendency towards skeptical doubt. Although Cavell acknowledges the existence of an authentic form of "modernism" in art, he criticizes the late avant-garde's obsession with novelty for its own sake, denouncing its lack of an authentic compromise with the tradition of true cultural values rooted in the human condition. For Cavell, this goes hand-in-hand with a theatricalization of interpersonal relationships and a reification of fellow human beings. Despite some striking analogies between these two critical diagnoses of contemporaneity, Diaz-Soto also points to the deep discrepancies between the two authors: both are critical of artistic avant-gardes, but Meyer's attitude is that of the "integrated" aesthete, finally embracing the positive aspects of the present, while Cavell remains an "apocalyptic" moralist, and his judgment is largely negative. It remains as

an open choice for the reader to decide which of these two attitudes to reality he finds more congenial or convincing. Nothing could be better suited than this open, pluralistic finishing point to be a conclusion to a book whose key concepts are "plurality" and "dialogue," and whose aim is to present the multiplicity of its different contributors' visions on the complexities of our present world.

This book should be of interest for scholars in the fields of Philosophy, Political Sciences, Spanish Thought, Literary Theory, and Cultural Studies; for students in programs of Cultural Studies or of the different fields of the humanities; and for the general reader with an interest in philosophical reflections on the complexities of pluralism and the modern world.

# SECTION I:

# POLITICAL FRAMEWORKS AND PHILOSOPHY OF LAW

# CHAPTER ONE

# COMMUNICATIVE ACTION THEORY AND SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING

JAIRO MIGUEL TORRES OVIEDO

## 1. Introduction

A theory of communicative action is intended to frame a particular category of *communicative action*, which in turn permits the introduction of three complex thematic aspects. These three thematic aspects are interrelated, and stand in need of further articulation; for unless we understand them, communicative action theory itself remains opaque. These three aspects are: (i) the concept of *communicative rationality*, which seeks to confront the cognitive-instrumental claims to which reason pretends to be reduced; (ii) the concept of *society*, which combines the world paradigms of life and the "system"; (iii) a project to build upon the first two elements a theory of *modernity* that seeks to reveal the process of colonization of the world of life by instrumental reason – that is, the intrusion of cognitive-instrumental reason in areas such as family, school, and other quotidian communicative practices which should properly be governed by another type of rationality. Thus, we may see that communicative action theory ventures to establish certain categories which are inherent in daily communicative practice, on which basis we can analyze the different social pathologies inherent in the processes of social modernization. At the same time, such a theory seeks to develop the concept of an "ideal speech community," the role of which is to guide our modes of communication. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to articulate a communicative action theory under the title of a social theory, and thus to set out how this impacts upon the processes of social understanding. To this end, we will focus principally on the concept of communicative rationality, explaining how it develops from a theory of argumentation which addresses the way people build up and express validity claims, through speech acts, in order to generate processes of understanding that

allow for the construction of agreement regarding social problems, and without resort to other means that may be different from communication. In this connection, it is necessary to specify that a communicative action theory does not aspire to circumscribe the *content* of moral standards as a basic principle for social life, but to rather play a critical role in legitimizing the political, economic, and social agreements that may be achieved by the members of a particular community.

## 2. Communicative Rationality

To understand the concept of rationality, it is important to point out that a communicative action theory is a research project that is a result of cooperation between science and philosophy. The part of the theory that aims to develop the concept of communicative reason is the "philosophical dimension" of that project. In that vein, it can be indicated that the formal-pragmatic presuppositions of communicative action are universal and necessary presuppositions for the achievement of a linguistic understanding that must be presupposed by all the people involved in a communicative process, in which they try to understand each other and build agreement. In this sense, it is important to clarify that formal pragmatics is a discipline which seeks to reveal the rules that are used implicitly by those who try to understand each other through language, and who engage in interpretation and discussion with the goal of effecting social action. In just the same manner in which there are grammatical and syntactic structures, therefore, there is also a pragmatics contained in daily speech. Just as grammar expresses the universal traits present in a language, it is possible to establish a universal pragmatics of speech acts through a critique of language. As we can see, this rationalization process leads to the formalization of reason itself, meaning that rationality does not consist in certain pre-formed and substantive ideas, but rather in the procedures by which we come to hold such ideas, where these procedures are implicit in all speech acts. In this sense, universal pragmatics is an attempt to show that all subjects who try to understand through language have to make certain pragmatic presuppositions, which appear as universal and necessary as soon as they make them. In particular, they have already accepted the possibility of establishing agreement based on reasons and in relation to norms of truth, righteousness, and truthfulness.

The concept of reason is a procedural concept; this means that it does not issue in content, but rather establishes procedures for the discussion of matters that already have content. By "rational" we understand any social action that can be submitted to adjudication. In particular, what we submit

to adjudication are validity claims that can issue in social action in the course of daily life. According to Habermas,

> The relation of the utterance to the facts (and its amenability to grounding) make possible an understanding among participants in communication about something that takes place in the world. It is constitutive of the rationality of the utterance that the speaker raises a criticizable validity claim for the preposition p, a claim that the hearer can accept or reject for good reason.[1]

To establish a useful analytical distinction in terms of formal pragmatics it is necessary to identify (a) certain universal and necessary formal pragmatic presuppositions of communication (formal concepts of world, validity claims, and attitudes towards the world); and (b) an "internal rational structure of the processes of understanding." This allows us to give a substantive account of acts of understanding and agreement among the subjects of a social group that interact communicatively. This is perhaps best illustrated with the following example.

In a work group formed by Juan, Pedro, Carlos, Maria, Jorge, Ivan, and Ricardo, some of them complain about Carlos' behavior in relation to the responsibilities he was assigned. In the process many judgments are expressed:

> Carlos is unsupportive
> Carlos is irresponsible
> Carlos does not follow orders from the group
> Carlos is a bad teammate
> Carlos misbehaved

In this case, the opinions expressed by members of the group make an assessment, "Carlos behaved badly." This judgment is not verifiable according to the positivist scientific method because the process of verification and demonstration will assume the very fact which is supposed to be under evaluation. In this respect the epistemic situation is very different to that with a physical science statement such as "all bodies fall." The verification of the former statement will depend on the valuation and justification provided by the process of argument itself, and this is what allows understanding and agreement on a topic. Here, then, validity is conferred by the consensus built through communication produced by rational argument.

This picture, however, raises a problem that may need clarification. Statements or judgments of fact, as is the case with assertions that are made in the natural sciences, are presumed to be verifiable empirically.

But Habermas does not agree: for him, a statement is true if it can get the acceptance of all the members of the relevant epistemic community. This means that both normative rectitude and truth must be decided by agreement under ideal conditions of communication.

The idea that a scientific theory is true if it is verifiable empirically is part of common sense, and was defended strongly by the logical positivists. Habermas initially subscribes to a discursive theory of truth and justice; in the course of the development of his thought, however, he corrects his discursive theory of truth and so develops a pragmatic concept of truth that differs in important respects from his initial proposals.

It is important to emphasize the difference between the truth of a statement and the rectitude and justice of a norm of action. To determine the rectitude of a norm of action we need to take into account the interests of those affected by it; this is not the case when it comes to determining the truth of a statement, of course.

The validity claims made by subjects who interact communicatively give form to the internal rational structure of the processes of understanding, showing that the exercise of communicative rationality is displayed as cognitive-instrumental rationality, moral and practical rationality, and aesthetic-expressive rationality. In this sense, communicative rationality is the ground of possibility for individuals, who interact in a communicative process, to establish rational agreement motivated by truth, justice, and truthfulness. In other words, it is a process in which individuals express their validity claims, which are taken to form part of a scenario in which rational thought is framed with the purpose of objectifying the linguistic acts of such claims, all the while looking for agreement and understanding among the members of a social group.

The knowledge thereby expressed may be criticized since it is not infallible: but in fact the rationality of a validity claim depends on the reliability of the knowledge that it embodies. Here, Habermas points to two cases that can be taken as examples:

> An assertion with which A in a communicative attitude expresses a belief and a goal directed intervention in the world with which B pursues a specific end. Both embody fallible knowledge; both are attempts that can go wrong. Both expressions, the speech act and the theological action, can be criticized. (*Theory*, p. 8)

In other words, the truth is not in what A says, nor in what B understands; rather, the rationality of a statement or an intervention lies in its criticality, not in the speech act considered in isolation. Habermas's intention in providing these two examples is to show that a statement

about something in the world comes to be rational insofar as it is worthy of criticism or amenable to justification. But he does not appeal to the idea of what we would call "truth" or "fairness," for the latter would be the *result* of a rational discussion. These, then comprise our preliminary considerations regarding the concept of rationality.

The validity claims expressed are to be exposed to criticism, since only in this way they can aspire to be an affirmation or a teleological action. In order to achieve validity, these expressions must be justified by the actors in a given context with respect to the conditions previously established. It is precisely in this field where we attempt to build preliminary consideration upon the concept of rationality. Consequently, what we are trying to do is provide some preliminary ideas about what should be understood by "rational."

It is important to consider that the "rationality inherent in communicative practice extends over a broad spectrum. It refers to various forms of argumentation as possibilities of continuing communicative action with reflective means" (*Theory*, p. 11). Regarding this, it is necessary to capture the central idea of the concept of rationality. First, this concerns a series of considerations aimed to show that an utterance is rational if it "basically has the character of goal directed, feedback-controlled intervention in the world of existing states of affairs. Second, the abstract concept of the world is a necessary condition if communicatively acting subjects are to reach understanding among themselves about what takes place in the world or is to be effected in it" (*Theory*, p. 11).

Having said that it is too strict, we must note the wide range of manifestations that are susceptible to criticism and justification (actions regulated by standards, dramaturgical actions, evaluative utterances), all of which are starting points from which we may show that in matters of normative rectitude it is possible to establish agreement based on reasons. According to Callinicos, "The nature of rationality is instead to be elicited from the structure of intersubjectivity – more specifically, from the presuppositions of every speech act, the aspiration that everyday discourse involves towards rationality motivated agreement."[2]

We might well consider that this is correct, since Habermas seems to be right in holding that a conception of what is rational is implicit in the attitudes that some users of the language assume compared to others; what could be potentially disastrous, however, is the way in which such a claim is implemented.

We often use the concept of rationality in a different way. For example, the concept of cognitive-instrumental rationality is one that makes a non-communicative use of propositional knowledge: rather, it

makes use of teleological actions to achieve its claims, while the concept of communicative rationality expresses propositional knowledge through acts of speech, arguing for the relevant validity claims in a linguistic way. Thus cognitive-instrumental rationality not only pertains to teleological actions, but also to statements in general. Statements say something about the world, while the teleological actions are an intervention in the world. The general idea is that both are rational to the extent that they are worthy of criticism or justification. But they are also fundamentally different manifestations: cognitive-instrumental rationality cannot be reduced to teleological action.

Up to this point, we have assumed, with Habermas, that this concept of communicative rationality

> carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained unifying, consensus bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld. (*Theory*, p. 10)

It is necessary that the speakers frame validity claims that are open to criticism according the condition that such claims will be accepted or rejected by the listener. That is why a statement is only rational if the speaker meets the conditions that are required to reach the illocutionary end that has been proposed, i.e., to understand something that is in dispute along with the other actors involved in the communicative process. In contrast, teleological actions can only be called rational if the actor meets the conditions that are necessary to achieve the proposed objective, i.e., to intervene effectively in the world. It must be noted that both concepts of rationality could fail in their implementation. “The consensus sought can fail to come to pass, the desired effect can fail to take place. But even the nature of these failures shows the rationality of the expressions – failures can be explained” (*Theory*, p. 10).

In general terms the concept of rationality refers to everything that is worthy of criticism or justification, and to all manifestations that meet these conditions. For Habermas, not only statements and teleological actions, but also actions regulated by rules meet the requirements of rationality to the extent that they are worthy of criticism, substantiation, or justification – meaning that on the issues of normative rectitude implicit in the understanding and agreement, besides a cognitive-instrumental rationality, a practical-moral rationality is also to be found.

Of course, a communicative action theory will not deal with this thoroughly, i.e., "prove" that understanding and agreement based on reasons about issues of normative rectitude are possible. This is precisely the issue that will be treated in the justification of the program of discourse ethics and in general in the series of works on discursive ethics.

> Actions regulated by norms, expressive self-representations, and also evaluative expressions, supplement constative speech acts in constituting a communicative practice which, against the background of a lifeworld is oriented in achieving, sustaining and renewing consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjectivity recognition of criticizable validity claims. (*Theory*, p. 11)

We can call rational not only the actors capable of language and action that in a given context express statements and are able to defend them against a critic, expressing reasons which underlie the claim issued; but also those actors who follow an established rule, and who are able to justify their actions against a critic, giving reasons for why their behavior is or was this or that way. It is also rational that the actor expresses a desire to admit a fact. In this way the implicit rationality in the daily communicative exercises takes us to the practices of argumentation as a last resource, to which we appeal when we want to continue the communicative action in the face of disagreements which cannot be resolved by daily communicative or strategic actions.

## 3. Rational Argumentation

Argumentation theory attempts to explain the internal rational structure of the processes of understanding by which individuals defend their validity claims, citing reasons for these claims and trying to convince other actors.

> Anyone participating in argument shows his rationality or lack of it by the manner in which he handles and responds to the offering of reasons or seek to reply to them, and either way he will deal with them in a "rational" manner. If he is "deaf to argument" by contrast, he may either ignore contrary reasons or reply to them with dogmatic assertions and either way he fails to deal with the issues "rationally." (*Theory*, p. 18)

In a linguistic scenario containing argumentation we can exhibit what the concept of rationality is concerned with and analyze cases in which individuals adopt and respond to a rational position; but this also shows us that it is possible to create inter-subjective linguistic relationships that

generate processes of understanding or agreements in order to build consensus around the exposed validity claims. In a linguistic scenario containing argumentation we can eventually show what the concept of rationality and analysis is about, when individuals take and respond to a rational position; but it also shows that it is possible to create inter-subjective linguistic relationships that generate processes of understanding in order to build consensus around the relevant validity claims or agreements. It is necessary to specify that the processes of understanding in daily communicative praxis are one thing, and that the agreements we try to achieve when the processes of understanding fail are another. From the point of view of a communicative action theory the processes of understanding are quotidian – i.e., as users of a language we easily understand, because we have an inter-subjectively shared world. When a problem arises in these quotidian processes of understanding, for example when someone expresses a disagreement about a statement that A makes or an order that B gives, then we can pass from the action to discourse or argumentation about the validity claim that has become problematic. In other words, we must distinguish between communicative action and discourse or argumentation. The clarification of these validity claims is performed via participation in argumentation. In other words, it is not the theory but the actors in the process of argumentation that provide the justification when someone questions a validity claim in the context of communicative action.

So far we have been talking about certain features of argumentation: actors behave rationally when they claim reasons or take into account the reasons according to which others argue, and through this process it is possible to establish agreement. Below we will try to show how argumentation is understood as a process, procedure, and product, and the way it makes implicit knowledge explicit.

From the point of view of an argumentation theory it is possible to distinguish between arguments understood as *process*, *procedure*, and *product*. As process, they seek to establish certain ideal conditions in communication, conditions of symmetry that Habermas calls ideal speech situations. As procedure they establish rules that regulate communicative interaction. As product, argumentation has to do with the generation of rational arguments that persuade actors with regards to the validity claims that are expressed, and at the same time win inter-subjective recognition for the validity claims exposed. In this way, the three notions of argumentation – as process, procedure, and product – present differences according to the knowledge they express. The first point of view presents an ideal speech situation characterized by conditions of symmetry and

without social problems (repression, inequality, and handling). The second point of view establishes conditions that make it possible for the exposed validity claims to be supported or defended with the best arguments. The third point of view defines the internal form that the argument must have, and the relationship they must have with each other.

What the theory aims to do is to make the conditions of the implicit rational behavior explicit. It is important to grasp that the sense of argumentation theory is also the sense of a communicative action theory understood as formal pragmatics: this theory tries to make implicit knowledge explicit, conceptualizing that knowledge and framing it as a theory, and so effecting a reconstruction of the communicative competence. In other words, it seeks to make conceptions, visions, and social practices of the world visible through rational discourse, without mentioning the validity claims exposed by the actors.

How could processes of understanding be generated that allow the construction of agreements around social problems using rational arguments? Firstly, from the point of view of formal pragmatics, communicative action can be understood as a type of interaction in which two or more actors participate linguistically and interactively in processes of understanding in order to achieve agreement for coordinating and implementing action plans through communication. Secondly, it is important to point out once again that communicative action is one thing and argumentation something completely different. In communicative action there is no argumentation: argumentation takes place when a validity claim in communicative action emerges as problematic. Communicative action implies a concept of rationality that is developed out of argumentation. The strength of an argument is measured by the relevance of the reasons: i.e., given that the arguments should correspond to the interests of the actors in a speech-act, that indicates that anyone who participates in an argument demonstrates his rationality (or lack of it) based on the way he acts and responds to the reasons that are marshalled, and what is in dispute. If the actor is rational, the actor will recognize the strength of the arguments or will try to respond to them rationally; if he is not, he will ignore the reasons against or will respond to them with unconvincing ideas: i.e., those who are always rational are willing to respond to critics, and if so they with participate in argumentation.

By definition, those who interact *communicatively* are trying to understand each other, so what the theory of communicative action aims to do is to show us what are the rules we use implicitly when participating in processes of understanding.

> In speaking we relate to the world about us, to other subjects, to our own intentions, feelings, and desires. In each of these dimensions we are constantly making claims, even if usually only implicitly, concerning the validity of what we are saying, implying or presupposing, for instance regarding the truth of what we say in relation to the objective world; or claims concerning the rightness, appropriateness, or legitimacy of our speech acts in relation in relation to the shared values and norms of our social world; or claims to sincerity or authenticity in regard to the manifest expressions of these sorts can be contested and criticized, defended and revised. (*Theory*, p. 13)

It is necessary to clarify that the pragmatic presuppositions of communication are one thing and that the procedural rules regulating a real argument are another. A communicative action theory understood as formal pragmatics tries to make explicit what those who interact communicatively presuppose, and this leads to the formulation of the rules of argumentation. But these rules are not, as Habermas says, rules of action. To become rules of action these will have to be institutionalized. So far, the theory attempts to make explicit that they are counterfactual, i.e., they are not necessarily presented as a question of fact.

> The key to this notion of reaching understanding is the possibility of using reason or grounds to gain intersubjective recognition for criticisable validity claims. It is not only claims to propositional truth and to the effectiveness of means for attaining ends that can be criticized and defended with reasons: the claim that an action is right or appropriate in relation to a certain normative context deserves to be recognized as legitimate, can also be discussed in this way, as can the claim that an utterance is a sincere or authentic expression of one's own subjective experiences. (*Theory*, p. 13)

Arguments have a general structure that Toulmin characterizes in the following way: an argument is made of a problematic issue (conclusion) that has a validity claim, and the reason or basis (ground) that must decide that claim. When Habermas talks about the presuppositions made by the actors who are trying to understand each other, it is clear that these are the presuppositions of the argumentation. Habermas points out that under those conditions the presuppositions of communication are "idealized" in argumentation. The important point here is that, if he is talking about communicative action, i.e., about the actors that understand each other using language, then confusion can be generated; thus the best thing to do in this case is to speak simply about the presuppositions of *argumentation*.