

JÜRGEN HABERMAS AND KWASI WIREDU: REFLECTIONS ON THE CONSENSUS

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Abstract: This article aims to confront two philosophers (one, European, the other, African) so as to elucidate on the category "consensus". To the thinking of both, it is fundamental issue. In Habermas, this importance is highlighted, starting from reflections on his theory of communicative action; with respect to Wiredu, a member of the Akan ethnic group, the highlight is made from discussions on the research of this philosopher together to the Ashantis, who cultivate consensus as a value. The survey found that there are convergences and divergences between the two thinkers in the way each one deals with the "consensus" as a category and a central concept in their philosophical development.

Keywords: Ashanti; consensus; *ubuntu* philosophy; democracy.

Resumo: Este artigo tem por objetivo confrontar dois filósofos (um, europeu; o outro, africano) no que se refere à categoria "consenso". Para o pensamento de ambos, ela é peça fundamental. Aqui, em Habermas, esta importância é destacada, a partir de reflexões sobre sua teoria do agir comunicativo; no que toca a Wiredu, membro do povo Akan, o destaque é feito a partir de discussões sobre as pesquisas desse filósofo junto aos Ashantis, que cultivam o consenso como um valor. A pesquisa constatou que há convergências e divergências entre os dois pensadores na maneira de cada um lidar com o "consenso".

Palavras-chave: Ashanti; consenso; filosofia *ubuntu*; democracia.

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Introduction

In the nineteenth century, in an environment marked by the attempt by the European colonizer to deny full humanity status to the South Saharan Negro, the question arises as to the existence or not of an African philosophy. In 1945, the Belgian Franciscan missionary Placide Tempels presented his work *Philosophie bantoue* to the public, defending the thesis that there is indeed an authentic philosophical thought in the peoples of southern Sahara.

Today, the philosophical production of this immense region of Africa is something consolidated, rich in quantity and quality. Many are prominent philosophers inside and outside of the continent. One of these thinkers, with an internationally consolidated intellectual work, is Kwasi Wiredu². Like Habermas, he gives the category "consensus" a place of prominence in the whole of his work, in other words, we are talking about a key category for both.

However, these are two figures whose life histories present profound differences. These divergences do not in any way prevent the possibility of a dialogue between the thought elaborated by each one of them. On the contrary, these differences can only contribute to the enrichment of this dialogue. After all, they are two distinct perspectives fueled by two worldviews characterized by significant distances, but that do not impede dialogue.

In this research, the approach of the Habermas's ideas will be guided by his theory of communicative action that is anchored in the thesis that human rationality lies in the very structure of speech. According to him, this communicative reason has the capacity to achieve human emancipation. Regarding the approach of the Ghanaian philosopher's thought, we point out that it occurred from the studies of Wiredu that have been carried out for years on the consensual experience lived by the Ashanti people who inhabit much of Ghana.

² He was born in 1931 in Kumasi (Ghana). Studied at Oxford. There wrote the thesis *Knowledge, Truth, and Reason*. Back in his country, he returns to his former university, University of Ghana, where he worked for 23 years as Head of Department and Professor. His works include: *Philosophy and an African Culture* (1980, Cambridge University Press), *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (1996, Indiana University Press), *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical* (1992, Council for Research in Values and Philosophy) and *A Companion to African Philosophy* (2004, Blackwell). Since 1987, he teaches at the University of South Florida, and has been Visiting Professor at Calf University, Ibadan and Duke Universities, among others.

1. Habermas's theory of communicative action

In his intellectual journey, Jürgen Habermas will realize a paradigm shift. He will leave aside the idea of a reason that proceeded essentially through self-reflection and will work with the notion that reason is essentially communicative. Reason, according to him, resides in the act of speech, characteristic of every human person. This communicative reason desires the achievement of consensus among the people involved in a discussion, in a debate, in which all those involved are invited to raise and defend their validity claims. Thus it has the task of emancipating humanity. The concept of communicative reason is fundamental for the elaboration of the theory of Habermasian modernity.

Our author defends the thesis, according to which, modernity is, in fact, a project not yet realized. This is what we find in his work, published in 1980, entitled *Die Moderne, ein unvollendetes Projekt*. In his defense of the rationalistic project of modernity, it can be said that it is inserted the confrontation with Heidegger, with French post-structuralism, with Rorty's relativistic pragmatism and with ethical reflection and, more generally, confrontation with contemporary thought, hermeneutics, analytical philosophy and Marxism.

The phase of the history of philosophy that opens with the crisis of Hegelianism is, according to Habermas, that of post-metaphysical thought³, whose main mark is the historization of reason, which refuses to associate rationality with characteristics such as purity, unity and immutability. Classical (Greek matrix) ontology and philosophy of consciousness are the products of a metaphysical conception of reason.

The Hegelian notion of absolute knowledge is the last episode of the Western metaphysical adventure: the extreme attempt to keep united absolute reason and history, immutability and movement. Contemporary philosophy breaks with this paradigm. It is essentially historicist, renounces self-sufficient reason, and reveals its relations with the non-purely rational: praxis, existence, body, language, tradition. The linguistic turn of philosophy is part of this context.

This epochal change of philosophical horizon puts in contemporary thought an important question: the relation with modernity and with its normative content. The rejection of metaphysics and its ultimate expression, the philosophy of the subject, knows in

³ On this, check out the work of the German philosopher *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze* (1988).

contemporary thought a variant which, according to Habermas, leads to Nietzsche and which totally identifies modernity with the centrality of the subject.

The rejection of subjectivism is followed by the rejection of modernity itself and its normative content. In *O discurso filosófico da modernidade: Doze lições* (2002a) [Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen (1985)], our author presents the concept of modernity elaborated by Hegel (2002a: 35-36) and recalls that this concept, as Hegel understood it, continued to be accepted until Max Weber. The question to be posed by Habermas is whether this Hegelian concept really no longer holds true, or whether, on the contrary, it is still valid.

But it must be explained that this validity occurs no longer through a reason centered on the monological subject of the philosophy of consciousness. On the contrary, it will be maintained through a dialogical reason centered on intersubjectivity. This inspiration is given to him by young Hegel. He had found a way, but he refused to tread it, namely: communication. This points to "[...] uma intersubjetividade ileisa que, de início, o jovem Hegel tivera em mente como totalidade ética" (2002^a, p. 468)⁴. This will lead us to two concepts valuable to Habermas' philosophy in general and to his theory of communicative action, in particular: *communicative action* and the *world of life*.

As for the communicative action, it is worth remembering that from the 70's his thinking takes a linguistic turn. This appears, above all, with respect to the structure of rationality. All this will lead to his theory of communicative action. This theory, on the one hand, is linked to the theory of rationality elaborated by it, insofar as the latter leads to a communicative reason and a universal pragmatics; on the other hand, is related to a theory of social action, which according to Habermas, should allow us to deal with issues such as Weber's social rationalization, using new ways.

However, it is worth remembering that the notion of communicative rationality besides being of a sociological nature is also of a philosophical nature. The idea of communicative reason is, in Habermas, at the center of a philosophy that wants to be universalistic, anti-ethical and post-metaphysical. Philosophy must, for him, assume the role of guardian of rationality, bringing to light the structural characteristics of rationality, which, by the way, are found in the very structure of speech that people use in everyday life to communicate.

⁴ "[...] an unharmed intersubjectivity which, at first, the young Hegel had in mind as an ethical totality".

Thus, the horizon, in which his thought wants to situate itself, is the linguistic turn of the contemporary philosophy, realized by the analytical philosophy and the hermeneutic philosophy. Language, therefore, replaces consciousness as the central concept of philosophical knowledge. Transposing all this to the field of human action, we will have the language as soil on which the philosopher of Dürseldorf will raise his ethical thinking.

He considers the world of life as composed of three spheres. The first is the sphere of culture; the second, that of personality and, finally, the sphere of society.

At the beginning of the chapter "O conteúdo normativo da modernidade" (2002a, p. 467-509) [Der normative Gehalt der Moderne (1985, p. 390-425)] in *O discurso filosófico da modernidade* [Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen (1985)], Habermas lists three items that represent the normative content of modernity, such as self-awareness, self-determination.

Further on page 479 he writes that "[...] a consciência de si retorna na forma de uma cultura tornada reflexiva; a autodeterminação, em valores e normas generalizados, e a autorrealização, na individuação progressiva dos sujeitos socializados"⁵. In relation to these values and to these norms, it is Habermas himself who says that they must be grounded discursively (2002a, p. 478), without pressure⁶. The normative content of modernity, consisting of ideas such as universal validity of knowledge and norms, of equality and reciprocal respect, comes directly from the structures related to culture, society and the personality of the communicative obligations that originate in the everyday world of life.

In communicative intersubjectivity, each one assumes the position of an individual "I" and raises universal pretensions of validity (truth⁷, justice, and sincerity), establishes a parity with a "You". From this performative structure, it is possible to extract the values that constitute the constructive side of modernity.

Ethics for him is inherent in communication and eminently communicative. For him, the actions in which the participants coordinate their action plans together are communicative.

⁵ "[...] self-consciousness returns in the form of a culture made reflexive; self-determination, in generalized values and norms, and self-realization, in the progressive individuation of socialized subjects".

⁶ For him, the only valid pressure is that of the best argument, used in a discourse in which all stakeholders should be able to participate. For Bourdieu and Passeron, on the contrary, dominant groups reproduce in their subaltern classes their worldview (their values, their norms etc.) according to the interests of the same groups holding the command, through the pedagogical action; not having to resort to external pressure and, in particular, physical coercion (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1996, p. 76).

⁷ Habermas's position on truth reminds us of the words of *Educar en la era planetária*: "[...] não se nega a verdade, mas o caminho da verdade é uma busca sem fim [... truth is not denied, but the way of truth is an endless search]" (MORIN; CIVRANA; MOTTA 2002, p. 24).

As it appears several times in his work *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (1981), ethics is a type of acting primarily oriented to the act of understanding.

Ethical understanding, in turn, comes through the discursive satisfaction of claims to validity and a reference to a world of moral agents. According to the author, it is on these bases that the agreement on which the access to the game-ethics itself will be sustained will be possible, which will constantly seek to include in discourse those who are on the margins of public space, that is, outside the process of decision-making⁸.

In Habermas's project, the Principle of Universalization obliges each one to realize a universal exchange of roles, to which he points out the value of enterprise realized by individuals in a real moral argument of which they participate as free and equal, and in the course of which not only register and add to their preferences, but freely pursue the goal of an intersubjective understanding. The impartiality of the standards will be checked when they, visibly incorporating a common interest to all the people involved, can count on universal consensus.

The Principle of Universalization must therefore be understood as a rule of argument which makes possible an agreement in practical discourses, provided that material questions can be regulated in the joint interests of all the subjects involved. It implies the universal communicative competence of subjects in providing and confronting good arguments when it comes to resolving everyday conflicts of interest and flattening dissent. This principle is therefore the rule of an inter-human action that aims at an agreement based on reasons, not derived from the strategic calculation of selfish individuals. Our philosopher makes use of the modern and illuminist idea of the equality of respect of the subjects who participate in the discourse, and of the right to equal consideration of their understanding of the good. For him, Mead takes a theoretical turn in Kant's argument: The rationale for the validity of a norm is that it can be accepted with good reasons by all concerned. Only thus understood, that is, as something that is founded on reasons for all concerned, universality can be considered criterion of validity of the moral norm.

In Habermas's view, Mead substitutes, therefore, the categorical imperative for the discursive formation of the will. The universalization that the categorical imperative required of the isolated subject is now carried out communicatively by intersubjectivity. Since the idea

⁸ Check out "A reconciliação por meio do uso público da razão" [Reconciliation through the public use of reason], In *A inclusão do outro: Estudos de teoria política* (HABERMAS, 2002b, p. 61-68) "Versöhnung durch öffentlichen Vernunftgebrauch" [Die Einbeziehung des Anderen: Studien zur politischen Theorie, (1996, p. 65-94)]. Regarding the meaning of public space along the evolution of the thought of Jürgen Habermas, it will be of great benefit the reading of Felipe Carreira da Silva *Espaço público em Habermas* (2002).

of a rationally motivated understanding is already installed in the structure of language, this is not a mere requirement of practical reason, but is inserted in the reproduction of social life.

As social integration ceases to be articulated on a religious basis, and becomes increasingly articulated on communicative bases, the ideal of the unlimited community of communication is increasingly effective in the empirical communicative social reality. Universalist principles of law and discursive formation of the will are imposed in the democratic process where the foundation of legitimacy is referred to pretensions of validity installed in language.

Habermas, starting from the dialectic theory-praxis (of base Hegeliano-Marxian), starts orienting his discourse towards the terrain of the paradigms of the communicative action, going through the theme of the ideal linguistic situation, with the idea that in the own structure of the language is immanent the *telos* of understanding.

From the phase of self-reflection of consciousness about the nature of the interests that guide the present knowledge in his work *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (1968), we come to the announcement of the abandonment of the paradigm of consciousness and the cognoscent subject in favor of the paradigm of intersubjectivity communicated in the world of life, as witness his famous work *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (1981).

2. The category “consensus” in Wiredu

As previously stated, in 1945, Placide Tempels published the book *Philosophie bantoue*. This work represents a milestone for the study of African philosophy. He was one of the first Europeans to recognize an African people the privilege of a developed philosophical system.

In this work, the Belgian thinker tries to show that there is no more terrible punishment for a "muntu" (person) than to be excluded from his community.

The concept "bantu" was coined by the German anthropologist and philologist Wilhelm Heinrich Immanuel Bleek in 1851 as an attempt to bring together different languages of southern Sahara, which had a certain degree of kinship. Over time, the term "bantu" has acquired racial connotations. Boers and the British came to use the term to designate South African blacks.

The discrimination suffered by black Africans represented the denial of their humanity. Here it is worth mentioning that in Bantu languages, the word *Ubuntu* has several meanings, among which "humanity" or "the human". So, living or having *Ubuntu* means,

grosso modo, being human to others. According to Kashindi, “Ser humano, vivir la humanidad es, en el horizonte africano bantú, ser generoso, compasivo, solidario... lo cual siempre remite a una alteridade”⁹ (2013, p. 214). There is a proverb from the Xhosan people that says: "each individual humanity expresses itself ideally in relation to others."

The sense that Desmond Tutu gives the term *Ubuntu* comes from there. For the religious activist, *Ubuntu* means, above all, "I am, because we are". Thus, it should be pointed out that Kashindi recalls: “De todas esas traducciones de *Ubuntu* se desprende una visión comunitarista que asienta a la comunidad humana como base del ser, del existir y de la realización de todos los seres humanos”¹⁰ (2013, p. 213). In this way, it becomes clear that the "I am" only materializes with "We are" and intersubjectivity appears as a fundamental category to understand these societies. In this sense Kashindi affirms: “Es, entonces, en ese reconocimiento de la importancia del otro, en ese vivir con el otro, en esa convivencia social, donde la vivencia de *Ubuntu* se extiende y se entiende como una peculiaridad del humanismo que nos atrevemos a llamar “africano.””¹¹ (2013, p. 217).

Undoubtedly, *Ubuntu* experience abounds in African societies located south of the Sahara. This experience is a fundamental element in the constitution of the worldview of Bantu peoples, thus influencing various spheres of these societies, including politics. In this, *Ubuntu* is used to emphasize the need of the union between all and the search for consensus in the decision making, assuming a humanist ethic. Kashindi states:

Ubuntu como humanismo africano bantú, entonces, alude a la convivencia con ese otro (ser humano y otros seres). Vivir con ese otro, respetarlo en su diferencia y reconociendo lo valioso que es para mi existencia, para mi vida, me hace más humano, ya que me hace respetuoso, solidario, responsable, compasivo y generoso no sólo con mis semejantes seres humanos, sino también con la naturaleza. Esto es vivir *Ubuntu*, esto es ser humano.¹² (2013, p. 222)

⁹ “To be human, to live the humanity means, in the African Bantu horizon, to be generous, compassionate, solidary [...] which always refers to an otherness.”

¹⁰ "From all translations of this word, a communitarian vision emerges which places the human community as the basis of the being, existence and achievement of all human beings".

¹¹ “It is then in this recognition of the importance of the other, in this living with the other, in this social coexistence, in which the experience of *Ubuntu* extends and is understood as a peculiarity of humanism that we dare call "African“.

¹² “*Ubuntu* as African Bantu humanism, then, alludes to coexistence with this other (human being and other beings). Living with this other, respecting it in its difference and recognizing how valuable it is for my existence, for my life, makes me more human, since it makes me respectful, supportive, responsible, compassionate and generous not only with my fellow beings humans, but also with nature. This is living *Ubuntu*, this is human being.”

The value given by the African tradition to consensus as a way to solve problems in the political field attracted the attention of Ghanaian philosopher Ghana Kwasi Wiredu. In this sense, specifically, the case of the Ashantis¹³ peoples, who inhabit about forty percent of the territory of Ghana¹⁴, has been the object of their philosophical interest.

The lineage is the basic political unit among the Ashantis. Because they are a matrilineal group, this unit consists of all the people in a town or village having a common female ancestor, which, as a rule, is quite a considerable body of persons. Every such unit has a head, and every such head is automatically a member of the council which is the governing body of the town or village. The qualifications for lineage headship are seniority in age, wisdom, a sense of civic responsibility and logical persuasiveness. All these qualities are often united in the most senior, but non-senile, member of the lineage. In that case, election is almost routine. But where these qualities do not seem to converge in one person, election may entail prolonged and painstaking consultations and discussions aimed at consensus. There is never an act of formal voting. Indeed, there is no longstanding word for "voting" in the language of the Ashantis. (WIREDU, 2000)

The councils, among the Ashantis, have great importance as a political instrument. This stems from the fact that these people hold the belief that the interests of all members of society are the same. Following this line, Wiredu highlights an Ashantis maxim: "There is no problem of human relations that cannot be resolved by dialogue." For them, the ability to dialogue is considered a fundamental requirement for the person to assume a prestigious position in society.

According to these people, consensus is something that surpasses the decision of the majority. In this sense, says the Ghanaian philosopher: "I would like to emphasize that the pursuit of consensus was a deliberate effort to go beyond decision by majority opinion. It is easier to secure majority agreement than to achieve consensus." (WIREDU, 2000)

For them, everyone in the community has the right to be represented on the board, but also on matters of interest to him and / or his group. Thus, it is necessary to seek to build a consensus. But will it always be possible to reach a consensus in collective disputes?

¹³ The Ashanti Empire was a pre-colonial state of West Africa created by the Akan. The Ashanti monarchy continues as one of the traditionally protected traditional subnational states in the territory of Ghana. In that country, the Ashantis are an important ethnic group. The ancient Ashantis migrated from the northwest region of the Niger River after the fall of the Ghana Empire in the 13th century. The political organization Akan centered on several clans, each headed by a supreme chief or Amanhene.

¹⁴ Concerning political power in an Akan context, it is worth conferring on Umberto Pellechia's thesis *Il potere dell'abbondanza: Costruzione sociale dell'autorità in un contesto akan (Gana)*. According to the author, this work represents an ethnographic and theoretical path. On the one hand, the research wanted to produce a phenomenology of the institutes of political power in the region inhabited by the Akans; on the other hand, its aim is to show political authority as a social constitution.

According to the Ashantis the answer is affirmative, at least in principle (WIREDU, 2000). Therefore, it can be said that its system is a consensual democracy.

3. Habermas and Wiredu: approximations

According to Uchenna Osigwe, democracy walks with consensus and, therefore, democratic principles run less risk where consensus practices are well developed (2006, p. 105). For this philosopher it is important to know whether democracy is possible for all peoples. Osigwe speaks of two types of democracy: "democratic principle" and "electoral democracy". The first is the one adopted by the Igbos of Nigeria¹⁵. Its main characteristic is that it is based on respect for each human being, for animals and for nature as a whole.

For Osigwe, the second type of democracy will only be authentic if it is the result of the democratic principle. In order to prove his thesis, he will make a genealogy of consensus as a value. According to him, consensus is the ultimate value in politics. In this, according to Jürgen Habermas and Kwasi Wiredu.

For Wiredu, consensus is important because all human problems can be solved through dialogue (WIREDU, 2009, p. 97). Forster formulates some categories to better understand *Ubuntu*: talks about objectivity, interobjectivity, subjectivity and intersubjectivity (KASHINDI, 2013, p. 215). This is *Ubuntu* which, in this perspective, rests on the principle of relational ontology, because the "I" cannot be understood, is not realized, not revealed, does not exist, but through "We" (KASHINDI, 2013, p. 217).

Concerning the reflections on the consensus, we can say that in the African philosopher of Kumasi as in the German of Dürseldorf, the consensus is understood from ideas such as post-metaphysical thought, the need to include the other, democracy as a value, commitment to the emancipation of the person, the struggle for the defense of human rights, for example. These, then, are points in common to these two thinkers.

With regard to the differences between them, as regards the consensus held by both, we can cite an essential divergence that contaminates, so to speak, the reflections of the two. It is the way of understanding modern societies and traditional societies. Habermas considers

¹⁵ Osigwe notes that "Wiredu parle du royaume Ashanti, au Ghana actuel. C'est une monarchie qui est différente du système igbo, lequel se veut davantage «républicain». Toutefois, comme c'est le cas pour plusieurs systèmes africains, il existe beaucoup de ressemblances entre les deux systèmes." (OSIGWE, 2006, p. 117) ["Wiredu speaks of the Ashanti kingdom in present-day Ghana. It is a monarchy that is different from the Igbo system, which has the advantage of being "republican". However, as is the case for many African systems, there are many similarities between the two systems."].

open society (modern Western rational society) as dialogic and closed society (archaic societies) as monological (PADMANABHAN, 2005, p. 31). This view is not shared by Wiredu. The African thinker defends the thesis that, like the modern, also traditional societies lived or experienced the experience of the dialogue.

Another striking distinction between the two philosophers refers to the existence(or not) of critical-rational capacity of traditional societies. According to the German thinker, archaic\traditional societies are devoid of critical-rational understanding (PADMANABHAN, 2005, p. 32). Such an affirmation is vehemently contested by the African, a scholar of these societies, who considers them endowed with critical rationality. Wiredu sees no reason to question such capacity except the disqualifying and nihilistic gaze of the colonizer.

In Padmanabhan's view, "The emancipatory intent that Habermas assumes is, however, as irrational as the archaic understanding that he examines. [...] Thus, the emancipatory intent envisioned by Habermas does not stand scrutiny in a democracy" (PADMANABHAN, 2005, p. 32). Moreover, for him, Habermas's argumentation process is applicable only in a highly specialized discursive environment and his communicative discourse is symmetrical. But, he continues, the German philosopher does not adequately address issues concerning an asymmetric discourse in which participants belong to all sectors of society (PADMANABHAN, 2005, p. 32-33). Here, we may say, we have one more divergence between the two philosophers. Wiredu has an argumentation process that is fully suited to common discursive environments. His reflections about the need to seek consensus are directed directly to asymmetric discursive situations reaching participants from the most varied sectors of society. In this regard, as was said earlier, to understand in depth the consensus, the African philosopher studies the discursive procedure of the Ashantis peoples.

According to Deves-Valdés, Boele presents three different types of discourses about democracy: the liberal, which corresponds to the liberationist criterion and, finally, "[...]o que reproduz os critérios básicos do modelo identitário: a democratização é a prova cabal do consenso africano na situação contemporânea"¹⁶ (DEVES-VALDÉS, 2016, p. 158). It is with this that Wiredu is more attuned. Consider Your Reflections

[...]sobre a relação entre democracia e governo por consenso, na esteira de sua afirmação sobre a existência de sociedades que funcionam sem Estado e de formas de decisão de políticas que não implicam partidos, assinalando

¹⁶ "which reproduces the basic criteria of the identity model: democratization is the full proof of the African consensus in the contemporary situation".

a necessidade de inspirar-se na sociedade civil, que oferece modelos importantes nesse sentido.¹⁷ (2016, p. 158)

For Wiredu, philosophy should be an elucidation of our way of communicating. According to him, we must learn to think in our own language (DIAGNE, 2000, p. 52). He defends the idea that a new philosophy is urgently needed in Africa. He argues that this philosophy must be critical and reconstructive. In this way, it can contribute to the human development of the African continent. Thus, there is an important role to be played by dialogue and the search for consensus.

Wiredu's mother language is akan. In it, the fact that one can deceive oneself does not follow that he can never be right. For the Akans, the skeptic is not the one who is moved by doubt about the possibility of knowledge as certainty that bears infallibility; on the contrary, “Costui/costei è solo un *akinyegyefo*, alla lettera uno che discute, in altri termini chi sia in grado di mettere in discussione o di contestare le credenze ricevute.”¹⁸ (WIREDU, 2009, p. 100)

Final considerations

Habermas himself makes the point that it is necessary to take into account the fact that, in his reflections on the theory of communicative action and the search for consensus related to it, it is based on the European context. I decided to start this topic by remembering this, because although it is undeniable that there is in the reflections on consensus elaborated by this philosopher a universalizable nucleus, capable of transcending space and time, when it comes to understanding what to do in order to reach consensus be effectively achieved in non-European contexts, this caveat does not fail to point to a limitation.

In this case, therefore, to ask the help of a philosopher for whom, as for Habermas, to understand the mechanisms of the consensus represents something of the first order in the whole of his work, but, in a different way, does it in a non-European perspective, can be quite beneficial.

Wiredu responds to these requirements. His reflections linked to the *Ubuntu* philosophy, understood as Bantu African humanism, make reference to the coexistence with

¹⁷ “[...] on the relationship between democracy and government by consensus, in the wake of his assertion about the existence of stateless societies and non-party political decision-making, noting the need to draw inspiration from society civil society, which offers important models in this regard.”

¹⁸ “He is only an *akinyegyefo*, literally, someone who argues, in other words, that it is in a position to question or challenge the beliefs received”.

the alter, be it human or not. Living with this other, respecting it in its difference, recognizing its importance for my existence, for my life, will make me more human (KASHINDI, 2013, p. 222).

For Brazil, whose deep historical-cultural relations with Africa go beyond the fact that both regions are peripheral and marked by conflict, taking the thought of a philosopher of the stature of Kwasi Wiredu seriously is something that can have positive and profound consequences. In this sense, we can highlight the words of Devés-Valdés, who, citing Sékou Touré, draws attention to the importance that the community has in African peoples: “a vida coletiva e a solidariedade social “dão aos costumes africanos um fundo de humanismo” pelo qual um indivíduo na África “não pode considerar a vida fora da família, aldeia ou clã”¹⁹ (2016, p. 128). According to Touré, Africa is communist.

¹⁹ "collective life and social solidarity give African customs a background of humanism" which an individual in Africa "cannot consider life outside the family, village or clan".

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