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## Discourse, reflection and commitment

**Abstract** In response to William Rehg's and Barbara Fultner's criticisms, I clarify and extend some arguments found in my book *Reflection Revisited*. I first redescribe how Hegel's critique of Kant's theory of reflection opens up the possibility for an intersubjective reflection. Habermas, I argue, can exploit such a theory of reflection since it is immune from the problems attendant on a 'theory of consciousness'. Second, I address how by means of meta-discourses temporal claims can be formalized for the pragmatics Habermas is developing. Finally, I take up Fultner's suggestion that Robert Brandom provides a fruitful point of comparison with Habermas's theory, and argue that norms are in fact formed and critiqued on the basis of – as Brandom describes – the modal capabilities or incompatibilities of their entailments.

**Key words** Robert Brandom · commitments · contextualization · discourse ethics · Jürgen Habermas · reflection · time · truth

Consistent with his robust critique of theories of consciousness, Jürgen Habermas has seemingly acquiesced completely in Richard Rorty's blunt dismissal of the philosophy of reflection that emerged from Kant (cf. Rorty, 1979). Yet Habermas acknowledges that the philosophy of reflection served as an important springboard for the development of critical philosophy: a philosophy able to provide independent grounds from which to make objective judgments about current ethical, social and political practices. Without reflection, what could take on this objective and emancipatory role? Habermas rejects several possible replacements, notable among them more recent suggestions such as Heideggerian notions of world-disclosure and Rortyesque schemes of instrumentalisms by which we simply 'get what we want'. Instead, Habermas

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affirms the possibility of an emancipatory power emerging not only from intersubjective verification but also from 'transcendence from within' (Habermas, 1991: 127ff.). But both of these context-independent modes of determination, let us call them, certainly sound distant echoes of the philosophy of reflection. Moreover, how can he repeatedly use the term 'reflection' in his writings on social theory, and yet fail to rely upon some kind of reflexive capacity of individual thought and agency? In my *Reflection Revisited: Habermas's Discursive Theory of Truth* (1999), I inquired into how exactly Habermas understands the reflexive capacities of individual agents.

William Rehg and Barbara Fultner have both, with their usual acumen, not only encapsulated the key elements of my argument in the book, but also moved them charitably in fruitful directions. Moreover, I must say at the outset that I have a great deal of sympathy with the misgivings of them both about the very possibility of the formal-pragmatic reconstruction of the contextualization of discourse I offer in the book as an extension of Habermas's theory of emancipatory thinking. Prompted by their criticisms, I shall here re-examine my claim that Habermas's theory can be considered a theory of reflection at all and then show how, if so, this entails the possibility of meta-discourse as part of the formalized process of contextualization of discourse. I shall then briefly examine the nature of what it is to be *committed* to a norm. I shall conclude by drawing our attention to the related issue of whether or not Habermas's discourse theory is, in any case, a theory of truth at all.

### Is Habermas's discourse theory a theory of reflection?

Rehg puts into question whether Habermas's theory ought to be considered in any way a philosophy of reflection. Habermas indeed takes pains to indicate that the philosophy of reflection affirms all of the core features of a 'philosophy of consciousness' – a Cartesian view of a subject who reconstructs the data of sensation in order to make representations of external reality – that he staunchly rejects. Ordinarily, reflection is understood as an inward turning of a solitary subject to take inventory of its own sense data and faculties. Habermas finds this a dubious notion that would require a 'knowing before knowledge'. So, to make the claim that Habermas is, nevertheless, utilizing a philosophy of reflection, I have to show one of two things: either that he fails in his critique of theories of consciousness and inadvertently forms or maintains one himself, or that he in fact employs a theory of reflection purified of any of the presuppositions of a philosophy of consciousness. Of course, as Rehg clearly sees, I choose the latter alternative. But this

choice besets me with a significant burden. I have to give a convincing account of a theory of reflection that shares both similarities with and important differences from that of a philosophy of consciousness. Let me briefly rehearse how I did that – and in the process make a few minor adjustments to the argument.

The philosophy of reflection, specifically the theory of reflection developed in the German Idealism, forms the background to much of Habermas's work on validity and truth. The theory of reflection began not so much with Descartes as with Kant. One of the best places to locate its origin lies in the Transcendental Analytic in the *First Critique* (A260/B316–A292/B349). Kant is, as often is the case, working to find a middle ground between two extremes – here specifically between empiricists' (Locke) and rationalists' (Leibniz) views on the relation between sense and intellection. Rationalists held that we have no access to the very givenness or origin of our represented concepts. To grasp the origin of a concept with another concept would make no sense. For one, it would lead just to an infinite regress of originating concepts. For the rationalist, then, intelligibility was a dynamic matrix in which we are simply always already conceptually situated. Even time and space have conceptual content. Empiricists like Locke, on the other hand, assumed that all concepts spring, or originate, from sense perception. On this account, even if one held that there are relations of ideas, themselves underived from sensation, one could still affirm that the concepts upon which these relations are employed are always empirically grounded in sense experience. Kant's genius was to explicate the *subjective* conditions that brook this divide between empiricism and rationalism (indeed one can argue that he accomplishes this same mediation at several points in the *First Critique*). Unlike *logical* reflection that compares concepts without regard for where their objects belong, a *transcendental reflection*, Kant claims, can indicate one of two possible sources whence a given concept emerges. This grasp of origination sets the ground on which concepts can be properly compared. The relations of comparison affected derive from each of the four sets of categories: quantity (identity/difference), quality (agreement/opposition), relation (inner/outer) and modality (matter and form). Thus Kant is subjectively grounding the distinct *loci* needed for a comprehensive doctrine of determinant judgments.

The most important function of transcendental reflection is to provide the basis for the distinction between a thing in itself and its appearance, particularly its appearance in space. It can also allow us to make sense of *real opposition* in the same subject – something Leibniz could not do. Thus he claimed that all evils or failings are simply consequences of the limits of created beings – they are only negations. But for Kant nature precludes this possibility of cancelled opposition. He

thinks that Leibniz could never attain to objective reality, since he lacked a proper account of spatialized and temporalized intuition (two a-priori forms preceding the matter of the manifold). Kant argued, in contrast, that the function of the understanding is distinct from sense:

... apperception and, with it, thinking precede all possible determination of the arrangement of representations. We therefore think something in general, and on the one side determine it sensibly, only we also distinguish the object represented in general and *in abstracto* from this way of intuiting it; thus there remains to us a way of determining it merely through thinking that is, to be sure, a merely logical form without content, but that nevertheless seems to us to be a way in which the object exists in itself (*noumenon*), without regard to the intuition to which our sensibility is limited. (A 289/B346)

This distillation of the two sources of concepts is what I term analytic reflection. It is analytic insofar as Kant left the two sources of concepts without a further ground. Thus sense and intellection give rise to a dialectic that is never resolvable – at least on the level of judgments about the natural world. Positively, however, aside from the clarity this distinction gives to metaphysics, Kant used it to undergird a coherent account of the tension between the freedom of reason and the determinism of nature.

Spurred on by Fichte's explorations into the unity of self-consciousness, Hegel criticized Kant's achievement as a mere subjective philosophy of reflection that gives rise to a perpetual disjunction between the phenomenal and the noumenal. Hegel thought Kant's explication of sense experience closed off the pre-reflective posit necessary for the distinction between sense and intellection in the first place. Hegel resolved this, in the *Greater Logic*, by explicating the origins of and interrelations among the forms of intuition and the categories themselves – something Kant refrained from doing. In so doing, Hegel criticized Kant's prioritization of quantity as a means to express negation. This had led Kant to ascertain the noumenon as an *empty* concept without an object. Instead Hegel prioritized quality in this determination process, such that negation is understood as an *absence* of an actual object (Hegel, 1979: 79). Thus he gave more ontological weight to what Kant called the 'nothing' of the *nihil privativum*: the absent object of a concept. This forms the basis of Hegel's conceptual realism, in which even privations are not outside of the reach of concepts. We can have a positive concept of an absence, as, for example, when a shadow indirectly indicates an adjacent object. All concepts of non-beings have content. This overrides Kant's more empirical concern with the noumena as the 'none' that cancels out quantitative signifiers of all, some and one (A290/B347). This is why Hegel is concerned first and foremost not with determinant

judgments, a conceptualization of representations arising from a sensing of the manifold of appearance, but with the *actuality* of the negation in change and development as such:

The actual is therefore *manifestation*; it is not drawn into the sphere of *alteration* by its externality, nor is it the *reflecting* of itself in *an other*, but it manifests itself; that is, in its externality it is *itself* and is *itself* in that alone, namely only as a self-distinguishing and self-determining movement. (Hegel, 1979: 542)

This is the ground of actuality that Kant failed to explicate. Hegel effectively uses Kant's category of quality to claim that actuality is a dialectic of limitation and remanifestation of the object. Thus by shifting the frameworks initially discovered by the philosophy of reflection, he essentially sublates it. In so doing he establishes synthetic reflection. It is the positive determination of limits in the intentional distinction of subject and object. It takes place in the field of continuous actuality and determination of consciousness. Hegel thus eliminates the necessity of a noumenal realm as a presupposition for determining actuality.

As a matter of historical interest, Hegel's move on Kant is not without some precedent in the history of philosophy. Duns Scotus made a similar move against Henry of Ghent and, indirectly, Thomas Aquinas. Henry held that the concept of being is effectively equivocal. It means one thing when applied to God and something else when applied to creatures. The distinction was based on the distinction between infinite and finite being (which are in Kant's quantitative order of *ens rationis*). The two domains have no intersection. Scotus argued instead that being as applied to God and creatures is neither equivocal nor even simply analogical. Rather, we can make a case for the univocal notion if we start not with the disjunction between infinite being and finite being, which is a difference derived from quantity, but with a stance of *quality*. In this case, being is understood as opposed to nothingness or an empty object of a concept (Kant's *nihil privativum*). The univocity is derived from the fact that the being of creatures is opposed to nothingness *just as much as* God's being is. The nothingness in either case is *determinative* of the being. If this is taken as the starting-point, we have a univocal concept of being, though the domains of the infinite and the finite still remain distinct. The advantage of this move is that it, in turn, makes sense of the analogical distinctions between God and creatures. We cannot presume an analogy without some basis of comparison that is univocal to the two terms.

Subsequent philosophers, nevertheless, have puzzled over Hegel's rather simplistic 'elimination' of the philosophy of reflection. To eliminate the problems of the limitation of intellection by sense does one formulate a kind of reason that subsumes all forms of intellection into

actualizations of self-differentiating spirit? My claim is that one can formulate a different version of the philosophy of reflection that bears the marks neither of the Kantian dualism nor of the Hegelian oversimplification.

To accomplish this, one strategy is to take Kant's two bifurcated sources of concepts, sense and intellection, and add a 'third'. This third would be a kind of *intersubjective* source of concepts. In Kant's view, when sensibility is the source of a concept, form precedes matter in the subject (the employment of the forms of intuition); when intellection is the source, matter or sheer possibility precedes the formal determination. Intersubjectivity adds a third source. It is the positing of a limit not of a subject relative to an object (sense) or to itself as a subject (intellection) but *between two interacting subjects*. This is a unique kind of transcendent (yet concrete) locus or space of concepts that Kant's determinant judgment ignored. It is manifest in Charles Taylor's claim that certain interactive gestures, such as a smile, play an 'ontogenetic role' in manifesting the openness that is anterior to the framing of all intentions for any action of communication between two subjects (Taylor, 1979: 78). Most importantly for my argument, Taylor also claims that this is a transcendently grasped source of concepts.

It is my contention that Habermas employs – albeit not explicitly – such a third source of concepts. He assumes its presence not in judgments about the empirical, moral, or aesthetic realms *per se*, but rather as the condition for *verification* of any claim as such. It is the source for all concepts relative to action coordination. Thus he grafts Hegel's synthetic reflection on to a discursive practice. Viewed from an intersubjective locus, real opposition, which Kant re-established from Leibniz's denial of it, becomes for Habermas the presupposition for grasping the conflicting but coexisting claims to validity within a life-world situation. As such, these oppositions are conceptualized within an interpersonal background such that each discursive actor is a *participant* in the validity determination of all claims, even those it itself does not endorse.

But, as one could still ask, in what sense is the explication of an intersubjective locus still an act of *reflection*? In reply, it should be evident that this explication involves limit determinations. For Habermas, all concepts are limited by human interests, on the originary side, and by idealized intersubjective verification, on the completion side. The life-world is inherently social and has a practical aim: the reproduction and deepening of itself. Thus he holds that the life-world is not to be comprehended in absolute knowing, as it was for Hegel, or even in authenticity, as it is for Heidegger, but in ongoing empirical, social, and even aesthetic *learning*.

## The contextualization of discourse

Having reconstructed this intersubjective framework of reflection, I then showed in the last chapters of the book how Habermas applies it to specific spheres of validity. I could have chosen to examine how it influenced his understanding of empirical claims – but I refrained from this task due to his relative silence on the matter. Instead I decided to target its impact on aspects of the other two realms of validity: one social and the other subjective. Thus I looked at discourse ethics and ego-identity theory respectively – themselves, of course, closely interrelated areas. My actual reconstruction of reflection in both of these realms is, arguably, the part of my project that remains most unfinished. The section also contains the most controversial argument of the book: the claim that the process by which moral and ethical existential norms are problematized can be formalized.

Rehg argues that for Habermas the process of recognizing when a moral discourse is appropriate resists formal description. It is, rather, as Habermas himself says, an ‘art of problematization’ (cf. Habermas, 1984b: 336). What I am really posing, however, is not so much the question how exactly the process would be formalized but rather the prior reflective question regarding what the *conditions* of its formalizability would be. It would seem that the *temporal* aspect of the formalization would be the crucial component. Habermas’s failure to consider these additional reflective features adequately, I contend, ends up weakening the emancipative component of his theory of discourse.

To set a context for this problem of the conditions of problematization, consider Dewey’s early criticism of the reflex arc concept and his counter-development of the notion of reflective thinking. For him, reflective thinking is engaged when one’s actions are somehow thwarted. He then formalizes this procedure. An initial pre-reflective confusion and perplexity are followed by the setting, or framing, of the problem. Then the problem must be ‘intellectualized’ (Dewey, 1998: 140). Hypotheses are formed: if the problem is of such a type, then such things will follow. Finally one searches to see if these consequences actually obtain. Thus one reasons from facts by means of ‘intermediate terms which link together into a consistent whole elements that at first seemingly conflict with each other’ (ibid.: 141). Ultimate reason shows that if the idea is adopted, certain favorable consequences follow. The entire process is thus an experiment or a test. So what are the background conditions for this formalized process? First, Dewey maintains that this is not primarily an intersubjective act at all; its aim is the formation not of norms, but of individual actions. Second, the verification is not a final agreement, but a corroboration of a hypothesis such that one can go on without doubts or troubles. Third, *qua* formalized, the process has

temporal conditioning: the *past* is crucial for this reflective process. In fact 'examination of the past may be the chief and decisive factor in thought' (ibid.: 145). Inasmuch as ethnographics – which Rehg mentions – includes historical reference, it would also be temporalized. But the key factor I want to take from Dewey is that the determination of the hypothesis requires an implicit temporal reference to the past.

Rehg is right to map my analysis in Chapter 5 of a threefold (synchronic/historical/chronological) temporal coordination onto Habermas's threefold characterization of the realms of communicative action. But he is hesitant to adopt my claim that the temporal reference of a problematized claim – particularly within the second realm – can be the object of a meta-discourse. Rehg claims that such meta-discourse rarely happens. This is, of course, correct: but one could make the very same claim about the frequency of discourses themselves. In fact, one could even argue that ethical reasoning as such, as deliberative decision-making, happens rarely. Most of our actions, it can be argued, are guided by previously instantiated rules and habits. But to quibble thus would be to miss Rehg's main point, which is that once we introduce a meta-discourse prior to an actual discourse, we run aground of the possibility of an infinite regress of meta-discourses. We would eventually have to decide when to decide *when* to decide to have a discourse, and so on *ad infinitum*. Fultner raises the same issue. Instead, Rehg turns to an analysis of what he astutely terms 'initiation claims', which can be rationally defended if challenged. He is right to claim that giving more weight to the autonomy of the meta-discourse would circumvent the problem of avant-gardism: the assumption prior to a moral discourse that one knows which substantive norm correctly solves a problem. He then notes, however, that I offer only a kind of quick stopper to the regress problem; he offers an argument.

Before taking up Rehg's argument, I would just like first to take up the issue of an infinite regress in a very general sense. I would contend that many infinite regress critiques improperly conflate two separate claims:

- 1 the condition in question is subject to an infinite regress;
- 2 the given infinite regress of conditions renders the conditioned to which they refer impossible.

I would contend that one can successfully demonstrate (1) without that demonstration implying the truth of (2). I in fact entertain the possibility that relative to the meta-discourse in question here (1) is true. Yet I hold that, if true, this does not render (2) true. Thus meta-discourses do in fact exist, even though they are subject to an infinite regress. That said, Rehg's 'demonstration' of the impossibility of a regress – thus (1) – of meta-discourses is nonetheless not only compelling, but extremely

important to any kind of formal pragmatic reconstruction of discourse competence. Rehg clearly shows that in fact any meta-meta-discourse, apart from its temporal situatedness relative to a meta-discourse (namely, that it would have to precede it), is substantively indistinguishable from a meta-discourse.

Rehg's own support for the possibility of non-iterative meta-discourse, however, immediately languishes. He claims that what is principally needed to contextualize discourse are not formal reconstructions of competencies, but ethnomethodological studies. This is a claim Fultner also endorses. Of course, Rehg is not arguing that empirical and formal accounts of modes of problematization are inconsistent. Both Rehg and Fultner conclude rather that temporal contextualization is neither sufficient nor even necessary for discourse. Fultner argues in a similar fashion to Rehg that we can grant the contextualization problem, and still hold that the way we problematize norms may be simply a contingent matter. Like Rehg she grants that meta-discourses do take place, but does not take this to entail that they are necessary for discourse as such. She also makes an important and helpful distinction between discourse about problematization and discourse about what kind of claim the norm embodies (whether truth, rightness, or sincerity). She argues that the former is in fact known intuitively or implicitly. She buttresses this adroitly by a reference to Habermas's claims about how context, or background knowledge, is used by speakers in order to make the specific meaning of an utterance diverge from the literal meaning.

But I wonder whether in ethnomethodological accounts of problematization the formalized temporal factors are in fact still in the driver's seat. In other words, how do we go about *taking up* the ethnographical claims *before* discourse? How do we go about settling any conflicting information *they* might furnish? Moreover, if they do not in any way change our own commitment or lack of commitment to a norm, is the question then settled? I again suggest that the deeper issue here regards the sheer possibility of the formalization of problematization as such. I grant the contingency of the conditions that compel us to commence discourse – but only on one level of the agents involved. On another level, though, I would propose that all *institutionalization* of discourse – whether in the realms of ethics, society, or politics and law – necessarily requires the formalization of temporal contextualization. If a discourse process is to be regularized, such contingent features must be somehow formalized.

To illustrate, consider an example. A local police department finds that the fact that its employees take second jobs as security guards and guards for special events is negatively affecting their job performance. So, the department adopts a norm prohibiting the employees from taking any second job. For a while the policy is enforced without complaint.

Then one day an employee takes a second job that has minimal hours and has no relation to police work. The police department, when informed of this, tells him he must quit the second job or be fired. So the employee challenges the norm against second jobs. But immediately a perplexing question arises. Would the arguments the employee offers on his behalf concern

- 1 the norm in general, or
- 2 only the norm's *applicability* to his particular case?

My claim about this distinction is twofold. First, *every* discourse requires a *prior* determination of which of these two, (1) or (2), is ultimately at stake. Second, this decision implicitly requires a meta-discourse. Meta-discourses are needed to determine what empirical claims are pertinent to the settling of the hypothetical issues of (2) – and these have to be settled before (1) can be taken up. In other words, the empirical factors associated with second jobs must be settled before determining whether discourse about the norm in question ought to commence. To settle these questions requires reference to reasoning about contingent cases of past application of the norm.

Now, can this process, involving the applicability of contingent past applications of a norm, itself be formalized? Note that the arguments about (2) tend to devolve in the direction of empirical questions: does it make a difference, as far as the second job goes, what *kind* of second job is involved? It makes no sense to settle these questions, given the reason *why* they are questions, simply ethnographically. My claim is that they involve determinations that utilize the process of asking for and giving reasons. And we require a sufficient – determined ultimately by a consensus or compromise – number of intersubjectively verifiable *actual instances* of agents' experience of the norm's real or putative *inapplicability* in given circumstances to establish its problematization.

### Formalizing agents' 'commitments to' a norm

In other words, what is really doing the problematizing work here are the specific beliefs, or *commitments*, on the part of those subjected to the norm as to how it would affect or has affected them. How is this to be formalized? An appeal to commitments in ethics has prompted some, like Ricoeur, to undermine Habermas's universalism and formalism (cf. Ricoeur, 1992). Without going in Ricoeur's direction of attestation, I shall rather, like Fultner, consider Robert Brandom's pragmatic analysis of commitments as applicable to the rationality of norms.

Fultner is quite right at the outset to point out a fundamental hiatus in Brandom's work: his failure to deal with action coordination as such.

Nonetheless his theory serves to establish proprietary action generally. What Brandom wants to show is that in our attempts to situate contextualization without falling into vicious redundancy, we do well to keep two principles in mind – both of which Habermas would affirm. First, we have to be able to defend, in the game of asking for and giving reasons, all of our commitments – on the basis of the *content* of them. In the realm of discourse this would seemingly entail that we cannot simply affirm a norm either is or is not problematized without some kind of explicable *inference* to that conclusion. Second, however, we must acknowledge that we remain in a permanent disjoint between what we take a speaker to refer to by an utterance or action, and *our own taking of* that reference. This is the basis for the intersubjective divide that Brandom claims is indicated by the difference between *de dicto* and *de re* assertions. We must keep this distinction in mind in order properly to inherit commitments from others.

In a recent article, however, Habermas criticizes Brandom's blurring of the distinction between the factual and moral realms such that action norms are reduced to factual norms. Habermas maintains that what is unique about action norms is that their justification, unlike that of a factual claim, requires not merely an attributional but a unique *participant* perspective (Habermas, 1999: 182). (Indeed it might be the case that excessive need to include the factual, or applicational, issues of commitments to a norm, which I have emphasized in regard to application issues, might in fact distract from the actual participant interaction in the discussion of the validity of the norm in question.) Habermas criticizes Brandom's failure to develop a proper participant perspective specifically in the analysis of scorekeeping. For Habermas, Brandom's scorekeeping takes place between two persons, but exhibits a third-person, and not a second-person, form of attribution (1999: 173–4). But Brandom's point is that at some point the content of a norm is not purely something to which we can become entitled simply by dint of the agreement of all or everyone, even under idealized conditions (cf. also Rescher, 1993: 44–63). Rather, norms are settled not so much by actual agreement under idealized conditions as by the actual lack of a *materially* inferred incompatible counter-claim. These material inferences establish the rationality of a subject's takings of the world: its commitments.

The incompatibility requirement is what I take to be the strength of Brandom's argument. What would this entail in the realm of moral discourse? Presumably it would entail that a norm is valid if *no* application of it actually prevents a participant from freely engaging in new and creative actions (cf. Brandom, 2000b: 178–9). Secondly, it would entail that a norm is valid if it does *not* increase the balance of pain over pleasure overall. Of course, this points in the general direction of

a less proceduralist and more substantive notion of good. But it would also seem to point to the very ethnographic and local considerations that Rehg and Fultner urge. Yet it remains intersubjective inasmuch as the material inferences one makes to see an incompatibility – and thus problematize a claim – remain, in principle, distinct from the material inferences another makes to *inherit* that very claim.

### Concluding remarks

A few brief final reflections. First, I would like to conclude my argument not with a deflationary remark about Habermas's discourse ethics in general, but at least with a comment on a rather unsettling feature of it. Any consensus theory, as such, assumes that truth or rightness is a matter of the inclusion of a quantitative measure, namely *all*, of the numerically distinguished members of a certain class: those *affected* by the object of the consent. It is the quantification of the affected that is doing the work rather than the qualitative status of the affect. The ultimate standard for that affect cannot be measured in quantitative terms, such as by a sum of all possible pleasures. A qualitative determination, on the other hand, would demand a kind of *reflective* determination of the limits of the affect that does not divorce us from temporal and spatial considerations. Here the affect would be understood as a quality that can be grasped relative to its own limitations. Thus it is open to an ethical standard of goodness, understood as a kind of growth or development. This, it seems to me, must point us more in the direction of a qualitative good for ethics. This would entail a move in a neo-Aristotelean direction quite contrary to Habermas. But to work this argument out entirely would require a great deal of further study and analysis.

Second, Fultner is quite right to question the very use of the word 'truth' in the book's title. She is right to point out that Habermas's theory primarily involves verification or justification, not truth as such. He works out verification of truth-*claims*, rightness-*claims*, and aesthetic *claims*, and so forth. However, Habermas does call all verified claims 'truth-analogous'. As such, his has the status of a truth theory. Moreover, in the context of discourse he does equate truth and justification: '*die Wahrheit und Richtigkeit diskursiv einlösbar Geltungsansprüche sind*' (Habermas, 1984a: 159). More recently, responding to Rorty's claim that a theory of justification deflates a notion of truth, Habermas claims that in discourse 'an assertion "proves its truth" solely on the basis of reasons, that is, with reference to the authority responsible for possible refutation' (Habermas, 2000: 48). As Rescher puts it, Habermas does refer to a 'truth of the matter' (Rescher, 1993: 46).

But regardless of whether we take this to be primarily a theory of truth or of justification, Fultner's main point is that we have to acknowledge Habermas's firm commitment to a discursive theory of verification. Moreover, to take his theory of reflective acceptability in the direction that Fultner proposes – in the direction of Brandom's prosentential theory of truth – would unquestionably be quite fruitful. The prosentential theory of truth makes explicit the phenomena of preservation of commitments and their ability to be taken up or inherited across the intersubjective divide. But my initial take on this – viewed in terms of my thesis about Habermas – is that Brandom's theory is in the final analysis quite different than Habermas's. Habermas clings to a context-transcendence – vague as that might be. In 'Tranzsendenz vom Innen, Tranzsendenz ins Deisseits', Habermas points out that both he and Apel have taken up 'the fundamental insight of his [Peirce's] theory of truth, that validity claims possess a transcendental power that secures for each speech act a future reference' (Habermas, 1991: 147). Thus Habermas does grasp some element of temporal transcendence in truth. Brandom's theory of truth, though, is completely linguistified, and thus makes no appeal to specifically temporal transcendence as such. For Brandom, all normative stances are immanent to interlocutors: 'all transcendental constitution is social institution' (Brandom, 2000a: 34). Thus we inquire not into empirically representable subjective desires that cause beliefs and actions, but into the inferential articulation of the reasons socially used to justify holding or doing them.

Finally I should briefly clarify, as Fultner seems to urge, what my own ultimate views of reflection and truth are. First, my view is not that all commitments that emerge from and are manifested in practice are the result of a reflection of discourse. It all depends on how one qualifies the kind of reflection required for a commitment. A commitment is a belief, relative to a set of practices, that is ultimately subject to the intersubjective game of asking for and giving reasons. But I argue that a kind of reflection is necessary for a commitment to be taken simply as *my* commitment in the first place. Thus I do seek a more subject-specific theory of reflection than Habermas offers for commitment, though a less subject-specific theory than Ricoeur offers in *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur, 1992). I pair reflection with any notion of transcendence. And transcendence is utilized for grasping limits: the first in a series of conditions (origins, principles) or the last in a series of inferences (conclusions, idealizations). I commend Habermas's use of intersubjective reflection to establish both the principles (the intersubjective nature of language oriented to agreement and social coordination) and the idealizing closure needed for intersubjective agreement. Brandom in turn uses intersubjective reflection to explicate scorekeeping. But both fail to use it to make fully explicit what constitutes a first in the series

of evaluation of norms, namely the status of an individual ('my') commitment to a norm. Reflection discovers the limits needed for the 'I commit to norm x': it is synthetically opposed to 'I don't commit to (but deny or merely believe) norm x', and analytically distinct from 'you (or "any other") commit to norm x'. The explication of such commitments is crucial for the *problematization* of a norm *before* the interchange of reasoning about it can take place.

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