

The Philosophy Café.

Communicative Rationality:

The Ethics of Online Discourse, What is the Philosophy of Communication?

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Hosted by

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INTRODUCTORY GUIDE



Thales of Miletus



Lao Tse



Siddhartha Gautama  
(Buddha)



Jesus of Nazareth



Confucius



Socrates



Plato



Aristotle



Seneca



Augustine of Hippo  
(Saint Augustine)

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Averroes



Saint Thomas of Aquino



Niccolò Machiavelli

PHILOSOPHERS AND  
THINKERS OF HISTORY



Francis Bacon



René Descartes



Montesquieu



Voltaire



David Hume



Jean-Jacques Rousseau



Immanuel Kant



Arthur Schopenhauer



Søren Kierkegaard



G.W. Friedrich Hegel



Karl Marx



Friedrich Nietzsche



Miguel de Unamuno

Is that all-well said?

The theory of communicative rationality states that it is a necessary outcome of successful communication, and that the potential for certain kinds of reason is inherent in communication itself.

### **Big and Basic Picture from Jürgen Habermas, and Karl-Otto Apel**

1. There are necessary conditions for reaching an understanding through communication [universal or formal pragmatics].

- Human competition, conflict, and strategic action are failed attempts to achieve understanding due to modal confusions. Modality refers to a collection of formal systems.
- "understanding," is when two or more social actors share the same meanings about certain words or phrases. There is confidence that those meanings fit relevant social expectations, or what is referred to as "mutually recognized normative background."
- understanding is "intersubjective mutuality ... shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another."
- "communicative action" is the development of shared (intersubjective) norms which in turn establish the social coordination needed for practical action in pursuit of shared and individual objectives.

2. There is a type of argument that attempts to establish normative or ethical truths by examining the presuppositions of discourse [discourse ethics].

- Discourse ethics explains the implications of communicative rationality in the sphere of moral insight and normative validity.
- It evokes the universal obligations of communicative rationality.
- The ethics forms part of a cognitivist moral theory (ethical sentences express propositions and can therefore be true or false). The validity of moral norms can be done in a manner analogous to the justification of facts.
- Public accountability consists of three basic factors:
  - a diversity of ideas,
  - an engagement of public decision making, and
  - an account for continuing a practice or way of doing something or a means or reason for changing the practice.

3. A philosophical term with several distinct meanings [rational reconstruction].

- Presented with philosophical and linguistic method that systematically translates intuitive knowledge of rules into a logical form.
- Rational reconstruction is a manner of explicating the deep generative structures that give rise to and allow for particular performances, behaviours, and other symbolically pre-structured realities.
- Rational reconstruction is limited to the analysis of symbolically pre-structured realities because it is a procedure that is intimately tied to the interpretation of reality as opposed to its description.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Jürgen Habermas (German 1976; English 1979) *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Polity Press.**

Pages on communicative action: 1, 34, 38, note on 208.

Pages on universal or formal pragmatics: x xix, 44, note on 207.

Pages on rational reconstruction: 117-120, not on 224.

**Jürgen Habermas (German 1981; English 1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and Systems, a Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Volume 2, Polity Press.**

Pages on communicative rationality: 2, 5, 40, 46, 86-87, 186, 262, 265-66, 280-81, 303, 333, 397.

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