

THE CATEGORICAL FRAMEWORK OF HABERMAS'S THEORY OF SOCIETY AND THE KEY ROLE ATTRIBUTED TO LANGUAGE

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Introduction

Not only the architecture of Habermas research program has undergone significant changes. This is also the case with the categorical framework Habermas has been developing for the purpose of his theory of society. As said already in the foregoing chapter, I limit myself here to the categories that are basic for Habermas's theory of society **after the shift** that underwent his categorical framework in the mid-seventies. This transformation in Habermas's conception is part of the '**linguistic turn**' in philosophy. It is the shift from philosophy of mind to philosophy of language, from metaphysics to conceptual reconstruction (in need of empirical feeding and testing), from philosophy of knowledge to philosophy of (inter)action and from philosophy of subjectivity to philosophy of intersubjectivity.

In this chapter, the **speech act theory** as found in Habermas's work is crucial for my approach. In Habermas's reception of major ideas of Austin, Searle, and Grice, among others, he has **radicalized** their variants of speech act theory by integrating them in a comprehensive theory of society (see Habermas (1988, 1996 and 1999), Van Doorne (1982:118-143) and Cooke (1994)). I share the view underlying speech act theory that, within the overall framework of social interaction, knowledge, action, and speech intersect and are mutually dependent. But as in Habermas's theory, the focus of my analysis is on the general constitutive features of a **social interaction situation**, and not on speech acts and speech act theory as such. And it is quite essential to note, that the social interaction situation Habermas is reconstructing, is itself **the outcome of an evolutionary process**1.

In two recent texts on the topic Habermas himself makes clear, more unambiguously than ever before, that it is **social interaction** that his work is all about2. For Habermas's theory of society the concept of social interaction is the crucial and comprehensive one. And speech act analysis is for him the way to get to this very core. It is for this reason that I prefer to use, where possible, in this and in the next chapter the term 'social interaction', and not the term 'speech act'. There are too many misunderstandings of Habermas's personal variant of speech act theory. And going into the discussions hereabout would obscure the purpose of this book: contribute to upgrading the basic concepts of economics.

Obviously, it is unavoidable to use the term ‘speech acts’ in the sections where I am analyzing a couple of fragments focused on and organized around specific aspects of speech acts.

What I am after in this chapter is the reconstruction of what Habermas in his theory of society considers to be **the set of basic concepts and their framework** (that is, their internal interconnection), which is necessary and sufficient to **understand and explain** the constitutive features of social interaction situations in the first place, and of the performance of social interactions in general . I understand it as his **search for an explanatory model**. It is a reconstruction of the **general structural conditions** which have to be fulfilled in order to be justified to characterize interactions as **social** interaction. As already noted in the first chapter³ the analyses of these *general* structural conditions and their modelling in terms of a framework take place within the context of reconstructive-theoretical research. In several publications Habermas has been working on it. In this chapter I follow closely some representative parts of his early writings on this topic.

First approaches

I start my reconstruction of Habermas’s conception by resuming the set of basic concepts represented in Figure 2 of the first chapter. (The references are given there.)

Figure 1: the general action system

This scheme summarizes the results of Habermas’s first attempts to develop ‘a formal pragmatics’. Guided by his intuitions concerning the characteristics of human existence and its distinctive pattern of interaction he considers the concepts represented in Figure 1 as indispensable for this purpose.

With regard to the structure of the interaction-field of man, he distinguishes four **action sectors**, four related **action competences**, four **reality relations** between the different action sectors and the different action competences, and he takes into account four implicit validity claims that actors mutually bring forward. These distinctions are proposed by Habermas as basic presuppositions which we need in order to be able to account for our thinking, acting and speaking. Their

value has to be made plausible in an empirically controlled manner. The main road Habermas has taken to make plausible the introduced differentiation of concepts is argumentation along the lines of philosophy of language, more particularly of speech act theory as developed by Austin, Searle and others. However, a double reading of most of Habermas's texts on the 'basics' of speech act theory is recommendable: partly a reading aimed at the formal-conceptual reconstruction of the basic set of concepts required to articulate the general characteristics of a speech act situation ; and partly a reading , bringing to the fore features of Habermas's theory which are related to empirical conditions of the actual performance of speech acts. The reading I have chosen in this chapter is the first one, the book of Cooke (1994) is a good example of the second reading.

Universal Pragmatics

As major point of reference I take Habermas's reception and *radicalization*⁴ of speech act theory in his 'What is Universal Pragmatics ?' (1975) and in two related papers (1980) and (1981). I have left out an analysis of a number of other important texts concerning Habermas's variant of speech act theory, because it is not my aim to discuss here its development over the years. I believe that can be maintained, that the basic characteristics of it , the 'universal pragmatics' part , have remained the same. For the empirical-scientific strategies Habermas has chosen to elaborate his conception of speech act theory and to make 'universal pragmatics' plausible, the following texts have to be mentioned in particular: his (1981, vol. I, p.367-452 and vol.II, p.171-228; 1984, ch. 9 and 11 and 1988, ch. 4, 5 and 6; 1999, the Introduction and Part I).

At the end of his 'What is Universal Pragmatics ?' (hereafter quoted as UP) Habermas enumerates the set of basic categories required for the reconstruction of a speech act situation. In comparison with the set of basic concepts given in Figure 1, the heading 'action sectors' is replaced by 'reality sectors', as shown in Figure 25 . Much more important, in the last column three new concepts, referring to three general speech act functions, are added in relation to the other concepts of the first three rows. I believe that it makes sense to say, that the action competences of Figure 1 are 'replaced' by the general speech act functions in Figure 26.

Figure 2: the general speech act categories⁷

What strikes at first sight is that there is an open space where one would expect the mentioning of the general function of a speech act with regard to the concepts of the fourth row (language, intersubjectivity and comprehensibility). Is there a reason for this lacuna ?

Reading UP and other writings of Habermas there is no doubt as to his position: the coherence of the basic constitutive concepts related to a speech act situation can only be conceived of under the assumption that there are **at least two** actors involved (actor positions, I would prefer to say), let us say actor A and B. This implies that in order to have a speech act situation one has to take into account, for each of the two actors, the three general speech act functions introduced in Figure 2: representation, coordination and expression. This can be stated otherwise by saying that in Figure 2 the general speech act functions have to be differentiated, given the unique position of actor A and B respectively, in accordance with **two actor-perspectives**. That is, when two actors speak with each other then emerges through their interaction **a network of reality relations** (objectivity, normativity and subjectivity) in and by which, presumedly, reference is made to different reality sectors, and in and by which mutual validity claims are implied. Simultaneously, both actors are **constructively partaking** in the emergence of an objective, a normative and a subjective world, and are capable to bring to the fore claims with regard to truth, rightness and veracity.

It is quite obvious that Habermas intends to interconnect the general components of the thus determined speech act situation, with the basic concepts of the fourth row of Figure 2: language, intersubjectivity and comprehensibility. But how can this happen when we do not have a general speech act function attuned to those concepts ?

*Language as a 'reality sector sui generis'*⁹

I think that Habermas's account so far of the different aspects of a speech act situation is incomplete and should be complemented. And indeed, in more recent texts Habermas speaks about speech act functions in a way that might help to fill in the lacuna in the scheme of Figure 2. I refer to his text on the media theory of Talcott Parsons (1980) and his 'Interpretative Social Science vs. Hermeneuticism' (1981). I will present a detailed analysis of a couple of crucial text passages in order to fill in the lacuna. As I will make clear in my analysis, Habermas's radicalization of speech act theory and its transformation into a comprehensive theory of social interaction, is fundamental for his general theory of society. And as we will see, Habermas's conception of language as a 'reality

sector sui generis', is pivotal for this general theory. Its paradigmatic significance has become ever more clear in Habermas's work¹⁰. Nevertheless, I will not make an attempt to present in any detail the essentials of Habermas' conception of language. My reconstruction here of Habermas's position has only a limited scope. It will be guided by the search for his rather complex, categorical framework, and for the consistency and the interdependence of the basic concepts. In the end it will lead, as we will see, to a limited, well-articulated set of basic categories. In view of my purpose to plea for a broadening of the categorical framework of economic science, this will prove to be sufficient.

Before I begin with the detailed interpretation and reconstruction of a couple of, for this purpose important, text fragments, it seems to me helpful to offer an overview of what will be the result of that analysis. The following figure offers this overview.

Figure 3: Extension of general speech act categories

The scheme of Figure 3 is constructed around the distinction Habermas makes between a direct and an indirect action-perspective on speech act exchanges (in my preferred terminology : on social interactions). First, the relevant categories for the two actors involved in a speech act situation are enumerated from their direct action-perspective. We know these categories already, with the exception of the category of linguistic articulation¹¹, the concept that fills in the one space left open in the scheme of Figure 3. And, second, a set of new categories is shown which pertains to the actors' interaction as well, but seen from the perspective of the resources on which the actors have to rely in order to be able to interact with each other. Compared with the direct action-perspective of the actors Habermas calls it an indirect perspective¹².

The use of the term perspective for the action-perspective of the actors as well as for the perspective of the resources may cause some doubts. One might think that the direct action-perspective of the actors involved is meant to represent the perspective of the actors themselves, while at the other hand the indirect action-perspective is not representing the perspective of the actors themselves but, however indirectly, of the resources involved. Do resources have their own perspective? And can it, conversely, be called the indirect perspective of the

actors involved ? In my view Habermas's point is not to represent **performance** perspectives by either the actors or by the resources in any interaction situation. But, as I understand the terms direct and indirect perspective, they indicate, **from the reconstructive viewpoint of the theoretician** , that **the structure** of a social interaction situation has to be represented by the interconnection of two sorts of positions: the (equivalent) actor positions A and B, and another position representing the action resources on which both actors will have to draw for their interaction. It is the theoreticians' choice that determines what in his analysis of **performing** social interactions will be called the direct and what the indirect perspective. The choice Habermas makes with regard to the distinction of a direct and an indirect perspective as well as to the categories he uses for the indirect perspective, will be introduced and elucidated in the following. And arguments will be given for the way in which I have filled in the lacuna concerning the general speech act function of language with regard as well to the direct as to the indirect perspective.

Additional speech act functions

There is a highly relevant fragment in Habermas's article of 1981, which I will quote in some length, where not only reference is made to the three speech act functions already introduced, but where also three new ones are introduced. In the context of a discussion about hermeneutics, Habermas discusses two modes of language use. According to him, hermeneutics comes into the picture whenever language is employed 'for the purpose of coming to terms or reaching a consensus with somebody else (be it only to agree on disagreements) [...]' In that case:

'hermeneutics has to cope with **the tripartite relationship** [my emphasis, FvD]of the utterance's (a) being an expression of the speaker's meaning, (b) being an expression instrumental for establishing the speaker's interpersonal relationship with hearer, and (c) being an expression about something in the world. Furthermore, any attempt to clarify what it means, for a speaker, to know how to say something and , for a hearer, to know how to understand what is said, faces us with **a fourth relationship** [my emphasis, FvD] --with that between a given utterance and sets of possible utterances made in the same language. Hermeneutics looks at language while it is at work, while it is employed for reaching a common understanding or shared view among participants. The optical metaphor of 'view' should not obscure, however, the fact that language in its

communicative use is embedded in relationships much more complicated than, and as fundamental as, the ‘about-relationship‘ (and its correlated intentionality). 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 manifestible 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** [my emphasis, FvD] can be analysed **intentione obliqua**, from the perspective of the lifeworld, or 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 coordinating the plans of different actions in social interaction): [...]¹¹
- the function of socialization (or of the cultural interpretation of needs): [...]¹²

Comment [FD/V1]: Jack vraagt zich af, of de volgende tekstpassage geen betrekking heeft op een ander niveau van analyse

’Intentione recta’

Close reading of the text quoted will be very helpfull to fill in the lacuna of the scheme in Figure 2 and to extend that scheme. ‘Hermeneutics looks at language while it is at work, while it is employed for reaching a common understanding or shared view among participants.’ I leave aside a discussion on the precise meaning of the term ‘hermeneutics’ as it is used here. Clear is , that Habermas takes as starting point for his analysis an actual utterance¹³, and looks at it in a

theoretical manner in an attempt to reconstruct its characteristic features. But he can not do so otherwise than ‘hermeneutically’, that is, from the position of being himself a participant in social interaction. And participation in social interaction has for him, generally speaking, two sides to it : participation from within, from the ‘internal’ perspective of initiating interactive exchanges , and participation from without, the ‘external’ perspective of observing in what way social interaction takes form and to what it leads. In accordance with this distinction Habermas distinguishes, in his reconstruction of the characteristic features of utterances as they occur in actual exchanges of speech acts , two sides. In the first two passages quoted, **the side of speaker and hearer making language work by using it for their own purposes** . That is what Habermas calls the **direct** perspective. And in the third passage, as we will see, **the side of speaker’s and hearer’s lifeworld** which, as a comprehensive resource makes language available for the actors. As well through the possibilities it offers them for the actual exchange of speech acts as through the constraints it is putting on that exchange. That is how I understand what Habermas calls the **indirect** perspective.

In the first two passages we do recognise , albeit in a somewhat different version, the action competences presented already in the scheme of Figure 2 (see above), which are required to be able to engage in an actual exchange of speech acts. We do recognise as well the ‘reality sectors ‘ of that same scheme.

Quite interestingly, Habermas explores now further **the reality sector language**: ‘... any attempt to clarify what it means, for a speaker, to know how to say something and , for a hearer, to know how to understand what is said, faces us with **a fourth relationship**-- with that between a given utterance and sets of possible utterances made **in the same language** ’. He calls the relation between a given utterance and sets of possible utterances in the same language **the fourth relationship**. But it is a relation of a special kind. It cannot simply be ‘**added**’ to the three relations defining the tripartite network between the two actors, for it is a relation of a special kind. It is the relation **through which** the other three relations can be **intertwined** into a **common** network. The performance of the speech act functions by the two actors leads to **social interaction only** , when the actors make use of **a specific know how** that regards the relation ‘between a given utterance and sets of possible utterances made in the same language’. Apparently it has to be presupposed, that the actors have to choose position, however implicitly, as to **the comprehensibility** of a given utterance for the interacting other. Social interaction comes only about when the two succeed in reaching **mutual comprehensibility**, through using the **same** language for their utterances, that is, through using a language that is comprehensible for both. **Language thus understood is the use of lifeworld resources by each of the**

two actors such that the common ground of an interaction situation emerges. This being so, we have to conclude, that **making use of a mutually comprehensible language**, is the fourth general speech act function of the actors A and B. I call this **linguistic articulation**¹⁴. And it is this general speech act function which is lacking in the scheme of Figure 2. And it is precisely this linguistic articulation that enables actor A and actor B to construct an **intersubjective** network of reality relations of which an objective external world, a social world and their respective subjective worlds are part. And the **comprehensibility** to be reached concerns as well their respective representations as their coordination-efforts and their self-expressions, which have to be considered as constitutive parts of the common network of reality relations. All this can be seen, in line with Habermas's conception, looking 'intentione recta' (directly) to utterances, that is, from the perspective of actors and hearers being involved in actual exchanges of speech acts.

For a better understanding of this part of Habermas's text that I have been commenting on, I will present now **a graphic representation** of the intersubjective network, as I understand it, between the speech act functions **from the direct perspective of the two actors** (see Figure 4). Note that I represent with C the (as yet almost unexplored) indirect perspective of the lifeworld besides the direct double actor-perspective, represented by A and B. Herewith I anticipate the introduction and articulation of the mathematical modelling of the set of basic categories defining Habermas's conception of social interaction. It is the topic of the next chapter. At this place I simply borrow¹⁵ the graphic model without going into any discussion concerning its mathematical features.

Figure 4: the intersubjective network of speech act functions (intentione recta)

'Intentione obliqua'

In the third passage Habermas contrasts the **direct** view ('intentione recta') with an **indirect** view ('intentione obliqua') **'on the same network'**. He calls this **'the perspective of the lifeworld'**. And from the perspective of the actors involved, it is an indirect perspective. In the same sentence he equates the meaning of this expression with 'background of shared assumptions and procedures'. And he states, that it is the life-world 'in which any particular piece of communication is unconspicuously embedded from the very beginning'.

From within ongoing exchanges of speech acts the life-world perspective appears to be not readily and immediately accessible ('background'; what is 'unconspicuously' embedding actual exchanges). But at the same time, in the context of Habermas's conception, you can apparently not have an utterance without drawing on life-world resources.

To find out how this has to be conceived, we have to know what it means, that Habermas speaks about the relation between pieces of communication and lifeworld in terms of the former being **embedded** in the latter? What is the meaning of being 'embedded'? In the second passage quoted here above we read: 'language in its communicative use is embedded in the relationships' constitutive for the tripartite network between actor A and B. Which means (as I understand it), that it is the speech act function of linguistic articulation that **intertwines** the other three speech act functions of A and B. And in this sense, linguistic articulation is a constitutive feature of the coming about of **the common intersubjective network** of an actual speech act situation. In other words, of a social interaction situation. This is the particular character of the fourth speech act function. But, actors making work language (linguistic articulation) are by the same effect, considered from a different angle, inevitably **drawing on a life-world**, drawing on a background of shared assumptions and procedures.

That different angle is articulated in the third passage of the long quotation we are analyzing. Habermas explicates here what he calls the indirect view, the life-world perspective, with regard to the (four dimensional) intersubjective network resulting from the interaction between actors A and B. The most important hold we find in the text to further clarify his conception as to this indirect view, is what he elaborates about the life-world functions of 'language'. 'Language' is a constitutive part of the life-world through serving three functions: the functions of cultural reproduction, of social integration and of socialization. These functions have to be considered as the **counterparts** of the speech act functions from the perspective of the actors, given Habermas's assumption, that it is **the same network** that defines the interaction from the perspective of the two actors that defines the perspective of the life-world as well. Thus the speech act functions of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization are correlates to the speech act functions of the two actors: representation, coordination and expression. And of course, we must find a counterpart for the fourth speech act function we have filled in with regard to the actors perspective: linguistic articulation. Let us call it provisionally 'linguistic articulation' 16. Linguistic articulation viewed from the direct perspective (that is, from the side of speaker and hearer) and 'linguistic articulation' viewed from the indirect perspective (that is, the side of speaker's and hearer's life-world) are

interlinked. The interconnection of social interactions (between actors) with the network of (interactive) life-world processes happens through ‘linguistic articulation’. To put this in other words: the speech act functions that ‘language’, as constitutive part of the life-world, serves (cultural reproduction, social integration, socialization) are intertwined by a fourth life-world function: ‘linguistic articulation’. And by the same effect they are **indirectly** ‘coordinating’ the performance of the speech act functions by actors A and B: the functions of representation, coordination, expression and linguistic articulation. And this is why these terms are also appropriate to refer to what, **indirectly**, actors are ‘doing’, by doing **directly** their own thing. They are ‘doing’ more than they possibly might intend to do through getting involved (through drawing on ‘linguistically articulated’ life-world resources) in the process of ‘the reproduction of the life-world’: ‘(...) speaker and hearer, by taking a performative attitude, become involved in those functions which processes of communication fulfill **for the reproduction of the lifeworld** [my emphasis- FvD] they both share¹⁷. Linguistic articulation by the actors leads, ipso facto, to connecting them to the ongoing processes of the life-world: cultural reproduction, social integration, socialization and ‘linguistic articulation’. Actors cannot avoid getting involved in the life-world processes of ‘keeping traditions alive’, in ‘coordinating the plans of different actors in social interaction’, in ‘the cultural interpretation of needs’ and in linguistically differentiating, articulating and intertwining these three functions (that is, what I have ‘added’ as the fourth function of ‘linguistic articulation’.)

In a comparable way as in the case of the direct perspective of the actors, it is now possible to give, from the direct perspective of the life-world, **a graphic representation** of the network of speech act functions constitutive for the reproduction of the life-world. The same graphic model used in Figure 4 can be used again given the ‘sameness’ of the network defining social interaction and reproduction of the lifeworld alike (see the next Figure 5). To avoid new complications I have omitted to name and label the angles of the triangle as I did in Figure 4. In the next chapter I will make up for this.

Figure 5: the ‘intersubjective’¹⁸ network of speech act functions (intentione obliqua)

Reversal of perspectives

Until now we have almost exclusively spoken about the perspective of the actors as being the direct perspective, while the life-world perspective has been taken to be the indirect one. I hope to have made clear, that in Habermas's conception this relation of the two perspectives **can be reversed**. The theoretician has the choice. And his choice depends upon the argumentative context in which the complementary terms are used. Reversing the relation, things look different. It is one thing to consider social interaction as the 'product' of the interaction of two actors commonly drawing on life-world resources. The focus of analysis is on the network constitutive for social interaction between actors (see Figure 4). So far we have called it **the direct actors' perspective**, and in Habermas's conception it is unconceivable without taking into account an indirect life-world perspective. It is another thing to consider life-world reproduction as the 'product' of the social interaction of life-world constituting processes. And in Habermas's conception this reproduction is unconceivable without taking into account coordinated use by the actors of life-world resources. The focus of analysis is now on the network constitutive for the reproduction of a lifeworld (see Figure 5). It is bringing in a direct life-world perspective, which in turn is interconnected with an indirect actors perspective. Reversing the perspective from actors to life-world, one can say: given the interconnection of the speech act functions (of which actors are the initiators) with the speech act functions of the life-world (served by 'language'), coordination of life-world resources by the actors has to be considered as resource for the reproduction of the life-world. In the scheme of Figure 5 the concept 'lifeworld coordination' represents it.

For my interpretation I find support in Habermas's (1988). There he chooses the term '**circulation process**' for the interlocking relation of social interactions by the actors at the one hand, and life-world processes at the other hand, and for the possibility of reversal of perspectives: 'Between the life-world as resource, on which draws communicative action, and the life-world as product of this action is an ongoing circulation process, (...)'¹⁹. This text makes clear that the complementary terms life-world and communicative action (which I have called social interaction) are used in two different ways, depending on the differentiation of perspectives for which they are used.

The overall picture

In anticipation of the results of this inquiry I have made up the scheme of Figure 3. We know now that it could have been constructed differently by choosing the 'lifeworld' perspective as the direct one, and therefore the 'actors' perspective as

the indirect one. Note that I have left out the implicit validity claims mentioned in the schemes of the Figures 1 and 2 in order to simplify this overview, but also because I think that **claims do belong to a different register**. Not to the conceptual register of (structural) constitutive categories, but to the conceptual register required for the analysis of **empirical** social interactions. I consider the constitutive categories pertaining to the network of reality relations (as represented in Figure 3) to be the core of Habermas's categorical framework. **They open up a space of social interaction in which reality-claims can be made.** Advancing claims in actual interactions is the performative actualization of the social resources **and** constraints which are conditioning the process of interaction.

The graphic representation of the Figures 4 and 5 is focused on the speech act functions from the actors- and from the lifeworld-perspective respectively. This representation is mainly aimed at explicating what it means, according to Habermas, that 'the same network' resulting from the performing of speech act functions (by the actors), respectively the serving of speech act functions (by 'language'), defines social interaction between actors as well as reproduction of the life-world.

If this is so, then there must be, with regard to the perspective of the life-world, not only correlates for the speech act functions from the actors perspective, but as well for the reality sectors and the reality relations which are constitutive features of that perspective. And indeed, elsewhere can be found **counterparts** for the reality sectors external nature, society, and internal nature. Most clearly in Habermas's (1981)²⁰. These counterparts are: culture, 'society' and personality. And I have argued that 'language' should be 'added'. Nowhere I have found life-world correlates for the reality relations objectivity, normativity, subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Nevertheless, I will argue in the next chapter that they are **the quintessential components of the network that forms the common characteristic of the actors perspective as well as of the life-world-perspective**. For my reconstruction of the conceptual framework of Habermas's theory of society I have assumed, that the network of the reality relations is the determining 'factor' of the sameness of the two perspectives. However, for the time being I will use the terms for the reality relations from the perspective of the life-world within quotation marks ('society', 'language', 'intersubjectivity' and 'linguistic articulation'). Herewith I want to warn, as I will argue in the following chapter, that the statement that they are 'the same' does not mean that the meaning of these terms is identical with respect to the two perspectives. The precise meaning of the expression 'the same' is, as I will show there, that **they are structurally homologous**. Further I will argue there that the concepts of objectivity, subjectivity, normativity and intersubjectivity suffice **to generate**

and articulate systematically all the other components of Habermas's categorical frame of reference as put together in the scheme of Figure 3. In this sense, the concepts ordered under the heading 'reality relations' form **the minimal set of categories Habermas's theory of society requires**.

What then is the status of the other concepts put together in the scheme of Figure 5? Maybe this is the right place to say, that I am not quite satisfied with the manner in which Habermas delineates the interconnectedness and coherence of all these concepts. The schemata of related concepts in the Figures 1 and 2 make not sufficiently clear how precisely the interrelations of the concepts have to be articulated. It is my concern in this and in the following chapter to show how the interrelations of the basic concepts can be defined and articulated in a very precise way. It is my experience, that even readers with a good acquaintance with Habermas's work have problems in getting right the powerful intuitions guiding Habermas in the construction of his theory of society. And given the importance of Habermas's project it would be very infortunate when less versed Habermas-readers get discouraged by the high degree of complexity of his work, and leave it aside. It is my intention to make its encompassing conceptual 'infrastructure' more accessible. And it is my conviction, that the use of mathematical means is highly recommendable for that purpose. Using a mathematical model makes it also possible to minimize the number of basic concepts required. For it is possible to show how in successive steps with the minimum set of basic concepts used under the heading of 'reality relations', the richness of Habermas's conception can be generated systematically. And my hope is, that using mathematical means for my personal reconstruction of the categorical framework of Habermas's theory of society will facilitate, at least for economists who are today the most influential group of social scientists, to get a good picture of the conceptual resources his theory offers for an enrichment and eventually a redefinition of the basic concepts of their discipline. I will do this in the next chapter. In this chapter I have introduced the set of basic concepts Habermas's theory of society requires, and I have given the outlines of the framework of Habermas's theory of society. In the next chapter this framework will be reformulated in a rigorous way.

The key role of language

Several times I have been alluding to the pivotal role language plays within Habermas's conception. For him language is the key force in the interlocking relation of social interaction between actors and reproduction of the life-world, and for the transformation of their relation. It would be very rewarding to develop on this theme at some length, but this book is not the right place to do so²¹. Nevertheless, I like to conclude this chapter with one significant quotation from Habermas's writings, that gives at least some indications why language is

so crucial for his conception. Interestingly enough, as will be shown in a contribution of Jack Vromen to this book (see chapter...), language is becoming a research-item in economic science as well:

‘Die sprach- und handlungsfähigen Subjekte, die sich vor dem Hintergrund einer gemeinsamen Lebenswelt miteinander ueber etwas in der Welt verständigen, verhalten sich zum Medium ihrer Sprache sowohl autonom wie abhaengig: sie können sich die grammatische Regelsysteme, die ihre Praxis erst ermöglichen, auch zu eigenen Zwecke bedienen. Beide Momente sind gleichursprünglich. Einerseits finden sich die Subjekte immer schon in einer sprachlich strukturierten und erschlossenen Welt vor und zehren von den grammatisch vorgeschossenen Sinnzusammenhaengen. Insofern bringt sich die Sprache gegenueber den Sprechenden Subjekten als etwas Vorgangiges und Objektives, als die pragende Struktur von ermoechlichenden Bedingungen zur Geltung. Andererseits findet die sprachlich erschlossene und strukturierte Lebenswelt nur in der Verständigungspraxis einer Sprachgemeinschaft ihren Halt. Dabei bleibt die sprachliche Konsensbildung, ueber die sich Interaktionen in Raum und Zeit vernetzen, abhängig von den autonomen Ja- /Nein-Stellungnahmen der Kommunikationsteilnehmer zu kritisierbaren Geltungsansprueche.’²²

We have seen that the action sector language has to be defined from two perspectives: at the one hand, from the perspective of the actors, it is language as resource used by the actors to coordinate their actions, and , from the perspective of the life-world, it is ‘language’ as enabling and constraining lifeworld force that makes it possible for actors to engage in social interaction. It shows that in Habermas’s conception the action sector language has to be conceived in an unusually broad sense. This can be seen already in his (1981): ‘ Any meaningful expression, be it an utterance, verbal or non-verbal, an artifact such as a tool or institution or scripture, can be bifocally identified as an observable event and an understandable objectification of meaning.’²². Anything that can be used by the actors to bring about social interaction, and anything serving the differentiated reproduction of the life-world of the actors is comprehended in Habermas’s concept of language.

Comment [FD/V2]: weer dezelfde vraag van Jack. M.i. vergeet hij dat c de lifeworld resources representeert die systeemtheoretisch terugkeren in domeinen van culturele reproductie, sociale integratie en socialisatie.

The double meaning of the terms social interaction and life-world is not only due to a reversal of perspective on one and the same circulation process, the components of which are graphically represented in two separate figures (Figures 4 and 5). As the use of the term ‘reproduction of the life-world’ already indicates, Habermas wants to say more. He intends as well to give an

interpretation of the reconstructively introduced circulation process such that can be spoken about the **'dynamics'** of this circulation process. This demands theoretical elaborations concerning a **'transformation'**-process which allows to account for the possibilities of transition between social interactions between actors and the interactive reproduction processes of the life-world **without the loss of the sameness of the constitutive network of their respective relations**. Only then, we would have a frame of reference for the theoretical articulation of **empirical** change, which is the aim of the reconstructive part of Habermas's theory of society. I will have to come back in some length to this transformation process in the next chapter. And again it will become clear that language/'language' has a key role in it.

NOTES

1. The social interaction situation Habermas is reconstructing, is in his conception itself the outcome of an evolutionary process. One becomes sharply aware of this, when one looks at the long discussion Habermas has devoted to the evolutionary path along which has come about what he reconstructs as the constitutive features of social interaction in today's (posttraditional) society (1981, t.II, ...). His conceptual reconstruction builds on the developmental stage that has been reached in modern society with the result that language has become the constitutive differentiating medium of all social interactions. Social interactions between actors (not only for understanding, but also for personal development and for generating common normative frames) and social interactions between social domains (cultural reproduction, socialization and social integration). Further on in this chapter I will give a detailed account of what this means. For now, see Figure 3.

2. I refer to Habermas (1999, ch.1 and the Introduction respectively). The main distinction of ch.1 (the text has been published in 1996) concerns **non-social versus social interactions** (compare the scheme on p. 130 in the 1999 edition). The latter concept comprises: strong communicative (consensus-oriented) actions as well as weak communicative (understanding-oriented) actions and strategic (result-oriented) actions. The clear distinction between strong and weak communicative actions and the inclusion of strategic actions within the scope of the concept of social interaction are new. The criterion for the distinction is whether an action is interactive or not. And in this context interaction apparently means interaction between persons. I have not reproduced the scheme of Habermas. In my opinion its construction is not rigorous enough and may lead to misunderstandings. In the next chapter I will come back to that and explain why.

In the Introduction the same topic occurs in the most straightforward way (1999, p. 22).

3. See chapter 1, p.3-4

4. Compare Cooke (1994), p.56 ff.

5. For the purpose of this discussion concerning Habermas's formal-conceptual framework it is not useful to elaborate on these differences.

6. In my view the equivalents of the action competences of the scheme in Figure 1.

7. I use for the translation of the first and third German names of the three general speech act functions: 'Darstellung, Mitteilung, Ausdruck', a translation derived from McCarthy's terms (1978), p.281: 'representative' and 'expressive', that is, representation and expression. The term 'interactive' for the German 'Mitteilung' chosen by McCarthy is too unspecific as I will make clear in the next chapter by showing that the other two speech act functions are also interactive. Therefore, I have chosen the term 'coordination' for the German 'Mitteilung'.

8. Given the aim of **formal** (reconstructive-scientific) analysis I prefer to speak of 'actor positions' where Habermas speaks of actors. In the next chapter I will make clear why. Nevertheless, in discussing Habermas's texts I will use frequently the term 'actor' as he does. In the texts I am discussing here, the term has a definite formal-pragmatic tone.

9. UP, p. 257

10. To mention the more important elaborations of the key role of language I refer to the important chapter V of his (1981), where language is treated from an evolution-theoretic perspective; to his (1988), the contributions 3, 4 and 8 of the German edition; his (1997), the highly interesting essay on Cassirer, and his (1999), the Introduction in particular and Parts I and II).

11. See note 16

12. In the instances where for the new categories the same terms are used as for categories regarding the direct perspective, although with a different meaning, I have marked this difference by putting them within quotation marks.

13. Note that within the brackets Habermas adds: 'this is the point from which I would develop a theory of communicative action' (l.c.).

14. (1981), p. 6. The use of the term 'function' in connection with the categories of 'cultural reproduction', 'social integration' and 'socialization' might suggest, that Habermas is using here categories from a functionalist, systemic, perspective. In my opinion this is not the case. The term 'function' as Habermas is using it in the context of his universal pragmatics, should rather be understood in a mathematical sense. And as such, its use does not imply a differentiation between actiontheoretic and systemic categories.

15. An utterance is the elementary unit of analysis in the empirical part of Habermas's theory of society.

16. I have chosen for the term linguistic **articulation** and not for the term linguistic **mediation**. The last term is appropriate to refer to the common use of linguistic means **in general** by at least two actors, but from the reconstructive **and evolutionary** perspective of Habermas's theory of language (as integral part of his theory of **contemporary** society) this is not enough. Therefore, we need a richer concept referring to **grammatical** language mediation. With this in mind I have opted for the term linguistic articulation in the case of actors' interaction, and for 'linguistic articulation' in the case of life-world processes.

17. From Ruys (1981), p....

18. see note 10

19. (1981), p. 8

20. see note 9

21. (1988), p.51: 'Zwischen der Lebenswelt als Ressource, aus der das kommunikative Handeln schöpft, und der Lebenswelt als Produkt dieses Handelns spielt sich ein Kreisprozess ein, (...)'

22. (1988), p.95 [Engelse vertaling nog zien te krijgen!]

23. It is therefore very helpful, that the MIT Press has published a selection of relevant writings of Habermas: Maeve Cook (ed.), **On the Pragmatics of Communication** (1998).

24. (1981), t.II, p.214 [dt.!). See also his (1984), chapter 11, p.563. This chapter dates from 1982. And compare it with (1988), ch.4, p. 102 [dt!].

25 (1988), p.51 [Engelse vertaling nog zien te krijgen!]. As stated before, 'Kommunikationsteilnehmer' are all actors involved in social interaction.

26. (1981), p. 6