

J. Habermas and the Art of Dialogue: The Practicability of the Ideal Speech Situation

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1. Introduction

Critical reasoning is a core element of the P4C program. Yet, the appearance of postmodernism, multiculturalism and ethnocentrism casts doubt on the Western concept of rationality and demands that its claim of universal purview be justified. In this context, the desideratum of this article is to provide a concept of rationality that has the potential to serve as the theoretical basis of reasoning in P4C. This is an important task, because if we cannot defend P4C against the postmodern criticism of rationality, we cannot claim that it is a multicultural program in a true sense, nor can we defend it against the charge that this is just another attempt of “western colonization”.

In what is to follow, I will discuss one possible solution to this problem by drawing on Habermas’ notion of communicative rationality. I’ll begin by showing that communicative rationality has the potential to widen our western-based concept of reasoning in P4C and thus, make it more applicable in a multicultural environment. Yet, one weak point in Habermas’ theory is that he assumes the illocutive ends of all communication participants and, therefore, fails to show the practicability of the ideal speech situation. Therefore I will argue to apply P4C to the discourse theory and communicative rationality itself (i.e. to foster such illocutive ends in young children in a C of I) and claim that P4C may provide the missing link. Last but not least, I will focus on the practical level and explore possibilities of applying Habermas’ notion of an ideal speech situation to the C of I.

2. The postmodern Sea of Contingencies: Challenging Rationality

“Communicative rationality is certainly an unsteady vessel, but it doesn’t capsize in the ocean of contingencies, even if quaking on the high seas is the only modus by which it can ‘manage’ these contingencies”
(Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken*, p. 185)

Habermas’ famous notion of communicative rationality has been thoroughly criticized: postmodernists condemn the limitations of the vessel, whereas objectivists fear the ocean of contingencies. But both often overlook the substance of the vessel itself: i.e., its phenomenological origins of *Lebenswelt* and intersubjectivity which serve as the best counter-argument against the postmodern objections. In what is to follow I will focus on two arguments against rationality, namely the incommensurability of cultural worlds on the one hand, and the reduction of plurality through rationality on the other. I thus suggest that communicative rationality has the potential to defend and continue the “project of modernity”.

a. Cultural Determinism and the Notion of Incommensurability

The postmodern idea of incommensurability¹ claims that a language-based understanding is never possible, because even if we speak the same language, we interpret each word differently. This becomes even more problematic when we try to understand somebody from another culture because our cultural horizon of understanding is incompatible with the other’s horizon, i.e., our structure of thinking is not only different in content, but different in kind. For a postmodernist, understanding is the illusion which occurs when we impose our own structure of meaning to what the other says. It is an illusion because even if two structures of meaning seemingly overlap in one place, they are still connected to a completely different network that surrounds each of them.

Understanding thus is just the reduction of the Otherness in order to fit in my little world of sense making. This insight led Rorty to the claim that all justifications are contingently related to our language, traditions and life forms². Objectivity is nothing but an intersubjective consent³. Hence, Rorty suggests that we regard the distinction between the terms opinion and truth as 'old vocabulary' that can be left behind. To fill the empty gap, he replaces objectivity with solidarity⁴, by which he means that we should rather concentrate on cultivating solidarity, despite the fact that we don't really understand the other. Thus, from Rorty's point of view, it becomes less important to justify our interpretation of the world or find consent through reasoning.

The price that Rorty pays for adhering to the perspective of the participant, is firstly that he locks us into an ethnocentric worldview⁵ and thereby runs the risk of imprisoning the Other in his/her Otherness. Secondly, his pre-reflexive concept of empathy and solidarity implies the danger that we reduce the other to an object of pity, or assume that the other feels the way we would feel in his/her situation. Thirdly, on the level of political action, Rorty fails to provide a strategy to make decisions on a global level or about issues that concern the planet as a whole⁶. Issues in which 'no action' might as well have severe consequences for everybody.

b. The Rescue of Complexity

The second argument against rationality is related to the first one and mirrors the metaphysical attempt to relate the overwhelming complexity of being to one principle⁷. One core intention of postmodernism has been to make us aware of the violence that escorts this attempt: it reduces the complexity of things to one transcendental principle, e.g., that we are all just rational beings.

Postmodernism⁸ wants to rescue the non-identical, different, heterogenic, contradicting, conflicting and fading moments of existence⁹ from such reduction. This awareness of real difference has become crucial with regard to the process of globalization, e.g. the dialogue on global Human Rights, the political role of religion and the like: conflicts in which it has been extremely fruitful and necessary to include as many different opinions and interpretations as possible. Yet, on the other hand, postmodernism leaves us alone with the problem of complexity, while – on a political and personal level – global problems urge us to act because the refusal to act is not an option.

One example is Rorty's criticism of rationality, which forces us back to a pre-reflexive concept of empathy, because for him any language-based understanding is an illusion that suppresses the Other. But if empathy is the only alternative then we are even more in danger to reduce the Other in his/her Otherness, since we are left with our own spectrum of emotions as a resonance field for the Others bodily expressions. It means to exclude language as a medium of understanding and thus – in my view – to throw the baby out with the bath water and be back where we began: at a mirrored version of Kant's categorical imperative which instead of internalizing the Other's voice in our reflexive process of reasoning, we now internalize the Other's way of feeling through a pre-reflexive empathy.

3. Communicative Rationality: a way out of the dilemma

Jürgen Habermas offers a way of seeing through the apparent dilemma of either reducing real people to identically rational beings or being stuck apart in our incommensurable cultures. He does so through the concept of a communicative rationality, which relates to the notions of *Lebenswelt* and a procedural understanding of truth.

a. Becoming aware of the *Lebenswelt*: Countering against the Incommensurability of Cultures

Although Habermas posits a plurality of rationalities¹⁰, I will reduce my argumentation to his distinction between strategic and communicative rationality. I will begin by explaining why communicative rationality is always prior to all other kinds of rationalities. That will explain why the postmodern criticism of rationality doesn't apply for the communicative rationality.

When we look at the very beginning of the "Theory of Communicative Action," Habermas distinguishes between two ways of acting: the teleological and the communicative action. The teleological action uses specific means to achieve a chosen end. The act is rational if the agent can explain why and how he acted to put his plan

into effect. This presupposes an external objective reality, within which the agent distinguishes between useful and useless objects.

A communicative action is fundamentally different. It first aims to agree on a shared perspective about what is, before any manipulations within the world take place. It begins with one person explaining what he or she sees and believes. This interpretation can be doubted by others, in which case, the first person must provide reasons to justify his/her belief.

Although both kinds of actions begin with propositional knowledge, the use made of this knowledge is quite different: teleological action intends an instrumental manipulation, whereas communicative rationality strives toward communal understanding.

Habermas argues that these two modes of action grow from two different understandings of reality: the realistic and the phenomenological. The realist assumes an ontological precondition for the world: "the epitome of what is"¹¹. Within his/her "objective" notion of reality, a realist explains the rationality of his action by referring to its usefulness and its successful consequences. But the understanding of objectivity undergoes a drastic change when the phenomenological position is adopted. A phenomenologist realizes that whatever s/he sees has its foundations in a pre-reflexive prejudice, i.e., in the background of primordially given structures of meaning). S/he knows that those prejudices are necessary social constructs. So a phenomenologist puts the notion of "objectivity" in parentheses for the moment and considers the conditions under which the participants in a communicative community [Kommunikationsgemeinschaft] constitute the world as an objective unity, i.e., as intersubjective. "A world acquires objectivity only when it is regarded as the same world by a community of subjects, each of whom is capable of speech and action."¹²

With this phenomenological understanding in mind, Habermas refers to Husserl's *Lebensweltbegriff*. He emphasizes that we are born into a preexistent socially constructed world, which is already filled with implicit meaning. As we grow into this world, we adapt its habits and structures of meaning. This is the background against which we develop our own convictions, meanings and beliefs. "The *Lebenswelt* is the transcendental place where speaker and hearer encounter each other"¹³ and where understanding between people can occur. Although parts of the *Lebenswelt* can be questioned and can be recreated through dialogue, the *Lebenswelt* as a whole cannot be thematized because no one can ever step outside the *Lebenswelt* and look down on it as an observer. In this sense, the *Lebenswelt* is given and its unquestionability refers back to the a priori of intersubjective agreement.¹⁴

Returning to our two prototypes, i.e., the realist and the phenomenologist, the realist assumes that the outside world is the way s/he perceives it. Hence, s/he has no need for communication and his/her action can be characterized as a unidirectional connection between person and world, i.e., between subject and object. The phenomenologist, on the other hand, is aware of the contingency of his/her perspective on the world. S/he, therefore, sees the necessity of initially establishing an intersubjectively agreed-upon objectivity, within the context of which rational actions can only become possible. More simply we could say that the realist, who intends a teleological action, manipulates external reality and uses it as a means for his ends; the phenomenologist, although possibly intending to do something, begins with an awareness of the contingency of his/her perceptions. This is why s/he is open to consider the perspective of the Other. S/he says "I see this or that" and asks "Do you see what I see?" S/he suggests "I think we should do this or that because...." and asks "What do you think?" Through this dialogue, we establish a common world to which both can refer. For Habermas, this is the only way that a phenomenologist can act rationally: A person is 'rational' if "s/he interprets the nature of her desires in the light of culturally accepted standards of value; and we say s/he is 'really rational' if s/he can take a reflexive attitude to those need-interpreting standards of evaluation. Within the confines of communicative rationality, cultural values do not appear as norms of action with claims of universal validity. At most, values can argue for interpretations under which a circle of affected individuals can potentially describe and norm a shared interest. The court of intersubjective recognition that forms around cultural values certainly doesn't entail a claim of general cultural consent and most certainly doesn't entail a claim of universal consensus."¹⁵ Strategic rationality (and all other forms of rationality) is unaware of the contingency of its perspective on the *Lebenswelt* and mistakes its perspective as an "Archimedean standpoint" from which to wield its levers of strategy (morality or taste). But for Habermas it is not enough to merely reflect on why we think something is true, right or beautiful. That is why the concept of communicative rationality insists that we must first reflect on our cultural background, in

front of which we may view something as true, right or beautiful.

With regard to the postmodern argument of the ethnocentricity of the western concept of strategic rationality, Habermas argues that a communicative rationality is needed, because although our actions become increasingly relevant for more and more people, each dissent is a challenge to a part of our *Lebenswelt* in a complex and diverse society (in which all no longer share the same cultural background). This bewilderment accelerates the dissolving of parts of our *Lebenswelt* [becoming reflexive and accessible to language] and thus enables us to (at least in part) transcend the incommensurability of cultural world view. Through communicative rationality, rather than rationalizing our actions in front of our cultural set of meaning, we let the other's perspective challenge this background and make us aware of it. This is a mutual process of questioning. Hence, we will be less inclined to impose our worldview on the other, and with this reduce his/her Otherness to our own system of meaning. Communicative rationality is a process of attempting to reach true understanding, i.e., in Gadamer's words "the merging of horizons"¹⁶. It is a process from which we both part as changed or as 'Others'.

b. The Unity of Rationality in the Plurality of its Voices: Countering against the Rebuke of Reductionism

Habermas basic theory of communicative rationality says that "The oneness of rationality can only be heard in the plurality of the voices."¹⁷ To understand this we need to understand two basic concepts of his theory. The first is the notion of *Lebenswelt* which we have already explored. The second is Habermas' replacement of the traditional substantial understanding of truth by a procedural understanding. According to this view, referred to as discourse theory, truth is seen as an intersubjective agreement within an ideal speech situation. Such dialogues include as many perspectives and arguments as possible, because truth is seen as the congregation of different perspectives.¹⁸ True is what can no longer be challenged in such a community. But because this community also includes the future societies, this temporary consent has to remain open for revision.

Although Habermas refers methodically to Kant's concept of practical rationality, the core achievement of his theory is that he places the internal reasoning process into the public, i.e., in the intersubjective space between people. Hence, the subject-centered understanding of rationality is being replaced by a de-centered and intersubjective understanding of rationality.¹⁹ By externalizing the process of reasoning Habermas overcomes the downside of both mentioned concepts, Kant's categorical imperative and Rorty's theory of empathy: The Other is actually there and can raise his/her voice if s/he feels misunderstood. This attempt follows as a consequence from his theoretical framework: a. Only those actions are rational that refer to an intersubjectively accepted truth or interpretation of reality (*Lebenswelt*). b. The Other's perspective is a necessary condition for approaching truth as much as possible (procedural understanding of truth). As a necessary consequence Habermas develops an empirical verifiable procedure that guarantees to include the Other's perspective as much as possible, i.e. the four universal validity claims and the ideal speech situation. In his political theory of a deliberative democracy he works out practical ways to institutionalize such ideal dialogues.

Admittedly, Habermas concept of communicative rationality is not free from any idealistic claims: Firstly, he assumes that we can genuinely understand one another, even if not always completely. This turns out to be an empirical claim whose truth can only be discovered in practice. Secondly, we may ask why we are so eager to base our agreement on rationality.²⁰ Habermas might counter that we haven't found a better alternative. And how else can we achieve consent on political actions that concern all of us and which are not optional (e.g. pollution of environment etc.)? And thirdly, Habermas assumes that people genuinely want to understand one another, i.e. that they have an illocutive intention and interest in others. This last assumption, although banal, is actually a central problem: as it is evident that we often cocoon into our own little world, interpretations and egocentric-strategic plans. Hence, instead of arguing whether we humans are egoists or altruists, I suggest to ask instead: "Is the ability to understand and to have a genuine interest in others an a priori Human condition."²¹

4. Is the illocutionary attempt to connect with others an a priori human condition?

It seems to me that an illocutive intention that attempts to understand others is not something artificial that must be implemented, but is actually an inherent ability that needs to be restored and cultivated in adult life.²²

Merleau-Ponty demonstrates in "La Phenomenologie de la Perception" that bodily intersubjectivity (intercorporeality) and connectedness is prior to the concept of individuality: He shows that a baby initially has no

concept of “you” or “me” because its bodily scheme has not yet developed. An infant inhabits a world which s/he believes is accessible for everybody. S/he doesn’t think of Others as “private subjectivities” nor does s/he believe that we are all “limited to one perspective on the world. (...) Only for adults is the perception of others and the intersubjective world a problem.”²³ Furthermore, there seems to be an immediate connection between bodies: A child will frequently intentionally imitate our movements. Thus, for example, though s/he has neither seen his/herself in the mirror nor is his/her body similar to his/her mother’s, if his/her mother opens her mouth when she raises a spoon to feed him/her, a baby will intentionally open his/her own mouth. “She perceives in her body her intentions, my body with my intentions and thus my intentions within her body”²⁴ This immediate imitation is also how children learn to use tools and thus to dwell in the world of things. The body indwells space and time, but this indwelling results from a long learning process. For a baby, the things around him/her are like “aeroliths from an alien planet”²⁵ S/he relates to them, and ultimately finds them, as extensions of his/her own body by correlating what s/he sees others around him/her doing with them – and thus feels it from within his/her own body. There is no other way to learn how to eat with a fork, scribble with a crayon, or tie one’s shoes except by watching another person doing these actions and then feeling the corresponding movements within one’s own body.

Because we bodily indwell the world, we experience it not only in terms of ‘I think’ but also in terms of ‘I can.’ We constitute ourselves in relation to the things around us, which acquire meaning through their relationships to our bodily abilities. Merleau-Ponty radicalizes this realization when he says “Consciousness is being at the thing through the medium of the body.”²⁶ We acquire this “I can” from others as we progressively learn many ways to engage in and with the world. Because our own visible, material body indwells a similarly visible, material world, the body teaches us that we and the objects around us share one and the same physical world. For Merleau-Ponty, “The body is a thing within things, though it is a thing that has begun to communicate with the world from within the world.”²⁷ The body is therefore also an essential precondition for public space because it is the physical vehicle toward a shared world in which we encounter other embodied beings. Within this mutual intersubjective world, the Other is perceived not a threat to my absolute perspective, but as a welcome colleague, who can augment my limited perspective on the world.

This intersubjective world can be forsaken and, to a certain degree, it necessarily will be left behind as we grow older. But we need to become aware of our interdependence and our connection with others if we want to have an intersubjective, public world. Thus, Merleau-Ponty says that “In fact, if there is to be one intersubjective world (also for adults), then the child’s worldview must be acknowledged as having been correct all along, despite the opinions of adults or Piaget”²⁸. And he goes on to say that “the Other as object remains only a devious modality of the Other”²⁹, because the gaze that reduces the Other to an object is only possible if this objectifying gaze supplants communication.³⁰ Thus, although a child outgrows the state of infantile communion as s/he matures, certain events can reawaken this primordially intersubjective perspective. For example, if somebody cuts his finger and we see it bleeding, we immediately feel inside ourselves how the wound feels for the other. And if somebody stumbles beside us on the sidewalk, we instinctively try to prevent them from falling. All of which suggests that before we become subjects that cocoon in our own little worlds, we live in a world of immediate intersubjectivity, in which understanding happens on an immediate, pre-reflexive, bodily level (e.g., the symbiosis between mother and child).

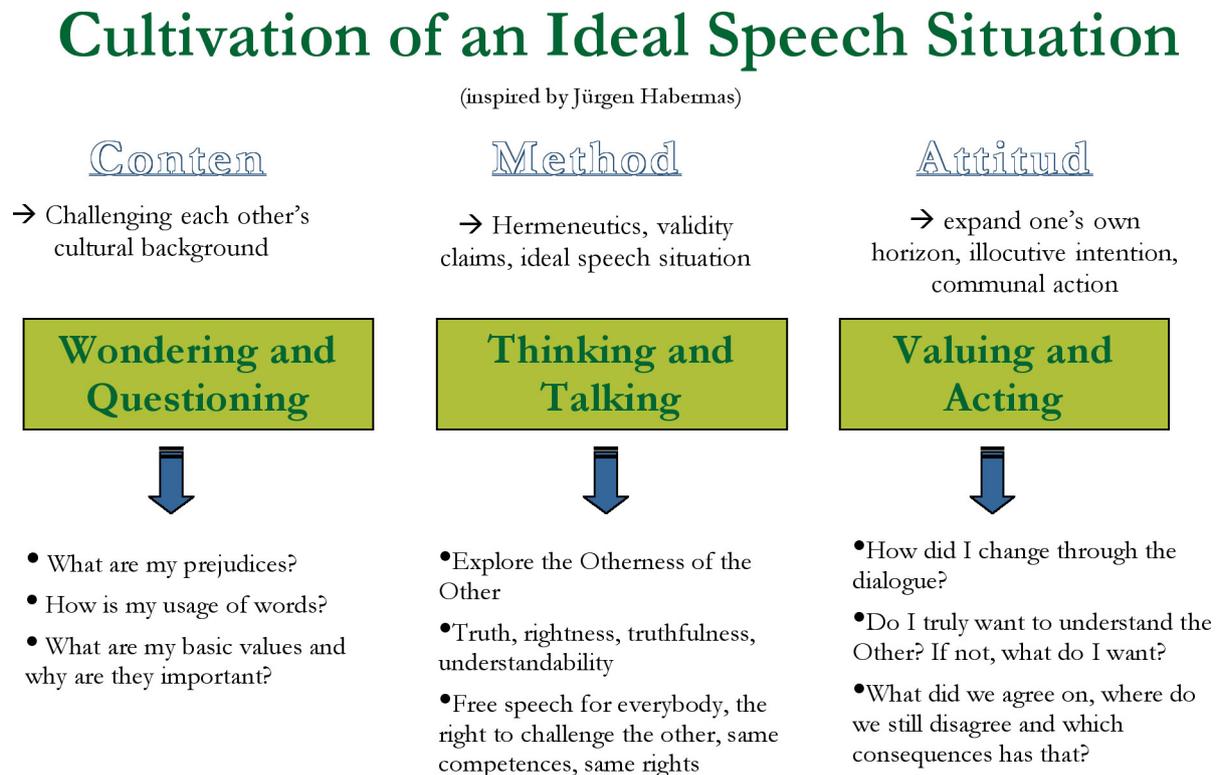
Given that this is the case, it could be argued that we ‘only’ need to maintain or cultivate this intersubjectivity at an early age: i.e., in children and young adults, so that intersubjectivity becomes a “natural” attribute in them as human beings, and that we need to do our best to keep it alive as we age.³¹

5. A multicultural Community of Inquiry: Some final Suggestions

If maintaining a vibrant sense of intersubjectivity is the goal, then P4C has the potential of both: to maintain bodily intersubjectivity and immediate interest in others and, at the same time, to cultivate communicative rationality as a reflexive mode of including the other in his/her Otherness. That is to say: a dialogue that genuinely aims for understanding and simultaneously makes us aware of our differences as well as of our own prejudices. Thus, P4C would provide the missing link to make Habermas concept of communicative rationality more practicable by cultivating a natural illocative intention in children. Because: to have citizens that are capa-

ble of participating in a public *ideal speech situation* with communicative rationality, we need to educate children in such a way.

I will refrain now from showing all the similarities that already exist between the philosophical community of inquiry and the *ideal speech situation*.³² Rather I'd like to concentrate on the contributions that Habermas theory might add to the C of I. The overall aim is to make it a program that may claim to be multicultural. The following graphic makes this more concrete:



a. Wondering and Questioning: Awareness of Lebenswelt

At first, I would like to point out the importance of the Lebenswelt. What I mean by this is the necessity to clarify the different cultural prejudices and backgrounds of understanding whenever we address a question in a C of I. Of course, this is not always easy for a teacher, because the Lebenswelt remains unconscious until it becomes problematic. Yet, we might be able to sensitize ourselves: e.g. irritations or anxieties are often a sign that our deepest beliefs and dearest values or 'blind spots' are being challenged. In addition, it helps to reflect on our usage of words and to ask others about the precise meaning of frequently used expressions or fundamental convictions that we are likely to refer to (e.g., the good, reason, God, happiness). As well, one should remain skeptical towards 'quick affirmations' of each other's opinion. The overall aim is to hold oneself open for the Otherness of perspectives and sets of meaning.

b. Thinking and Talking:

On the level discourse, the hermeneutical aspects of communicative rationality offers an instrument to reinforce intercultural understanding, e.g., clarifications on what understanding means (i.e., the 'melting of the horizons'), to face and work with the fear of inner change, the demand to heal the other's argumentation where evidence is missing: because even if we disagree with the other in the end, we first need to make sure that we understood the other's point and made it as strong as possible.

The ideal speech situation provides empirically verifiable criteria that guarantee to make everybody's argument heard: e.g., the inclusion of all participants, the rule to give reasons if challenged, the claim that each member has the right to learn those competences that are necessary to participate fully in the dialogue as well as making sure that all members have the same rights (e.g. nobody should be suppressed or blackmailed after the

dialogue, etc.).

The validity claims eventually help to identify disagreements that might either occur on the level of theoretical truth (need to show evidence), rightness (need to find argument for appropriateness), truthfulness (need to show through behavior) and understandability (try to rephrase the sentence).

c. Valuing and Acting

In order to cultivate an inner attitude for a communicative rationality, I suggest that we should applaud changes of opinions as a sign of inner growth and progression, as well as to make the group aware that those changes when they happen in order to show where and how understanding happens. Hesitations in our will to understand the other should not be suppressed but followed and scrutinized with courage. Last, but not least, a C of I that is based on the concept of communicative rationality aims towards communal action, i.e. to either find consent or a compromise. In that sense the C of I can't remain on a linguistic or theoretical level, but aims to apply insights to a problematic situation.

Endnotes

1. An insightful outline and description of the postmodern argumentation is being offered by W. Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, Weinheim 1987.
2. R. Rorty, *Solidarity or Objectivity?*, in: J. Rajchman, C. West (Eds.), *Post-Analytical Philosophy*, N. Y. 1985, p. 4ff.
3. That means we may never transcend the provinciality of our cultural structure of meaning.
4. R. Rorty, *Contingency, irony and solidarity*, Cambridge 1989, p. 189ff.
5. See J. Habermas, *Vom sinnlichen Eindruck zum symbolischen Ausdruck*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 46.
6. This criticism might be too strong or even unjust at this point. I therefore want to mention that Rorty does distinguish between private and public issues and thus provides some help in terms of political actions (see *ibid.*, p. 197f.).
7. See the ancient Greek principle of *hen kai pan* – i.e. the one and everything, the oneness of everything. This first appeared in Heraklites: 'from everything comes one and from one comes everything', see: Charles H. Kahn: *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus. An edition of the fragments with translation and commentary*, Cambridge 1981; see also: W. Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen*, Frankfurt am Main 1985, p. 31ff.
8. I obviously have to simplify postmodernity at this point. The main attempt of the article is to concentrate on Habermas contribution. For a more detailed description of postmodernity see W. Welsch 1987.
9. J. F. Lyotard, *Der Widerstreit*, München 1987.
10. *Cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, aesthetic-practical and communicative rationality* (J. Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (henceforth abbreviated in the text as *TkH I*), vol. I, Frankfurt am Main 1981, p. 75ff.).
11. J. Habermas, *TkH I*, p. 30.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 31ff.
14. See *ibid.*, p. 198ff; for the notion of *Lebenswelt* see: E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Hua VI.*, Hamburg 1977.
15. J. Habermas, *TkH I*, p. 41.
16. H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen 1990, p. 309ff.
17. J. Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken*, Frankfurt am Main 1988, p. 155.
18. Of course, one might argue that some perspectives are not of much worth: e.g. the perspective of a drug addict, a blind man or an insane person might not be of much worth if we are trying to describe a visual object. Postmodernists might counter though that by excluding these opinions, we have already decided on the content that we want to see or regard as 'worthy'. In addition, what we regard as 'real' only exists in relation to somebody perceiving it: e.g. to say that this flower is blue only makes sense for a Human who is capable of perceiving colors. A bee might have a completely different visual sensation of the flower and for a dog a flower might more be an olfactory experience. To reduce the flower to its visual aspects already means to

reduce and exclude all other possibilities of perceptions that are as real as our own. Furthermore, to assume that visual perception is independent from all other senses is again only an assumption.

19. This is a consequence of the discovery of the *Lebenswelt*: because for a phenomenologist rationality is only possible on the background of a shared interpretation of what is. And because such agreement comes from communication, rationality itself has its roots in intersubjectivity.
20. See Ch. Taylor's argument in: *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton 1992, p. 70ff.
21. With this methodological approach I'm not alone. K. Jaspers notes in "Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung" (München 1984, p. 317) that a philosophical insight in the Human Condition shall replace the 'will of destruction' by the 'will to communicate'.
22. Of course, this argumentation can only remain a sketch at this point.
23. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris 1961, p. 407f.; one might be able to show that the primordial state of children is 'public' (i.e. intersubjective) and that the state of the 'private' along with subjectivity comes a posteriori.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 404f.
25. See *ibid.* p. 406f.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 167f.
27. See M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'Invisible*, Paris 1964, p. 152f.
28. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 408f.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 511f.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 414f. For example, and as we know from war reports and criminal literature, it's easier for a soldier or a murderer to kill somebody if there's no communication between him and his victim. If the intended victim speaks, if vocal contact or eye contact occurs, it becomes difficult for the perpetrator to reduce the Other to a mere object.
31. Of course, this argumentation stays sketchy at this point. My intention is solely to give a good reason for more research in this direction. It seems though that the ability of interconnectedness and pre-reflexive empathy is the precondition for the intellectual ability to take on a different person's perspective, as explicated in Habermas' concepts of communicative rationality.
32. It was actually Matthew Lipman himself, who - when I last talked to him - pointed to Habermas as a possible theoretical fundament for the community of inquiry.

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