RELIGION, RATIONALITY, AND LANGUAGE

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF JÜRGEN HABERMAS' THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Ali Mesbah

Faculty of Religious Studies
McGill University, Montreal
December 2002

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in philosophy of religion
©Ali Mesbah, 2002

National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

Acquisisitons et
services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Canadä

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Author: Ali Mesbah

Title of Thesis: Religion, Rationality, and Language: A Critical Analysis of Jürgen
                    Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action

Department: Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Jürgen Habermas is a second-generation social philosopher of the Frankfurt school, the birthplace of critical theory. He suggests that modernity is a project of substituting rationality for religion. In his analysis, such a succession is the result of a process of social evolution, in which each developmental stage has its basic concepts and modes of understanding subjective, objective, and social worlds. For him, the salient feature of rationality consists of differentiation between various validity claims of truth, truthfulness, and sincerity which are indistinguishable in religious language. The rationalization of religion, hence, progresses in terms of a differentiation between validity claims, a decentration of human understanding, the disenchantment of the world, and the linguistification of the sacred. Habermas proposes a universal pragmatics in which two modes of language use are separated: instrumental-strategic, and communicative. He thinks that the failure of the enlightenment movement to replace religion with reason stems from its preoccupation with instrumental reason and language use, dispensing with communicative rationality; and the remedy lies in communicative rationality.

Critically analyzing Habermas' theory of communicative action, this study examines Habermas' basic idea of substituting communicative rationality for religion in the light of his critique of Max Weber and of instrumental reason. Ontological, epistemological, methodological, and conceptual presuppositions in his argument are discussed and evaluated.

Résumé

Jürgen Habermas est un philosophe social de la seconde génération de l'École de Frankfort, lieu de naissance de la théorie critique. Il suggère que la modernité est un projet de substitution de la rationalité en replacement de la religion. Dans son analyse, une telle succession est le résultat de processus de l'évolution sociale dans laquelle chaque stade de développement a ses concepts et ses modes de compréhension des mondes objectif, subjectif, et social. Pour lui, la caractéristique de la rationalité réside dans la différenciation entre les caractères de vérité, de véracité et de sincérité qui sont impossibles à distinguer dans le langage religieux. La rationalisation de la religion progresse par conséquent grâce à une différenciation des critères de validité, à une décentration de la compréhension humaine, au désenchantement du monde, et à la 'linguistification' du sacré. Habermas propose une pragmatique universelle dans laquelle deux modes d'utilisation du langage sont séparés: le mode stratégique instrumental, et le mode communicatif. Il pense que l'échec des Lumières relatif au remplacement de la religion par la raison résulte d'une insistance sur la raison instrumentale et un usage du langage qui ignore la rationalité communicative, et que le remède réside dans la rationalité communicative.

Tout en proposant une analyse critique de la théorie de l'action communicative de Habermas, cette étude examine l'idée principale, qui vise à substituer la rationalité communicative à la religion, à la lumière de sa critique de Max Weber et aussi de la raison instrumentale. Les présupposés ontologique, épistémologique, méthodologique et conceptuel de l'argumentation de Habermas sont abordés et évalués.

In the name of Allah,

The Compassionate, The Merciful

To *Imām Mahdi* who Revives Religion, Nurtures Rationality, and Speaks the

Language of Truth.   May Allah hasten his reappearance!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS FOR WRITINGS BY HABERMAS[1]

KHI   *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 1978

PMT   *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, 1996

TCA I   *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, 1984

TCA II   *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, 1984

---

[1] See Bibliography—Primary Sources, pp. 272-74.

INTRODUCTION

Habermas is a social philosopher in the tradition of neo-Marxism. He is neither a philosopher of religion nor a philosopher of language. James Marsh admits that "Habermas often does not have much to say about religion, and when he does, his discussion is mostly critical."[1]

Jürgen Habermas was born in 1929 in Düsseldorf, Germany, and spent his childhood in Gummersbach, a small town "some 35 miles east of Cologne."[2] From 1949 to 1954, he "studied philosophy, history, psychology and German literature at the University of Göttingen, and then in Zurich and Bonn, where he obtained his doctorate in 1954 with a rather traditional dissertation on Schelling."[3] "His most important teachers in philosophy were Erich Rothacker, a theorist of the human sciences who followed Dilthey, and Oskar Becker, a student of Husserl's belonging to Heidegger's generation."[4] In 1953, he wrote an article on Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*.[5] In this critical commentary, he "accused Heidegger of using the history of Being to sanction the elimination of the idea of equality of all before God, the idea of individual freedom, and the idea of providing a practical and rationalist corrective to technological progress."

---

[1] James L. Marsh, "The Religious Significance of Habermas," *Faith and Philosophy* 10/4 (October 1993): 521.

[2] William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK & Stanford, CA: Polity Press & Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 2.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), p. 538.

[5] J. Habermas, "Mit Heidegger gegen Heidegger denken," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 25, 1935); also published in J. Habermas, *Philosophisch-politische Profile.* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 254 p.; pp. 67-75.

Later in an interview, however, he ascribed this criticism to his naiveté at that time.[6] Such naiveté might indicate two different things: either that he was wrong in his critique and Heidegger was right, or that he was wrong in expecting great philosophers not to make great mistakes. Habermas' other work on Heidegger is his article in 1959 on Heidegger's seventieth birthday[7]; he juxtaposes Heidegger's ontology with two types of positivism: Heidegger would represent "a conservative apositivism" which perceives itself, "alongside conservative positivism," as springing from Enlightenment. [8]

The publication of two books introduced the young Habermas to a new generation of philosophers. *From Hegel to Nietzsche* by Karl Löwith opened a window to the world of "young Hegelians and the young Marx,"[9] and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*[10] by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno inspired Habermas in its use of Marx for analyzing contemporary society. His interest in employing classical thinkers in his analysis of present-day situations took another turn when he discovered Freud in a celebration of Freud's centenary in 1956: Marcuse's closing lecture of the event on "The Idea of Progress in the Light of Psychoanalysis", introduced Habermas to Critical Theory.[11]

1. Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School

Critical Theory is associated with the Frankfurt School, the first of its kind dedicated to the study of Marxism in the West. 'Frankfurt School' refers to *the Frankfurt*

---

[6] R. Wiggershaus, Ibid., p. 539.

[7] J. Habermas, "Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence," *Inquiry* 13 (1970): 360-75.

[8] R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 592.

[9] Ibid., p. 540.

[10] M. Horkheimer & T. W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947).

[11] Cf. R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 544.

Institute for Social Research established at Frankfurt University in 1923 with money provided by Felix Weil, the son of a wealthy German-Argentinean wheat merchant.[12] At this time, when "the socialist movement in the Weimar Republic was sharply split between a bolshevik Communist Party and democratic Socialist Party, [...] the leading theorists of the so-called 'Frankfurt School' returned to the foundations of Marx's thought and thought to re-examine the philosophical heritage from which it arose."[13] From 1930 on, the Institute, directed by Max Horkheimer, developed a peculiar identity as representing a humanistic version of Marxism along with Critical Theory. Among the prominent members of the Institute were Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Friedrich Pollock, Walter Benjamin, Leo Löwenthal, Henryk Grossmann, and Eric Fromm, some of whom fled Nazi Germany and set up the Institute in 1934 in its new location at Columbia University in New York City. It was, however, re-established at Frankfurt University in 1949 under the directorship of Horkheimer.[14] When the Institute resumed its work in August 1950 at Frankfurt University, Adorno was the assistant director; in 1955 Adorno became co-director, and he became director of the Institute in 1958.[14b]

Through the Hungarian Marxist, György Lukács, "the Frankfurt School joins Weber's analysis of rationalization and disenchantment—of 'rationalization as the loss of freedom' and of 'rationalization as the loss of meaning'—with Marx's analysis of the commodity form."[15] In this way, Lukács becomes a channel for transmuting "German idealism, with important modifications by the sociologist Georg Simmel, into 'critical

---

[12] Helmut Gumnior & Rudolf Ringguth, *Max Horkheimer in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* [Rowohlts Monographien, 208]. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973, 150 p.; pp. 28-35.

[13] John B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study of the Thoughts of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 75.

[14] Cf. Peter M. R. Stirk, *Max Horkheimer: A New Interpretation*, XI+266 p. (Lanham, MD: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992), p. 178.

[14b] See "Epilogue" of Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950* (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown Co., 1973, xvi + 382 p.), pp. 286-87.

[15] Michael Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Peter Hamilton [Key Sociologists] (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 33.

theory'."[16] On the other hand, he makes it possible for the Frankfurt School to bring Marx and Weber together in a many-sided study of reification, false consciousness, and ideology in late capitalism—in arts (Benjamin), in popular culture (Adorno), in economics (Pollock), in psychology and the family (Adorno, Fromm), and in science (Marcuse).[17]

In 1956, Habermas became Adorno's assistant at the Institute.[18] In 1961, he submitted his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* as a Habilitation thesis. It "was rejected by Adorno and supported instead by Wolfgang Abendroth in Marburg."[19] By the end of the 1960s, he was preoccupied with positivism and scientism. At the suggestion of his friend Karl-Otto Apel,[20] Habermas broadened his view and studied pragmatism, among other domains of philosophy. It was, however, an unusual practice among German intellectuals to the extent that he recalls himself feeling like "some kind of foreigner"[21] among his fellow students. He tackled issues "such as the nature of modern democracy, the 'scientization' of politics and other spheres of life, the critique of positivism, and the outline of an alternative philosophy of science and alternative methodological orientations for the social sciences."[22] In 1963, Habermas published "Analytic Theory of Science and Dialectics: a Supplement to the Controversy between

---

[16] W. Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, p. 5.

[17] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, p. 33.

[18] W. Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, p. 2.

[19] Ibid., p. 2

[20] R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 571.

[21] Axel Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas," *Telos* 49 (Fall 1981); quoted in M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, p. 14.

[22] W. Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, p. 37.

Popper and Adorno"[23] in the Festschrift for Adorno's sixtieth birthday. He approached the issue from another perspective than Adorno, and contrasted Popper's suggestion of founding scientific objectivity on critical, rational consideration with a 'comprehensive rationality' based on free communication between individuals. He regarded that change as "the condition of possibility for such an idea to be realized if the model of the advancement of knowledge in the natural sciences were abandoned."[24]

In the summer of 1965, Habermas gave his inaugural lecture, as Horkheimer's successor, on 'Knowledge and Human Interests'. An outline of a 'critical philosophy of science', this lecture was an indication of Habermas' adoption of the ideals of the Frankfurt School in his treatment of positivism.[25] In 1971, after "the University of Munich refused him an honorary professorship,"[26] Habermas shared, "along with the natural scientist Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker,"[27] the directorship of the Max Planck Institute for Research on Living Conditions in the Scientific and Technological World, in Starnberg, near Munich. There, he pursued his research program on an interdisciplinary social theory. It was a clear attempt to reconsider the thought and practice of such critical theorists as Horkheimer and Adorno. Despite his publication of *Legitimation Crisis* (1973) and *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) during these years, he considers this experience as futile.[28] *Legitimation Crisis* examines how and why strategic

---

[23] J. Habermas, "Analytische Wissenschaftstheorie und Dialektik: Ein Nachtrag zur Kontroverse zwischen Popper und Adorno," in *Zeugnisse: Theodor W. Adorno zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Max Horkheimer (Frankfurt-Main: Europäische Verlags-Anstalt, 1963).

[24] R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 571.

[25] Ibid., p. 575.

[26] Ibid., p. 658.

[27] W. Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, p. 3.

[28] Cf. R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 658.

application of cultural traditions culminates in a divestiture of their power, which "could only be preserved through critical assimilation of the tradition, to the extent that its claims to validity could be proved through discourse."[29]

In 1974, Habermas published in *Telos* the article "On Social Identity." This article may be regarded as the first instance in which Habermas deals directly with religion as a social phenomenon. Here, he takes on an analysis of the evolution of social identity from primitive societies with mythical world images, through the world of the polytheistic religions with a worldview based on religious narratives, to major universal religions with general or universalistic claims to validity, up to the modern era with no apparent worldview and no unifying mechanism that could form identity. He suggests that "[t]hese trends characterize a development in which what is left of universal religions is but the core of universalistic moral systems"[30] and concludes that "philosophy must step in its place."[31] This period of Habermas' intellectual life represents a new direction in his work. He increasingly distances himself from classical philosophy regarding both socio-political questions as reflected in his *Theory and Practice* and epistemological problems as manifested in his *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Instead, he leans "towards a sharper focus on language and communicative action."[32] In 1982 he returns to the University of Frankfurt—the original birthplace of Critical Theory—to the chair in sociology and philosophy. Now a visiting professor at Northwestern University

---

[29] Ibid., p. 643.

[30] J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," *Telos* 19 (Spring 1974): 94.

[31] Ibid., p. 95.

[32] W. Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, p. 38.

(Evanston, Ill.), his teaching focuses on philosophy and religion in the German tradition as well as on multiculturalism and its critics.

2. Habermas and Critical Theory

The problem with social theorists like Lukács, Horkheimer, and Adorno is that their theories are based on the subject-object paradigm. Instead, Habermas suggests reconstructing critical theory on the basis of intersubjectivity, which is coherent with communicative rationality as a "normative standard" of criticism.[33] In order to do so,

> Habermas appropriates major currents of twentieth-century philosophy
> and social theory—speech-act theory and analytic philosophy, classical
> social theory, hermeneutics, phenomenology, developmental psychology,
> systems theory—in order to transform the basic paradigm of social theory
> and to formulate a critical theory adequate to the contemporary world.
> Nevertheless, in the process of appropriation, Habermas adopts many
> presuppositions that are in tension with and, it could be argued, ultimately
> weaken the critical thrust of his theory.[34]

Habermas' "recondite philosophical ruminations,"[35] include abstract concepts and a complex of ideas from across divergent disciplines. He brings about a synthesis of Hegel's notion of historical reason, Max Weber's concept of occidental rationalization, and Marx's idea of historical materialism in order to show the role of political power and

---

[33] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, p. 34.

[34] Moishe Postone, "History and Critical Social Theory," *Contemporary Sociology* 19/2 (March 1990): 171.

[35] Robert Wuthnow, "Sociology and the Pursuit of Rationality," *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 15/2 (March 1986): 194.

economical wealth in the process of social rationalization characteristic of Western Enlightenment and modernity. In contrast to Weber, who saw in the Reformation movement the potential for an analysis of Western rationalism, Habermas' starting point is the Enlightenment itself.

> Like Blumenberg (1983), he believes that the cultural forms of modernity are not reducible to the mere secularized equivalents of tradition, which was the thesis that Weber shared with Carl Schmitt and Karl Löwith. And, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer (1979), he does not see the Enlightenment and the project of modernity only in terms of domination (except strangely in the case of the relationship to nature)."[36]

Habermas is criticized for confining his analysis to Western societies while his conclusions are meant to include all cultures. Gerard Delanty considers this as a symptom of his perception of the Enlightenment as "liberation from the unitarian worldview of premodern tradition and the equation of the new decentered understanding of the world with the spirit of modern Europe."[37]

Besides Enlightenment and Critical Theory, German Idealism, especially the ideas of Hegel, and also Marx are influencing mostly Habermas' epistemology and political-social philosophy. Despite his rejection of the idealist notion of innate ideas, his epistemological commitment to a reasoning subject as the ground for the validation of knowledge and understanding puts him in the idealist camp. However, against the British

---

[36] Gerard Delanty, "Habermas and Occidental Rationalism: The Politics of Identity, Social Learning, and the Cultural Limits of Moral Universalism," *Sociological Theory* 15/1 (March 1997): 37.

[37] G. Delanty, "Habermas and Occidental Rationalism," p. 39.

empiricist tradition with its idea of 'reasons' as particular arguments or inferences, Habermas follows the Hegelian tradition in which "Reason is the creative potentiality, not of the single individual but rather of a collective 'history-making subject' or 'species subject'."[38] Also in his social philosophy, Habermas owes his idea of 'the emancipation from the tyranny of work' to "Hegel's formulation of the master-slave dialectic."[39] French theorists of post-structuralism such as Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari are believed to have the same debt for their formulation of the "emancipation from the tyranny of language."[40] The effect of dialectical reason can also be seen in Habermas' view of history as a dialectical process of rationalization. On the other hand, Habermas believes that critical theorists were trapped in Hegel's negative dialectics, a paradigm too negative to be viewed as the basis for social theory, which "partly accounts for critical theory's near total *lack of any clear (positive) normative standards* for its critique."[41] He also considers the "concepts of totality, of truth, and of theory derived from Hegel as representing too heavy a mortgage on a theory of society which should satisfy empirical claims."[42] In British social and political philosophy, society is conceived as an aggregation of individuals, and therefore the individual enjoys primacy over society. Habermas, contrarily, sides with the German tradition in considering society as "a collective embodiment of knowledge, of reason, and of the

---

[38] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, p. 16.

[39] Roy Boyne and Scott Lash, "Communicative Rationality and Desire," *Telos* 61 (Fall 1984): 52.

[40] Ibid.

[41] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, p. 34.

[42] J. Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," *New Left Review* 151 (1985): 78.

identity of a people [...] Positive (and negative) notions of *the rationalization of society* have their roots in these aspects of the German tradition."[43]

The notion of social rationalization in critical theory is borrowed from Max Weber's analysis of the modern European condition based on purposive rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) as the only way rationality is valued by modernity. Such rationality for Weber did not bring freedom and dignity but imprisoned the modern man in an 'iron cage'. Following this analysis, Horkheimer and Adorno spoke of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, and Habermas thinks that the means-ends rationality is only one dimension of it; the failure of modern Western civilization is not caused by rationality as such, rather it is the result of ignoring the other facets of rationality. The thrust of critical theory consists in the reconstruction of a balanced view of rationality that takes all its dimensions into account.[44] This is why the authors of "Communicative Rationality and Desire" coin the term "Critical Theory II" for Habermas' version of the theory.[45] And yet, the influence of the earlier critical theorists, especially Adorno, can be felt throughout Habermas' attempt to synchronize "scientific and academic developments with social developments."[46] To do that, he radicalizes the specialization of sciences to the point that they might be really aware of their principles and their relation to social reality. "Such self-reflection must reveal 'the hidden practical roots of pure theory'."[47]

---

[43] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, pp. 16-17.

[44] Cf. Thomas McCarthy, "Reflections on Rationalization in the Theory of Communicative Action," *Praxis International* 4/2 (July 1984): 177.

[45] R. Boyne and S. Lash, "Communicative Rationality and Desire," p. 16.

[46] R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 545.

[47] Ibid., p. 546.

For Habermas, the reduction of rationality to instrumental reason is the result of a commitment to the philosophy of consciousness and its dominant subject-object paradigm.[48] Linguistic communication is the new medium through which a comprehensive notion of rationality can be reached. "Wellmer[49] has characterized this transposition of rationality from the domain of subject as the 'linguistic turn' of Critical Theory."[50] Communicative action is logically prior to strategic (instrumental) action and provides a firm basis to measure up and evaluate the development of the rationalization of society. "It is the logic of development of rationality that is immanent to the concept of reason in formal pragmatics that supplies the basis of this strategy."[51]

3. Habermas and Religion

Recently, Habermas has showed more interest in religion. This is quite obvious in his lecture, given in the wake of the September 11th events on *Faith and Knowledge*[52], and the course he is offering this year at Northwestern University on philosophy and religion in the German tradition. He explicitly admits, "as far as I am talking philosophically, I am taking my place outside any religious community. So I am looking from the outside to it."[53] For him as a sociologist and a philosopher, "it is easier to explain religious traditions and their roles from the perspective of an observer than to

---

[48] Cf. J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p. 386.

[49] Albrecht Wellmer, "Kommunikation und Emanzipation: Überlegungen zur sprachanalytischen Wende der kritischen Theorie," in *Theorien des historischen Materialismus*, ed. U. Jaeggi & A. Honneth (Frakfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 465.

[50] Gerhard Wagner and Heinz Zipprian, "Habermas on Power and Rationality," *Sociological Theory* 7/1 (Spring 1989): 103.

[51] Ibid.

[52] J. Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*. Sonderdruck ed. Jan Philipp Reemtsma. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 2001.

[53] Interview with Habermas. Tehran, May 12, 2002.

approach them in a performative stance."[54] Such an approach represents what he calls "*methodical* atheism" which "does not assert anything about the personal self-understanding of the philosophical author."[55]

The sociological approach is not restricted to Habermas' treatment of religion alone. Also in his analysis of language, reason, rationality, and rationalization, Habermas takes a sociological stance different from that of philosophy or theology. One can easily figure this out by comparing his definitions, methodology, and approach with that of analytic philosophy on the same issues, for example.[56] For instance, Donald Jay Rothberg[57] and Thomas G. Walsh[58] do accept Habermas' statement on the collapse of the religious worldview, but they want to salvage the relevance of religious experience in the modern world. David M. Rasmussen[59] criticizes Habermas' sundering of religion from myth as well as his myth/modernity distinction based on Ferdinand de Saussure's rejection of the evolutionary schema in the study of language and its aftershocks in the late Wittgenstein and Claude Lévi-Strauss. William J. Meyer challenges Habermas on the question of metaphysical claims with regard to religion and suggests that he has to "reassess his denial of the metaphysical enterprise by specifically addressing process

---

[54] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within, Transcendence in this World," in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, ed. Don S. Browning and Francis S. Fiorenza (NewYork: Crossroad, 1992), p. 227.

[55] Ibid.

[56] For a survey on the theological responses to Habermas see Edmund Arens, "Theologie nach Habermas: Eine Einführung," in *Habermas und die Theologie: Beiträge zur theologischen Rezeption, Diskussion und Kritik der Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, ed.: E. Arens (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989), pp. 9-38.

[57] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work: Some Remarks on the Relation between Critical Theory and the Phenomenology of Religion," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 11/3 (Summer 1986), pp. 221-43.

[58] T. G. Walsh, "Religion and Communicative Action," *Thought* 62 (March 1987): 111-25.

[59] D. M. Rasmussen, "Communicative Action and Philosophy: Reflections on Habermas' Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 9 (Spring 1980): 3-28.

denial of the metaphysical enterprise by specifically addressing process metaphysics."[60]

James L. Marsh argues that "on four different levels, descriptive-eidetic, hermeneutical, structural, and political,[...]religious belief can enhance" Habermas' theory of communicative action, and he believes that there can be a reciprocity between this theory and religious beliefs.[61] Georges de Schrijver thinks that the problem of theodicy and human suffering offers a common ground to religion and to Habermas' concerns.[62] He argues that religious "narrative, ritual and cult, may, in their expressive character, make a unique and vital contribution to that rational discourse which is occupied with matters of human wholeness,"[63] and he takes the Free Masonic paradigm as a model for a post-traditional religion. Distinguishing between Marxist science, Marxist ideology, and Marxist political strategy, Joseph Kroger[64] adopts Habermas' theory of knowledge, applies it to Liberation Theology, and defends it against charges of being reductive or subversive.

Wolfhart Pannenberg criticizes the implications of Habermas' epistemological stand for theology: "It is undeniable that truth as correspondence depends on (at least the presumption of) an intersubjective consensus about the state of affairs which is an essential part of its objectivity. But it does not follow from this that the correspondence theory of truth can be reduced to a consensus theory of truth, as proposed by Habermas.

---

[60] W. J. Meyer, "Private Faith or Public Religion? An Assessment of Habermas's Changing View of Religion," *The Journal of Religion* 75/3 (July 1995): 372.

[61] J. L. Marsh, "The Religious Significance of Habermas," *Faith and Philosophy* 10/4 (October 1993): 521-38.

[62] G. de Schrijver, "Wholeness in Society: A Contemporary Understanding of the Question of Theodicy, a Critical Appraisal of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action," *Tijdschrift voor de Studie van de Verlichting en van het Vrije Denken* 12 (1984): 377-94.

[63] Ibid., p. 387.

[64] J. Kroger, "Prophetic-Critical and Practical-Strategic Tasks of Theology: Habermas and Liberation Theology," *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 3-20.

between a consensus in truth and a prevailing convention."[65] David Brown refers to similar concerns when he speaks of "a sliding scale of relativism with Habermas at the most objectivist end. [...] There is more to truth than simply human agreement. Not only is there a world independent of that consensus, there is a God independent of that world."[66] Others like Edward Schillebeeckx and Helmut Peukert have accepted Habermas' theory of knowledge, while they have challenged his theory on its failure to take the past generations seriously. Drawing on Johann Baptist Metz, Schillebeeckx suggests that "the past has the possibility of being 'a subversive memory'."[67] In a similar vein, Peukert counts Habermas' theory among the many modern theories that have emerged as unclosed systems and regards its deficiency in its neglect for the past.[68] Anne Fortin-Melkevik draws on the recent rehabilitation of the aesthetic dimension in Habermas' philosophical system in order to work out a new bridge between philosophy and theology.[69] Others such as Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, David Tracy, Helmut Peukert, and Fred Dallmayr in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*[70] have either taken up Habermas' insights and tried to "expand, modify, and challenge them in relating religion and theological reflection to the public realm,"[71] or pointed to the limits of critical theory

---

[65] W. Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 41.

[66] D. Brown, *Continental Philosophy and Modern Theology: An Engagement* (Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 147.

[67] E. Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1981), p. 134.

[68] H. Peukert, *Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), p. 209.

[69] A. Fortin-Melkevik, "Relecture du rapport théologie/philosophie: Le statut du paradigme esthétique dans la théologie postmoderne," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 21/4 (1992): 381-94.

[70] F. Schüssler Fiorenza and Don S. Browning, eds. *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

[71] F. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction: A Critical Reception for a Practical Public Theology," in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, p. 16.

and theological reflection to the public realm,"[71] or pointed to the limits of critical theory and to the dimensions that did not receive adequate treatment within Habermas' theory of communicative action.

Harry Elmer Barnes traces back the creation of the social sciences to the industrial revolution in Europe. As a result of this great event, the foundations of the preceding social system were broken down. To solve "the newly created social problems, [and] to reconstruct the disintegrating social order" a branch of knowledge called social sciences was created.[72] The social sciences as practiced in the West have been criticized from various perspectives. Some have criticized them for depriving social scientists of "comprehending the causes of the problems that beset" their societies due to the process of secularization in the West.[73] Others find theories, problems, and suggestions in the social sciences extraneous to their local cultural settings: "The 1970s also witnessed the call to the indigenization of the social sciences in the Third World as a result of dissatisfaction with what was perceived as irrelevant social scientific theories and methods and faulty paradigms of development."[74] Still another disapproval of the Western social sciences comes from the Marxist tradition that perceives them as based on a bourgeois understanding of society and social relations, and calls for a critical social science. This was the program the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School pursued by establishing The Institute for Social Research.

---

[71] F. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction: A Critical Reception for a Practical Public Theology," in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, p. 16.

[72] H. E. Barnes, *An Introduction to the History of Sociology* (1948), p. 47; quoted in Scott Gordon, *The History and Philosophy of Social Science* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 634.

[73] Syed Farid Alatas, "The Sacralization of the Social Sciences: A Critique of an Emerging Theme in Academic Discourse," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 91 (July-September 1995): 89.

[74] Ibid., p. 89.

4. The Plan of this Study

Habermas belongs to this latter attitude. His convergence and divergence with the founders of the Frankfurt School will be discussed in this study that begins with a chapter on reason and rationality as the cornerstone of Habermas' theory. Different concepts of reason and rationality in philosophy, the social sciences, and the critical theory, and Habermas' interpretation of them will be discussed along with the relation of reason to religion on the one hand, and to practice on the other, followed by a discussion on validity claims and a review on the standards of rationality in chapter 2.

Whereas chapter 3 deals with rationalization and social evolution, two concepts that are central in Habermas' argument on religion and modernity, which makes it necessary to refer to the idea of lifeworld and worldview, chapter 4 deals with the rationalization of worldview. Habermas considers the religious worldview as one of three phases in an evolutionary process after the mythical world image and its distinctive features, and before the modern understanding of the world as the final result of religious rationalization. Rationalization as the linguistification of the sacred leads to chapter 5 on religion and language. After an overview of the history of language research from semantic studies to universal pragmatics, a discussion of Habermas' notion of communicative language and communicative rationality sets the stage for an inquiry into Habermas' developmental approach and his characterization of religious language in terms of validity claims. Chapter six is the concluding chapter. Habermas' basic idea of substituting religion with communicative rationality is examined in the light of his critique of Max Weber and of instrumental reason. Ontological, epistemological,

methodological, and conceptual presuppositions in his argument are discussed and evaluated.

CHAPTER 1

REASON AND RATIONALITY

Hans-Georg Gadamer calls philosophy "a science of reason."[1] As the "unique excellence of man" reason "occurs in manifold forms" and manifests itself in different forms of language and art.[2] Discourse on rationality takes a variety of forms depending on the approach one takes to the issue and the context in which the investigation takes place. Reason is the center of philosophical inquiry into all matters human ever since the dawn of human thought.

Reason and rationality mean different things for philosophers, natural scientists, or social scientists. Without explaining what we mean by the term, we would not be able to effectively communicate and arrive at any conclusion. Disagreements about rational action, Richard B. Brandt suggests, "persist in part because participants do not mean the same thing by [what] 'is a rational action,' and partly because they do not or may not mean anything definite at all."[3] Defining a single term requires reference to the various contexts in which the term is used. In an interview, Jürgen Habermas suggests "that one should always explicate the conceptual structure used to criticize particulars to avoid falling into trouble when one's viewpoint, criteria, or context is challenged."[4] Whether there is a core meaning

---

[1] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Historical Transformations of Reason," in *Rationality To-Day/ La rationalité aujourd'hui*, ed. Théodore F. Geraets (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[3] R. B. Brandt, "The Concept of Rational Action," in *Rationality in Action: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 398.

[4] Axel Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas," *Telos* 49 (Fall 1981): 11.

of rationality underlying different uses of the term rationality is a matter of debate between those interested in "the sociology of scientific knowledge" and in the "rational choice model," for they "proceed in contrary ways on this central issue."[5] In this study, I focus on how reason and rationality are understood in philosophy and the social sciences, mainly with reference to Habermas' works. This, however, does not necessarily mean preferring one definition to another. As John Rawls has it, none of the interpretations for rationality can be preferred as the best one.[6]

1.1 Rationality in Philosophy

Aristotle defines "human being" as "a being that has logos", which has been translated in Latin as "rational animal." Reason is usually contrasted with imagination, illusion, and emotion, and rationality involves following rigorous rules of assessment and judgment, and it culminates in necessary and universal results. Rational rules can be applied to practical problem solving as well as to theoretical situations, and hence, the notions of theoretical and practical reason emerge. And yet, "[e]ven the knowledge of nature (physics in the classical sense) had its role to play with respect to praxis (to ethics and politics)."[7]

According to Habermas, reason in Western philosophy receives its central feature in the Enlightenment. He traces the origins of the concept of reason as opposed to dogmatism and as related to human action-orientation back to the eighteenth century. He draws on Paul-Henri d'Holbach (1723-89), the leading French materialist, atheist, and Encyclopedist who systematized and radicalized Diderot's naturalism, and inspired Ludwig Feuerbach, David Friedrich Strauss, Karl Marx, and

---

[5] Stephen Turner, "Rationality Today," *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 191.

[6] J. Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory," *Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980): 529.

[7] J. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 263.

Friedrich Nietzsche in their criticism of religion in general and Christianity in particular. In *System of Nature* (1770) d'Holbach contends that acquiring knowledge of nature is tantamount to knowing how to lead a happy life. This kind of approach is based on the assumption that to know the causal relations between natural phenomena and events is closely related to the knowledge of action-orientations providing guidance for happiness and welfare.[8]

Radical Enlightenment, or as Habermas calls it, the positivistic Enlightenment "has reduced reason to a potential for knowledge that has lost, together with its critical sting, its commitment, its moral decisiveness, and has been separated from such a decision as from an alien element."[9] Kant, however, denies nature the responsibility for causal laws of phenomena as well as for normative laws of action-orientation, and reason then takes on a synthetic nature that is not determined solely by the objective data provided through the senses, but depends on the inherent categories of mind as well.[10] For Kant, rationality means grounding one's knowledge and practice in reason rather than in sensibility and experience; "hence rational knowledge and knowledge *a priori* are one and the same."[11] Habermas holds that "Kant had carried out his critique of reason from reason's own perspective[...]which places anything metaphysical off limits."[12] Calling Kant's concept of reason "an exclusive reason,"[13] he criticizes this project of the critique of reason for its emphasis

---

[8] Cf. J. Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Praxis in Our Scientific Civilization," in *Theory and Practice* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 258.

[9] Ibid., p. 258.

[10] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929), B102-B109.

[11] I. Kant, *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (London, New York, and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898), p. 97.

[12] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990), p. 302.

[13] Ibid.

on the "principle of subjectivity", identifying Kant with "Descartes, the Utilitarians, and even Max Weber as equal participants in the philosophy of subjective consciousness."[14] According to Habermas, reason in its Kantian vision is "reduced to the subjective faculty of understanding and purposive activity [that] corresponds to the image of an exclusive reason,"[15] "alienated from concrete social practices."[16] This is unacceptable for Habermas who seeks to reconcile theory and practice. Mikael Stenmark also criticizes, though from another perspective, the "[t]raditional theory of rationality" for proposing "standards of rationality [that] seem to address the ideal cognizers without any consideration of their general usefulness and applicability;...[they] are assumed to be epistemically independent of the actual agents and the actual practices the agents are involved in."[17]

By the end of the eighteenth century, a similar idea was developed by Johann G. Fichte who substituted his own *Doctrine of Science* [Wissenschaftslehre] for d'Holbach's *System of Nature*, made practical reason autonomous and defined nature in a way "that it became the material of action produced by freedom."[18] The positivist reason was not capable of resisting and overcoming this type of idealist dogmatism because dogmatism, according to Fichte, is the fixation of consciousness at the level of immaturity and puts one's "faith in things for their own sake."[19] Reason, for Fichte,

---

[14] Tracy B. Strong and Frank Andreas Sposito, "Habermas's Significant Other," in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 268.

[15] J. Habermas, "A Reply to My Critics," in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1982), p. 305.

[16] T. B. Strong & F. A. Sposito, "Habermas's Significant Other," p. 268. It is worth noting that this article criticizes Habermas for putting forward a new orientation for philosophy.

[17] M. Stenmark, *Rationality in Science, Religion, and Everyday Life: A Critical Evaluation of Four Models of Rationality* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 355.

[18] J. Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," p. 259.

[19] J. G. Fichte, *Werke*, ed. Medicus (Darmstatt: 1962), vol. 3, p. 17; quoted in J. Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," p. 259.

has a close affinity with—or is indeed based on—volition. For him, the historical evolution of the human species is the result of a process of self-formation. Those who choose to freely accept the interest of reason as their own, surmount dogmatism. Reason and moral decision are united again, and dogmatism is juxtaposed with idealism. "The ultimate basis of the difference between the idealist and the dogmatist is thus the difference of interest."[20]

Habermas believes that "Marx—after Holbach and Fichte representing the third generation of committed spokesmen for enlightenment—showed how the inner content of reason and the partisanship of thought against dogmatism also arose historically from a self-formative process."[21] Instead of Fichte's emphasis on a subject's decision and interest, Marx emphasizes the socio-historical conditions shaping such interests, namely, "alienated labor, denied satisfactions, and suppressed freedom."[22] Accordingly, an interest in rationality is as much the product of an historical evolution as its dogmatic (ideological) counterpart. Marx claims objectivity for reason as the critique of ideology by appealing to historical materialism in order "to bring about the unity of life-processes as the rationality that is immanent in social conditions."[23]

1.1.1 Reason and Religion

Habermas' analysis of the Enlightenment movement in Europe points to an underlying motif that manifests itself in a variety of philosophies and theories. This underlying idea is the search for an alternative to religion. According to Habermas,

---

[20] Ibid.

[21] J. Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," p. 261.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 262.

the Enlightenment thinkers had come to the conclusion that Christianity, as the most rational religion of the West, is not capable of surviving the challenges of the modern age. They sought, therefore, a man-made substitute for religion and the first candidate was reason, the motto of modernity and the Enlightenment. Hegel had "no doubt that the rational is the real and the real the rational."[24] His conception of reason and rationality, however, differs dramatically from that of Kant and Fichte.

According to Habermas, Hegel also perceived an "antithesis between faith and knowledge [and] his aim was to burst the philosophy of subjectivity from within."[25] Hegel identifies two mistakes on the part of the people of religion and the people of reason. The mistake of the Enlightenment thinkers, including Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi, was that they identified understanding or reflection with reason, and the mistake of Protestant Orthodoxy, on the other hand, was their equation of faith with positive religion. By positive religion he refers to an authority-based religion with no respect for human beings in its moral teachings.[26] Hegel is also critical of the Enlightenment idea of a religion of reason for its being abstract, private, and cut off from public life.[27] He regards religion as evolving and becoming more rational by the passage of time in the history of humankind. "Still, reason initially appears as the negation of religion, not its fulfillment. Religion and Enlightenment grow apart."[28] Habermas sympathizes with Hegel and thinks,

---

[24] Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, 9 vols.; vol. 7 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1963), p. 22.

[25] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 23.

[26] G. W. F. Hegel, "Fragmente über Volksreligion und Christentum" (1783-1794), in the recent edition of his works, G. W. F. Hegel, *Surhkamp-Werkausgabe*, Bd. 1, p. 103; quoted in J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 25.

[27] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 26.

[28] David Ingram, *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 80.

Enlightenment can only make good its deficits by radicalized Enlightenment; this is why Hegel and his disciples had to place their hope in a dialectic of Enlightenment in which reason was validated as an equivalent for the unifying power of religion. They worked out concepts of reason that were supposed to fulfill such a program[...]Hegel conceived of reason as the reconciling self-knowledge of an absolute spirit; the Hegelian Left, as the liberating appropriation of productively externalized, but withheld, essential powers; the Hegelian Right, as the rememorative compensation for the pain of inevitable diremptions.[29]

What all these interpretations of reason have in common is their attempt to substitute human reason for "the unifying power of religion and overcome the diremptions of modernity by means of its own driving forces."[30] Habermas refers to these three attempts as endeavors "to tailor the concept of reason to the program of an intrinsic dialectic of enlightenment."[31]

Nietzsche represents a turning point in the post-Enlightenment thought with long lasting influences on later philosophers. He deems it futile to seek still another critique of reason to come up with a suitable alternative to religion. Nietzsche, according to Habermas, "analyzes the fruitlessness of cultural tradition uncoupled from action and shoved into the sphere of interiority."[32] Instead of still another immanent critique of the subject-centered reason, he gives up reforming the notion of reason and the dialectic of Enlightenment altogether. Radicalizing the Enlightenment's historical reason, Nietzsche demands philosophy to understand reason as a historical phenomenon. In this way, he turns reason against itself and calls

---

[29] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 84.

[30] Ibid., p. 85.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

it "the imperative of the new spirit of the 'new age' if it really does contain something new, mighty, original and a promise of life."[33] As an alternative to the too-rational religious-metaphysical worldviews on the one hand, and "reason as manifested in the form of a religion of culture"[34] on the other, Nietzsche takes refuge in myth. Since he celebrates modernity's time consciousness and does not believe in the reactionary attitude of "Back to the origins", he thinks of art and aesthetics as the medium in which mythology will manifest itself in a modern age and, therefore, "will decenter modern consciousness and open it to archaic experiences."[35] Such a recourse to myth as the other of reason puts Nietzsche on a par with Romanticism.

According to Habermas, Nietzsche follows two strategies in the face of nihilism that results from the absence of religion: "an artistic contemplation of the world carried out with scholarly tools but in an antimetaphysical, antiromantic, pessimistic, and skeptical attitude [and] on the other hand [...] a critique of metaphysics that digs up the roots of metaphysical thought without, however, itself giving up philosophy."[36] "As Habermas points out, this type of radical critique of rationality necessarily ends in an aporetic situation: the critique undercuts the ground on which the proof of its validity must be based."[37]

Habermas interprets Martin Heidegger as taking over the first agenda of Nietzsche "while avoiding the aporias of a self-enclosed critique of reason,"[38] by

---

[33] F. Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 24-25; quoted in J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 86.

[34] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 86.

[35] Ibid., p. 88.

[36] Ibid., pp. 96-97.

[37] Peter U. Hohendahl, "Habermas' Philosophical Discourse of Modernity," *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought* 69 (Fall 1986): 53.

[38] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 97.

giving the place that art and Dionysian myth take up in Nietzsche to philosophy; "he wants to describe the emergence and overcoming of nihilism as the beginning and end of metaphysics."[39] Reason, in this reading of Heidegger, is only exercised through forgetting and expelling. His critique of reason is understood as "all-pervasive but empty of content—away from autonomy and toward a self-surrender to Being."[40]

Georges Bataille, also inspired by Nietzsche, believes that experiences and sensations happen even before any subject exists; the subject is a product of experience. Bataille's preoccupation includes investigating the possibility of overcoming the realm of reason by transcending the usual way of understanding individuality. He refers to what transcends the boundaries of science and rationality as "Sacred". In his notion of general economy, the Sacred acquires a social character, and Bataille inquires into various instances of individual and social moments of life and behavior that surpass rationality and escapes rational explanation. "The Sacred in general removes things from the realm of mere usefulness and thus elevates them above time and its laws of necessity and causality. It not only leaves the realm of reason and discourse behind (which is part of what makes it so difficult for Bataille to discuss it), but actually destroys them (at least temporarily) as well."[41] In this effort by Bataille, Habermas sees another example of sifting through human potentials "that could heal the discontinuity or rift between the rationally disciplined world of work and the outlawed other of reason."[42]

Habermas considers Bataille as the godfather of French neo-conservatism when he refers to their commonality suggesting that to instrumental reason they

---

[39] Ibid.. p. 98.

[40] Ibid., p. 99.

[41] G. Bataille, *Théorie de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p. 43.

[42] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 99-100.

juxtapose "a principle only accessible through evocation, be it will to power or sovereignty, Being or the Dionysian force of the poetical. In France this line leads from Georges Bataille via Michel Foucault to Jacques Derrida."[43] Benjamin Noys disagrees with Habermas' reading of Bataille and says: "What Bataille develops in his alternative notion of communication is a thought that is not dependent on the subject not on being simply outside reason or modernity. It suggests an opening of Habermas's criticisms to a different mode of thought that resists his characterization of 'postmodernism'."[44] According to Noys, Bataille uses "communicative unreason" as "an opening that traverses reason and unreason, subjectivity and intersubjectivity [it] is an opening of reason, putting it into a communication that it cannot regulate and control a priori, it is in that event of communicative unreason that reason can think itself."[45]

1.1.2 Reason and Practice

Regarding reason "as a guide to practice"[46] is characteristic of eighteenth-century philosophical thought. For the Enlightenment, the relation was drawn between critical reason and practice. Later, however, in the context of positivist philosophy theoretical reason was transformed into the neutral application of scientific method and practical reason into the prognostic employment of empirical knowledge. As a result, the nexus between the two was perceived "as the purposive-rational application

---

[43] J. Habermas, "Modernity--An Incomplete Project," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), p. 14.

[44] B. Noys, "Communicative Unreason: Bataille and Habermas," *Theory, Culture & Society: Explorations in Critical Social Science* 14/1 (February 1997): 61.

[45] Ibid., p. 73.

[46] Thomas A. McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: The MIT Press, 1978), p. 5.

of techniques assured by empirical science."[47]

The unity of theoretical (speculative) and practical reason becomes a matter of dispute between David Hume and Kant in the late 18th century. Hume's instrumentalism detaches reason from action, and allows alone to mediate. His famous idea of reason as the slave of passions is meant to indicate that reason is only capable of providing factual information, which in turn, motivates passions to carry on the appropriate course of action. Kant, on the other hand, by differentiating between the realm of facts and that of values, suggests an autonomous realm of practical reason, motivating action directly by providing normative principles. Habermas goes a step further and considers rationality as the object domain of philosophy especially in what he calls the "postmetaphysical" era, by which he refers to "the logical empiricists in the Vienna Circle,...the early Husserl, the young Horkheimer, and later the structuralists" (PMT 6). Contrary to Kant and the philosophy of subjective consciousness, Habermas embeds reason "in language and the shared practices of communicative actors."[48]

Habermas attributes to "analytic philosophy, inspired by the Vienna Circle as well as by Peirce and Dewey," the explication of the positivistic self-understanding of the empirical sciences "in terms of the philosophy of science, especially in the work of Carnap, Popper, and Morris."[49] The outcome of such a positivist attitude toward science is a complete separation of critical from natural knowledge, "both deprived of their power of orientation for action."[50] According to Habermas, positive science has two functions: affirmative and critical. Its affirmative achievement consists in

---

[47] J. Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," p. 254.

[48] T. B. Strong & F. Sposito, "Habermas's Significant Other," p. 268.

[49] J. Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," p. 263.

[50] Ibid.

explanation, prediction, and technical control over natural and social objects. By monopolizing the realm of action-guidance, the critical achievement of modern science materializes in the form of "a positivistically circumscribed critique of ideology [...] directed against dogmatism in a new guise."[51] All relations between knowledge and action other than that of purposive-rational is rendered dogmatic "under the slogan of ethical neutrality and value-freedom."[52]

Values on the other hand, whose function is to guide action, are deemed irrational because "practical questions (in our sense) cannot be discussed cogently and in the final instance must be simply decided upon, one way or another [...] practical questions are not 'capable of truth' [wahrheitsfähig]."[53] As a result, "[e]very single value appears as a meaningless agglomeration of meaning, stamped solely with the stigma of irrationality, so that the priority of one value over the other [...] simply cannot be rationally justified."[54] This means that in a progressively rationalized society, the only sphere subject to rationalization is the domain of technical control. At the same time, the implementation of such rational techniques is based on irrational choices of values and high-level goals. The settlement of value judgment is left to a subjective philosophy detached from objective reality and real contexts of life, immersed in irrational hypotheses, and incapable of rationally establishing its subject matter. Positivism in the domain of values can but lead to and produce decisionism.

Habermas takes the positivist understanding of reason and rationality to be responsible for a return to myth and a recourse to mythology as "the ultimate

---

[51] Ibid., p. 264.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p. 265.

[54] Ibid.

desperate attempt to secure socially binding precommitments on practical questions."[55] An analytic-empirical understanding of rationality is self-contradictory and not value-neutral either, since it normatively presupposes "that behaving in accordance with technical recommendations is not only desirable, but also rational."[56] Therefore, rationality in its narrowly positivistic definition as efficiency and economy becomes a value in itself that should be pursued and accomplished. The irony is that values, according to the positivist criteria, are not rational and cannot be rationally determined; the only advantage technical rationality as a value has over other values is that it is an implicit value disguised under the banner of objectivity. In other words, technology becomes autonomous and "dictates a value system—namely, its own—to the domains of praxis it has usurped—and all in the name of value freedom."[57]

1.2 Rationality in the Social Sciences

Social scientists also have dealt extensively with the notion of rationality, its empirical expressions and social manifestations. Rationality occupies a major place in sociology and other social sciences as well. The idea of "the rational man" as a presupposition exemplifies the import of this concept and the emphasis these disciplines put on rationality in their analyses as well as its implications "in the social life and institutional arrangements of modern societies [which has] a clear normative aspect."[58] Nikolai Genov expresses this idea when he writes, "rationality is of key importance for the explanation and the practical regulation of social action and social

---

[55] Ibid., p. 267.

[56] Ibid., p. 269.

[57] Ibid., p. 270.

[58] Barry Hindess, "Rationality and Modern Society," *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 220 & 225.

systems."[59] The "institutionalized reason", as Arthur L. Stinchcombe calls it, "includes as a large part of its substantive content the norms of rationality in the narrow sense, a body of doctrine about how to maximize returns or minimize costs."[60]

The social sciences provide a different approach to the problematic of reason and rationality that affects all aspects of the discussion. Unlike philosophy mostly concerned with employing the faculty of reason towards unveiling facts, understanding factual propositions, and determining codes of individual actions, social sciences are concerned with utilizing reason for understanding and regulating meaningful social behavior, or choosing the right means towards social goals. Max Weber's definition of social action as a meaningful human conduct carried out "with reference to the behavior of others and [...] oriented toward the behavior of those others through its course"[61] makes the difference between the two conceptions of reason clear. On a practical level, John Kekes suggests that problem solving be regarded as the primary "criterion of rationality."[62] Rationality in this sense requires the problem solving activity to be "prepared and carried out consciously and effectively at all stages of problem solving and in all its analytical dimensions."[63] Therefore, the two basic tasks of theoretical and practical reason are preserved, while their object domains have shifted from the private and individual to the public and social.

---

[59] N. Genov, "Towards a Multidimensional Concept of Rationality: The Sociological Perspective," *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 210.

[60] A. L. Stinchcombe, "Reason and Rationality," *Sociological Theory* 4 (Fall 1986): 165.

[61] Wiese-Becker, *Systematic Sociology* (1932), part IV, pp. 56-57, quoted in Howard Becker and Harry Elmer Barnes, *Social Thought from Lore to Science*; vol. 3 (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1961), p. 849.

[62] J. Kekes, "Towards a Theory of Rationality," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3 (1973): 285.

[63] N. Genov, "Towards a Multidimensional Concept of Rationality," pp. 207-8.

1.2.1 Max Weber

The term 'reason' is used in the social sciences also in contrast to *cause* and denotes the subjective meaning an agent gives to his or her action, which corresponds to motives. Causes, on the other hand, are meant to represent external objective circumstances that affect behavior and enable scientists to infer general laws that provide them with the necessary means for prediction.[64] Rational, causal, and interpretive explanations construe the three major approaches to social research.[65] This may explain why Peter Winch translates Weber's use of the term *Grund* as "reason" in Weber's following statement: "'Motive' means a meaningful configuration of circumstances which, to the agent or observer, appears as a meaningful 'reason' (*Grund*) of the behaviour in question."[66] For Weber, a "motive is a complex of subjective meaning which seems to the actor himself or to the observer an adequate ground for the conduct in question."[67] Here, reason or ground point to a subjective intention and conscious purpose, guiding an agent to behave in a certain way in society. Rational action is contrasted with "reactive behavior" in which the actor responds, without pondering the motives and consequences, to the external social forces in a reactionary way. The social sciences explain human social conduct in the light of either its causes or its reasons. Weber refers to such an equivocality when he writes:

---

[64] Vernon Pratt, *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 73.

[65] Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 4 & 11.

[66] P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London, UK: Routledge, 1994), p. 45.

[67] Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, trans. H. P. Secher (New York, NY: The Citadel Press, 1968), p. 11.

'Rationalism' may mean very different things. It means one thing if we think of the kind of rationalization the systematic thinker performs on the image of the world: an increasing theoretical mastery of reality by means of increasingly precise and abstract concepts. Rationalism means another thing if we think of the methodical attainment of a definitely given and practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means. These types of rationalism are very different, in spite of the fact that ultimately they belong inseparately together.[68]

Karl-Otto Apel also acknowledges the fact that, at least in the Western tradition, "the terms 'ratio', 'rationality', or 'reason' can be used in very different senses and with very different valuations," some of which may actually contradict each other.[69] As is the case with other equivocal terms, different meanings of reason are prone to confusion in both use and understanding. "To dismiss rigorous definitions of rationality," Maria Carmela Agodi writes, "is to dismiss the understanding of complex situations. It is to dismiss rationality as a *possible* meaning of social action."[70] One rarely comes across a social scientist who defines and elaborates on terminology, even when it is equivocal. The result is a combination of fallacy and confusion. Nikolai Genov speaks of "more than a dozen meanings of 'rational' [...] in the works of Max Weber alone."[71] He distinguishes between individual and collective, autonomous and instrumental, present type and prospective, cognitive and practical, procedural and

---

[68] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 293.

[69] K.-O. Apel, "Types of Rationality Today: the Continuum of Reason between Science and Ethics," in *Rationality To-Day/ La Rationalité Aujourd'hui*, ed. Theodore F. Geraets (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979), p. 307.

[70] M. C. Agodi, "Rational Fools or Foolish Rationalism?: Bringing Meaning Back in," *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 203.

[71] N. Genov, "Towards a Multidimensional Concept of Rationality," p. 206.

resultative, synchronic and diachronic, subjective and objective rationality, and also between rationality for a specific actor and rationality for the situation.[72]

For instance, consider the following passage from Winch: "[t]he terms 'reason' and 'motive' are not synonymous... To say, for example, that N murdered his wife from jealousy is certainly not to say that he acted reasonably."[73] The question arises as to which one of the two above-mentioned meanings of reason Winch has in mind here. The underlying intention and drive for an agent to carry out certain action can be regarded as both his or her motive and reason in the second sense of the term to which Winch seems sympathetic when he translates Weber's *Grund* as "reason". Therefore, he most probably wants here to differentiate the first meaning of 'reason' from motive. Another confirming evidence comes to the fore when we consider the fact that the derivative "reasonable" is never used to refer to what is related to reason in the second sense. Comparing Winch's statement with the following quotation from Weber leaves little doubt that they refer to different meanings of the term. Equating motivation with reason, Weber writes that "'[m]otivation' as used here refers to a complex of meaning which appears to the individual involved or to the observer to be sufficient reason for his conduct."[74] Reasons are not always perceived as the other of causes. Donald Davidson believes that in the realm of human conduct, reasons are certain instances of causes: reasons rationalize actions. He defends "the ancient—and commonsense—position that rationalization is a species of causal explanation."[75]

Habermas draws heavily on Weber and his characterization of modernity as

---

[72] Ibid., p. 207.

[73] P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 82.

[74] Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, p. 39.

[75] D. Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, Causes," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, ed. Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1994), p. 675.

Occidental rationality and social rationalization. The description of reason and the relation between rationality and practice is obviously of fundamental significance in social sciences in general and in sociology in particular. At a conference of national economists in 1909, two groups of sociologists faced off on this issue. The first party, grouped "around Schmoller, Wagner and Knapp argued for the unity of theory and practice, science and politics. On the other, Weber, Sombart and Eulenburg demanded the separation of these two areas, maintaining that value judgments can never be made with an objective claim to truth."[76]

Weber distinguishes between two aspects of action, i.e. technique and end. Each of them can be rationalized on its own terms. "The presence of a 'technical question' always means there is some doubt over the choice of the most rational *means* to an end."[77] The only criterion by which technical, or instrumental, rationality is measured "is the rule-governedness of reproducible behavior to which *others* can adapt themselves in a calculating manner."[78] Weber describes four orientations for action in general and social action in particular:

> *instrumentally rational (zweckrational)*, that is, determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as 'conditions' or 'means' for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends;
>
> *value-rational (wertrational)*, that is, determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success;

---

[76] Michael Landmann and David J. Parent, "Critiques of Reason from Max Weber to Ernst Bloch," *Telos* 29 (Fall 1976): 187.

[77] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al, 2 vols.; vol. 1 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press, 1978), p. 65.

[78] Ibid.

affectual (especially emotional), that is, determined by the actor's specific affects and feeling states;

traditional, that is, determined by ingrained habituation.[79]

For Weber, instrumentally rational behavior as opposed to value-rational on the one hand, and the traditional and emotional behavior on the other, is distinguished by its calculating and goal-oriented criteria: reason seems "limited to finding increasingly more effective means for given objectives."[80] This kind of formal or purposive-instrumental rationality[81] can only determine, at best, the most suitable means and methods for achieving goals. "*Substantive* goal rationality"[82] falls outside the boundaries of such a circumscribed rationality. It cannot settle the question of the rationality of the ends. The same holds true for values because for Weber "values are felt or posited, not known."[83] Habermas explains this idea as follows:

In normative questions Weber is a sceptic; he is convinced that the decision between different value systems (however clarified analytically) cannot be grounded, cannot be rationally justified. Strictly speaking there is no rationality of value postulates or belief systems as regards their content. Nevertheless, the way in which the actor grounds his preferences, in which he is oriented to values, is for Weber an aspect under which an action can be viewed as rationalizable [...] 'Value-rational action is always action in accordance with 'commands' or 'demands' which the actor believes himself to be placed under .[84]

---

[79] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[80] M. Landmann and D. J. Parent, "Critiques of Reason from Max Weber to Ernst Bloch," p. 187.

[81] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 85.

[82] Ibid., pp. 85-86.

[83] M. Landmann and D. J. Parent, "Critiques of Reason from Max Weber to Ernst Bloch," p. 187.

[84] TCA I, 171 — M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 25.

From an instrumentally rational "point of view, however, value-rationality is always irrational. [On the other hand,] the orientation of action wholly to the rational achievement of ends without relation to fundamental values is, to be sure, essentially only a limiting case."[85] Although Weber approves of instrumental rationality, he is aware of its limitations and dangers. His discontent with the disenchantment which followed Occidental rationalization and his complaint about the conversion of the economic and technical means into ends in themselves led him to believe that in the rationalized society "the care for external goods [has] become an iron cage."[86]

Wolfgang Schluchter considers Weber's use of the term 'rationality' ambiguous and calls for precision.[87] He proposes a triad consisting of *scientific-technological rationalism, metaphysical-ethical rationalism,* and *practical rationalism.* For him, scientific-technological rationalism is an outcome of empirical knowledge and "refers to the capacity to control the world through calculation."[88] Metaphysical-ethical rationalism is a "consequence of cultured man's 'inner compulsion' [...] to take a consistent and unified stance toward" the world, and it "refers to the systematization of meaning patterns;" finally, practical rationalism "is the consequence of the institutionalization of configurations of meaning and interest [and it] refers to the achievement of a methodical way of life."[89] Stephen Kalberg deems Schluchter's attempt at systematizing Weber's usages of 'rationality', along

---

[85] Ibid., p. 26.

[86] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 181.

[87] W. Schluchter, "The Paradox of Rationalization: On the Relation of Ethics and World," in *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Methods,* ed. Guenther Roth & Wolfgang Schluchter (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1979), p. 14.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., p. 15.

with Johannes Weiss'[90], to suffer from "a common shortcoming: both note 'usages' or 'dimensions' of rationality that cannot be consistently traced back to the frequent discussions of 'rationality' and rationalization processes in *Economy and Society* [...] and the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*. Moreover, their definitions do not coincide with Weber's various historical-sociological analyses of the paths followed by rationalization processes in different civilizations."[91] Kalberg also criticizes efforts made by such authors as Ulrike Vogel[92], Ann Swidler[93], Benjamin Nelson[94], and F. H. Tenbruck[95] at categorizing various usages of the term 'rationality' for lack of sufficient differentiation or for their limited perspective.[96]

1.2.2 Georg Lukács

Between 1906 and 1918, Max Weber established the Heidelberg Circle in which Georg Lukács took part. Lukács is influenced by the ideas of Georg Simmel, another member of the circle. They combine a Weberian critique of modernity as rationalization with a Neo-Kantian distinction between facts and values. Lukács owes to Hegel and Marx his idea of illustrating various elements of social life as a whole. For him, modernity merely involves individual facets of social life. Society as a whole is inconceivable, though individual aspects can be modernized. Following Marx, he

---

[90] J. Weiss, *Max Webers Grundlegung der Soziologie* (Frankfurt: UTB, 1975), pp. 137-138.

[91] S. Kalberg, "Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History," *American Journal of Sociology* 85/5 (March 1980): 1145-46.

[92] U. Vogel, "Einige Ueberlegungen zum Begriff der Rationalitaet bei Max Weber," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 25 (September 1973): 532-50.

[93] A. Swidler, "The Concept of Rationality in the Work of Max Weber," *Sociological Inquiry* 43/1 (1973): 35-42.

[94] B. Nelson, "Civilizational Complexes and Intercivilizational Encounters," *Sociological Analysis* 34 (Winter 1973): 85.

[95] F. H. Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 27 (December 1975): 663-702.

[96] S. Kalberg, "Max Weber's Types of Rationality," p. 1146.

understands rationalization as the advanced mode of 'commodity fetishism' that has put its stamp on every modern philosophy, especially in their understanding of society as fragmented. Lukács praises Hegel for his assertion that 'the True is the whole', which in the case of the society means that society can only be understood as a whole and by a total subject who is called by Hegel 'Absolute Spirit'. In *History and Class Consciousness*[97], Lukács substitutes Absolute Spirit with the working class as its sociological version. He emphasizes that only the proletariat is in a position to comprehend society as a whole.

In "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,"[98] Lukács describes the notion of alienation as the result of "the artificial fragmentation of original wholes (a motif that can be traced back to Rousseau, Humboldt and Schiller, who however hoped to regain the totality lost in reality only indirectly, through education and art)."[99] For him, economic rationalization reifies human beings by turning the worker as an individual into "the bearer of the work-process." This reification is the direct and indispensable result of fragmentation and disjointing of the elements of the whole. As a result of such a rational mentality, every aspect of reality and social life is left to a specialized science. This is true of the social sciences as well because they too, as sciences, have to meet the precision and credibility of science "precisely by leaving [their] substratum in unexplored irrationality."[100] The outcome of such specialized social sciences, Lukács observes, is separate disciplines each with logical coherence and rationality within the framework of its own method and object domain

---

[97] Trans. Livingstone, R. (London: Merlin, 1971). Originally published as *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1923).

[98] *History and Class Consciousness*, pp. 83-222.

[99] M. Landmann and D. J. Parent, "Critiques of Reason from Max Weber to Ernst Bloch," p. 188.

[100] Ibid., p. 189.

without any connection and even awareness of other elements or the whole. "It even loses sight of the whole of its field. It restricts itself to specialized sub-laws of its field, but not to its concrete substratum of reality."[101] Therefore, we are left with restrained rationality in every field, and irrationality in respect to the whole and also with regard to the relation between different sciences. Lukács' solution is a "consideration of the totality, unscientific as that may seem."[102] This idea of understanding as well as investigating society as a whole lives on in the agenda of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory with their criticisms of empirical social science for dealing "with incoherent details, and [being] value-free."[103]

1.3 Rationality and Critical Theory

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer followed the lead of Lukács in considering the analytical method of science inadequate for reflecting "upon meaning and value, or upon anything 'incommensurable,' because these things cannot be broken down into mathematical formulae."[104] In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*[105] they concluded that Enlightenment is in the midst of a process of self-destruction. To them, the original idea of the Enlightenment is to consider reason not only as a means of perception, classification and calculation, but also as critical of any form of domination. Unfortunately, in the process of social rationalization it has been transformed to a means of domination.

The founders of critical theory conceived of reason as suspicious and dependent on circumstances, "a thing of the past which is associated with positivism,

---

[101] Ibid., p. 188.

[102] Ibid., p. 189.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Trans. John Cumming (New York, NY: Herder & Herder, 1972).

empiricism and the entire project of modernity."[107]. In *Negative Dialectics*,[108] Adorno develops an even more negative attitude toward reason, considering it as deriving from human yearning for domination, and therefore, as being untrustworthy. He leaves no room for any kind of reason, be it instrumental, technological, scientific, or even intuitive or dialectical. He regards the generalizing power of reason as an instrument in the service of human *interest* in domination.

From this perspective, "Enlightenment returns to mythology"[109] in its reconstruction of the existing reality of domination in the form of an eternal standard. Adorno's solution to this dilemma is a refuge to 'unregulated experience' of the individual without categorizing it in the pre-fixed conceptual systems.[110] Adorno distinguishes two basic attitudes in human encounter with nature, which is discernable in human treatment of others as well: the first attitude, exemplified by instrumental rationality, is subjugating nature or society; the second one, typified by magic, is what he calls the "mimetic attitude" in which one "submits to nature in order to save [one]self from this superior power."[111] For Adorno as for the Romanticists this attitude survives in the form of aesthetics and art in the modern age. The homogeneity is evident between Adorno's idea of resort to magic as expressed in artwork and Nietzsche's recourse to myth as manifested in arts. Mimetic knowledge provides an alternative way of perceiving the world that bypasses the established conceptual

---

[107] Jeppe Sinding Jensen, "Rationality and the Study of Religion: Introduction," in *Rationality and the Study of Religion*, ed. J. S. Jensen and Luther H. Martin (Aarhus C, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1997), pp. 13-14.

[108] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966).

[109] M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 26-27; quoted in John B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study of the Thoughts of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 76.

[110] M. Landmann and D. J. Parent, "Critiques of Reason from Max Weber to Ernst Bloch," p. 191.

[111] Ibid., p. 192.

framework of the reified society. Adorno suggests a *critical theory* of rationality that is "open to experience phenomena which do not conform to natural or socio-technical regulations."[112] Such a critical theory is supposed to substitute what he calls an *identity theory*, which is characteristic of bourgeois society. Habermas contends that such a yearning for reconciliation with nature will lead to a return to notions of theological origin that are for him "theoretically no longer tenable."[113]

Horkheimer also perceives rationalism as an equivalent to positivism and describes it as "an imperfect, inflexible, impoverished rationality."[114] On the other hand, he refers to *Lebensphilosophie* (the philosophy of life) and existentialism as irrationalism. Irrationalism, for Horkheimer, condemns "thought as a destructive force, and [makes] the soul or intuition the sole deciding authority in all the critical problems of life."[115] Against these two extremes, he suggests that the ultimate goal of humanity is the complete dominance over "nature both inside and outside us by means of rational resolve."[116] He follows Hegel and Marx and describes this process dialectically. Wiggershaus expresses his disappointment with this kind of critique and asserts: "Horkheimer in the *Eclipse of Reason*[117] and in his inaugural lecture as rector [...] contrasted the dominant 'subjective reason' with 'objective reason', but without himself clearly laying any claim to possess objective reason, he was avoiding

---

[112] Axel Honneth, "Communication and Reconciliation: Habermas' Critique of Adorno," *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979): 50.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), p. 136.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Max Horkheimer, "Zum Problem der Voraussage in den Sozialwissenschaften," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung 2* (1933): 412; quoted in R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 136.

[117] New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974.

the problem."[117] In *Critique of Instrumental Reason*[118], Horkheimer makes the observation that "[f]or antiquity and for Leibniz, reason was not only a faculty of a subject but was also an objective order of reality. Subjective reason grasped this order as the true nature of things [...] The antireligious and antimetaphysical Enlightenment destroyed precisely this context in the name of reason."[119] Horkheimer's solution lies in the proposal of a reunification between two aspects of rationality unjustifiably separated in the process of Enlightenment. Rationality for him consists of substantive and functional rationality, "one perceiving ideas, the other merely finding means for purposes [...] The dangers of objective reason are Romanticism and ideology, while the dangers of subjective reason are materialism and nihilism. The task of philosophy consists in uniting the two wings of reason intellectually to prepare their unification in reality."[120]

Axel Honneth believes that "Adorno's premises leave critical theory with both dogma and resignation"[121] because he rejects any kind of thought and historical action except mimetic knowledge mediated by individual artworks. Therefore, critical theory's claim to guide practice loses its theoretical support in Adorno.[122] Axel Van den Berg is also critical of the whole movement of critical theory and thinks of it as "a philosophy whose only distinction is its sheer obscurity [with] a notion of reason lacking all substance [with] a utopia without any indication of its features or

---

[117] R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 207.

[118] Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al. New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1974.

[119] M. Landmann and D. J. Parent, "Critiques of Reason from Max Weber to Ernst Bloch," p. 193.

[120] Ibid.

[121] A. Honneth, "Communication and Reconciliation," p. 56.

[122] Ibid., p. 57.

feasibility."[123] He considers Habermas a follower of the old generation whose "attempt to ground practical reason convincingly appears to be nothing but a restatement of the old dilemma based on a faith in the goodness of man without any further justification."[124]

Among the major points in critical theory, there is the idea of the fragmentation of the whole as a negative result of modern thought, whether one conceives of the whole as the whole of nature, society, or the whole of creation in general: the Enlightenment and the analytic culture of modernity with its scientific approach to reality result in demarcating different aspects of reality and assigning each minute facet to a specialized discipline. Critical theory's diagnosis of modern rationality as one-sidedly instrumental is also plausible, though one should appreciate the endeavors by Occidental rationalists to take a critical stance in order not to lose sight of its flaws.

1.4 Habermas' Conception of Rationality

The "attempt at a theory of rationality" is among the essential motifs Habermas has dealt with in *The Theory of Communicative Action*.[125] In his critique of rational positivism, Habermas agrees with the old generation of the Frankfurt School. His position in this regard is obvious in his "dispute against Karl Popper and his allies of the Cologne School"[126] in the German *Soziologentag* of 1961 and his defense of the Frankfurt School's thesis. Here Habermas stresses the idea of establishing the

---

[123] A. van den Berg, "Critical Theory: Is There Still Hope?," *American Journal of Sociology* 86/3 (November 1980): 476.

[124] A. van den Berg, "Critical Theory," p. 473.

[125] A. Honneth, "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 12.

[126] Peter U. Hohendahl, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of Frankfurt School," *New German Critique* 35 (Spring-Summer 1985-No 35): 3-4.

humanities and the social sciences on grounds other than the methodology of the natural sciences. Nonetheless, by the end of the 1970s, as Axel Honneth has it, a theoretical turn occurs, which "is equivalent to a change of paradigm in critical theory from Adorno to Habermas."[127]

Habermas begins to draw the lines between his own ideas and those of the Frankfurt School, especially those of Horkheimer and Adorno. He perceives a general weakness both Horkheimer and Adorno share with Marx and Weber: on the one hand, they "identify societal rationalization with the expansion of instrumental and strategic rationality of action contexts; on the other hand, they all have a vague notion of *an encompassing societal rationality*" (TCA I, 144). He believes that Horkheimer and Adorno undermine the prospect of critical thought by their radical critique of reason.[128] The chapter on "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, first published in 1982,[129] not only sharpens the critique of Horkheimer and Adorno but also displays "a certain amount of acrimony absent from Habermas' earlier writings."[130] Peter Hohendahl attributes this increasing disagreement to the discovery by Habermas of the roots of the Frankfurt School's critique of reason in Nietzsche.[131]

With his pragmatic approach to language, philosophy, and rationality, Habermas distinguishes two types of practice, or historical action: "work (instrumental rationality) and interaction."[132] While instrumental rationality makes the

---

[127] A. Honneth, "Communication and Reconciliation," p. 45.

[128] P. U. Hohendahl, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited," p. 8.

[129] *New German Critique* (Spring-Summer 1982-No 26): 13-30.

[130] P. U. Hohendahl, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited," p. 4.

[131] Ibid., p. 5.

[132] A. Honneth, "Communication and Reconciliation," p. 51.

rationalization of our control over nature possible, communicative rationality determines the course of rationalization in society. Adorno criticizes the dominance of instrumental reason over all aspects of human life. Habermas shares with critical theory its rejection of instrumental reason's reign, but he disapproves Adorno's reductionist theory of rationality and introduces communicative rationality as a complement alongside the instrumental rationality.[133]

Contrary to some of his critics' claims, Habermas is not pursuing the German Idealist project. As Hohendahl rightly asserts, "Habermas thinks in terms of a third alternative that would avoid the dangers of logocentrism and deconstruction. [...] In his opinion, the old paradigm is to be replaced with the model of communicative action in which neither the subject nor factual relations are the basis. Instead, the point of departure is communicative interactions."[134] This alternative is justified by "an evolutionary theory of practical reason analogous to Piaget's developmental psychology."[135] Against the two alternatives, he argues that humankind undergoes a very slow learning process independent of the development of productive forces and comprising successively higher levels of moral-practical consciousness and social integration, with norms and values becoming ever more universalistic. However, Van den Berg provides the counterargument that the barbarian nature of the twentieth-century politics on the one hand, the intensification of religious rivalry on the other, and finally the absence of any universal ethics are among evidences that count against

---

[133] Ibid., p. 53.

[134] P. U. Hohendahl, "Habermas' Philosophical Discourse of Modernity," pp. 61-62.

[135] J. Habermas, *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp. 1-2. See also J. Habermas, "History and Evolution," *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979): 29, where he counts himself amongst others such as Bellah, Döbert, and Eder who tried to make "developmentally oriented investigation of collectively shared structures of consciousness" in the fields of religion, law and morality.

Habermas' claim.[136]

"A central thesis of *The Theory of Communicative Action*," Kenneth Baynes writes, "is that the conceptions of reason or rationality used in most social theory do not provide a basis for answering the Hobbesian problem of social order or, beyond that, for adequately describing the processes of modernization."[137] In Habermas' analysis, the notion of reason has its roots in Hegel who radicalizes the Enlightenment by working out a concept of reason that was supposed to be "an equivalent for the unifying power of religion": "Hegel conceived of reason as the reconciling self-knowledge of an absolute spirit [...] Hegel's concept proved too strong; the absolute spirit was posited [...] beyond the process of a history open to the future and beyond the unreconciled character of the present."[138] What is needed, in Habermas' view, is an idea of reason and rationality that seriously takes language and the lifeworld into consideration. He agrees with the radical critics of the Enlightenment who see "reason as inescapably situated, as concretized in history, society, body, and language."[139] These are the salient features of the notion of communicative reason he employs along with communicative action in order to rectify the concept of reason. Since Habermas based his analysis of modernity on the differentiation between system and the lifeworld, he has to come up with a notion of rationality that succumbs neither to an instrumental rationality of social systems—as did Weber and the members of the Frankfurt School, nor to an inclusive reason that treats all cases of rationality under one unifying concept—as it was the case with Hegel.

---

[136] Cf. A. van den Berg, "Critical Theory," p. 474.

[137] K. Baynes, "Democracy and the *Rechtsstaat*: Habermas's *Faktizität und Geltung*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 203.

[138] J. Habermas, "A Reply to My Critics," p. 84.

[139] Thomas McCarthy, "Introduction," in J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990), p. xvii.

Habermas praises Max Weber for clarifying the interconnection between three levels of the rationality problematic: metatheoretical, methodological, and empirical. At a metatheoretical level, one has to come up with a theory of action that revolves around rationalizable aspects of action. Action theories are concerned with different issues pertaining to diverse facets of human action. The nature of action, its origins, the relation between an action and proceeding actions, its relation to the actual consequences on the one hand, and to the agent's intention and volition on the other, are among the most common issues. A theory of rationality, however, should focus on the rationalizable dimension of action. At a methodological level, what is of great importance to a theory of rationality, according to Habermas, is not theorizing about action but understanding symbolic representations that provides an explanation for the relation between meaning and validity in our understanding of action orientations. At an empirical level, a theorist of rationality tries to explore, through an historical investigation, the correlation between the process of modernization and the development of rationalization in modern societies.[140]

Habermas is concerned with the rationality of action—or practical rationality—and not the rationality of beliefs or evaluations, or as Mikael Stenmark calls them respectively, theoretical and axiological rationality.[141] Therefore, when he speaks of the rationality or irrationality of religion, Habermas does not talk about rationally justifying or proving religious beliefs, creeds, or values. His concern is with action, whether it is religious or otherwise. Or as T. Strong and F. Sposito have it, "[t]he theory of communicative action makes the case that rationality is a relevant

---

[140] Cf. TCA I, 6-7.

[141] M. Stenmark, *Rationality in Science, Religion, and Everyday Life*, p. 5.

moral *social* concept."[142] This explains Habermas' choice of entering into a long

discussion on action theory before actually beginning to investigate the problem of

rationality.

Reason, according to Herbert A. Simon, has an "ineradicable element of

arbitrariness [...] that corrupts the reasoning process, and therefore its products."[143]

Here, arbitrariness refers to the axiomatic nature of the premises on the one hand and

the unreasoned character of the rules of inference, including the principle of no

conclusion without premises, on the other. For Simon, this problem has two

consequences for reasoning: first, the fallibility of its output, and second, the

impossibility of deriving normative conclusions from descriptive inputs. He

concludes:

> Reason, then, goes to work only after it has been supplied with a
> suitable set of inputs, or premises. If reason is to be applied to
> discovering and choosing courses of action, then those inputs include,
> at the least, a set of should's, or values to be achieved, and a set of is's,
> or facts about the world in which the action is to be taken. Any attempt
> to justify these should's and is's by logic will simply lead to a regress
> to new should's and is's that are similarly postulated.

What follows these premises is that "reason is wholly instrumental;"[144] it cannot

provide any help for deciding which ultimate goals one should choose, it can only be

used to know how to go after a goal. In other words, one can reason about the sub-

goals "adopted as means to other goals," but not about "ultimate standards of

---

[142] T. Strong & F. Sposito, "Habermas's Significant Other," p. 263.

[143] H. A. Simon, "Alternative Visions of Rationality," in *Rationality in Action: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 190.

[144] Ibid., p. 191.

conduct."[145]

Simon's exposition of rationality clearly explains Weber's stance on the issue. Despite the fact that Weber distinguishes between various types of rationality, he is obviously interested in particular instances of rationality, namely, technical or instrumental rationality. The rationality of techniques is determined by their success to attain the agent's goal by employing the best possible means at the lowest cost.[146] Following the first generation of critical theorists, Habermas is deeply concerned about "the dominance of instrumental reason."[147] Genov presents one example of such an instrumental understanding by describing rationality as

> the capacity to make and implement decisions under the conditions of choice and risk in accordance with knowledge about the actors and the situation and in accordance with the requirements of logical consistency and effectiveness in the course of preparing, implementing, controlling, and evaluating the problem-solving activity, the result of which is the increase of the adaptive capacity of social systems.[148]

Habermas criticizes Weber, along with Marx, Horkheimer, and Adorno, for reducing rationality to means-ends rationality that exemplifies "the type of purposive-rational action, which refers to either the organization of means or choice between alternatives."[149] Or as Barry Hindess writes, "[m]uch of Weber's discussion of the West is concerned with what he regards as the secular growth of instrumental

---

[145] Ibid., p. 193.

[146] Cf. Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, pp. 65-66.

[147] William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK & Stanford, CA: Polity Press & Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 20.

[148] N. Genov, "Towards a Multidimensional Concept of Rationality," p. 208 (italics in original).

[149] J. Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 81.

rationality."[150] Habermas also thinks that Weber is guilty of providing a "vague notion of *an encompassing societal rationality*" (TCA I, 144). Drawing on Talcott Parsons' distinction between personality, culture, and society, Habermas believes that Weber's approach to rationality stays on the level of culture and personality and falls short of tackling the problem on a social level. That is why Weber's project of analyzing the process of modern rationalization rests on the level of society.[151] From his critiques of Weber, one may interpret Habermas' project as an attempt to overcome those mistakes by putting forward a theory of rationality that proves first of all to be socially oriented, and secondly, more inclusive in order to cover every contingent form of rationality without sacrificing their differences.

Habermas supports the idea of explaining social behavior on the basis of "action orientations (and the possible reasons) for an actor" (TCA I, 54). At the same time, he makes the rationality of "reasons" conditional on clarification of the contextual circumstances, and on social and cultural elements "from which the agent proceeds" (TCA I, 54). In this way, he tries to show that there is no clear-cut distinction between reason (motive) and cause, but rather that they are intertwined and have a reciprocal relation.

---

[150] B. Hindess, "Rationality and Modern Society," p. 224.
[151] Cf. TCA I, 178.

CHAPTER 2

RATIONALITY AND VALIDITY CLAIMS

Not all social scientists agree upon what rationality stands for or what elements contribute to rational behavior. Oswyn Murray, for instance, speaks of holistic and particularistic approaches to the study of the "Greek City" and its rationality. He associates the former with Émile Durkheim and the latter with Max Weber. He also attributes to anthropologists a kind of coherence theory of rationality that does not take into account "truth or falsehood, or the external functional status in terms of success or failure, of the beliefs."[1] The coherence theory of rationality is associated with Hegel and Bradley, and Peter Winch is considered its modern representative, although he cuts off the theory from its original conjunction with monism, combines it with pluralism, and therefore "allows the possibility of an indefinite number of systems, each with a peculiar notion of rationality."[2]

Emphasizing the linguistic aspect of our understanding of the term 'rationality', Winch confirms Alasdair MacIntyre "that we have already invoked our concept of rationality in saying of a collection of people that they constitute a society with a language."[3] According to Winch, intrinsic to the concept of rationality is "conformity to norms". Borrowing from Ludwig Wittgenstein the expression 'form of life', he allocates to any form of life its peculiar norms and rules that determine its

---

[1] O. Murray, "Cities of Reason," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 28/2 (1987): 329.

[2] J. Kekes, "Towards a Theory of Rationality," p. 284.

[3] P. Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society," in *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, ed. Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy (Notre Dame, IN & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 177.

own type of rationality. By 'forms of life' he refers to science, art[4], and religion, each of which has "criteria of intelligibility peculiar to itself."[5] He explains this by stating that "the difference between forms of life is not that some do and others do not conform to norms, but that different norms are being followed within them."[6] Therefore, the existence of norms is a necessary condition for rationality, but it does not make any difference which system of norms is followed.

As Kekes observes, "The crux of Winch's theory of rationality is that each form of life has its own standards of rationality;"[7] thus we can speak of rationality or irrationality within a form of life, but "one cannot apply criteria of logic to modes of social life as such."[8] Kekes rightly questions the rules by which Winch wants to distinguish between different forms of life. The point is whether this rule is also "part of a form of life [or] independent of any form of life.[In the first instance,] circularity makes the individuation of forms of life impossible [and in the latter,] it vitiates Winch's whole enterprise whose purpose is to show that there are [...] no rules of rationality outside of forms of life."[9]

In another compartmentalization, Peter Halfpenny juxtaposes positivism, conventionalist theory, and a "third tradition, growing out of ethnomethodology"[10] regarding their views on the problem of rationality. Logical positivism was put forward "as the 'official' philosophy of the Vienna Circle in the famous manifesto

---

[4] P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 41.

[5] Ibid., p. 100.

[6] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[7] J. Kekes, "Towards a Theory of Rationality," p. 275.

[8] P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 100.

[9] J. Kekes, "Towards a Theory of Rationality," p. 278.

[10] P. Halfpenny, "Rationality and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge," *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 214.

Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung in 1929."[11] The Vienna Circle aimed at creating "a new, logically rigorous form of empiricism according to which all meaningful-scientific-propositions are reducible to propositions about immediately given experience."[12] Otto Neurath, a scientist and neo-Marxist member of the Vienna Circle, regarded the organization of natural scientists as the proper model for a rationally managed society. He recommended the eradication of all metaphysical elements from both intellectual and social spheres of human life.

During 1930-34, a discrepancy surfaced between Rudolf Carnap and Neurath over 'protocol-sentences'. Protocols are basic propositions recording the results of scientific findings. Carnap believed that such propositions merely convey the scientist's private and subjective sense-experience, whereas for Neurath this view was inconsistent with the universality and intersubjectivity required by science. Therefore, he developed a socially oriented conception of protocols as propositions accepted by the scientific community and considered as recording the results of scientific observations at a given time. In this way, Neurath tried at once to save the universality of science through agreement by a certain community and to relativize its truth claim by confining it to a certain period of time.

For Halfpenny, the positivist approach considers rationality "as a universal set of rules about how to reach agreement on whether scientific statements are true or false on the basis of impartial observational evidence."[13] Conventionalism, on the other hand, understands rationality as "a set of socially embedded practices for conducting arguments, a set of culturally specific norms for creating and contesting

---

[11] Scientific World-Perception.—Michael Friedman, "Logical Positivism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), vol. 5, p. 792.

[12] Ibid.

[13] P. Halfpenny, "Rationality and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge," p. 213.

the credibility of knowledge claims. Universal rationality is replaced by a range of rationalities, each operating within and internal to a particular social group."[14] This view is described as cognitive relativism.[15] As to tradition, "growing out of ethnomethodology," it considers rationality as "the localized practical accomplishment of a shared sense of social and natural order."[16]

Habermas sums up the various approaches to the problem of rationality in two positions he calls "realistic" and "phenomenological" (TCA I, 11). His description of these positions as well as his stance on the problem of rationality is difficult to grasp, hence a high degree of "hermeneutic charity" (TCA I, 55) toward obscure expressions is called for here.

2.1 Realistic Approach

The realistic approach presupposes the existence of the world as a state of affairs. It also takes for granted that the objective world can be grasped by human knowledge. The realist's goal in rationality, or as Habermas calls it, "the *way* in which the knowledge is *used*, appears to be *instrumental mastery*" of the world (TCA I, 11). Thus, both statements and meaningful actions can be subjects of rationality. The rationality of a statement depends both on its being open to criticism and on the speaker's ability to justify (*begründen*)[17] it on solid grounds and to establish its correspondence to reality. But, as Nanette Funk observes, Habermas fails to elaborate on the issue whether the agent should *actually* be able to provide adequate reason for the statement in question before it can be regarded as rational. Or is it enough that

---

[14] Ibid.

[15] See for example Martic Hollis and Steven Lukes, eds., *Rationality and Relativism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

[16] P. Halfpenny, "Rationality and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge," p. 214.

[17] Thomas McCarthy translates *begründen* as "having good reasons" (Cf. TCA I, 11).

proper justifications exist even if the speaker is not currently in a position, intellectually or motivationally, to provide them?[18] The rationality of action, on the other hand, is based on the degree of its success in materializing the anticipated goals.[19] These descriptions of the realistic approach correspond to the tradition Halfpenny refers to as positivism[20] and is based on the following set of presuppositions:

— reason is a faculty whose task is to explain the "whyness," as well as the "whatness," of the world events and social actions on the basis of objective evidence;

— rationality is determined by objective criteria;

— objective criteria of rationality are universal rules and methods shared by all rational beings;

— what is judged as rational should be accessible to all people so that anybody can test its claim to rationality, whether it is an assertion's claim to truth or an action's claim to success;

— the only use of such knowledge conceivable to Habermas is an instrumental mastery of the world.

2.2 Phenomenological Approach

The second approach Habermas speaks of is the phenomenological one. Rationality, from this point of view, is based on the assumption that "[t]he world gains objectivity only through *counting* as one and the same world *for* a community of speaking and acting subjects" (TCA I, 12-13). Such a shared understanding of the

---

[18] N. Funk, "Review on *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 1," *The Philosophical Review* 45/2 (April 1986): 270.

[19] Cf. TCA I, 169.

[20] Cf. P. Halfpenny, "Rationality and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge," p. 212.

world is possible through communication. Obviously, these criteria correspond to the conventional tradition in Halfpenny's classification.[21] The criterion set for the rationality of assertions is their correspondence to the interpretation and understanding of the world shared by members of a given community and believed as the objective world. Habermas calls these shared pre-understandings "lifeworld".[22] We might infer from Habermas' description that a phenomenological approach to rationality

— is based on a coherence theory of truth in which coherence is sought between a validity claim and proper social consensus;

— does not have a universal perception of rationality. Instead, it depends on the peculiar "form of life"—to use Wittgenstein's terminology—of any given society. What is rational in a society may not necessarily be so in another because of their different perceptions and interpretations of the world. As for the assumptions themselves, Habermas does not render them with criticizability, and hence they are not rational in this sense;

— is based on, or rather results in, a collective rationality theory. Rationality is meaningful only in a social setting and is based on an appeal to inter-subjective understanding of the world as well as to the rules and criteria of rationality. Inter-subjective rules and criteria, however, are culturally determined, locally specific, and cannot be universal;

— consequently, instead of "rationality" we are dealing here with "rationalities."

2.3 Rationality of Action

In contradistinction to the two aforementioned approaches, Habermas looks

---

[21] Ibid., p. 214.

[22] TCA I, 13. – "Lebenswelt" is a key word in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. More on this later (see # 3.3.2).

for a new foundation for his theory. In TCA, he considers the speaking and acting persons as the prime candidates to become "subjects that go with the predicate expression 'rational'" (TCA I, 22). Although rationality presupposes knowledge, it has little or nothing to do with either knowledge per se[23] or the possession of knowledge by an individual. Rather, someone is called rational because what s/he does is reasonable and corresponds to the standards of rationality.

Action as the motif of Habermas' theory of rationality denotes "those symbolic expressions with which the action takes up a relation to at least one world (but always to the objective world *as well*)".[24] Habermas distinguishes between three worlds: objective, subjective, and social. Taking up a relation to any one of these worlds involves a claim to validity of a certain type. Using language to claim correspondence of one's speech to the objective world includes a 'truth claim'. The same relation to the subjective world involves a claim to 'truthfulness', for instance the sincerity of emotions expressed in a work of art. And finally, a claim to 'rightness' is raised when one speaks the language of law and morality, hinting at its agreement to social norms. The differentiating element that demarcates actions from bodily movements is found "in following a technical or social rule" (TCA I, 97). The following of a rule is also the same criterion Winch suggests for determining a meaningful action. Habermas analyzes the rationality of an action as the rationality of a symbolic expression articulated in accordance with social or technical rules "in terms of the justifiability and criticizability of expressions," and thereby he attributes "a key role to the procedural rationality embodied in argumentative practices."[25]

---

[23] Cf. J. Habermas, "A Reply to My Critics," p. 234.

[24] TCA I, 96 — More on this later (see # 4.3.2).

[25] J. Habermas, "Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality," in *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, ed. Maeve Cooke (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 307.

For Habermas, rationality is not the attribute of a state of affairs; rather it primarily describes *actions* of a certain type. Taking knowledge into account, we can think of two kinds of actions: acquiring knowledge, and using it for other purposes (TCA I, 8). Emphasis is put by Habermas on the *use* of knowledge in accordance with Karl-Otto Apel's transcendental pragmatics, although Habermas and Apel are not always agreeing with one another.[26]

One can employ one's knowledge in at least two ways and for two sets of purposes. Knowledge may be used to manipulate, and to take hold of, the objective world for reasons of self-maintenance. This is what Habermas calls "cognitive-instrumental rationality" (TCA I, 10). It may also be employed for communicating with others and establishing a mutual understanding, i.e. communicative rationality "determined by the force of better argument alone."[27] He does not elaborate on what constitutes the rationality of motivation in the first place, and whether 'rationality' denotes the same thing when it modifies action and motivation respectively. Neither does he explain how the rationality of motivation can be determined *before* we engage in communication, or what determination such rationality has *before* communication. Such a questioning can take place only apart from the very situation of communication and thus precludes the essentially communicative core of rationality. With reference to his "privileging of the discursive rationality embodied in argumentative practices," Habermas uses "the predicate 'rational' in the first instance to refer to beliefs, actions, and linguistic utterances [...] because in the propositional structure of knowledge, in the teleological structure of action, and in the

---

[26] See for instance Karl-Otto Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung: Das Problem des Übergangs zur postkonventionellen Moral*, 488 p. (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 50.

[27] J. B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics*, p. 88.

communicative structure of speech, we come upon *various roots of rationality.*[28] But still he acknowledges a special position for discursive rationality on account of the integrative role discursive rationality plays to establish "an interrelation among the entwined structures of rationality (the structures of knowledge, action, and speech)."[29]

To sum up, rationality for Habermas can be interpreted from two perspectives. From an observer's viewpoint, rationality means grounding one's belief, action, or utterance on proper knowledge or "good reasons" which is tantamount to its justification against criticisms.[30] From the first-person perspective of a believer, or an acting or speaking person, rationality can be described as holding to, or using one's own knowledge to accomplish some goals in terms of either creating, changing, or eliminating something in the objective world, or coming into understanding with others in the realm of the social world. It is a belief's, an action's, or a statement's, criticizable claim to validity that makes it a candidate for being rational. Without such a claim, one is not expected to provide justifications, and therefore rationality or irrationality for that matter does not make sense. Depending on the type of validity claim embodied in an action or utterance, the criteria of rationality changes. This brings us to our next discussion on the types of validity claims from Habermas' point of view, followed by an analysis of the criteria he provides for their rationality.

2.4 *Validity Claims*

Rationality, according to Habermas, requires a symbolic expression with a claim to validity. Types of validity claims depend, on the one hand, on different worlds we live in, and on the other, on different modes of language use. Habermas

---

[28] J. Habermas, "Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality," pp. 308-09.

[29] Ibid., p. 309.

[30] Cf. TCA I, 16; J. Habermas, "Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality," p. 307.

distinguishes five validity claims.

1. Truth: Truth is the kind of claim embedded in constative speech acts, the type of language use appropriate to cognitive mode of communication. Constative speech acts have a propositional content with a claim to revealing some knowledge about the objective world. What determines the validity of such a claim is its correspondence to the general understanding of the world members of a certain community share.

2. Effectivity: Drawing on John L. Austin's bilateral concept of speech acts, i.e. locutionary and illocutionary acts[31], Habermas suggests that validity claims are not restricted to truth claim, as John Searle tries to establish in *Speech Acts.*[32] Habermas considers such a position as "a step backward from Austin and the later Wittgenstein to Frege" (PMT 71). Along with the universal truth claim related to statements and referring to something that exists as a state of affairs in the objective world, there exists the claim to effectiveness related to actions and denoting "something that *should occur* in the objective world" (TCA I, 9).

Effectivity is the validity claim of goal-directed, meaningful actions. In other words, only instrumental and strategic actions can be described as effective. Instrumental actions refer to actions whose goals belong to the non-social domain of the objective world, while strategic actions denote those actions that take social results as their goals.[33] Habermas groups this type of validity claim with truth claim as

---

[31] Austin emphasized the fact that in uttering a sentence, one may *do* several actions, including the locutionary and illocutionary acts. The former concept refers to the mere act of uttering a statement, while the latter points to the act of expressing a subjective state of the speaker, whether it be a belief, a request, an apology, or greeting. He also speaks of perlocutionary acts, which pertains to the effect an interlocutor causes on the interlocutee.—On this, see Oswald Ducrot & Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Nouveau dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage,* 670 p. (Paris: Seuil, 1995), pp. 646-47.

[32] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

[33] J. Habermas, "Aspects of the Rationality of Action," in *Rationality To-Day/ La Rationalité Aujourd'hui,* ed. Theodore F. Geraets (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979), p. 193.

parts of a "problematic expression" called "cognitive-instrumental" (TCA I, 23). The reason for such a grouping lies in the perception that they both belong to the objective domain of reality, though in quite different ways.[34] Just as the validity of truth claims and their rationality depend on what Habermas calls the lifeworld of a given community, the validity of an action's claim to success and efficiency varies according to the one who is judging. The goal that a strategic action should attain in order to be recognized as successful may not be the same for participants and observers: "From the viewpoint of the participating actors, success appears as the realization of collective goals, whereas from the observer perspective it appears as the maintenance of a given system or as the attunement of different systems to one another."[35] The effectivity of an action, according to Habermas' communicative principles, is determined through communication and argumentation among all participants in a free and non-coercive environment.

3. *Rightness*: This is the validity claim Habermas blames Austin for falling short of recognizing as a distinctive species of validity besides truth and effectiveness (PMT 71). A speaker lives simultaneously in heterogeneous worlds and makes claims that can be related to each one of them. The first and most tangible world (for the observers who are the judges in the court of rationality) is the objective world, and validity claims related to this world are, as mentioned before, claims to truth and effectiveness. But a speaker lives in a social world as well. For Habermas, unlike Karl Raimund Popper, the social world is not part of the objective world; it is rather a unique world with characteristics of its own. What Habermas calls social world is "the totality of interpersonal relationships that are currently accepted as legitimate" (PMT

---

[34] Ibid., p. 198.

[35] J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 319.

76). Legitimate social relationships constitute a normative regulatory system that has an obligatory force[36] and influences the actions of all members of a given society. Any engagement in such actions implies a validity claim of a peculiar type, which is neither a truth claim nor a claim to efficiency. It rather makes claim to normative rightness that connotes its compliance with the accepted moral and legal norms in the society in question. This claim can also be an object of rational evaluation thanks to its criticizability. Nevertheless, such claims do not have for Habermas the same kind of universality truth claims are enjoying. The validity of normative claims is to be judged on the basis of normative consensus within the boundaries of a cultural community. They may not entertain the same kind of approval outside certain social contexts.

4. Truthfulness: Another world an acting and speaking person lives in and relates to, is one's own subjective world of thoughts, feelings, interests, and judgments. This world is "the totality of lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*) to which he [the speaker] has privileged access" (PMT 75). Expressing such subjective experiences in self-expressive representations in the form of an artwork can imply a claim to truthfulness or sincerity (*Wahrhaftigkeit*). By explicitly demonstrating in utterances or implicitly claiming in action and attitude one's anger or joy, one might imply that these manifestations are representative of what one actually feels.

Despite the fact that such a claim is analogous to truth claim in conveying the possibility of correspondence of what is deemed its referent, Habermas distinguishes it from truth claim by suggesting that "they cannot be true or false" (PMT 76). One may justify this distinction by an appeal to the difference between action and utterance. An action may be distinguished from a statement in terms of its lack of an

---

[36] Cf. J. Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, trans. Ciaran P. Cronin (Cambridge, Mass. & London, England: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 14.

explicitly logical form. Habermas actually builds his theory on the concept of speech-act with the purpose of establishing a social theory of rationality based on the close relation between language and action, theory and praxis. He also regards multifarious types of validity claims as the result of various forms of sentences we use (descriptive, normative, evaluative, expressive, and explicative)[37]. The moment such an implicit claim of action to truthfulness is made explicit in the form of an assertoric statement, it becomes an instance of a truth claim.[38] Before the implicit claim of action is verbalized it has claim to truthfulness. Habermas' demarcation between truth and truthfulness can be understood on the basis of his distinction between two language uses: the language of science and that of arts. The former raises a claim to an intersubjective validity while the latter broaches a claim to a subjective validity, which is not directly accessible to others.

5. Preference: This validity claim belongs somewhere between the social and the subjective worlds. Habermas speaks of values and norms as the bearers of this claim. He invests the term 'value' with different meanings in different contexts in which its relation to 'norm' also varies. Such equivocality requires an explicit differentiation between diverse uses and their definitions.

Max Weber and Talcott Parsons tried to describe the relation between values and norms from a sociological perspective. For them, social norms derive their obligatory force from the values they represent. Weber considers norms, whether legal or moral, as the materialization of selected corresponding values. Parsons speaks of two sets of values: internalized values and institutionalized values, the latter of which corresponds to social norms that are deemed to incorporate certain values. This understanding of norms runs counter to a purely positivist conception of them as

---

[37] Cf. TCA I, 39.

[38] Cf. PMT 76.

general rules abstracted from customs or personal commands of an individual authority without any relation to values.

Habermas charges Weber and Parsons with drawing on the neo-Kantian "notion that ideas and interests (Weber) or cultural values and motives (Parsons) *interpenetrate* in social orders."[39] Accordingly, social norms derive their obligatory quality from internalized values and are designed to be realized in a social milieu. Norms and values are on the same track as far as their scopes of validity are concerned. In this sense, they speak of "value-consensus"[40] that refers to a social agreement about some values belonging to the social world.

Habermas, in contrast, differentiates between values and norms on five bases. In a religious worldview, social norms are anchored in values in order to provide a metasocial guarantee for their claim to validity. As a result of a process of rationalization, norms are secularized, i.e. detached from values, as part of the process of disenchantment, they are constructed and developed according to their own logic, foundations, and universal principles. Therefore, Habermas invests norms with generality and he puts values on the borderline of the general and the private domains, of cultural norms and subjective expressions.[41] Thus, values are equated with appreciation and become "evaluative expressions" conveying one's desires, preferences, rejections, jealousy, and the like. Such an understanding of values is based on a Kantian distinction between facts and values, between descriptive and evaluative statements. The idea that values are acts of judgment is clearly expressed by Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817-81) in his *Logik* published in three volumes in 1874,

---

[39] J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 66.

[40] Ibid., p. 139.

[41] Cf. TCA I, 16 & PMT 223.

particularly the third one with the title "Vom Erkennen".[42] Accordingly, the question arises as to what qualifies values as candidates for incorporation in a discussion of rationality. For Habermas, values qualify for inclusion in such a discussion because rationalization resorts to culturally understandable and socially acceptable concepts for interpreting one's subjective evaluations. These interpretations are to be judged as to their rationality, and what distinguishes rational validity claims of such interpretations from subjective expressions might be explained in terms of their explicability on the basis of other conceptions. Tastes and merely subjective feelings cannot be rationalized on the basis of something else. One is not expected to explain why one likes certain colors, whereas one may explain why one desires certain behaviors, for example, on account of certain results they create in society.

In *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas demarcates values from norms on four other grounds: "Norms and values therefore differ, first, in their references to obligatory rule-following versus teleological action; second, in the binary versus graduated coding of their validity claims; third, in their absolute versus relative bindingness; and fourth, in the coherence criterion that systems of norms and systems of values must respectively satisfy."[43]

6. Authenticity: Habermas calls those evaluative expressions that cannot be justified by an appeal to public understanding, idiosyncratic. However, private evaluations with "an innovative character [...] distinguished by their authentic expression" are exempted from this (TCA I, 17). Such non-consensual manifestations are believed to deliver a distinct form of validity claim called authenticity. By these

---

[42] Second edition in 1880, reprint of the 2nd edition in 1912 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag) with an important introduction by Georg Misch. – On this see Martin Heidegger's ground breaking analysis in the course he gave during the Winter semester 1925-26, published in 1976 as M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 21: *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (Frankfurt-Main: V. klostermann, 418 p.), pp. 27-125, particularly pp. 62-88.

[43] J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 255.

manifestations, Habermas refers to some types of symbolic self-expressions or "dramaturgical actions" (TCA I, 239) such as artworks that reveal subjective attitudes. The unique aesthetic nature of a work of art secures a distinct type of rational validity claim specifically reserved for the domain of art to which he assigns authenticity.

In his earlier works such as "What is Universal Pragmatism?" where Habermas establishes, in detail, his idea of validity claims, there is no reference to arts and aesthetic discourse. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, where he does mention aesthetic expressions, Habermas uses such terms as "authenticity" (TCA I, 20) or "beauty" (TCA I, 77) to refer to their validity claims. Authenticity and beauty also belong to the subjective world of an individual, and it is not clear whether they delineate the same type of validity claim as truthfulness and sincerity, or whether they convey divergent claims that belong to various symbolic expressions. According to one version, authenticity belongs to the domain of subjective *evaluations*, while truthfulness belongs to subjective *experiences* (TCA I, 17). But sometimes both Habermas and his commentators/critics use them interchangeably. Jane Braaten also makes the observation that these claims are not as elaborated as the other universal validity claims, namely truth and efficiency. But in her interpretation, both truthfulness and authenticity belong to the realm of aesthetic rationality. Therefore, she makes a synthesis out of the two and calls it an "aesthetic-expressive claim."[44]

2.5 Standards of Rationality

Habermas suggests the criticizability and testability of a validity claim expressed in an utterance or action as the key element for its rationality.[45] For

---

[44] J. Braaten, *Habermas's Critical Theory of Society*, ed. Lenore Langsdorf (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), p. 51.

[45] Cf. J. Habermas, "Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality," p. 307.

instance, with regard to cognitive validity claim, he asserts, "*speech-act-typical commitments are connected with cognitively testable validity claims*—that is [...] the reciprocal bonds have a rational basis."[46] That is so, because "the rationality of an expression depends on the reliability of the knowledge embodied in it" (TCA I, 8). This means that an utterance is rational insofar as its claim is proven to be reliable; unreliable knowledge is doomed irrational. Criticizability implies that the embodied claim should be fallible. If an expression—either for its idiosyncratic nature or because of its being regarded as sacred—is considered out of reach of criticism, it cannot be judged as rational or irrational.

The reliability condition requires claims grounded on reasons appropriate to their validity (TCA I, 9). Habermas is not satisfied with these criteria because of what he considers as two weaknesses, the first of which is its high level of abstraction that does not allow for "important differentiations" (TCA I, 10). Differentiation in this context refers to different criteria for the rationality of actions oriented to success and those oriented toward communicative understanding. The second weakness is that Habermas finds such a standard too narrow because it does not cover all validity claims.

Habermas' alternative to mere "criticism and grounding" as the criteria of all kinds of rationalities is a series of specialized standards pertaining to each and every validity claim. However, as Anthony Giddens observes, "[r]eason, for Habermas as for Popper, becomes primarily a phenomenon of methodical criticism."[47] This is why for Habermas, a theory of argumentation is important to the rationality problematic.

---

[46] J. Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 63.

[47] A. Giddens, "Reason without Revolution?: Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 99. The same article is published in: *In Defence of Sociology: Essays, Interpretations and Rejoinders* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 177.

Here is an outlook of his standards for various validity claims.

1. Truth claim: "An assertion can be called rational only if the speaker satisfies the conditions necessary to achieve the illocutionary goal of reaching an understanding about something in the world with at least one other participant in communication" (TCA I, 11). This implies both criticizability of the truth claim expressed in an assertion, and one's ability to ground one's claim on reasons if necessary. It also implies that if a speaker is not knowledgeable, or motivated, or argumentatively skilled enough to provide convincing arguments to satisfy other participants in the conversation, the reason lies not only in the speaker's irrationality, but also in the irrationality of the statement itself. One and the same assertion, therefore, could become rational if uttered by another speaker or by the same person in another setting in which the speaker could convince the addressee.

2. Efficiency: "A goal-directed action can be rational only if the actor satisfies the conditions necessary for realizing his intention to intervene successfully in the world" (TCA I, 11). Habermas does not make it clear whether successful intervention in the world is the necessary condition or only a sufficient condition for its rationality. Since he does not mention any other condition, it seems that he means the former alternative. If so, one may wonder if every success would be rational; obviously, success can be gained by different means and through very different procedures, and not all of them can be viewed as rational. Furthermore, some rational means may fail in certain circumstances and not in others. Habermas seems cognizant of such issues, at least as far as the problem of failure is concerned. Failures that can be "explained" are signs of rationality too (TCA I, 11). But he does not go further to elaborate on whether there are other criteria or conditions that should be met by successful actions before they could be called rational. Of course, if we speak of instrumentally rational

actions, this is the only criterion necessary for their rationality. In this sense, following a morally right procedure is irrational, that is, unsuccessful, if it does not lead to the desired goal. This is exactly the kind of rationality Weber and critical theory criticizes modernity for.

3. Rightness: Habermas emphasizes two basic conditions: "criticizability", and "the possibility of intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims" (TCA I, 15), as the constitutive criteria for the rationality of normatively regulated actions. The rightness of validity claims embedded in normative speech acts can be established or dismissed through argumentation by comparing the semantic content of the speech act with the norms accepted as legitimate in the lifeworld of the society in which the claim is raised.

4. Truthfulness: Habermas associates the truthfulness of expressive self-representations with the preference of evaluative expressions regarding their criteria of rationality. Expressive self-representations also reveal something about the subjective world of a speaker. Therefore, Habermas joins them with evaluative expressions and determines their rationality on the basis of their cultural acceptability. There are, however, differences between the two, which makes the transmission of rationality standards difficult. Although both subjective and evaluative expressions belong to the subjective world, they pertain to different levels of communication and rationality. According to Habermas, in evaluative utterances, like other types of discourse, rationality is decided on the basis of an observer's criticism of the speaker's (or agent's) claim and his or her ability to provide good reasons in the form of *arguments*. Observers could then compare the subject's arguments with their own understanding of the world, or accepted social norms and values, and come up with a judgment. In the expressive utterances, however, the object of validity claim is not at

the observers' disposal because it belongs to the private domain of subjective experience. The only way to have access to the subject's world is his or her own symbolic expressions. This is why Habermas replaces argument with action in this case, and resorts to monitoring subject's further actions as a procedure to judge about its rationality and sincerity. For him, truthfulness that conveys "the transparency of a subjectivity representing itself in language"[48] "can only be checked against the consistency of his [speaker's] subsequent behavior."[49] As a result, Habermas' idea of "argumentation as a court of appeal" (TCA I, 17) for judgments about validity and rationality gives way to action, and grounding to showing (TCA I, 41). The same conceptual tools Habermas uses to distinguish between formal analysis and empirical analysis procedures are applicable here as well.

    5. Preference: As far as the conditions for the rationality of evaluative expressions are concerned, Habermas speaks of interpreting the nature of one's "desires and feelings [*Bedürfnisnatur*] in the light of culturally established standards of value" (TCA I, 20). Habermas gives very little explanation about this type of validity claim and its rationality conditions. The introduction of the notion of interpretation into the decision process of rationality only adds to the problem. It seems that his attention has shifted from the success of one's *argument* in reply to criticisms about the validity of the claim expressed in one's assertion, to the degree to which one's *understanding* of one's own subjective experiences confirm the value-standards of the community in question. As a rejoinder to such criticism, Habermas adds another level of rationality to the discussion by suggesting that the speaker should "adopt a reflective attitude to the very value standards through which desires and feelings are interpreted" (TCA I, 20).

---

[48] J. Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?," p. 57.

[49] Ibid., p. 64.

An example may help situate the discussion and justify Habermas' arguments. When person *A* is afraid of high altitudes, this state of mind, however subjective, has an implicit universal claim, viz. everybody who would be in such a situation would have experienced the same fear. This kind of situational evaluation is an interpretation of one's subjective and immediate experience. Observers, however, can criticize this self-understanding of the individual on the basis of the way other partners in conversation would feel in the same circumstances. If all participants agree upon some criteria in this regard, these criteria become the standards of rationality for such claims. Habermas believes that such claims are neither universal nor even shared by all members of a cultural community. Nevertheless, they are not purely subjective either because dialogue partners can agree on them among themselves.

Habermas distinguishes between two levels of experience: "sensory experience or *observation*," and "communicative experience or *understanding* [*Verstehen*]."[50] He assigns to each experience a specific relation to its unique object, that is, the objective reality and the intentional meaning respectively. In the context of our discussion, we may speak of two levels of expression: the subjective expression related to the speaker's inner experiences, and the evaluative expression related to the sub-culturally shared values. Each one has a different claim and should be examined according to the nature and level of its validity claim.

Habermas' major criticism of definitions offered by sociological analysts of modernity, both proponents and opponents, is what he calls their narrow understanding of rationality by reducing it to 'instrumental rationality'. He thinks of such an interpretation as peculiar to the philosophy of consciousness that has to be revised on the basis of the new philosophy of language. Therefore, he comes up with

---

[50] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

a notion of communicative rationality that is "concretized in history, society, body, and language."[51] Rejecting realistic and phenomenological approaches to rationality, Habermas suggests a practical approach in which the prime object of rationality is human action including communicative action in the form of language. It is an action's criticizable claim to validity that makes it rational or irrational. Habermas allocates a specific type of rationality to each validity claim depending on its peculiar inner logic and the way it could be criticized and justified.

---

[51] T. McCarthy, "Introduction," in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. xvii.

CHAPTER 3

RATIONALIZATION AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION

"What, then, is the connection between rationalization and rationality?", Robert Audi asks with reference to Kant's following suggestion that "one can do the right thing for the wrong reasons; and when one does, one is not acting morally."[1] Rationalization is a process that presupposes a state of irrationality in need of being made rational through a gradual procedure. Since rationality has a positive connotation, rationalization is supposed to be a progressive movement out of the defection of irrationality to the perfection of rationality. Rationality, or irrationality for that matter, does not necessarily refer to a state of affairs in the world, whether subjective, objective, or social. They may refer to what is either only deemed, or seems to be, rational or irrational. Therefore, rationalization may take the form of a procedure to prove the rationality of a course of action, an article of belief, or the adherence to a value, which has been accused of being irrational.

3.1 Concepts of Rationalization

Depending on the meaning of reason and rationality, some of which was discussed in the first chapter, rationalization takes on different meanings and interpretations. If one understands reason to be the motivational ground of an action, i.e. reason vs. cause in the sense used in the social sciences, rationalization presupposes a

---

[1] Robert Audi, "Rationality and Valuation," in *Rationality in Action: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 426.

course of action that is not understandable for an observer as to what has motivated the actor to do it. If an action is not explicable from a third-person's perspective with respect to the reason behind it, it is characterized as irrational. The actor, or interpreter for that matter, then tries to show the motives and reasons behind the action in order to make it reasonably comprehensible. In this context, 'rational' means 'reasonable', that is, capable of being reproduced in terms understandable for others as an act justifiable with good reasons and defendable against criticisms and accusations; such defense is called rationalization. References to such instances of rationalization are found in the works of the social scientists and philosophers of science such as Robert Audi and Donald Davidson.

3.1.1 Rationalization as Having Good Reasons

Audi believes that "a particular action should be considered rational in virtue of a set of beliefs and wants expressing reasons for it, only if these wants and beliefs play a role in generating or sustaining it."[2] Such a condition corresponds to the second proviso proposed by Davidson for the rationalization of actions: "Whenever someone does something for a reason, therefore, he can be characterized as (a) having some sort of pro attitude toward actions of certain kind, and (b) believing (or knowing, perceiving, noticing, remembering) that his action is of that kind."[3]

In this sense, rationalization is the interpretative effort of one's own action to make it understandable and agreeable for others, or at least to prove it reasonable. In *Actions, Reasons, and Causes*, Davidson writes: "A reason rationalizes an action only if it

---

[2] Ibid., p. 427.

[3] D. Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, Causes," p. 675.

leads us to see something the agent saw, or thought he saw, in his action—some feature, or aspect of the action the agent wanted, desired, prized, held dear, thought dutiful, beneficial, obligatory, or agreeable."[4] An element Davidson emphasizes here is the agent's understanding and intention, and its effect on the rationality of action. In other words, it is not enough to do something to which the observers attribute rationality; rather, it is necessary to explore how the actor had perceived his or her own action in terms of rationality criteria. Audi is also of a similar opinion when he writes, adjudicating between William Dray and Carl G. Hempel,

> Doing a rational kind of thing does not entail that one's doing of it is rational. I doubt the converse entailment as well [...] What does a rationalization of one's action—if it cites a good reason one had for the action—show to be rational? On my view, it is at best the relevant action-type, not the token, that such rationalizations show to be rational [...] Unfortunately, it is easy to conflate the rationality of types with that of tokens because, for one thing, we have so many locutions that apply to both [...] Once we steadfastly distinguish these two kinds of things, we can see that much (though not all) of what Dray says about rational action applies to types, whereas Hempel's points against him apply mainly to tokens.[5]

Rationalization in the current discussion, however, does not refer to this type of justifying one's own, or another's, action through seeking and expressing the actor's reasons behind it.

---

[4] Ibid.

[5] R. Audi, "Rationality and Valuation," p. 426.

3.1.2 Societal Rationalization

In an interview, Habermas refers to societal rationalization as one of the motifs he has dealt with in *The Theory of Communicative Action*.[6] For him, societal rationalization signifies "the unfolding of the rational potential of social practice."[7] He considers Weber as his point of departure in this regard and describes the processes of social rationalization as referring to "the advance of an institutional embodiment of complexes of rationality."[8] He thinks that, in the context of Weber's discussion, this means "essentially the institutionalization of goal-rational action above all in economic and administrative systems."[9] He is critical of the narrow approach Weber chooses to the problem of rationality and rationalization; nevertheless, he owes to Weber his idea of societal rationalization as the growth of the subsystems of purposive rational action (TCA I, 284), as he is indebted to Parsons' functionalist approach in his presentation of social rationalization as an increase in system's complexity or an expansion in its steering (adaptation) capacity.[10]

This type of rationalization stands at the level of society and social action. It has nothing to do with individual agents, individual rationality, or the rationalization of individual actions *per se*. If there are references to, and discussions of, individuals they are included in the discussion due to the fact that an individual is part of society.

---

[6] Cf. A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 13.

[7] J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 345.

[8] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 17.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Cf. Johannes Berger, "The Linguistification of the Sacred and the Delinguistification of the Economy," in *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 168.

3.1.3 The Rationalization of Social Action

Rationalization on the level of culture refers to a society that "remolds its basic institutions in order to make use of—so to speak—culturally ready-made structures of rationality."[11] Weber specifically analyzes this concept in his discussion of the sociology of religion. Since Habermas draws heavily on Weber's idea of rationalization, let us first discuss Weber's understanding of the term. Rationalization is one of the most general elements and major themes in Weber's sociology as well as philosophy of history. As H. H. Gerth has it, Weber's suggestion consists in a prescription that says: for the analysis and understanding of "the rise and fall of institutional structures, the ups and downs of classes, parties, and rulers implement the general drift of secular rationalization."[12]

Weber confines his discussion to the rationalization of social action. In this regard, he thinks of "the substitution for the unthinking acceptance of ancient custom, of deliberate adaptation to situations in terms of self-interest"[13] as one major characteristic of rationalization. Such an understanding leads him to analyze the "development of the spirit of capitalism" in terms of the general process of rationalization.[14] This, of course, does not exhaust the concept of the rationalization of action.

> For in addition this can proceed in a variety of other directions; positively
> in   that   of   a   deliberate   formulation   of   ultimate   values
> (*Wertrationalisierung*); or negatively, at the expense not only of custom,
> but of emotional values; and finally, in favor of a morally sceptical type of

---

[11] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 18.

[12] H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, "Introduction: the Man and His Work," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 51.

[13] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 30.

[14] Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 76.

rationality; at the expense of any belief in absolute values. The many possible meanings of the concept of rationalization will often enter into the discussion.[15]

Weber's discussion of rationalization and its developmental course in history takes on the form of a sociological analysis of human endeavor to reconcile what seem to be in antagonistic relations, namely, eternal salvation and sacred values on the one hand, and temporal welfare and mastery of the world on the other. Weber conceptualizes myth-magic, religion, and science as stages in the human perpetual striving for furthering the rationalization of this reconciliation. For him, the main character determining the rationality of a reconciling proposal on the one hand, and distinguishing one stage from another on the other, lies in a worldview's ability to replace the unconsciously customary rites and sacraments with consciously chosen views and actions. As a consequence, the further human society travels this path, the more distinct becomes the differentiation among social structures, each of which following their own laws instead of all abiding by one comprehensive and all-embracing law imposed by nature or decreed by God. "The extent and direction of 'rationalization' is thus measured negatively in terms of the degree to which magical elements of thought are displaced, or positively by the extent to which ideas gain in systematic coherence and naturalistic consistency."[16]

What Weber believes to be shared by both myth and religion is that they take the meaningfulness of the world for granted. "Even the most primitive orgy has not entirely lacked a meaningful interpretation, although only the rationalized religions have imputed a metaphysical meaning into such specifically religious actions, in addition to the direct

---

[15] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 30.

[16] H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, Ibid., p. 51.

appropriation of sacred values. Rationalized religions have thus sublimated the orgy into the 'sacrament'."[17] In this regard, Weber considers theology as representing "an intellectual *rationalization* of the possession of sacred values. [...] Every theology [...] adds a few specific presuppositions for its work and thus for the justification of its existence. Their meaning and scope vary. Every theology [...] presupposes that the world must have a *meaning*, and the question is how to interpret this meaning so that it is intellectually conceivable."[18] Stephen Kalberg maps Weber's inquiry about the influences of religion on the rationalization of action

> throughout Max Weber's *The Religion of China* (1951), *The Religion of India* (1958), and *Ancient Judaism* (1952), as well as *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). It is central also in the more theoretical treatments of religion in *Economy and Society* (1968, pp. 399-634), "Author's Introduction" (1930, pp. 13-31), "the Social Psychology of the World Religions" (1964, pp. 267-301), and "Religious Rejections of the World" (1964, pp. 323-359) [...] Yet he fails to articulate systematically the degree to which and manner in which an orientation to the supernatural influences and even rationalizes action.[19]

Stephen Kalberg traces the debates over Weber's idea of religious rationalization back to the mid 1970s as the central theme among the sociologists of West Germany exemplified

---

[17] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," p. 278.

[18] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), p.153.

[19] S. Kalberg, "The Rationalization of Action in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion," *Sociological Theory* 8/1 (Spring 1990): 58.

in the works of Tenbruck[20], Schluchter[21], Riesebrodt[22], Winckelmann[23], and Döbert[24]. He

considers Habermas as having sided with Tenbruck's position in this regard.[25]

One of the major points of divergence among those who have discussed the issue

of social rationalization is the question whether rationalization is a gradual and

developmental trend in human history or only a reaction to certain conditions. Guenther

Roth explains Weber's notion of rationalization in terms of a structural approach: when

Weber speaks of different social structures as following their own laws he "refers not to

any developmental scheme or any inherent laws of evolution but to institutionalized

logics and rationales. [...] Thus, this notion is related to the concept of rationalization."[26]

According to Roth, rationalization is a defense mechanism employed in the face of crises

in order to maintain power, integrity and structural differentiation:

> Various kinds of rationalization [...] create new forms of structural
> differentiation and integration. Rationalization may be a response to built-

---

[20] F. H. Tenbruck, "The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber," *The British Journal of Sociology* 31 (September 1980): 316-51.

[21] Wolfgang Schluchter, "The Paradox of Rationalization;" W. Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History*, trans. Guenther Roth (Berkeley, CA & London: University of California Press, 1981); W. Schluchter, "Max Weber's Religionssoziologie: eine werkgeschichtliche Rekonstruction," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 36 (December 1984): 342-66; W. Schluchter, "Weber's Sociology of Rationalism and Typology of Religious Rejections of the World," in *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity*, ed. Sam Whimster & Scott Lash (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 92-118.

[22] Martin Riesebrodt, "Ideen, Interessen, Rationalisierung: kritische Anmerkungen zu F. H. Tenbrucks Interpretation das Werkes Max Webers," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 32 (March 1980): 111-29.

[23] Johannes Winckelmann, "Die Herkunft von Max Webers 'Entzauberungs'-Konzeption," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 32 (March 1980): 12-53.

[24] Rainer Döbert, "Rationalität und Rationalisierung im Werk Max Webers," in *Max Weber heute: Erträge und Probleme der Forschung* , ed. Johannes Weiss (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989,) pp. 210-49.

[25] Cf. S. Kalberg, "The Rationalization of Action," p. 58.

[26] G. Roth, "Duration and Rationalization: Fernand Braudel and Max Weber," in *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Methods*, ed. Guenther Roth & Wolfgang Schluchter (Berkeley, CA & London: University of California Press, 1979), p. 178.

in conflict in a given structure [...] Rationalization may also result from external pressures, such as military threats [...] Finally, rationalization tends to develop different logics for different spheres, and this process too creates historical tensions with unpredictable outcomes.[27]

According to this interpretation, rationalization is not perceived as a process, but it is described as an analytic concept explicable from the perspective of those who create ideas and manipulate social systems. This is not what Weber means by rationalization. His idea of rationalization can only be explained in terms of the interests and attitudes of those affected by the changes of ideas and actions. Elaborating on the differences between rational ideas and bureaucratic rationalization on the one hand and charismatic beliefs and power on the other, he writes:

> The decisive difference—and this is important for understanding the meaning of 'rationalism'—is not inherent in the *creator* of ideas or of 'works,' or in his inner experience; rather, the difference is rooted in the manner in which the ruled and led experience and internalize these ideas. As we have shown earlier, rationalization proceeds in such a fashion that the broad masses of the led merely accept or adapt themselves to the external, technical resultants which are of practical significance for their interests [...] whereas the substance of the creator's ideas remain irrelevant to them [...] whereas charisma, if it has any specific effects at all, manifests its revolutionary power from within, from a central *metanoia* [change] of the followers' attitudes [...] charisma, in its most potent forms, disrupts rational rule as well as tradition altogether and overturns all notions of sanctity. [...] In this purely empirical and value-free sense

---

[27] Ibid.

charisma is indeed the specifically creative revolutionary force of history."[28]

Contrary to Roth, Habermas explains Weber's notion of the rationalization of social systems as referring to a process of adaptation in a political system

> to the new requisites of rationality brought about by [the] developing subsystems...of purposive-rational action. [... M]easured against the new standards of purposive rationality, the power-legitimating and action-orienting traditions—especially mythological interpretations and religious worldviews—lose their cogency. On this level of generalization, what Weber termed 'secularization' has two aspects. First, traditional world-views and objectivations lose their power and validity. [...] Instead, they are reshaped into subjective belief systems and ethics which ensure the private cogency of modern value-orientations (the 'Protestant ethic'). Second, they are transformed into constructions that do both at once: criticize tradition and reorganize the released material of tradition according to the principles of formal law and the exchange of equivalents (rationalist natural law).[29]

Habermas raises a number of criticisms against Weber's analysis of rationalization. First, he thinks that Weber does not pay proper attention to the fact that capitalist rationalization has followed a selective pattern in this regard, since it has focused on the purposive-instrumental rationality and neglected other spheres of rationality. Second, Habermas believes that Weber does not distinguish sharply enough between lifeworld and system, "between the more or less differentiated or 'rationalized' life-worlds that are reproduced by way of communicative action and, on the other hand, formally organized

---

[28] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, pp. 1116-17.

[29] J. Habermas, "Technology and Science as "Ideology"," in *Toward a Rational Society*, p. 98.

systems of action based on media steering."[30] By media he mainly refers to money and power that are institutionalized in economical and administrative social systems. The third critique concerns the rationalization of worldviews; here, Habermas is of the opinion that although Weber differentiates between "three value spheres in the rationalization of society that set in with the modern age" (TCA I, 197-98), he does not include all of them in his analysis of the rationalization of worldviews. Instead, Weber limits his discussion "to the standpoint of ethical rationalization [*Ethisierung*]; he traces the development of a religiously grounded ethic of conviction—more generally, the development of posttraditional legal and moral representations [...] But the rationalization of worldviews could have been traced equally well in [...] the transformation of cognitive and expressive elements looking back from the perspective of modern science and autonomous art" (TCA I, 197).

The detachment of the specialized domains from tradition poses a problem "generated by the autonomous logic of the differentiated value spheres."[31] Habermas is sympathetic to and even agrees with Weber's idea of disenchantment and loss of meaning and integrity in the modern era, but he is of the opinion that modernity with its characteristic rationality is capable of, and has the potential for, redeeming and curing this deficit. Habermas' discussion of rationalization thus focuses on the two spheres of rationalization, namely, lifeworld and worldview. Before tackling the issue in these domains, we have to inquire into Habermas' fundamental assumption about the nature of

---

[30] Axel Honneth, Eberhard Knodler-Bunte, and Arno Widmann, "The Dialectics of Rationalization," in *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Peter Dews (London & New York: Verso, 1992), p. 112.

[31] J. Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Classical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ed. Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 46.

rationalization. In his developmental system of thought, rationalization is perceived as a developmental process consisting of different stages, distinguished by the level of differentiation.

3.2 Rationalization and Social Evolution

Habermas cites Ernst Schulin stating that "world history is no longer understood as a continuum, as a unitary course or process from the beginnings to the present. Evolutionary conceptions of history are a thing of the past."[32] Against the background of such a theory of history, there are those who view the course of history as stages in a perpetual evolutionary process. Weber, according to Tenbruck's interpretation, has sided with the evolutionary thesis "so far as matters of religion are concerned."[33] Such an attribution gains legitimacy despite Weber's overt suspicion about theories that analyze the course of human history as following a progressive law, when one considers his examination of the world religions and his conclusion that all world religions abide by the unidirectional laws of rationalization.

According to Habermas, the systems-theory of society propounded by Parsons should be complemented with a theory of social evolution. His justification for this suggestion, is that Parsons

> tries to transform the framework of a theory of action extracted from Pareto, Durkheim, and Max Weber, so that it fits into the system paradigm. [...] By programmatically taking the step to a general systems theory of society, Parsons must also replace history as the medium of

---

[32] E. Schulin, "Introduction," in E. Schulin, ed., *Universalgeschichte* (Cologne, 1974), pp. 11ff.; quoted in J. Habermas, "History and Evolution," p. 5.

[33] F. H. Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers," p. 682; quoted in TCA I, 195.

change of societal systems with developmental processes. [...] Social evolution reaches right through history, it makes history into an epiphenomenon.[34]

Habermas notices a radicalization of the Parsonian approach in the functionalistic methodology of Niklas Luhmann who follows the lead of biology and the theory of organic evolution, applying its basic assumptions and principles to the field of sociological development. Luhmann perceives a continuity between the biological and sociological evolution and transforms the three mechanisms of the evolution of individual organs to the level of society: he substitutes language for the variation mechanism, communications media for the selection mechanism, and the achievements of system differentiation for the stabilization mechanism.[35]

The divergence between Luhmann's evolutionism and Habermas' developmentalism is clearly stated by Klaus Eder who divides the evolutionary views of history in contemporary sociology into two basic types: the first

proceeds from the assumption that social evolution is continuous with the evolution of animal sociality [...] The opposite category is [...] based on the assumption [that] social evolution follows its own peculiar cultural logic, driven by specifically human learning processes, well beyond the logic of natural evolution. While Luhmann's functionalistic theory of social evolution corresponds to the former description, Habermas's rationalistic theory of social evolution is exemplary of the latter type.[36]

---

[34] J. Habermas, "History and Evolution," p. 23.

[35] Cf. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[36] K. Eder, *Die Vergesellschaftung der Natur* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 287-88; quoted in Piet Strydom, "Sociocultural Evolution or the Social Evolution of Practical Reason?: Eder's Critique of Habermas," *Praxis International* 13/3 (1993): 309.

Habermas openly seeks to provide an alternative to Luhmann's theory of social evolution. "Universal structures of consciousness and levels of learning scaled according to the logic of development"[37] are the linchpins of his theory. He expects a theory of social evolution neither to play the role of the philosophy of history, nor to be a framework for the writing of history. Instead, he perceives evolutionary theory as applicable to practical discourse as the medium of rationality.[38]

3.2.1 Historical Materialism and Social Evolution

Rationalization for Habermas is perceived in terms of a socio-historical evolution. He bases his analysis of rationalization on a developmental perspective of history anchored in the Marxist theory of historical materialism. Habermas' point of divergence from the orthodox Marxist analysis of social history is the way he interprets the force behind such an evolution. Contrary to the Marxist tradition, which counts labor and the relations of production as the source of conflict and revolution in human history, Habermas reconstructs human history in terms of a developmental logic borrowed mainly from the developmental cognitive psychology of Jean Piaget. According to him, the development of the social cognitive potential puts social evolution in motion.

Inspired by the theory of historical materialism put forward by Karl Marx, Habermas develops a critical theory of society in the form of a theory of social evolution. The materialist conception of history is one of the major instances where Marx relates the idea of dialectical materialism to the historical development of society. According to this

---

[37] J. Habermas, "History and Evolution," pp. 7-8.

[38] It is beyond the scope of our study to further analyze the famous debate between Habermas and Luhmann. See in particular Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1971).

theory, productive forces of society expand within the framework of a system of social relations of production. The development of the productive forces, as well as the rate of such an expansion, is determined by historical circumstances. This immanent force is described as the conflict or the contradiction between the productive powers as well as the production relations. Contradiction is seen as the major force of historical development that initiates an epoch of social revolution.

As Michael Schmid suggests, Habermas' agenda to reconstruct historical materialism is based on a "fundamental anthropology which allows us to identify *labour* and *language* as irreducible presuppositions of any society."[39] Accordingly, labor is the medium in which the material reproduction of society is made possible, and through the medium of language its members can socialize and communicate with one another. Social evolution is perceived as the continuation and gradual transformation of these social structures. "Through extensive arguments Habermas has tried to substantiate the connection of reproductive labour with instrumental and/or strategic action on the one hand, and of language and communication with the competent use of normative rules on the other."[40]

Habermas distinguishes between three central structures of society: (a) instrumental action steered to solving the problems of material reproduction, (b) power structure concerned with system autonomy, and (c) collective identity aimed at establishing and maintaining social integration. In the orthodox Marxist tradition, the emphasis is on the reproduction forces as the motive power of socio-historical revolution,

---

[39] M. Schmid, "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution," in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1982), p. 162.

[40] Ibid., p. 163.

and economy is seen as the infrastructure of society, while all other institutions and social structures are deemed secondary superstructures. Superstructures and their corresponding domains of rationality depend for their development and evolution on, and actually follow, the lead of the changes that occur in the domain of instrumental reason aimed at solving the material reproduction of society. Habermas' focus, however, is on action structures, social systems and social integration. For him, "[s]ocial systems can be viewed as networks of communicative actions,"[41] and all structures are thus comprehensible only as "structures of linguistically established intersubjectivity."[42] Habermas regards collective identity and social integration as the cultural infrastructure for any social change. This may explain Habermas' choice of communicative action as the subject for his research program instead of capital, as it was the case for Marx.

3.2.2 From Cognitive Development to Social Evolution

Habermas assimilates Jean Piaget's genetic epistemology, with its developmental viewpoint, into the Marxist theory of historical materialism. In Habermas' own words,

> The stimulus that encouraged me to bring normative structures into a developmental-logical problematic came from the *genetic structuralism* of Jean Piaget as well, thus from a conception that has overcome the traditional structuralist front against evolutionism and that has assimilated motifs of the theory of knowledge from Kant to Peirce. (Lucian Goldmann

---

[41] J. Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 89.

[42] Ibid., p. 116.

very early recognized the significance of Piaget's work for Marxist theory.)[43]

Besides Piaget's developmental psychology and his Geneva school, Habermas is indebted to other "psychologists in this tradition [...] such as Bruner, Flavel, Furth, Kohlberg, etc. [who] have demonstrated a developmental logic of arranged learning levels in the child's cognitive development."[44] Habermas also mentions a few efforts made to "discover similar structures of consciousness on the level of the development of macro-systems, or [...] collectively shared structures of consciousness. [...] Such efforts [...] have been made for the development of religion (Bellah, Döbert), and also for the development of law and morality (Eder, Habermas)."[45] Encouraged by these attempts in a variety of fields of social consciousness, Habermas applies the notion of developmental logic, along with historical materialism, in his analysis of the rationalization in the domain of social systems as well as the lifeworld, and he proposes "to explain the evolutionary changes of social systems with simultaneous reference to developmental logics (structures of consciousness) and historical processes (events)."[46]

Habermas has borrowed the term as well as the idea of developmental stages from the genetic epistemology Piaget developed in the field of developmental psychology. This has been applied by the American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg to the field of moral development. Habermas traces sketches of the same ideas in two other theoretical traditions as well: "in analytic ego psychology (H. S. Sullivan, Erikson)" and "in the

---

[43] Ibid., pp. 124-25.

[44] J. Habermas, "History and Evolution," p. 29.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., p. 30.

symbolic interactionist theory of action (Mead, Blumer, Goffman, et al.)."[47] For Piaget,

the notion of *development* is restricted to human psychological growth in contrast to

maturation by which he refers to the physiological growth of any living organism.[48] The

notion of development implies duration, time, and an order of succession. A new logical

structure is in need of a previous logical structure serving as a substratum. Therefore, a

developmental process cannot be accelerated through learning.[49] In other words, "it is one

thing to learn the result and another to form an intellectual instrument, a logic required to

construct such a result. Such a new reasoning instrument is not formed in a few days."[50]

Piaget thinks of developmental levels (stages) as requiring a hierarchy of structures built

in a certain order of integration according to which the whole period of a stage is viewed

as a preparatory level for the next one.[51] He uses the term 'structure' as denoting the

global laws or properties of a totality seen as a system. Coherence, unity, and the laws of

totality are characteristic of structures.[52] For him, a structure is more like a planetary

system, any change of whose elements affects the relation of all others in the system, so

that the system reorganizes itself according to the forces inherent therein.[53]

---

[47] J. Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 73.

[48] Cf. Hans G. Furth, "Piaget's Theory of Knowledge," in *Piaget, Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 2.

[49] Cf. Ali Mesbah, "Human Cognitive Development in the Transcendental Philosophy of |adr al-Dîn Shîrâzî and the Genetic Epistemology of Jean Piaget" (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1994), p. 78.

[50] J. Piaget, *The Child and Reality: Problems of Genetic Psychology*, trans. Arnold Rosin (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 8.

[51] Cf. Ibid., pp. 1-11.

[52] Cf. Ibid., pp. 51-52.

[53] Cf. Donn Welton, "Introduction to the Faculty Seminar on the Concept of Structure in Piaget's Genetic Epistemology," in *Piaget, Philosophy and Human Sciences*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 36.

Habermas takes Piaget's theory of individual cognitive development as a paradigm and generalizes it to society and human history. In other words, he uses Piaget's ontogenetic research program to draw his phylogenetic conclusions, a strategy which is not without precedence in the Marxist tradition. He suggests modeling "the history of technology on the ontogenetically analyzed stages of cognitive development," which can be done "only if we can specify which structures of world views correspond to individual forms of social integration and how these structures limit the development of secular knowledge."[54] He even takes pains to—albeit very tentatively—"distinguish among (a) the symbiotic, (b) the egocentric, (c) the sociocentric-objectivistic, and (d) the universalistic stages of development"[55] by making correspondence between Piaget's cognitive-developmental stages and his idea of the levels of social evolution and the evolution of worldviews.

Habermas considers development and learning as constituted by a set of elements including differentiation, reflexivity, decentration—adapted from Piaget—and autonomy. He uses these elements in order to transform the idea of individual cognitive development into a theory of social learning evolution. He analyzes and evaluates religious worldviews against these criteria and concludes that "[m]odern rational structures satisfy these criteria to a higher degree than do religious worldviews. [...] This is (for Habermas) a process of progressive overcoming of (psychological and social) constraints to free communication."[56]

---

[54] J. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 169.

[55] J. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," p. 100.

[56] Donald Jay Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work: Some Remarks on the Relation between Critical Theory and the Phenomenology of Religion," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 11/3 (Summer 1986): 222-23.

The resemblance or homology—to use Habermas' terminology—between Habermas' analysis of the evolution of society and its learning levels on the one hand, and Piaget's theory of cognitive development and its stages on the other, is interesting. For Piaget, the point of departure is an analogy between intellect and biological organisms, transferring the criteria from the latter and applying their governing rules and laws to the former. Habermas makes the same move by comparing society with intellect, bringing the developmental logic of the latter to bear upon the former. Piaget borrows the concepts of organization, adaptation, assimilation, and accommodation from the field of biology and applies them to the domain of cognitive psychology in order to explain the way an individual makes sense of new objects, how one's knowledge expands, and the manner in which one's cognitive structures develop. In biology, there is a distinction between "two inseparable general functions: *organization* and *adaptation*. [...] Organization forms the internal process of a mechanism the external aspect of which is fashioned by adaptation [...] organization refers to the relation between the parts and the whole, and adaptation alludes to the coordination of the whole with its surrounding environment."[57] Piaget speaks the same language in his analysis of human intellect: "Every intellectual operation is always related to all the others and [...] its own elements are controlled by the same law. [...] The relationships between this organization and adaptation are consequently the same as on the organic level."[58] The only difference between the two domains is that an "organism's adaptation requires constructing new material forms to be adjacent to its material surroundings, whereas intellectual adaptation

---

[57] A. Mesbah, "Human Cognitive Development," p. 43.

[58] J. Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*, trans. Margaret Cook (New York, NY: Norton & Co., 1963), p. 7.

surpasses this limit by constructing mental structures to be applied to those of the universe."[59]

Piaget perceives a certain continuity "between intelligence and the purely biological processes of morphogenesis[60] and adaptation to the environment,"[61] and he equates intelligence with adaptation.[62] Living organisms, from the simple, one-celled amoeba to the most complex ones, for their physical growth, go through a process of accommodating themselves to their food objects in the external environment on the one hand, and assimilation of the food into their biological structures. According to Piaget, the process of cognition also involves assimilation, internalizing the environmental elements by absorbing the new situation into the hitherto existing cognitive structures or schemes. If the pre-existing schemes are not sufficient to make sense of the new situation, one is required to accommodate, or modify, one's own cognitive structures in a way that makes room for new external elements. Cognition, according to Piaget, aims at equilibrium, viz. a balance between external world and internal schemes,[63] although the reached equilibrium is not stable and soon relapses into disequilibrium while confronting a new challenging situation.

---

[59] A. Mesbah, "Human Cognitive Development," p. 43.

[60] Morphogenesis denotes the structural formation of an organism as well as the distinctions and growth of tissues and organs in the course of development.

[61] J. Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*, p. 1.

[62] Cf. Ibid., p. 3. Later, Piaget ascribes this definition to Claparèd and considers it "too vague." By refuting Karl Bühler's definition of intelligence as "an act of immediate comprehension" for being "too narrow", Piaget prefers to define intelligence in terms of coordination of operations or "as a form of equilibration, or forms of equilibration, towards which all cognitive functions lead." (J. Piaget, "The Stages of the Intellectual Development of the Child," in *Readings in Child Development and Personality*, ed. John J. Conger, Paul Henry Mussen & Jerome Kagan [New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1970], pp. 291-92.)

[63] Cf. A. Mesbah, "Human Cognitive Development," p. 45.

Habermas justifies such a transition by indicating that "[t]he learning capacities first acquired by individual members of society or marginal social groups gain entrance into the interpretive system of the society through exemplary learning processes. Collectively shared structures of consciousness and stores of knowledge represent, in terms of empirical knowledge and moral-practical insight, a cognitive potential that can be used socially."[64] In this way, Habermas builds his theory of social evolution for which "learning processes in the domain of moral-practical consciousness function as pacemakers."[65] He also distinguishes three developmental processes, each of which is connected with a different object, and he ascribes to each process an internal developmental logic. First is the ontogenesis of individuals that occurs in the three spheres of cognition, morality, and interaction. The second domain is "the technical development of humanity as a whole. Technical knowledge, which can be converted into instrumental action, increases by accumulation."[66] Finally the third realm consists of normative structures whose development follows the process of collective learning.[67] Habermas admits that "[t]he *learning mechanisms* have to be sought first on the psychological level. [...] *Individually acquired learning abilities* and information must be latently available in world views before they can be used in a socially significant way, that is, before they can be transposed into *societal learning processes.* [...] It is only in a derivative[68] sense that societies 'learn'."[69]

---

[64] J. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," p. 160.

[65] Ibid. See also J. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," p. 99.

[66] M. Schmid, "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution," p. 164.

[67] Cf. Ibid.

[68] Schmid cites the same sentence in the following form: "Societies 'learn' only in a metaphorical sense." M. Schmid, "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution," p. 167.

The realization of this agenda for transforming individual development into social evolution requires Habermas to establish systematic links between the developmental history of individuals and that of society. His way of accomplishing such an agenda lies in sociologizing history through a shift of emphasis in historical inquiry that substitutes for the study of great individuals the investigation of "the activities of collective actors, gives priority to analyses of institutions, expands the history of ideas into a critique of ideology and takes more strongly into account anonymous, quantitatively registered social processes."[70] Consequently, history turns into a social science leading "away from the political history of the actions of leaders and governments in a history of ideas framework, to economic and social history, in which cultural history is also integrated."[71] History for Habermas represents a continuous chain of events and procedures leading to an idealized state of problem solving. Each episode in the human history is perceived as one part in this whole process of learning and is "evaluated by means of the underlying problem-solving pattern."[72]

Habermas endorses Luhmann's idea of language as a mechanism that functions in the process of social evolution for generating variety. Meanwhile, he criticizes Luhmann for failing to recognize that language is not simply a mechanism, but "the bearer of socio-cultural learning processes, with whose help we can give respectively specific explanations as to why a few systems, when faced with unsolvable steering problems

---

[69] J. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," p. 121.

[70] J. Habermas, "History and Evolution," p. 15.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

form new structures and increase their complexity, while others do not."[73] To fix this

defection, Habermas proposes

> a genetic theory of language–mediated cognition [...] (in areas of
> objectifying thought and of moral-practical insight), which explains
> evolutionary learning as a process of construction and reconstruction in
> the sense of Piaget, instead of subverting it functionalistically from the
> first [...] Learning potentials must...be secured tangibly by consciousness
> structures that can be understood as learning levels [...] the concept of
> structures of consciousness arranged according to a degree of
> development.[74]

Structures of consciousness refer to the structural conditions that provide society qua

macro-system with prospects for learning processes in a higher level. "The evolutionary

learning process consists then in the constructive mastery of new learning levels.

Evolutionary learning processes are reflexive—they are learning applied to structural

conditions of learning."[75] As Schmid explains, Habermas analyzes the process of social

evolution in the form of several steps in a learning procedure. Each and every society, at

any point of its history, stands on a specific learning level represented by its capacity for

learning and the knowledge contained in its worldview. The capacity of a certain society

for learning is manifested in its 'steering capacity' and its ability to deal with, and adapt

to, the 'steering problems', namely the contingent social problems and disturbances

threatening "the development of productive forces, of system autonomy and of *social*

---

[73] Ibid., p. 28.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., p. 29.

integration.[76] When such problematic situations occur, a society reacts in proportion to its latent problem-solving capacity present in its worldview in order to overcome the crisis. This effort is circumscribed by what Habermas calls 'organizational principles'.

The principles of organization refer to "innovations that become possible through developmental-logically reconstructible stages of learning, and which institutionalize new levels of societal learning;" "a principle of organization consists of regulations so abstract that in the social formation which it determines a number of functionally equivalent modes of production are possible."[77] As far as this happens and system problems are unraveled within the boundary of the pervasive organizational principles of a given society, social integrity is preserved, but no advancement toward a higher level of learning is made. However, if this does not materialize due to the lack of capacity in the existing organizational principle for solving precisely these 'evolutionary challenges', the integrity of the social system is threatened. At this juncture, a society can safeguard "its normatively secured identity in the face of evolutionary challenges by abandoning its learning level and thereby also its institutional form of integration, that is, its organisation principle. With recourse to the problem-solving capacities latent in its world-views, the society then reintegrates at a new (and in terms of developmental logic) higher stage."[78]

3.2.3 Reflections and Criticisms

Those who have expressed concerns over, and criticized, Habermas' idea of the evolution of society have approached it from a number of perspectives. Some critics such as Schmid are concerned over the abstractness of the theory and its justificatory language.

---

[76] M. Schmid, "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution," p. 168.

[77] J. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," p. 153.

[78] M. Schmid, "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution," p. 169.

Schmid thinks that a theory of social evolution of this caliber, which wants to explicate the way central structures of social identity change over time, has to introduce "an unequivocal specification of the types of social formation,"[79]—a necessary step not provided by Habermas who instead is content to present organizational principles as abstract regulations. Schmid disagrees with Habermas' proposal that certain social formations can be adequately explained with reference to an organizational principle on such a level of abstraction alone. He thinks that general concepts of this sort serve only for analytical purposes without sufficient exactness to account for empirical evidence and to allow accurate explanations.[80] This level of abstraction robs a theory of its predictability and makes its claims dependent on *"an empirical interpretation* before they can be tested."[81] Schmid's critique can be expanded to include some other elements in Habermas' theory such as his materialistic analysis of the origins of religion, its development, and its end. Habermas proposes his ideas on these essential issues in abstract terms without producing explicit evidences, historical or otherwise, to establish them and defend them against criticisms.

A second line of criticism concerns the scope and focus of the theory. Piet Strydom calls it a "culturalistic theory of social evolution [that] rests on [Habermas'] normativistic reconstruction of historical materialism which gives primacy to moral evolution" and "neglects the social praxis underlying societal learning processes."[82] Johannes Berger, however, is unsatisfied with such a reductionistically cultural

---

[79] Ibid., p. 171.

[80] Cf. Ibid., pp. 171-72.

[81] Ibid., p. 172.

[82] P. Strydom, "Sociocultural Evolution," pp. 309-10.

interpretation of this theory. He rightly defends Habermas' theory as basically a "cognitivist theory of social evolution. This states that the rise of modern societies must be conceived as the translation of a prior cultural rationalization into a social counterpart. The threshold of modern societies is crossed precisely at the point when (and because!) progress in rationality already exists on a cultural level and, as it were, it steps out of the monasteries and into social reality."[83]

Klaus Eder believes that Habermas positively endorses social evolution at the expense of losing much of his theory's potential for criticism.[84] Eder's criticism gains more weight when we take into consideration that he regards Habermas' theory of social evolution as being in line with Kant's critique of reason "in so far as it proceeds from the construction of ideal stages and the postulation of potentialities of social evolution, and is then exercised with reference to a standard or criterion beyond society."[85] In other words, Eder believes that despite his criticism of the Kantian philosophy of consciousness (as he calls it), Habermas adopts its principles and transforms them into his own theory of social evolution. According to this interpretation, Habermas has applied and generalized them to a social context. Eder calls Habermas' theory an aprioristic critique of reason that socializes the Kantian critique of practical reason. Yet, although the epistemological foundations of Habermas' theory of social evolution can be traced back to the Kantian critiques of reason, its main feature, namely its developmental logic, runs counter to the Kantian apriorism. As Habermas himself clearly states, his idea of development is the

---

[83] J. Berger, "The Linguistification of the Sacred," p. 170.

[84] Cf. P. Strydom, "Sociocultural Evolution," p. 317.

[85] Ibid.

result of an expansion of Piaget's theory of cognitive development which is, in turn, a critique of the Kantian notion of a priori categories.

The correspondence of the stages in the evolution of social structures of knowledge to the stages of cognitive development of individuals is of major concern for Habermas' critics. Schmid "can find no detailed argument for what the connection between ontogenesis and the developmental logic of worldviews should look like."[86] He raises the question as to whether a theory of social evolution based on individual cognitive development is meant to imply that "the people of earlier social formations did not pass through all the stages of their possible ontogenetic development," and "if this is the case, what kind of empirical grounds could we produce for this, independently of the fact that the relevant world-views had *no* universal or postconventional features?"[87] Labeling Habermas' developmental logic a theoretical fiction,[88] Schmid perceives it as having "no explanatory powers whatsoever and in fact only burdens an evolutionary theory with irrelevant logical problems" and for him, Habermas' theory should *"be freed of all developmental-logical elements"*[89] before it can be viewed as a viable social theory.

A similar deprecation, though from a different perspective, to the evolutionary argument in regard to rationalization comes from David M. Rasmussen who describes Habermas' strategy—contrasting the modern to the savage mind as stages in an evolutionary continuum—as "a version of nineteenth century argument which fascinated Sir James Frazer and a host of others including Karl Marx. By disclosing the fetishistic

---

[86] M. Schmid, "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution," p. 173.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid., p. 180.

[89] Ibid., p. 174.

character of archaic thought we can better understand the superiority of our modernity; or so the argument seemed to go."[90] He appeals to the investigations of Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss in order to show that discursive reasoning is not confined to modernity. Rejecting the dichotomy of myth-modernity as an old-fashioned distinction, Rasmussen believes that simple evolutionary paradigm belongs in the late eighteenth century up until the beginning of the twentieth century, when "it was fashionable to argue that language could be understood on the basis of an evolutionary theory [...] Hegel and Kant [...] used theories that presupposed such an evolutionary development."[91] He believes that such a scheme of interpretation is now left 'dangling in the wind', thanks to the discoveries of de Saussure, Wittgenstein, and Lévi-Strauss. Rasmussen seems willing to argue that it is not the case that Habermas has discovered the evolutionary logic of historical changes, and because of that, felt himself obliged to interpret the course of social rationalization in developmental terms. Rather, the reverse is true, and Habermas uses a theory of developmental rationalization in order to justify his choice of a general theory of evolution.[92]

3.3 Spheres of Rationalization

Habermas chooses "to work up the sociological approaches to a theory of societal rationalization" as the best strategy in his endeavor to establish "the universality of the concept of communicative rationality, without falling back upon the guarantees of the great philosophical tradition" (TCA I, 138-39). By societal rationalization, Habermas

---

[90] D. M. Rasmussen, "Communicative Action and Philosophy: Reflections on Habermas' Theorie des Kommunikativen handelns," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 9 (Spring 1980): 8.

[91] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[92] Cf. Ibid., p. 9.

refers to Weber's use of the term 'societal action' in contrast to 'communal action' that "refers to that action which is oriented to the feeling of the actors that they belong together."[93] Social action denotes an action "methodically ordered and led [and] oriented to a rationally motivated adjustment of interests."[94]

In societal rationalization, Habermas distinguishes between social system and lifeworld. This distinction is central to Habermas' argument against Weber on the one hand, and for his theory of communicative rationality on the other. Speaking of Habermas' magnum opus, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, J. Berger reminds us that "[t]o fail to recognize the importance Habermas ascribes to the distinction between rationalization of the lifeworld and rationalization of the system would be to miss the book's central intention completely."[95] This distinction, however, is another version of Marx's metaphorical demarcation between "the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom'" (TCA II, 340). Habermas thinks that Weber, along with many others, has overlooked this distinction and focused on system rationalization. He criticizes Weber for failing to give the rationalization of lifeworld its due attention.

> To the degree that the institutionalized production of knowledge that is specialized according to cognitive, normative, and aesthetic validity claims penetrates to the level of everyday communication and replaces traditional knowledge in its interaction-guiding functions, there is [...] a rationalization of the lifeworld that Weber neglected as compared with the rationalization of action systems like economy and the state. (TCA I, 340)

---

[93] Max Weber, "Class, Status, Party," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), p.183.

[94] Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 228.

[95] J. Berger, "The Linguistification of the Sacred," p. 169.

He also blames Parsons for subsuming "the concept of the lifeworld gained from an action-theoretical perspective under systems-theoretical concepts" (TCA II, 153). Finally, his diagnosis of Marx's error is that he dialectically clamps "together system and lifeworld in a way that does not allow for a sufficiently sharp separation between the *level of system differentiation* attained in the modern period and the *class specific forms* in which it has been *institutionalized* [...] otherwise he could not have failed to see that *every* modern society, whatever its class structure, has to exhibit a high degree of structural differentiation" (TCA II, 340).

3.3.1 The Uncoupling of System and Lifeworld

Habermas' two-level concept of society joins the two facets of lifeworld and social system. He thinks that such a two-dimensional concept of society, and the process of societal rationalization, is possible only on the basis of the conceptual framework of a theory of communicative action. There arises a contradiction

> between, on the one hand, a rationalization of everyday communication that is tied to the structures of intersubjectivity of lifeworld, in which language counts as the genuine and irreplaceable medium of reaching understanding, and, on the other hand, the growing complexity of subsystems of purposive-rational action, in which actions are coordinated through steering media such as money and power. Thus there is a competition *not between the types of action* oriented to understanding and to success, *but between principles of societal integration.* (TCA I, 342)

Habermas develops the idea of a lifeworld as a counterpart to the social system "with reference to construction problems in Parsons' social theory" (TCA II, 301). For him, the "processes of societal rationalization [...] transpire more in implicitly known structures

of the lifeworld than in explicitly known action orientations" (TCA I, 337). He introduces three structural components for the lifeworld (i.e. culture, society, and personality) and assumes that social systems are regulating only the second element in the form of social integrity.(cf. TCA II, 153)

Social system and lifeworld "differ in their mechanisms of societal integration, that is, in the intermeshing of interactions. In 'socially integrated' spheres of action, this interlinking [...] is achieved either through the intentions of the agents themselves or through their intuitive background understanding of the lifeworld; in 'systematically integrated' spheres of action, order is generated objectively, 'over the head of the participants'."[96] In other words, in those areas of social action regulated and ordered by social systems, such as economy and bureaucratic administration, society members have no influence as to how to integrate their actions. Decisions are made for them by the system, and they cannot do anything about it. In contrast, those spheres of life under the control of the social forces are regulated and integrated by decisions made by members themselves. This latter field is the domain Habermas allocated to the lifeworld.

Habermas also differentiates system and lifeworld by the modes of reproduction peculiar to each one. While the social system produces *technê*, the lifeworld yields *praxis*. And while system is under the demands of purposive rationality, lifeworld is guided by intersubjective validity claims arrived at through discourse and communicative rationality.[97] Modernity in Habermas' diagnosis is seen as an epoch in the historical

---

[96] J. Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 166.

[97] Cf. Eva M. Knodt, "Toward a Non-Foundationalist Epistemology: The Habermas/Luhmann Controversy Revisited," *New German Critique* 61 (Winter 1994): 86.

process of 'decoupling of system and lifeworld'.[98] For Habermas the development of subsystems and their rationalization independently from the rationalization of the lifeworld has destructive consequences, whereas the rationalization of the lifeworld makes the very existence and development of subsystems possible, so that both subsystems and lifeworld can grow simultaneously and in harmony (cf. TCA II, 186). Eva Knodt thinks that Habermas is ambiguous and even inconsistent in what he has presented for the justification of this distinction. She compares the system/lifeworld distinction in *The Theory of Communicative Action* with the same issue in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* and concludes that the division in the former "is introduced on strictly cognitive grounds," whereas in the latter, the "distinction clearly amounts to a subordination of the cognitive realm to moral-practical imperatives."[99]

According to Habermas, one of the aberrations brought about by modernity and its project of rationalization is the fragmentation of the spheres of life. By life fragmentation, he refers to those endeavors aimed at setting one specialized sphere of validity claim at the center while *sublating* the others. He accuses the Surrealists for sublating arts on account of "the violent attempt to shatter the illusory autarchy of the sphere of art,"[100] and thus reducing classical aesthetics to an expression of the artist's subjective experience. Young Hegelians, on the other hand, are blamed for making a similar move toward the sublation of philosophy. Habermas considers such a partition as impoverishing culture "by violently forcing open *one* cultural domain,"[101] and he

---

[98] Cf. Ibid., p. 97.

[99] E. M. Knodt, "Toward a Non-Foundationalist Epistemology," p. 99.

[100] J. Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," p. 49.

[101] Ibid.

contends that "[t]he processes of reaching understanding which transpire in the lifeworld require the resources of an inherited culture *in its entire range.*"[102]

A possible solution to "the aporias of cultural modernity"[103] is to break down the exclusive focus on a single dimension by incorporating the specialized validity claims "into the context of an individual life history or into a collective form of life."[104] When an aesthetic experience, for instance, is connected to everyday life situations or used as an interpretative tool in order to shed light on the history of life in a certain place or specific period, it "not only revitalizes those needed interpretations in the light of which we perceive our world, but also influences our cognitive interpretations and our normative expectations, and thus alters the way in which all these moments *refer back and forth* to one another."[105] Such reconciliation, however, is successful only under certain conditions, namely "if the process of social modernization can *also* be turned into *other* non-capitalist directions, if the lifeworld can develop institutions of its own in a way currently inhibited by the autonomous systemic dynamics of the economic and administrative system."[106]

Rationalization may be understood, in Habermas' perspective, in relation to at least three different aspects of human life: social systems, lifeworld, and worldview. Rationalization in the realm of worldview is divided into cognitive rationalization and ethical rationalization. The ethical rationalization of worldview can also take two different directions: world-affirmation, and world-rejection. Rationalization in each

---

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., p. 51.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., p. 53.

sphere has implications and consequences that are quite different from that of the other spheres. In order to identify rationalization in each and every dimension, one should determine the properties of the rationality in question and lay down the blue print of the path a process of rationalization takes and criteria it acquires at each level of rationalization. For such a notion of rationalization, one should have a multi-level notion of rationality, from the less rational to the most rational, with several stages of middle-course rationality in between. According to a multi-level rationality, it is necessary to think of a definition that, with different degrees of strength, applies to all forms and levels in this spectrum.

> The rationalization of society would then no longer mean a diffusion of purposive-rational action and a transformation of domains of communicative action into subsystems of purposive-rational action [as it is the case with Weber's notion of rationalization]. The point of reference becomes instead the potential for rationality found in the validity basis of speech. This potential is never completely stilled, but it can be activated at different levels, depending on the degree of rationalization of the knowledge incorporated into worldviews. (TCA I, 339)

According to Habermas, both Weber and Parsons focused on, and even confined their investigations to, the rationalization of the social systems as the hallmark of modernity. He believes that this one-sidedness flaws their analysis of modernity and leads to the negative impression that modernity strips human life of its meaning and integrity. This is expressed in various ways: Weber coins terms like 'disenchantment', 'lack of meaning and freedom', and 'iron cage'; Horkheimer speaks of the 'dialectics of enlightenment' and the 'eclipse of reason', and Adorno radicalizes it as 'negative

dialectics'. Habermas diagnoses a general mistake in these treatments of modernity and rationality, namely, lack of ability to distinguish between the two distinct facets of society—system and lifeworld—and their respective rationalization. Instead, Habermas emphasizes the rationalization of the lifeworld and concentrates his effort on delineating its features and conditions.

3.3.2 Rationalization and Lifeworld

Lebenswelt, or world as met in lived experience, is one of the key terms in Habermas' understanding of rationalization, and it was also used by the German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918).[107] During Edmund Husserl's lifetime (1859-1938) practically nothing was known of *Lebenswelt*,[108] one of Husserl's terms that became a favorite word after the Second World War also among social scientists who gave differing meanings to it. Indeed, Husserl's *Kant-Rede* in 1924 already refers to what he then called "real Lebenswelt", i.e. "the world in the howness of experience,"[109] but *Lebenswelt* does not play a really important role for Husserl before his last incomplete work on *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*[110] in which it is disclosed and systematically developed.[111] Interpreters have different views on what Husserl really meant by *Lebenswelt*: some regard it as a

---

[107] See particularly Georg S. Simmel, *Lebensanschauung* and *Der Konflikt der modernen Kultur* (Munich and Leipzig: 1918).

[108] Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* [Phaenomenologica, 5], 2 vols., xxxvi+765 p.; vol. 1 (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 2, 1965 - 2nd ed.), p. 159.

[109] Reprinted in E. Husserl, *Hussserliana*, vol. 7: *Erste Philosophie (1923-24)*, part 1: *Kritische Ideengeschichte*. (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956), p. 232.

[110] Trans. D. Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970). –The first two parts of *Crisis* were first published in 1936 in the new international magazine *Philosophia* (Belgrad).

[111] See Antonio F. Aguirre, *Die Phänomenologie Husserls im Licht ihrer gegenwärtigen Interpretation und Kritik* [Erträge der Forschung, 175], 173 p. (Darmstadt: Wissenschafliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), p. 148.

departure from his standpoint in *Ideas*,[112] others still view it fully compatible with other elements in his phenomenology,[113] and even—according to the American philosopher John Wild—as "a possible meeting ground with the analytic philosophers."[114]

Husserl juxtaposes a natural world against a transcendental one, and a natural attitude (or natural world concept) against a phenomenological one. In a manuscript dated 1917, he writes, "[t]he lifeworld is the natural world—in the attitude of the natural pursuit of life are we living functioning subjects involved in the circle of other functioning subjects."[115]. He describes the natural attitude as the already pregiven world to which all opinions and theories relate; "no theorizing may offend against this sense."[116] He describes the lifeworld as "always there, existing in advance for us, the 'ground' of all praxis, whether theoretical or extratheoretical."[117] Lifeworld, for Husserl, has its central place not only in our perception of the world, but also in the process of justification as well. "An opinion is justified by being brought into 'reflective equilibrium' with the doxa of our lifeworld." Husserl perceives the phenomenological attitude as a counterpart to the lifeworld. "Through the phenomenological reduction, phenomenology will take us out of our natural attitude where we are absorbed by the world around us, into the

---

[112] Vol. 1 trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1982), vol. 2 trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), vol. 3 trans. T. E. Klein & W. E. Pohl (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1980).

[113] See for instance A. F. Aguirre, *Ibid.*, chap. 3 with the title: "Die Lebenswelt," pp. 86-149. –On P. 141 n. 47 Aguirre refers to K. Held, *Heraklit, Parmenides und der Anfang von Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, which offers a broadly sketched out view of the beginnings of the idea of *Lebenswelt* in pre-Socratic thought already.

[114] H. Spiegelberg, *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 636.

[115] E. Husserl, *Husserliana* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1950), vol. 4, p. 375, quoted in E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, CD-ROM.

[116] E. Husserl, *Husserliana*, vol. 13, p. 196, quoted in E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, CD-ROM.

[117] E. Husserl, "Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie," in *Husserliana*, ed. H.L. Van Breda (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1954), p.145, quoted in E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, CD-ROM.

phenomenological, transcendental attitude, where we focus on the noemata[118] of our acts—on our structuring of reality."[119]

Two passages are of significant help in understanding what lifeworld stands for in Habermas' system of thought. In an interview with Honneth and others, Habermas describes lifeworld as standing

behind the back of each participant in communication and out of which the process of understanding is supported. Members of a social collective normally share a life-world. In communication or in processes of cognition this only exists in a uniquely pre-reflexive form of background assumptions, background receptivities or background relations. [...] The life-world functions in relation to processes of communication as a resource for what goes into explicit expression. [...] The moment one of its elements is taken out and criticized, made accessible to discussion, that element no longer belongs to the life-world. [...] The life-world is so unproblematic that we are simply incapable of making ourselves conscious of this or that part of it at will [...] there are general life-world structures. But, first of all, they are present only as infrastructures in historical forms of living that can only exist in the plural—besides which they change in the evolutionary dimension.[120]

In a more elaborated and more systematic presentation of the idea of a lifeworld, Habermas introduces

---

[118] "The noemata are akin to Frege's 'third world' objects, that is, the meanings of linguistic expressions. According to Husserl, 'the noema is nothing but a generalization of the notion of meaning [Bedeutung] to the field of all acts' ([1913] 1950: 3, 89)." E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, CD-ROM.

[119] Ibid.

[120] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," pp. 16-17.

the concept of the *Lebenswelt* or lifeworld [...] as the correlate of processes of reaching understanding. Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld. Their lifeworld is formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions. This lifeworld background serves as a source of situation definitions that are presupposed by participants as unproblematic. [...] The world-concepts and the corresponding validity claims provide the formal scaffolding with which those acting communicatively order problematic contexts of situations, that is, those requiring agreement, in their lifeworld, which is presupposed as unproblematic. The lifeworld also stores the interpretive world of preceding generations. (TCA I, 70)

The two aforementioned passages entail essential elements of the lifeworld (its content, its characteristics, and its functions) in Habermas' theory of communicative rationality. According to Habermas, the lifeworld consists of general infrastructures and frameworks embodying the world-interpretation inherited from past generations and underlying different forms of life. So far, the lifeworld corresponds to Ludwig Wittgenstein's "inherited background" of which he says, "But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background (*der überkommene Hintergrund*) against which I distinguish between true and false."[121] The lifeworld comprises a community's history, culture, language, and semantic relations in the three areas of cognition, action and reception. As far as the characteristics of the lifeworld are concerned, it is (a) more or less vague and indeterminate because it does not include any details. So (b) it includes a spectrum of meanings without dictating any specific one. It is

---

[121] L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), p. 94.

(c) unconsciously and (d) unwillingly held as (e) an unproblematic and un-criticizable conviction, and (f) presupposed by all participants in communication. Although (g) shared by members of a community, (h) lifeworld is local and non-universal, and therefore (i) always plural. (j) Lifeworld is historically bound and hence (k) always in a process of perpetual change. As for the functions of the lifeworld, according to Habermas, (a) it acts as a correlate for understanding and (b) as a reservoir for communication and social relations. (c) It sets the horizon of communication within any given community, limiting their interactions within its framework. Thomas A. McCarthy sums up the elements of the lifeworld, its functions, and its relation to communicative action and language:

> Thus, to the different structural components of the lifeworld (culture, society, personality) there corresponds reproduction processes (cultural reproduction, social integration, socialization) based on the different aspects of communicative action (understanding, coordination, sociation), which are rooted in the structural components of speech acts (prepositional, illocutionary, expressive). These structural correspondences permit communicative action to perform its different functions and to serve as a suitable medium for the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld.[122]

From the functions of the lifeworld one can draw a parallel between the idea of the lifeworld for Habermas and the concept of 'tradition' for Hans-Georg Gadamer. Tradition is existing "in the medium of language,"[123] and language is "the reservoir of

---

[122] T. A. McCarthy, "Translator's Introduction," in J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p. xxvii.

[123] H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden & John Cumming (London: Sheed & Ward, 1975), p. 351.

tradition."[124] Since "every language represents a view of the world,"[125] tradition itself "is language"[126]. Language represents one's understanding of the world; we are always already biased in our thinking and knowledge by our linguistic interpretation of the world. The result is that tradition and language enable and at the same time condition and delimit our understanding. The same functions are attributed to the lifeworld in Habermas' system of thought. The only difference lies in the fact that Gadamer focuses on human understanding of, and one's relation to, the external world—whether it is a text or an objective fact—while Habermas is concerned with communicative action and one's interrelation with others in the social world. Habermas modifies Gadamer's principles belonging to the subjective realm of individual understanding and applies similar tenets to the realm of social relations.

One of the basic characteristics of lifeworld for Habermas is, as mentioned before, that it is dogmatic, unproblematic, and un-criticizable. The moment one ponders upon any element of one's lifeworld and begins to question its credibility, the doubted element is transferred to the conscious realm of understanding and the criticizable arena of rationality. The shaky condition of the lifeworld in its encounter with "critique, new insights, learning processes, and the like" (TCA I, 192), causes its de facto recognized validity claims to become dubious and threatens the stability of legitimate orders. This condition requires lifeworlds to be rationalized so that society can resist the menace of social disorder. The rationalization of the lifeworld refers to those elements of alternative life-styles that "appear to differ clearly from more strongly traditional life-styles. That is

---

[124] H.-G. Gadamer, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 29.

[125] H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 399-400.

[126] Ibid., p. 321.

the wider horizon of what *can* be thematized."[127] Thematization of the lifeworld and criticism of its constituents are not intentional acts of people. Rather, the rise of alternative forms of life, along with reservations about some elements of the lifeworld, is a consequence of the process of social evolution. "Societies are *also* systems, but their mode of development does not follow solely the logic of the expansion of system autonomy (power); social evolution transpires rather within the bounds of a logic of the life-world, the structures of which are determined by linguistically produced intersubjectivity and are based on criticizable validity claims."[128] The process of social evolution is explained in terms of the rationalization of the lifeworld. According to Habermas, those basic elements once were in the background without any thematization. Conscious reflection and critique at a higher level of development bring them to consciousness, and they eventually become problematic. "The point that must not be missed," Michael Pusey warns, "is that rationalization is a function *not* of the *contents* of the cultural tradition but rather of the new possibilities of criticizing them that are now 'institutionalized' in a progressively more *rationalized* lifeworld."[129] Habermas describes the rationalization of the lifeworld in terms of the changes between the weight of the risk of disagreement and the conservative counterweight called the lifeworld.

> The more the worldview that furnishes the cultural stock of knowledge is decentered, the less the need for understanding is covered *in advance* by an interpreted lifeworld immune form critique, and the more this need has to be met by the interpretive accomplishments of the participants themselves [...] the more frequently we can expect rational action

---

[127] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 17.

[128] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 14.

[129] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Peter Hamilton (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 60.

orientations. Thus for the time being we can characterize the rationalization of the lifeworld in the dimension 'normatively ascribed agreement' *versus* 'communicatively achieved understanding'. (TCA I, 70)

The degree of the rationalization of the lifeworld depends on the extent to which social agents base their decisions regarding social actions on criticizable validity claims and try to reach consensus among themselves through discussion and dialogue. "Correspondingly, a lifeworld can be regarded as rationalized to the extent that it permits interactions that are not guided by normatively *ascribed* agreement but—directly or indirectly—by communicatively *achieved* understanding" (TCA I, 339- 340). Even in primitive societies one can find the general mores of communicative rationality. The obstacle that prevents those precepts from being effective in such contexts is their reliance on un-rationalized lifeworlds. "Communicative action can fully unfold only in the rationalized lifeworld of post-conventional societies."[130]

3.3.3 Rationalization and Worldview

Habermas, following Max Weber, speaks of the rationalization of a worldview as one major component in the process of the rationalization of society. In a sociological context, worldview (*Weltanschauung*) renders the general image or perception members of a society, group, community, region, class, or historical period assume toward the world and the place the human being occupies therein, based on their common experiences, attitudes and presuppositions.

---

[130] Günter Dux, "Communicative Reason and Interest: On the Reconstruction of the Normative Order in Societies Structured by Egalitarianism or Domination," in *Communicative Action*, ed. A. Honneth and H. Joas, p. 75.

For Wilhelm Dilthey, worldview is an overall outlook on life that includes one's knowledge of the world, one's emotional evaluation of the world, and one's volitional response to the world. In "Types of Worldview and their Development in Metaphysical Systems,"[131] he counts art, religion, and philosophy as the three sources of worldview, the latter of which receives more intellectual attention in the West. According to him, philosophical worldviews are subdivided into three types: naturalism or materialism found for instance in Democritus and Hobbes which reduces everything to what can be perceived through the senses or is capable of being determinately conceived. This kind of worldview has a pluralistic structure. The second type is vitalism or the idealism of freedom found for instance in Plato and Kant with emphasis on human free will and its irreducibility. For Dilthey, this type of worldview is dualistic in nature. The last type is the objective idealist worldview found for instance in Heraclitus, Leibniz and Hegel which acknowledges reality as the quintessence of a congruous cluster of values and is monistic. According to Dilthey, since each of these types of worldview depends on, and arises from, a certain perspective, they cannot have universal claims to reality.

Habermas describes worldviews, as far as their content is concerned, as "highly complex formations that are determined by cognitive, linguistic, and moral-practical forms of consciousness; the composition and the interplay of the structures is not fixed once and for all."[132] Worldviews have two functions, theoretical and practical, and the cognitive function of worldviews is exemplified by way of portraits. In his critique of Peter Winch's theory of the incommensurability of worldviews, Habermas says:

---

[131] W. Dilthey, *Philosophy of Existence* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1911).

[132] J. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," p. 168.

> A portrait offers rather an angle of vision from which the person represented appears in a certain way. Thus there can be numerous portraits of the same person [...] and yet they can all be experienced as accurate, authentic, or adequate. Similarly, worldviews lay down the framework of fundamental concepts within which we interpret everything that appears in the world in a specific way as something. Worldviews can no more be true or false than can be portraits. On the other hand, worldviews differ from portraits in that they in turn *make possible* utterances that admit of truth. To this extent they have a relation, albeit indirect, to truth. (TCA I, 58)

Worldviews are complex portraits of reality. Portraits vary due to the angle from which the artist looks at the object and the perspective from which it is seen. And yet, not any portrait can claim to be a bona fide portrait of the person in question; certain features are essential and cannot be overlooked or neglected in the production or evaluation of a portrait. The same holds true for a worldview: worldviews may incorporate contradictory or incommensurable elements, and criteria for their appreciation are necessary. Without an appeal to universally acceptable foundations, comparison, judgment, and criticism become impossible as well as communication among people of different backgrounds and worldviews.

Closely related to the concept of worldview is that of the world-concept. In "the relations of the speech act to speaker's intentions and to addressees,"[133] Habermas refers to three worlds—objective, subjective, and social—and he calls a world-concept the relation to each one of them. Since moral systems are components of worldviews, the latter consist of two elements called descriptive and normative. A more accurate account may lead to understanding worldviews as responsible for supplying a certain appreciation

---

[133] J. Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, ed. Maeve Cooke (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 295.

of the world and thus as providing a particular attitude toward the world and a specific course of conduct. Habermas regards the essential function of worldviews as providing both a certain 'meaning' of the world and order in society. He speaks of worldviews as "the cultural interpretive systems [...] that reflect the background knowledge of social groups and guarantee an interconnection among the multiplicity of their action orientations" (TCA I, 43). There are also references to "action-orienting worldviews" (TCA I, 43), which is an indication of the importance of the normative aspect of worldviews and of the difference between the pre-modern worldviews and modern understandings of the world. There is a close affinity between worldview and lifeworld in Habermas' understanding of the two terms. This connection can be explicated in terms of rendering worldview a theoretical—interpretive and practice-orienting—perspective of the world. Lifeworld on the other hand is more complex (cf. TCA I, 43), more inclusive, and more rigid. It contains values, norms, and motivations as well as the background knowledge. The rationalization of worldviews can occur in each one of these spheres and lead either to cognitive rationalization "in the direction of theoreticization" (TCA I, 209), or to ethical rationalization in the guise of practice, including manipulation and control. According to Habermas, in order to avoid the negative consequences of modernity put forward by Weber, Adorno, Horkheimer and others, these two spheres have to be rationalized in connection with each other. He ascribes to classical sociology the idea that "subjects capable of speaking and acting could develop the unity of their person only in connection with identity-securing world-views and moral systems. The unity of the

person requires the unity-enhancing perspective of a life-world that guarantees order and has both cognitive and moral-practical significance."[134]

The functions Habermas attributes to a worldview require an understanding of the world as a united whole. He considers seeking the unity of the world as a rational motive and he believes that "[t]he motive of reason was already central and determining in myth, religion, and philosophy; there it had the function of laying the foundation [...] for the unity and coherence of a world."[135] The kind of unity Habermas thinks of here is the unity between epistemological, ontological, and ethical aspects of the world on the one hand, and those of human life on the other. Even earlier Enlightenment relied on such a world-unity, although reason was emphasized over against dogmatism: "Insights into the laws of nature is believed to be capable of providing, at the same time, instruction for the just life. [...] As in Hobbes, the study of nature appears to lead to both knowledge of what nature is and instruction on how man is to conduct himself in accordance with nature."[136] However, such a theoretical unity of the world differs in principle from the empirical unity of the world Habermas traces back to eighteenth century European civilization. The empirical idea of an interconnected world emerges as a consequence of "the great discoveries of the period of colonization, the missionary enterprise in China, and finally the beginnings of independence for the North American territories."[137] Of course, this idea of global unity is an empirical knowledge "which seemed to be secured

---

[134] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, pp. 117-18.

[135] J. Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," p. 282.

[136] Ibid., p. 254.

[137] J. Habermas, "Between Philosophy and Science: Marxism as Critique," in *Theory and Practice* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 250.

more by the social intercourse of men with each other than by the historically fortuitous fact of a salvation through Christian revelation."[138]

According to Habermas, worldviews follow a developmental logic according to which they go through stages of progress. Less rational societies retain the cognitive as well as the moral-practical role because in these societies "world-views and norms are scarcely differentiated from one another."[139] In primitive societies, an illusory meaning is introduced through narratives as myths. Mythical worldview has the privilege of interpreting the world as well as interpreting away the contingency and menace arising from lack of control over nature and natural events. As a result of the rationalization process and "with increased control over outer nature, secular knowledge became independent of world-views, which were increasingly restricted to functions of social integration. The sciences eventually established a monopoly on the interpretation of outer nature; they devalued inherited global interpretations and transformed the mode of faith into a scientific attitude that permits only faith in the objectivating sciences."[140] Thus, worldviews were stripped of their cognitive function, but continued to retain their practical function in establishing and maintaining social order through their moral-practical 'meaning-giving' and justificatory function in regard with social contingencies. Following the progress of the rationalization process, and as a result of the growing complexities in social relations and the development of social sciences, worldview finally is doomed to lose its function as the supplier of practical action-guide also. However, the social sciences, at least in their present state, "can no longer take on the functions of

---

[138] Ibid.

[139] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, p. 18.

[140] Ibid., p. 119.

world-views."[141] The advanced modern sciences, unable to maintain the unity of the world through unifying principles, can only offer the promise of "the unity of reason (or [...] a rational organization of the world, the actualization of reason)."[142]

Habermas interprets Weber's notion of rationalization of worldview "as a process of decomposition and differentiation"[143] and suggests that "[w]e must, in principle, live disconsolately with [...] contingencies that are irremovably attached to the bodily and moral constitution of the individual."[144] He makes the observation that the re-politicization of the Christian doctrines in the theological traditions of Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sölle, and Metz discredits the idea of the liquidation of all worldviews, especially religious worldviews, in the modern era.[145] Moreover, although he is sure that "[s]cience can certainly not take over the functions of world-views," he is not so sure that the promises of meaning "cannot also be retained through scientific argumentation."[146]

According to Habermas, worldviews increasingly lose their roles as society follows the path of rationalization. The development of worldviews, as it was the case in Piaget's cognitive developmental theory on an ontogenetic level, "apparently leads to a growing decentration of interpretive systems and to an ever-clearer categorical demarcation of the subjectivity of internal nature from the objectivity of external nature,

---

[141] Ibid., p. 120.

[142] J. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," p. 105.

[143] J. Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, p. 411.

[144] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, p. 120.

[145] Ibid., p. 121.

[146] Ibid.

as well as from the normativity of social reality and the intersubjectivity of linguistic reality."[147] Habermas illustrates the development of worldviews in terms of

> a pattern that makes it possible to reconstruct rationally the following descriptively enumerated regularities:
>
> —expansion of the secular domain *vis-à-vis* the sphere of the sacred;
>
> —a tendency to develop from far-reaching heteronomy to increasing autonomy;
>
> —the draining of cognitive contents from world-views (from cosmology to the pure system of morals);
>
> —from tribal particularism to universalistic and at the same time individualistic orientations;
>
> —increasing reflexivity of the mode of belief, which can be seen in the sequence: myth as immediately lived system of orientations; teachings; revealed religion; rational religion; ideology.[148]

Habermas ascribes to Weber the idea that religious and metaphysical worldviews did express substantive reason, while such reason is divided in cultural modernity

> into three moments, now capable of being connected only formally with one another (through the form of argumentative justification). [...] Thus scientific discourse, moral and legal enquiry, artistic production and critical practice are now institutionalized [...] and this professionalized treatment of validity in each case serves to bring to light the autonomous structures intrinsic to the cognitive-instrumental, the moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive knowledge complexes.[149]

---

[147] J. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," p. 106.

[148] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, pp. 11-12.

[149] J. Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," p. 45.

In the course of social evolution worldviews are deprived even of their last property, namely providing a basis for morality and action-orientation, and this has far reaching consequences: "To the extent that world-views are impoverished, morality too is formalized and detached from substantive interpretations. Practical reason can no longer be founded in the transcendental subject."[150] According to Habermas, "communicative ethics appeals now only to fundamental norms of rational speech" and "it is not possible to see why there should still issue from it a normative force that organizes the self-understanding of men and orients their action."[151] This situation runs counter to "the extravagant expectation" of such partisans of the Enlightenment as Condorcet that the advance of science and arts would "further the understanding of self and world, the progress of morality, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness."[152]

Three tendencies characterize the structural changes worldviews go through as a consequence of their rationalization.

> *First*, dominant elements of the cultural tradition are losing the character
> of world-views, that is, of interpretations of the world, nature, and history
> as a whole. [...] *Further*, attitudes of belief, which since Protestantism
> have been extensively detached from cult practice, have once again been
> subjectively broken [corresponding] to the recognition of a pluralism of
> competing beliefs that is undecided as to truth. Practical questions no
> longer admit of truth; values are irrational. *Finally*, moral conceptions
> have been detached from theoretical systems of interpretation. [...] Since
> the middle of the nineteenth century, this process has become conscious as
> the 'sublation' [*Aufhebung*] of religion and philosophy, a highly

---

[150] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, p. 120.

[151] Ibid.

[152] J. Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," p. 45.

ambivalent process. Religion today is no longer even a personal matter.
[...] Philosophy has been stripped of its metaphysical pretension; but in
the ruling scientism, those constructions before which a wretched reality
must justify itself have also fallen apart.[153]

The rationalization of worldview comes down to the sublation of worldview and can be

explained in terms of the substitution of formal principles for material ones. Rousseau

and Kant are the turning points in the developmental process of rationalization; before

them, Habermas contends, the matter of an argument was decisive, but since their time, a

shift has occurred in the reasoning procedure: its salient feature is the reliance on the

form rather than on the matter of the argument. In practical issues and questions about the

justification of norms and actions, "this development led to the conclusion that the formal

principle of reason replaced material principles like Nature and God."[154] This is due to

the assumption that "ultimate grounds can no longer be made plausible, [hence] *the

formal conditions of justification themselves obtain legitimating force.* The procedures

and presuppositions of rational agreement themselves become principles."[155] Upon

transition to a higher level of rationality, "it is not this or that reason which is no longer

convincing but the *kind* of reason."[156] Habermas' discussion in this context is related to

the practical justification and legitimating abetment of political power. Yet, he

generalizes the consequences to the whole problem of rationality. More precisely, he

understands the development of levels of justification in practical issues as a form of

---

[153] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, p. 80.

[154] J. Habermas, "Legitimation Problems in the Modern State," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 184.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., p. 185.

rationalization that depends on a more universal development of rationality: "My conjecture is that these depreciatory shifts are connected with social-evolutionary transitions to new learning levels, learning levels that lay down the conditions of both objectivating thought and practical insight."[157] Worldviews, moral representations, and identity formations are different expressions of rationality structures that ensue "a *developmental logic* inherent in cultural traditions and institutional change."[158] Developmental levels refer to the levels of learning "that lay down the conditions for [further] possible learning processes."[159]

Worldview is modern only if it satisfies the conditions of being 'non-fundamentalistic' and postmetaphysical:

> A reasonable doctrine must recognize the burdens of reason. Modern worldviews must accept the conditions of postmetaphysical thought to the extent that they recognize that they are competing with other interpretations of the world within the same universe of validity claims. This reflective knowledge [...] creates an awareness of their fallibility and shatters the naiveté of dogmatic modes of belief founded on absolute truth claims.[160]

One of the main differences between modern and pre-modern worldviews is that the former is reasonable, reflexive, and contextual, while the latter is dogmatic, comprehensive, and interprets "the world as a whole."[161] "Worldviews are constitutive

---

[157] Ibid.

[158] J. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," p. 98.

[159] J. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," p. 160.

[160] J. Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 94.

[161] Ibid., p. 95.

across the whole breadth of processes of understanding and socialization" (TCA I, 63).

They

> are constitutive not only for processes of reaching understanding but for the social integration and the socialization of individuals as well. They function in the formation and stabilization of identities, supplying individuals with a core of basic concepts and assumptions that cannot be revised without affecting the identity of individuals and social groups. This *identity-securing knowledge* becomes more and more formal along the path from closed to open worldviews; it attaches to structures that are increasingly disengaged from contents that are open to revision. (TCA I, 64)

CHAPTER 4

RATIONALIZATION AND RELIGION

For Habermas, a worldview has a twofold role: to provide the basis for understanding and interpretation of the world, and to carry normative imperatives for action in society. "Worldviews are constitutive *across the whole breadth* of processes of understanding and socialization" (TCA I, 63). Weber denies worldviews the role of governing human action; instead, he puts the responsibility of it directly on what he calls material and ideal interests. Nevertheless, "very frequently the 'world images' created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest."[1] Habermas analyzes the function of worldviews in the process of socialization of individuals and of social integration in terms of their capacity for "the formation and stabilization of identities, supplying individuals with a core of basic concepts and assumptions that cannot be revised without affecting the identity of individuals and social groups" (TCA I, 64). As humanity goes through stages of development determined by the imperatives of social evolution, the significance of worldviews shifts from their content to their form. The embodied knowledge of worldviews is important to primitive societies and almost immune to criticism. As worldviews open themselves to alternative paradigms of interpretation, their form and structure become increasingly significant. In this way, the *"identity-securing knowledge* becomes more and more formal along the path from closed to open worldviews; it

---

[1] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," p. 280.

attaches to structures that are increasingly disengaged from contents that are open to revision" (TCA I, 64). The shift of precedence from content to structure, from matter to form, from truth claim to validity claim characterizes the type of philosophy Hans-Georg Gadamer criticizes in *Truth and Method*. There are three stages in the transformation and increasing rationalization of worldviews: mythical, religious-metaphysical, and scientific.

4.1 Salient Features of the Mythical Worldview

The work of Émile Durkheim, the French social scientist and a founder of sociology known for his study of social values and alienation, and that of Lévi-Strauss, the French anthropologist and leading proponent of the structural approach in social anthropology, have become classics with respect to the analysis and understanding of primitive societies. Drawing on their interpretations, Habermas believes that archaic societies could not master the risks they experienced with regard to the contingencies and hazards of their environment. They had neither the necessary theoretical nor practical knowledge nor the required instruments to understand and bring them under control. "Thus arises the need to check the flood of contingencies—if not in fact at least in imagination—that is, to interpret them away" (TCA I, 47). According to this analysis, the so-called savage mind, incapable of explaining the phenomena and events of the world in a rational way, tries to seek their causes outside this world. The search for 'whyness' takes precedence over an inquiry into 'whatness', and the why and wherefore is sought in an imaginary world of myths, gods, and goddesses. Appealing to myths provides the archaic societies with "the unifying function of worldviews in an exemplary way—they permeate life-practice" (TCA I, 44) as well as the understanding of life. The totalizing power of a mythical interpretation of the world justifies its usefulness for securing some

sort of meaning for life and the world. Habermas details the characteristics of mythical worldview as follows:

> On the one hand, abundant and precise information about the natural and social environment is processed in myths. [...] On the other hand, this information is organized in such a way that every individual appearance in the world, in its typical aspects, resembles or contrasts with every other appearance. Through these *contrast and similarity relations* the multiplicity of observations is united in a totality. (TCA I, 45-46)

Rasmussen attributes to Plato, Heidegger, and Ricoeur the idea that "myth is a resource for rational reflection, not the opposite,"[2] whereas for Habermas the magical world of ideas is "an impediment to [rationality and] the adoption of an objectivistic attitude toward technical innovation, economic growth, and the like" (TCA I, 205). In his diagnosis, lack of differentiation is the most basic symptom that distinguishes mythical worldview from modern understanding of the world. This manifests itself in various ways, particularly the lack of differentiation between culture and nature, subjective and social world, language and referent, and between different validity claims. Differentiation becomes the hallmark of rationality, and lack of it characterizes irrationality. "What irritates us members of a modern lifeworld is that in a mythically interpreted world we cannot, or cannot with sufficient precision, make certain differentiations that are fundamental to our understanding of the world" (TCA I, 48). Alasdair MacIntyre supports the same idea when he writes, "Myths would then be seen as perhaps potentially science *and* as literature *and* theology; but to understand them as myths would be to

---

[2] D. M. Rasmussen, "Communicative Action and Philosophy," p. 9.

understand them as actually yet none of these."[3] Let us briefly describe some features of un-differentiation Habermas ascribes to mythical worldview.

4.1.1 Lack of Differentiation Between Culture and the Objective World

The mythical worldview precludes categorical uncoupling of nature and culture. For anthropologists like Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss, the confusion between nature and culture is the idiosyncratic feature of mythical thinking and magical practice.

> Myths do not permit a clear, basic, conceptual differentiation between things and persons, between objects that can be manipulated and agents [...] magical practices do not recognize the distinction between teleological and communicative action, between goal-directed, instrumental intervention [...] and the establishment of interpersonal relations. [...] Moral failure is conceptually interwoven with physical failure, as is *evil* with the *harmful*, and *good* with the *healthy* and the *advantageous*. (TCA I, 48)

Habermas finds it astonishing that, in mythical worldview, nature and culture are teamed together. As a result, nature is vested with anthropomorphic characteristics and thus humanized, and culture is conferred with natural criteria and therefore reified. The mythical interpretation of the world places at human disposal both a narrative explanation of the world and a magical control over the world events. (Cf. TCA I, 47-48)

Culture, like many other concepts in the fields of social studies, has acquired a certain ambiguity due to "the multiplicity of its referents and the studied vagueness with

---

[3] A. MacIntyre, "Rationality and the Explanation of Action," in *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), pp. 252-53; quoted in TCA I, 63.

which it has too often been invoked."[4] For Habermas, culture is "the stock of knowledge from which participants in communication supply themselves with interpretations as they come to an understanding about something in the world" (TCA II, 138). Such a definition falls in with Geertz' presentation of the term as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitude toward life."[5] The close affinity between culture and what Habermas calls 'lifeworld' is obvious here. More precisely, culture is considered only as one part of a complex called lifeworld. The other components of lifeworld include society and personality structures.[6]

Habermas reconstructs the Marxian subdivision of nature into subjective, objective, and nature-in-itself. The objective nature, or the external world, is the un-interpreted world of reality; the surrounding environment exists independently of human being and human understanding, it is value-free in Weber's terminology and has no significance. Culture, on the other hand is "a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a segment on which *human beings* confer meaning and significance."[7] As far as the finite, meaningful segment is concerned, the difference between nature and culture is analytical. Conscious distinction between the two analytic domains of reality calls for a high level of rationality capable of abstraction. The so-called savage mind in primitive society is supposed to lack such a degree of sophistication and is therefore

---

[4] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973), p. 89.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Cf. J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 55.

[7] Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Edward A. Shils & Henry A. Finch (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1949), p. 81.

incapable of such differentiation. As a result, a primitive individual attributes all the characteristics to be found in culture to the external world and vice versa.

4.1.2 Lack of Differentiation Between Culture and the Subjective World

Parallel to the fusion of the domains of culture and nature in mythical understanding, there is a confusion in the realms of culture and the subjective world of an individual. The subjective world, or the internal nature, is a world to which one "has privileged access and to which everything is attributed that cannot be incorporated in the external world" (TCA I, 51). The internal world consists of subjective experiences such as "beliefs and intentions, feelings and desires,"[8] and comprises "beside the bodily attributes of an organism dependent on its environment (sensuous receptivity, need, emotionality, vulnerability), the adaptive modes of behavior and active life expressions of an 'active natural being'" (KHI 26).

To the extent that the mythical worldview determines one's understanding and decisions, one has no formal concept at one's disposal for a clear differentiation between the culturally determined and imposed feelings and beliefs, and those arising from subjective and personal origins. The solution lies in acquiring the relevant skills or competence, to use Habermas' term, for doing the demarcation in the real world. But the problem is not confined to the mythical worldview as such; it rather arises from negligence or lack of consciousness regarding such a differentiation, as the everyday experience of the modern individual enjoying the so-called scientific worldview shows. Habermas does acknowledge this for instance when he states, "nor can the modern

---

[8] Thomas McCarthy, "Reflections on Rationalization in the Theory of Communicative Action," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 186.

understanding of the world be described solely in terms of formal properties of the scientific mentality" (TCA I, 63).

4.1.3 Lack of Differentiation Between Validity Claims

The undifferentiated understanding of diverse dimensions of reality (external nature, culture, and internal nature) corresponds to a lack of ability to adequately make the distinction between elements of the Parsonian triad nature-society-personality. One of the consequences of such inability is expressed by Donald Jay Rothberg as the reification of worldview "as the 'world order'."[9] In other words, on account of the confusion between one's feelings, cultural meanings, and objective reality, one tends to equate one's own worldview believed to be the outcome of the cultural stock of knowledge with the objective order of the world. A statement that conveys some claim about one of the three dimensions of reality is endowed with a certain type of validity essentially different from that of statements bearing claims regarding the other two dimensions. Claims related to the external world are truth claims expressed through propositional statements, whereas claims concerning the socio-cultural aspect are claims of rightness and are communicated through normative statements. Claims about the inner world of individuals are claims regarding sincerity and are conveyed via expressive statements. In mythical thought, "diverse validity claims, such as propositional truth, normative rightness, and expressive sincerity are not yet differentiated" (TCA I, 50)

There is a categorical separation between different relations to the world, and this is expressed in different types of statements and validity claims. Mythical thought, however, does not allow for such distinctions "between cognitive-instrumental, moral-

---

[9] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 223.

practical, and expressive relations to the world [...] this is a sign that the 'closedness' of their animistic worldview cannot be described solely in terms of attitudes toward the objective world." (TCA I, 63)

4.1.4 Lack of Differentiation Between Language and World

The fusion of diverse features of reality in the mythical worldview takes place in the "deficient differentiation between *language and world*; that is, between speech as the medium of communication and that about which understanding can be reached in linguistic communication" (TCA I, 49). Mythical thought is believed to lead to "a reification of worldview" (TCA I, 50). Although a linguistically constituted structure, the worldview is then identified with the world-order itself. Accordingly, mythical understanding takes worldview to be identical with what really is "to such an extent that it cannot be perceived *as* an interpretation of the world that is subject to error and open to criticism." (TCA I, 50)

The mythical mode of cognition entails a "systematic confusion between *internal connections of meaning* and *external connections of objects*" and therefore does not take into account that "the logical relation between ground and consequence is internal, the causal relation between cause and effect is external (symbolic *versus* physical causation)" (TCA I, 49). The totalizing mode of thought in mythical worldviews is unable to draw "with sufficient precision the familiar (to us) semiotic distinctions between the sign-substratum of a linguistic expression, its semantic content, and the referent to which a speaker can refer with its help" (TCA I, 49). In mythical thought, "even the diffuse concept of validity in general is still not freed from empirical admixtures. Concepts of validity such as morality and truth are amalgamated with empirical ordering concepts,

such as causality and health" (TCA I, 50). If we look for one sentence that includes all the negative attributes Habermas imputes to the mythical mode of thought, we may find it in the following assertion:

> Members of archaic societies tie their own identities in large measure to the details of the collective knowledge set down in myths and to the formal specifications of ritual prescriptions. They do not have at their disposal a formal concept of the world that could secure the identity of natural and social reality in the face of the changing interpretations of temporalized cultural traditions; nor can the individual rely on a formal concept of the ego that could secure his own identity in the face of a subjectivity that has become independent and fluid. (TCA I, 51-52)

For sure, "[t]he degree of rationality of worldviews evidently does not vary with the stage of cognitive development of the individuals [and the] rationality of worldviews is not measured in terms of logical and semantic properties but in terms of the formal-pragmatic basic concepts they place at the disposal of individuals for interpreting their world" (TCA I, 44-45). According to the evolutionary paradigm of Habermas' interpretation of history, as humanity develops through stages of rationalization, different aspects of the world become more differentiated and the mythical worldview becomes demythologized. "[T]he demythologization of worldviews means the desocialization of nature and the denaturalization of society. This process apparently leads to a basic conceptual *differentiation between the object domains* of nature and culture" (TCA I, 48). The demythologization of worldview, for Habermas, is another way of expressing the basic idea of the rationalization of mythical worldview. Such a rationalization culminates

in substituting myth with an alternative that has the capacity for more differentiation with regard to various dimensions of the world and that is open to criticism.

4.2 The Religious Worldview

Peter L. Berger emphasizes the necessity of defining technical terms in any systematic study by contending "that the main consequence of avoiding or postponing definition in a scientific enterprise is *either* that the area of research becomes fuzzy [...] *or* that one operated with implicit rather than explicit definitions."[10] Yet, for him, definitions are "matters of taste [that] fall under the maxim *de gustibus*,"[11] and he advises students that "the only sensible attitude in matters of definition is one of relaxed tolerance."[12] Clifford Geertz takes a modest stance regarding definitions. While he admits the infamous idea that definitions establish nothing, he considers that carefully constructed definitions are indeed useful tools for providing thought with orientation or reorientation.[13]

Philip E. Devine's treatment of the problem of definition is not so thoroughgoing as Berger's, although he comes to almost the same conclusion in matters of religion. His concern is that since religion is a value-laden concept, "[n]o non-persuasive definition of an evaluatively charged expression is possible."[14] In such evaluations, normative as well as conceptual considerations do take place, so that a value-free definition of religion is impossible according to him. Besides, evaluations here are particularly complex and one

---

[10] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1967), p. 176.

[11] Ibid., p. 177.

[12] Ibid., p. 175.

[13] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 90.

[14] P. E. Devine, "On the Definition of "Religion"," *Faith and Philosophy* 3/3 (July 1986): 270.

should avoid "simple-minded ideological gambits."[15] With reference to broad-range applications of the term 'religion', he distinguishes two general characteristics that justify the use of the term, namely, "the unknown character of the subject of their inquiries and the resistance the human imagination displays when confronted with it."[16]

For defining any phenomenon, including religion, different strategies or patterns can be adopted. First is what we may call *lexical definition* in which one seeks the literal roots of a term in order to come up with a set of characteristics constituting the meaning of a word and justifying its usage. This type of definitions, helpful for philologists, is often of little help and sometimes even deceiving in other specialized disciplines due to the complexity of determinative factors and the richness of the semantic content of technical terms. A second strategy is *substantive definition* in which one tries to exhaust the constitutive elements of a phenomenon and to demarcate it from others. Such elements may include semantic components such as genus and differentia, and also material ingredients such as constituents in an aggregate. This strategy is suitable for entities and facts of the objective world. Still a third strategy concerns itself with the functions of the object under study and provides a *functional definition* with regard to various uses of an object or diverse tasks it accomplishes, or sundry roles it plays. This type of definition is appropriate for objects of instrumental character, or from a perspective whose main purpose of defining an object is its practical usefulness.

P. Devine classifies various definitions of religion in two categories with a different pattern for each. "One looks for necessary and sufficient conditions—for sets of properties possessed by all and only religions. A second abandons the search for

---

[15] Ibid., p. 271.

[16] Ibid.

necessary and sufficient conditions, and looks instead for a set of religion-making characteristics, establishing a family resemblance among the various phenomena called 'religion'."[17] The first strategy corresponds to the substantive definition discussed above. According to Berger, the debate over "the alternative of substantive and functional definition [is] a constant in all fields of sociological analysis,"[18] and he prefers the substantive type of definition with regard to religion.

Charles Taliaferro adds as a third strategy what he calls the *paradigm case definition* or *definition by example*, which in many aspects resembles Devine's second strategy. "A case is identified where a term applies and other applications are designated in virtue of their resemblance to it."[19] Accordingly, *"religions include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, and those traditions that resemble one or more of them."*[20] Aware of some problems and limitations such a definition may encounter in the long run, he does not specify any criterion as to "what makes these traditions religious"[21] and he does not say what constitutes a resemblance either.

Religion has very differing meanings and definitions among philosophers, theologians, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and others. Some definitions are targeted at specific religious traditions and exclude other religions along non-religious traditions, others include all systems of belief, even those consciously rejecting the idea of religion altogether. Is it then possible to arrive at a definition of religion that not only

---

[17] Ibid.

[18] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 176.

[19] C. Taliaferro, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Malden, Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 21.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 22.

overcomes the limitations of substantive definitions, but also the unnecessary generality of the paradigm case definition?

4.2.1 Different Approaches to Religion

While referring to the term 'religion' to its Latin root, *religio*, which means 'to bind, and *religare* (to tie fast), Taliaferro suggests that religion is that which joins people and specifies their personal identities.[22] For Mark C. Taylor, *religare* is composed of *re-* (back) and *ligare* (binding) and implies that a "return to the origin that constitutes the end holds out the promise of unifying human life by reconciling opposites and overcoming strife."[23] Such analyses do not solve any problem at all, at least for philologists in the first place, as the French linguist Émile Benveniste (1902-1976) has shown in 1969 already in *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, vol. 2, part 3 on *Religion*.[24] For Benveniste, Cicero's *De natura deorum* II, 28, 72 gives the central orientation in debates on the meaning of the term 'religion'. Cicero speaks of "religiosi ex relegendo ut elegantes ex eligendo, ex diligendo diligentes. His enim in verbis omnibus inest vis legendi eadem quae in religioso"—"*religiosi* from *relegere*, as *elegantes* from *eligere* and *diligentes* from *diligere*. All these terms do have the same meaning—*legere*—as *religiosus*."[25] This ancient use is documented in a way "deprived of any ambiguity," Benveniste says, and "it assigns as the only interpretation for *religio* the one provided by

---

[22] Ibid.

[23] M. C. Taylor, "The End(s) of Theology," in *Theology at the End of Modernity*, ed. Sheila Greeve Davaney (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 243.

[24] Paris: Minuit Publisher, first ed., 1969, 3rd ed. 1980, 340 p.; pp. 177-279, particularly pp. 266-79.

[25] E. Benveniste, Ibid., p. 268.

Cicero who refers *religio* to *legere*" and *not* to *ligare*, as Tertullian and Lactance later did.[26]

Religion in the current meaning of the term is, Gabriel Moran states, an invention of Western Enlightenment, according to which philosophers in the eighteenth century equated religion with superstition, magic, and irrationality. "For the most part, the word religion referred to the external practices of Christianity"[27] which was believed to be the only real religion. In protestant dialectical theology of the 1920s, religion was viewed as absolute opposite to faith. When religion means rituals and faith represents the inward beliefs, this runs counter to descriptions restricting religion to "the manifestation of the divinity already in man," to "the subjective experience which transforms our life."[28] Moran contends that only with the advent of social sciences, and consequently the interest in the scientific study of religion, the idea of religion as an external and inclusive phenomenon began to emerge; a usage for the term religion that he prefers to call 'religiology'.[29] Thanks to this new usage of the term, various religions now "can be studied, compared, and understood" as religions of equally right and significance.[30]

Different descriptions of religion can be found in the encyclopedias of philosophy and religion. Taliaferro cites several definitions proposed by such philosophers,

---

[26] E. Benveniste, Ibid., pp. 270 & 268. —In his historical survey *La religion en Occident: Évolution des idées et du vécu* (series "Héritage et Projet," 23. Montreal: Fides Publ., 1979, xiii+579 p.), Michel Despland lists fourty (40) "ideas about religion"—as he calls it, from Cicero up to Schelling, on pp. 537-42. Jacques Derrida offers a critique of Benveniste's "assurance of 'proper meaning' [...] with regard to everything," including the word 'religion' [Ed. J. Derrida & Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: *T Religion*, Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-78, particularly pp. 31-38, 65, 67, 73-75.

[27] G. Moran, "Religious Pluralism: A U.S. and Roman Catholic View," in *Religious Pluralism and Religious Education*, ed. Norma H. Thompson (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1988), p. 38.

[28] Swami Tathagatananda, "Hinduism and How it is Transmitted," in *Religious Pluralism and Religious Education*, ed. Norma H. Thompson (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1988), p. 276.

[29] Cf. G. Moran, "Religious Pluralism," p. 51.

[30] Ibid., p. 40.

theologians, and social scientists as William James, Talcott Parsons, Salomon Reinach, Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, C. P. Tiele, F. H. Bradley, James Marineau, and Richard Swinburne. He also brings in the description offered by the *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to the Supreme Court*. He criticizes all definitions for being either too wide to exclude any non-religious tradition or practice, or too narrow to include all that might have been called religion.[31] It seems unrealistic to look for a logical definition of religion that would be inclusive and exclusive at the same time. The plausible expectation from anyone who takes on an issue related to religion is to explain one's usage of the term and explicate its criteria and characteristics so that the reader is not confused.

4.2.1.1 Philosophical Approaches

In *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel defines religion as a the "consciousness of Absolute Being."[32] Rudolf J. Siebert puts Hegel's analysis in the context of the modern Protestant concern with human spirit and subjectivity, which has even gained precedence over "God as such."[33] God becomes essentially spirit and a knowing subject, and "the relation between God's infinite, and humanity's finite spirit underlies all religion."[34] Religion as a kind of knowledge is a consciousness that relates to the Absolute as its object.

Kant already divorced religion from pure reason and related it to practical reason asserting, "[m]orality thus leads ineluctably to religion, through which it extends itself to the idea of a powerful moral Lawgiver, outside of mankind, for Whose will that is the

---

[31] Cf. C. Taliaferro, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 22-24 & 30-31.

[32] Trans. J. B. Baillie (New York & London: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 551.

[33] R. J. Siebert, "Adorno's Theory of Religion," *Telos* 58 (Winter 1983-84): 108.

[34] Ibid., p. 108.

final end (of creation) which at the same time can and ought to be man's final end."[35] He thinks of religion—"the one true religion"—as comprising "nothing but laws, that is, those practical principles of whose unconditioned necessity we can become aware, and which we therefore recognize as revealed through pure reason (not empirically)."[36] Within this framework, Kant defines religion as "the recognition of all duties as divine commands,"[37] leaving out any explicit reference to 'assertoric knowledge' in the definition of religion, even that pertaining to the existence of God. Depending to one's subjective approach to such commands, Kant distinguishes two types of religion: (1) revealed religion—"that religion in which I must know in advance that something is a divine command in order to recognize it as my duty;" and (2) natural religion—"that religion in which I must first know that something is my duty before I can accept it as a divine injunction."[38] Regarding characteristics of acceptability, Kant divides religions into "*natural* religion, of which (once it has arisen) everyone can be convinced through his own reason" and "*learned* religion, of which one can convince others only through the agency of learning (in and through which they must be guided)."[39] According to Kant, believing in God is not a necessary condition for religion; having an idea of God as a hypothetical assumption is enough, for he denies reason any cognitive capability to prove the existence of God.[40]

---

[35] I. Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene & Hoyt H. Hudson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 5-6.

[36] Ibid., p. 156.

[37] Ibid., p. 142.

[38] Ibid., pp. 142-143.

[39] Ibid., p. 143.

[40] Cf. Allen W. Wood, "Rational Theology, Moral Faith, and Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 406-08.

Charles Sanders Peirce conceives of religion as comprising a symbolic relation between the outer and the inner worlds: Religion "is neither something within us nor yet altogether without us—but bears rather a third relation to us, namely, that of existing in our communion with another being."[41] He renders religious experience as disclosing the outer world, in contrast to logical investigation set to explore the inner world.

Ludwig Wittgenstein has a double picture of religion: first, a subjective concept of religion from a first-person perspective—he writes: "You can't hear God speak to someone else, you can hear him only if you are being addressed,"[42] and second, religion as a picture of the world within whose framework one orders one's life. Thus religion is understood as a social fact both in its foundations and results.

Philip E. Devine holds a more traditional view of religion, which encompasses both theoretical and practical dimensions called doctrinal and functional.

> Two central criteria for the existence of religion can be distinguished. [...] The first criterion is doctrinal: a religion affirms the existence of one or more superhuman agents, on whose favor the welfare of human beings depends. [...] The second criterion is psychological or functional. A religion [...] unifies, through a system of symbolic representations, the framework by which an individual or group regulates its thought and its

---

[41] C. S. Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, ed. Max H. Fisch et al. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982-1986) vol.1, p. 108; quoted in J. Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 93.

[42] L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p. 717; quoted in Jens Glebe-Møller, "Two Views of Religion in Wittgenstein," in *The Grammar of the Heart: New Essays in Moral Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Richard H. Bell (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 98.

life, and thus manages to maintain in them some semblance of coherence.[43]

In his presentation, Devine gives several conditions for religion, some substantive and others functional. First is the affirmation of superhuman agents. Second is the fact that there should be a certain kind of relationship between such deities and human life situation. Therefore if a system of beliefs does not offer any idea of a superhuman being or does not relate to the human fate, it is not considered a religion in this sense. A third condition is Devine's insistence that a religion should comprise "some form of nonliteral speech—say paradox or a myth—whose point is to convey what cannot be expressed literally. [...] Other forms of nonliteral speech employed in religious discourse include parables [...] metaphors, action-symbols; and, most austerely, statements in which words like 'good' are projected by analogy to a subject other than those to which they ordinarily apply."[44] As to the functional criteria of religion, he refers to two major points in his definition: first, the structuring and maintaining of identity for both individuals and groups—religion "is both an individual and a group phenomenon, comprising 'faith' in an individual and 'tradition' in a group,"[45] and second, the providing of an image of the world as a coherent whole; in this way "science and political ideology can be distinguished from religion, by the fact that they stop short of presenting a total picture of the universe."[46] Devine tries to reconcile two approaches to the problem of definition with regard to any phenomenon and especially that of religion: the substantive and the

---

[43] P. E. Devine, "On the Definition of "Religion"," p. 272.

[44] Ibid., p. 273.

[45] Ibid.; cf. Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1963), particularly chap. 5.

[46] P. E. Devine, "On the Definition of "Religion"," p. 282.

functional ones. As Berger has pointed out, there are justifications for each case,[47] depending on one's expectation of a definition, which usually depends on the discipline in which the act of defining occurs.

For Friedrich Schleiermacher, the essence of religion is "neither thinking nor acting but intuition and feeling. [...] Thus religion maintains its own sphere and its own character only by completely removing itself from the sphere and character of speculation as well as from that of praxis."[48] Such feeling of infinite and absolute dependence[49] is the starting point for Ludwig Feuerbach's theory of religion. In his later account of religion, Feuerbach elaborates on the object of such dependency asserting that

> The basis [Grund] of religion is the feeling of dependency; but the object
> of this dependency—that upon which human beings are fully dependent—
> is originally, nothing other than Nature. Nature is the first, original object
> of religion, as is confirmed by the history of all religions and peoples.[50]

Against such reductionistic assumptions, Ninian Smart presents a six-dimensional concept of religion, comprising ritual, mythological, doctrinal, and ethical, social, and experimental dimensions.[51]

---

[47] Cf. P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 175.

[48] F. Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 102.

[49] Cf. Van Austin Harvey, "Feuerbach on Religion as Construction," in *Theology at the End of Modernity*, ed. Sheila Greeve Davaney (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 265.

[50] L. Feuerbach, "Das Wesen der Religion," in *Kleinere Schriften III*, par. 1; quotedd in V. A. Harvey, "Feuerbach on Religion as Construction," p. 265.

[51] N. Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York, NY: Scribners, 1976), p. 6ff. See also D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," pp. 226-27.

4.2.1.2 Sociological Approaches

Social scientists are concerned with social institutions and social relations. They take religion as a social institution—besides government, economy, or education—or as an active element in social life. Weber refers to this second attitude when he writes, "[t]he essence of religion is not even our concern, as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a particular type of social action."[52] Such an approach brings with it a host of characteristics distinguishing social scientific inquiry from that of philosophy, theology, or even psychology. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of sociological investigations about religion lies in its functionalist approach and its reduction to morality, which has its roots in Kant's critique of practical reason.

Weber is of the opinion that definition in general and definition of religion in particular "can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of the study."[53] But "he never came to such an end"[54] in his investigation of the sociology of religion. However, in "Religious Rejections of the World," he considers becoming "alienated from all structured forms of life [as] the specific religious essence."[55] Here, human relation to a transcendent being is missing, whereas in the first chapter of *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Tambiah contends that religion as a generic concept "provides a way of apprehending the transcendent and communicating with it."[56]

---

[52] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 399.

[53] Ibid.

[54] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 175.

[55] Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 357.

[56] Deepak Mehta, "Review," *Contributions to Indian Sociology (New Series)* 25/2 (July-Dec. 1991): 345.

Thomas Luckmann understands transcendence in terms of a social functionality of religion according to which "religion is the capacity of the human organism to transcend its biological nature through the construction of objective, morally binding, all-embracing universes of meaning. [...] Specifically, religion is equated with symbolic self-transcendence."[57] This recalls Hugo Ball's reconstruction of the idea of God as "the freedom of the lowliest in the spiritual communication of all."[58] For Berger, Luckmann's functional definition implies that "everything genuinely human is *ipso facto* religious and the only nonreligious phenomena in the human sphere are those that are grounded in man's animal nature."[59] Berger has reservations about the efficacy of such a definition since it "equates religion with the human *tout court*"[60] and does not distinguish religion from modern science. More essential questions can be formulated in the spirit of Habermas' puzzlement with Glebe-Möller's reconstruction of Christian beliefs as to "*who* recognizes himself or herself in this interpretation."[61]

Conceiving of, and communicating with, the transcendent presupposes what Huston Smith attributes to William James and characterizes as an "ontological hierarchy."[62] Such a concept of ontological hierarchy resonates in Peter Berger's "substantive definition of religion in terms of positing of a *sacred cosmos*. [...] The differentia in this definition, of course, is the category of the sacred [...] taken essentially

---

[57] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, pp. 176-77, with reference to Th. Luckmann, *Das Problem der Religion in der modernen Gesellschaft*, 1963, English version as *The Invisible Religion*, 1967.

[58] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within, Transcendence in this World," in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, ed. Don S. Browning and Francis S. Fiorenza (NY: Crossroad, 1992), p. 235.

[59] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, pp. 176-77.

[60] Ibid., p. 177.

[61] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 235.

[62] H. Smith, "Postmodernism's Impact on the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58/4 (1990): 654.

in the sense understood by *Religionswissenschaft* since Rudolf Otto."[63] For Peter Beyer, 'definitional diversity' is responsible for the "current controversies about secularization, privatization [of religion], civil religion, and the fate of religion under conditions of modernity."[64] For him, communication is what distinguishes social from psychological phenomena; therefore, religion from a sociological point of view is "a certain variety of communication."[65] He finds that sociological definitions of religion are generally based on fundamental dichotomies

> such as profane/sacred (Durkheim), natural/supernatural (Parsons), nomos/cosmos (Berger), and empirical/super-empirical (Robertson). Others speak about religion as dealing with 'ultimate' problems (Yinger) or a 'general [...] uniquely realistic' order of existence (Geertz), implicitly defining it by contrast to a more proximate and equivocal domain. The common thread through most of them is that religion is primarily about something beyond the normal, the everyday, the perceptible; and that somehow this radically other fundamentally conditions human existence.[66]

Beyer prefers to speak of the dichotomy between immanence and transcendence as the basic division fundamental to the definition of religion. For him, immanence as the whole of the perceptible world can only be distinguished, and hence communicated, if it is put in the context of transcendence; otherwise, "we cannot distinguish it from anything that it does not encompass. [...] Religion, therefore, operates with sacred symbols, ones which always point radically beyond themselves. It deals simultaneously with the immanent and

---

[63] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 177.

[64] P. Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1994), p. 4.

[65] Ibid., p. 5.

[66] Ibid.

the transcendent."[67] Beyer seeks a functional definition as well in order to complement this substantive definition. "The social function of religion, in other words, is as much a part of what defines religion as its mode of operation."[68] Thus religion "posits the transcendence to give the immanent world meaning," and "transcendence then becomes a potential solution to those very core problems of life in the immanent world."[69] Beyer asserts that in order to

> provide meaning, including the meaning of suffering and evil, and further to offer the power to overcome the problem, religion posits the possibility of communication between humans and the transcendence: it treats the transcendent as a social partner. [...] In sum, religion is a type of communication based on the immanent/transcendent polarity, which functions to lend meaning to the root indeterminability of all meaningful human communication, and which offers ways of overcoming or at least managing this indeterminability and its consequences.[70]

Clifford Geertz, the anthropologist, includes five conditions in the definition of religion. He defines religion as "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[71]

---

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., p. 6.

[70] Ibid.

[71] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 90.

4.2.1.3 Religion and Critical Theory

Habermas quotes Horkheimer as referring to the essential substance of religion in terms of morality while unraveling morality from reason.[72] Horkheimer speaks of God as the necessary condition for the human striving for unconditional meaning.[73] He believes that reason and philosophy cannot substitute for religion in this dimension because "reason that can appeal to no authority higher than that of the sciences is a naturalized faculty that [...] measures itself by the yardstick of functional contributions and technical successes, and not by a mode of validity that transcends space and time: 'With God dies eternal truth'."[74] Habermas concentrates on the functions of religion and he refers to three functions for religion: (a) offering a worldview, and hence providing meaning for life by presenting an image of the world as a whole, (b) providing moral codes of conduct as well as motivation to follow moral commands, (c) regulating human relation with the extraordinary events of life such as grief, suffering and the like. As far as the first function is concerned, Habermas puts forward a modern alternative to this view of meaning and its relation to transcendence. Although the kind of reason that the philosophy of consciousness talks about is incapable of replacing religion for providing unconditioned meaning, nonetheless, as a result of social evolution and the process of rationalization, "a concept of communicative reason [...] enables us to recover the meaning of the unconditioned without recourse to metaphysics."[75] Unconditioned, here, refers to an image of the world that does not depend on an individual's subjective

---

[72] Cf. J. Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 134.

[73] See in particular M. Horkheimer, *Die Sehnsucht nach dem ganz Anderen* [Stuttenbücher, 97]. Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, (¹1970) ²1971, 90 p.

[74] M. Horkheimer, "Gespräch mit Helmut Gumnior," *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt, 1985-1991), vol. 7, p. 387; quoted in J. Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 137.

[75] Ibid., p. 141.

understanding. As to the second function attributed to religion, namely, setting moral standards, Habermas is of the opinion that although rationally established ethical standards of action can, and inevitably will be, substitutes for religion, they are inadequate for providing motivation and answer the question, 'why be moral' in the first place. "In *this* respect," he cautiously writes, "it may perhaps be said that to seek to salvage an unconditional meaning without God is a futile undertaking, for it belongs to the peculiar dignity of philosophy to maintain adamantly that no validity claim can have cognitive import unless it is vindicated before the tribunal of justificatory discourse."[76] "Unconditional meaning" refers here to a context-free truth or obligation as depicted in the works of Horkheimer who argues for anchoring morality in religion and divine knowledge in order to secure its unconditionality and absolute truth in contrast to the human knowledge that changes with the contingencies of the world. With regard to the third function, Habermas thinks that

> Viewed from without, religion, which has largely been deprived of its worldview functions, is still indispensable in ordinary life for normalizing intercourse with the extraordinary. For this reason, even postmetaphysical thinking continues to coexist with religious practice. [...] Philosophy, even in its postmetaphysical form, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is the bearer of a semantic content that is inspiring and even indispensable, for this content eludes (for the time being?) the explanatory force of philosophical language and continues to resist translation into reasoning discourses.[77]

---

[76] Ibid., p. 146.

[77] J. Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 51.

Here Habermas speaks of the continuation of religious practice and not of religious worldview: as a result of social evolution and the process of rationalization, religion has lost its function of delivering a worldview, but still continues to furnish society with unconditional morality and a motivation to abide by moral codes, as well as consolatory power in the face of disastrous events in life. In order to understand Habermas' position, let us analyze his understanding of the religious worldview and its major features, the rationalization of religion and its consequences, and the main characteristics of a modern understanding of the world.

4.2.2 Salient Features of the Religious Worldview

Tenbruck presents an overview of Weber's idea regarding the process of rationalization in the following passage:

> When men no longer regarded the forces that mysteriously confronted them in the unmastered environment as powers immanent in the things themselves, but represented them as beings lying behind the things, then for Weber a new idea was born; and when they made personal beings out of them, that was once again a new idea. Likewise for Weber, the monotheistic concept of a transcendent God was a new idea which first had to be born, but which once accepted had far-reaching consequences. Then it was a completely new idea that this was a rewarding and punishing God, especially when this further gave rise to the idea that the destiny of men in this world and in the next depended essentially on keeping such ethical commandments. Another new idea came into the world with emissary prophecy, that is with Judaism, because now men had

to understand themselves as God's instruments working in the world. And it was again a new idea when Protestantism added predestination to this.[78]

Following Weber, Habermas thinks that the religious worldview, although different from mythical worldview, shares with it some features. Common to both is a holistic image of the world, which enables to understand world events despite still uncontrolled probabilities, it is "the cognitive interpretation of the world in such a way that the contingencies of an imperfectly controlled environment could be processed simultaneously with the fundamental risks of human existence."[79] Six major aspects distinguish the religious worldview from mythical images of the world:

1) Desacralization of nature— The mythical world image depends on forming "analogies between all the natural and cultural phenomena [...] everything depends upon everything else in an evident manner. [...] The mythical world image assigns a meaningful place to every perceptible element; in so doing it absorbs the insecurities threatening a society."[80] In a society that believes in myth, there is no distinction between "individuality, particularity, and universality;"[81] consequently, the problem of identity does not arise. Everything, including the individual, is analogous to everything else in the world; for Hegel, as Habermas quotes, "mythical thought constructs a vast hall of mirrors in which the image of man and the world endlessly reflect each other."[82] When early civilizations establish "a form of centralized political organization which requires legitimation and must hence be assimilated into the religious narratives and secured by

---

[78] F. H. Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers," p. 685; quoted in TCA I, 196.

[79] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, p. 119.

[80] J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," p. 91.

[81] Ibid., p. 92.

[82] Ibid., p. 91.

rituals,"[83] then the legitimation of a political entity or system is guaranteed by considering it as the carrier of a religious system. This stage of development brings about a worldview peculiar to polytheistic religions and distinguished through the desacralization of nature, which provides a certain autonomy for the political system from the cosmic order.

It is impossible to deal with the contingencies accompanying the new situation through interpretation alone, as in the mythical worldview. People have to learn new ways of controlling such possibilities, and they find it in religious activities like prayer, sacrifice, and worship related to a multiplicity of gods who actively and sometimes arbitrarily control various aspects of the world and human life. Each society possesses its religion and gods without any claim to universality.[84] In most of his writings, however, Habermas does not consider this stage separately from the mythical stage, and he reserves the term 'religious worldview' for the next level.

2) *Universality and monotheism*— Following Hegel, Habermas argues that in the third stage, a particular and highly rationalized form of religious worldview develops carrying two major characteristics, namely, a claim to universality and belief in monotheism. These types of universal religions, of which Habermas introduces Judaism and Christianity as "perhaps the most rationally structured,"[85] thrive in highly developed civilizations with extreme inequalities and injustice. Therefore, religion has a twofold responsibility in this context: first, it provides a feasible explanation of the world

---

[83] Ibid., p. 92.

[84] Cf. Ibid.

[85] Ibid., pp. 92-93.

including its natural individual and social facets, and also it creates and maintains ego and group identities.

3) World as a systematically ordered whole— The unifying character of the religious worldview brings about an essential difference from mythical worldviews. Instead of introducing different mythical narratives to explain every aspect of the world in particular, or assigning to each god a portion of reality as in polytheistic religions, a monotheistic religion considers the world as a systematically ordered whole, i.e. as cosmos, in the context of which everything and all events find their proper place.

4) Finding a rational answer to the problem of theodicy— With reference to the ethical dimension of religious systems, Weber and Tenbruck consider the problem of theodicy central to a religious worldview. In their interpretation, religious worldviews look for "a rational answer to the problem of theodicy; and the stages of religious development are increasingly explicit conceptions of this problem and its solutions."[86] "Every theology [...] presupposes that the world must have a *meaning*, and the question is how to interpret this meaning so that it is intellectually conceivable."[87] Although for Weber even the most primitive worldview is considered as some sort of meaningful interpretation of the world, nonetheless, only rationalized religions do offer a metaphysical meaning of the world as part of their specifically religious actions and the "direct appropriation of sacred values."[88]

Habermas puts the role of the religious worldview this way: "Religious systems originally connected the moral-practical task of constituting ego—and group—identities

---

[86] F. H. Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers," p. 683; quoted in TCA I, 195.

[87] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," p. 153.

[88] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," p. 278.

[...] with the cognitive interpretation of the world."[89] He injects a Marxist overtone to Weber's analysis by reducing the problem of theodicy to social inequality, and restricting the task of the religious worldview to "justifying the unequal distribution of life's goods" (TCA I, 201). The theodicy problem in Weber pertains to a host of paradoxical situations in which human suffering is involved, whether it is the result of a natural disaster, social inequality, or any other source of anguish. Putting agonizing situations in the context of a belief in an Omnipotent and Just God poses the question of how to reconcile the two. Habermas' reinterpretation, or as he calls it, reconstruction of Weber involves a multiple reductionism. First, he reduces the functions of religion in modern society to its conciliatory side effect and neglects its original function as guidance for human conduct. Secondly, he reduces suffering to social inequality, i.e. the lack of distributive justice. This narrow and one-sided vision of religion also entails the identification of equality with justice and inequality with injustice. In this respect, Habermas should speak rather, as Georges de Schrijver suggests, of 'humano-dicy' instead of theodicy.[90]

According to Habermas, in order to accomplish this task of justification of social injustice, religion not only utilizes ethical arguments but also mobilizes a whole range of theological, cosmological, and metaphysical views "concerning the constitution of the world as a whole" (TCA I, 202). This process gives way to "an intellectual *rationalization* of the possession of sacred values," called theology. Every theology "adds

---

[89] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, p. 119.

[90] Georges de Schrijver, "Wholeness in Society: A Contemporary Understanding of the Question of Theodicy, a Critical Appraisal of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action," *Tijdschrift voor de Studie van de Verlichting en van het Vrije Denken* 12 (1984): 377.

a few specific presuppositions for its work and thus for the justification of its existence."[91]

5) Lack of differentiation between nature and society— In a religious-metaphysical worldview, the natural and the social domains of reality are not demarcated yet. The idea of "a God of Creation or a Ground of Being that unites in itself the universal aspects of 'is' and 'ought', essence and appearance" (TCA I, 206), unifies nature and society.

6) Lack of differentiation between value spheres— In the religious-metaphysical worldview and in the paradigm of a unified world order, "ontic and normative questions are blended together" (TCA I, 202), along with expressive aspects.[92] Rothberg speaks of the religious-metaphysical worldview as amalgamating "the different value spheres together in an undifferentiated manner, merging the ontic, normative and expressive dimensions."[93] Religious-metaphysical worldviews are regarded as rationalized compared to mythical worldviews so far as they distance themselves from plurality by "a concept of a concrete world order that relates the multiplicity of appearances, monotheistically or cosmologically, to a point of unity" (TCA I, 206). Habermas puts different types of metaphysical—including the naturalist—worldviews in the same category with religious worldviews. He justifies this by referring to their general appeal to "ultimate principles or beginnings" such as 'God', 'being', or 'nature'. These ultimate principles are uncriticizable. "[W]hile all arguments can be traced back to such beginnings, the latter are not themselves exposed to argumentative doubt" (TCA I, 214). Because Habermas

---

[91] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," p. 153.

[92] Cf. TCA I, 203.

[93] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 223.

claims that the religious, as well as the metaphysical, worldview is based on ultimate principles immune from criticism, Rothberg rightly accuses him of not taking "adequate stock of the level of reflexivity reached in many contemplative traditions, and of the extent to which there is experiential validation of the most basic claims."[94] Although subjective, objective, and social world relations are, to some extent, differentiated and deal with the multitude of appearances in the religious-metaphysical worldview, they are still fused when it comes to their basic concepts. "[P]recisely in these 'beginnings' there lives on something of mythical thought" (TCA I, 214). The process of rationalization of the religious-metaphysical worldview allows for dealing with the world cognitively as well as practically under each of these aspects separately.

4.2.3 Religious Rationalization

Apart from endeavors by religious scholars and theologians to seek a rational basis for religious beliefs and teachings, and answering non-believers' doubts and opposition, there exists two lines of inquiry into the rationality of religion, especially that of Christianity as the dominant religion and religion par excellence in the West. These attempts took place after the Enlightenment and did study religion from a rational point of view. They mainly revolved around the deists' pursuit of a natural religion and around "Ludwig Feuerbach's scathing critique of religion as nothing but human projection. Common to all, however, was the conviction that religion as known and practiced was in conflict with human reason."[95] They shared with Durkheim the idea that behind what appears in religion as madness, there must be some kind of reason to be discovered by

---

[94] Ibid., p. 236.

[95] J. S. Jensen, "Rationality and the Study of Religion: Introduction," pp. 9-10.

science.[96] Other efforts include Friedrich Max Müller's 'science of religion' enterprise and Edward B. Tylor's illustration of "anthropology as 'a reformer's science'."[97] The various religions are answers, "though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence."[98]

The assumption behind all such attempts is the idea that religion as part of the social and cultural life of almost all human individuals and communities has to be supported by reason, and the rationality of a belief or an action depends on the fact that it should be regarded as an answer to a human need, or a solution to a problematic situation. Rationality is equated with problem solving. The difference between the diverse attempts in this venue goes back to the kind of specific need religion is supposed to satisfy. Religion from this perspective is seen as a human and social construct, and rationality is perceived as "an integral aspect of religion, including religious values."[99]

> Classical protagonists of the scientific study of religion generally embraced some form of positivist epistemology [but] as demonstrated by philosopher of science Larry Laudan: "These days [...] Positivism [...] transforms itself into a potent tool for resurrecting the very anti-empirical ideologies that it was invented to banish."[100] [...] Laudan set out to show how strong relativism may be conceived as "positivism's flip side".[101]

---

[96] Cf. E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph W. Swain (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 14-15.

[97] J. S. Jensen, "Rationality and the Study of Religion: Introduction," p. 9.

[98] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 15.

[99] J. S. Jensen, "Rationality and the Study of Religion: Introduction," p. 15.

[100] Larry Laudan, *Beyond Positivism and Relativism; Theory, Method, and Evidence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 25.

[101] J. S. Jensen, "Rationality and the Study of Religion: Introduction," p. 11.

In Comte's theory of positive philosophy, the developmental course of human intelligence, on the level of both ontogeny and phylogeny, entails three stages. The first stage is called theological and characterizes primitive societies who explain all phenomena and events in terms of divine will and forces. The second, metaphysical stage appeals to human essences and internal forces as explanations for what happens in the world. In the third and final stage, the positive one as the highest level of progress and rationality, explanatory force is reserved for scientific observations alone. Almost all sociologists of religion share this view including Max Weber who writes, "When these types [of practical rational conduct] have been obstructed by spiritual obstacles, the development of rational economic conduct has also met serious inner resistance. The magical and religious forces, and the ethical ideas of duty based upon them, have in the past always been among the most important formative influences on conduct."[102]

In his sociological analysis of Occidental rationality, Weber accepts an evolutionary paradigm in order to account for, and systematize, all the changes that have occurred in the history of thought and action in the West. Clearly influenced by Auguste Comte's three-stage theory, he brings in religion as one of the influential parameters in the process of rationalization human intellect goes through: from magic, through religion, to science. Each stage is a precondition for the next one. However, after a stage has passed, it can be but a restraint along the path to radical rationalization if it is maintained, and it should be removed to give way to the new stage.

Weber considers religion and the radical rationalization of purposive action as opposite: the further the purposive rationalization progresses, the more religion is pushed

---

[102] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, pp. 26-27.

aside "into the realm of irrationality."[103] The more the theoretical understanding of the world and the practical administration of life are determined and controlled by rational procedures, the less spheres of life and comprehension are influenced by religion. This antagonistic polarization has its roots in the Enlightenment thought and philosophy. As we saw in the case of the rationalization of lifeworld and that of worldview, religious rationalization also means a diminishing of religion in favor of rationality.

Weber's theory of rationalization revolves around the meaning of world and life. Human beings have always sought the meaning of life in the whole structure of a meaningful universe, and the rationalization of religious worldview is based on the separation of religious teachings and commands from the course of events in the world and human life, i.e. on secularization. Therefore, disconnecting religion from eternal salvation is perceived as an accomplishment, and Weber considers that the Baptist denominations "carried out the most radical devaluation of all sacraments as means to salvation, and thus accomplished the religious rationalization of the world in its most extreme form."[104] Tenbruck distinguishes three distinctive features in Weber's treatment of religious rationalization. First of all, Weber interprets the vicissitudes of religious experience in the course of history within an evolutionary paradigm. "With his thesis about the unidirectional rationalization of *all* world religions, Weber, despite his scepticism in regard to laws of progress, 'suddenly finds himself in the camp of the contemporary evolutionism so far as matters of religion are concerned'."[105] Secondly, in Weber's view, the development of religions "is supposed to follow predominantly

---

[103] M. Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," p. 281.

[104] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 147.

[105] F. H. Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers," p. 682; quoted in TCA I, 195.

rational constraints; the genesis of religion is thus supposed to comprise a progress in rationality."[106] And thirdly, Tenbruck identifies the problem of theodicy as the essential problem to which Weber associates the process of the rationalization of all world religions: "The rational constraints that religion is supposed to follow arise from the need to have a rational answer to the problem of theodicy; and the stages of religious development are increasingly explicit conceptions of this problem and its solutions."[107] Clifford Geertz paraphrases this latter point when he says that "the process of religious rationalization seems everywhere to have been provoked by a thorough shaking of the foundations of social order. Provoked but not determined."[108]

Despite his appeal to treat all religions by the same token, Weber singles out Christianity in his discussion of rationalization and claims that for external reasons, only one religion, *viz.* Christianity in the West, is actually radically rationalized. In the Occident, rationalization "sets free the structures of consciousness that make a modern understanding of the world possible" (TCA I, 198). Although Habermas rightly believes that "The cognitive and expressive elements of tradition are no less affected by these structures of world understanding than the evaluative" (TCA I, 198), Weber more strongly emphasizes the cognitive aspect. Perhaps such an accentuation is attributable to the fact that the cognitive facet underlies the other strata of judgment, emotion, and action. As Kalberg points out, "For the devout, just the *discrepancy* between the rational transcendent domain viewed as a 'meaningful totality' and random earthly occurrences and injustices sets in motion, according to Weber, an autonomous thrust. This *cognitive*

---

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., p. 683; quoted in TCA I, 195.

[108] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 173.

thrust [...] provides the transcendent point of reference that offers a comprehensive 'meaning' to life and legitimates religion-oriented methodical ways of life."[109] The religious worldview with its image of the world as a coherent whole helps the individual to orient one's "action systematically and in an internally consistent manner to the supernatural. [...] As opposed to the primitive conception of the supernatural [...] world views are characterized by ethical, universal, and permanent features."[110] For Weber, the ethical feature of a worldview is the fundamental criterion that paves the way for the rationalization of action. However, the actualization of such potentiality in the form of systematically rational life style depends upon several conditions including "the presence of salvation religions, virtuoso religious qualifications, the presence of the enduring 'religious mood' and the salvation goal, and the existence of either of the methodologies of sanctification—asceticism or mysticism—as the salvation path."[111]

Habermas follows Weber in his developmental account of human rationality, in which religion is a medium stage. As Anthony Giddens calls it, the "three main phases of social evolution—mythical, religious-metaphysical, and modern" are actually the 'shades of Comte'.[112] Modifying the legacy of Comte, Habermas offers his theory rather in the form of a system of "four stages of social evolution."[113] Each stage is deemed a necessary condition for the next, and the moment a higher stage is achieved the former has to be abandoned, since each stage has all the advantages of the previous ones in a higher form. In such a conception of rationality, religion as a stage is superior to magic and higher in

---

[109] S. Kalberg, "The Rationalization of Action," p. 81.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] A. Giddens, "Reason without Revolution?," p. 101.

[113] J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," p. 91.

the scale of rationality. It is, however, inferior to the next stage—namely, science—and an obstacle to the advancement of rationality if it continues to function in a post-religious stage of human development. As Rothberg has it, "There is, on Habermas' argument, a fundamental kind of zero-sum game in which, as rationality develops, the 'sacred' is "linguistified" and eliminated."[114] Of course, Habermas concedes the possibility that there may remain functions and certain types of usefulness peculiar to magic, religion, or metaphysics that are not embedded in later stages of rationality. What happens in these cases is an overlap of stages. The previous strata continue their existence until they are completely overcome by the next ones. In his analysis of Habermas' treatment of religion, Schrijver observes,

> It is this Hegelian concept of the self-surpassing advance of reason which accounts for Habermas' rejection of religion. In his eyes religious faith curbs the novelty of interpretation required for the emergence of new stages of rationality; hence, his disagreement with those authors (Weber, Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Parsons) who show a reluctance to abandon religion. Habermas dismisses their attempts to safeguard the meaning of the Sacred—through for example, the 'commemoration of sundered life', the 'nostalgia for ultimate completion' or the 'elaboration of the telic system'. Such attempts are unjustified. They manifest their authors' disbelief in the victory of reason. [...] Habermas does not seem to believe in the future of religion."[115]

Habermas relies on Weber for the general structure of his analysis and arguments with regard to the question of rationalization and religion. He also acknowledges the

---

[114] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 233.

[115] G. de Schrijver, "Wholeness in Society," p. 387.

necessity of religion for the emergence of moral consciousness. Nevertheless, he is critical of Weber for his remarks on the self-destructiveness of the process of societal rationalization, and the necessity of religion, especially salvation religion, for the survival of rationally based morality.

> Weber still owes us a demonstration that a moral consciousness guided by principles can survive only in a religious context. He would have to explain why embedding a principled ethic in a salvation religion, why joining moral consciousness to interests in salvation, are just as indispensable for the *preservation* of moral consciousness as, from a genetic standpoint, they undoubtedly were for the *emergence* of this stage of moral consciousness. (TCA I, 229)

4.3 The Modern Understanding of the World

Habermas considers the religious worldview as a stage in the learning process and the development of formal world-concepts. He borrows the concepts of learning and stage, as well as the idea of cognitive development, from Piaget's genetic epistemology (see above #3.2.2). For Habermas, religion is a product of the human intellect developed as a response to certain needs aroused in the course of human encounter with the objective, subjective, and social worlds. Religion is not considered as a permanent solution to human problems; rather, it is a temporary answer appropriate only for a specific period of time. In this understanding of religion, which is common to social scientists, there is no reference to the divine element in religion, or to revelation. Such interpretation may seem enough to describe some aspects of those thought-systems that contain no reference to divinity or have no claim to be revealed. However, these two

elements are essential in the self-understanding of certain religions, especially Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

4.3.1 Rationalization as Decentration

Still another idea Habermas adopts from Piaget is 'decentration' as a criterion of development. Decentration in Piaget's theory of child development refers to a level of cognitive as well as social development in which ego-centrism is overcome.

> The child's ego-centrism is essentially a phenomenon of indifferentiation, *i.e.*, confusion of his own point of view with that of others or of the activity of things and persons with his own activity. Defined thus, it is both suggestibility and unconscious projection of the ego into the group, and lack of awareness of the point of view of others and unconscious absorption of the group into the ego. In both cases it is essentially unconscious, precisely because it is the expression of a failure to differentiate.[116]

Ego-centrism is thus correlative to child's non-differentiation from the group on the one hand, and from the external world of objects on the other.[117] Piaget suggests a process of decentration as "a gradual reduction of ego-centricity in favour of the progressive socialisation of thought, in favour, that is to say, of objectivations and reciprocity of view-points."[118] As a result of the decentration process, a child proceeds in the two domains of cognitive and social development, and succeeds "in emerging from itself and

---

[116] J. Piaget, *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood*, trans. C. Gattegno & F. M. Hodgson (New York, NY: The Norton Library, 1962), pp. 73-74.

[117] Cf. J. Piaget, *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*, trans. Derek Coltman (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 175.

[118] J. Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*, trans. Marjorie Gabain (Totowa, NJ.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1965), p. 301.

in becoming aware of its self, in other words, in situating itself from the outside among others while at the same time discovering both its own personality and that of everyone else."[119]

Habermas attributes also to Weber the idea of rationalization of worldview as decentration, which culminates in different attitudes toward the natural, subjective, and social worlds.

> On the one hand, a decentered understanding of the world opens up the possibility of dealing with the world of facts in a cognitively objectified [versachlicht] manner and with the world of interpersonal relations in a legally and morally objectified manner; on the other hand, it offers the possibility of a subjectivism freed from imperatives of objectification in dealing with individualized needs, desires, and feelings [Bedürfnisnatur]. (TCA I, 216-217)

The correspondence between decentration and differentiation in the above analysis, replicates exactly their relationship in Piaget's theory, and it is very likely that Habermas has taken over the idea from Piaget, applying it to the history of human understanding in general. He uses the generalized theory of development to reconstruct Weber's notion of social rationalization.

Habermas thinks of worldview as a twofold concept comprising a cognitive aspect along with an ethical dimension (see #3.3.3). For him, the rationalization of worldview occurs in both: ethical rationalization either as world-affirmation with regard to "practical adjustment to the world", or as world-negation leading to "the flight from the world" (TCA I, 208-9); and cognitive rationalization "in the direction of

---

[119] J. Piaget, *Science of Education*, p. 175.

theoreticization" (TCA I, 209). Habermas believes that Weber, despite his emphasis on the differentiation of three value spheres in the rationalization of society, neglected the cognitive dimension. He criticizes Weber for limiting "the rationalization of worldviews to the standpoint of ethical rationalization [*Ethisierung*]; he [only] traces the development of a religiously grounded ethic of conviction—more generally, the development of posttraditional legal and moral representations". (TCA I, 197)

Habermas does not consider any kind of rationalized worldview as modern: there is a gap and "an *additional step* between the results of worldview rationalization and the understanding of the world that is in a specific sense "modern" (TCA I, 214). But what exactly is that step? Habermas does not use the term 'worldview' for the modern view of the world, neither does he apply the term to the mythical world image. That is because his definition of worldview implies a holistic picture of the world, which is lacking in both primitive and modern interpretations of the world. Habermas admits that his analysis of what he considers to be a modern understanding of the world presupposes the Occidental mode of thinking as universally valid. For him, the Occidental modern understanding of the world is not something essentially exclusive to the West and could emerge everywhere else too. Only external conditions led to the elevation of the western societies to this level of rationalization while others lag behind. In a modern understanding of the world, "structures of consciousness are expressed that belong to a rationalized lifeworld and make possible in principle a rational conduct of life" (TCA I, 44). Insisting on the fact that a worldview only constitutes one part of a form of life, he characterizes the modern world understanding by its decenteredness. (TCA I, 73)

4.3.2 Rationalization as Differentiation

In the concluding reflections of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas once again tries to incorporate Weber's theory of modernity and Occidental rationality into his theory of social evolution. Weber tries to show that the rationalization of worldview in the West has led "to the differentiation of cultural value spheres with their own logics, and thereby to posttraditional legal and moral representations" (TCA II, 315-316). Rothberg traces back the idea of differentiation to "Durkheim, as well as later writers on religion and "modernization" such as Parsons, Bellah, and Döbert."[120] He sees differentiation as

> the separation of what Weber calls the three cultural "value spheres" of science, morality, and art from their relatively undifferentiated unity in religious worldviews; each of these spheres is thus freed to follow its own inner logic. This process is simultaneously a differentiation of three "worlds" ("objective," "social," and "subjective"), three "attitudes" (*Einstellungen*) by which to approach these worlds ("objectivating," "norm-conforming," and "expressive"), and very crucially, three types of "validity claims" (truth, rightness, and truthfulness).[121]

Habermas considers differentiation as a must for a modern understanding of the world "in order that the reflexivity of traditions, the individuation of the social subject, and the universalistic foundations of justice and morality do not all go to hell."[122] This is not, however, an inclusive list of the modes of rationalizable world relations from Habermas' point of view. In a more comprehensive explanation, he multiplies the three

---

[120] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 222.

[121] Ibid.

[122] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 15.

basic attitudes of expressive, objectivating, and norm-conforming with the three worlds

of objective, social, and subjective to come up with nine possible relations, "only six of

which, according to Habermas, have been rationalized historically [...] leaving three

relations [...] as not capable of supporting systematic 'learning' and rationalization."[123]

Habermas illustrates these relations in the figure No. 1, in which "X" represents areas that

do not support rationalization. His interpretation of modernity pertains to a philosophical

discourse comprising rationalization as differentiation that shapes the backbone of a

modern understanding of the world. Weber traces the first manifestation of such

differentiation back to a functional segregation of the economic and political subsystems

from each other and from society as a whole. Further differentiation occurs in the three

social components of culture, society, and personality. Finally, differentiation penetrates

into the three value spheres of culture, namely, science, law and morality, and art. Each

value sphere becomes independent and develops its own internal logic as well as its

unique standards of critique and evaluation. The interpretation of modernity in terms of a

process of rationalization has its roots in the Enlightenment, which considers reason an

equivalent alternative to the isolated religion in its unifying, consensus-creating power in

the social life. According to Habermas, this is exactly "the motivation behind German

Idealism; this type of idealism has found equally influential proponents in the tradition of

Peirce, Royce, Mead, and Dewey."[124]

There remains a difference between the classical theories of modernity and the

one proposed by Habermas. Weber, for example, saw in the rationalization process a

---

[123] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 226.

[124] J. Habermas, "Questions and Counter-Questions," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 197.

Worlds / Basic Attitudes	1 Objective	2 Social	3 Subjective	1 Objective
3 Expressive	Art			
1 Objectivating	Cognitive-instrumental rationality Science Technology	Social technologies	X	
2 Norm-Conformative	X	Moral-practical Rationality Law	Morality	
3 Expressive		X	Aesthetic-practical Rationality Eroticism	Art

Figure 1: Rationalization Complexes in Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (TCA I, 238)

threat to social life through the vacuity of meaning resulting in the emergence of an 'iron cage'. Durkheim saw the emerging of 'anomie', and Marx spoke of 'reification' as the unavoidable and unbearable consequence of rationalization. Habermas, instead, focuses on what he takes to be a potential for emancipation also made available through modernity: social problems associated with modernity and its rationalized worldview are the results of the 'colonization of the lifeworld' through the one-sided process of rationalization in which only the purposive rationality is emphasized while other dimensions of rationality are neglected. Thus market economy and administrative state as the two main forces impose their modes of rationality upon all areas of social life. They invade the lifeworld and with their own one-dimensional form of functional rationality displace a communicatively rational integration, which could emerge if rationalization would have flourished in all its dimensions. Besides its cooperation with the various reconstructive sciences, philosophy plays the more general "role of an interpreter who mediates between the lifeworld and expert cultures,"[125] and thus sets aside the religious integrative function. In the face of the rationalized, disintegrated, and analytical understanding of the world that characterizes modernity, and in the absence of the integrative force of religion, only philosophy remains as a synthetic force in modern society. And yet, philosophy does not provide the basis for understanding, but mediates between different disciplines.

Peter Dews and Richard Rorty are among Habermas' critiques on this issue, albeit from two almost opposite perspectives. In his critique of Habermas' thesis of 'postmetaphysical' philosophy as the hallmark of modernity, Dews suggests that "by

---

[125] J. Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 162.

piecing together the elements which Habermas himself provides in a different way, we can see that the interdependencies between science, morality, ethics and 'metaphysical' (albeit fallible and non-objectivistic) reflection concerning the ultimate meaning of our knowledge and action are far more intimate than he is usually willing to admit."[126] Rorty suggests that Habermas has taken Kant's demarcation between science, morals, and art (as proposed by his three critiques of pure reason, practical reason, and judgment) too seriously. Kant's compartmentalization of reason "as a *donnée, as die massgebliche Selbstauslegung der Moderne*[127] [and] then the *Selbstvergewisserung der Moderne*[128], which Hegel and Habermas both take to be the 'fundamental philosophical problem',"[129] have culminated in what Rorty calls 'an artificial problem'. He blames Habermas for viewing "the story of modern philosophy (as successive reactions to Kant's diremptions) [as] an important part of the story of the democratic societies' attempts at self-reassurance," and for making this sort of mentality responsible for the vanishing relevance of religion in the social affairs of modern communities as well as in "the self-image of that citizenry."[130] Habermas regards modernity as a philosophical movement with distinctive characteristics separating it from pre-modern metaphysical philosophy. Along with Weber, he wants us to believe that due to the differentiation of validity claims as the criterion of the philosophical discourse of modernity people lose the sense of unity and meaning previously provided by the religious worldview. Yet, this is not all

---

[126] P. Dews, *The Limits of Disenchantment: Essays on Contemporary European Philosophy* (London & New York: Verso, 1995), p. 210.

[127] Leading self-interpretation of modernity.

[128] Self-reassurance of modernity.

[129] R. Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 167.

[130] Ibid., p. 169.

modernity can offer, since the still unfinished project of modernity can potentially replace the religious integrative power and meaning with communicative rationality. Rorty instead takes a more straightforward approach to modernity, almost equating it with modernization.

> It is, after all, things like the formation of trade unions, the meritocratization of education, the expansion of the franchise, and cheap newspapers, which have figured most largely in the willingness of the citizens of the democracies to see themselves as part of a 'communicative community'—their continued willingness to say 'us' rather than 'them'. [...] One's sense of relation to a power beyond the community becomes less important as one becomes able to think of oneself as part of a body of public opinion, capable of making a difference to the public fate.[131]

Johann P. Arnason presents a similar picture of modernity and he focuses on social structures peculiar to modern society instead of anchoring it in an idiosyncratic philosophical understanding of the world: a "particular constellation of economic, political and cultural structures appears as the distinguishing characteristic of modernity."[132] However, one cannot ignore the philosophical foundations of modernity and the fact that the modern understanding of, and attitude toward, the world, the society and the individual, as well as their reciprocal relationships differ in some fundamental respects from those of the primitive and pre-modern societies. It is a simplification of the issue to limit our view of modernity to the apparent structural changes in society, which we may call 'modernization of society'. In any case, neither rationalization nor a higher

---

[131] Ibid.

[132] J. P. Arnason, "Modernity as Project and as Field of Tensions," in *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 185.

level of development does automatically mean progress. Admitting such a distinction, Habermas tries to explain it with reference to "the fact that new levels of learning mean not only expanded ranges of options but also new problem situations. [...] But the problems that arise at the new stage of development can—insofar as they are at all comparable with the old ones—increase in intensity."[133] Habermas sums up his evolutionary theory of society described in terms of differentiation as follows:

> With the transition to the sociocultural form of life, that is, with the introduction of the family structure, there arose *the problem of demarcating society from external nature*. [...] Power over nature came into consciousness as a scarce resource. The experience of powerlessness in relation to the contingencies of external nature had to be interpreted away in myth and magic. With the introduction of a collective political order, there arose *the problem of the self-regulation of the social system*. [...] Legal security came to consciousness as a scarce resource. The experience of social repression and arbitrariness had to be balanced with legitimations of domination. This was accomplished in the framework of rationalized world views (through which, moreover, the central problem of the previous stage—powerlessness—could be defused). In the modern age, with the autonomization of the economy (and complementarization of the state), there arose *the problem of a self-regulated exchange of the social system with external nature*. [...] Value came into consciousness as a scarce resource. The experience of social inequality called into being social movements and corresponding strategies of appeasement. These seemed to lead to their goal in social welfare state mass democracies (in which, moreover, the central problem of the preceding stage—legal insecurity—could be defused). Finally, if postmodern societies, as they are today envisioned from different angles, should be characterized by a

---

[133] J. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," pp. 163-64.

primacy of the scientific and educational systems, one can speculate about the emergence of *the problem of a self-regulated exchange of society with internal nature*. Again a scarce resource would become thematic—not the supply of power, security, or value, but the supply of motivation and meaning.[134]

4.3.3 Rationalization as Disenchantment

Disenchantment is considered one of the hallmarks of modernity as well as of a rationalized understanding of the world. It has become a central theme in discussions of rationality in the domain of sociology. The term 'disenchantment' connotes a fundamental contradiction between religion and reason and the overcoming of the former by the latter in modernity. Quoting Tenbruck's analysis of Weber's "The Economic Ethics of World Religions,"[135] Habermas endorses his idea that Weber's "real theme is the universal-historical process of disenchantment [and] how rationality is produced and takes effect in the interplay of ideas and interests."[136] Weber explains disenchantment in the context of an essential tension between religion and intellectual knowledge. Disenchantment is thus understood as evisceration of meaning. For Weber, meaning refers to motivation and plan for action by the agent of action. In the pre-scientific era people had to assume the world and worldly events as actions of an agent whose intention and plan were considered as the meaning of the world. With the triumph of empirical knowledge and the death of God there remains no need for this postulate because world relations are transformed into a causal relationship between events themselves. They no

---

[134] Ibid., pp. 165-66.

[135] Max Weber, "Die Wirtschaftsethick der Weltreligionen," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tubingen: 1922-23), pp. 237-68.

[136] F. H. Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers," p. 677; quoted in TCA I, 195.

longer refer to anything beyond themselves and thus are devoid of meaning. "In principle, the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for a 'meaning' of inner-worldly occurrences."[137]

Weber holds intellectualism responsible for disenchanting the world processes by suppressing belief in magic. A disenchanted world thus looses its magical significance, and world events "henceforth simply 'are' and 'happen' but no longer signify anything. As a consequence, there is a growing demand that the world and the total pattern of life be subject to an order that is significant and meaningful."[138] Intellectuals are the unique social group preoccupied with the 'meaning' of the world. Disenchantment has become a technical term in the sociology of religion. In the tradition of critical theory, Adorno and Horkheimer explain enlightenment in terms of "demythologizing, secularizing or disenchanting some mythical, religious or magical representations of the world,"[139] and William Rehg describes disenchantment of the world in terms of "the loss of the 'sacred canopy',"[140] thus referring to Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy*.[141]

Habermas adopts Weber's notion of disenchantment and applies it to his own idea of worldview with both theoretical and practical dimensions. The theoretical or cognitive dimension is related to the understanding and interpretation of the world, whereas the practical or ethical one concerns the relations with others including encounter with God. Cognitive disenchantment amounts to a demythologization of theoretical knowledge,

---

[137] M. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World," pp. 350-51.

[138] M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 506.

[139] Simon Jarvis, *Adorno; A Critical Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), p. 24.

[140] W. Rehg, "Translator's Introduction," in J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. xxvi.

[141] New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1967.

which entails (a) the refinement of a formal concept of the world as a whole; "(b) the differentiation of a purely theoretical attitude (set off from practice); and (c) the development of an epistemic ego in general, which can give itself over to the contemplation of what is, freed from affects, lifeworld interests, prejudices, and the like" (TCA I, 213). As far as ethical disenchantment is concerned, Habermas interprets Weber's idea as overcoming magical thinking, which happens "primarily in the interaction between the believer and God (or the divine being)" (TCA I, 212). In his explanation he fuses magic and religion, and treats them as the same. This merger has its roots in Weber himself who thought that a meaningful image of the world is an attribute common to magic and religion: religion provides the world with meaning by offering a worldview in which the world is ordered and ordained by God "and hence somehow *meaningfully* and ethically oriented."[142] Therefore, disenchantment comes down to depriving the world and worldly events, including human life, of meaning. For Weber, this happens through the process of the rationalization of the world order because a rational worldview puts everything to the analytic test of instrumental rationality which does not harmonize with a holistic image of the world. However, such a unification of magic and religion is incompatible with Habermas' presumptions since he denies the potentiality of magic for providing a coherent picture of the world as a whole.

Habermas reconstructs Weber's notion of disenchantment. He takes his "theory apart and put[s] it back together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself."[143] He consciously makes use of this strategy throughout his writings.

---

[142] M. Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World," p. 351.

[143] J. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 95.

For example, he declares in an interview, "I believe that I make the foreign tongues my own in a rather brutal manner, hermeneutically speaking. Even when I quote a good deal and take over other terminologies I am clearly aware that my use of them often has little to do with the authors' original meaning."[144] Ethical disenchantment thus comes down to "the disenchantment of the manipulation of things and events" (TCA I, 213). It entails: (a) the evolution from an ego-centric world concept to a normatively regulated interpersonal relations; (b) the development of an ethical stance independent from cognitive and expressive dimensions, in which the individual can freely criticize or follow ethical demands; "and (c) the development of a concept of the person that is at once universalistic and individualistic. [...] With this the devout attachment to concrete orders of life secured in tradition can be superseded in favor of a free orientation to universal principles" (TCA I, 212-13)

Weber's notion of disenchantment as the result of rationalization process is a necessary consequence of his reductionist approach to rationality on the one hand, and of his functionalistic approach to religion on the other. Habermas shares with Weber the second assumption and has a narrow understanding of what religion is and what its functions are. The idea of disenchantment and its negative consequences are expressed in Weber's famous expressions, 'loss of freedom' and 'loss of meaning'. In Weber's view, disenchantment "is a process in which the original ethical and religious-cultural motivations are dissolved into a 'pure utilitarianism'."[145] Habermas, however, criticizes Weber for his narrow perception of rationality and suggests instead its broadening to

---

[144] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 30.

[145] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, p. 53.

include communicative rationality. Such a comprehensive idea of rationality may lead us to see the positive aspects of disenchantment as well, for instance in the domain of law:

> Although this process destroyed the metasocial guarantees of the legal order, it by no means vaporized the noninstrumentalizable quality of the law's claim to legitimacy. The disenchantment of religious worldviews not only has the destructive consequence of undermining the "two kingdoms" of sacred and secular law, and with this the hierarchical subordination to a higher law. It also leads to a reorganization of legal validity, in that it *simultaneously* transposes the basic concepts of morality and law to a postconventional level.[146]

McCarthy refers to more general aspects of disenchantment by explaining it in terms of "communicative liquifaction of the basic religious consensus" in which "the authority of tradition is increasingly open to discursive questioning; the range of applicability of norms expands while the latitude for interpretation and the need for reasoned justification increases; the differentiation of individual identities grows, as does the sphere of personal autonomy."[147]

4.3.4 Linguistification of the Sacred

Appealing to Émile Durkheim and George Herbert Mead, Habermas introduces the linguistification of the sacred as another point in his discussion of religion and rationalization. "Habermas adopts Durkheim's assumption that the binding (bonding) force of every society, including that of primeval societies, manifests itself in a collective

---

[146] J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 73.

[147] T. A. McCarthy, "Translator's Introduction," in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, p. xxiv.

consciousness which represents the incarnation of the sacred."[148] In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*[149], Durkheim suggests that the authority of moral codes and legal norms stem from religious commands and rituals as the root of all social norms. He presents a developmental account of social integration according to which the form of solidarity changes in the course of history from religious to rational, and from mechanical to organic solidarity. This analysis rests on Durkheim's presupposition that the human being is a social animal, the various dimensions of whose life are determined by society. Because he perceives religion as the first manifestation of social life, he argues for its central role in providing the cognitive, expressive, moral, and legal foundations of human understanding as well as human individual and social life. Habermas does accept Durkheim's interpretation of the eternal essence of religion as historically dynamic beliefs and ritual practices,[150] and instills it into Mead's idea of symbolic communication as a developmental phase in animal interaction resulting in a three-stage model of development.[151] He considers Durkheim and Mead among the founding fathers of modern theory formation in the social sciences who formulated the concept of paradigm change (TCA I, 86 & 399). Furthermore, he attributes to Durkheim and also Parsons the concept of 'normatively regulated action', and to Mead that of communicative action. Mead, who is considered, along with Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey, one of the classic representatives of American pragmatism, is of interest to Habermas for his theory of human communication in its distinction from animal

---

[148] G. Dux, "Communicative Reason and Interest," p. 76.

[149] Trans. Karen E. Fields (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1995).

[150] Cf. Ibid., pp. 429-33.

[151] Cf. G. Dux, "Communicative Reason and Interest," p. 77.

interaction and his idea about human cognitive and ethical development. 'Taking the role of the other' is for Mead the fundamental feature of all human sociality. It refers to a human capacity for internalizing—and in higher levels of development, taking into account—the expectations of others in one's dealing with them.[152] Differentiating between play and games in children, he suggests a developmental gradation between the two. In play, a child interacts with a single imaginary partner, while in games, s/he has to deal with different actual partners and to take their various expectations into consideration. Mead calls the partner in this situation 'the generalized other' whose expectations are part of the game. By way of generalization, Mead extends his theory to any norm, value, and communication in a social context.

By synthesizing and reconstructing Durkheim's and Mead's theories, Habermas "thus develops a theory of the inner logic of sociocultural development as a process of the 'linguistification of the sacred'."[153] According to Habermas, "the primordial consensus takes shape through the agency of a religious paleosymbolism."[154] The linguistification of the sacred takes place along with the fulfillment of the conditions for the emergence of action oriented toward understanding. To the extent that "the rationality potential ingrained in communicative action is set free, the archaic core of the normative dissolves and gives way to the rationalization of worldviews, the universalization of law and morality, and accelerated processes of individuation."[155] The goal of the

---

[152] On this see Maurice Boutin, "Autrui différé: Remarques sur la théorie de l'action de G. H. Mead," in *Interroggettività, socialità, religione*, ed. Marco M. Olivetti, 810 p. (Padua: CEDAM Publishers, 1986), pp. 725-39.

[153] Moishe Postone, "History and Critical Social Theory," *Contemporary Sociology* 19/2 (March 1990): 173.

[154] G. Dux, "Communicative Reason and Interest," p. 79.

[155] T. A. McCarthy, "Translator's Introduction," in *The Theory of Communicative* Action, vol. 1, p. xxiv.

linguistification of the sacred is to overcome the sacred dimension of worldview. Linguistification of the sacred (*die Versprachlichung des Sakralen*) is a process in which, according to Habermas, "the implicit and 'ungrounded' authority of the 'sacred' is gradually replaced by the explicit rational authority of a 'grounded consensus'."[156] By this, he means "the transfer of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization from sacred foundations over to linguistic communication and action oriented to mutual understanding. To the extent that communicative action takes on central societal functions, the medium of language gets burdened with tasks of producing substantial consensus." (TCA II, 107)

For Durkheim, sacredness and morality refer to desirability and obligation respectively. "The sacred being is in a sense forbidden; it is a being which may not be violated; it is also good, loved and sought after."[157] The opposite of the profane, the sacred is "that which is *set apart*, that which is *separated*. What characterizes it is that it cannot, without losing its nature, be mixed with the profane [...] they are heterogeneous and incommensurable; the value of the sacred cannot be compared with that of the profane."[158]

The linguistification of the sacred is an overcoming of the sacred by human reason. It is tantamount to the disempowerment of the sacred realm, which is constitutive to religion. As Rothberg has it, "The aura of attraction and terror, beaming from the sacred, the spell-binding (*bannende*) power of the Holy, is at once sublimated and

---

[156] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 224.

[157] E. Durkheim, "The Determination of Moral Facts," in *Sociology and Philosophy* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1974), p. 36.

[158] E. Durkheim, "Replies to Objections," in *Sociology and Philosophy* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1974), p. 70.

brought to an everyday level by the binding (*bindenden*) power of criticizable validity claims."[159]

---

[159] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 224.

CHAPTER 5

RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

5.1 The Linguistic Turn

Habermas' idea of the rationalization of the religious worldview through what he calls "the linguistification (*Versprachlichung*) of the sacred" (see # 4.3.4) requires further investigation of his approach to the problem of language with reference to rationality and rationalization. "The so-called linguistic turn in Habermas' work after *Legitimation Crisis* (1973)"[1] involves a shift of interest and emphasis in his research program. The linguistification of the sacred as a criterion for the rationalization of the religious worldview corresponds to the linguistic turn in philosophy as a criterion for the rationalization of the metaphysical worldview. The expression 'linguistic turn in philosophy' is used for the first time by Gustav Bergmann (a member in the Vienna Circle) to designate a school of thought established by such philosophers as Rudolf Carnap and Bertrand Russell following Gottlob Frege's lead. For them, investigation into the structure of language is the essential task of philosophy, not the inquiring into the structure of consciousness, as Locke and Kant did. Such a transformation would make the subject matter of philosophy more tangible and its objective more attainable. Another distinguishing feature of linguistic philosophy is the clear distinction between questions regarding the meaning of linguistic expressions (or conceptual questions), and empirical

---

[1] P. U. Hohendahl, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited," p. 5.

questions concerning objective facts. In the American tradition of pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce is considered as one of the leading figures in the linguistic turn; for Peirce, competence in the use of signs is an essential aspect of thought.

As John B. Thompson clearly shows[2], the linguistic turn in Habermas' work is not a sudden shift, but rather the natural continuation of his attempt at reconstructing the Frankfurt School's program for establishing a critical theory of society. One can trace the origins of Habermas' interest in language back to his early studies of Marxism, when he, along with other members of the Frankfurt School, criticized the orthodox Marxism for reducing the development of society merely to the technical dimension and labor power. He believed that a society's autonomous development in communicative interaction is not less important at all. In elaborating this dimension, Habermas engaged himself in a discussion of hermeneutics and analytic linguistic philosophy. He admits of being "indebted to a reception of both the hermeneutic and the analytic strains of linguistic theory and, one could say, to a reading of Humboldt with the insight of analytic philosophy. This is the intuition that a *telos* of mutual understanding is built into linguistic communication."[3]

However, Habermas criticizes the hermeneutic theorists as well as the analytic philosophers for even though language constitutes a meta-institution on which other social institutions—such as politics, economy, and education—rest, they forget all too easily that language itself is a product of social relations and is affected by power. Habermas, therefore, calls for a depth hermeneutics whose task is to disclose systematic

---

[2] Cf. J. B. Thompson, "Universal Pragmatics," in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1982), pp. 116-19.

[3] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 9.

distortions embodied in language use by power relations. In *Knowledge and Human Interest*, he argues that all the scientific disciplines—natural and social—are influenced by different types of interests. The technical-cognitive interest of science is oriented toward technical control, practical-cognitive interest of morality and law toward mutual understanding and coexistence, and emancipatory-cognitive interest of art toward emancipation. The task of a critical social science is then to dissolve the relation between knowledge and power so that knowledge is freed from the influence of other interests and "coincides with the fulfillment of the interest in liberation through knowledge."[4] He distinguishes three kinds of knowledge in terms of "information that expands our power of technical control; interpretations that make possible the orientation of action within common traditions; and analyses that free consciousness from its dependence on hypostatized powers. These viewpoints originate in the interest structure of a species that is linked in its roots to definite means of social organization: work, language, and power" (KHI 313). He links these viewpoints to "three categories of processes of inquiry" (KHI 308) in which methods are determined by knowledge-constitutive interests. Habermas diagnoses technical control, practical and emancipatory interests as the very bases for distinguishing between different 'categories of processes of inquiry'. For him, categories of inquiry refer respectively to the empirical-analytic sciences, historical-hermeneutic sciences, and the critique of ideology in conjunction with psychoanalysis.

The crucial question, then, is how to justify the superiority of critique over other modes of knowledge, since it is quite possible that critique itself be just another instance of distorted communication, and that the interest in critique really be on a par with other

---

[4] J. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, p. 9.

modes of human interest. Habermas begins to address this very concern in his 1965 inaugural lecture published as an appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, and he suggests that "What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language*" (KHI 314). In this way, he sketches the outline of a philosophy based on two a priori ideas possibly given by the structure of language itself, namely, autonomy and responsibility, which together form a basis for critique and self-reflection. As universal claims, these two concepts embody our innate interest in universal consensus, which is unattainable otherwise than through critique. Both unity and universality of scientific knowledge are tarnished by its differentiated domains and their compartmentalized interests; they can be redeemed only through an appeal to the validity claims manifested in discourse. Habermas works out this idea through contradistinguishing action and discourse:

> 'Action' refers to everyday contexts of social interaction, in which information is acquired through sensory experience and exchanged through ordinary language. 'Discourse', on the other hand, designates a realm of communication which is abstracted from the contexts of everyday life. The participants of a discourse are concerned not to perform actions or to share experiences, but rather to search for arguments and justifications.[5]

Habermas' critics such as Eugene Rochberg-Halton have interpreted these developments as an abandonment of his ideas in *Knowledge and Human Interests* in favor of a linguistic approach in his later works, especially in *The Theory of*

---

[5] J. B. Thompson, "Universal Pragmatics," p. 119.

Communicative Action.[6] Albrecht Wellmer talks about "the linguistic turn in critical theory"[7] in order to emphasize the importance of this move.[8] Habermas is no longer interested in pursuing his inquiry into human consciousness anymore: "The appropriation of hermeneutics and linguistic analysis convinced me then [in the 1960s] that critical social theory had to break free from the conceptual apparatus of the philosophy of consciousness flowing from Kant to Hegel."[9] Nevertheless, he builds his critical social theory on the basis of the epistemological theory developed in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. He takes his analysis of categorical distinctions and interest positions for granted and seeks a solution to the fragmented understanding of the world peculiar to modernity in *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Thanks to language, the disintegrated image of the world brought about by diverse interests expressed in different sciences can now be recovered in the medium of discourse through its unifying nature and consensus generating power. Such a unity is not attributable to the world as such, but rather characterizes our understanding of the world inasmuch as social interaction is concerned. Language can be regarded as a unifying power at least within the scientific community where its binding role reduces disagreements as well as the abyss caused by diverging interests. (More on this later, # 5.2)

---

[6] E. Rochberg-Halton and Arthur W. Frank, "Review Symposium: Jürgen Habermas's Theory of Communicative Etherealization," *Symbolic Interaction* 12/2 (Fall 1989): 336.

[7] A. Wellmer, "Kommunikation und Emanzipation; Überlegungen zur sprachanalytischen Wende der kritisch Theorie," in *Theorien des historischen Materialismus*, ed. U. Jaeggi & A. Honneth (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 465.

[8] Cristina Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, trans. Jose Medina (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999), p. 119.

[9] J. Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen & Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1988), p. xiii.

The Theory of Communicative Action offers a social theory of intersubjective rationality based on an evolutionary philosophy of language. Human thought has gone through three stages of development: mythical, religious-metaphysical, and modern (TCA I, 68). Each stage represents a higher level of rationality (TCA I, 220) stemming from an epistemological development in the course of history. The caesurae between these three modes of thought is "characterized by changes in the system of basic concepts" (TCA I, 68). What distinguish religious and modern worldviews are not methods of reasoning and interpretation, but rather the very concepts and reasons they employ in their explanations of the world and their justifications of its events. New levels of human thought introduce new interpretations of the world that are couched in language (TCA I, 94). New stages depend on new languages, leaving the old languages dying in obsolescence. Hence, religious language as the only accessible facet of religion representing its basic concepts gains the center stage in a discussion of the development and rationalization of worldviews. For Habermas, there are aspects of religious language that are not expressible, at least for now, in any of the rational language uses. These aspects include its consolatory functions as well as its potential for providing grounds for acting according to moral obligations. Therefore, "intuitions which had long been articulated in religious language can neither be rejected nor simply retrieved rationally" (TCA I, 94). This is especially true in the case of monotheistic traditions because they "have at their disposal a language whose semantic potential is not yet exhausted [*unabgegoltenen*], that shows itself to be superior in its power to disclose the world and to form identity, in its capability for renewal, its differentiation, and its range" (TCA I, 229)

5.1.1 From Semantics to Pragmatics

Language is studied from different perspectives in different disciplines. There are phenomenologists such as Marty or the German philosopher and phenomenologist Adolf Reinach (1883-1917), linguists such as Bally and A. Gardiner, psychologists such as Karl Bühler, and anthropologists such as Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski[10], who have dealt with various aspects of language before it became the matter of systematic treatment in a philosophy of language. In the middle of the twentieth century, there emerged two schools within the field of the analytic philosophy of language with opposing interests and approaches. Their differences led, later on, to two trends in the linguistic research. The first school, founded by such logicians as Gottlob Frege[11], Bertrand Russell[12] and the logical positivists, was concerned with studying formal languages and generalizing its findings to 'language' in general. They called it 'ideal language philosophy'. Their studies, especially those of Frege, Russell, Rudolf Carnap[13], Alfred Tarski[14] and Richard Montague[15], culminated in the establishment of an independent discipline called 'formal semantics'. The other camp, comprising such figures as John Austin[16], Peter Strawson[17], Herbert Grice[18] and the later Ludwig Wittgenstein, deemed the analytic approach to language inadequate for revealing significant aspects of natural languages. They

---

[10] (1884-1942): Polish-born British anthropologist who maintained that customs and beliefs have specific social functions.

[11] Gottlob Frege (1848-1925): German philosopher-mathematician.

[12] Bertrand Arthur William Russell (1872-1970): British logician-philosopher.

[13] Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970): German philosopher and logician.

[14] Alfred Tarski (1901-83): Polish mathematician and logician.

[15] Richard Merett Montague (1930-71): Logician, philosopher, and mathematician.

[16] John Langshaw Austin (1911-60): Analytic philosopher.

[17] Peter Frederick Strawson (1919-): British analytic philosopher.

[18] Herbert Paul Grice (1913-88): British analytic philosopher.

promoted a more descriptive approach under the banner, 'ordinary language philosophy', which gave rise to a discipline known as 'pragmatics'.

Semantics, the study of meaning, and pragmatics, the study of language in use, are two important and complementary areas of contemporary linguistic research. Pragmatics as contrasted with syntactics, on the one hand, and with semantics on the other goes back to the American philosopher Charles W. Morris (1901-1979), a student of George Herbert Mead in the early 1920s, when Mead was involved in the Chicago School. According to Morris' distinction put forward in 1938 in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs,*[19] syntactics refers to the study of expressions in order to determine to which linguistic category they belong. It also deals with their 'well-formedness' in sentences, that is, how different types of expressions should be combined to form larger units. Semantics deals with the meaning of representations, and pragmatics is concerned with the use of language. The differentiation between the latter two can be explained by the fact that semantics deals with the relation between words and the state of affairs in the world, while pragmatics is the study of the relation between words and language users. Another distinction pertains to a differentiation between the meaning of a 'sentence' and that of an 'utterance': semantics is an investigation into the meaning of a sentence as determined by its belonging to a certain type, while pragmatics is an inquiry about the meaning of a sentence as uttered by a particular language user in a certain context.

Formal semantics is based on an understanding of the linguistic meaning derived from the tradition of ideal language philosophy for which the meaning of a sentence is closely related to its truth-conditions and the meaning of a declarative sentence is

---

[19] Reprinted in Ch. W. Morris, *Writings on the General Theory of Signs* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1971), pp. 13-71. – See M. Boutin, "Relation, Otherness, and the Philosophy of Religion," *Journal of Religious Pluralism* 2 (1992): 61-82.

determined by elucidating the conditions under which it is true. Accordingly, making statements is believed to be the essential role of sentences. Ordinary language philosophers disagree with such an approach. They distinguish either between 'language' and 'speech', as A. Gardiner suggests in *The Theory of Speech and Language*[20], or between 'sentence' and 'statement', in John L. Austin's terms.[21] According to ordinary language philosophy, meaning is the property of a sentence, while truth-conditions are attributes of a statement, *viz.* verbal expression of a sentence in a specific context. Semantics is thus conceived of as dealing with the meaning of sentences, whereas pragmatics is allocated to investigating the truth conditions of statements and utterances. The role of language and the mode of language use are not restricted to declaring truths; other linguistic uses such as communication and reasoning are incorporated also into the realm of pragmatics.

Distinguishing between three ways of using signs, the psychologist Karl Bühler (1879-1963) attributes to a linguistic sign three simultaneous roles as symbol, symptom and signal: "It is a *symbol* in virtue of being correlated with objects and states of affairs, a *symptom* (indication, index) in virtue of its dependence on the sender, whose subjectivity it expresses, and a *signal* in virtue of its appeal to the hearer, whose external or internal behavior it steers like other traffic signs."[22] These roles are functions of linguistic parts, such as words, independently of their place in the sentence. Bühler's distinction is the starting point for Habermas' analysis of the modes of language use. He thinks of a parallel distinction used in the analytic study of the meaning of linguistic statements. The

---

[20] Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932.

[21] J. L. Austin, "Truth," in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 119.

[22] K. Bühler, *Sprachtheorie* (Jena, 1934), p. 28; quoted In TCA I, 275.

denotation of a statement can be analyzed either by an appeal to its relation to the state of affairs, or by taking the intention of the speaker into consideration, or by the way it affects the hearer. Habermas interprets Carnap's 'reference semantics' as fulfilling just the first step toward this task of transformation. Drawing on Peirce's and Morris' pragmatic theory of signs, Carnap holds that "the bearers of meaning are not isolated signs but elements of a language system, that is, sentences whose form is determined by syntactic rules and whose semantic content is determined by relations to designated objects or states of affairs" (TCA I, 276). In this model, the relation between a sentence and its meaning is modeled on the relation between a name and its reference.

Intentionalist semantics that looks for the meaning of an expression in the intention of the speaker corresponds to the second role Bühler assigns to linguistic signs. Habermas considers this theory closer to an action theory than to a theory of meaning. Labeling it a nominalistic theory of meaning, he traces its roots back to the

> studies by Grice[23], which was further developed by Lewis[24], and was worked out by Schiffer[25] and Bennett[26]. This [theory] analyzes the act of reaching understanding on a model of action oriented to consequences. Intentionalist semantics is based on the counterintuitive idea that understanding the meaning of a symbolic expression X can be traced back

---

[23] Herbert Paul Grice (1913-88) is a leading member of the post-war Oxford group of analytic philosophers. Cf. H. P. Grice, "Meaning," *Philosophical Review* 66 (1957); "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning and Word-Meaning," *Foundations of Language* 4 (1968), and "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions," *Philosophical Review* 78 (1969).

[24] David Kellogg Lewis (1941-) has made important and influential contributions to many topics in metaphysics, philosophical logic, the philosophy of science, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of probability, rational decision theory, and ethics and social philosophy. Cf. D. K. Lewis, *Convention* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

[25] Stephen Schiffer, *Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

[26] Jonathan Bennett, *Linguistic Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

to understanding the intention of speaker *S* to give hearer *H* something to understand by means of a sign. (TCA I, 274-75)

What demarcates the two-aforementioned trends from the one led by Frege and the early Wittgenstein, and developed by Davidson and Dummett is what Habermas calls an ontological turn in semantics. As a consequence of this turn, he contends, the theory was transformed from reference semantics to truth semantics. Truth semantics renders the meaning of a sentence and the understanding of its meaning inseparable "from language's inherent relation to the validity of statements" (TAC I, 276). At this stage of the evolution of the semantic theory, the only dimension under scrutiny was representational language, and all sentences were analyzed "on the model of assertoric sentences. The limits of this approach become visible as soon as the different modes of using sentences are brought under formal consideration". (TCA I, 277)

Habermas distinguishes between two language uses: cognitive and interactive. The interactive use of language refers to communication between individuals in a society. The communicative use of language is bound to the linguistic tradition of the community in which it is employed. Cognitive language use is to be freed from such dependence, and linguistic competence includes the ability to distinguish between these two modes of language use and to understand the cognitive mode as "an independent medium over against the societal reality of established values and norms," which is possible "by virtue of denotations referring to situations different from the situation of actual speech."[27] In the cognitive use, language is viewed as an instrument, while the interactive language use is meant to provide communication and mutual understanding. Those who participate in

---

[27] J. Habermas, "Some Distinctions in Universal Pragmatics: A Working Paper," *Theory and Society: Renewal and Critique in Social Theory* 3/2 (Summer 1976): 163.

communicative action have one or more validity claims, including the claims to comprehensibility, truth, rightness, and truthfulness (see # 2.4). All speakers share the claim to comprehensibility, which refers to one's pretension that one's utterance is meaningful and intelligible. Truth claim is the realm of science, which concerns the correspondence to the objective reality of one's speech. The claim to rightness that hints at agreement with social norms and values is believed to pertain to the language of law and morality. Truthfulness relates to aesthetics and suggests the sincerity of emotions expressed in a work of art. The critical examination and verification of the validity claims in each realm has methods and rules that are not applicable to other fields.

5.1.2 Speech Act Theory

The theory of speech acts has its roots in later Wittgenstein and was elaborated and systematized by Stenius, Kenny, Austin, and Searle, which brought about a paradigm shift in the study of language use and was "the first step toward a formal pragmatics that extends to noncognitive modes of employment" (TCA I, 277). Austin distinguishes between constative and performative utterances[28], and he states that the performative utterances have three levels of performance: "the senses in which to say something may be to do something, or in saying something we do something (and also perhaps to consider the different case in which *by* saying something we do something)."[29] He calls the act of saying something "the performance of a locutionary act,"[30] which amounts to

---

[28] J. L. Austin, "Performative-Constative," in *Contemporary Analytic and Linguistic Philosophies*, ed. E. D. Klemke (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1983); and J. L. Austin, "Performative Utterances," in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

[29] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. & Urmson and Marina Sblsà (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 91.

[30] Ibid., p. 94.

expressing some "meaning in the sense in which meaning is equivalent to sense and reference."[31] Doing something *in* saying something is called illocutionary act. By illocutionary acts he refers to such conventional acts as "asking or answering a question, giving some information or an assurance or a warning, announcing a verdict or an intention, pronouncing sentence, making an appointment or an appeal or a criticism, making an identification or giving a description, and the numerous like."[32] The third category is called perlocutionary act. Elaborating on this use of utterances, he speaks of "certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons,"[33] which is produced *by* saying something.

Despite the paradigm shift brought about by the speech act theory, Habermas finds that "the narrow ontological presuppositions of truth-conditional semantics" (TCA I, 277) do remain in the background of the new orientation. He suggests to radicalize Austin's program by generalizing "the concept of validity beyond the truth of propositions and identify validity conditions no longer only on the semantic level of sentences but on the pragmatic level of utterances." (TCA I, 277)

5.1.3 Illocutionary vs. Perlocutionary Acts

In order to transform the course of discussion from semantics to pragmatics, Habermas reconstructs the idea of illocutionary act and incorporates it into a framework of communicative action. He begins by contrasting sharply illocutionary and perlocutionary acts; reaching understanding is the point of reference of the former, while orientation toward success characterizes the latter. On account of the emphasis on the

---

[31] Ibid., p. 100.

[32] Ibid., pp. 98-99.

[33] Ibid., p. 101.

illocutionary force of language, "the illocutionary use seems to be the foundation on which even these other kinds of employment rest. [...] We can also say that the illocutionary force of a speech action consists in fixing the communicative function of the content uttered."[34] Habermas attributes to speech acts a genuine generative power through which a speaker is able to establish a certain relation to the audience and the hearer has the possibility to understand and accept or reject what is uttered by the speaker, as an order, a warning, an information, or any other similar statement. The illocutionary act is the *original mode* of language use because of its orientation towards reaching understanding, while the perlocutionary act is aimed at influencing the audience's mood or behavior. (TCA I, 288)

Habermas mentions four criteria proposed by theoreticians of speech acts for distinguishing illocutions from perlocutions (TCA I, 290-92). These criteria are not completely distinct; they overlap to some extent:

1. identification—For Schwayder, an illocutionary act is self-identifying, in accordance with the manifest content of speech,[35] while Meyer describes a perlocutionary aim as being only identifiable through the speaker's intention without being directly enunciated;[36]

2. success—For Schwab, the conditions for the success of an illocutionary act might be inferred from the description of the content of a speech act, while the success of a perlocutionary act is only conjecturable from the context of a speech act;[37]

---

[34] J. Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?," p. 34.

[35] Cf. D. S. Schwayder, *The Stratification of Behavior* (London: 1965), pp. 287ff.

[36] Cf. M. Meyer, *Formale und handlungstheoretische Sprachbetrachtungen* (Stuttgart: 1976).

[37] Cf. M. Schwab, *Redehandeln* (Königstein: 1980), pp. 28ff.

3. convention or context—For Austin, an illocutionary act is determined on the basis of conventions governing speech acts, whereas perlocutionary acts depend on fortuitous contexts and are not fixed by conventions;[38]

4. achievement—For Strawson, illocutionary aims can be achieved only if they are expressed, while perlocutionary aims can be achieved only if the speaker refrains from expressing them.[39]

Yet, these are no precise and unequivocal criteria for separating illocutions from perlocutions. As Gerhard Wagner and Heinz Zipprian notice, "a case in which an openly declared *illocution* is not oriented toward reaching understanding, but rather aims at success [...] is the case of the imperative, a speech act that carries a claim to power. It fulfills all the criteria required by Habermas for the orientation toward reaching understanding *qua* illocution. [...] Nevertheless, it appears *prima facie* that imperatives are not oriented toward reaching understanding."[40]

According to Habermas, cognitive and interactive language uses correspond to the differentiation between locutionary and illocutionary speech acts, and the perlocutionary act is an instance of teleological action that makes use of language as an instrument. The interactive use of language is concerned with establishing an interpersonal relationship between speaker and hearer, whereas its cognitive use is concentrated on the propositional content of a sentence. Linguistic competence includes an ability to master, and differentiate between, these two structures of speech and modes of language use. On the other hand, communicative language use is bound to the linguistic tradition in which

---

[38] Cf. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, p. 118.

[39] Cf. P. Strawson, "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts," *Philosophical Review* 73 1964): 439ff.

[40] G. Wagner and H. Zipprian, "Habermas on Power and Rationality," *Sociological Theory* 7/1 (Spring 1989): 105.

it is performed, while its cognitive use can be freed from such dependence. According to this distinction, one is able to use language in a cognitive mode as "an independent medium over against the societal reality of established values and norms."[41] This is possible "by virtue of denotations referring to situations different from the situation of actual speech."[42] Habermas thus proposes that the illocutionary act be conceived of as a component of the propositional content of speech rather than as an irrational force over against its cognitive theme. An illocutionary act "specifies which validity claim a speaker is raising with his utterance, how he is raising it, and for what". (TCA I, 278)

Reaching understanding has to be identified with illocutionary acts because, on the one hand, locutionary acts are designated only for the act of saying something and have nothing else to accomplish, and on the other hand, perlocutionary acts are strategic, namely teleological, acts whose purposes "can be achieved *under the description* of something to be brought about in the world" (TCA I, 293). For Habermas, "reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech. Naturally, speech and understanding are not related to one another as means to end. But we can explain the concept of reaching understanding only if we specify what it means to use sentences with a communicative intent. The concepts of speech and understanding reciprocally interpret one another" (TCA I, 287). The meaning of what is said is constitutive for illocutionary acts, while the intention of the speaker is constitutive for perlocutionary acts (TCA I, 289). Locutions and illocutions are conceived of as analytically different aspects of the same goal, whereas the "distinction between these two types of acts, on the one side, and perlocutionary acts on the other, is by no means analytical in character" (TCA I, 292).

---

[41] J. Habermas, "Some Distinctions in Universal Pragmatics," p. 163.

[42] Ibid.

Perlocutions are "a special class of strategic interactions in which illocutions are employed as means in teleological contexts of action. [...] This proviso lends to perlocutions the peculiarly asymmetrical character of concealed strategic actions" (TCA I, 293-94). Perlocutionary acts as strategic actions belong to a different level of interaction, and complex speech acts "can have perlocutionary effects on *third parties*." (TCA I, 295)

For Habermas, the illocutionary act has the following three characteristics: it is the original aspect of language use, its aim is communication and reaching understanding, it does not focus on the content of speech but on the validity claim raised therein. On the basis of the precedence and import of the illocutionary act and the significance of validity claims for its communicative performance, Habermas proposes a research program to reconstruct the universal validity basis of speech under the rubric of *universal pragmatics*.[43]

5.1.4 Universal Pragmatics

The theory of speech acts as initiated by Austin and furthered by Searle and Wunderlich is the point of departure for Habermas' universal pragmatics.[44]

> The task of universal pragmatics is to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding [*Verständigung*]. [...] I prefer to speak of general presuppositions of communicative action because I take the type of action aimed at reaching understanding to be fundamental. Thus I start from the assumption [...] that other forms of social action— for example, conflict, competition, strategic action in general—are

---

[43] Cf. J. Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?", p. 5.

[44] Cf. Ibid., pp. 7 and 34.

derivatives of action oriented to reaching understanding [*Verständigungsorientiert*].[45]

Habermas compares universal pragmatics with other attempts in the realm of the analytical study of language. Based on the current distinction between sentences and utterances, or language and speech (*langue et parole*—Ferdinand Saussure), he sees the difference of universal pragmatics from linguistics as follows: "The production of sentences according to the rules of grammar is something other than the use of sentences in accordance with pragmatic rules that shape the infrastructure of speech situations in general."[46] For him, sentences are the subject matter of linguistic analysis, whereas speech acts are believed to form the subject matter of pragmatic analysis.[47] He appeals to Wittgenstein's use theory of meaning in order to show that the meaning of a linguistic expression can be understood only through recourse to its context of use. Therefore, an investigation into the meaning of linguistic expressions, which is the self-identified task of semantic theory, cannot be completely carried through without taking pragmatic aspects into consideration.[48] The meaning of a linguistic expression is considered an object of a pragmatic analysis insofar as it is understood in connection to "speech acts that satisfy the validity claims of truth, truthfulness, and normative rightness."[49] Habermas also makes the distinction between empirical pragmatics, such as sociolinguistics, and universal pragmatics on account of the type of situation in which the linguistic content is involved. Empirical pragmatics relies on the particular context of

---

[45] Ibid., p. 1.

[46] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

[47] Cf. Ibid., p. 32.

[48] Cf. Ibid.

[49] Ibid., p. 31.

employment that may "happen by chance to have additional meaning-generating power but do not affect the semantic core of the linguistic expression."[50] On the contrary, universal pragmatics takes into account the formal properties of typical speech situations in general. The very point of departure for a universal theory of pragmatics is the distinction between formal semantics and the theory of intentionality.

> The three general pragmatic functions—with the help of a sentence, to represent something in the world, to express the speaker's intentions, and to establish legitimate interpersonal relations—are the basis of all the particular functions that an utterance can assume in specific contexts. The fulfillment of those general functions is measured against the validity conditions for truth, truthfulness, and rightness. Thus every speech action can be considered from the corresponding analytic viewpoints. Formal semantics examines the structure of elementary propositions and the acts of reference and predication. A still scarcely developed theory of intentionality examines intentional expressions insofar as they function in first-person sentences. Finally, the theory of speech acts examines illocutionary force from the viewpoint of the establishment of legitimate interpersonal relations. These semiotic distinctions are summarized in the following table.[51]

---

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., p. 33.

Theoretical Level	Object Domain
Linguistics	Sentences
Grammar	Sentences of an individual language
Grammatical Theory	Rules for generating sentences in any language whatever
Aspects of linguistic analysis	
Phonetic theory	Inscriptions (language sounds)
Syntactic theory	Syntactical rules
Semantic theory	Lexical units
Pragmatics	Speech actions
Empirical pragmatics	Context-bound speech actions
Universal pragmatics	Rules for using sentences in utterances
Aspects of universal-pragmatic analysis	
Theory of elementary propositions	Acts of reference and predication
Theory of first-person sentences	Linguistic expression of intentions
Theory of illocutionary acts	Establishment of interpersonal relations

For Habermas, the parallel between illocutionary acts and the use of language for establishing interpersonal relations or reaching understanding is the most important part of the twofold structure of speech.[52] Universal pragmatics is, therefore, defined as a reconstructive discipline whose main task is to reconstruct the general and inevitable presuppositions of linguistic competence through a methodology he calls formal analysis.[53] In contrast to empirical analysis, formal analysis refers to "the methodological attitude we adopt in the rational reconstruction of concepts, criteria, rules, and schemata.

---

[52] Cf. Allen W. Wood, "Habermas' Defense of Rationalism," *New German Critique* 35 (Spring-Summer 1985): 152.

[53] Cf. J. Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?," p. 6.

Thus we speak of the explication of meanings and concepts, of the analysis of presuppositions and rules."[54]

The establishment of interpersonal or communicative relation requires that a linguistic validity claim be potentially acceptable to the hearer. For communicative action (i.e. illocutionary act) to be successful, it is imperative that the two parties share certain background knowledge and norms. "Without the normative background of routines, roles, forms of life—in short, conventions—the individual action would remain indeterminate. All communicative actions satisfy or violate normative expectations or conventions."[55] Such a relation is motivated by the illocutionary force of an utterance due to an implied conviction by the speaker to provide, if necessary, sufficient reasons for the validity of claims raised in his speech. Therefore, the binding force of an utterance is attributed "not to the validity of what is said but to *the coordinating effect of the warranty that he* [the speaker] *offers*" (TCA I, 302). Because the claims contained in speech vary due to the fact that they may belong to different aspects of the world, in order to come to an agreement, speaker and hearer have to associate their understanding as well as their communication with all possible worlds of the objective, the subjective, and the social. They should share also a common concept of the world or participate in a shared lifeworld. Therefore, he suggests that

> we differentiate the external world into an objective and a social world,
> and that we introduce the internal world as a complementary concept to
> the external world. The corresponding validity claims of truth, rightness,
> and sincerity can then serve as guiding threads in the choice of theoretical

---

[54] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[55] Ibid., p. 35.

perspectives for distinguishing the basic modes of language use, or the functions of language. (TCA I, 278)

5.2 Communicative Rationality and Language

In Habermas' analysis, the differentiated functions of language are the results of the analytical methodology associated with the project of modernity. The fragmented knowledge of the world is the result of interest positions and categorical distinctions. The confinement of rationality in this type of means-ends rationality by the enlightenment thinkers is responsible for a lack of communication and mutual understanding. Systematically distorted communication is a consequence of differentiation in validity claims, as symbolic and strategic language uses specifically show. Strategic action pertaining to an instrumental use of language oriented toward success lacks a claim to truthfulness and has nothing to say about the harmony of its claim to the speaker's subjective world. It is only geared toward impressing the audience and manipulating the hearer's thought, feelings, and behavior. In action "bound to nonpropositional systems of symbolic expression," a claim to truth is suspended.[56] According to Habermas, the strategic and symbolic language uses belong to the cognitive function of language. The solution to the fragmented world of knowledge and differentiated knowledge of the world is to be found in the communicative mode of language use. According to Habermas, the intertwining of individual and social consciousness and the fusion of claims to external, internal, and social worlds in communicative language use document the importance of language for his analysis of rationalization as a process of communication.[57]

---

[56] Ibid., p. 41.

[57] Cf. J. Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," p. 168.

Communicative action comprises all the three validity claims, namely, the external, the internal, and the social, and thus is the link between Habermas' universal pragmatics and his later work on communicative action. The linguistic direction of his theory of communication enables him to characterize and relate different validity claims raised in speech acts. In his discussion of the consequences of Habermas' linguistic approach to communication for critical theory, Axel Honneth refers to its epistemological effects: "Through this linguistic turn, critical theory becomes a theory of social communication."[58] As Hans-Peter Krüger puts it,

> Habermas attempts in a rational manner to gain uniform theoretical access to the whole breadth [...] of communicative rationalization. This could serve to ground the possibility of grasping through learning the alternative unity of expert cultures among themselves and together with everyday communication. In this connection, Habermas develops important chain of argumentation on the linguistic unity of the differentiated validity claims, on the intensification of communicative rationalization by means of being condensed in discourse at higher levels of learning and on the potential of linguistic communication for creativity.[59]

For Habermas, communicative action enjoys unique features not to be found in any corresponding philosophical concept. It "includes relations to the social and the subjective worlds as well as to the objective world" (TCA I, 45). The paradigmatic significance of the concept of communicative action for the formation of social theory can be traced back to Mead and Garfinkel (TCA I, 86). Action in this context is

---

[58] A. Honneth, "Communication and Reconciliation," p. 61.

[59] H.-P. Krüger, "Communicative Action or the Mode of Communication for Society as a Whole," in *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 144.

distinguished from bodily movements and operations by being applied only to "those symbolic expressions with which the actor takes up a relation to at least one world (but always to the objective world *as well*)" (TCA I, 96). 'Symbolic expressions' here include verbal and non-verbal expressions of meaning so that they entail "semantically relevant bodily movements [such as] hand movements while writing, drawing, and so on" (TCA I, 67). They are symbolic because they convey the agent's meaning, and the speaker expresses himself through communicative actions. They are expressions for they embody validity claims, whether it is the truth of an assertion or the success of an action or any other form of validity claim. John B. Thompson expresses this idea by suggesting that action "refers to everyday contexts of social interaction, in which information is acquired through sensory experience and exchanged through ordinary language." [60]

Habermas does not only distinguish between actions oriented toward success and actions oriented toward reaching understanding; he also differentiates between two types of success-oriented actions: instrumental and strategic. A success-oriented action is called instrumental when it is considered "under the aspect of following technical rules of action and assess the efficiency of an intervention into a complex of circumstances and events" (TCA I, 285). An action oriented toward success is called strategic "when we consider it under the aspect of following rules of rational choice and assess the efficiency of influencing the decisions of a rational opponent" (TCA I, 285). By contrast, an action oriented toward reaching understanding is called communicative action. Communicative action is made out of at least two subjects coordinating their actions based on mutual understanding rather than aimed at their own individual success. Communicative action,

---

[60] J. B. Thompson, "Universal Pragmatics," p. 119.

however, does not require participants to abandon their individual goals; they pursue their goals "under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions" (TCA I, 286). They "pursue their illocutionary aims *without reservation*" (TCA I, 294). The major difference between communicative and strategic-instrumental actions can be reduced to the difference between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (TCA I, 295). It is essential for parties involved in communicative action to agree upon the definitions of the situation "which admit of consensus" (TCA I, 86). Such an agreement paves the way for a common interpretation, which is a necessary condition for communicative action. The underlying agreement is to be found in the shared lifeworld of a community. In defining the situation, "participants in communication assign the various elements of an action situation to one of the three worlds and thereby incorporate the actual action situation into their preinterpreted lifeworld" (TCA I, 100). This is why language is a pivotal part in Habermas' discussion of rationality and communicative action.

Habermas develops his idea of communicative rationality in contrast to conceptions of rationality and its role in the self-understanding of modernity presented by such critics of enlightenment as Weber and the theorists of the Frankfurt School. He criticizes Weber for losing sight of selectivity in the capitalist process of rationalization because of his concept of rationality in terms of purposive, means-ends rationality (*Zweckrationalität*), or 'instrumental rationality', as Horkheimer calls it.[61] Habermas is equally critical of Horkheimer and Adorno for their blindness to the real distortions as well as potentialities of modernity on account of their pessimistic analysis regarding the

---

[61] See for instance, M. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* ([1]1947). New York: Continuum, 1992, vii+191 pages.

alleged lack of any kind of rationality in modern structures of social life. According to Habermas, what these theories and most of the social scientific systems have in common is their commitment to a notion of rationality reduced to the human ability "to choose the optimal means to some given end. [...] For Marx and Weber, societies undergo an historical process of rationalization, where rationalization is seen as an increasing ability of a society to manipulate natural and social forces in the service of class or collective ends."[62] Habermas' idea of rationality is rather geared toward "the experience of achieving mutual understanding in communication that is free from coercion."[63] In other words, communicative rationality implies an engagement in critical dialogue in order to achieve consensus in the medium of discourse. Communicative rationality is the thrust of human speech as such in every act of linguistic communication; it is "the basic standard of rationality which competent speakers at least in *modern* societies share."[64] Whereas minimal standards of rationality offered by such authors as Steven Lukes take the law of non-contradiction and logical coherence of an utterance as the necessary and sufficient condition of a universal concept of rationality, Habermas' communicative rationality provides a concept of rationality that goes beyond the formal relations between elements of propositions and encompasses "coherence relationships between the linguistic utterances, actions, and expressions of an actor."[65] Furthermore, communicative rationality broadens the scope of rationality in another dimension: it requires some "internal, normative relationships between the *intersubjectivity* of validity claims, modes

---

[62] J. Braaten, *Habermas's Critical Theory of Society*, p. 71.

[63] T. A. McCarthy, "Translator's Introduction," in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, p. xii.

[64] Albrecht Wellmer, "Reason, Utopia, and the Dialectic of Enlightenment," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 52.

[65] Ibid.

of *argumentation*, and the idea of a rational agreement."[66] Therefore, rationality is determined not only on the basis of formally logical laws of deduction, but also on account of abiding by formal rules governing dialogue and interpersonal relationships. Habermas complements these formal conditions with the qualification that in communicative rationality, "validity claims, because they can only *emerge* from the sphere of communication, can also be *redeemed* in the sphere of human discourse: there are no possible *external sources of validity*, since the sphere of validity is—conceptually—identical with the sphere of human speech."[67] According to Habermas,

> argumentation as a means of restoring intersubjective agreement begins to assume a central role even in those spheres of social reality where in traditional societies the authority of religion or tradition secured a safe foundation of common beliefs, practices, and orientations. Habermas speaks of *communicative rationalization* (or rationalization of the life-world) wherever forms of communicative action and of argumentation replace other mechanisms of coordination of actions, of social integration, or of 'symbolic reproduction'.[68]

Habermas draws on Bühler's triadic approach to language and regards his theory of communicative rationality as "a *communications-theoretic turn* that goes beyond the linguistic turn of the philosophy of the subject" (TCA I, 397). Such a turn is made possible through various developments in the modern age. The decentration of the understanding of the world, the differentiation of various universal validity claims, and the discrediting of religious-metaphysical worldviews all contribute to the emergence of

---

[66] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

[67] Ibid., p. 53.

[68] Ibid., pp. 53-54.

communicative rationality (TCA I, 397). What distinguishes this mode of rationality from religious-metaphysical worldviews is its differentiating out various validity claims. Its distinctive feature compared to other modes of modern understanding of the world lies in its commitment to mediate between various

> modern complexes of knowledge that have been differentiated out, each under a different single aspect of validity—truth, normative rightness, or authenticity. The mediation of the moments of reason is no less a problem that the separation of the aspects of rationality under which questions of truth, justice, and taste were differentiated from one another. The only protection against an empiricist abridgement of the rationality problematic is a steadfast pursuit of the tortuous routes along which science, morality, an art communicate with one another. (TCA II, 398)

According to Habermas, the central issue for a social theory is to investigate those elements that hold society together and analyze the way they evolve throughout the history of human social life. These unifying factors are comprised of shared understanding of the world, common norms, and collective expectations. The reproduction of agreement on all these aspects is possible only through action oriented toward mutual understanding, if not consensus: "Successful understanding-oriented actions are *communicatively rational*."[69]

Habermas' acceptance of the differentiation of validity claims and types of rationality on the one hand, and the unity, or at least internal relationship, between different validity spheres on the other, amount to a paradoxical situation for some of his interpreters as well as his critics. For Martin Seel, Habermas' approach to communicative

---

[69] J. Braaten, *Habermas's Critical Theory of Society*, p. 57.

rationality represents a "dual literal and metaphorical meaning given to the concept of communicative rationality [which] is indicative of a methodological problem."[70] Seel tries to analyze this contradiction in the light of Habermas' twofold interest in rationality: "Habermas the sociologist adopts Weber's theory of the modern separation of value spheres (interpreted as validity spheres); Habermas the philosopher, however, is not completely convinced that this separation has become a thorough-going reality."[71] Habermas' project, however, can be analyzed at a deeper level with regard to his goal of reconstructing the project of modernity, a project based on a diagnosis of the problem of modernity associated with the radical separation between differing fields of rationality, knowledge, and value spheres, which makes reconciliation and unification all the more difficult. Communicative action and communicative rationality are understandable as attempts to establish language as the only medium in which all validity claims meet. Thus, religious language also is part of such an attempt which presupposes its difference from a religious worldview and its developmental presuppositions.

5.3 Habermas' Developmental Approach to Religious Language

Although a religion is not reducible to its tangible expressions, the latter are the only facets accessible to an outsider who does acknowledge only observable or measurable aspects of it. Religious expressions cover a wide range of signs and symbols from physical demonstrations of rites and rituals to more abstract linguistic representations. All instances of such expressions are referred to as religious language in

---

[70] M. Seel, "The Two Meanings of 'Communicative' Rationality: Remarks on Habermas's Critique of a Plural Concept of Reason," in *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 37.

[71] Ibid.

a broad sense. The accessibility of language has led some scholars to reduce religion to its language and to consider its uniqueness as bizarre, eccentric, or even pathological.[72] Sociologists as such are not concerned with the supernatural aspects or the origin of religions. In order to take these questions seriously, they would have to cast off their sociological role because they fall outside the realm of sociology. Of course, the origin of the religiosity of people or of religious communities is one of their main interests, and this explains Peter Berger's following stance shared by most sociologists of religion on how to understand religion from a sociological point of view:

> The essential perspective of the sociological theory here proposed is that religion is to be understood as a human projection, grounded in specific infrastructures of human history. [...] Sociological theory must, by its own logic, view religion as a human projection, and by the same logic can have nothing to say about the possibility that this projection may refer to something other than the being of its projector.[73]

Detached from its extra-human and supernatural origins, and voided of its cognitive relation to reality, religion is reduced to "a humanly constructed universe of meaning, and this construction is undertaken by linguistic means."[74] This approach to religion is not confined to sociology; neither has it originated there. This line of thought goes back to the positivist theory of knowledge and the later Wittgenstein's theory of language-games. According to Wittgenstein, religious argumentation and scientific proof

---

[72] Friedrich Max Müller, *Essays on Comparative Mythology*, 1856; quoted in P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 175.

[73] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 180.

[74] Ibid., p. 175.

are just "different language games, different forms of life."[75] Dan R. Stiver summarizes

the features of Wittgenstein's perception of forms of life and modes of discourse in the

following three steps: First, "The different modes of discourse which are distinctive

forms of life have a logic of their own," second, "Forms of life taken as a whole are not

amenable to criticism," and third, "each mode of discourse has its own specific criteria of

rationality/irrationality, intelligibility/unintelligibility, and reality/unreality."[76] A logical

consequence of this is the idea that religious claims do not give way to criticism by other

language games and vice versa. Standards of rationality and validity are conceived of as

local without any claim to universality. Several philosophers concerned with religious

language draw on Wittgenstein's approach. Philip E. Devine considers religious

representations to include nonliteral speech such as paradoxes, myths, parables,

metaphors, action-symbols, and "statements in which words like 'good' are projected by

analogy to a subject other than those to which they ordinarily apply."[77] The point of such

representations is to communicate what is not literally expressible. According to Devine,

religious representations are, or are believed to be, pictorial, rhetorical, and irreducible

(i.e. untranslatable) into non-religious terms. In sum, they are believed not to refer to any

fact in the world and on this they differ from scientific discourse.[78] Richard Braithwaite

also describes religious language with reference to its use: it determines our attitudes and

governs the way we live.[79]

---

[75] Kai Nielsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism," *Philosophy* 42 (July 1967): 192-93.

[76] D. R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (Cambridge, Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 69.

[77] P. E. Devine, "On the Definition of "Religion"," p. 273.

[78] Cf. Ibid., pp. 273-74.

[79] Cf. D. R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 72.

Dewi Z. Phillips bases his theory of language on the Wittgensteinian notion of language games and he suggests some modifications of it in order to respond to critics accusing him of fideism. "He rejects the notion of compartmentalized language games. [...] This means, second, that language games can be dependent upon one another and can criticize one another. He points out that [...] if a religious view attempts to compete with a scientific hypothesis on scientific grounds, it should be rejected. Third, this means that a rejection of criticism based on a universal standpoint does not mean the dismissal of criticism altogether."[80] As Stiver rightly observes, "both Phillips and Wittgenstein, while allowing for many language games, seem to privilege the scientific game when it comes to questions of cognitivity. Apart from the existence of God, Phillips's working principle seems to be to question the cognitivity of any belief that cannot be justified by scientific methodology."[81]

In Habermas' developmental understanding of the social world, there are three consecutive stages through which humankind has gone so far: the mythical-magical, the religious-metaphysical, and the modern-postmetaphysical stages. The caesurae between the modes of thought corresponding to these stages of development are "characterized by changes in the system of basic concepts" (TCA I, 68) in each stage concerning the interpretation of the world, the organization of interpersonal relations, and the standards for expressing personal feelings and tastes. These basic concepts are couched in language (TCA I, 94). This situation makes language the fundamental factor for the understanding, evaluation, and criticism of validity claims embedded in different worldviews. Therefore, as far as religion is concerned, religious language is the only accessible facet of religion

---

[80] Ibid., p. 71.

[81] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

representing its basic concepts. Habermas prefers "to remain silent"[82] about the content

of religious claims to truth, rightness, and truthfulness. As a sociologist and philosopher,

he assumes the position of an observer who, like Hegel, wants to study religion at least

from a methodologically atheistic point of view.[83] By methodical atheism he means "the

philosophical reference to the contents of religious experience."[84] In "Transcendence

from Within, Transcendence in this World," Habermas admits that in *The Theory of

Communicative Action* he "subsumed rather too hastily the development of religion in

modernity with Max Weber under the 'privatization of the powers of faith' and suggested

too quickly an affirmative answer to the question as to 'whether then from religious

truths, after the religious worldviews have collapsed, nothing more and nothing other

than the secular principles of a universalist ethics of responsibility can be salvaged."[85] He

thinks that a social scientist has to remain in a position of dubiosity concerning this issue

and to proceed reconstructively without trying "simply to project developing trends

forward in a straight line."[86] A philosopher must remain open to this question also

because "intuitions which had long been articulated in religious language can neither be

rejected nor simply retrieved rationally."[87] In his later writings, Habermas does not offer

atheism as a reliable alternative to religion; instead, he believes it necessary to suspend

judgment on all matters related to metaphysical issues: he admits that "along with

fundamental metaphysical concepts, a metaphysically affirmed atheism is also no longer

---

[82] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 226.

[83] Ibid., p. 227.

[84] Ibid., p. 233.

[85] J. Habermas, *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 52; J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 237.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

tenable" and that materialism "is a hypothesis which at best can claim plausibility for the

present moment."[88] His position on religious language is as follows:

> As long as religious language bears with itself inspiring, indeed,
> unrelinquishable semantic contents which elude (for the moment?) the
> expressive power of a philosophical language and still await translation
> into a discourse that gives reasons for its positions, philosophy, even in its
> postmetaphysical form, will neither be able to replace nor to repress
> religion.[89]

Despite all these positive developments with regard to religious language, Habermas

maintains that religious language is non-cognitive, although he acknowledges David

Tracy's and Helmut Peukert's critique of his "one-sided, functionalist description" of

religion in *The Theory of Communicative Action*.[90] For sure, it is not necessary to adopt

an intra-religious perspective in order to understand the onesidedness of an instrumental

conception of religion, nor does it depend on theological presuppositions to understand

the inaccuracy of a merely functionalist perception of religious language. Durkheim, for

example, believes that "religion has not merely enriched a human intellect already

formed, but in fact it has helped to form it. Men owe to religion not only the content of

---

[88] Ibid., p. 228.

[89] J. Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 60; J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 237.

[90] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 236. – See for example, Dennis P. McCann, "Habermas and the Theologians," *Religious Studies Review* 7/1 (Jan. 1981); Anne Fortin-Melkevik, "Relecture du rapport théologie/philosophie: Le statut du paradigme esthétique dans la théologie postmoderne," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 21/ 4 (1992); Anne Fortin-Melkevik, "Le statut de la religion dans la modernité selon David Tracy et Jürgen Habermas," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 22/4 (1993); James L. Marsh, "The Religious Significance of Habermas," *Faith and Philosophy* 10/4 (October 1993); Willian J. Meyer, "Private Faith or Public Religion? An Assessment of Habermas's Changing View of Religion," *The Journal of Religion* 75/3 (July 1995); D. M. Rasmussen, "Communicative Action and Philosophy"; D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work"; G. de Schrijver, "Wholeness in Society"; Thomas G. Walsh, "Religion and Communicative Action," *Thought* 62 (March 1987).

their knowledge, in significant part, but also the form in which that knowledge is elaborated."[91]

5.4 Religious Language and Validity Claims

Habermas' diagnosis of the pathologies of modernity is that it suffers from a narrow conception of rationality that leads to a radical separation of the various fields of knowledge and value spheres and to their disintegration, which culminates in a loss of meaning, in reification, and in colonization of the lifeworld. According to him, pre-modern society did not experience this kind of problem because religion played a significant role in preventing such disasters 1) by providing a harmonic, holistic, and unifying picture and understanding of the world in general and of world events in particular, so that people had some sort of meaning at their disposal; 2) by securing social identity for members of each and every society by giving them something to unite and differentiate themselves from others; 3) by giving them direction and commands for their lives. For Habermas, there has been an intriguing connection between the sacred and collective normativity that was the core of a basic consensus for society members.[92] Modernity, however, abolishes religion as a social factor and all its social roles are diminished. On the other hand, modernity tries to substitute rationality for religion without successfully filling the gap following the absence of religion. For Habermas, all these problems result from a one-sided conception of rationality which is confined to instrumental rationality. These problems cannot be solved through a return to religion because religion, for him, despite its unique characteristics and potentialities, speaks a

---

[91] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 8.

[92] Cf. G. de Schrijver, "Wholeness in Society," p. 382.

language that is not understandable to modern individual and should be translated into the languages of modern philosophy, science, art, secular ethics and law. The social functions of religion should be left to social organizations and subsystems. As a substitute for religion as a uniting force, Habermas thinks that his theory of communicative action helps avoiding the pitfalls of religion proper. As Schrijver puts it, Habermas "regards his theory of communicative action as the enlightened heir to religion."[93]

5.4.1 Lack of Universal Validity Claims

Habermas considers religious language as semantically rich (PMT 51) because it combines various validity claims. Indeed, religious language is characterized by the "syndrome of validity" (PMT 17): different validity claims of ontic, normative, and expressive nature are and "must remain fused together in the conception of the creator and redeemer God, of theodicy, and of the event of salvation."[94] This "syndrome of validity" is that which distinguishes religious utterance from modern, and thus rational, language use in which the validity claims of truth, rightness, and truthfulness (sincerity) are properly differentiated (TCA I, 51), and this syndrome is responsible for the lack of differentiation of the basic functions of language regarding the objective, social, and subjective worlds in the face of the process of rationalization (TCA I, 278). Such differentiation between different validity claims stems from an epistemological situation. According to the stages of epistemological development (see # 3.2.2), religious language belongs to a pre-modern era in which people, unable to distinguish between subject, object, and society, did mix culture and nature, language and reality, individual and

---

[93] Ibid., p. 377.
[94] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 233.

society. Therefore, in religious language, very much like the language of myth and metaphysics, everything is comprehended within a whole called 'worldview'. In a rational society and culture, the descriptive, normative, and expressive aspects of the world (TCA I, 214) are dealt with in the expert cultures of science, morality/law, and art (PMT 17). Religious language, however, does not yield itself to the process of rationalization in terms of a learning process in which development and evolution are distinctive features. Therefore, rational knowledge and action are impossible in a religious context.[95]

Underlying Habermas' equation of rationalization with developmental learning process are two presuppositions shared by Kant and the Enlightenment: first, human beings are finite beings equipped with a limited faculty of reasoning, and second, reason is the only means at human disposal to know reality and manage one's individual and social life. Only those who do not religiously rely on their own understanding of 'is's and 'ought's, can be considered in the long journey to truth that requires to change one's view of what is true or obligatory in the face of better arguments and evidence. As far as the human intellect and its outcome are concerned, this is the conclusion every rational agent can arrive at: the process of learning and revising previous understandings is part of a rational acknowledgment of the limitations of human rational capacities. When it comes to the possibility of paths to reality other than human reasoning, the exclusivity of human intellect becomes questionable. Habermas does not acknowledge any autonomous validity claim for religious language, although in his more recent writings, he admits that

---

[95] Cf. D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 223.

"this question has to *remain open*."[96] "Under the conditions of postmetaphysical thinking, whoever puts forth a truth claim today must, nevertheless, translate experiences that have their home in religious discourse into the language of a scientific expert culture—and from this language translate them back into praxis. [...] For religious discourses would lose their identity if they were to open themselves up to a type of interpretation which no longer allows the religious experiences to be valid *as* religious."[97]

As far as rationalization as a learning process is concerned, Habermas' analysis is confined to religions that are themselves products of a learning process, that is, religions with human origins. On the other hand, there exist monotheistic religions that have their roots in divine knowledge and a revelation by an Omniscient God of creation. The claims expressed in the discourse of the divine religions are not prone to the same developmental process, and their rationality does not depend on historical evolution. Of course, when it comes to human understanding of such claims, the same conditions and principles as for other human reflections, understandings, and interpretations do apply. But this is not a matter of concern here, since Habermas' argument revolves around religious claims per se and their lack of differentiation between validity claims. If the fused aspects of validity in religious discourse are analytically separated under the conditions of rational discourse, then the criterion of religious language is lost, whether it be in the form of philosophical arguments about the existence and nature of God, or in terms of a scientific investigation into the origins of the universe, or in the framework of a rational analysis of the foundations of facts and norms.

---

[96] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 237.

[97] Ibid., p. 234.

Habermas conceives of religious language, in contrast to rational language, as bound to particular communities of faith without expressing a universal claim to truth or even universal intelligibility, which is the essential feature of modernity. "The *religious* discourse conducted within the communities of the faithful takes place in the context of a specific tradition with substantive norms and an elaborated dogmatics. It refers to a common ritual praxis and bases itself on the specifically religious experiences of the individual."[98] For him also there is a distinction between polytheistic and monotheistic religions. Polytheistic religions offer an understanding of the world comprised of local deities with limited claims. Polytheism, very much like its mythological world images, suggests a compartmentalized picture of reality; each part is related to, and governed by, a given personal deity, tribal gods are not considered global gods, and religious ethics, expressions, rites, and rituals do not lay any claim to universality. Monotheistic religions, on the contrary, provide a unified view of reality: the One God rules the whole universe. They are not confined within the boundaries of any given tribe, group, or community, rather they are deemed universally valid: "It is only the major universal religions, of which Judaism and Christianity are perhaps the most rationally structured, which raise a general or universalistic claim to validity."[99] "Monotheism, especially Christianity, was the last system of ideas which provided a unifying interpretation acknowledged by more or less all the members of the community."[100]

It is beyond the scope of our study to evaluate Habermas' understanding of Christianity or Judaism and his disregard for Islam, and to trace in any detail the

---

[98] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 231.

[99] J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," pp. 92-93.

[100] Ibid., p. 95.

immanent difficulties of his exposition of the monotheistic religions in general. Universality as the eventual acceptability of an idea or a claim by all reasonable people regardless of their group and community or the period of time in which they live is the only option to which Habermas refers when he speaks of universality for rationalized validity claims over against religious ones. He denies religious language any universal validity claim on account not only of its lack of differentiated validity claims, but also of its uncriticizability.

5.4.2 Uncriticizability of Religious Language

According to Habermas, in a rational language, critical examination and verification of the subjective, objective, and social validity claims have their appropriate methods and rules, which are not applicable to other fields. It is impossible to verify, justify, or refute the validity of a truth claim through the methodology of ethical sciences and by an appeal to standards of moral rightness. It is equally inappropriate to evaluate claims to moral rightness on the basis of scientific principles and findings. The same applies to the verification and assessment of the validity of legal norms in their relation to the methodology and criteria of aesthetic criticism. The mixture of validity claims in religious language prevents it from the possibility of criticism and renders it unverifiable. Now we can understand why he considers religious language alienated if translated into modern languages of science, morality, and arts. Based on his characterization of religious vs. rational languages, religious language would lose its undifferentiated, fused, and ambiguous character that guards it against any criticism.

A discourse, Habermas holds, is either religious or rational. It cannot be both because religious claims cannot be problematized due to their close relation to ritual

praxis, whereas analytically rational methods force to separate them from one another.[101]

Furthermore, religious and metaphysical discourses are constructed on the basis of a unifying comprehension of the world in which everything is perceived in relation to every other thing in the world and all things are related to the whole. This religious-metaphysical worldview runs counter to rational understanding of the world, in Habermas' narrow definition of rationality.

> The unity of rationalized worldviews that refer, in a theological vein, to the creation, or in a metaphysical vein, to the whole of what exists, is anchored in concepts like "God." [...] In these basic concepts, descriptive, normative, and expressive aspects are still fused. [...] This protects the rationalized worldviews, *as* worldviews, from consequences that would endanger the tradition-securing modes of pious belief or reverential contemplation. By contrast, modern modes of thought do not recognize any such preserves, any such exemptions from the critical power of hypothetical thought, either in ethics or in science. (TCA I, 214)

Habermas seems to work within a specific framework, or say lifeworld, with pre-understandings and presuppositions about religion, which is not universally applicable to all religions. His notion of religion is an advanced form of myth and magic with fideistic characteristics. Religion in this sense is perceived in terms of a dichotomy between religion and reason, and the only task for a sociologist remains to analyze and justify this dichotomy by looking for social, cultural, and developmental elements underlying this supposedly existing lacuna. Religion for Habermas is not, and cannot be, based on reason and rational argumentation; the moment it or one of its elements is subjected to rational criticism it loses its essence and becomes something else. Such a proviso, while

---

[101] Ibid., p. 233.

pertaining to some practices called religion is not applicable to all religions of the world, especially those encouraging rational criticism and the critical examination of their fundamental religious beliefs. "What is left of universal religions is but the core of universalistic moral systems, and this in greater proportion, the more transparent the infrastructure of monotheistic belief systems has become."[102]

In Habermas' view, those who participate in communicative action in a rational context have one or more validity claims including the claims to comprehensibility, truth, rightness, and truthfulness. All speakers share the claim to comprehensibility, which includes the claim that one's utterance is meaningful and intelligible. Truth claim is the realm of science, which concerns—in terms of semantics (see # 5.1.1)—the correspondence to the objective reality of one's speech. The claim to rightness that hints at agreement with social norms and values is believed to pertain to the language of law and morality. And truthfulness relates to aesthetics and suggests the sincerity of emotions expressed in a work of art. Differentiation is the most positive aspect of rationality that renders validity claims criticizable. As a result of criticism, any claim is potentially accepted or refuted by all participants in communication. This leads Habermas to conclude that religious language is not comprehensible, or at least suitable and useful, for a modern and rational society.

The question, however, arises as to whether differentiated validity claims of the so-called rational languages account for the reality of the world and reflect the complexity of the relations between its phenomena and events. Are the dimensions of the world so detached from one another that the expert cultures and differentiated spheres of

---

[102] J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," p. 94.

validity can express them in a proper manner? Habermas' answer is a firm 'no', and he criticizes the Enlightenment thinkers because for him the differentiation of validity claims only represents the necessary, and not the sufficient, condition for rationality. Another dimension of rationality is communicative rationality that is able to cover up the flaws of the so-called purposive rationality.

The task of communicative rationality is to establish a relationship between rational agents in order to arrive at a more comprehensive, reliable, and defendable understanding of the world. It is meant to substitute for the unifying power of religion and the meaningfully unified view religion provides of different dimensions and levels of the objective, subjective, and social worlds in the modern era. The problem is that, although communicative action may provide an interconnection between the participants in communication, it does not account for the interrelationship between different spheres of validity. It might have the potential for relating different arguments regarding a specific claim raised in a differentiated value sphere, but it cannot link various value spheres together. This is because communicative rationality takes the principle of differentiated value spheres for granted. Differentiation is the result of the analytic approach to knowledge. The analytic approach as the legacy of the Enlightenment is, at least partially, responsible for this differentiation in the detached domains of knowledge in the modern era. That is why besides analysis we need synthesis in order to have direction and meaning.

Synthesis is a certain unity made out of diversity. In other words, different findings of diverse disciplines cannot make connections except in a synthetic approach. In an analytic culture, combined with positivist mentality, each validity claim is separated

from other ones as if it were an autonomous realm of reality. In order to investigate one

aspect of reality, other elements are supposed invariant and static. This is only a

hypothetical situation, assumed for the interest of scientific methodology. The subject

matter is disconnected from all other elements in order to facilitate an objective study.

The price for this kind of objectivity is dissociation from actual relations that exist in the

real world. In this sense, religious language has the potential for revealing the real sense

of relatedness between differentiated language-games by relating all validity claims and

thus accounting for the complexity of reality. Habermas' interest in continuing the

Enlightenment project by developing a critical social theory and a theory of

rationalization are among the factors steering his treatment of religious language and its

function. Habermas' negation of the universality of religious language amounts to the

idea that although monotheistic religions lay claim to universality, their claims are not

acceptable to the modern mind because of the undifferentiated, and thus uncriticizable,

validity claims contained in religious language. And yet, he now realizes the erroneous

nature of this judgment regarding religious language and speaks instead of "the process

of a critical appropriation of the essential contents of religious tradition" that is underway

on the contemporary scene of rational thinking, the outcome of which is difficult to

predict.[103] For him, "intuitions which had long been articulated in religious language can

neither be rejected nor simply retrieved rationally,"[104] and this is true particularly for

monotheistic traditions because they "have at their disposal a language whose semantic

potential is not yet exhausted [*unabgegoltenen*], that shows itself to be superior in its

power to disclose the world and to form identity, in its capability for renewal, its

---

[103] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 237.

[104] Ibid.

differentiation, and its range."[105] What he does not elaborate on is the question of what this "semantic potential" is and to which domain it belongs. His reference to the power of religious language "to disclose the world" might be taken to suggest that part of its capacity is related to the cognitive realm of truth claims about the objective world. But this is incongruent with his insistence that "[u]nder the conditions of postmetaphysical thinking, whoever puts forth a truth claim today must, nevertheless, translate experiences that have their home in religious discourse into the language of a scientific expert culture."[106] An alternative interpretation that is more plausible and more harmonious with his theory of social evolution is that this power refers to the undifferentiated richness of religious language he speaks of in *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (PMT 51). In other words, religious language in Habermas' conceptual view is a communicative and not a cognitive language; and yet, as a semantically rich language, it is unintelligible as well as incommunicable in a modern age characterized by postmetaphysical thought.

---

[105] Ibid., p. 229.

[106] Ibid., p. 234.

CHAPTER 6

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE, RATIONALITY, AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

One of the main functions Habermas, along with other critical theorists and sociologists of religion, accepts for religion is its potential for providing humanity with meaning. Religion offers a holistic picture of the world, including the natural, social, and individual worlds; thus it provides purpose and direction in the world and in human life. The analytically differentiated spheres of validity claims in the rationalized understanding of the world not only threatens but also destroys this sense of meaningfulness. Despite the pessimism shared by Weber and such critical theorists as Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas suggests his theory of communicative action as a modern alternative to religion.

Common to all critical theorists and most sociologists of religion is the presentation of modern rationality as an alternative to religion. Religion in this context is functionally perceived, its functions are conceived of in terms of a human need for interpreting the world events and in connection with the human yearning for meaning. The cognitive task of religion is claimed to have been taken over by the modern philosophies and sciences, while meaning is lost in the midst of the process of rationalization.

6.1 Religion and Meaning

Weber explains his understanding of the term 'meaning' quite frankly and clearly in different passages of his works including *Economy and Society*, where he rejects any "objective" meaning in phenomena, events, or actions. For him, meaning always refers to what an actor is heading for subjectively.

> The term may refer first to the actual existing meaning in the given concrete case of a particular actor, or to the average or approximate meaning attributable to a given plurality of actors, or secondly to the theoretically conceived *pure type* of subjective meaning attributable to the hypothetical actor or actors in a given type of action. In no case does it refer to an objectively 'correct' meaning or one which is 'true' in some metaphysical sense.[1]

According to H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Weber's account of meaning runs counter to its objective version expressed by Hegel, Adam Smith, and Marx. In their analysis, "Adam Smith's 'unseen hand' and Hegel's 'ruse of the idea' appear in Marx's system as an objective logic of dynamic institutions that work themselves out behind the backs of the actors. [...] Thus Marx measures the subjective notions of the actors of the system against the objective meaning as revealed by scientific study."[2]

According to Weber, an observer can understand and interpret subjective meanings by grasping "action-elements in their intended context of meaning," that we "understand what a person is doing when he tries to achieve certain ends by choosing

---

[1] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 4.

[2] H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, "Introduction: the Man and His Work," p. 58.

appropriate means on the basis of facts of the situation."[3] In this way, Weber relates subjective meaning to ultimate ends and values toward which a certain action is consciously oriented. For Weber, those instances of value-governed actions lacking the element of consciousness, such as purely traditional imitations or purely emotional reactions, are not considered meaningful. Values, and thus meanings, are not considered to be rationally or experimentally determined on the basis of facts or specific norms. In the context of social action, value and meaning are understood from the motivation and belief system of each party engaged in a social relationship. "The 'meaning' relevant in this context is always a case of the meaning imputed to the parties in a given concrete case, on the average, or in a theoretically formulated pure type—it is never a normatively 'correct' or a metaphysically 'true' meaning."[4] Meaning and value are not rationally analyzable and cannot be determined or evaluated on the basis of rational standards; we are only capable of rationally analyzing meaningful actions. Weber illustrates the analysis of meaningful action in terms of its relation to its agent on the one hand, and to its goal on the other. If the aim of an action is chosen consciously and for its own sake, and if the action is suitable for attaining that goal, it is called value-rational. Value-rational action "is determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success. [...] It is only in cases where human action is motivated by the fulfillment of such unconditional demands that it will be called value-rational."[5]

---

[3] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 5.

[4] Ibid., p. 27.

[5] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

Weber deems religion necessary for a meaningful life. This amounts to the idea that religion provides its adherents with certain beliefs and values, perspectives and motivations, thoughts and feelings, commands and demands that govern their action. Religion makes life meaningful if these influences occur consciously. He suggests two frames of reference for judging the level of rationalization a religion represents: "One is the degree to which the religion has divested itself of magic; the other is the degree of systematic unity it gives to the relation between God and the world and correspondingly to its own ethical relation to the world."[6] "[...] the world order in its totality is, could, and should somehow be a meaningful 'cosmos.' This quest, the core of genuine religious rationalism, has been borne precisely by strata of intellectuals."[7] Such a core is different from both rationalization and intellectualization. For Weber, the latter two refer to a process of disenchantment of the world and the secularization of human understanding and value judgment. "The fate of our time is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations."[8] Not only does he not find fault with such a state of affairs, but he also approves it as an instance of progress under the banner of "intellectual integrity" and excoriates unconditional religious devotion as "intellectual sacrifice".[9] The "disenchantment of the world" is the chief character of rational knowledge that sets the

---

[6] Max Weber, *The Religion of China* (New York, NY: 1964), p. 226.

[7] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," p. 281.

[8] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," p. 155.

[9] Cf. Ibid.

stage for a challenge to religion. What makes the tension between rationality and religion inevitable is the differentiation between causal explanations of worldly mechanisms and the search for meaning in purposeful actions. Weber assumes that "[i]n principle, the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for a 'meaning' of inner-worldly occurrences." [10] This is because any religious claim about the world as ordained by God and a cosmos "somehow *meaningfully* and ethically oriented"[11] runs counter to the scientifically causal explanation of worldly events, so that "[e]very increase of rationalism in empirical science increasingly pushes religion from the rational into the irrational realm."[12]

Weber's judgment is based on a specific interpretation of meaning and on a certain understanding of the task of scientific explanation, especially that of social actions. As mentioned above, meaning for Weber refers to the intention of the actor's subjective motivation for initiating an action. Morris Ginsberg interprets Weber as saying that understanding the behavior of an actor relies on drawing parallels with one's own subjective experience.[13] Peter Winch blames Ginsberg for not being wary enough, and he gives instead a Wittgensteinian interpretation of Weber's idea of meaning: "action with a sense is symbolic: it goes together with certain other actions in the sense that it *commits* the agent to behaving in one way rather than another in the future. [...] It follows that I can only be committed in the future by what I do now if my present act is the *application*

---

[10] Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World," pp. 350-51.

[11] Ibid., p. 350.

[12] Ibid., pp. 350-51.

[13] Cf. M. Ginsberg, *On the Diversity of Morals* (Heinemann, 1956), pp. 153ff.

of a rule [...] this is possible only where the act in question has a relation to a social context."[14] According to Winch, social conventions—not individual intentions—determine the meaning of particular bodily movements and convert them to meaningful *actions*.[15] Whether Weber targets individual intention or social convention does not make any difference with regard to our present discussion. In either case, he contradistinguishes between meaning and causality, between subjective reason (i.e. motivation) and objective cause, and he assumes that they are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, one may consider, along with Donald Davidson, that explaining an action by giving the agent's reason for doing it is in fact an instance of causal explanation.[16]

As far as the relation between religion, meaning, and science is concerned, there is another aspect to be taken into account. A religious worldview does not take God's intentions as substitutes for natural causes, social conventions, or individual intentions. The meaning a religious worldview discloses refers to the idea that the world is an ordered system aimed at a 'telos' set by its creator. Causal relations between natural, social, or individual phenomena, events, and actions that are explored by different fields of science and philosophy do not transcend the boundaries of human intellectual and experimental potentials. Scientific causal explanations bring the interrelationships among worldly events to light. A critical self-understanding of scientific knowledge uncovers the fact that the causal relationship between natural and social phenomena cannot negate the view of the world as an organic whole, or its meaningfulness.

---

[14] P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 50.

[15] Cf. V. Pratt, *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, p. 45.

[16] Cf. D. Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, Causes," pp. 675-86 & Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

6.1.1 Habermas' Critique of Weber

According to Habermas, pre-modern people found in religion a perspective of the world (worldview) that enabled them to understand and interpret world events and phenomena in a satisfying way. They made sense of what happened to them by drawing on religious beliefs, without which they would lack the conceptual tools that are necessary to ascribe any meaning to the world and worldly events. For Habermas, the cognitive need that drives human beings to embrace religion pertains to the human longing for finding meaning amid all complexities and perplexing events. Meaning cannot be separated from perception of particular phenomena and events as parts of a whole. In P. L. Berger's words, there is "a human craving for meaning that appears to have the force of instinct. Men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality."[17] Following Durkheim and Weber, Habermas thinks of meaning as common to both religion and magic. The difference lies on the level of the rationality and rationalization potential of their truth claims, and he criticizes Weber's analysis of rationalization because it places "greater stress on overcoming magical practices than on overcoming mythical modes of thought in which magic is interpreted." (TCA I, 205)

Religions are not at the same level concerning the possibility of rationalization. On a continuum starting from the magical image of the world and ending with the rational understanding of the world the more a religion is rationalizable, the higher it is capable of providing humanity with meaning in the framework of a worldview. Accordingly, religion represents a whole spectrum of human endeavor to make sense of the world rather than a point on this continuum. Habermas' idea of the rationalization

---

[17] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 22.

potential and the dimensions of rationalization of various religions as well as philosophical systems can be sketched out as follows (TCA I, 212):

Dimension of Rationalization \ Rationalization Potential	High	Low	
Ethical	Mastery of the world: Judaism, Christianity	Flight from the world: Hinduism	Salvation Religions
Cognitive	Contemplation of the world: Greek Philosophy	Adjustment to the World: Confucianism	Cosmological-Metaphysical Worldviews
	Occident	Orient	

Differentiation is one of the major features of rationality: the rationalization of social systems is made out of the differentiation of subsystems into autonomous organizations, and the rationalization of the lifeworld denotes a differentiation of validity claims into sovereign 'provinces'. Habermas refers to this situation as the 'second nature' of society, a term that in W. Outhwaite's words documents his adherence to the model "running from Hegel through Marx and Engels to Weber and Lukács, in which the development of aspects of a society takes place at the expense of their links with the whole."[18] This model of modernity is responsible for the loss of meaning, but it does not belong to the

---

[18] W. Outhwaite, *Habermas*, p. 90.

nature of rationality according to Habermas; rather it results from the Enlightenment thinkers' misunderstanding of rationality proper.

6.1.2 Instrumental Reason and Its Critique

One of the major pitfalls of modernity consists in limiting reason and rationality to instrumental reason. The critique of instrumental reason was of great concern for the founders of critical theory, especially Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse.[19] In their interpretation, Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophers did develop a subjective concept of reason, which entails human capacity to find the best means for arbitrarily chosen ends, and the ends *per se* do not yield themselves up to rational analysis and arguments. Horkheimer interprets this position as a reaction to

> Great philosophical systems, such as those of Plato and Aristotle, scholasticism, and German idealism were founded on an objective theory of reason. It aimed at evolving a comprehensive system, or hierarchy, of all beings, including man and his aims. The degree of reasonableness of a man's life could be determined according to its harmony with this totality. [...] The emphasis was on ends rather than on means. The supreme endeavor of this kind of thinking was to reconcile the objective order of the 'reasonable,' as philosophy conceived it, with human existence, including self-interest and self-preservation.[20]

As far as practical reason is concerned, modern theorists, at least after Durkheim's critical examination of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, accuse the ancient philosophers of referring back the idea of a good life for the individual and the best order of life for

---

[19] See M. Horkheimer, *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft: Aus den Vorträgen und Aufzeichnungen seit Kriegsende* [FAT 4031], 355 p. (Frankfurt-Main: Athenäum Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974).

[20] M. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (1947), (New York: Continuum, 1992), pp. 4-5.

society to the *nature* of the objective world, and of establishing what goals were worthy of pursuing through an appeal to inferences and the principles of practical reason. In their view, the Enlightenment thinkers deemed good life a mere subjective idea not attainable by reason and reserved rationality for procedures and means employed to realize one's ideal life. Yet, "[u]nder the triple attacks of positivism, historicism, and 'value-free' social science, practical philosophy lost its claims to reason."[21]

Positivism considers the methodology of the natural sciences as a highly developed form of reason and urges the application of scientific method in all areas of knowledge.[22] Reason, in the positivist account, is of little relevance to determining ends, setting goals, and leading a good life; these issues are outside the scope of reason and rationality. The function of reason is limited to (1) criticizing certain sets of beliefs and goals for falling short of meeting the consistency condition; (2) scrutinizing certain means for their inappropriateness regarding certain given ends; (3) exposing the non-cognitive character of value judgments presented as truth claims. Reason, in a positivist context, can proceed only by imitating the methodology of natural sciences, and this requires that society is viewed in the same way as the natural world, namely as consisting of discrete facts, events, and institutions which exist in disjunction from each other and from those who perceive them. In order to analyze social phenomena one has to use descriptive concepts without recourse to evaluative judgments. Reason is thought of as a tool to determine the best means to goals undeterminable through rational arguments. Critical theorists call this 'instrumental reason' and criticize positivism for such a narrow

---

[21] Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia; A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 1.

[22] Cf. Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 2.

understanding of reason and rationality. Whereas Weber considers it an inevitable evil

that sweeps meaning and freedom away from human life, Adorno denounces such a self-

glorification of mind dominating nature, and Horkheimer thinks of it as the self-

destruction of reason through instrumentalization,[23]

6.1.3 Immanent Criticism

Critical theorists reject both metaphysical and positivist positions on reason and

its role regarding social life. Denying reason direct participation in determining the

standards and ends of life, they also reject what they call the subjective attitude toward

reason in the positivist approach. Instead, they believe in the important function of reason

in what they call internal or immanent criticism. Immanent criticism refers to the idea

that critical theory, contrary to positivism, looks inside institutions for standards of

criticism instead of appealing to predetermined universal concepts or external principles.

Basically a social theory, it conceives of society as a complex totality with

interconnections among all its facets on the one hand, and with the understandings,

beliefs, and values of society members on the other; members of a society create each and

every social institution in order to fulfill its assigned role in attaining a good life.

Therefore, the idea of good and bad enters into the very core of the nature of social

institutions as well as our understanding of them. Apart from the vision of the good life,

social reality and institutions do not make sense at all. The ideal type for a certain

institution—in a Weberian sense of the term 'ideal type'—or the concept of an

institution—in its Hegelian use—is abstractly constituted according to beliefs and

aspirations contributing to its creation. Such a concept is considered the only yardstick

---

[23] Cf. R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 313.

for criticizing the actual institutions of a given society. The disclosure and analysis of incongruity between ideal and actual institutions is the task that critical theory puts upon itself and calls immanent criticism. Therefore, in the tradition of critical theory, the evaluation of social institutions is relative to the task they are to accomplish and to the belief system and value system of their creators. One and the same institution might be good, successful, and necessary in the context of a given society, while it might be evaluated as bad, vain, and needless in another one.

To engage in immanent criticism, a social philosopher has to consider the history of the institution in question in the given society, and the belief system, value system, and expectations behind it. This complex of foundations contributes to the formation of a concept of institution which suffices, according to critical theorists, for criticism from within, without any recourse to standards from without. However, critical theorists up until Adorno's death in 1969, agreed with the positivist idea that reason was incapable of positively determining the conditions of good life, or sketching out the characteristics of a given utopia. The function of reason was thus restricted to criticism and, at most, negative description of what is absent from a good life; such description as 'class-less society' in Marx's exposition of his utopia may have inspired them. This trend begins to change in the second generation of critical theorists such as Marcuse who proposes a biological foundation for socialism, and Habermas who formulates the basic ideas of critical theory on the basis of Neo-Kantian ideas against which the founders of critical theory were reacting.[24] Nonetheless, all critical theorists share the opposition to the one-sided account of reason in positivism.

---

[24] Cf. Ibid.

Weber and Lukács express similar criticisms concerning the positivist attitude toward reason. Weber coins the expression 'the aristocracy of intellect' to refer to a scientific culture that,

> in the name of "intellectual integrity," has come forward with the claim of representing the only possible form of a reasoned view of the world. [...] In addition to the burden of ethical guilt, however, something has adhered to this cultural value which was bound to depreciate it with still greater finality, namely, senselessness—if this cultural value is to be judged in terms of its own standards.[25]

Weber regards the emergence of the scientific understanding of the world as a result of the process of rationalization that alters the way people understand world events. In order to describe this process, he borrows "Friedrich Schiller's phrase, the 'disenchantment of the world.' The extent and direction of 'rationalization' is thus measured negatively in terms of the degree to which magical elements of thought are displaced, or positively by the extent to which ideas gain in systematic coherence and naturalistic consistency."[26]

Lukács uses the term 'reification' to refer to the changes modern capitalism brought about in the sphere of human understanding.[27] He owes this concept to Marx who argues in *Capital* that the relationship among human beings experiences a kind of deformation due to the triumph of capitalism. The values of the market economy influence the way people treat each other's labor power: they set a price on each other and deal with their fellow human beings as things. Marx calls this 'commodity fetishism'.

---

[25] Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World," p. 355.

[26] H. Gerth and C. Mills, "Introduction," to *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 51.

[27] Cf. A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 26.

Lukács generalizes this idea to pervade the whole range of social and intellectual spheres of human life. Habermas describes reification as a 'socio-pathological phenomenon' and asserts, "[m]y real motive in beginning the book [*The Theory of Communicative Action*] in 1977 was to understand how the critique of reification, the critique of rationalization, could be reformulated" (TCA I, 15). Habermas' reformulation is materialized in the form of suggesting a new type of rationality called communicative rationality.

6.2 Communicative Rationality

Habermas follows the lead of the first generation of the Frankfurt School in criticizing the mainstream philosophers of the Enlightenment for reducing rationality to instrumental rationality. The main goal he pursues in *The Theory of Communicative Action* is to unfold different aspects of rationality and come up with a conception of rationality that encompasses the benefits of instrumental rationality and at the same time avoids its limits and pitfalls. The notion of communicative action is meant to accomplish exactly that, along with the other purpose of compensating for the loss of meaning and offering a new sense of wholeness without sacrificing differentiation or relapsing into a religious worldview.

Habermas criticizes Weber's action theory because it narrows down the understanding of rationality to purposive rationality. For him, "analytic action theory has been fruitful for clarifying the structures of purposive action by an isolated actor and does not consider the mechanisms for coordinating action through which interpersonal relations come about. [...] As actions are reduced to purposive interventions in the objective world, the rationality of means-ends relations stands in the foreground" (TCA I, 273-74). The concept of communicative action, on the contrary,

provides access to three intertwined topic complexes: first, a concept of communicative rationality; [...] second, a two-level concept of society that connects the 'lifeworld' and 'system' paradigms in more than a rhetorical fashion; and finally, a theory of modernity that explains [...] social pathologies [...] by way of the assumption that communicatively structured domains of life are being subordinated to the imperatives of autonomous, formally organized systems of action. Thus the theory of communicative action is intended to make possible a conceptualization of the social-life context that is tailored to the paradoxes of modernity. (TCA I, xlii)

According to Habermas, one, if not the, major feature setting communicative action off positivist rationality is its potential for joining the separate spheres differentiated in the process of rationalization. One aspect of such merger is the unification of meaning and validity in "the potential for critique [...] built into the very structure of communicative action."[28] Validity refers to the relation of a claim to a particular world (objective, subjective, or social), while meaning connotes its relationship to the whole. Habermas' reconstruction of wholeness leads him to take up a pragmatic approach to language through emphasis on the relation of language use to its users. (see #5.1.1)

Habermas attributes two different functions to language: cognitive and communicative. In a communicative milieu, speakers use language in order to reach understanding and coordinate their actions. Both theoretical agreement and practical cooperation are based on a consensus among parties regarding the interpretation of the situation in which they are involved. In a non-communicative context, language is used to

---

[28] M. Postone, "History and Critical Social Theory," p. 173; see also TCA I, 104-06 & 295-305.

assume a direct relation to the world in the form of either teleological, normatively regulated, or dramaturgical action in order to convey claims pertaining to the objective, social, or subjective world. The communicative use of language, however, requires speakers to adopt a reflective attitude toward their claims; they have to "relativize their utterances against the possibility that their validity will be contested by other actors" (TCA I, 99). In such communicative language use, the reflective attitude entails theoretical foundations other than those posited by the cognitive employment of language: it can no longer take relations with only one world at a time; in every instance, one has to take into account one's claims in relation to the social world of the hearer(s) as well. Differentiation as the yardstick of rationalization looses significance in the face of a search for common ground. "Speakers integrate the three formal world-concepts, which appear in the other models of action either singly or in pairs, into a system and presuppose this system in common as a framework of interpretation within which they can reach an understanding" (TCA I, 98). Habermas expresses this idea in his contradistinction between two types of knowledge: one oriented towards instrumental control and manipulation of the world, and the other geared toward communicative understanding. "The former rests on an assumption that the social world is merely there, objectively waiting to be discovered, factually described, and technically manipulated; the latter is based on considering the social world as a constructed reality, neither objective nor subjective but intersubjective,"[29] and it characterizes Habermas' preference for hermeneutics as the interpretive method in sociology over against empirical positivism.

---

[29] Robert Wuthnow, "Sociology and the Pursuit of Rationality," *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 15/2 (March 1986): 196.

The postulate of a common interpretative system has a close affinity with another concept in Habermas' theory, namely that of lifeworld as "the common background knowledge presupposed in real action" (TCA I, 339) and "complementary to the concept of communicative action" (TCA I, 337). Another feature of great significance incorporated into the notion of lifeworld is the idea that it not only represents the common background knowledge but also includes traditional values of people who live in a society. "In communicative action as such, we always already move within the boundaries of a lifeworld saturated with ethical value."[30] The combination of 'ought' and 'is', ethical value and factual knowledge, in lifeworld is vital for Habermas' attempt to substitute communicative rationality for religion. What distinguishes communicative from instrumental rationality pertains to this combination.

6.2.1 Substituting Communicative Rationality for Religion

For Habermas, there are two kinds of modernization: pathological and normal. Pathological modernization—one can say: the inadequate understanding of what a real modernization is—has led to the "colonization" of the lifeworld. Such misunderstanding of the essence of modernization as rationalization gave rise to diverse critiques of modernity. Habermas rejects as "bourgeois cultural critics" those who "attribute the pathologies of modernity to one of two causes: either to the fact that secularized worldviews lose their socially integrating power, or to the fact that society's high level of complexity overtaxes the individual's power to integrate" (TCA II, 330). He also criticizes Weber's paradoxical rationalization, Marx's internal colonization, and Adorno's and Horkheimer's dialectic of enlightenment as giving in to a narrow concept

---

[30] J. Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 77.

of rationality. Such one-sided understandings of rationality and modernity consist in focusing on cognitive-instrumental rationality. Johannes Berger expresses this idea by asserting, "With his theory of communicative action Habermas explicitly claims to be able to identify and explain the 'pathologies of modernity' which other research strategies ignore for methodological reasons."[31]

Habermas accuses Weber of reducing rationality to means-ends, or purposive, rationality. Means-ends rationality manifests itself in the rationalization of the economic and administrative systems, which amounts to a decision by rationalized systems instead of rational individuals. Purposive rationality does not remain confined to its own realms of economy and social administration, but "through monetarization and bureaucratization, extends beyond the economy and the state into other spheres and achieves dominance at the expense of moral-practical and aesthetic-practical rationality."[32] Based on his twofold approach to society—system vs. lifeworld— Habermas calls this process "the colonization of the lifeworld" (TCA II, 318), which means that the rationalization of social systems made possible by an appeal to cognitive-instrumental rationality has invaded the spheres belonging to other facets of rationality, viz. those of the lifeworld. This assessment might be viewed as a variant of Marx's diagnosis of capitalist modernity as commodity fetishism, and its reformulation as the reification of the social relations by Lukács.

[31] J. Berger, "The Linguistification of the Sacred and the Delinguistification of the Economy," p. 169; cf. TCA II, 378.

[32] M. Postone, "History and Critical Social Theory," p. 174.

6.2.2 Unity of Reason and Mediating Expert Cultures

Any rational social system based on purposive-strategic rationality comprises the subsystems of economy and state. Capitalist economy is differentiated through money, and the administrative subsystem is characterized through power. In this sense, a rational economic system is meant to employ the most efficient means to produce the biggest amount of wealth and money, and a rational administrative system is set to exploit the most effective means to gain the most power. Habermas juxtaposes a rationalized lifeworld based on communicative rationality to the rational social system. The social components of lifeworld form a system of institutions working through public opinion. "In bourgeois society, over against those areas of action that are systematically integrated in the economy and the state, socially integrated areas of action take the shape of private and public spheres, which stand in a complementary relation to one another. The institutional core of the private sphere is the nuclear family. [...] The institutional core of the public sphere comprises communicative networks amplified by a cultural complex, a press and, later, mass media" (TCA II, 318-19)

Habermas analyzes the pathology of so-called bourgeois rationality in terms of an overstepping of the boundaries of normality through "monetarization and bureaucratization [...] when they instrumentalize an influx from the lifeworld that possesses its own inner logic" (TCA II, 323). By the same token, he interprets Weber's concern about the two consequences of rationalization, namely the loss of meaning and the loss of freedom: both are the results of the penetration of the imperatives of rationalized systems into the private and public spheres that originally belong in the lifeworld. He anticipates, even reports, the clash between system imperatives and

independent communicative structures of the lifeworld as a source of conflict and protest in highly rationalized societies. (TCA II, 391)

Against "these magnificent 'one-sidednesses,' which are the signature of modernity," Habermas calls for two questions to be answered: "(i) whether a reason that has objectively split up into its moments can still preserve its unity, and (ii) how expert cultures can be mediated with everyday practice" (TCA II, 397-98). Habermas seeks answers in a process he identifies as normal modernization, a process characterized by a rationalized lifeworld differentiated from the rationalized social system. The mutual influence upon one another is what he calls "mediatization" (TCA II, 186), which presupposes enough integration on both sides so that they can interact as united wholes. The integration of a system is guaranteed by functional interconnections of action, whereas the integration of a lifeworld is brought about "through the consensus of those involved" (TCA II, 186). Habermas affirms Knödler-Bunte's conclusion that "the communicative life-world is a block against which capitalist rationalization scratches." He justifies and qualifies it by adding, "I really do believe that it is a question of injecting communicative everyday praxis into institutions. This was once a conservative view,"[33] but Habermas' communicative theory might well be, as Postone puts it, "a critical theory adequate for contemporary postliberal society."[34] According to the imperatives of communicative rationality, along with differentiation processes in each value sphere of science, morality, and art, one can detect counter-movements aiming at the reunification of validity claims. Various aspects of validity—truth, rightness, truthfulness—once differentiated in accordance with the imperatives of rationality, tend to communicate and

---

[33] A. Honneth et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization," p. 27.

[34] M. Postone, "History and Critical Social Theory," p. 170.

interact in a certain way. "It seems as if the radically differentiated moments of reason want in such countermovements to point toward a unity—not a unity that could be had at the level of worldviews, but one that might be established *this side* of expert cultures, in a nonreified communicative everyday practice" (TCA II, 398). The unity on this side of the differentiated validity claims is meant to substitute for the unifying power once attributed to religion in the so-called pre-modern societies.

6.2.3 The Problem of Foundation

Aware of the critics who accuse him of foundationalism for granting an affirmative role to philosophy, Habermas utterly denies such allegations and affirms the kind of postmetaphysical philosophy ready to be tested by empirical sciences. The basis for criticism is not philosophical foundation; instead,

> Coherence is the sole criterion of considered choice at the level on which mutually fitting theories stand to one another in relations of supplementing and reciprocally presupposing. [...] Once we have dropped foundationalist claims, we can no longer expect a hierarchy of sciences; theories [...] have to fit with one another, unless one puts the other in a problematic light and we have to see whether it suffices to revise the one or the other. (TCA II, 399-400)

Habermas comes to the same conclusion in communicative rationality as Weber did in value rationality. Weber regards rationality as confined to the procedure through which one can attain an ultimate end or value "toward which experience shows that human action may be oriented."[35] He distinguishes between instrumentally-rational and value-

---

[35] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 5.

rational orientations of action and calls the former "rationally pursued and calculated ends."[36] For Weber, values, on the other hand, are not rationally determined because they do not refer to a result ulterior to them. Their significance lies in the unconditional demand an actor believes to be called for by some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other sources of obligation; value-rational actions are carried out for their own sake and cannot be rationally established. One can rationally pursue values without being able to rationally determine them. Such an approach robs values of their claim to universality and of any ground for determining the right values from the wrong ones. It is left to societies, groups, or individuals to choose which values they want to pursue.

In the context of communicative rationality, Habermas shares with Weber a rejection of foundationalism, though in a broader sense. In his theory the validity of claims is determined by consensus without introducing any basis for differentiating valid from invalid consensus. The agreement of agents is the ultimate judge and is not considered itself in need of justification. This approach robs validity of its claim to universality.

6.3 Religion and Communicative Rationality

There are certain conceptual inadequacies in Habermas' agenda and his theory of communicative action. Habermas has been successful in drawing attention to the shortcomings of a one-sided notion of reason and rationality utilized by positivism in its various fashions, some of which are disguised under a critique of peripheral aspects of

---

[36] Ibid., p. 24.

other forms of positivism.[37] Communicative rationality, however, is based on certain ontological, epistemological, sociological, and historical provisos in its analysis of religion, rationality, social interaction, and communication.

6.3.1 Ontological Materialism

The theory of communicative action presupposes a self-sufficient, one-dimensional, and material world. Habermas' normative reconstruction of the Marxian historical materialism[38] delimits its potential for the inclusive theory it claims to represent. Other critiques notwithstanding, it can be fruitful in explaining social relations in a limited sense, i.e. as far as they pertain to the material surface of the events. Rejecting the immaterial facet of reality, it neglects the richness of the world as well as the complexity of human life in their multi-dimensional character. It conceptualizes rationality on the basis of only one world of existing state of affairs and consequently, the natural-supernatural interrelationship is lost. At most, it can show, within the boundaries of the material worlds of nature, individual, and society, how the process of rationalization "relates to power, economy and nature."[39]

Habermas deprives his theory, from the outset, of the possibility of exploring other arenas of possible worlds that do not give way to the narrow concepts of a materialist understanding of the world. Engaging in an analysis of religion as a stage in human cognitive development, and taking on the interpretation of religious language as representing a period in the process of rationalization is not coherent with presupposing a

---

[37] For instance, Habermas' challenge to Popper's theory of refutation as critical rationalism. A detailed examination of this issue is beyond the scope of this study.

[38] Cf. P. Strydom, "Sociocultural Evolution," p. 309.

[39] M. Pusey, *Jürgen Habermas*, p. 40.

firm negation toward the existence of the spheres to which they refer. The immaterial dimension of the world is exactly the domain to which religion mostly relates. Religious language can be understood specifically with reference to the realm of the supernatural. As the world is reduced to its visible and material appearance, it is quite predictable that the negation of foundations lays claim to an exclusive privilege to the standard of rationality.

6.3.2 Epistemological Coherentism

Habermas' version of critical theory is characterized by its emphasis on critique as an essential element in determining the rationality of a validity claim. "The central presupposition of rationality," is that validity claims "can be defended against criticism" (TCA I, 16). A critique is rational when it is based on plausible reasons. Habermas seeks plausibility in "a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims" (TCA I, 17) against the background of a shared lifeworld of a certain society. Any claim to validity, whether it is a claim to truth, truthfulness, or rightness, has to be established through argumentation, and its validity depends on the extent to which it can gain consensus. From among rival claims, the one agreed upon by more people proves to be valid, and true in the case of truth claims. For Habermas, as far as different truth claims coexist without contradiction, they are true, and none of them depends upon another. In case of contradiction, one should "see whether it suffices to revise the one or the other" (TCA II, 400)

This vision of rationality and validity rests on a theory of knowledge known as a coherence theory of justification. Distinguished from a coherence theory of truth—which belongs in the realm of ontology and held mainly by idealists—a coherence theory of

justification is developed as a reaction to criticisms against foundationalism. Both coherentism and foundationalism are responses to the epistemic regress problem that plays in the hands of the skeptic. Regress problems arise when one tries to justify some beliefs by their inferential relations to other beliefs. The justification of these other beliefs may also depend on inferential relations to still further beliefs, and so the chain of regress goes on *ad infinitum*.

The foundationalist response to this problem is the idea that there are certain beliefs that do not depend on inferential relations to other beliefs for their justification. These basic beliefs are considered foundations for the justification of other beliefs. Different schools of foundationalism diverge in determining which beliefs constitute foundations and on what basis. The two main branches of foundationalism are rationalist and empiricist. The coherentist alternative seeks the solution in a non-linear chain of inferential relation between beliefs and suggests the coherence between such beliefs as a sufficient condition for justification. Coherentists are too different to be regarded as one alternative to foundationalism and their definition of coherence and its conditions greatly diverge. Perhaps the most standard version of coherence theory, which can be traced back to Bosanquet,[40] is the one suggesting a holistic understanding of justification. According to this theory, all beliefs stand in mutual support-relation in a believer's system of thought without any epistemic priority. In this 'web of belief', to use Quine's term, the system itself represents the primary unit of justification, and all other beliefs are justified by their inclusion in this system. Therefore, the justification of the system logically precedes the justification of its component beliefs. The whole system itself also derives

---

[40] B. Bosanquet, *Implication and Linear Inference* (London: Macmillan, 1920).

its justification from the coherence of its parts, that is, from the firmness of the interconnection between particular beliefs, including that of explanatory connections.

Although Habermas does not elaborate on his presuppositions regarding epistemic justification and his conception of coherence, he seems to rely on this latter notion of justification when he explains the relation of philosophical theories to those of other sciences, especially social sciences, as mutually fitting, "supplementing, and reciprocally presupposing" (TCA II, 399-400). It is understandable for an adherent of such a coherence theory not to be willing, or even able, to explicate his presuppositions because, according to this theory, everything presupposes everything else in a system of thought. Habermas, therefore, has to deal with all the criticisms coherence theory has to face up to. One of the major problems with a coherence theory of justification is its subjective criterion for determining the truth of a belief, or the truthfulness of an expression, or the rightness of a norm for that matter. In the absence of an objective standard, there may be an infinite number of coherent systems of thought.

Habermas may argue that his theory of communicative action is exactly geared to solve this problem because it offers an intersubjective standard of validity instead of a subjective one. The problem is that, as he consciously admits, intersubjective communication is only possible within the confines of the shared lifeworld of a given society. Even within the same society, and with similar background lifeworld, not all people agree upon the same sort of validity claims, and a variety of coherent systems of thought may coexist with the same background knowledge. The question remains open as to what distinguishes the true coherent system from the false ones.

A second standard objection to the coherence theory of justification pertains to the question as to why we should think of a coherence system of beliefs as being representative of truth. At most, a coherent system indicates that the one who holds those beliefs is a rational person. What makes one deem it depicts reality? For an idealist who also holds a coherence theory of truth, it is easier to answer this question because according to such an approach, there is no reality beyond what one perceives. But for Habermas this does not work, and he may want to follow N. Rescher[41] who

> attempts to give a pragmatic argument to the effect that the practical success which results from the employment of the coherent system makes it likely that the beliefs of the system are at least approximately true (in the sense of corresponding to independent reality). Unfortunately, however, the need for justification for the claims of practical success, which must presumably also be coherentist in character, threatens the project with vicious circularity.[42]

There are still other challenges to coherentists in general to which Habermas also has to face up. They include such questions as: is there any justification for a belief in coherence as the yardstick for justification, and if so, is it justified through a coherence theory of justification or does it rest on another criterion for its justification? The first part of the dilemma leads to a vicious circularity, while the second one runs into self-contradiction. Furthermore, is someone's judgment that "belief A is coherent with other beliefs" justifiable? If it cannot be justified, how can it be regarded as a criterion, and if it

---

[41] N. Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); N. Rescher, "Foundationalism, Coherentism, and the Idea of Cognitive Systematization," *Journal of Philosophy* 19/71 (1974): 695-708; and N. Rescher, *Methodological Pragmatism* (New York: New York University Press, 1977).

[42] Laurence Bonjour, "Knowledge and justification, coherence theory of," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), vol. 5, p. 258.

can, is it justified through another coherence or does it have a criterion of its own? The first supposition results in an infinite regress, and the second one leads to self-contradiction.[43]

Some of Habermas' critics have raised questions and objections especially tailored to his consensus theory of truth. O. Höffe, for instance, points to the circularity of Habermas' definition of rational consensus, where he describes the validity of a claim by its reliance on rational consensus, and considers a consensus rational insofar as it is arrived at in an ideal speech situation. Höffe challenges Habermas on what constitutes the validity of the very claim that rational consensus should be defined in this way. If this claim also needs to be validated by a consensus reached in an ideal speech situation, Habermas will have to face an infinite regress, and if it is exempt from this test, there should be other criteria for validating claims, which runs counter to Habermas' principal assumption.[44] Höffe also raises the point that despite the fact that Habermas contends to have solely relied on consensus for the truth of statements, he cannot avoid an implicit reference to a coherence theory of truth, which he explicitly rejects.[45] However, as far as the idea of truth as consistency (or coherence) is concerned, Höffe's objection seems off track. Based on our discussion of Habermas' coherence theory of justification and the role of consensus in providing an intersubjective basis for coherence, Habermas runs into no inconsistency. In other words, coherence (or consistency) and consensus, for

---

[43] Cf. Muhammad Husaynzadeh, *Foundations of Religious Knowledge* (Qum, Iran: Imam Khomeini Institute Press, 2002), pp. 68-70.

[44] Cf. O. Höffe, "Kritische Überlegungen zur Konsenstheorie der Wahrheit (Habermas)," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 83 (1976): 330, quoted in Alessandro Ferrara, "A Critique of Habermas's Consensus Theory of Truth," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 13/1 (1987): 47.

[45] Cf. O. Höffe, "Kritische Überlegungen," p. 331, quoted in A. Ferrara, "A Critique of Habermas's Consensus Theory of Truth," pp. 47-48.

Habermas, are not at the same level and consequently do not compete nor even contradict each other. Habermas does not reject coherence as a criterion of validity; he explicitly endorses it as "the sole criterion of considered choice at the level on which mutually fitting theories stand to one another in relations of supplementing and reciprocally presupposing." (TCA II, 399-400)

Albrecht Wellmer criticizes Habermas' consensus theory of truth and suggests that consensus cannot be regarded only as a formal criterion of truth. Consensus, in Habermas' exposition, amounts to the formal conditions of competent people agreeing upon the validity of certain claims in an ideal speech situation, namely, free from coercion. First of all, Habermas qualifies the agreeing people with being competent. It means that they are qualified to pass judgment on the truth of the given claims. In this way, the criterion of truth exceeds the formality of how to determine the truth, and pertains directly to the content of the claim. Furthermore, Habermas' exposition of consensus theory of truth is paradoxical because either he has to "say that a statement is true because there exists a *de facto* consensus about its validity, and this is clearly untenable", or he has to say that "there is consensus because the statement is true rather than the other way around."[46]

And yet, what Habermas suggests is not a theory of truth, rather it is a theory of justification, though he sometimes calls it a consensus theory, or discourse theory, of truth[47]. As Ferrara correctly points out, Habermas conflates the two aspects.[48] Consensus does not constitute the criterion of the truth of a statement, but is regarded as an

---

[46] A. Ferrara, "A Critique of Habermas's Consensus Theory of Truth," p. 49.

[47] J. Habermas, "Morality, Society, and Ethics: An Interview with Torben Hviid Nielsen," in *Justification and Application*, p. 162.

[48] A. Ferrara, "A Critique of Habermas's Consensus Theory of Truth," p. 53.

argumentative justification of its truth claim. Habermas has already rejected any foundations as the cornerstone of knowledge and has refused foundation-based reasoning as a plausible method to establish the truth of a statement. Instead, he regards coherence as a criterion of truth and suggests consensus as a heuristic method for discovering the coherence of a statement with the whole background knowledge of a society. Of course, Wellmer's objection still holds true that the rationality of a consensus does not guarantee the truth of a given claim; as from the falsehood of a claim, one cannot infer the irrationality of consensus about its truth.

6.3.3 Methodological Functionalism

Habermas studies religion from without as an observer, and not from within as a participant. Investigation has to take all the existing elements into consideration without being selective in this regard or neglecting or leaving out any dimension, factor, or function if it is to be objective. In the social sciences, and more specifically, in sociology, any social phenomenon or event is studied as a human phenomenon constructed and evolved within society. This approach finds its way in a sociological study of religion and turns religion into a product of a social animal called human being. In this respect, P. L. Berger writes, "Whatever else it may be, religion is a humanly constructed universe of meaning, and this construction is undertaken by linguistic means."[49] Habermas follows Berger and regards religion as a human phenomenon "grounded in specific infrastructures of human history."[50] Berger's instruction for sociological theory is that it "must, by its own logic, view religion as a human projection, and by the same logic can

---

[49] P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 175.
[50] Ibid., p.180.

have nothing to say about the possibility that this projection may refer to something other than the being of its projector."[51] It is understandable why Berger advises not to judge, either positively or negatively, about the possibility, let alone the existence, of other dimensions, since sociology works within the confines of certain principles, presuppositions, and methodology that do not allow it to investigate about other factors and facets of its object of inquiry. Functions of religion such as forming identity and establishing social solidarity can be seen as proper aspects of religion to be studied in sociology. However, it would be a grave mistake to reduce religion to its social functions simply because sociology, or more precisely, certain sociological presuppositions and methodologies, are not able to account for other dimensions.

Habermas reduces religion to its functions with his very first step. For him, the monotheistic religions are perceived as the result of a developmental process starting from polytheism. According to him, the polytheistic religions were created by centralized political organizations in order to solve the problem of their legitimacy, and therefore had the function of an ideology. For him, various forms of religious expressions such as prayer, sacrifice, and worship were human inventions for the purpose of securing political legitimacy of the ruling system. Endorsing Hegel's analysis, Habermas thinks of such expressions as resulting in a differentiation between the individuality of a person, the particularity of one's community, and the universality of cosmic order and thus a distinction between self-identity and group-identity. According to his developmental philosophy of history, "the major universal religions"[52] with their idea of monotheism and immortal human soul, paved the way for what Hegel calls an infinite worthiness of

---

[51] Ibid.

[52] Cf. J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," p. 92.

the individual in the face of God.[53] For him, the monotheistic religions have the potential of providing a universalistic legitimation, whereas the political systems need a particularistic legitimation. Despite such incompatibility, ideologies are invented to form a nexus between the two. "Ideology functions as the counterweight to the structural dissimilarity between collective identity tied to the concrete state and ego identities formed within the framework of the universalistic associations."[54] This picture of the monotheistic religions runs counter to their self-understanding and ignores some of the, if not the most important elements of religion as well. In his revised vision of religion, however, Habermas acknowledges that his account of the functions of religion was not adequate, that he had neglected some important and as yet irreplaceable functions, namely religion's potential for consolation and its capability for providing moral directions and motivation. This positive shift does not exceed the self-imposed boundaries of his functionalist approach to religion: he still regards religion as a tool for attaining other purposes. Despite the fact that he criticizes the modern understanding of rationality for reducing rationality to its instrumental component, he repeats the same mistake in his interpretation of religion. Influenced by instrumental mentality, his understanding of religion is no more than a human-made tool to meet some individual and social needs.

Seen from both intra- and extra-religious perspectives, religion is more than its functions. Religion has a universal claim to the validity of its descriptive statements and normative codes of action. Religious experiences take up a major portion of the content of most religions, and as Rothberg shows, Habermas fails to recognize this dimension as

---

[53] Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, par. 482; quoted in J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," p. 93.

[54] J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," p. 93. By "the universalistic associations," Habermas refers to "the community of believers to which potentially all men belong; for the commands of God are universal" (Ibid.).

well as to question "the very possibility of potentially universally valid knowledge concerning inner nature."[55] Furthermore, the monotheistic religions claim to have access to the immaterial world of supernatural beings, including the existence of God and a human life beyond death. They claim to be revealed by God in order to guide people to a prosperous life in the hereafter. One cannot find these elements in the portrait Habermas draws of religion, and I wonder who recognizes one's religion in Habermas' exposition. Therefore, if we can speak of a structure for religion, Habermas' idea of religion is structurally flawed. His perception of religion, following Hegel and Durkheim, is an entirely human construct. In his one-sided reading of religion, Habermas does not acknowledge any divine element in religion, nor does he recognize any revelatory factor in religious language. Religious language is thus perceived as a human language besides any other cultural language, created by people living in a specific location, in a particular span of time, and for the fulfillment of special needs.

6.3.4 Narrow Understanding of the Functions of Religion

In his approach to religion, Habermas systematically downplays some functions while he emphasizes other. As we saw in chapter four (see # 4.2.1.3), he thinks of religion as performing three functions: (a) cognitive—suggesting a worldview, and hence providing meaning for life by presenting an image of the world as a united whole; (b) practical—providing moral codes of conduct as well as motivation to follow them; (c) emotional—offering consolation in the face of such extraordinary events of life as grief and suffering. Each of these tasks is an intermediary for the social task of securing ego

---

[55] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 236.

identity a..d group identity[56] religions have to accomplish in pre-rational societies. Ego

and social identities are in turn necessary for the preservation of social solidarity. As soon

as there arises an alternative which presumably accomplishes this task, there should be no

hesitation to turn the task over to the new rival. Habermas praises Francis Schüssler-

Fiorenza's fundamental theology for offering a political theology characterized by

restricting religion to the internal world of an individual on the one hand, and opening it

to the secularized world on the other. This means the uncoupling of an interiorized

religion from the explanatory claims of cosmological worldviews, leaving the latter to the

newly emerging secular sciences and philosophies.[57] "Yet, the more that theology opens

itself in general to the discourses of the human sciences, the greater is the danger that its

own status will be lost in the network of alternating takeover attempts."[58] On the basis of

his developmental theory of history, Habermas transfers the cognitive role of religion to

the differentiated spheres of science and postmetaphysical philosophy based on

communicative rationality and he does not take seriously objections of the kind Rothberg

raises when he writes:

> Just as Habermas can acknowledge the empirical dominance of the
> cognitive-instrumental form of rationality, and argue that this represents a
> narrowing and loss of rational potential, so the loss of a coherent religious
> worldview and the privatization and relativization of religious claims
> might as well be interpreted as a loss of potential. The level of discussion

---

[56] Cf. J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 229.

[57] Ibid., pp. 228-29.

[58] Ibid., p. 231.

seems to be formal and metatheoretical, concerning the very possibility that there can be even potentially valid religious claims.[59]

As to the moral dimension of religion, Habermas once believed that "from religious truths, after the religious world views have collapsed, nothing more and nothing other than the secular principles of a universalist ethics of responsibility can be salvaged."[60] This same idea had been expressed previously by him as follows: "what is left of universal religions is but the core of universalistic moral systems."[61] In other words, the practical task of religions also is being handed over to a secular discourse ethics. In a later publication, however, he finds such a claim doubtful; he suggests rather that the question has to remain open as to whether the trends of development will proceed in a straight line, and he concludes "that the intuitions which had long been articulated in religious language can neither be rejected nor simply retrieved rationally."[62]

The only function attributed by Habermas to religious language that has not yet found a communicative alternative is the emotional one:

> As long as religious language bears with itself inspiring, indeed, unrelinquishable semantic contents which elude (for the moment?) the expressive power of a philosophical language and still await translation into a discourse that gives reasons for its positions, philosophy, even in its

---

[59] D. J. Rothberg, "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work," p. 234.

[60] J. Habermas, *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 52, quoted in J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 237.

[61] J. Habermas, "On Social Identity," p. 94.

[62] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 237.

postmetaphysical form, will neither be able to replace nor to repress religion.[63]

As far as communicative action is concerned, it

> does not make its appearance in an aestheticized theory as the colorless
> negative of a religion that provides consolation. [...] As long as no better
> words for what religion can say are found in the medium of rational
> discourse, it will even coexist abstemiously with the former, neither
> supporting it nor combatting it. (PMT 145)

Contrary to Niklas Luhmann's suggestion, Habermas is hesitant to stabilize religion "into a social subsystem specialized [...] in coping with contingency,"[64] because Habermas believes that Luhmann's proposal presupposes a complete neutralization of religious content which runs counter to the claims of political theology that "fights for a public role for religion and precisely in modern societies. Yet then religious symbolism should not conform to the...forms of expression of an expert culture, but must maintain its *holistic* position in the lifeworld."[65] Without endorsing either Luhmann's or Fiorenza's stance, Habermas prefers to put a question mark on all competing claims, including his own previous position. There seems an agnostic threat lingering in the air resulting from a communicative approach to rationality and religion alike.

The most recent developments in Habermas' view of the issue makes one wondering whether his acceptance of some role for religious language in modern societies should be regarded as part of a secularization agenda. In his speech of October

---

[63] Ibid.

[64] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 241.

[65] Ibid.

2001 on *Faith and Knowledge*[66] he rejects the two current models for interpreting secularization (more on this later in the conclusion). He describes himself as a post-secularist and thinks that both the "replacement model" and the "expropriation model" are mistaken: "They both consider secularization as a kind of zero-sum game. [...] This image no longer fits a post-secular society." At the same time he renounces "disruptive secularization." For him, Kant "provided the first great example of a completely secularizing, yet at the same time redeeming, deconstruction of the truths of faith." This makes one think that Habermas might view religious language as benefiting "the West, as the great secularizing force in the world today."

---

[66] J. Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen* (*Süddeutsche Zeitung,* 15 October 2001), also published in book form by Suhrkamp (Frankfut-Main) in 2001.

CONCLUSION

There is a basic discrepancy between two ways of understanding religion and its task. The first defines religion as a worldview describing fundamental facts about the universe, the human life, its origin and end. Such a view requires a course of action that is coherent with this understanding of the events and their relation to the creator and to the destiny of the human agent. Thus religion provides a series of commands and demands, including the relation to the creator of the universe, one's treatment of the objects in the natural world, one's relation to the other members of society, and one's conduct in private life. The latter three aspects correspond to Habermas' objective, social, and subjective worlds. According to this perception, although the psychological and sociological corollaries of such beliefs and practices are not ignored, they are considered as peripheral and secondary, compared to the cognitive and practical aspects of religion.

The second approach regards religion primarily as a means to come to terms with social, psychological, and emotional needs. Thus, religion is a conciliatory factor in the face of disasters and anxieties of all kinds. Accordingly, the belief system, God's attributes, revelation, prophethood, the Day of Judgment are merely designed to provide good feelings and to lull the believers. Religion is not only deemed to have no truth claim and represent no reality, but also it represents a syndrome that forms a "specific barrier" to rationalization.[1]

Habermas first regarded religion as an ideological tool in the hands of oppressive politicians to legitimize their power and justify their right to impose their will upon

---

[1] J. Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," p. 234.

people. Then he regarded religion as a legitimate descriptive and normative tool in the history of the human development which loses its function in modern society except for those parts that are not yet translated into secular languages. Since the translated parts no longer maintain their religious character, there is a decline of religion in modernity. In a later development, Habermas grants religion a continuing role in modern societies: to provide consolation in the face of grief and suffering, and in disastrous situations. Religion accomplishes this task by offering a picture of the world as a whole within which every event finds meaning. This response to the human craving for meaning, as Peter L. Berger has it, gives people assurance and satisfaction in the midst of confusion and conflict.

Habermas perceives the latter function common to religion and metaphysics because "[r]eligious-metaphysical worldviews ground fundamental attitudes toward the world" (TCA I, 206). The strategies religion and metaphysics employ to secure such an attitude are the same, though in different ways. They offer a uniform and unifying picture of nature, individual, and society within the framework of a whole. "This principle is represented as a God of Creation or a Ground of Being that unites in itself the universal aspects of 'is' and 'ought,' essence and appearance." (TCA I, 206)

Habermas speaks of two attempts to preserve religious language alive in the modern era: the 'Protestant path', and 'enlightened Catholicism'. These are the two major responses to the modern problematization of religious claims. The Protestant answer is based on an appeal "to the kerygma and faith as a source of religious insight absolutely independent of reason," while the Catholic response "relinquishes the status of a special discourse and exposes its assertions to the whole range of scientific discussion [...]

without renouncing the acknowledgment of the experiences articulated in the language of the Judeo-Christian tradition as its *own* base of experience."[2] Habermas suggests that religious discourse would lose its identity if it were to choose none of these solutions that are characteristic of modern Christian theology in the West, but rather to expose religious claims to scientific experiments and reinterpret religious language so that it does not contradict a modern understanding of the world and secular values. Habermas suggests "the 'political dogmatics' of the Copenhagen theologian Jens Glebe-Møller as an example"[3] of such a solution, but he does not consider this proposal a rescue plan because in such a reconstructive interpretation of religious language, there remains nothing genuinely religious; he asks, "*who* recognizes himself or herself in this interpretation?"[4] In his speech of October 2001 on *Faith and Knowledge*, however, he seems sympathetic to this third alternative designed not to preserve religious language but to pave the way for a smooth and non-conflictual process of secularization in order to prevent the destructive potentials of the monotheistic religions.

The synthetic language of religion can be understood as a complementary partner to the analytical-rational language of science instead of its opposite. Religious language provides humankind with a sense of direction and meaning by putting different validity claims in the context of a whole. Habermas' interest in continuing the unfinished project of modernity by developing his theory of communicative action is among the factors steering his treatment of religious language and its functions. He does not succeed in replacing the synthetic character of religious language through the communicative

---

[2] Ibid., p. 235.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

attributes of argumentative discourse. The reason for that lies in the fact that although a theory of communicative action may be viewed as a theory of justification, it is not a theory of truth. Communicative rationality may develop a solid ground for mutual understanding, consensus, and social solidarity; and yet, it falls short of constituting a sound basis for grasping the complex relations that exist between different elements in the real world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Primary Sources: Writings by Jürgen Habermas

"Mit Heidegger gegen Heidegger denken." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 25, 1935; also published in J. Habermas, *Philosophisch-politische Profile*. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1971, 254 p.; pp. 67-75.

"Analytische Wissenschaftstheorie und Dialektik: Ein Nachtrag zur Kontroverse zwischen Popper und Adorno." In *Zeugnisse: Theodor W. Adorno zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Max Horkheimer. Frankfurt-Main: Europäische Verlags-Anstalt, 1963.

"Technology and Science as "Ideology"." In *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1970, pp. 81-122.

Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1970.

"Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence." *Inquiry* 13 (1970): 360-75.

Philosophisch-Politische Profile. Frankfurt-Main: Sugrkamp, 1971.

— & Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie*. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1971.

"A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*." *Philosophy and the Social Sciences* 3 (1973): 157-89.

"Between Philosophy and Science: Marxism as Critique." In *Theory and Practice*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973, pp. 195-252.

"Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Praxis in Our Scientific Civilization." In *Theory and Practice*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973, pp. 253-82.

Theory and Practice. Translated by John Viertel. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973.

"On Social Identity." *Telos* 19 (Spring 1974): 91-103.

Legitimation Crisis. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1975.

"Some Distinctions in Universal Pragmatics: A Working Paper." *Theory and Society: Renewal and Critique in Social Theory* 3/2 (Summer 1976): 155-67.

Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1976.

"A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method.*" In *Understanding and Social Inquiry.* Eds. Fred R. Dallmayr & Thomas McCarthy. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, pp. 335-63.

Knowledge and Human Interests. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro. London: Heinemann, 1978.

Politik, Kunst, Religion. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978.

"Aspects of the Rationality of Action." In *Rationality To-Day/ La rationalité aujourd'hui.* Ed. Theodore F. Geraets. Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979, pp. 185-213.

Communication and the Evolution of Society. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979.

"Einleitung." In *Stichworte zur 'Geistigen Situation der Zeit',* vol. 1: *Nation und Republik;* vol. 2: *Politik und Kultur* [edition suhrkamp, 1000]. Ed. J. Habermas. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1979, 861 p.; pp. 7-35.

"What is Universal Pragmatics?" In *Communication and the Evolution of Society.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979, pp. 1-68.

"Moral Development and Ego Identity." In *Communication and the Evolution of Society.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979, pp. 69-94.

"Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures." In *Communication and the Evolution of Society.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979, pp. 95-129.

"Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism." In *Communication and the Evolution of Society.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979, pp. 130-77.

"Legitimation Problems in the Modern State." In *Communication and the Evolution of Society.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979, pp. 178-205.

"History and Evolution." *Telos* 39 (Spring 1979): 5-44.

"The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality." In *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique.* Ed. Josef Bleicher. London & Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, pp. 181-211.

"A Reply to My Critics." In *Habermas: Critical Debates,* ed. John B. Thompson and David Held. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982, pp. 219-83.

The Theory of Communicative Action. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2 vols., 1984 and 1987.

"A Philosophico-Political Profile." *New Left Review* 151 (1985): 75-105.

Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1985.

"Modernity—An Incomplete Project." In *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster. London: Pluto Press, 1985, pp. 3-15.

"Questions and Counter-Questions." In *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 192-216.

Nachmetaphysisches Denken. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988.

On the Logic of the Social Sciences. Translated by Sherry Weber Nicholsen & Jerry A. Stark. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988.

The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Translated by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990.

"Transcendence from Within, Transcendence in this World." In *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, ed. Don S. Browning and Francis S. Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad, 1992, pp. 226-50.

Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics. Translated by Ciaran P. Cronin. Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 1993.

"Morality, Society, and Ethics: An Interview with Torben Hviid Nielsen." In *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*. Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 1993, pp. 147-76.

Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays. Translated by William Mark Hohengarten. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996.

"Modernity: An Unfinished Project." In *Habermas and the unfinished Project of Modernity: Classical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ed. Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997, pp. 38-55.

Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy. Translated by William Rehg. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998.

On the Pragmatics of Communication. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998.

"Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality." In *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, ed. Maeve Cooke. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998, pp. 307-42.

"Glauben und Wissen." *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* Munich, 15 October 2001. Speech following the grant of Peace Prize of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association, Paulskirche, Frankfurt-Main. Also published in Sonderdruck: *Glauben und Wissen.* Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 2001. — *Faith and Knowledge* is available from http://www.eumc.eu.int/publications/equalvoices/ev07/ev07-4_en.htm.

— & Dorothee Sölle, eds. *Religionsgespräche. Zur gesellschaftlichen Rolle der Religion.* Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1975.

2. Secondary Sources: Writings on Jürgen Habermas

————. *Kritik und Interpretation der Kritischen Theorie: Aufsätze über Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Benjamin, Habermas.* Giessen:Verlag Andreas Achenbach, 1975, 383 p.

Arens, Edmund. "Towards a Theological Theory of Communicative Action." *Media Development* 28/4 (1981): 12-16.

————. "Theologie nach Habermas: Eine Einführung." In *Habermas und die Theologie: Beiträge zur theologischen Rezeption, Diskussion und Kritik der Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns.* Ed. Edmund Arens. Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989, pp. 9-38. –French translation: *Habermas et la théologie.* Transl. Denis Trierweiler. Paris: Cerf Publ., 1993.

Arnason, Johann P. "Modernity as Project and as Field of Tensions." In *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action,* ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, pp. 181-213.

Baynes, Kenneth. "Democracy and the *Rechtsstaat*: Habermas's *Faktizität und Geltung.*" In *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas,* ed. Stephen K. White. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 201-32.

Berger, Johannes. "The Linguistification of the Sacred and the Delinguistification of the Economy." In *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action,* ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, pp. 165-80.

Bernstein, Richard J., ed. *Habermas and Modernity.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985.

————, ed. *The Frankfurt School: Critical Assessmetns,* Londond & New York: Routledge, 6 vols., 1994.

Braaten, Jane. *Habermas's Critical Theory of Society.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991.

————. *Jürgen Habermas.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992.

Brand, Arie. *The Force of Reason: An Introduction to Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action.* Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1990.

Brown, David. "Doctrine of Salvation, the Social Context: Salvation, Marx to Habermas." In D. Brown, *Continental Philosophy and Modern Theology: An Engagement.* Oxford & New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987, pp. 139-50.

Chew, Sing C. "From Dilthey to Habermas: Reflections on Verstehen, Hermeneutics, and Language." *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 3 (1982): 57-72.

Colburn, Kenneth, Jr. "Critical Theory and the Hermeneutical Circle." *Sociological Inquiry* 56/3 (1986): 367-80.

Cusset, Y. *Habermas, l'espoir de la discussion.* Paris : Michalon, 2001.

———— & Stéphane Haber. *Vocabulaire de l'École de Francfort.* Paris: Ellipse, 2002.

Delanty, Gerard. "Habermas and Occidental Rationalism: The Politics of Identity, Social Learning, and the Cultural Limits of Moral Universalism." *Sociological Theory* 15/1 (March 1997): 30-59.

de Schrijver, Georges. "Wholeness in Society: A Contemporary Understanding of the Question of Theodicy, a Critical Appraisal of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action." *Tijdschrift voor de Studie van de Verlichting en van het Vrije Denken* 12 (1984): 377-94.

Douramaris, Demetrios. *Mapping Habermas from German to English 1952-1995: A Bibliography.* Sidney: University of Sidney, 1995.

Dux, Günter. "Communicative Reason and Interest: On the Reconstruction of the Normative Order in Societies Structured by Egalitarianism or Domination." In *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action,* ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, pp. 74-96.

Ferrara, Alessandro. "A Critique of Habermas's Consensus Theory of Truth." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 13/1 (1987): 39-67.

Fortin-Melkevik, Anne. "L'exclusion réciproque de la modernité et de la religion chez des penseurs contemporains: Jürgen Habermas et Marcel Gauchet." *Concilium* (1992—No. 244): 79-91.

————. "Le statut de la religion dans la modernité selon David Tracy et Jürgen Habermas." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 22/4 (Fall 1993): 417-36.

Funk, Nanette. "Review on *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 1." *The Philosophical Review* 45/2 (April 1986): 269-72.

Gay, William & Paul Eckstein. "Bibliographic Guide to Hermeneutics and Critical Theory." *Cultural Hermeneutics* 2 (1975): 379-90.

Geuss, Raymond. *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Giddens, Anthony. "Reason without Revolution?: Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action." In *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 95-121 (Reprinted in: *In Defence of Sociology: Essays, Interpretations and Rejoinders.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, pp. 173-97).

Görtzen, René. *Jürgen Habermas: Eine Biblioraphie seiner Schriften und der Sekundärliteratur 1952-1981.* Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.

Hohendahl, Peter U. "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of Frankfurt School." *New German Critique* 35 (Spring-Summer 1985): 3-26.

————. "Habermas' Philosophical Discourse of Modernity." *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought* 69 (Fall 1986): 49-65.

Höffe, O. "Kritische Überlegungen zur Konsenstheorie der Wahrheit (Habermas)." *Philosopisches Jahrbuch* 83 (1976): 313-32.

Holub, Robert. *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Honneth, Axel. "Communication and Reconciliation: Habermas' Critique of Adorno." *Telos* (Spring 1979, No 39): 45-61.

———— & Hans Joas, eds. *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991.

————, Eberhard Knodler-Bunte, and Arno Widmann. "The Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas." *Telos* (Fall 1981, No 49): 5-31; also published in Peter Dews, ed. *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas.* London & New York: Verso, 1992, pp. 95-130.

Hoy, David Couzens. "Taking History Seriously: Foucault, Gadamer, Habermas." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 34/2 (1979): 85-95.

Ingram, David. *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.

————. "The Possibility of a Communication Ethic Reconsidered: Habermas, Gadamer, and Bourdieu on Discourse." *Man-and-World* 15 (1982): 149-161.

Kelly, Michael. "The Gadamer-Habermas Debate Revisited: The Question of Ethics." *Philosophy-and-Social-Criticism* 14 (1988): 369-389.

Knodt, Eva M. "Toward a Non-Foundationalist Epistemology: The Habermas/Luhmann Controversy Revisited." *New German Critique* 61 (Winter 1994): 77-100.

Kroger, Joseph. "Prophetic-Critical and Practical-Strategic Tasks of Theology: Habermas and Liberation Theology." *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 3-20.

Krüger, Hans-Peter. "Communicative Action or the Mode of Communication for Society as a Whole." In *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, pp. 140-64.

Lalonde, Marc P. *Critical Theology and the Challenge of Jürgen Habermas: Toward a Critical Theory of Religious Insight* [series "Studies in Religion, Politics, and Public Life," 1]. New York: Peter Lang, 1999, 136 p.

Lepenies, Wolf. "Anthropologie und Gesellschaftskritik: zur Kontroverse Gehlen-Habermas." In *Kritik der Anthropologie*. Eds. W. Lepenies & Helmut Nolte [Reihe Hanser, 61]. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, (1971) 1972 (2nd ed.), pp. 77-102.

Marsh, James L. "The Religious Significance of Habermas." *Faith and Philosophy* 10/4 (October 1993): 521-38.

McCann, Dennis P. "Habermas and the Theologians." *Religious Studies Review* 7/1 (January 1981): 14-21.

McCarthy, Thomas. "Reflections on Rationalization in the Theory of Communicative Action." In *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 177-91. Also published in *Praxis International* 4/2 (July 1984): 177-91.

————. "Introduction." In Jürgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990, pp. vii-xvii.

————. *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*. Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 1978.

————. "Rationality and Relativism: Habermas' 'Overcoming' of Hermeneutics." In *Habermas: Critical Debates*. Eds. John B. Thompson & David Held. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982, pp. 57-78.

————. "Translator's Introduction." In Jürgen Habermas. *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1984, vol. 1, pp. vii-xliv.

————. "Reflections on Rationalization in the Theory of Communicative Action." In *Habermas and Modernity*. Ed. Richard J. Bernstein. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 176-91; also published in *Praxis International* 4/2 (July 1984): 177-91.

————. "Philosophical Foundations of Political Theology: Kant, Peukert and the Frankfurt School." In *Civil Religion and Political Theology*. Ed. L. S. Rouner. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986, pp. 23-40.

————. "Introduction." In Jürgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990, pp. vii-xvii.

Mendelsohn, Jack. "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate." *New German Critique* 18 (1979): 44-73.

Meyer, Willian J. "Private Faith or Public Religion? An Assessment of Habermas's Changing View of Religion." *The Journal of Religion* 75/3 (July 1995): 371-91.

Misgeld, Dieter. "Critical Theory and Hermeneutics: The Debate between Habermas and Gadamer." In *On Critical Theory*. Ed. John O'Neil. New York: Seabury Press, 1976, pp. 164-83.

————. "Discourse and Conversation: The Theory of Communicative Competence and Hermeneutics in the Light of the Debate between Habermas and Gadamer." *Cultural Hermeneutics* 4 (1977): 321-44.

————. "Science, Hermeneutics, and the Utopian Content of the Liberal Democratic Tradition of Habermas' Recent Work: A Reply to Mendelsohn." *New German Critique* 20 (1981): 123-44.

Noys, Benjamin. "Communicative Unreason: Bataille and Habermas." *Theory, Culture & Society: Explorations in Critical Social Science* 14/1 (February 1997): 59-75.

Outhwaite, William. *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge, UK & Stanford, CA: Polity Press & Stanford University Press, 1994.

Pressler, Charles A. & Fabio B. Dasilva. *Sociology of Interpretation from Weber to Habermas*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996.

Pusey, Michael. *Jürgen Habermas*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Rasmussen, David M. "Communicative Action and Philosophy: Reflections on Habermas' Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 9 (Spring 1980): 3-28.

————. *Reading Habermas*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Rawls, John. "Reply to Habermas." *Journal of Philosophy* 92/3 (March 1995): 132-80.

Rehg, William. "Translator's Introduction." In Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998, pp. ix-xxxvii.

Reimer, A. James, ed. *Critical Theory and the Future of Religion.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989.

————. *The Influence of the Frankfurt School on Contemporary Theology: Critical Theory and the Future of Religion.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Ethics and Culture: Gadamer and Habermas in Dialogue." *Philosophy Today* 17/2 (Summer 1973).

Rochberg-Halton, Eugene, and Arthur W. Frank. "Review Symposium: Jürgen Habermas's Theory of Communicative Etherealization." *Symbolic Interaction* 12/2 (Fall 1989): 333-60.

Rochlitz, Rainer, ed. *Habermas: L'usage public de la raison.* Paris: PUF, 2002.

Rorty, Richard. "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity." In *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 161-75.

Rothberg, Donald Jay. "Rationality and Religion in Habermas' Recent Work: Some Remarks on the Relation between Critical Theory and the Phenomenology of Religion." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 11/3 (Summer 1986): 221-43.

Schlageter, Johannes. "Theorie und Praxis der Gesellschaftskritik in der Kritischen Theorie der 'Frankfurter Schule', besonders bei Jürgen Habermas: Eine Nachfrage aus theologischem Interesse." *Franziskanische Studien* 61 (1979): 149-61.

Schmid, Michael. "Habermas's Theory of Social Evolution." In *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982, pp. 162-80.

Schrader-Klebert, Karin. "Der Begriff des Transzendentalen bei Jürgen Habermas." *Soziale Welt* 3/4 (1968): 342-59.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Francis. "Introduction: A Critical Reception for a Practical Public Theology." In *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, ed. Don S. Browning & Francis Schüssler Fiorenza. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992, pp. 1-18.

————, and Don S. Browning. *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology.* New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992

Seel, Martin. "The Two Meanings of 'Communicative' Rationality: Remarks on Habermas's Critique of a Plural Concept of Reason." In *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, ed. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, pp. 36-48.

Siebert, Rudolf J. *The Critical Theory of Religion: The Frankfurt School.* Berlin & New York: Mouton Publ., 1985.

————. *From Critical Theory to Critical Political Theology: Personal Autonomy and Universal Solidarity* [American University Studies: Series 7, Theology and Religion, 52]. New York & Berlin: Peter Lang, 2002 (2nd ed.), xii + 484 p.

Simon-Schaefer, Roland & Walther Ch. Zimmerli. *Theorie zwischen Kritik und Praxis: Jürgen Habermas und die Frankfurter Schule* [Problemata, 37]. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1975, 186 p.

Simpson, Gary M. "The Linguistification (and Liquefaction?) of the Sacred: A Theological Consideration of Jürgen Habermas' Theory of Religion." *Explanation: Journal for Adventurous Thought* 7 (Summer 1989): 21-35.

Spüllbeck, Volker, "Herrschaftsfreie Kommunikation als emanzipatorische Praxis: Jürgen Habermas." In *Neomarxismus und Theologie: Gesellschaftskritik in Kritischer Theorie und Politischer Theologie.* Freiburg-Br.: Herder, 1977, pp. 109-69.

Staudinger, H. *Die Frankfurter Schule: Menetekel der Gegenwart und Herausforderung an die christliche Theologie.* Würzburg: 1982.

Strong, Tracy B., and Frank Andreas Sposito. "Habermas's Significant Other." In *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Teigas, Demetrius. *Knowledge and Hermeneutic Understanding: A Study of the Habermas-Gadamer Debate.* Mississauga, ON: Associated University Press, 1995.

Thompson, John B. *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study of the Thoughts of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas.* Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

————. "Universal Pragmatics." In *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982, pp. 116-33.

————, & David Held. *Habermas: Critical Debates.* Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1982.

Wagner, Gerhard, and Heinz Zipprian. "Habermas on Power and Rationality." *Sociological Theory* 7/1 (Spring 1989): 102-109.

Walsh, Thomas G. "Religion and Communicative Action." *Thought* 62 (March 1987): 111-125.

Wellmer, Albrecht. "Communication and Emancipation: Reflections on the Linguistic Turn in Critical Theory." In *On Critical Theory.* Ed. John O'Neil. New York: Seabury Press, 1976, pp. 231-63.

————. "Kommunikation und Emanzipation; Überlegungen zur sprachanalytischen Wende der kritischen Theorie." In *Theorien des historischen Materialismus*, ed. U. Jaeggi & A. Honneth. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.

————. "Reason, Utopia, and the Dialectic of Enlightenment." In *Habermas and Modernity*. Ed. Richard J. Bernstein. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 35-66.

Wenz, G. "Review" of J. Habermas, *Theorie des Knommunikativen Handelns. Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik* 27 (1983): 223-27.

White, Stephen K. *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

————. "Selected Bibliography." In *Cambridge Companion to Habermas*. Ed. S. K. White. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 325-40.

Wood, Allen W. "Habermas' Defense of Rationalism." *New German Critique* 35, Spring-Summer (1985): 144-64.

3. Other Sources

Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund. *Negative Dialektik*. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1966.

Agodi, Maria Carmela. "Rational Fools or Foolish Rationalism?: Bringing Meaning Back In " *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 199-205.

Aguirre, Antonio F. *Die Phänomenologie Husserls im Licht ihrer gegenwärtigen Interpretation und Kritik* [Erträge der Forschung, 175]. Darmstadt: Wissenschafliche Buchgesellschart, 1982.

Alatas, Syed Farid. "The Sacralization of the Social Sciences: A Critique of an Emerging Theme in Academic Discourse." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 91 (July-September 1995): 89-111.

Apel, Karl-Otto. "Das Problem der Philosophischen Letztbegründung im Lichte einer transzendentalen Sprachpragmatik (Versch einer Metakritik des Kritischen Rationalismus)." In *Sprache und Erkenntnis: Festschrift für Gerhard Frey*. Ed. B. Kanitscheider. Innsbruck: 1976, pp. 55-82.

————. "The Apriori of Communication and the Foundation of the Humanities." In *Understanding and Social Inquiry*. Eds. Fred R. Dallmayr & Thomas McCarthy. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, pp. 292-315.

————. "Types of Rationality Today: The Continuum of Reason between Science and Ethics." In *Rationality To-Day/ La rationalité aujourd'hui*, ed. Theodore F. Geraets. Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979, pp. 307-50.

————. *Diskurs und Verantwortung: Das Problem des Übergangs zur postkonventionellen Moral.* Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988.

Audi, Robert. "Rationality and Valuation." In *Rationality in Action: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 416-46.

————, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Austin, John Langshaw. *How to Do Things with Words.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.

————. "Truth." In *Philosophical Papers.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 117-33.

————. "Performative Utterances." In *Philosophical Papers.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 233-52.

————. "Performative-Constative." In *Contemporary Analytic and Linguistic Philosophies*, ed. E. D. Klemke. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1983, pp. 411-20.

Barnes, Harry Elmer. *An Introduction to the History of Sociology*, 1948.

Bataille, Georges. *Théorie de la religion.* Paris: Gallimard, 1974.

Becker, Howard, and Harry Elmer Barnes. *Social Thought from Lore to Science.* New York: Dover Publications, 1961.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Critique, Norm, and Utopia; A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Bennett, Jonathan. *Linguistic Behavior.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Benveniste, Émile. *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes.* 1st ed. Paris: Minuit Publisher, 1969.

Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion.* New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1967.

Bernstein, Richard J. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

Beyer, Peter. *Religion and Globalization.* London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1994.

Bonjour, Laurence. "Knowledge and Justification, Coherence Theory of." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig. London: Routledge, 1998.

Bosanquet, B. *Implication and Linear Inference*. London: Macmillan, 1920.

Boutin, Maurice. "Autrui différé: Remarques sur la théorie de l'action de G. H. Mead." In *Intersoggettività, socialità, religione*, ed. Marco M. Olivetti. Padua: CEDAM Publishers, 1986, pp. 725-39.

————. "Relation, Otherness, and the Philosophy of Religion." *Journal of Religious Pluralism* 2 1992): 61-82.

Boyne, Roy, and Scott Lash. "Communicative Rationality and Desire." *Telos* 61 (Fall 1984): 152-58.

Brandt, Richard B. "The Concept of Rational Action." In *Rationality in Action: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Paul K. Moser. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 398-415.

Brown, David. *Continental Philosophy and Modern Theology: an Engagement*: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Bubner, Rüdiger. "Responses to 'Hermeneutics and Social Science'." *Cultural Hermeneutic* 2 (1975): 327.

Bühler, Karl. *Theory of Language*. Transl. D. Goodwin. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1990; German original: *Sprachtheorie*. Jena: 1934.

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *A History of Philosophy*. New York: Doubleday, 9 vols., 1963.

Craig, Edward, ed. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. CD-ROM, 1.0. Routledge, London.

Davidson, Donald. *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

————. "Actions, Reasons, Causes." In *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, ed. Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994, pp. 675-86.

Devine, Philip E. "On the Definition of "Religion"." *Faith and Philosophy* 3/3 (July 1986): 270-84.

Dews, Peter. *Logics of Desintegration, Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory*. London & New York: Verso, 1987.

————. *The Limits of Disenchantment: Essays on Contemporary European Philosophy*. London & New York: Verso, 1995.

Dilthey, Wilhelm. "Types of Worldview and their Development in Metaphysical Systems." In *Dilthey's Philosophy of Existence*, ed. W. Dilthey. New York: Bookman Associates, 1911.

Döbert, Rainer. "Rationalität und Rationalisierung im Werk Max Webers," in *Max Weber heute: Erträge und Probleme der Forschung*, ed. Johannes Weiss. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1989, pp. 210-49.

Ducrot, Oswald, and Jean-Marie Schaeffer. *Nouveau dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage*. Paris: Seuil, 1995.

Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph W. Swain. New York: The Free Press, 1965.

————. "The Determination of Moral Facts." In *Sociology and Philosophy*. New York: The Free Press, 1974, pp. 35-62.

Eder, Klaus. *Die Vergesellschaftung der Natur*. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988.

Fortin-Melkevik, Anne. "Relecture du rapport théologie/philosophie: Le statut du paradigme esthétique dans la théologie postmoderne." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 21/4 (Fall 1992): 381-94.

Friedman, Michael. "Logical Positivism." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig. London: Routledge, 1998.

Furth, Hans G. "Piaget's Theory of Knowledge." In *Piaget, Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Garrett Barden & John Cumming. London: Sheed & Ward, 1975.

————. "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection." In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 18-43.

————. "Man and Language." In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 59-68.

————. "Historical Transformations of Reason." In *Rationality To-Day/ La rationalité aujourd'hui*, ed. Theodore F. Geraets. Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1979, pp. 3-14.

Gardiner, A. *The Theory of Speech and Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Genov, Nikolai. "Towards a Multidimensional Concept of Rationality: The Sociological Perspective." *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 206-11.

Gerth, H. H., and C. Wright Mills. "Introduction: the Man and His Work." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 1-74.

Geuss, Raymond. "Critique of Instrumental Reason." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Ginsberg, Morris. *On the Diversity of Morals*. London: William Heinemann, 1956.

Glebe-Møller, Jens. "Two Views of Religion in Wittgenstein." In *The Grammar of the Heart: New Essays in Moral Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Richard H. Bell. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988, pp. 98-111.

Grice, Herbert Paul. "Meaning." *Philosophical Review* 66 (1957): 377-88.

————. "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning and Word-Meaning." *Foundations of Language* 4 (1968): 1-18.

————. "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions." *Philosophical Review* 78 (1969): 147-77.

Gordon, Scott. *The History and Philosophy of Social Science*. London & New York: Routledge, 1991.

Guminor, Helmut & Rudolf Ringguth. *Max Horkheimer in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* [Rowohlts Monographien, 208]. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973, 150 p.

Halfpenny, Peter. "Rationality and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge." *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 212-15.

Harvey, Austin Van. "Feuerbach on Religion as Construction." In *Theology at the End of Modernity*, ed. Sheila Greeve Davaney. Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991, pp. 249-68.

Hegel, Georg W.F. *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Translated by J. B. Baillie. New York & London: Harper & Row, 1967.

Hindess, Barry. "Rationality and Modern Society." *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 216-27.

Hollis, Martic, and Steven Lukes, eds. *Rationality and Relativism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.

Horkheimer, Max. *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.

————. "Auf das Andere hoffen: Interview." *Der Spiegel,* January 5, 1970.

————. *Die Sehnsucht nach dem ganz Anderen* [Studenbücher, 97]. Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, (1970) 1971, 2nd ed., 90 p.

————. *Critique of Instrumental Reason*. Transl. Matthew J. O'Connell et al. New York: Seabury Press, 1974; German original: *zur Kritik der instrumentalen Vernunft: Aus den Vorträgen und Aufzeichnungen seit Kriegsende* [Fischer Athenäum Taschenbücher, 4031]. Frankfurt-Main: Athenäum Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974, 355 p.

————, & Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*. Amsterdam: Querido, 1947. — *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. John Cumming. New York: Herder & Herder, 1972.

————. "Gespräch mit Helmut Gumnior," In M. Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*. Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1985-1991, vol. 7.

Husaynzadeh, Muhammad. *Foundations of Religious Knowledge*. Qum, Iran: Imam Khomeini Institute Press, 2002.

Husserl, Edmund. *Husserliana*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1950.

————. "Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie." [*Husserliana*, 6]. Ed. H.L. Van Breda. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1954. — *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Translated by D. Carr. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

————. *Ideas*. Translated by T.E. Klein and W.E. Pohl. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 3 vols., 1980. Other translations include: *Ideas*. Translated by F. Kersten. The Hague: Nijhoff, 3 vols., 1982 & *Ideas*. Translated by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 3 vols., 1989.

Jarvis, Simon. *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Jay, Martin. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1996.

Jensen, Jeppe Sinding. "Rationality and the Study of Religion: Introduction." In *Rationality and the Study of Religion*, ed. J. S. Jensen and Luther H. Martin. Aarhus C, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1997, pp. 9-23.

Kalberg, Stephen. "Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History." *American Journal of Sociology* 85/5 (March 1980): 1145-79.

————. "The Rationalization of Action in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion." *Sociological Theory* 8/1 (Spring 1990): 58-84.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*. Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. London, New York, and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898.

——. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929.

——. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Translated by Theodore M. Greene & Hoyt H. Hudson. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.

Kekes, John. "Towards a Theory of Rationality." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3 (1973): 275-88.

Lafont, Cristina. *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*. Translated by Jose Medina. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999.

Landmann, Michael, and David J. Parent. "Critiques of Reason from Max Weber to Ernst Bloch." *Telos* 29 (Fall 1976): 187-98.

Laudan, Larry. *Beyond Positivism and Relativism; Theory, Method, and Evidence*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

Lewis, David Kellogg. *Convention*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.

Little, Daniel. *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.

Lukács, Georg. *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*. Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1923 — *History and Class Consciousness*. Translated by R. Livingstone. London: Merlin, 1971.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. "Rationality and the Explanation of Action." In *Against the Self-Images of the Age*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984.

Mehta, Deepak. "Review" of Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* [The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, 1984]." *Contributions to Indian Sociology. New Series* 25/2 (July-Dec. 1991): 345-46.

Mesbah, Ali. "Human Cognitive Development in the Transcendental Philosophy of Sadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî and the Genetic Epistemology of Jean Piaget." M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1994.

Meyer, Meinert. *Formale und handlungstheoretische Sprachbetrachtungen*. Stuttgart: Klett, 1976.

Moran, Gabriel. "Religious Pluralism: A U.S. and Roman Catholic View." In *Religious Pluralism and Religious Education*, ed. Norma H. Thompson. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1988, pp. 37-56.

Morris, Charles W. "Foundations of the Theory of Signs (1938)." In *Writings on the General Theory of Signs*. The Hague & Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1971, pp. 13-71.

Murray, Oswyn. "Cities of Reason." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 28/2 (1987): 325-46.

Nelson, Benjamin. "Civilizational Complexes and Intercivilizational Encounters." *Sociological Analysis* 34 (Winter 1973): 79-105.

Nielsen, Kai. "Wittgensteinian Fideism." *Philosophy* 42 (July 1967): 191-209.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*. Translated by Francis McDonagh. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976.

Peirce, Charles S. *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: a Chronological Edition*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982-1986.

Peukert, Helmut. *Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984.

Piaget, Jean. *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood*. Translated by C. Gattegno & F. M. Hodgson. New York: The Norton Library, 1962.

————. *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*. Translated by Margaret Cook. New York: Norton and Company, 1963.

————. *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*. Translated by Marjorie Gabain. Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1965.

————. "The Stages of the Intellectual Development of the Child." In *Readings in Child Development and Personality*, ed. John J. Conger, Paul Henry Mussen, & Jerome Kagan. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

————. *The Child and Reality: Problems of Genetic Psychology*. Translated by Arnold Rosin. New York: The Viking Press, 1976.

————. *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child*. Translated by Derek Coltman. Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1977.

Postone, Moishe. "History and Critical Social Theory." *Contemporary Sociology* 19/2 (March 1990): 170-76.

Pratt, Vernon. *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. London & New York: Routledge, 1989.

Rawls, John. "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory." *Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980).

Rescher, N. *The Coherence Theory of Truth.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.

————. "Foundationalism, Coherentism, and the Idea of Cognitive Systematization." *Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1974): 695-708.

————. *Methodological Pragmatism.* New York: New York University Press, 1977.

Riesebrodt, Martin. "Ideen, Interessen, Rationalisierung: Kritische Anmerkungen zu F. H. Tenbrucks Interpretation das Werkes Max Webers." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 32 (March 1980): 111-29.

Roth, Guenther. "Duration and Rationalization: Fernand Braudel and Max Weber." In *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Methods,* ed. Guenther Roth & Wolfgang Schluchter. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 166-93.

Schiffer, Stephen. *Meaning.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. *The Understanding of Faith.* New York: Sheed & Ward, 1981.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers.* Translated by Richard Crouter. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Schluchter, Wolfgang. "The Paradox of Rationalization: On the Relation of Ethics and World." In *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Methods,* ed. Guenther Roth & Wolfgang Schluchter. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 11-65.

————. *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History.* Translated by Guenther Roth. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1981.

————. "Max Weber's Religionssoziologie: Eine werkgeschichtliche Rekonstruction." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 36 (December 1984): 342-66.

————. "Weber's Sociology of Rationalism and Typology of Religious Rejections of the World." In *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity,* ed. Sam Whimster & Scott Lash. London: Allen & Unwin, 1987, pp. 92-118.

Schnädelbach, Herbert. "Max Horkheimer and the Moral Philosophy of German Idealism." *Telos* (Winter 1986- No. 66): 81-101; also published in Seyla Benhabib, ed. *On Max Horkheimer,* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993.

Schwab, Martin. *Redehandeln: eine institutionelle Sprechakttheorie.* [Philosophie, Analyse und Grundlegung, 4]. Königstein: Hain, 1980.

Schwayder, D. S. *The Stratification of Behavior.* London: Routledge, 1965.

Searle, John. *Speech Acts.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Siebert, Rudolf J. "Adorno's Theory of Religion." *Telos* (Winter 1983- No. 58): 108-14.

Simmel, Georg. *Der Konflikt der modernen Kultur.* Munich and Leipzig, 1918.

Simon, Herbert A. "Alternative Visions of Rationality." In *Rationality in Action: Contemporary Approaches,* ed. Paul K. Moser. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 189-204.

Smart, Ninian. *The Religious Experience of Mankind.* New York, NY: Scribners, 1976.

Smith, Huston. "Postmodernism's Impact on the Study of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58/4 (1990): 653-70.

Smith, Wilfrid Cantwell. *The Meaning and End of Religion.* New York, NY: Macmillan, 1963.

Spiegelberg, Herbert. *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* [Phaenomenologica, 5]. The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 2 vols.,1956.

Stenmark, Mikael. *Rationality in Science, Religion, and Everyday Life: A Critical Evaluation of Four Models of Rationality.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.

Stinchcombe, Arthur L. "Reason and Rationality." *Sociological Theory* 4 (Fall 1986): 151-66.

Stirk, Peter M. R. *Max Horkheimer: A New Interpretation.* Lanham, MD: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992.

Stiver, Dan R. *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story.* Cambridge, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Strawson, Peter F. "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts." *Philosophical Review* 73 (1964): 439-60.

Stroud, B. "Transcendental Arguments." *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 241-56.

Strydom, Piet. "Sociocultural Evolution or the Social Evolution of Practical Reason?: Eder's Critique of Habermas." *Praxis International* 13/3 (1993): 304-22.

Swidler, Ann. "The Concept of Rationality in the Work of Max Weber." *Sociological Inquiry* 43/1 (1973): 35-42.

Taliaferro, Charles. *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*. Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

Tathagatananda, Swami. "Hinduism and How it is Transmitted." In *Religious Pluralism and Religious Education*, ed. Norma H. Thompson. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1988, pp. 271-300.

Taylor, Mark C. "The End(s) of Theology." In *Theology at the End of Modernity*, ed. Sheila Greeve Davaney. Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991, pp. 233-48.

Tenbruck, F. H. "Das Werk Max Webers." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 27 (December 1975): 663-702.

————. "The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber." *The British Journal of Sociology* 31 (Sept. 1980): 316-51.

Turner, Stephen. "Rationality Today." *Sociological Theory* 9/2 (Fall 1991): 191-94.

van den Berg, Axel. "Critical Theory: Is There Still Hope?" *American Journal of Sociology* 86/3 (Nov. 1980): 449-78.

Vogel, Ulrike. "Einige Ueberlegungen zum Begriff der Rationalität bei Max Weber." *Kö. lner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 25 (Sep. 1973): 532-50.

Walsh, Thomas G. "Religion and Communicative Action." *Thought* 62 (March 1987): 111-25.

Weber, Max. "Die Wirtschaftsethick der Weltreligionen." In *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. Tubingen, 1922-23, vol. 1, pp. 237-68.

————. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Translated by Edward A. Shils & Henry A. Finch. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1949.

————. "Bureaucracy." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 196-244.

————. "Class, Status, Party." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 180-95.

————. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

————. "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 323-59.

————. "Science as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 129-56.

————. "The Social Psychology of the World Religions." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 267-301.

————. *The Religion of China*. New York, NY, 1964.

————. *Basic Concepts in Sociology*. Translated by H. P. Secher. New York, NY: The Citadel Press, 1968.

————. *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Translated by Ephraim Fischoff et al. Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press, 2 vols., 1978.

Welton, Donn. "Introduction to the Faculty Seminar on the Concept of Structure in Piaget's Genetic Epistemology." In *Piaget, Philosophy and Human Sciences*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980.

Wiggershaus, Rolf. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*. Translated by Michael Robertson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.

Winch, Peter. "Understanding a Primitive Society." In *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, ed. Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy. Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, pp. 159-88.

————. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. London, UK: Routledge, 1994.

Winckelmann, Johannes. "Die Herkunft von Max Webers 'Entzauberungs'-Konzeption." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 32 (March 1980): 12-53.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Zettel*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1967.

————. *On Certainty*. New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1969.

Wood, Allen W. "Rational Theology, Moral Faith, and Religion." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 394-416.

Wuthnow, Robert. "Sociology and the Pursuit of Rationality." *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 15/2 (March 1986): 194-97.