

MODELING A RECONSTRUCTION OF HABERMAS' UNIVERSAL PRAGMATICS

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The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how with the help of a mathematical model the set of concepts which are constitutive for Habermas' conception of UP can be systematically generated, and how its coherence and consistency can be reconstructed.

1

Habermas has introduced the concept 'Universal Pragmatics' (UP) in his (1976a and b) and in his (1980), (1981a and b). In these writings it is the name he uses for a general theory of social interaction, which is the reconstructive-philosophical part of his theory of society. Its aim is to reconstruct in an analytical manner, that is, regardless of time and space, the overall structure of a social interaction situation. According to Habermas' reconstruction all social actions and events have, in all contexts and on all levels of analysis, a common multidimensional, intersubjective structure. In this paper I can not give a detailed analysis of his reconstruction. I have to refer to my dissertation (1982). A short outline of my reconstruction is given in my (v.Doorne, Ruys 1984) and (v.Doorne 1986).

To give at least an impression of Habermas' differentiated (speechact theoretic) pragmatic approach I quote a passage from his (1981, 159) that, in my opinion, is quite significant:

'In saying something within an every-day life context, speaker not only refers to:

- something in the objective world (as the totality of what is the case), but simultaneously to
- something in the social world (as the totality of legitimate interpersonal relationships), and to
- something in speaker's own subjective world (as the totality of manifestable subjective experiences to which he/she has privileged access).

This is how the tripartite network between utterance and world presents itself intentione recta, that is from speaker's (and hearer's) perspective. The same network can be analysed intentione obliqua, from the perspective of the life-world, or the background of shared assumptions and procedures, in which any particular piece of communication is inconspicuously embedded from the very beginning. From this viewpoint language serves

- the function of cultural reproduction (or keeping traditions alive): (...)
- the function of social integration (or co-ordinating the plans of different actions in social interaction): (...)

the function of socialization (or of the cultural interpretation of needs): (...).'

2

As a result of my reconstruction of Habermas' UP I consider (partly amending his terminology and adding to it) the following set of concepts as indispensable: objectivity, subjectivity, normativity, intersubjectivity and sociality. I feel encouraged to defend this position by Habermas' recent analysis (1996), in which he reconstructs the linguistic-pragmatic conceptual infrastructure of social interaction.

These five concepts determine in their mutual interdependence the general conceptual characteristics of social relations. It is only with the help of a mathematical model and in a longstanding dialogue with Pieter Ruys, professor of mathematical economics, that I have been able to articulate in a precise way the complex interrelatedness of the five constitutive concepts as they are introduced in Habermas' writings. The mathematical model I use has been developed by Ruys, and he calls it the tripolar interaction model. Making use of this model in my interpretation of Habermas' conception I have developed a Habermasian model of social

interaction. I claim that my interpretation is consistent with the characteristics of the (mathematical) tripolar interaction model as well as with the (philosophical pragmatic) structure of Habermas' conception of social interaction. Interpretation of the formal model in terms of what I call a basic model of social interaction results in a consistent, coherent, and fruitful set of analytical concepts that are appropriate to generate the five structuring concepts of Habermas' UP. I introduce it under 3. Given the space limits of this paper I can only present the basic model. Elsewhere I claim that with the conceptual means of the basic model two new sets of interdependent concepts can be generated and articulated, that is, the concepts of an action-model (referring to social interaction between agents) and the concepts of a system-model (referring to social interaction between domains). For this purpose the concepts of the basic model have to be empirically specified to make them apt to refer to social phenomena in different contexts and on different levels of aggregation. There I claim further, that the basic model, the action- and system-model together, in their mutual interdependence, constitute the general frame of social interaction required by Habermas' theory of society.

3

The tripolar interaction model that I take as my point of departure, is a purely formal model, that is, void of empirical content. Its structure is determined by the interdependence of seven positions, represented by points, and seven relations, represented by lines (see figure 1). For the mathematical features of the operator that commands the interaction between points and between lines I refer to (vDoorne/Ruys 1986, section 3.1 and 3.2, 208-212).

Figure 1: the formal tripolar model of interaction

seq Figure * Arabic 1

Figure 1 represents the structural nexus of positions and relations. Figure 2a (see below) represents my interpretation of the positions of figure 1 in terms of primitive concepts referring to the constituent components of social interaction which are necessary and sufficient for generating the five structuring concepts of Habermas. They are defined by the (interpreted) relations of figure 1 represented in figure 2b (see below).

The basic model

In the mathematical model (figure 1) three groups of positions can be distinguished, each with different characteristics. The presence of a characteristic is indicated by the cipher 1. There are three positions

(100, 011, 001) having only one characteristic. There also are three positions with two characteristics (110, 011, 101). And there is one position with three characteristics (111). I interpret all seven positions as representing capacities. And I call the capacities represented by the three positions having only one characteristic, separate capacities; the three positions with two characteristics intermediate capacities; and the position with three characteristics integrative capacity.

In the philosophical interpretation I give to the three separate capacities I alter the formal equivalence of the three positions with one characteristic by conceptually defining two of them (100 and 010) as action competence. For these two positions this competence is understood in the same sense, albeit that the competence is unique in the two cases, in the sense of being irreducible to the other. This difference will be coded as + and -. From the perspective of a general theory of society I interpret the third position (001), which equally represents a separate capacity, as mediative resources.

For the interpretation of the intermediate capacities, represented by the three positions with two characteristics (110, 011, 101), another alteration of their formal equivalence has to be made, that is, in line with the differentiation of the conceptual content of the three separate capacities. The positions (011) and (101) represent the capacity of interaction between each of the two different action competences (+ and -) and mediative resources, that is, as belonging to the relations (100, 101, 001) and (010, 011, 001) respectively. I define this capacity as embodiment + and -. Due to the differentiation of the conceptual definition of the three separate capacities, position (110) as belonging to the relation (100, 110, 010) has to be defined differently. In my interpretation it represents the capacity of interaction between the action competences + and -, and I call this capacity common framing. The thus defined three intermediate positions represent the interaction between separate capacities, combining their characteristics.

There is still another reason to interpret these three positions as intermediate capacities. Each of them represents also the relation between a separate capacity and the integrative capacity (111): (011) as belonging to the relation (100, 111, 011); (101) as belonging to the relation (010, 111, 101); and (110) as belonging to the relation (011, 111, 110). From the angle of their being part of these relations a new interpretation is required of the three intermediate capacities, different from, and complementary to, the interpretation already given.

I interpret position (011), belonging to the relation (100, 111, 011), as object-determination + because it represents the capacity of interaction between action competence+ (100) and what I will call the integrative capacity of social interaction represented by position (111). This interpretation of position (111) has to be qualified in the sense that this position as being part of the relation (100, 111, 011) represents social interaction under the angle of its intersubjective objectivity. Similarly, I call (101) as belonging to the relation ((010, 111, 101) object-determination - because it represents the capacity of interaction between action competence - (010) and social interaction (111), equally to be qualified under the angle of its intersubjective objectivity. I call position (110) as belonging to the relation (110, 111, 001) the capacity of intersubjective framing because as being part of this relation the position represents the capacity of interaction between the separate capacity of mediating resources (001) and the capacity of social interaction (111), in as far as this last capacity is considered under the angle of its commonly framed intersubjectively mediated use of the resources involved.

There is still another, last, reason to interpret the three positions with two characteristics as intermediate capacities. Each of them represents the capacity of interaction with the other two intermediate capacities. I call (110) interpreted as representing the capacity of interaction between embodiment + (101) and embodiment - (011) common framing of embodiment , and as representing the interaction between object-determination + (011) and object-determination - (101) common framing of object-determination . I call (101) interpreted as representing the capacity of interaction between embodiment - , respectively object-determination + (011) and common framing (110) equivalent d. In the same sense I call (011) interpreted as representing the capacity of interaction between embodiment +, respectively object-determination - and common framing (110) equivalent e.

Finally, the remaining position (111) with its three characteristics represents a threefold integrative capacity with regard to the relations of which this position is part: (110,111,001), (100,111,011), (010,111,101) respectively. First, (111) represents the capacity of interaction between common framing (110) and mediative resources (001). I call (111) in this relation social interaction with regard to commonly framed intersubjectively mediative use of resources. Second, (111) represents the capacity of interaction between action competence + (100) and object-determination + (011). I call (111) as part of this relation social interaction with regard to the intersubjective objectivity of embodiment -. Third, (111) represents the capacity of interaction between action competence - (010) and object-determination - (101). I call (111) as part of this relation social interaction with regard to the intersubjective objectivity of embodiment +. Thus, according to my definition, (111) represents a capacity of interaction such that it integrates the six other capacities. Therefore, I have called this capacity social interaction.

In this way, I have interpreted all the positions of the mathematical tripolar model in terms of well-defined primitive concepts which , so I argue, are necessary and sufficient to develop a general theory of society. The positions in figure 2a represent these primitive concepts, and instead of the algebraic codes assigned to the seven positions I use the first seven letters of the alphabet (lower case) to name them, as follows:

(100) = a
 (010) = b
 (001) = c
 (101) = d
 (011) = e
 (110) = f
 (111) = g

Figure 2a: the basic model (primitive concepts)

seq Figure * Arabic 2

In Table 1 I summarize the foregoing.

Table 1

a,b,c : separate capacities
- a action competence +
- b action competence -
- c mediative resources

d,e,f : intermediate capacities,
- d . in the sense of embodiment + (d as intermediate in the relation (a,d,c)),
. in the sense of object-determination - (d as intermediate in the relation (b,g,d)),
. in the sense of expression of its equivalence with embodiment - and object-determination +, given the common frame of action (d as intermediate in the relation (d,f,e));
- e . in the sense of embodiment - (e as intermediate in the relation (b,e,c)),
. in the sense of object-determination + (e as intermediate in the relation (a,g,e)),
. in the sense of expression of its equivalence with embodiment + and object-determination -, given the common frame of action (e as intermediate in the relation (d,f,e));
- f . in the sense of common framing of action competences + and - (f as intermediate in the relation (a,f,b)),
. in the sense of common framing of embodiment + and - as well as of object-determination + and - (f as intermediate in the relation (d,e,f)),
. in the sense of common framing of intersubjectively mediated resources (f as intermediate in the relation (f,g,c));

g : integrative capacity
- g . social interaction regarding commonly framed intersubjectively mediative resources (g as capacity in the relation (f,g,c)),
. social interaction regarding the intersubjective objectivity of embodiment - (g as capacity in the relation (a,g,e)),
. social interaction regarding the intersubjective objectivity of embodiment + (g as capacity in the relation (b,g,d)).

With the help of the analytically constructed primitive concepts of Table 2a and given the definition of their interrelatedness I am now able to generate systematically the concepts needed for a UP. The five structuring concepts generated are represented in figure 2b by the seven relations. Each of them is conceptualized in terms of the interactive nexus of three primitive concepts summarized in Table 1, such that each time the three concepts concerned belong to the same relation (as shown in Table 2).

Figure 2b: the basic model (structuring concepts)

Table 2

(a,d,c) and (b,e,c): two relations of subjectivity (+ and -)
in both cases constituted by a action competence (a and b), mediative resources (c) and embodiment + (d) and embodiment - (e);
(a,g,e) and (b,g,d): two relations of objectivity (+ and -)
in both cases constituted by a action competence (a and b), object-determination+ (e) and object-determination - (d), and social interaction regarding commonly framed intersubjectively mediative resources (g);
(a,f,b) : a relation of normativity
constituted by the two action competences (a and b) and common framing of action competences (f);
(f,g,c) : a relation of intersubjectivity
constituted by common framing of action competences (f), social interaction regarding the intersubjective objectivity of embodiment + and - (g), and mediative resources (c);
(f,d,e) : a relation of sociality
constituted by the common framing of action competences (f), the equivalence of (d) with object-determination + and embodiment-, and the equivalence of (e) with object-determination - and embodiment+.

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I With Ruys and Vromen I am preparing a book with the provisional title 'Dialogue on modeling in economics' (forthcoming 1998).