

According to McCarthy, Habermas holds that "the obligations immanent to speech acts can be met at two levels: immediately in the context of interaction—through recourse to experiential certainty [in the case of constatives], through indicating the relevant normative background [in the case of regulatives], or through the assurance of what is evident to oneself [in the case of expressives]—or mediately, either in theoretical or practical discourse [in the cases of constatives and regulatives respectively], or in a sequence of consistent action [in the case of expressives]" (286).

My question is whether this isn't still further evidence of the possibility of distinguishing and of the need to distinguish between the two senses in which "theory," like "reason," can be understood. Already at the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis, the obligations one assumes in making or implying claims to validity can be met "immediately" because even at that level there is theory as well as practice. On the other hand, one has to discharge one's obligations "mediately," insofar as one has to move from the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis to the secondary level of critical reflection in order to meet them.

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