Salvatore Italia

Some Remarks on Habermas and Consensus

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1. The Limits of Consensus

We can define "consensus" as a conformity of will or judgment on something between two or more people. As part of human activities, consensus bears the limits which are related to human finitude: life is not eternal and our knowing possibilites are temporally and spatially limited, since it takes time to cover a distance (real or theoric) and our time is limited. There is more: our knowledge is inevitably contextual, depending on our limited perspective on the world (with its relative assumptions). Finally, our chances of survival are limited by the narrowness of resources we have to share with other species. But what is a "limit"? We can define a limit as a border we can not cross (provisionally or definitively) and whose presence (together with our awareness of it) influences our *living inside a border*.[1] Here I want to focus on the theoretical implications of the "limits of consensus". A consensus is limited when our will to reach consensus sometimes find problems of various nature. It happens when there is a gap between our goal and what we can reach and this gap brings us the idea of a limit. In the case of consensus we can speak of different kinds of limits, like "inclusive" ones (it is not easy to reach consensus with people coming from different cultures and with very different ideas), "pragmatic" limits (our search for consensus sometimes needs to be stopped for practical limits) and "ontological" ones (consisting of the limits coming from the "natural" world).

In the present essay I will focus only on the last kind of limits. I will connect them to what can be defined as "objective world", using Habermas's terms. After illustrating the difference between the objective and the social world I will deal with Habermas's pragmatic characterization of the first as it emerges from his pragmatic turn, showing the meaning of the first kind of limits and the usefulness to consider them.

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1. In fact we are aware that because of this limit we can not do everything we would like to do.

2. Objective' and "Social" World in Habermas's Worlds-System

As a preliminary work, it is important to show how Habermas comes to a separation between the objective and the social world. It arises from the difficulty to keep together both the need of a moral anti-realism and the need to aknowledge a higher degree of "objectivity" to the objective world (realism).[2]

According to the particular claims of validity that a speaker-actor raises when he utters a sentence, he can enter into an objective world (if he raises truth's claims), a social world (if he raises claims of rightness) or a subjective world (if the raises claims of expressive sincerity). These are formal containers of daily and theoretical interactions (respectively named "communicative actions" and "discourses") because it does not matter *what* subjects are talking about but only their attitude towards a particular situation. In fact, they can refer to nature, society and personality in the objectifying attitude of the objective world, in the normative attitude of the social world and in the expressive attitude of the subjective world. In the present text, I will deal only with the objective and the social worlds because they are the only ones that can be linked to the idea of *universal* agreement (and understandability). In fact, "aesthetic or evalutative or ethical validity claims" linked to the subjective world of inner experience "remain bound to particular local contexts" - both spatially and temporally conceived - and so they can not claim universal validity.[3] These objective worlds (constituting Habermas's ontological-communicative triad) are the presupposed rails in which our daily life moves: they are necessary to coordinate our actions and communications by means of universal claims of validity. In fact, actions and communications make sense only if they refer to a sharable world of values or facts, that is if they can potentially be evaluated as *rational*. In a few words, Habermas's three worlds are the formal plan in which speakers and actors first *create* their validity claims (respectively about what exists, what is right and what is

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2. Anti-realism denies the independence of a reality from our epistemic and constructivist attitude. We can define "objectivity" as "intersubjective validity" (CASTELLANI 2005, 31).

3. They can only claim to be understood (COOKE 1994, 32 and COOKE 2002). The particular substance of the three worlds can change (fallibilism) but they remain as a container (formal).

truthful) and then evaluate and criticize (refusing or accepting) them on the basis of "reasons".[4] But these three worlds are also the three epistemic containers where speakers and actors can find *reasons* helpful to live and to satisfy their needs along these three dimensions (*survival* in the the objective world, *acceptance* in social relationship and personal identity development). In this way, Habermas's three world system is conceived together as the *departure point* and the *arrival point* of speakers and actors's rational activity: in each world they find a ready-made content, they use it and they push it in front of the audience of the others, in order to make it accepted as *good* (as a general term for true, right and truthful) for their specific purposes (demonstrating the truth or falsity of something in the objective world, defending as right a choice in the social world). If what speakers and actors take and use is not accepted any more (lacking to find a well justified consensus) here comes the space for a "revision".[5] Habermas's attention on communication leads him to give a great importance to consensus and to *coherence,* but if coherence is good to make sense of the phenomenon of "revision" in the social world (something receives consensus if it fits the ideas of the audience),[6] it is not enough to explain what happens in the case of the revision of a content of the objective world.[7] Although in both cases we deal with universal claims of validity and the consensual dimension is important, in the objective world there is an *ontological* dimension (linked to the notion of truth) that overcomes coherence and works as a limit that restricts it. Habermas can not assert this ontological difference until he does not open to a more ontologically commited concept of world - one that depends not only on the attitude but also on the type of entitites that

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4.   I can not discuss here the whole project of Habermas's communicative reasons (for which I address the reader to Cooke 1994). However, validity claims do not exist before a reference to an objective plan (anti-mentalism).

5.   A revision at the world-level is a revision of the content of it and not a revision of the formal three-worlds-system, because to realize the revision of this formal and transcendental level (because it allows the occurrence of certain experiences in three domains) there is a world-view's change that has to take place.

6.   The closeness between objective and social world is grounded in the closeness between a principle of 'induction' in the first case and a principle of 'universalization' in the second (Habermas 1972, 164-173).

7.   Habermas 1972, 174.

are referred[8] - and does not solve his *ambivalence* towards the status of the objective world: he ambiguously uses the adjective *objective* for both worlds and for only one of them at the same time. This shows an ambiguity between:

- (EQ) the attempt to *equalize* the ontological weight of the social and objective worlds presenting the concept of moral rightness as analogue to truth (they have the same single-minded-independence, so they show the same possibility to set a universal claim of validity)

and

- (DV) the will to *divide* them and to admit a more ontological force for the objective world.

On the one hand, he says (supporting EQ) that validity claims receive a discursive treatment that is "analogous to truth" (*wahrheitsanalog*) because people orient themselves in *practical* discourses, as in *theoretical* ones, according to the idea of a "single right answer" - commanded, allowed or prohibited;[9] on the other hand, he says (supporting DV) that only the objective world "preserves the ontological meaning in the strict sense of a totality of entities".[10] The equation is highlighted when he says that on the one hand we have "invariant *limitations* (*invarianten Beschränkungen*) that an objective world, supposed to be independent (*unabhängig unterstellte*), imposes on our active intellect in its pratical attempts to dominate reality" while on the other hand, analogously, "the invariant traits (*invarianten Züge*) of the social world [...] explain the universal validity of moral judgments".[11] If (EQ) is necessary to keep these worlds on the same level as the presupposed rails in which our daily life moves, avoiding both EQ-a (a too-strong ontological commitment, as ontological theories of truth do) and EQ-b

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8. An example is Popper's *ontological* triad, which interprets the differences among worlds in terms of different entities, rather than different communicative attitudes.

9. HABERMAS 1999, 264.

10. HABERMAS 1981, I: 126; English translations are mine.

11. HABERMAS 1999, 281; the English translation is mine

(a post-modern position whose relativism is a threat for normativity), on the other hand (DV) is a requirement for a theory of truth that wants to avoid an anti-realist position with respect to the objective world.[12]

It seems that (EQ) has two reasons in its favor but from its acceptance there comes an additional difficulty or obstacle that we can call (EQ-obs):

- (EQ-obs) equaling moral rightness with truth opens the door to an *aut aut* between a *moral* realism and an *epistemological* anti-realism.

In fact, until he equates *moral* truth (social world) and *epistemological* truth (objective world) he has to choose between a generic realism (both moral and epistemological) and a generic anti-realism.[13] In a few words, either he brings the concept of truth too close to that of validity (deflating in a counterintuitive way its non-epistemic quality, that is its independence from our possibility to reach it), or vice versa he brings the concept of validity to that of truth (increasing, in an equally counterintuitive way, its ontological burden). Until he does not break this link between truth and validity - useful to avoid ideological drifs but forgetting that truth is both a validity claim and at the same time it is something more than that -, invalidating the first means overloading the second, while invalidating the second means weakening the first.[14] (DV) too presents an obstacle:

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12. As regard the ontological value of Habermas's ontological triad see Habermas 1988, 79, 127 (referring to Dummett) and Habermas 1981, I: 114-148 (referring to Popper). "Ontological theories of truth" is a label in which he puts all those *correspondence* theories of truth based on the idea of an ontologically independent referent to which our representations or statements must correspond to be true (metaphysical realism) (Habermas 1971).

13. Habermas refuses moral realism, and this is the core of his controversy with Hilary Putnam according to Gil Martin 2009. Without (DV), refusing a moral-realism, he automatically falls into an anti-realist position about epistemological truth.

14. Linking truth to validity - that is to justification and recognition - is useful to avoid the possibility of an elite claiming an absolute epistemic power to catch an absolute truth, from which privilege they can justify their right to possess social and political power.

- (DV-obs): are truth claims and moral validity claims built differently?

Even if the role of the reasons is the same in both perspectives, facing this obstacle seems to be a more promising way and Habermas thinks the way out from this dilemma is to distinguish between the social and the objective world in a sharper way, as he tries to do in his 1999's *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung*: claims of moral validity (social world) lack the justification-transcendent weight of claims of truth (objective world)[15] because the first lack the ontological connotations (*ontologische Konnotationen*) of truth claims. However, as emerges from the quotetions above, his perspective still keeps these worlds on the same level. Only with a sharper and clearer rupture he can leave the objective and the social world to their own ontological burden: even if the linguistic moral game suggests an analogy with the linguistic game of truth, the objectivity given by the opposition of the others does not have the same force of the opposition of the objective world, the first being made of a "softer" material.[16] In fact, the social world does not become "real" without the collaboration of moral actors, while the objective world possesses the connotation of "unavailability" (*Unverfügbarkeit*). If in the first case consensus (through justifications) serves to "motivate" - justifications play an exhaustive role -, in the second it serves to "ascertain states of facts" (justifications play only a partial role).[17] In a few words, even if "communication" is seen (in both cases) as a process where a speaker looks for an agreement with a partner on something (*über etwas*), this "something" is different in the social and in the objective world: the last has a major independence and so an agreement *about* it entail also an agreement *with* it.[18] In fact, obtaining a consensus about the objective world can not do without the positive response of the world.

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15. Habermas 1999, 264, 281.
16. Habermas 1999, 56, 314.
17. Habermas 1999, 300.
18. Habermas 1988, 106.

3. The Objective World between Two Types of Consensus

Habermas seems to acknowledge that in the case of the objective world reaching consensus is a result that does not depend only on us. But what does it mean "reaching consensus" about the objective world? Is there a difference between a consensus *about* (CA) and a consensus *with* (CW) the objective world?[19] We can say that the objective world refers to the sum of all *possible* (because of its *formality*) utterances regarding certain kind of facts -referring to what exists in nature- on which we, as members of a particular Lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), can reach a consensus.[20] In fact, as speakers and actors, we always move in a Lifeworld, that is an already-interpreted world made up of a "background of widespread beliefs" and characterized by "naive familiarity" and inescapability.[21]

In Habermas's consensual theory of truth it was the Lifeworld (rather than the external reality) the meter for our claims of truth: truth conditions are *behind* the speakers and therefore accessible on the discursive level when we stop acting and start focusing on the "reasons" of our claims as given by our Lifeworld's background. In this way, Habermas conception of truth is an *epistemic* one, that is one that defines truth in terms of knowledge (actual or possible), unlike a *non epistemic* conception which cuts truth from what it is possible to know about it.[22] For this reason Habermas says that an internal *coherence* to Lifeworld is "the only criterion of evaluation" for truth and as a consequence (CA) is the basis for (CW): a coherence of utterances with the Lifeworld is the key for (CA) that, in turn, is a sign of (CW),

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19. Even if the Frankfurter does not uses these words I find them useful to explain what is at stake. Obviously, speaking of a consensus *with* the world is a strange use of the concept of consensus, as it implies reciprocity and the world does not "choose" its answers. However, this lexicon seems useful to explain the double dimension that is implicit in the objective world.

20. Siding with a philosophy of linguistic turn and with a (revised) speech act's theory, Habermas speaks of utterances (*Äusserung*) rather than sentences or propositions.

21. Habermas 1981, II: 199-201; English translation is mine.

22. Dell'Utri 1992, 22.

because the world is determined by the Lifeworld which provides it with boundaries.[23]

However, what Habermas seems to aknowledge during 90s is that, at least in the case of the objective world, we have to keep (CA) and (CW) separate, moving away from this epistemic as well as metaphysic dependence: all what is real can be represented through true sentences, even if facts are interpreted in a language that is "our" (*unsere*) language: from this point we have to distinguish the "existence" (*Existenz*) of objects, that is somehow independent from our linguistic perspective on them.[24] The norms of the social world exist too but in a different and weaker way: they do not pre-exist humans. Differently, what we can roughly refer to as "natural" objects, are conceived in a stronger way. Obviously we can discuss about the boundaries of this natural world (e.g. natural laws), but we are pretty sure that certain objects have an existence that is "independent", even if the notion of object is a *human* one. In a few words, if all objects are "culturally connoted", this does not imply that their existence too is *always* culturally dependent. As Lars Albinus says:

> We must not confuse Habermas's tripartite world-discrimination with an ontological differentiation. Ontologically speaking, our world is twofold, a physical world and a lifeworld. The lifeworld determines *what we make the physical world out to be*, by dealing with, cognizing it, and inhabiting it. The lifeworld is our communicative frame of orientation in a physical world.[25]

Among the claims of validity, truth has a special place due to its double character: it is both a validity claim and something more. In fact, often it connects us to a reality that is external (even if internally mediated). What Habermas says developing his "Janus-faced" theory of truth (that wants to overcome the narrowness of his previous consensus theory of truth), is that when we act and *naively* frequent the world, we need to use an *absolute* concept of truth animating our (CW), as if

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23. HABERMAS 1981, II: 588.

24. HABERMAS 2005, 35-36; here he goes really close to Putnam's internal realism, as himself explictly says in the same page.

25. ALBINUS 2013, 6-7; according to him there is a big difference between Habermas's and Popper's ontological triad: the first relates it to different validity claims, while the second to different areas of reality.

the criterion of truth gave us an independent truth (with respect to our perspective). However, when we have to talk about an action problem that breaks our naivity, we are instinctively pushed to consider truth as an epistemic concept, that is as linked to, and depending on, our epistemic possibilities. This makes possible to start debating about how reaching (CA). In one case we conceive truth conditions as "hinged" on the world, while in the other case we consider truth conditions as hinged on the potential assent of all the other participants of the same Lifeworld.[26] These two sides of Habermas's truth concept are tied together in a circular process of ascent and descent:

- (Ascent): when we encounter a problem while facing reality, our truths *ascend* to a discursive level in which we face problems trying to find a solution. At this level we treat them in an hypothetical way as linked to "good reasons".

- (Descent): our well-justified ideas *descend* to the level of action, where we consider them as absolutes. According to Habermas, this is a useful-pragmatic fiction for our daily lives.[27]

This is an attempt to balance the epistemic dependence of (CW) on (CA) and the pragmatic dependence of (CA) on (CW). In fact, as we have seen above, in Habermas's consensual theory of truth (1972) the limits of the world were based on the limits of the Lifeworld, conceived as the pragmatic and epistemic horizon of life. Here, the *pragmatic* dimension (CW) was submitted to the *epistemic* one (CA) to the extent that (CW) was conceived as always potentially possible because the Lifeworld sets up the boundaries of our worlds and so the problems at the world-level could always been solved referring to the Lifeworld-level.[28] On the contrary, now Habermas seems to hold this narrow relationship between (CW) and (CA) only for the social world (where justification is *constitutive* of moral rightness) and not for the objective

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26. ZUIDERVAART 2012, 2-3.

27. HABERMAS 1999, 255; there is a "a *practical* necessity to rely intuitively on what is unconditionally held-to-be-true" (HABERMAS 1999, 264; engl. tr. taken from COOKE 2001, 75).

28. This is linked to a devaluation of the concept of reference in favour of meaning. With his pragmatic turn Habermas tries to reinforce the role of reference.

world (where justification is only *regulative* but not exhaustive with respect to truth).[29]

4. Ontic Externalism and Pragmatic Realism

In a few words, (CA) is only *epistemically identical* to (CW) but not *metaphysically identical*, because we consider it as an identity that can be revised, modified and reconstructed on the basis of different and new reasons that are not completely dependent on the Lifeworld. Where are these new reasons coming from? Even if they can come from a dimension that is *internal* to Lifeworld (as an improvement of it), it is not always the Lifeworld that updates itself: they can come also from a dimension that is *external* with respect to the Lifeworld. This fact, reminds us that our fallible (CA) is only *provisionally* identical to (CW), while there is a *substantial* difference between the Lifeworld and what is external to it (at least for the objective world).[30]

This difference is the basis to explain the ontological limits of consensus. It gives also a new position to the objective world, that is no longer merely internal to the Lifeworld but helps us face a dimension that is external not only to our *thematized* Lifeworld but also to our *athematic* side of the Lifeworld.[31] Without this external referent, we would not be able to explain the *renewal* of Lifeworld in a satisfactory way. In fact the ascent level forces us to reformulate (CW) passing through (CA), thus meaning that the certain objects of the world have

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29. Constitutive and regulative is a dichotomy that I take (re-adapting it) from SEARLE 1969, 34. HABERMAS 1999, 38-39 considers the Lifeworld (as a transcendental level) a World (in the sense of worldview) and the worlds as Inner-worlds (objective level), but I prefer to use his first lexicon that i find less misleading. In the social world, a previous (CA) takes the place of (CW).

30. HABERMAS 1999, 41 thinks that it is possible to keep together the "epistemic primacy" of the linguistically articulated horizon of Lifeworld and the "ontological primacy" of a language-independent reality without identifying them.

31. The Lifeworld can not be completely thematized all at the same time: this would give raise to the paradoxical situation in which speakers judge their perspective from any perspective. The Lifeworld is constituted by a background (*Hintergrund*) and a foreground (*Vordergrund*). However, what belongs to each of them depends on the situation. Each situation carries a *section* that is halfway between these two dimension: it is the selected *mitthematisiertes Wissen* of what is relevant for the situation but only potentially explicable (HABERMAS 1988, 86-93).

a degree of independence that sometimes surprises us and gives us new material to work on. This shows us that we need a double account of learning sources (external and internal), able to make sense of two dimensions of learning in a realist way. This strategy opens some problems like "what are the sources operating time after time?", "what linguistic means make the innovative-external semantic contents available to participants in argumentation?"and "how can innovative semantic contents be rationally assessed in argumentation?". In a few words, what it seems to be the most difficult problem here is an account of *experience* (as the first step of learning) that could be able to explain the intervention of both internal and external sources of learning. The problem is that our explanation of experience is necessarily an internal-epistemic matter and it seems impossible to reach an explanation of how an external source relates to us without falling into metaphysical realism (that is into a description coming from a "God Eye point of view"). Otherwise, giving this kind of explanation would mean cutting again an external dimension and this is what we do not want to do.[32]

To reassure those who fear a restoration of metaphysical realism, this reinvigoration of a pragmatic realism through an external realism can still be read as a kind of pragmatic realism, because it aknowledges the independence of reality without any metaphysical commitment about its features. This enables us to overcome a skeptic attitude (as it can follow from metaphysical realism) and to trust our (CA) as a good way to (CW), if our relation with the world works well. This, as a result of (CW), shows us that we can trust (CA) as the only way that we, humans, possess to know and operate *in* and *with* the world (descent level), even if this trust is only provisional, because (CW) can stop working and so it can forces us to revise (CA) again (fallibilism).[33] From the impossibility of a strong foundation of our trust on (CA) (as theorized by metaphyisical realism) it does not follow directly

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32. Cooke 2002, 91.

33. From the impossibility to aknowledge our possession of the unique-true-description of the world (considered as a ready-made-world with respect to our intervention) it follows that metaphysical realism is intertwined with skepticism: we can never trust our representation of the world because we can never reach the God Eye point of view from which we can judge the truth of our representations. Here truth is seen as *radically* non epistemic (Preti 1974).

an epistemic realism: we can consider reality as a sort of external dimension even if our perspective on it is always context-depending. We can do so by focusing on the concept of a limit of our pragmatic perspective that works as a sphere from which we can not get away, enabling or disabling us to do, think, say, imagine certain things. If our cognitive attitude encounters a first limit in the totalizing power of Lifeworld that gives us a border, our pragmatic attitude - that is more general and foundative of our cognitive one -, faces an harder limit that is *external* to Lifeworld too. Only this kind of *ontic* externalism can explain why we and (more importantly) our Lifeworld have certain limits.

Shortly, we can say that we move in (1) a three-fold system of epistemic worlds (epistemic level), (2) in a Lifeworld as the horizon of what is conceivable inside the three worlds (ontological level), and (3) in a non-epistemic external dimension (ontic level).[34] This means that we have to force pragmatic realism, that is the interpretation of realism as a pragmatic presupposition (*pragmatischen Voraussetzung*),[35] on its extremes and we have to do this if we want to keep a *realist* interpretation of our being into the world. The result is a distinction between an ontic level and an ontological level. If the social and the objective world can be conceived as *ontologically* on the same level (definitions trace the border of all concepts, mountains and norms in the same way), from an ontic point of view there is a sharp difference between natural (more commited to a non epistemic dimension) and cultural (more commited to an epistemic dimension) objects. This difference forces pragmatism to admit the presence of a *hardly external* dimension that is usually judged as making no difference, therefore useless from a pragmatic point of view.[36] But is this external dimension really a useless dimension? Pragmatism:

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34. Considering the epistemological level as the level of the objective world and the ontological level has the Lifeworld's level, I name 'ontic' the external level, following PARRINI 2011. He considers the *modality* of entities as depending on the epistemic condition of knowledge, but the *existence* of entities (ontic) does not depends on us.

35. HABERMAS 2005, 34.

36. For example, according to LECIS 2002, 100 an external realism runs the risk of leaving this external existence as a "*caput mortuum*", an irreducible given with no operative role in our knowledge.

Makes us aware that even when action breaks down and specific doubts arise they can do so only against the background of an inter-subjective shared network of stable expectations, beliefs, and behavioral certainties that guide routine actions and communication.[37]

In this way "subjects do not return from discourse to action unchanged": they have *learned* something.[38] However, focusing only on the pragmatic circle of the surprising (*Überraschendes*) and the familiar (*Vertrautes*) does not explain why we belong to a pragmatic Lifeworld that, as enables us to do certain things, it disables us to do other things.[39]

To explain this kind of limit we need an external dimension: to reinforce pragmatic realism, we need something more than what a pragmatic realist like Habermas is ready to say. As Habermas correctly says, even if the objectivity of the world is so strictly intertwined (*so fest verschränkt*) with the intersubjectivity of an agreement about something in the world, this connection does not exclude (*schließ aus*) a continuation beyond the limits of our particular Lifeworld.[40] However he is too faithful to pragmatism to make use of this dimension in a really realist way, that is reintroducing an external and *non-directly* pragmatic dimension which allows us to consider the presence of this external dimension as a difference that makes some difference, enabling us to explain not only our learning inside a Lifeworld (as a pragmatic circle) but also the limits and the learning of our Lifeworld too.[41]

5. Conclusion

The world did not begin with us humans; many facts about it obtained before we did. How then could we have constructed them? For example, according to our best theory of the world, there were

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37. Levine 2010, 688-690.

38. Levine 2010, 688-690.

39. Habermas 1988, 85; with his pragmatic turn we can correctly say that he moves from a communicative version of Husserl's Lifeworld (through a wittgensteinian influence) to a pragmatic version of it. Here I use *doing* in the general meaning of the term (as including all kinds of activities).

40. Habermas 2005, 47.

41. This external dimension has an *indirect* kind of pragmatic utility in the negative way of disabling certain ways of acting and so enabling other ones.

mountains on earth well before there were humans. How, then, could we be said to have constructed the fact that there are mountains on earth?[42]

With these words Paul Boghossian clearly explain the point I am trying to point out here. The fact is that everything men can say about the world, is always epistemically imbued, thus meaning limited and conditioned. However, the quotation above, seems to refer to a different kind of truth, that is to a statement (a truth claim, in Habermas's words), that is epistemic and non epistemic at the same time. In fact, it is epistemic, depending on human existence and knowledge, but at the same time it says something about a world that is supposed to be independent on humans (non epistemic). This Janus-faced character of Boghossian's statement shows that this is a particular kind of truth, one that from *within* says something about the *outside*: the world has its own existence and structure. Even if it allows us a certain degree of freedom in its description, it has its own existence and structure that is independent: water boils at a determinated temperature, a point that can be described by different thermal systems; however, water boils only at "one" temperature-point. This is a kind of constraints that does not depend on us. My point is that only by reading Boghossian's statement as an epistemic spring towards a non epistemic reality, we can avoid idealism and skepticism. This is not an openess to metaphysical realism, since it does not imply that there is an ultimate structure, changeless and eternal, that we need to know in order to speak of truth. It simply makes sense of our knowledge of the objective world as facing two kinds of limits, internal-epistemical and external-non epistemical. We can not wait for an God Eye Point of View to speak of truth.

To conclude, what seems to distinguish the objective and the social world can be summarized in the following point: we don't enter into the social world guided by the conviction that our discussions will drive us to a single right answer, while in the objective world we can wait for it, as in the case of the boiling water. The higher degree of conflictuality we can see daily as characterizing the social world seems to be a sign of this difference. Language and communication create

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42. Boghossian 2006, 26.

a certain degree of freedom in human organization and coordination, a freedom that is more into the social world, where language has a more constitutive (rather than descriptive) role. This greater degree of freedom characterizes the lesser hardness of the social world, together with its higher degree of conflictuality, where everyone tries to find a consensus or a compromise that best suits his/her needs.

From the objective to the subjective world the distance between (CW) and (CA) get narrow, since the reference here is to a less hard reality (we create our identity and we can change it easier than how we can change social norms or the natural world, which has the highest degree of objectivity).

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