

## Promises and limits of discourse ethics in communicative interactions

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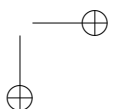
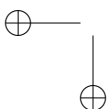
### Abstract

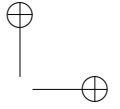
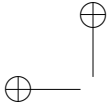
Communication ethics is concerned with the ways in which intersubjective relationships are constructed. It highlights the tensions among determinations that rule intersubjective contacts and the constant reformulation of meaning frames and forms of language that define both interlocution and its context. This text outlines the similarities and differences between two conflicting approaches concerning the use of everyday language as a particularly privileged way of social interaction. We shall first consider the Habermasian notion of an ideal situation

of communication, then shifting to the problems concerning the power and interests encapsulated in any communicative exchange, following the perspective of Bourdieu. It is worth mentioning that an ethics of communication that intends to evaluate the role played by interests and language in the practical relationship between subjects should approach conditions under which, through a discursive interaction in the public scope, individuals could reach an understanding regarding their interests and needs.

Keywords: Communication; Ethics; Habermas; Bourdieu

**M**UCH of the theoretical discussion on ethics in the field of Communication focuses on studies regarding deontological principles governing practices of communication professionals (Esteves, 1998, 2003). However, without disregard the importance of codes that drive the action and interests of these professionals, it is possible to affirm that communication ethics also concerns the ways in which intersubjective relationships are constructed. Communication ethics highlights the tensions among determinations that rule intersubjective contacts and the constant reformulation of meaning frames and forms of language that define both interlocution and its context. The way by which subjects try to associate their freedom of action and their own interests



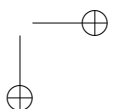
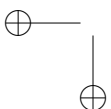


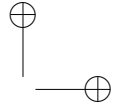
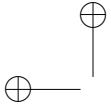
in order to respect other identities and interests is also related to the ethical framework (Marques, 2009, 2011).

An ethics associated with current communication processes should consider: a) operative modes of information production in the media, b) modes of dissemination and critical appropriation of media messages, c) intersubjective processes that try to uncover the perspective of each social actor involved in a communicative action, linking him/her or not linking him/her to the perspective of everybody; d) communicative situations and relational contexts that are created when subjects activate common elements of language to seek a mutual understanding, and e) a self-interest that guides not only strategic actions seen as contrary to the collective good, but rather directs the discursive engagement of actors with their peers; therefore, it has to be considered as a central element of a communicative interaction.

Beyond these dimensions, it is worth mentioning that an ethics of communication that intends to evaluate the role played by interests and language in the practical relationship between subjects should approach conditions under which, through a discursive interaction in the public scope, individuals could reach an understanding regarding their interests and needs. Habermas in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987) tried to build a discourse ethics in order to demonstrate how the use of language is able to promote mutual understanding and a provisional agreement between participants of practical discussions from a collective assessment of common issues and private interests. For the author, ethics is associated with a personal horizon of interests, choices, values, and worldviews, while the moral point of view adopted by participants in a discussion refers to the enlargement of the subjective horizon towards conflict resolutions and collective problems. The use of language in an argumentative situation, according to Habermas, also confers to subjects the ability to act rationally and, from their personal interests, choose alternative ways of action that favor the common good. In other words, subjects' actions had not been foreseen or encompassed by previous rules, but they would be the result of decisions morally constructed through discussion and dialogue.

From the horizon of their respective self-understanding and understanding of world, the different parties in dialogue refer to a moral point of view allegedly shared, which leads to an ever increasing decentralization of sev-





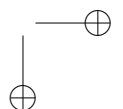
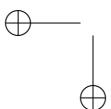
eral perspectives under the symmetrical conditions of discourse (Habermas, 2004a, p. 316).

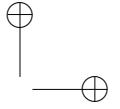
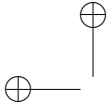
The excerpt above reinforces the fact that communicative actions are not separated of particular interests of subjects in interlocution. On the contrary: it is from the universe of unique insights and interests of those subjects that an extended horizon of shared meanings can be established. However, one can question how far the discussion is able to provide even parity conditions of enunciation and expression, making difficult the construction of strategies for achieving particular proposes. And for that it is necessary to bring the habermasian approach closer to another perspective that emphasizes power dynamics that pass by communicative relations.

In this sense, the debate proposed in this paper aims to retrieve the reflection of Pierre Bourdieu on an “ethics of language use” strictly directed to the success of the strategic action of subjects. According to Bourdieu the subject acts and uses language following norms and logic of a given field in order to obtain a symbolic gain, thus reiterating principles that guide his/her particular choices. In this paper, we use “field” according to the meaning proposed by Bourdieu in many moments (1980a, 1980b) as a structured social space in which actors in dispute which have a limited symbolic capital accumulated during their social trajectory look for the best positions and bonus associated with them.

Reflecting on the ethics and moral in the context of communication, we can not overlook that both social actors and media actors act in contexts marked by largely centralized structures based on hierarchical and asymmetric structures of communication. We can not forget either that media agents are linked to power structures that reproduce and renew, continuing a particular *habitus*. In general, the so-called *habitus* is a system that orientates individuals in their choices. Thanks to it, members of a social group share principles and definitions about their social reality. In other words, the *habitus* refers to a series of pre-reflective arrangements for the practical behavior that guide people in a peculiar sense in all aspects of their experiences (Bourdieu, 1980b).

A first set of questions can be extracted from these considerations: could interests of a media agent be considered the result of his/her autonomous choice? Or do these interests coincide with interests of the field in which he/she is inserted? Would it be possible to think of an ethical conduct without considering conditions and contexts of action of individuals?



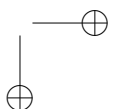
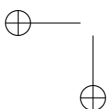


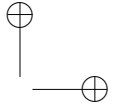
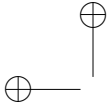
In turn, in relation to intersubjective processes of rapprochement between private and public interests, we note that the ethical and moral development of contemporary societies needs to take into account how subjects discuss, dialogue and negotiate their differences, interests, points of view, and needs. By means of a pragmatic approach of language use as a form of practical action for the search of mutual understanding, the theory of communicative action of Habermas (1987), as noted above, can be considered an important contribution to understand how individuals and groups question values and foundations that anchor moral rules that join them from an ethical position, combining individual interests and collective interests.

In general, the habermasian approach in current complex societies aims to reflect on the ways through which it could be possible to connect demands of a subjective nature linked to different conceptions of good life to moral demands which concern to the way by which we establish relations with other people in the search for respect and social recognition. In this context, the notion of interest is often perceived as a synonym of strategic, something that may corrupt the interactive communication, making it less desirable to promote something that can serve everybody. Thus, a second set of questions encourages us to reflect: how to go from a particular interest to reach a generalizable interest built on public reasons (publicly acceptable) and guided to the common good?

Facing these two problematic aspects, this text aims to develop a better approach on the ethics of communication structured around the notion of interests. The objective of this rapprochement of Habermas and Bourdieu is not to point difficulties and impossibilities for the elaboration of equal conditions of access to the communicative rationality and for an effective peer participation in discussions and public dialogues. Our aim is to demonstrate that notions of interests and self-interest are an essential component in the building process for an understanding of subjects and therefore an ethics of communication.

Themes of public deliberation and discourse ethics are not familiar to the scenery of theoretical writings of Pierre Bourdieu. In fact, these concepts are more associated with works of Jürgen Habermas, and their use by the French thinker is minimal. Works of Bourdieu on linguistic interactions exist from assumptions and they reach conclusions far from studies on the pragmatics of language developed by Habermas: it would be possible, when we ask on





Bourdieu's concerns about the ethics of language, simply reply that he doesn't deal with this issue.

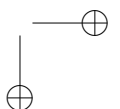
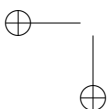
However, in his books and papers on this subject there seems to be a "discourse ethics" that does not risk revealing its name. But it is not possible to go far in this transplant of concepts between both shores of the Rhine: a rapprochement between Habermas and Bourdieu would require a space and a breath considerably larger than the limits of this text. Even the mutual absence of quotations can be considered an indication that considerations of one of them were beyond a conceptual map of the other.

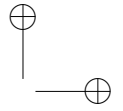
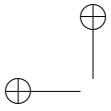
At first, and based on assumptions developed by Bourdieu, we will have out a reflection on possibilities of exploration of an ethics of language use. In a second step, we intend to explore another aspect of the ethics of communication from Habermas: the way by which communicative interactions may establish passages between individual and collective interests according to practical processes of discussion on topics morally relevant to everybody. The question that guides both moments, as explained in the introduction, is about the possibility and conditions of an ethics of discussion, considering the interests of social actors involved.

### **Chances of a discussion among equals in Bourdieu's writings**

Pierre Bourdieu devoted several writings and at least one book, *Ce que parler veut dire* (1982), reworked years later under the title *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (2001), published in Brazil with the title *A economia das trocas linguísticas* (1992), as well as some sparse texts joined later in *Questions de Sociologie* (1980a) and *Choses Dites* (1987). If, as stated above, questions of discourse ethics and deliberation seem to be unrelated to reflections of the French sociologist, on the other hand, in his studies he presented interest for the practical conditions of language use in a society - thus suggesting a concern with an ethics of language.

Without intending to establish here a theoretical discussion, or even a more detailed presentation of Bourdieu concepts (1980b, 2001), it is worth recalling briefly some conceptual frameworks from which this part of the text will be developed.



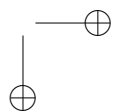
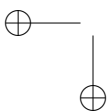


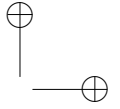
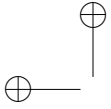
Linguistic interactions for Bourdieu (2001) occur not only as an exchange of propositions and meanings between speakers. Seeking to rescue the sociological element in language analysis to do not accomplish a linguistic analysis of social actions, the French author seeks to pursue social elements present in the dialogue. Conversation is seen as a social activity undertaken by historical subjects constituted within a field.

In this scenery, what Bourdieu (2000) named as *habitus* plays a fundamental role: a set of practices, perceptions, preferences, and other provisions internalized by the subject throughout his social existence. As a principle that generates daily practices but is also influenced by them, hence there is a constant relation with the society, the *habitus* is presented as an “invisible master” responsible at the same time for perceptual, cognitive, and practical dimensions of the subject. The *habitus* reveals itself especially in the seemingly unmotivated, obvious and natural action according to the view of those who practice it (Bourdieu, 2000, 1982; Barros & Martino, 2003; Martino, 2003).

When the individual talks, he/she makes use of components of his/her linguistic *habitus*, also due to the “linguistic capital” accumulated until that moment (and not represented just by a vocabulary of some specificity, but also the correction of language) that will be objectified as a “discourse” within a field (Martino, 2003). The peers will assign a value to this discourse, resulting in the classification of the speaker according to the field taxonomy and from which he will be recognized. By naming linguistic interactions as “linguistic exchanges” or even “linguistic market”, Bourdieu (2001) draws attention to this dimension of relation between discourse and power that is inserted in it as a result of his/ her social connections.

The social production of discourse is thus presented as the starting point for its understanding. Language for Bourdieu can not be detached from its social origins: it is not configured only as a mean used by speakers in equal positions for the free exchange of meanings. Both in discussion as in the speech, the possibilities to speak and the mutual recognition of the specific value of each speech are at stake. If, in a discourse ethics of habermasian approach we can perceive the exploration of mutual recognition of the *right to speak* as a *sine qua non* determination, Bourdieu (2001) suggests that the very recognition of this right also aims at the recognition of inequalities presented in this right to the speech. The “right to speak”, if assured by law in legal





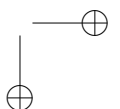
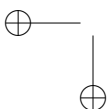
proceedings, becomes more fluid in daily interactions where the law of force - represented by the mutual position of speakers - is presented as an obstacle to interaction. The consensus arising from a discussion can be obtained, with no doubt, but not without taking a path cleaved of objectivities and disclosures of field structures on which rights to speech and reasoning are established and delimited, as well as the recognition of such an argument as a “valid” and “rational” one.

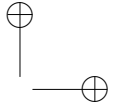
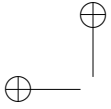
Regulatory elements for an ethics of language use according to Bourdieu are outside the discourse. Or it would be better to say “at the intersection” of the discourse itself. Validity claims of any one discourse is guaranteed, at least in a important dimension, for elements outside the discourse itself, but present in it due to the incorporation by the speaker of rules that legitimize the discourse. Thus, to every utterance the linguistic performance of a participant in a given field and in a usual situation is able to produce a legitimizable discourse to which possibilities of such a discourse are recognized as valid are already incorporated.

Just a discourse produced in situations beyond the speaker *habitus* that would require the calculation of reconstruction for this same *habitus* to account for a new circumstance would need a new evaluation and structuring of validity claims for this same discourse. It is impossible for the speaker familiarized with the social space in which he/she will apply his/her discourse in circulation to do not use elements that are presented as rules of language use, that means, an *ethos*. Could we notice here some echoes of an “discourse ethics”? Insofar this *ethos* is erected in its *habitus*, this allows in advance the recognition and unintentional calculation of elements that concede legitimacy to a particular discussion.

Thus, any use of discourse contrary to this *ethos* and, therefore, that breaks an ethics of language use would try to be recognized by the speaker as being exogenous to the own system of elaboration of linguistic action. Understanding the speech act from Bourdieu (1980a) as the objectification of a linguistic *habitus* acquired throughout the individual’s social trajectory, only the cost of a very advanced calculation could break the ethical rules of discourse once they are incorporated and try to define the recognition by the speaker himself regarding the axiological and cognitive characteristics of his speaking.

At this point, all discourse is ethical within the consecrated *ethos* limits of a social space. But chances of a speech to be validated from norms



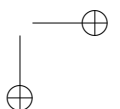
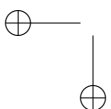


specified by rules of a consensual practical reason - what Bourdieu (1980a, 2001) understands as “linguistic *habitus*” - as the basis of a dialogical process of debate would be subject to an inquiry from the examination of genesis of criteria responsible to consider as “rational” some particular argumentative action, which gives it a status position from which the validity of propositions is determined.

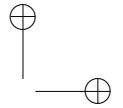
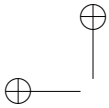
In other words, the question would be to verify who - obviously this is not an individual subject, but a social “agent” – was able to identify a pattern of use of discourse as “rational” against “non-rational” ones and, more importantly, how a particular discourse was perceived as having characteristics that qualify it as “rational” in opposition to others - an opposition also defined in hierarchical terms in the constitution of social formations of a field (Martino, 2010). In general, a field is a structured space of relations in which agents in dispute seek hegemony and symbolic profit, it is possible to argue that there is small space for ethics (Bourdieu, 1982, 2000).

In this case we are not claiming that the validity of a discourse - a concept that, in this part of the text can be viewed as the “use of language” according to Catherine Balsey (2002) - is given solely by exogenous criteria. What we try to stress is that the presence of elements in a discourse which ensure its validity is linked to the conditions of its formulation. It would be possible to indicate some circularity of the argument: a discourse is ethically valid because it is produced according to rules that ensure its validity. However, the dynamic characteristic of the *habitus*, an element in permanent rebuilding, “structuring structure” and at the same time a “structured structure”, leads to an equally dynamic in the formulation of the discourse, that requires in any dialogue the participant perception regarding immediate action data to the argumentative reciprocity within standards established by the circumstances in order to ensure the continued validity of his/her arguments against a speaker in a real situation of interaction.

Once the elements that immediately constitute the practical reason to some social space are defined interactions considered as valid use to be produced by agents from a normativity incorporated in the form of *habitus* in this field. Those agents pervades the discourse of its own validity rules, reducing the possibility of performance of speech acts unrelated to this *ethos*, that is, without elements responsible for its recognition as valid by the other participants of the interaction (Martino, 2010).







Then, linguistic exchange exists as a speech act within a social space that will find resonance in these same objectifying acts, even involuntary, for statements and ethical principles of the field in which they are pronounced.

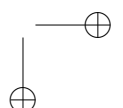
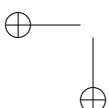
Thus we believe that a prospect of elaboration for a normative standard of guarantee of possibility of a linguistic interaction, a reflection that would be done from the standpoint of a sociology of language use, is related to the establishment of the legitimacy of a discourse within a particular social space. It is the aim of seeking explicit conditions of a “validity of discussion” by examining the constitution of those conditions - if it is possible to make a wordplay, this is to ask who validated rules of validity of a discourse.

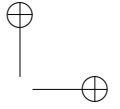
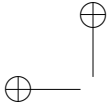
The answer according to the interpretation proposed here from the perspective of Bourdieu’s sociology could be drawn when one considers that the production of criteria of legitimacy of a discourse are linked to social spaces of use of such a discourse, as well as the trajectory of agents of this space. Social spaces according to Bourdieu (1980b) are endowed with a narrative that consists of their conflicts, disputes, and confrontations between agents by imposing hegemonic elements of cognitive and axiological validation of practices regarded as valid ones. Internal and external dynamic of fields allows a continuous redefinition of these elements according to multifactorial conditions that convert at the intersection of agent trajectories, moments of higher orthodoxy or heterodoxy, the success and incorporation in the core dispute of agents hitherto marginal. Finally, of a dynamic all its own that, somehow, becomes part of the field dynamic.

This way, in our view the diachronic field genesis becomes the structural synchrony of conditions such as proposed by dominants - which does not mean they are fully accepted by agents in dominated positions, but anyway they serve for establishing an image, both internally and reflective of the field. So, what is synchronously validated in the field tends to be viewed as “universally valid”.

Which are the chances for a resolution from this perspective? A first answer could be “nothing” to the extent that, as indicated earlier in this text, as far as we know the proposal for an “economy of linguistic exchanges” according to Bourdieu simply is not talking about it.

However, in our view, eliminating the possibility of exit from a discussion may not do justice to the author perspectives in the sense that the very linguistic activity is seen as a political act of interference - and this doesn’t accept





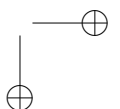
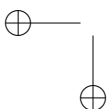
a deterministic reading of its conceptions of "field" and *habitus*, but thinking about possibilities of setting up counter-hegemonies and even counter-hegemonic or marginal discourses within a given field to the extent that, as a social space, it is not immune to changes and alterations in the society itself. This way, the very activity of language within a field can be thought of as an element of challenge, not just acceptance.

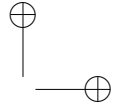
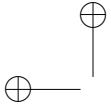
Notions of *habitus* and field as well as those of "linguistic market" help thinking about possibilities of setting up public arenas for debates as well as chances of success of each participant. A doubt about possibilities of a "linguistic equality" among participants in a dialogue, to the extent this dialogue is not detached from social hierarchies in which it is formulated, but exactly due to this, it can serve as an aid to the perception of these hierarchies, their objectification, and subsequent transformation.

It would perhaps be a challenge to think how far these equality conditions would be formed paradoxically by deconstructing the discourse of equality from an examination of field logics and, from there, they would allow a legitimate confrontation of interests in a public arena constituted by agents with a look of self-reflection that eventually could allow undoing the *illusio* of a certain "linguistic communism".

Also, the replacement of it by a sense of how differences in language linked to social differences can - or have to, under a certain perspective - be confronted in order to establish the same chances of a discussion between "equals" - and note - "equals" because they are aware of conditions in which the discourse takes place, without necessarily being caught specifically to this or that condition which, as being pre-established without the awareness of participants, erects itself on a "natural" condition in a discourse formulation.

At this point, it would be possible to suggest that an ethics of language use is possible only when one transcends dynamic structures of field from their own objectification as embodied practices and recognized by the participating subjects, but also freely deliberate - and "freely" does not mean an absolute freedom, but within parameters thought several times by Habermas (1987), which, as proposed, can be connected to issues raised to date under the sign of Bourdieu.





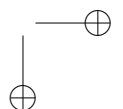
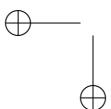
## **Communicative action, discourse ethics, and tension between private interest and the collective good**

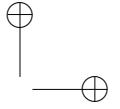
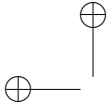
The communicative action aims at a mutual understanding of subjects about something that belongs to the objective, social, and subjective worlds. It points to how the discourse becomes a central element of building decisions able to, from the public consideration of particular arguments, constitute not only a common basis for agreements reached around generalizable elements, identified from the collective assessment of needs and particular interests. Despite the strategic and communicative actions are presented as two genuine types of interaction, only one of them can be considered able to produce rationally motivated agreements.

I refer to communicative actions when social interactions are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success accomplished by particular individuals, but by means of cooperative conquest of understanding among participants. In communicative action participants are not oriented primarily for their own success, but to achieve an agreement that is the condition for all participants could pursue and achieve their own plans (Habermas, 1982, p.264).

The communicative action indicates the process through which individuals would imply discursive exchanges that happen in several situations in order to produce information in a collective and reciprocal way, confronting their arguments and seeking appropriate alternatives to problems they face in their daily lives (Gomes and Maia, 2008; Page, 1996; Gastil, 2008; Marques, 2008). This process acquires concreteness through debate or public deliberation through which individuals and groups learn to define problems, to negotiate their interests, to seek solutions that fit a collectivity, to claim rights and achieve a status of a politically autonomous and valued citizen (Bohman, 2009; Habermas, 2004a). Conversely, “in the strategic action, participants assume that everyone decides in a self-centered manner according to the discretion of his/her own interests” (Habermas, 1989, p.8). In this type of instrumental relationship, others are only means or obstacles to the achievement of an action plan drawn by a single individual.

When Habermas emphasizes social circumstances of communication in which agents seek – cooperatively and without any form of coercion or constraint (ideals which ignore social, economic, and political dissimilarities a-





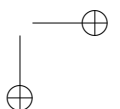
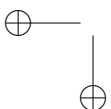
mong the speakers) – to reach an understanding, it seems that no strategic form of action or any self-centered perspective can be a part of that context. However, as he has affirmed, it is a mistake to exclude the strategic dimension of subjects' actions once influencing our interlocutors in an interaction is part of the negotiation process or production of justifications for our arguments. What would be disastrous for discursive interactions that aim to better understand collective problems is that speakers hide their intentions and refuse to justify reasons that are behind their interests, making interaction a game in which the principle of advertising (visibility) is disregarded in favor of rules and hidden objectives.

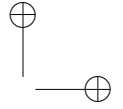
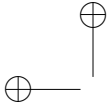
According to Habermas, the discourse or a rational discussion is able to connect private and public, morality and justice, individual interests and collective interests. This would be, in the context of pluralistic societies, the only way to collectively interpret our interests, “in order to discover or create, despite our differences, a common ground” (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 368). Under this bias, we can keep in mind that the discourse is an ideal way to discuss issues of concern to the community by requiring that participants realize their counterparts not as obstacles to be circumvented for the achievement of particular goals (strategic action), but as partners worthy of respect, understood as autonomous agents with moral capacity to prepare and publicly defend their own positions based on arguments and reasons (Chambers, 1996).

A reflective discussion, according to Habermas, enable us to express our desires, feelings, and needs to recognize which ones belong to the realm of personal discernment and which ones should be shared and understood as belonging to the collective context of justice, rules, and rights.

Some critics of Habermas, especially Thompson (1998) and feminists like Young (2001) and Fraser (1989, 1990) argue that such ideal conditions of discussion generate the understanding that Habermas might be neglecting individual concerns of subjects to universalize what barely could be generalized: parameters of perception of the world constituted by subjective experiences and subjective interests consisting of a particular worldview and a willingness to question and put on the agenda some specific topics and not others.

It is after building the foundation of discourse ethics that Habermas explores in a more recurrent way the issue of collective interests and self-interest in particular. To explain the operation of discourse ethics it is necessary to



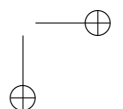
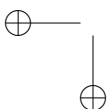


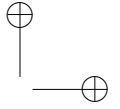
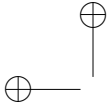
resume the distinction that Habermas proposed between ethical questions of good life and moral issues of justice. The first ones are related to individual and private decisions on actions to be taken and on the formation of particular identities. As for moral issues, they would be linked to the regulation of conflicts between different levels of contradictory interests, considering what is good for all.

On the one hand, ethical issues include the respect we have for ourselves and eventually the respect that others have for us. On the other hand, moral issues would deal with “the symmetric respect that each one demonstrates by the integrity of others” (Habermas, 1989, p. 9). But this symmetric respect can just be built if each individual from his/her own experience imagine himself/herself in another’s place, perceiving the other people as worthy of respect. For this, it is necessary some empathy, we need to see the history of other person as connected to my own history, the other person interests linked to my own interests.

According to Mansbridge (2005), after talking and discussing with other people with whom we have differences of interests, we can understand the price for obtaining what is good for them, the practical constraints of their wishes, possible solutions for their dilemmas and what they appreciate more deeply. In such cases, conflict and search for understanding are intertwined. As we will see later, the denial of the presence of self-interest in the process of discussion on issues of collective interest can often prevent the formation of connections of empathy, solidarity, and mutual respect.

Given this situation, ethics and moral meet themselves when the consideration on what is good for all requires that we understand what others consider “good.” In this respect, Habermas firstly asserts that ethics is not guided by “a self-centered limitation regarding individual preferences, but it provides a reference to a life history that is always linked to intersubjectively shared traditions and ways of life” (2004a, p. 40). The argumentative evaluation of moral issues always remains connected to the personal perspective (which is determined by my self-understanding). It depends, then, on the capacity of subjects to approach their particular life histories to the life histories of others with whom they share a common symbolic and cultural scenery (Habermas, 1989). That is, individual interests are placed on the background of culture and life world in order to originate “generalizable interests” potentially shareable by all.





Discourse (or discussion) ethics aims to promote inclusive discursive procedures so that all those potentially affected by an issue could express their needs and interests in order to reach a common point of view. In other words, it is based on the maxim (inspired by the categorical principle of Kant) that laws and rules can only be valid in a moral sense when they are freely accepted by all participants in the discourse in order to reflect a generalizable interest (Habermas, 2004a).

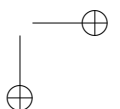
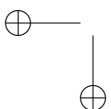
It is important to highlight that procedures of generalization of perspectives and needs do not require the elimination of specificities or the forgetting of ethical problem of living well, but they mention the discourse as a transformative moral process that allows us an approximation with the universe of “other person”, allowing the emergence of new links and new interests. Under this bias, participants in a dialogue do not let aside their private situations and desires to follow a universal and shared point of view. They simply move from a position that focuses on their personal needs towards an attitude of recognition of demands of other people. In this interpretation, these demands are generalizable once they “can be recognized without violating rights of others or subject them to domination” (Young, 1990, p. 107).

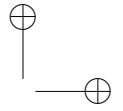
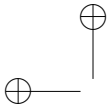
The major problem is that, in general, the search for a unit in preferences can lead to both suppression of singular experiments regarding the affirmation and prevalence of dominant interests (Fraser, 1990; Young, 2001). And none of these consequences favor the transformation of points of view; rather they promote their reification.

### **When is a private interest important for a public debate?**

In situations of deadlock and dissension, both collective and private interests need to be brought up in deliberative procedures rather than being entirely ignored. In these circumstances, it is necessary to incorporate the private interest to the debate, since its cancellation in favor of a “we” or a collective interest prevents participants of clarifying their interests (Fraser, 1990).

Mansbridge et al. (2010) believe that the public expression of private interests to be negotiated bring positive contributions to the deliberative process, expanding the possibilities of understanding between interlocutors. Firstly,



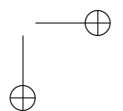
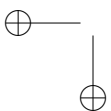


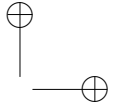
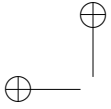
for the participants of a deliberation could know what is good for them, they need to consider which interests each one brings to the debate, reflecting together on their preferences, values, and interests. Thus, in deliberative situations that combine common interests and conflicts of interest, a first step to be taken would be to impel participants to talk with themselves, trying to understand their own interests. As stated by Mansbridge (2005), members of subordinated groups need to develop ideas and counter-hegemonic understandings of their interests. This process only occurs when these members find a space for deliberation that could be free of sanctions and that allows questioning and challenging the dominant view. In general, people need this kind of interaction to examine each other and find what they believe to be their “real” interests. Even in a deliberation that seeks to establish a consensus on common good, the exploration and clarification of personal interests should be taken into consideration.

Women, for example, have been socialized in order to put interests of others always ahead of their own interests, and this affects the way they interpret their own interests. The articulation of self-interest has a legitimate role in democratic deliberation, particularly in discussions of distributive justice. A legitimate self-determination should include the criterion to help citizens to understand better their interests, being those interests forged either aiming at the common good or not (Mansbridge, 2009, p. 229).

Under this bias, the inclusion of personal interest in the deliberative process introduces pieces of information that facilitate the attainment of reasonable solutions, involves a diversity of opinions and goals, generates the clarification and processing of preferences, and also reveal that apparent differences can hide the defense of a same concern regarding common good. In this process of clarification, participants of deliberation should be able to “explore and question what they really want and what is good and right for them, as for others, in a way that it does not suppress the interests of this reflection” (Mansbridge et al., 2010, p. 73). In this way, conflict and collective reflection on interests of each one can produce both self-understanding and mutual understanding. Without it, it is possible that what is defined as a common good, an objective of all communicative action, is imposed by those that hold higher influence power.

Therefore, we consider a mistake to exclude the self-interest of interactional processes on behalf of ideal of impartiality that can cause more harm





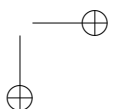
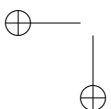
than help the understanding between interlocutors (Marques, 2009, 2011). Impartiality is revealed as an extremely restrictive criterion for deliberative processes, preventing the construction of a nuanced understanding of specificities of social context and the particular needs that people want to express. The ideal of fairness reflects the ethical attempt of the habermasian discourse to reach a moral standpoint, that is, a view that starts from individual horizons of subjects to achieve an expanded horizon. But as pointed out by Young (1990, p. 100), “the construction of a neutral point of view is accomplished through the abstraction of the concrete particularity of the subject at issue.”

If the ethics of communication is based on the expanding of individual ethical horizons considering issues that pertain to what is good for everyone, it is necessary to seek ways to reconcile interests and particular needs, which emerge in partial public scopes of interaction of groups and individuals with concerns related to those that integrate current societies that are highly complex, pluralistic, and differentiated.

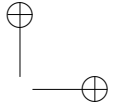
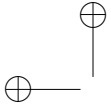
## Final Considerations

The ethical dimension of communication is commonly associated with the operation of strategic media devices and the performance of their employees in front of the constraint imposed by powers associated with the Market and the State. While we have to take into account the several ambiguities and inequalities present in the operating modes of the media and their professionals, it is also necessary to consider that an ethics of communication encompasses rules, norms, and values that regulate interaction practices in the everyday life. Thus, the ethics of communication is not restricted to practices that implement and renew the imperatives of performativity and effectiveness of the media, but we need to take into account “the mutual linguistic understanding: communication organized from the language, by which individuals socially constitute themselves as subjects and common life becomes possible” (Esteves, 2003, p. 146).

We saw that although we can discuss an ethics of language use in Bourdieu, what stands out in the reflections of this author is a research about practical conditions of language use within the possibilities provided in advance by the field and the *habitus* in which subjects in interaction are located. For







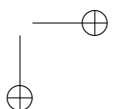
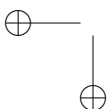
Bourdieu, the subject acts and uses language in accordance with strategies that do not contradict the logic of the field, and its action intends to achieve the higher symbolic profit, in an attempt to reaffirm limits and principles that guide his/her choices. Thus, individuals constituted within a field act for an interest (which is not personal, but presented as personal) to accumulate symbolic capital and achieve success.

There are numerous discrepancies between the approaches of Habermas and Bourdieu. Broadly speaking, while the discourse ethics erases inequities on behalf of an ideal community of communication, studies of Bourdieu seek to bring to the center of reflection social differences and multiple tensions which mark the production of social discourses. If, for Habermas, what guarantees the validity of discourses and utterances is the public exchange of reasons among individuals located on the same cultural background and value, for Bourdieu rules of the field, as previously defined and rooted in the actions of individuals, are able to determine this validity beforehand. The table below synthesizes the main differences between both approaches:

Despite these asymmetries noted, it is necessary to seek ways to reconcile interests and particular needs which emerge in interaction situations of groups and individuals with concerns related to those that integrate the highly complex, pluralistic, and differentiated societies of today. All interaction situations are arranged around interests of interlocutors, whether established in social spaces that are constrained to predefined rules or in situations where rules are not defined until the moment of the interaction itself. The interest of agents is not incompatible with an ethic of discussion, nor is something only related to the strategic action of interaction partners. It is an integral part of the building of a communicative moment and the condition of mutual understanding: if there is not interest, there is not participation in the debate.

An ethics of communication needs to take into account that the discursive arenas in which we participate are located in a broad social context permeated by structural relations of domination and subordination. Moreover, such an ethics can not ignore that subjects act both in accordance with rules aimed at fairness (requiring a brief suspension of differences and domination modes) and according to procedures considered as legitimate and valued by a given system of orientation.

Then, it is essential to bear in mind that the ethics of communication is constituted when we analyze the interlocutory situation in all its dimensions:



	<b>Habermas</b>	<b>Bourdieu</b>
Ethics	Ethics is present in rational discussion oriented to understanding.	Ethics is part of the <i>habitus</i> embodied by the agent in a particular field.
Pragmatics/Uses of language	Communicative action is characterized as a relationship between interlocutors equally able to use reason.	Possibilities for use of words are linked to the position of an agent in the field. There is no equality in language use.
Interests involved in the discourse	Interests of participants are clear in the discourse and they are inserted in the rational discourse aiming at the discussion towards understanding and the formulation of a generalizable interest.	Interests are not explicit. Sometimes they are unknown of participants because they are not understood as an "interest" - the participants themselves.
Validity of discourse	Free and rational use of language aiming at the validity of a discourse; the pretension of validity of discourse is established as a premise by interlocutors.	The validity of a discourse is given by its inter pares legitimacy. Each field in its dynamic redefines continually "legitimate" and "marginal" discourses.
Ethics of Communication/Discussion/Discourse	Ethics in communication is linked to the equal possibility of participation of people interested in discussion.	Ethics in communication is the appropriateness of actions of a communicator regarding procedures defined as "ethical" by the field.

from discursive exchange to the constitution of agonistic and unequal space of production of dialogue, access to language and distribution of linguistic roles among subjects.

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