

THE DIALECTICS OF EMANCIPATION:

A CRITICAL EXEGESIS OF THE WORK

OF

JÜRGEN HABERMAS

by

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This whole thesis, except where indicated to the contrary  
in the forms of quotations and footnotes, is my own work.

  
A.L. HARLEY

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"PHILOSOPHY, WHICH ONCE SEEMED OUTMODED, IS NOW ALIVE  
BECAUSE THE MOMENT OF ITS REALIZATION HAS BEEN MISSED."

T.W. Adorno

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## INTRODUCTION

In this introduction, I wish to refrain from comment on the text itself, where the primary concern is to develop an exegesis of the concept of freedom in the work of Juergen Habermas. In each particular chapter the problem of freedom is dealt with from a different perspective. Before proceeding with an explanation, exegesis, and in some cases, criticism, of Habermas's understanding and use of the concept of freedom, I have begun each chapter with a brief account of the history of the particular problem under discussion, and have sought to show why it is that the relationship between freedom and this particular problem became important for Habermas. I have therefore chosen to allow each chapter to stand for itself without further comment in this introduction. Instead of using the remainder of the introduction for the purposes of explaining what is already an essentially exegetical work, I shall try to explain some of the difficulties which present themselves in the study of a thinker such as Habermas. To those unschooled in and unfamiliar with the tradition of German philosophy, there are difficulties of a particular kind. It is to these sorts of difficulties as well that I wish to address myself in the remainder of this introduction.

The first of the difficulties is that it is not at all easy to think of freedom in terms of a world radically different from the familiar one around us. What seems to be understood generally by the meaning of the 'ideal of freedom' is some sort of improvement to the existing world in terms of an alteration of the balance among the existing centres of power. In critical theory, however, the problem goes deeper than this because, for critical theory, the truly problematical and puzzling aspect to social and economic development

is that all those activities of man, e.g. the sacrifice of instinctual gratification for the mastery of external or natural destiny -- something which has long been thought to be the means toward the attainment of true freedom -- are seen to reveal a reverse side as well. As man liberates himself from his external destiny, he becomes subject to an unforeseen internal destiny. The consequences -- reification, alienation, the subjection and demythization of nature -- of a civilization based upon rationality of the technical kind, are not merely abstract sociological phenomena; they characterize the internal condition of man himself. As Horkheimer and Adorno repeatedly emphasized, "the power of control over non-human nature and over other men" is paid for at the price of the "denial of nature in man."

One response to the recognition that man's mastery over himself and over nature is at the same time the destruction of the individual as a subject, could be resignation. The development described above could simply be accepted as the inevitable price of progress. Habermas, however, does not. He shows that there are two different kinds of rationality and that the logic of technical progress is quite different from the logic of the development or regression of freedom. The 'dialectics of emancipation', therefore, refer to the fact that in Habermas's writing freedom is not a one-dimensional concept which progresses or regresses only in a linear fashion.

In studying Habermas's work itself, an additional difficulty to that outlined above presents itself: not only does he show just how complex the problem of freedom is, but he does so within a body of writing which undertakes to synthesize an enormously large area of philosophical and scientific thought. He belongs to a tradition in German philosophy in which Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Marx are linked. But he extends this tradition in a way which makes possible the



critical reception into the German tradition of work by authors as disparate as Freud and Popper, Dilthey and Parsons, Peirce and Wittgenstein, Dewey and Mead, Gadamer and Luhmann. Few are the readers who can claim even a reasonably thorough acquaintance with such a vast body of scholarship. In a thesis of this kind it has not been possible to go into the question of whether or not Habermas correctly understands all the different branches of philosophy which he attempts to synthesize, and nor has it been possible to discuss the relative importance of each of these different fields for his own writing as a whole. At best it has been possible to indicate the extent and scope of Habermas's astonishingly wide range of interests and competence, and for the purposes of this introduction, to remind the reader again of the particular difficulty which this presents.

To make matters, for those unfamiliar with the language of German philosophy, even more difficult, there is a denseness and complexity -- of a kind probably without parallel in any other branch of social theory -- in the language used in critical theory. The insistence that every sentence must reflect the totality in an adequate manner, makes it very difficult to give an account of critical theory without resorting to using its own language at every point. In attempting to write an exegetical work such as this one, this was the most difficult obstacle to overcome. I can only hope that I have succeeded to some extent in rendering critical theory understandable to an uninitiated audience, without at the same time doing too great an injustice to the theory itself.

Finally, against the argument that late capitalist society is 'crisis free', and that, therefore, the possibility for a change to a qualitatively different kind of social order does not exist, it must be pointed out that most of the important structural changes in

society, e.g. the transition from feudalism to capitalism, have taken place over many hundreds of years. Habermas does not provide us with any detailed blueprint for how a freer future society should be structured. What he does give us, however, is the beginning for a programme of action, the implementation of which would ensure that, however structured, a different future society could result from the free-will and open, rational decision-making processes of all of its members. It is in this sense only that one could call Habermas a 'utopian', namely, that a utopian thinker is someone who holds fast to the possibility of conscious action for the realization of human happiness. Having accepted that, we should not forget then that 'utopia' and human reason coincide in a critical theory to the extent that a rejection of 'utopia' would also imply the denial of reason.

PROGRESSIVE AND REGRESSIVE EMANCIPATION

The historical context in which critical theory arose was one in which, after a period of approximately one hundred years of the most astonishing development of the forces of production, advanced capitalist society as a whole seemed to be heading for a period of barbarism rather than for a period of greater freedom. Max Horkheimer, one of the founders of critical theory<sup>1</sup> argued in one of his most important pre-World War II publications ('Traditionelle und kritische Theorie' - 1937) that the most important function of a critical theory of society is to conceptualize the discrepancy between historically possible emancipation and historically unjustified repression. According to Horkheimer, advanced industrial society is characterized by a high degree of historically unjustified repression.<sup>2</sup>

An understanding of the concern of critical theory for the problem of emancipation must take into account the central and defining characteristic of advanced industrial society -- the fact that, as a result of the changes brought about by technological innovation, society has become Janus-faced. The technological transformation of society has resulted both in increased pleasure and in increased tension and anxiety (Angst). The analysis of the nature of social freedom in critical theory deals with freedom in both material and social-cultural terms. The way in which critical theory uses the concept of reason ('Vernunft') is similarly complex. Horkheimer makes a distinction between subjective and objective reason.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For an account of Horkheimer's role as a founding member of critical theory, c.f. Martin Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, Heinemann, London, 1973, chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup>Max Horkheimer: 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie' in Traditionelle und kritische Theorie: Vier Aufsätze, Fischer, Frankfurt a.M., 1973, pp 43-44.

<sup>3</sup>Max Horkheimer: Zur Kritik der Instrumentellen Vernunft Fischer, Frankfurt a.M., 1969

In Habermas' thought a parallel with this distinction is to be found in his differentiation of technical from practical knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Subjective reason is concerned with the appropriateness of means for particular ends. The ends themselves remain outside the ambit of subjective reason, which can therefore be said to involve the application of technical knowledge. In this system of applied knowledge, truth means the same thing as the verification of a particular procedure of calculation. Since the beginning of philosophy however, reason had a diametrically opposed meaning. Objective reason aimed at the analysis of the all embracing system of social life as a whole in terms of judgements about such categories as justice or the meaning and purpose of life. The concept of objective reason does not exclude that of subjective reason. The latter, however, is seen as a partial, limited expression of a more comprehensive concept.

The dual concept of reason to which critical theory adheres, makes analysis of technological change possible. Within the hypothetical mode of "subjective rationalistic" thinking, the workings of nature's laws can be discovered, analysed and reproduced by human intelligence. However, because such knowledge is used to extract from nature a surplus economic product, which until now has been divided unequally within society, it becomes necessary to introduce the concept of objective reason. In this context, man's mastery of nature's laws can be said to be rational, but only in so far as he consciously controls or directs the whole process within which production takes place. What is objectively rational would be the collective historical effort of mankind if it were undertaken with

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<sup>1</sup>The German 'Praktisch' does not mean the same thing as 'practical' in its common English usage. In Habermas's thought 'practical' does not therefore refer to that which is based upon common sense or technical skill but refers instead to symbolic interaction (i.e. to a structure of human action).

full consciousness of the uses to which production based upon technology is put.

The concept of objective reason is a critical one. Under the prevailing mode of production, society appears to be as blind a force as animal nature which knows of no consciousness. Man does not control the process, by means of which he secures his self-preservation, on the basis of considerations and decisions made in common. Production and distribution depend instead upon the confrontation between unco-ordinated groups of economic subjects. To this situation one can adapt with more or less cunning, depending upon one's class position. The notion of the 'free contract' provides a useful example for analyzing this process. If both parties who enter into the labour contract are regarded as being free, then one is forced to abstract from the differences in power and position which force the two parties to enter into such a contract. The power of economic necessity clothes itself all too easily in the language of facts. In capitalist society, reason has been thought of largely in terms of subjective reason, and the result has been to adapt the subject to the reified authority of the economy because of the inability of this kind of thinking to give an adequate account of the meaning of social life as a whole.

In critical theory the relationship between the individual subject and the object of both theory and action, (the society) is seen in an entirely different way from non-critical theory. The latter postulates the strict separation of subject from object. Objective social processes are seen to occupy a realm beyond the influence of theory and the observer is an isolated and solitary entity. For critical theory, on the other hand, the object of research, the society, does not remain unaffected by theory.

Conscious critical action belongs to the development of society.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of historical development as the product of blind economic mechanisms contains, simultaneously, a protest against this very order and the promise of the self-determination by man of his own history.

The idea that critical thought participates in theory and practice in a world antagonistic to itself, is part of the heritage of classical Greek philosophy. The faculty of objective reason was accorded the power to distinguish between what is false and true in reality. Reason mediates between and pronounces on the difference between appearance and reality: on the one hand, a world of scarcity and potential destruction; on the other hand, a world as cosmos, of harmonious and ordered being, determined in accordance with final causes. The dialectical course of emancipation involves the transition from potentiality to actuality. Marcuse describes the emancipatory function of critical, or negative, thought as follows:

"The philosophic quest proceeds from the finite world to the construction of a reality which is not subject to the painful difference between potentiality and actuality, which has mastered its negativity<sub>2</sub> and is complete and independent in itself -- free."<sup>2</sup>

In ancient Greece where the forces of production were limited in both extent and scale, philosophy held the difference between appearance and reality to be ontologically given. Critical theory, however, grew out of a different historical situation, i.e. one in which the productive forces of society had been developed to the extent that reality could be transformed in such a way so as to coincide with ideals such as equality and freedom. Prior to this moment in history the power of nature and the powerlessness of man were the two sides of the same coin. If the reality of the good life ('a life free from toil, dependence and ugliness') in ancient

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<sup>1</sup>Horkheimer op.cit. p59

<sup>2</sup>H. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, Sphere, London, 1964, p. 108

Greece was confined to the numerically small ruling class because of the highly limited capability of the society to extract an economic surplus from nature, this can no longer serve as the basis for the justification of inequality in a situation in which industry and technology have wrested the power from nature. Although the power of nature has been circumscribed by technical rationality, society as a whole can still not be said to be rational or free as long as man remains powerless in the face of it.

In the historical development of society, freedom coincides with the formation of the Hegelian concept of self-consciousness (Selbstbewusstsein). To talk of a freedom which precedes this moment of self-consciousness is reactionary. The acceptance of the Hegelian notion of freedom, means that it now becomes possible to distinguish between historical movements in terms of a two-way concept of emancipation. The development of self-consciousness need not occur in a linear fashion. In the same way in which it comes to be formed, it can also be extinguished. The development of self-conscious freedom however, can only take place once a certain measure of material wealth ('Güterfülle') has been secured.<sup>1</sup>

Because freedom must at the same time be self-conscious freedom, there can be no inversely proportional relation between freedom and coercion. Limitations upon self-conscious freedom are set both by the degree of material wealth and security as well as by the inner spiritual constitution of the individual, acting subject. This is the reason why such categories as 'autonomy', 'independent thought', 'experience' (Erfahrung), 'spontaneity', 'fantasy' and 'spiritual longing' (geistige Sehnsucht) play an important part in critical thought. A situation is therefore conceivable in which external political coercion is reduced (e.g. within the framework of a

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<sup>1</sup>T.W. Adorno: Negative Dialektik, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1970, p.261

democratic constitution) without there being any necessary increase in the degree of self-conscious freedom. In this latter case, the realm of possible freedom would be circumscribed because of the absence of those factors mentioned above which promote the development of the spiritual constitution of the individual subject.

Central to Habermas' thinking is the theme that advanced capitalist society has institutionalized technological development.<sup>1</sup> This development has brought with it an enormous increase in the quantity of material comfort and wealth. In terms of the notion of self-conscious freedom, however, it should now become possible to understand why it could be argued that this society has become something of a Janus-headed monster. Material wealth, what Adorno calls 'Gueterfuelle' is a precondition of freedom. But it is not the only one as it does not in itself guarantee the actualization of the necessary degree of subjective or inner freedom.<sup>2</sup> Critical theory embodies a negative formulation because the increased standard of living in late capitalist and advanced socialist society has been offset by the loss of individual freedom which occurs as the correlative aspect of the increasing collective power of society. In particular, the tendency of the individual to react blindly and functionally upon the instructions of experts is seen as regressive.<sup>3</sup>

"Accordingly, the danger of an exclusively technical civilization, which is devoid of the interconnection between theory and praxis, can be clearly grasped; it is threatened by the splitting of its consciousness, and by the splitting of human beings into two classes - the social engineers and the inmates of closed institutions."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Juergen Habermas: 'Praktische Folgen des wissenschaftlich-Technischen Fortschritts' in Theorie und Praxis, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1974, p.336

<sup>2</sup>In a later argument (Chapter 3) it will be shown that as social theory has become more positivistically oriented, the less capable it has become of adequately grasping this dimension of the problem.

<sup>3</sup>Juergen Habermas: Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1971, p.210

<sup>4</sup>Juergen Habermas: Theory and Practice, (transl. John Viertel), Heinemann, London, 1974, p.282.



The concept of emancipation in Habermas's thinking depends upon a particular formulation of the relationship between the Hegelian notion of self-conscious freedom and the Marxian notion of release from the material restrictions of the natural world. At the social level, it therefore, becomes necessary to analyse the problem of emancipation in terms of the relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production.

According to Marx, the forces of production determine the outer limits of our possible control over nature and consist of capital, the labour power of those who work, and of technically utilizable knowledge. This latter kind of knowledge is embodied in both machines and tools, which make a vast increase in productivity possible; as well as in organizational forms such as 'Management' and personnel relations which see to it that the labour force is efficiently mobilized and sufficiently compliant.

The relations of production determine, at any given stage of the development of the forces of production, the way in which labour power is combined with the means of production, i.e. with machines and tools. In capitalist society which is based upon the private ownership of the means of production, it is, therefore, the owner of property who decides upon the conditions under which production takes place. Put in another way it can be said that a society (which produces a surplus extending beyond the mere satisfaction of the elementary needs necessary to physical survival) consists of an institutional framework (the relations of production) and of sub-systems of technical rationality (the forces of production).

Marx, who praised the important role played by the bourgeoisie in revolutionising and extending the forces of production,<sup>1</sup> took as

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto, in R.C. Tucker: The Marx-Engels Reader, W.W. Norton, New York, 1972: "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations

his central concern the fact that in capitalist society the institutional framework of society was only able to adapt itself in a passive way to the revolutionary changes in the sub-systems of technical rationality, which in their turn were responsible for actively bringing nature under control. As Marx saw it, a stage would be reached, in which the material productive forces of society would come into conflict with the existing restrictive relations of production, and as a result of this the epoch of social revolution would begin. The proletariat would overthrow the institutions of private property and the new political and social order which would be concerned only with the administration of things would be based upon universal suffrage. Social development would then be determined by the decisive sway exercised by the fully democratized institutional framework of society over the forces of production. From Marx's analysis of the relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production, a conclusion about the nature of social freedom can be drawn. Stated simply, this would be that emancipation depends upon a rational balance between self-conscious freedom and material wealth.

Habermas fully accepts the emancipatory intention of Marx's theory of the dialectic between forces and relations of production.

"The unity of the world is one of the presuppositions for the philosophy of history; that history can be made the other. Human beings can only rationally appropriate their history insofar as it is of their handiwork. ...The ability to make history grows in direct proportion to the growth of the self-consciousness of the Enlightenment,<sup>1</sup> of learning how to exercise rational control over history."

It is therefore most appropriate that Trent Schroyer should choose to call Habermas's thought a philosophy of 'critical materialism'.

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas: Theory and Practice, op.cit., p.250

It remains materialist in so far as it does not lose sight of the importance of the technical control of nature. It is critical because it does not argue that man's historical endeavour should exhaust itself in the promotion of such quantitative control. The aim is rather that the domination of nature itself be brought under conscious control, and that the primacy of the economic (i.e. of matter) be thereby broken.

This does not mean, however, that critical theory can adopt Marx's language in an unreflected manner. In order for Habermas to retain the critical element in materialist thought', he has to re-introduce important parts of Hegel's philosophy into the body of contemporary Marxist thought.

The point of Habermas's critique of Marx in Knowledge and Human Interests is that Marx came to misunderstand his own method because of certain positivistic presuppositions which he entertained but about which he did not reflect in a sufficient manner.<sup>1</sup> Habermas argues that Marx, somewhat dazzled by the aura surrounding the emergent positivistic scientific consciousness, tended to lose hold of his grip on the dialectical relationship between spirit and nature. For this reason Marx cannot be freed from blame for the fact that there has always been a danger within the sphere of critical materialist thought to transform this dialectic into a causal dependence of consciousness on historical existence. If blind fate can only be turned into freedom once man controls his destiny in terms of the conscious common effort of mankind as a whole, then what distinguishes Habermas' position from Marx's is that the analysis of the pre-conditions for the self-conscious emancipation of mankind requires a different kind of analysis, based upon a different kind of knowledge-constitutive interest, from that which deals with the

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<sup>1</sup>Juergen Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, transl. Jeremy Schapiro), Heinemann, London, 1972, p.5.

self-constitution, the species through the category of labour.

"The concept of 'interest' is not meant to imply a naturalistic reduction of transcendental-logical properties to empirical ones. Indeed, it is meant to prevent just such a reduction. Knowledge-constitutive interests mediate the natural history of the human species with the logic of its self-formative process."<sup>1</sup>

Social freedom, according to Habermas, depends upon the extent to which institutions based upon coercion are replaced by an organization of social relations based upon the idea of communication free from domination. For Habermas unrestricted and open communication is not to be equated with political action or with productive activity as such. The idea of communication free from domination is one of the presuppositions upon which an analysis of political action must be based in terms of the critical self-reflection of the social sciences. This is the most important result of Habermas' confrontation with the tenets of classical Marxism. In fact, Habermas' thought as a whole spreads outward as it were, from this central point. The re-introduction of the Hegelian moment of self-consciousness implies the theoretical separation of subjective from objective reason and the result is that Habermas sees that the analysis of the ways and means by which a surplus product is extracted from nature cannot be conducted in the same terms as an analysis of historically possible emancipation in terms of the idea of unconstrained and open intersubjectivity.

"Because there is no automatic developmental connection between labour and interaction, freedom from hunger and toil does not necessarily coincide with freedom from servitude and humiliation."<sup>2</sup>

The historical succession of modes of production can be analysed only in terms of abstract principles of social organization that indicate which structures of ideologies (Weltanschauungen)

<sup>1</sup>Habermas : Knowledge of Human Interests, op.cit., p.196

<sup>2</sup>Juergen Habermas: Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie', Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1973 p.46.

correspond to which forms of social integration, and in terms of the way in which these structures affect the development of technical knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Freedom links the realm of theory to the history of human society because man has the capacity to be reflective about his own formative process and this is why critical theory is 'concerned with the assessment of socially unnecessary modes of authority, exploitation, alienation, repression.' The model is derived in many important respects from Hegel, especially from the master-serf dialectic in the Phenomenology of Mind.

"From the point of view of the strict or hermeneutic sciences, a critical science is a speculative science in that it tries to reflect about the 'necessity' for the conditions of lawlike patterns in society and history. It is a science that in reconstructing the dynamic of individual or societal development tries to assess which are necessary norms and which are but remnants of power structures no longer humanly useful. This mode of analysis derives from the historic-generic mode of conceptualization which is inherent in Hegel's transcendental ontology as developed in his Phenomenology of Mind. The mode of analysis is essentially related to the Hegelian concept of reason that is fundamental to a Marxist science. Hegel conceives of reason as inherently historical, as geared to the 'explanation' not of invariant laws (the positivistic fallacy of objectivism) but of self-forming (Bildung) processes."<sup>2</sup>

In history man is involved in an active, creative struggle in the course of which he negates the natural world through labour and in so doing produces the cultural world. The antagonism between the natural world and the cultural world is one of the most important themes in Hegel's philosophy. For Habermas, the importance of a philosophy which articulates such a dialectic lies in the fact that "It recollects the emancipation thresholds of the history of mankind."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Juergen Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., pp12-19

<sup>2</sup>Trent Schroyer: 'Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society' in Recent Sociology No.2., Edited by Hans Peter Dreitzel, Macmillan, London, 1970

<sup>3</sup>Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, op.cit., p.20

In ancient Greece Hegel caught a glimpse of a lost but happy paradise, in which individual and state were united in a state of natural harmony. This situation could not and did not last, as in it man lacked the moment of self-conscious particularity. Hegel sees the freedom of the ancient Greeks as historically condemned, for it was an unconscious freedom.

Under the ideological banner of Christianity and the historical institutions of the Roman Empire, the concepts of 'private life', private property and private or civil law (Privatrecht), achieve recognition. But these too prove to be condemned moments because they contain particularity without universality. For Hegel, freedom only becomes historically real when particular self-consciousness returns to the realm of universal self-consciousness.

"Every self-consciousness knows itself (i) as universal, as the potentiality of abstracting from everything determinate, and (ii) as particular, with a determinate object, content and aim. Still both these moments are only abstractions; what is concrete and true (and everything true is concrete) is the universality which has the particular as its opposite, but the particular which by its reflection into itself has been equalized with the universal."<sup>1</sup>

The bourgeois world which is based upon particularity and private property is an estranged world of dead things. Hegel sets himself the task of answering the question of how this world can once more be harmonized with man's potentialities. In philosophical terms, Hegel understands the dialectic of interaction between the natural and cultural worlds to be based ultimately upon the moments of labour and mutual recognition. It must be emphasized that in Hegel's philosophy, both of these moments are accorded equal analytic importance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>G.W.F. Hegel: The Philosophy of Right, (Transl. by T.M. Knox), O.U.P., London, 1967, p.23 (p7)

<sup>2</sup>In Marx's theory these moments are of equal importance, but only implicitly. Labour becomes central, but the concept lacks a specifically articulated analysis of the nature and meaning of mutual recognition. c.f. Marx: 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844' in the Marx-Engels Reader, op.cit., p.89.

Labour must refashion the world, but before freedom can become real in the world, labour must be based upon reciprocity and mutual recognition. Man invests his subjectivity into nature, thereby humanizing it. A nature which has been worked upon is no longer a mere thing in itself; through work man has given it the form of self-consciousness. By means of his labour man comes to recognize himself in his product. This is one side of the reconciliation with nature. The other is that reconciliation rests upon reciprocity and mutual recognition. This means that the resurrection of nature should be correctly understood as a joint undertaking of human society as a whole. The origin of the whole problem of equality in Hegel's and Habermas's thought, i.e. of satisfied intersubjectivity in history, is to be found in the master-serf dialectic.

As Schroyer has pointed out, Marxists usually overlook this dimension of Hegel's dialectic, which shows that the need to overcome domination, both symbolically and actually, exists within human consciousness. Marx's analysis of the economic restriction of the political does, therefore, not do full justice to Hegel's dialectic.

"In its emphasis, however, that the relationship between self-consciousness and social-cultural process is objectively essential, Hegel's earlier theory is a moment that is needed for a more adequate critical theory. For example, if Marx had taken Hegel's analysis more seriously he would have given more thought to the cultural power of nationalism and would have anticipated this social-cultural block to the internationalization of the revolutionary movement."<sup>1</sup>

In Hegel's thought the source from which the river of world history rises is the confrontation of one self-consciousness with another self-consciousness. True self-consciousness or self-consciousness 'for itself' can only exist where one self-consciousness gains objective knowledge of itself through another self-

<sup>1</sup>Trent Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, George Braziller, New York, 1973, p.97.

consciousness, while this other self-consciousness retains its identity of itself. This is why the struggle depicted in Hegel's master-serf dialectic is not one of absolute war but is instead a struggle for recognition.<sup>1</sup> If the master merely killed the serf he would be unable to obtain the truth of his existence and human history would vaporize away in an impasse. This does not mean, however, that the relationship of domination and servitude is eternal. The enslaved consciousness which submitted before 'the fear of death, the sovereign master', is, nevertheless, the consciousness which projects its subjectivity onto the external world. In so doing, the slave lays the foundation for his eventual triumph over the master because he actualizes his negativity in a product which perseveres in time and does not immediately dissolve into the nothingness of death. The master cannot escape the 'dead world of consumption and desire', because he simply consumes the products of another's labour while simultaneously asserting the inessentiality of that other consciousness.

In the triumph of the slave, the consciousness that knew both fear and enforced service, ceases to exist in its immediacy and comes to exist in a mediated condition.<sup>2</sup> The Idea has gone outside of itself, laboured, mediated both itself and nature, thereby making possible its return back into itself as self-conscious universality: the first actor has emerged from the wings and entered the universal stage of history for the first time.

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<sup>1</sup>By way of explanation: Hegel does not intend the master-serf dialectic to be understood as a strictly historical account, in the sense that an anthropologist might seek to understand it. The two moments, the negative moment of fear and the positive moment of labour, are not to be taken as strictly historical moments. They are, on the contrary, the very basis of human history itself. Only in this way is it possible to conceive of history as the realization of the Hegelian Idea, i.e. the final attainment of true freedom by man.

<sup>2</sup>G.W.F. Hegel: The Phenomenology of Mind (translated by Sir James Baillie, Unwin, London, 1971, p.520)



The exposition of the possible rationality of human history however, is not the only great achievement of Hegel's Phenomenology. Jean Hyppolite, for example, argues that its greatness lies in the fact that it was able to do this at a time when another and antagonistic mode of philosophy was in the ascendent.

"At all events, the merit of the Phenomenology is to have raised the foundations of the human task and its possible rationality, to have offered a means of access to these foundations at a time when the classical dogma of eternal truth and the notion of transcendental consciousness were tottering under the events of history."<sup>1</sup>

According to Hegel, the sphere of absolute morality in the Aristotelian sense of a political order aiming at the establishment of the good life, could only be guaranteed by the state. The state is, therefore, something completely different from civil society, which Hegel views as a debased sphere of utilitarian calculation. What is called for, is a strong state which can intervene in, and correct and guide the processes of civil society.

The main argument against liberalism is that it falls silent when asked what social freedom and ethical totality mean. Hegel's concept of the state can be understood as a specific answer to this impasse in liberal philosophy. In his view a state cannot be defined solely in terms of guarantees for private property for a true state must also guarantee the right of moral subjects to find satisfaction in their aims.

"If the state is confused with civil society, and its specific end is laid down as the security and protection of property and personal freedom, then the interest of the individuals as such becomes the ultimate end of their association, and it follows that membership of the state is something optional. But the state's relation to the individual is quite different from this. Since the state is mind objectified, it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, individuality, and an ethical life."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Hyppolite: 'The Human Situation in the Hegelian Phenomenology' in Studies on Marx and Hegel (transl. John O'Neill), Heinemann, London, 1969, p.167

<sup>2</sup>Hegel: The Philosophy of Right, op.cit. p.258

Hegel attacked the English Reform Bill on the grounds that it made voting qualifications subject only to the limitations of age and income. In such a situation, conflicting social interests would be translated directly into the realm of political decision-making, thus threatening the ethical fabric of the state in this unmediated war of all against all. Hegel does not attempt to cancel the moment of subjective particularity, but he argues that this moment must be sublated in the higher ethical substance of the state.

Hegel sees the liberal position as being constantly undermined because of the fact that the sphere of economic activity can be extended ad infinitum. Because it ascribes paramount importance to the isolated individual, liberalism cannot develop an adequate theory of human life and needs. Particularized needs cannot be summed up in a general theory: they can at best be added one to the other in a solely quantitative fashion. Each individual is left to define for himself what he wants, which means in the end that what he wants is open to suggestion and influence from social forces over which he himself exercises no control.<sup>1</sup>

In a paradoxical way the relation between state society in late capitalist society comes to resemble the Hegelian one. The continuing relevance of Hegel's concept of the state is to be found in the difficulty of containing rapidly expanding forces of production within the more restrictive relations of production peculiar to capitalist societies. The history of the consolidation of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, Addition to P191: "What the English call 'comfort' is something inexhaustible and illimitable. (Others can reveal to you that what you take to be) comfort at any stage is discomfort, and these discoveries never come to an end. Hence the need for greater comfort does not exactly arise within you directly; it is suggested to you by those who hope to make a profit from its creation."

post-World War II capitalist world suggests that the capitalist economic system would have destroyed itself soon enough, had the political force of the state not intervened in the process in order to cushion the effect of the inherent contradictions.<sup>1</sup> What is paradoxical about such intervention is that the state does not intervene in the name of a higher ethical conception as in Hegel's theory, but does so in the name of the new state ideology -- technological progress. This situation introduces something historically new: we are confronted here with a sociological phenomenon unknown to any previous society. The kind of state intervention which ensures continual technological growth does not only signify the subordination of the concept of substantive rationality to that of formal rationality - which was the case in early capitalism<sup>2</sup> - but now heralds the destruction of the ethical realm as a category of human consciousness. Habermas sees the two developments which led to this situation as being the following:

"Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century two developmental tendencies have become noticeable in the most advanced capitalist countries: an increase in state intervention in order to secure the system's stability, and a growing interdependence of research and technology, which has turned the sciences into the leading force of production"<sup>3</sup>

We will now discuss each of these two developments in turn.

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<sup>1</sup>c.f. Michael Harrington: The Accidental Century, Penguin, 1965 and Paul M Sweezy: The Theory of Capitalist Development, Modern Reader Paperbacks, New York, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Marx's statement that man makes his history, but does not do so with consciousness and will, referred precisely to the situation in which the institutional framework of society passively followed in the wake of the revolutionary progress of the technical sub-systems of production.

<sup>3</sup>Juergen Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, (transl. Jeremy Shapiro), Heinemann, London, 1972, p.100

Increasing necessity for continued state intervention:

Marx developed his theory of political economy at the time when historical conditions favoured his aims. At the time when he wrote, property relations existed in an apparently non-political form. To the extent, however, to which his theory of pending crisis proved to be correct, and the state was forced to intervene to ensure stability in the economic sphere, what were previously seen as non-political relations came to assume an increasingly politicized aspect. Once this particular point has been reached, economic development ceases to take place according to purely economic laws. The boundaries between superstructure and base become confused. The subordination of politics to economics upon which the critique of political economy was based, no longer holds good. From this Habermas concludes that a valid critical theory of society can base itself no longer upon the classical Marxist science of political economy.

"If society no longer 'autonomously' perpetuates itself through self-regulation as a sphere receding and lying at the basis of the state - and its ability to do so was the really novel feature of the capitalist mode of production - then society and state are no longer in the relationship that Marxian theory had defined as that of base and superstructure. Then, however, a critical theory of society can no longer be constructed in the exclusive form of a critique of political economy."<sup>1</sup>

A strong state which has to invade the realm of civil society in order to overcome the disfunctionalities generated within that realm itself, experiences anew the need to legitimize its activities.

In performing these new tasks, the state has to attempt to reconcile two contradictory sets of activities. On the one hand, it has to represent and realize the interests of the ruling class if the whole society is not to collapse. But the need to secure a private form of capital utilization is brought about at the price of destroying the ideology of the 'invisible hand' of free competition.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.101.

On the other hand, if this process is not result in mass disaffection, the state also has to find a way of representing and satisfying the interests of the working class. Capitalist society has not yet found a way of satisfying these claims in a satisfactory manner. For the time being, late capitalist society has been able to avoid the possibly disruptive effects of these contradictory demands because it has been able to offer its members an ever increasing standard of living. This sort of situation, however, can only continue for as long as the people themselves accept an increased level of material wealth as a substitute for valid legitimation. The consequences of this process of substitution, however, are smoothed over by means of the ideology of technology progress. As long as the masses can be made to believe in the necessity for continued technological progress, their loyalty can be bound to the new form of state intervention.

Technology as the leading force of production:

For Habermas, the key to analysing the new politics of state intervention lies in an examination of the way in which technology and science mutually assume the role of legitimating political power. What Daniel Bell terms 'post-industrial society' is "one in which there will necessarily be more conscious decision-making."<sup>1</sup> As Bell later has to admit, the necessity for such decision-making throws open once again the unsolved problem of the relationship between equality and meritocracy. But what Bell does not so readily admit is that a depoliticization of the vast majority of the population is called for in terms of the new politics of state intervention. The significance of the 'post-industrial society' is that it "strengthens the role of science and cognitive values" as basic institutional necessities of society. The result of making

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Bell: The Coming of Post-Industrial Society, Heinemann, London, 1974.

decisions more technical, however, is not an increase in mass participation. It serves rather to bring the scientist or technologist more directly into the political process thereby reducing the extent to which the public are invited to participate in the decision-making process.

During the last thirty to forty years, the interests of science, research, technology, administration, industry and defence have become fused into the system of large-scale technological production. The compulsion which always existed in capitalist society to increase the productivity of labour through the introduction of new technological discoveries results in, what Habermas calls the "scientization of technology" and the "technologization of science". The financial outlay for scientific and technical research comes in the only really important instance from state departments. The main goal toward which such research is directed is that of military efficiency. The results of this research are then also fed back in time into the private industrial sector. The quantity of technology used in this way gradually increases until a threshold is crossed: technology becomes the leading force of production.

"It is true that social interests still determine the direction, functions, and pace of technical progress. But these interests define the social system so much as a whole that they coincide with the interest in maintaining the system. As such the private form of capital utilization and a distribution mechanism for social rewards that guarantees the loyalty of the masses are removed from discussion. The quasi-autonomous progress of science and technology then appears as an independent variable on which the most important single system variable, namely economic growth, depends."<sup>1</sup>

Until this time, the forces of production had been linked in a concrete and visible fashion to the actions of the men who were engaged in the process of production. Although such activity

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, op.cit., p.105

depended upon purposive-rational action<sup>1</sup> it was nevertheless instituted and carried out by man as part of a larger historical project.

In the historically new situation, science and technology emerge as independent variables which exercise a decisive influence upon social development. The most important consequence of this change is that the difference between the institutional framework of society (which embodies cultural norms and expresses social interests) and the sub-systems of technical rationality becomes unclear. Progress appears to be governed by objective laws of technology and not by political decision. The important difference between work and interaction becomes blurred. This is what is meant

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<sup>1</sup>By purposive-rational action or work Habermas means either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction. "Instrumental action is governed by technical rules based on empirical knowledge. In every case they imply conditional predictions about observable events, physical or social. These predictions can prove correct or incorrect. (Toward a Rational Society, pp91-92). Purposive-rational action is to be distinguished from communicative action which depends upon symbolic interaction and is governed by binding consensual norms. In Knowledge and Human Interests Habermas explains the difference between these two systems of action: "Both are set off by disturbances of routinized intercourse whether with nature or with other persons... The first aims at replacing rules of behavior that have failed in reality with tested technical rules, whereas the second aims at interpreting mutuality of behavioral expectations. Experiment refines the everyday pragmatic controls of rules of instrumental action to a methodical form of corroboration, whereas hermeneutics is the scientific form of the interpretive activities of everyday life." (p.175).

These two kinds of action -- purposive-rational and communicative -- are both essential moments for the analysis of human emancipation. What was only an implicit moment in Marx's theory, Habermas here makes the subject of the critical self-relection of social science. "A comprehension of the historical relatedness of these two moments - or the dialectics of emancipation - is itself the focus of a science that takes as its object the interrelation between the material and ideological constraints of human development (what Habermas calls the emancipatory cognitive interest). Critical theory, as a materialistic radicalization of critical philosophy, proceeds then by an analysis of both the blockages on productive activity and the distortions of communicative praxis." (Schroyer, The Critique of Domination, p.140)

by the phrase 'technocratic consciousness' or 'the ideological role of technology'. Because technology guarantees economic progress, it assumes legitimating power. The fact that the identity of society can only be secured through interaction (i.e. in terms of the frame of reference provided by communicative action and symbolic interaction) is thereby lost sight of.

These two processes -- the new ideological role of technology and state intervention for negative ends -- work together and result not in the institutionalization of an inferior kind of ethic, but in the 'suppression of ethics' as such as a category of life. What concerns Habermas most of all about this new development is that it reflects but does not objectively account for the triumph of the systems of techno-rationality over the socio-cultural life world. In the face of the masses whose cheers accompany the accelerating pace of technological progress, Habermas issues an alarming warning: our ability to understand history and therefore also to understand ourselves, is being jeopardized in the current celebration.

"The new ideology consequently violates an interest grounded in one of the two fundamental conditions of our cultural existence: in language, or more precisely, in the form of socialization and individuation determined by communication in ordinary language. This interest extends to the maintenance of intersubjectivity of mutual understanding as well as to the creation of communication without domination. Technocratic consciousness makes this practical interest disappear behind the interest in the expansion of our power of technical control. Thus the reflection that the new ideology calls for must penetrate beyond the level of particular historical class interests to disclose the fundamental interests of mankind as such, engaged in the process of self-constitution."<sup>1</sup>

Since the emergence of technology as the leading force of production, critical thought has had to rethink the following two sets of relationships:

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<sup>1</sup> Op.cit, Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.113



- 1). the relationship between cognition and interest (i.e. between knowledge and life)
- 2). the relationship between philosophy and science (i.e. between epistemology and methodology).

If talk within the dimension of critical theory about the possibility of equilibrium between the forces of production and the relations of production is to become meaningful, then a third kind of interest, with a more synthetic function, must be added to the other two kinds of interest (i.e. the interest in technical control and the interest in the extension of intersubjective understanding) which have already been discussed. This third kind of interest is what Habermas calls the emancipatory interest. In terms of this interest, critical thought subjects all relations of authority and domination to the power of self-reflection. Only that degree of authority which can be said to be commensurate with material necessity, judged in terms of the given stage of development of the forces of production, is to be acknowledged. Relations of authority which are perpetuated because of blockages to, and limitations upon, the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding, are to be condemned as ideological. This is why a critical science "presupposes the interest of the emancipation of men from law-like patterns of 'nature' and history."<sup>1</sup>

The method of scientific inquiry does not exist independently of all prior orientation about the relationship of cognition to interest. Once the connection between scientific enquiry and everyday life has been grasped, it becomes possible to subject the validity of scientific procedures to critical self-reflection, as well as to relate such procedures to changing historical conditions.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: 'Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society', p.215.

"The systematic sciences of social action, that is economics, sociology, and political science, have the goal, as do the empirical-analytic sciences, of producing nomological knowledge. A critical social science, however, will not remain satisfied with this. It is concerned with going beyond this goal to determine when theoretical statements grasp invariant regularities of social action as such and when they express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed."<sup>1</sup>

From this it can be concluded that reflection about emancipation in terms of possible control of the functions and uses to which the technical sub-systems of society are put, requires a unique mode of analysis. Such analysis is based upon the critical power of self-reflection which shows the practice of science to be part of the self-forming process by which man comes to make -- either consciously or unconsciously as the case may be -- his own history. According to Habermas, the idea of the further emancipation of man from the unreflected authority of reified social relationships has been distorted in advanced industrial society because science has come to be seen as the most important form of knowledge. In contrast to this, a revolutionary theory of society must retrace the process of the dissolution of epistemology and by looking backwards to the point of departure, 'help to recover the forgotten experience of reflection.'

The main thesis of Knowledge and Human Interests is that, "... since Kant science has no longer been seriously comprehended by philosophy." Although Hegel first opened the way to radical critique of reason, he did not develop it logically because he left unsolved the contradiction of phenomenology which 'must in fact be valid prior to every possible mode of scientific knowledge.' If philosophy, as absolute knowledge, claims to be the only authentic kind of science possible, then the relation between philosophy and science does not need further consideration. In actual fact, however, in the last one hundred and fifty years, science, as a discipline

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.310

pursued outside the domain of philosophy, has made such stunning progress, that Habermas is lead to reject Hegel's claim as 'bare fiction'. This is the meaning of the statement that philosophy was dislodged from its position as the theory of knowledge by philosophy itself. From this point on, the way was opened for the theory of knowledge (epistemology) to be replaced by the methodology of the physical and natural sciences.

The reason why Habermas believes that positivist science 'has regressed behind the level of reflection represented by Kant's philosophy', is because it has unreflectively leapt over the dimension of epistemological investigation. What is particularly important about Habermas' critique, is that he realizes at the same time, however, that the dimension of epistemology cannot be restored in the abstract. A radical self-critique of reason will have to begin again by adopting the position which the positivist philosophy of science came to occupy. Only then will it be able to return to the dimension which was first opened up, but unsuccessfully carried out, by Hegel.

This explains why the idea of historical materialism put forward by Marx could not succeed without the moment of Hegelian self-reflection. Marx, however, did not fully grasp the importance of this moment for his own philosophy and thereby 'completed the disintegration of the theory of knowledge'.

"Thus positivism could forget that the methodology of the sciences was intertwined with the objective self-formative process (Bildungsprozess) of the human species and erect the absolutism of pure methodology on the basis of the forgotten and the repressed."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.5.

This is the reason why the concept of emancipation in Habermas's thought is so intimately bound to the notion of critique. In Habermas's thought, the sustained tension between actuality and potentiality is the driving force of dialectical, critical thinking. Such thinking partakes of both dimensions of being: it strives to develop and mediate the real contradictions in terms of the concrete historical process. By means of the historical mediation of the so-called 'facts', critical theory is able to develop the criteria in terms of which progress can be distinguished from regression.<sup>1</sup> If the facts about the existence of masters and servants can be mediated by the discovery of those facts which made the masters and the servants, it becomes possible to replace an otherwise unavoidable relativism, with critical judgement about the extent to which the utopian contents of cultural tradition could be realized.

Because freedom is always something which 'becomes' (in Hegel's words, 'ist ein Werdendes'), philosophy cannot make any pronouncements about freedom which are valid for all historical epochs. As we have already seen, the object of Habermas's analysis is late capitalist society, and in this society freedom manifests itself in a contradictory manner. On the one hand, this society has greatly improved the standard of living and has increased considerably the average life-expectancy of its members. On the other hand, this society is also characterized by a loss of subjective freedom<sup>2</sup> and the growth in collective power of a highly organized and repressive social totality.

A concern for, and awareness of, the danger of totalitarian control has always been one of the characteristics of critical theory.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> c.f. pp. 8, 9, 12 & 33.

<sup>2</sup> c.f. pp. 9

<sup>3</sup> c.f. cit. Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, chapter 5 and Guenter Witschel: Die Wertvorstellungen der Kritischen Theorie, Bourvier Verlag, Bonn, 1975, p. 35

Both Horkheimer and Adorno had argued that Nazism was not something which happened merely accidentally, but that it was symptomatic of the direction in which society was going as a whole. Although Nazism has been defeated, a new danger has arisen. Habermas argues that the danger of total control today lies in the possibility of the disappearance of historical consciousness behind the spread of an ever more pervasive technocratic consciousness, i.e. in the disappearance of the emancipatory and practical interests in the face of the coercive power of the technical knowledge-constitutive interest.<sup>1</sup> In an epoch which is seemingly to be characterized by the continued liquidation of the autonomy of the individual, it is only by means of the critical self-reflection of reason that the importance of the emancipatory and practical interests is to be kept alive.

In critical theory, the protection of the autonomy of the individual is of supreme importance. Habermas, Horkheimer and Adorno have all emphasized the fact that the remnants of individual freedom should not be jeopardized by opportunistic and adventurous activism. In the new introduction to Theory and Practice, Habermas condemns the 'ineffectual training of cadres' and 'the building of impotent parties.' In his foreword to the republication of some of his pre-1939 essays in 1968, Max Horkheimer reflects the very same viewpoint:

"In the consciousness of the growing threat it is far more urgent to protect, to preserve, where possible, to extend, the limited, ephemeral freedom of the individual than to negate it abstractly or to endanger it through hopeless actions ... No matter how argued, it is pseudo-revolutionary to lend the advance of totalitarian bureaucracy help from the left, (just as) the tendency toward terrorism on the part of the right is pseudo-conservative."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> c.f. pp.23-26

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Horkheimer: 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie, p.10.

The preservation of the autonomy of the individual is linked to the task of rescuing the positive cultural moments of historical tradition. All the representatives of critical theory have supported the limited possibilities of a questionable democracy against the certain barbarism of dictatorship. In the same year in which Hitler seized power, Horkheimer wrote the following :

"Not the ideas of the bourgeoisie, but the conditions which do not correspond to those ideas have shown their untenability. More than ever, the slogans of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution have their validity."<sup>1</sup>

Habermas ends his work on 'Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus' with an attack on all forms of social systems which attempt to stabilize themselves in a realm beyond the control of their own members. In the face of the scorn which is currently being heaped upon the concept,<sup>2</sup> it is precisely in the name of 'the old European sense of the dignity of man' (alteuropäische Menschenwürde) that Habermas makes his attack.

The emphasis upon individual freedom is not something which cannot be reconciled with the materialist moments in Marx's philosophy: as Schroyer points out -<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Max Horkheimer quoted by Ivo Frenzel: 'Zur Kritischen Theorie Max Horkheimers' in Kritik und Interpretation der Kritischen Theorie, Verlag Andreas Achenback, Giesen, 1975 p.101.

<sup>2</sup>c.f. Niklas Luhmann: 'Systemtheoretische Argumentationen: Eine Entgegnung auf Juergen Habermas' in Habermas/Luhaann: Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1974. pp. 326 and 328.

<sup>3</sup>One of the more common misunderstandings of Habermas' theory in the Anglo-Saxon world is based upon the unfounded notion that Habermas propagates a purely idealistic philosophy. Perhaps the strongest statement of this position is to be found in Goeran Therborn's article, 'The Frankfurt School' in the New Left Review, No. 63, Sept-Oct., 1970 (c.f. in particular the section entitled, 'Theory as the Self-Knowledge of the Object'. The most convincing rejection of Therborn's position is probably Martin Jay's article, 'The Frankfurt School's Critique of Marxist Humanism', in Social Research XXXIX, Summer 1972, c.f. here especially p.282 and 293.

"Despite the vilification of the left, and to the dismay of the academy, Juergen Habermas remains a Marxist...In his attempts to critically engage the academy while translating its achievements into an ongoing criticism of Marx, Habermas presents a model of theoretical<sub>1</sub> praxis that contemporary Marxists could well emulate."

But at the same time Habermas strives to avoid the metaphysical implications which would result if one accepted the basic premises of identity theory.<sup>2</sup> It would therefore, not be fair to argue that Habermas develops a species of 'Hegelianized Marxism', in which all knowledge is reduced to the self-knowledge which the infinite subject has of itself. Habermas specifically rejects the notion that consciousness can and does create the world. According to Habermas, synthesis in the materialist sense differs from the concept of synthesis as advanced in idealist philosophy by Kant (where it is the achievement of transcendental consciousness), Fichte (where it is the result of the positing of an absolute ego), and Hegel (where it is achieved through the movement of absolute mind). Material synthesis does not generate a logical structure. "Instead it is the both empirical and transcendental accomplishment of a species-subject that produces itself in history."<sup>3</sup> Thus the autonomy of nature, for Habermas, can never be fully eradicated.

"No matter how far our power of technical control over nature is extended, nature retains a substantial core that does not reveal itself to us."<sup>4</sup>

On the basis of the foregoing discussion of the way in which Habermas analyses the dialectic of interaction between the forces of production and the relations of production, it should be clear that he is led neither to apotheosize the given in a positivistic

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.137

<sup>2</sup>Identity theory assumes an ultimate and complete identity between subject and object, consciousness and nature. In German Idealist philosophy, Kant's radical separation of subject and object was overcome by assuming that the object world was the mere externalization of absolute mind.

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas : Knowledge and Human Interests, p.31

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p.33

sense nor to accept the way in which Marx himself understands how own method. Habermas cannot accept Marx's model in the form in which it is offered, for in it

"... the history of the species is linked to an automatic transposition of natural science and technology into a self-consciousness of the social subject (general intellect) - a consciousness that controls the material life process. According to this construction the history of transcendental consciousness would be no more than the residue of the history of technology."<sup>1</sup>

What Habermas achieves by means of his synthesis of Hegel and Marx, is the basis for a self-reflective critical materialism. By separating and synthesizing the true from the false in Hegel and Marx, Habermas succeeds in laying the foundations for an emancipatory critique. In the two subsequent chapters it will be shown that Habermas does this in terms of the development of a theory of the dialectical relationship between instrumental action, practical action and emancipatory action. In this theory Habermas places the unity of knowledge and action in the context of a radically new conceptualization of the meaning of intersubjectivity. Because Habermas avoids both the quietistic implications of identity theory and the rigid determinism of non-reflective materialism, his critique gains considerably in sharpness.

Habermas' interest in Freud's metatheory of psycho-analysis means, finally, that the analysis of power and ideology acquire more attention as explicit moments of this thought. It is this which gives Habermas' concept of emancipation its full depth and range of complexity. For emancipation to be genuinely progressive, release from the material restraints of the natural world must be accompanied, as we have seen, by an advance in the realm of self-conscious freedom.<sup>2</sup> Self-conscious freedom cannot be realized within a form of social organization based upon institutions which distort and limit communication and inter-subjective understanding.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.48

<sup>2</sup>c.f. p.9



"In this way the logic of the movement of reflection directed against power and ideology, which derives its thrust from developments in the system of social labour (technology and science), becomes graspable... At every stage, development of the forces of production produces the objective possibility of mitigating the force of the institutional framework and '(replacing) the affective basis of (man's) obedience to civilization by a rational one.'"<sup>1</sup> (Latter quote from Freud's 'The Future of an Illusion').

Emancipation which results from a rational balance between material wealth and subjective freedom is therefore always dependent upon an organization of social relations in which the validity of every norm having political consequence depends upon a consensus arrived at in communication free from domination. The extension of such a democratic consensus has been hindered until now because late capitalist society has encouraged the belief in the importance of technological progress as the primary force of social development.

"For only here it is possible to buttress the concealment of the difference between progress in systems of purposive-rational action and emancipatory transformations of the institutional framework, between technical and practical problems. And it is necessary for the system to conceal this difference. Publicly administered definitions extend to what we want for our lives, but not to how we would like to live if we could find out, with regard to attainable potentials, how we could live."<sup>2</sup>

The unplanned socio-cultural consequences of technological progress have presented mankind with a challenge. The challenge is that we do not continue only to invoke social destiny, but that we learn to master it. The emancipation of society cannot be realized at the material level alone (i.e. through technical action). For Habermas such emancipation can only become a possibility once politically effective discussion is set into motion, by means of which our technical knowledge and capabilities can be placed in

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<sup>1</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.283

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.120

a binding and rational relationship to our practical<sup>1</sup> knowledge and desires.

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<sup>1</sup>c.f. footnote 1, p.5 in which it was pointed out that 'practical' in the German sense refers to a structure of human action. c.f. also Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, pp. 149-150: "It (the practical knowledge-constitutive interest) is a moment in a dialectic of material synthesis, and not an independent existential process, as able to constitute reality as in human work. Yet, without the symbolic mediation of work processes, the objective possibilities for human realization would not be realized and the instrumental activity of man would be perpetuated as a set of pseudo-necessities. Recovery of the practical moment of material synthesis is extremely significant in a global context in which the technocratic trends of both 'socialism' and 'capitalism' deny its basic importance."

CHAPTER TWORATIONALITY

"Reason became practical, and nonreason became theoretical. Technology was reason, and the social sciences were nonreason. Diabolical schemes were developed for doing away with masses of men in elaborate and costly ways; these were based on reason, but any overall purpose in society could only be called nonreasonable."<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation seeks to describe the fate of the social sciences since World War II and suggests, furthermore, that the kind of rationality upon which micro-social or sub-systemic development is based, differs in important respects from the logic governing macro-social development and change. In this chapter our central concern will be to analyse these two different kinds of rationality.

The first attempt to effect this separation was undertaken by Max Weber. Weber called the two different kinds of rationality, formal and substantive rationality respectively. In his view, formal rationality refers to the extent of 'quantitative calculation or accounting which is technically possible' and which is in fact applied in any given concrete case.<sup>2</sup> This kind of rationality is therefore related to the degree to which the provision of man's needs can be expressed in numerical or calculable terms.

While the concept of formal rationality is a relatively straight-forward one, Weber argues that the concept of substantive rationality is an ambiguous and difficult one. This is because substantive rationality refers to 'absolute values', and according to Weber, 'there is an indefinite number of possible standards of value which are rational in this sense.' Substantive rationality can be seen as

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<sup>1</sup>Irving Louis Horowitz: The Foundations of Political Sociology, Harper & Row, New York, 1972, p.97.

<sup>2</sup>Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation, (transl. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons), Free Press, New York, 1964 p.184.

"...the degree in which a given group of persons, no matter how it is delimited, is or could be adequately provided with goods by means of an economically oriented course of social action. This course of action will be interpreted in terms of a given set of values no matter what they may be."<sup>1</sup>

In his version of critical theory, Habermas makes a similar distinction between two different kinds of rationality. Corresponding to Weber's notion of formal rationality, Habermas advances a concept of 'purposive-rationality' which depends upon our empirical knowledge of natural laws. Upon such purposive rationality rests the goal-directed activity which results in the increasing instrumental or technical rationalization of society. This means that a high degree of correlation exists between Weber's concept of formal rationality and Habermas' concept of purposive rationality. The same cannot be said, however, for the degree of correlation between Weber's concept of substantive rationality and Habermas' notion of mediated intersubjectivity. The latter concept is specifically intended to increase the analytic depth and scope of the less adequate Weberian concept. According to Habermas, the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding results in the final instance in the creation of an equilibrium between the forces of production and the relations of production. This kind of rationality takes place through the medium of language and depends for its existence upon the successive removal of barriers to communication. As we argued in Chapter One both of these moments -- i.e. the removal of barriers to communication and the idea of an equilibrium between forces and relations of production -- are necessary conditions for the emancipation of society.

Both Weber and Habermas make these respective distinctions for the good reason that social change cannot be explained only in terms of a concept of rationality based upon the idea of an increase

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.185

in the degree of knowledge of the technical kind.

For if the determination of values is left to be decided by an external and arbitrary fate, man's ability to master his own history in a conscious manner will be severely retarded. Habermas, however, attempts to develop a concept of all-embracing rationality which implies that the order of values must be brought within the dimension of the critical reflection of social science.

The attempt to develop a concept of all-embracing rationality forces Habermas to undertake an examination of the methodological conditions governing the possibility of a social science which successfully integrates analytical and hermeneutical procedures. The important question historically is thus not whether we make use of every available means of technical production at our disposal, but whether we succeed in evolving institutions through which we could choose what we want for the purpose of 'pacified existence'.<sup>1</sup> The existence of a potentially free society, as we have seen, depends upon the extent to which the development of self-conscious freedom and an increase in material wealth can be brought into a rational relationship with one another.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate question for Habermas' theory as a whole then is this:

"How can technical knowledge be transformed into practical consciousness in a manner which is binding?"<sup>2</sup>

In order to answer this question, Habermas has to make the realm of values itself the object of a process of critical reflection and having done this he then has to show that the increasing rationalization of social norms would have the following three results:

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.185. The idea of pacified existence implies the reorganization of society in such a way as to create 'the space and time for the development of productivity under self-determined incentives'.

<sup>2</sup>c.f. Chapter 1, p. 10

Firstly, it would result in a decreasing degree of social repression; secondly, it would result in a decreasing degree of social rigidity; and thirdly, it would result, finally, in a situation in which the application of each and every norm would be subject to universal approval. The consequences of such a rationalization at the level of social norms are altogether different from the consequences which Weber saw as the inevitable result of increasing rationalization, viz, bureaucratization and disenchantment. For Habermas there is a clear and important difference between purposive-rational or technical action and communicative action.

"Rationalization measured by changes in these three dimensions does not lead, as does rationalization of purposive-rational subsystems to an increase in technical control over objectified processes of nature and society. It does not lead per se to the better functioning of social systems, but would furnish the members of society with the opportunity for further emancipation and progressive individuation. The growth of productive forces is not the same as the intention of the 'good life'. It can at best serve it."<sup>1</sup>

In extending the concept of substantive rationality in this way, Habermas returns to a dimension of Marxist theory which is very often overlooked -- viz. the dimension of the Marxian dialectic concerning the question of the possibility of knowing the world.<sup>2</sup> Between Marx and Kant there exists a relationship which has not been given due attention outside the realm of critical theory. On the one hand, Marx assumes the existence of a nature in itself which is prior to the world of mankind.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the first thesis on Feuerbach explicitly argues that we can only know the world in so far as it is a human creation.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.119

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.36

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx: 'The German Ideology' in The Marx-Engels Reader, Op.cit, p.114

As Alfred Achmidt puts it:

"Marx adopted an intermediate position between Kant and Hegel, which can only be fixed with difficulty. His materialist critique of Hegel's identity of Subject and Object led him back to Kant, although again this did not mean that being, in its non-identity with thought, appeared as an unknowable 'thing-in-itself'. Kant wanted to use the concept of 'transcendental apperception' to demonstrate, as it were for eternity, how a unified world of experience comes into existence. Marx both retained Kant's thesis of the non-identity of Subject and Object and adopted the post-Kantian view, no longer exclusive of history, that Subject and Object entered into changing configurations, just as the unify of the subjective and the objective realized in the various products of labour nevertheless means that the proportions between labour and the material of nature are very diverse."<sup>1</sup>

Habermas returns to this philosophical dimension in Marxism with the specific purpose of recovering an objective and critical concept of reason<sup>2</sup>, which can be used to provide the basis for a critique of instrumental reason. Such a critique can then be used to overcome the limitations of both the ideology of late capitalism and the mechanical Marxism of communist orthodoxy.

In the Dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno began to develop a critique of instrumental reason to broaden Marx's critique of political economy into a critique of advanced technical civilization as such. In the Dialectic of Enlightenment the theory remained at the level of critique. The advance made in Habermas's theory is that he has made it his central concern to develop a social theory around the concept of all-embracing rationality, i.e. he makes the emancipation of society dependent upon our ability to evolve a theory which can adequately explain how technical knowledge can be related in a binding and rational manner to our practical needs and desires. In alluding back to the central text of critical theory, Dieter Henrich is therefore quite

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Schmidt: The Concept of Nature in Marx, (transl. Ben Fowkes) New Left Books, London, 1971, p.120

<sup>2</sup>c.f. Chapter One, pp. 6-9.

correct in arguing that Habermas' theoretical endeavour begins with 'the dialectic of the political enlightenment of bourgeois society.'<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand more fully how and why Habermas makes a theoretical distinction between purposive-rational action and communicative interaction, we need to consider the following two points.

1) The critique of instrumental rationality

The promise of industrialization was that the long period during which man had been the passive object of the overwhelming power of natural and social forces could be replaced by period of history in which man would become the self-determining subject of his own destiny. It was for this reason that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the realization of reason meant the liberation of the processes of industrial capitalism.<sup>2</sup> Increased production, it was assumed, would provide all the necessary means for the gratification of man's needs. The fact that the idea of reason was directly linked to technical progress in this way had the following consequences:

"Modern rationalism, as a result, had a tendency to pattern individual as well as social life on the model of nature...Men believed their relations to each other to result from objective laws that operate with the necessity of physical laws, and their freedom to consist in adapting to this necessity. The more reason triumphed in technology and natural science, the more reluctantly did it call for freedom in man's social life."<sup>3</sup>

The objectivistic illusion referred to here arises from the assumption that the purpose of gaining knowledge is to increase our ability to control and manipulate both natural and social processes. The consequences of this conception of knowledge

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<sup>1</sup>Dieter Henrich: 'Kritik der Verstaendigungsverhaeltnisse' in Jurergen Habermas und Kieter Henrich: Zwei Reden; aus Anlass des Hegel-Preises, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1974, p.13

<sup>2</sup>Juergen Habermas: Kritische und konservative Aufgaben der Soziologie in Theorie und Praxis, op.cit. pp.294-297

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Marcuse: Reason and Revolution Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969, pp.225-256



as the logic of domination are highly significant:

"In the social sciences this leads to a misrepresentation of the object under scrutiny and to an accommodating conformism on the part of the scientists. Because they no longer see exactly how, 'in every act of perception' (Habermas), they remain imprisoned in and take their bearings from the process of social life, they misrepresent human history as a natural process and willingly act out the role assigned them by the capitalist system as useful and 'irresponsible' experts whose knowledge can be smoothly integrated in the system's utility structure."<sup>1</sup>

2). The need for a theory of communicative interaction

According to Habermas the objectivistic understanding of science to which we have referred above is no substitute for the critical power of self-reflection. The standards of self-reflection require that all human processes of cognition be made the subject of critical evaluation. The result of a critical process of evaluation of this kind would reveal the fundamental connection which always exists between knowledge and interest. In the objectivistic understanding of science, the interest which is being concealed is one which the scientific community shares in common with all of mankind, namely the interest in the realisation of a rational society.<sup>2</sup> The logic of domination which inheres in all processes of instrumental rationality on the other hand conceals the vital anthropological interest of the human species in intersubjective communication which ensures collective survival.<sup>3</sup> The socio-technical application of the results of empirically objectifying social theory is successful to the extent that,

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<sup>1</sup>Albrecht Wellmer: Critical Theory of Society, (transl. by Herder and Herder, New York, 1972, p.14.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, pp.314-317

<sup>3</sup>Juergen Habermas: 'Der befremdliche Mythos: Reduktion oder Evokation' in Arbeit, Erkenntnis, Fortschritt : Aufsätze 1954-1970, Verlag de Munter, Amsterdam, Schwarze Reihe Nr. 10, 1970, p.161

until now at least, socio-historical progress has been characterized by objective, causal structures of social relations. These relations which operate like natural laws behind the backs of the behaving subject as it were, serve particular but unreflected human interests -- the interest in technical control and domination.

The blind causality of such structures can only be made transparent if these processes of the social-life history which have taken a pathological turn can be reconstructed, made intelligible and hence made into the object once again of rational decision - making by a general and politically enlightened will. The interest in the emancipation of society can only be served, therefore, to the extent to which uncomprehended causal relations are broken in both thought and in practice.

"As long as the theory derives its meaning in relation to the reconstruction of a lost fragment of life history and, therefore, to self-reflection, its application is necessarily practical. It effects the reorganization of the action-orienting self-understanding of socialized individuals, which is structured in ordinary language. The experience of reflection induced by enlightenment is precisely the act through which the subject frees itself from a state in which it had become an object for itself."<sup>1</sup>

Having discussed the two aspects of the critique of instrumental rationality and the need for a theory of communicative interaction, it becomes possible to situate Habermas' reformulation of Weber's concept of rationalization in the context of social theory which makes possible the analysis of social change in the direction of increased emancipation from unnecessary social constraint. It is in this sense that a rational society depends upon the realization of the utopian notion of the 'good life'.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.247

"Critical theory is derivable from a notion of the 'good life' already available to it as part of the socio-historical situation it subjects to analysis; which, as the notion of an acknowledgement of each individual as a person by every other individual, and as the idea of a non-coercive communal human life of dialogue, is a draft meaning of history already fragmentarily embodied in a society's traditions and institutions: a draft meaning which is applied critically in opposing a society and its dominant forms of self-understanding."<sup>1</sup>

According to Weber the major characteristic of modern society would be an increase in the level of bureaucratic rationalization. In his view this process of rationalization would continue, no matter who owned the means of production -- the relations of production in industrial society could only be organized according to one principle, viz. bureaucratism. Rational organization is the fate of modern society. As a scientist Weber accepts this trend. He does not welcome it, however, and his fear that the transforming rationalization of society would destroy what in his eyes made life worth living -- individual action, religious faith, moral responsibility, personal choice -- was the reason behind the argument that the modern spiritual climate would be one of disenchantment.<sup>2</sup> What Habermas finds disturbing about this point of view is that it is correct as a description but is inadequate as a theory.

The problem arises because we do not yet know enough about the way in which the technical and economic sub-systems of formal rationality interact with and control changes in the institutional framework of society. Ultimately this is an empirical problem, but before it can be solved, a theoretically cogent framework must be found in order to make the formulation of the empirical questions possible. In the terminology of classical Marxism, the sub-systems of formal rationality are the forces of production and the

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Wellmer: p.41

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Aron, p.14

institutional framework of society is the relations of production. The fundamental perspective from which Habermas attempts to formulate a critical theory of the process of social change is the one to which we have already referred -- viz. that the emancipation of society depends upon the establishment of a rational balance between the forces and relations of production.<sup>1</sup> Upon its success in explaining this kind of interaction depends the relevance and validity of a critical theory of society. We should not forget that this question is not merely an academic one but that the historical survival of the human species is at stake:

"Whether humanity will survive the process of de-utopianization (Entutopisierung) - as a precondition for its brutalization as a whole - has been doubted by too many for this estimate to be denounced as a part of the culturally pessimistic ideology of bourgeois decay."<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter One we pointed out that the result of the technological transformation of society was to make it Janus-faced. It is therefore not surprising that Habermas should make the analysis of scientific progress a central part of this theory. As early as 1963 Habermas had argued that the advancement of science had betrayed all the promises which had once been made to mankind.<sup>3</sup> For some centuries the progress of science and technology has been associated with critical reflection and freedom - i.e. with the destruction of prejudice and with release from the repressive constraints of nature. In the eighteenth century the progress of science was to bring enlightenment to a public of private citizens. Scientific progress represented, in this sense, moral and political progress. In the nineteenth century according to Marx technical development was to lead to a situation in which the expanding productive forces would no longer be containable within the more restrictive relations of

<sup>1</sup>c.f. Chapter One, pp.9-12 and 32-35.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Sohn-Rethel: 'Technische Intelligenz zwischen Kapitalismus und Sozialismus' in Technologie und Kapital, herausgegeben von Richard Vahrenkamp, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1973, p.70

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theorie und Praxis, erweiterte Auflage, pp.336-339

production based upon private property and private appropriation of the surplus value obtained from an increasingly socialized mode of production. The revolutionary proletariat was to do away with this intolerable situation and to usher in the era of the emancipation of all humanity.

The decisive break with this kind of optimistic thinking within the Marxist tradition comes in our century, when science itself, as the motor of technological development becomes the primary force of production. In noting this development, Habermas for example, asks the following question: "But who still expects an increase in reflection, or even growing emancipation from this?"<sup>1</sup> For a Marxist this is a significantly pessimistic kind of 'Fragestellung'<sup>2</sup> and by means of it, an entirely new dimension is added to the debate about the relationship between rationality and emancipation.

As a categorical framework Habermas proposes distinguishing between 'work' and 'interaction'.<sup>3</sup> The category work refers to purposive rational action which takes place according to technical rules based on empirical knowledge as well as to the rational choice of strategies for the application of such knowledge. Technical rules are universal and can be formulated in context-free language.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to work, the category of interaction refers to symbolically mediated communication which takes place according to social

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theorie und Praxis, erweiterte Auflage, pp.336-339

<sup>2</sup>The concept 'Fragestellung' refers to the particular problem, or more usually, particular set or structure of problems which constitute the stimulus, impulse and core of a philosophical system.

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas : Toward a Rational Society, p.91

<sup>4</sup>In critical theory the concept of the context-free language refers to those linguistic systems of abstract symbolism which embody instrumental knowledge - e.g., mathematics, physics. Context-free language presents no problems for hermeneutic interpretation as it contains neither living experience nor does it embody utopian contents.

norms that define mutual expectations of behaviour. To be effective, such norms must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects. Social norms are enforced by sanction and cannot, therefore, be verified or falsified in the manner of technical rules. Because the validity of social norms can be grounded 'only in the intersubjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions and secured by the general recognition of obligations'<sup>1</sup> their meaning can be expressed and understood in ordinary language communication.

In terms of the two categories of work and interaction to which we have referred, it becomes possible to distinguish between social systems according to whether purposive-rational action or interaction predominates.<sup>2</sup> The subsystems of society -- e.g., the economic system of the state apparatus -- are organized according to the principles of purposive-rational action. In contrast to this, the institutional structures of society -- e.g., kinship and family structures -- are organized according to the moral rules of interaction. At the theoretical level, therefore, Habermas makes an analytic distinction between the institutional framework of a society or the sociocultural life-world and the subsystems of purposive-rational action which are 'embedded' in the framework. Thus,

"The relation of systems of technics to symbolic systems is a historical variable. For example, Marx showed that capitalism is the point in history where there is a reversal of the order of legitimation. This is the beginning of what in our own time has become known as the technological society. In this phase the extension of the systems of purposive rational behaviour begins to legitimate itself."<sup>3</sup>

In 'traditional' societies technical innovation is only tolerated within certain limits, and these limits are those of

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.92

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.93

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: 'Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society', p.218-219

cultural tradition. 'Traditional' societies exist, therefore, only so long as the development of the subsystems of purposive-rational action can be kept subject to the legitimating efficacy of the cultural traditions embodied in the institutional framework. The change from 'traditional' to modern society implies a reversal of this relationship. Historically this change coincided with the development of capitalism. Habermas argues that both Marx and Schumpeter showed in their respective theories that 'capitalism is the first mode of production in world history to institutionalize self-sustaining economic growth.'<sup>1</sup> The capitalist mode of production guarantees the permanent expansion of subsystems of purposive-rational action and thereby overturns the traditionalist 'superiority' of the institutional framework over the forces of production, thus calling into question the traditional form of the legitimation of power.

This is what Weber tried to grasp with his concept of rationalization -- the fact that social development would now be governed to an increasing extent by the standards of scientific and technological progress. However, as Lukacs pointed out, Weber made the mistake of seeing rationalization and bureaucratization as an inevitable fate, rather than as developments linked to a specific historical project - that of capitalist society.<sup>2</sup> Because he overlooked this connection, Weber did not realize that capitalist society would generate anew a crisis of legitimation, thereby creating the possibility for new developments in the process of social evolution.

As Habermas has repeatedly warned: The capacity for control made possible by the empirical sciences is not to be confused with

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.96

<sup>2</sup>Georg Lukacs: History and Class Consciousness (transl. Rodney Livingstone) Merlin Press, London, 1971, p.98: "Bureaucracy implies the adjustment of one's way of life, mode of work and hence of consciousness, to the general socio-economic premises of the capitalist economy, similar to that which we have observed in the case of the worker in particular business concerns."

the capacity for enlightened action.

"The power of technical control over nature made possible by science is extended today directly to society: for every cultural area that has become a separate, closed system whose relations can be analyzed immanently in terms of presupposed system goal, a new discipline emerges in the social sciences. In the same measure, however, the problems of technical control solved by science are transformed into life problems. For the scientific control of natural and social processes - in a word, technology - does not release men from action. Just as before, conflicts must be decided, interests realized, interpretations found -- through both action and transaction structured by ordinary language."<sup>1</sup>  
(My emphasis)

The attempt to substitute the capacity for technical control for the capacity for enlightened action would imply the realization of the kind of negative utopia envisioned in Orwell's 1984. In such a situation man would be bound by an artificial necessity, i.e. his behaviour would be organized entirely along the lines of a conditioned stimulus-response pattern. However, the bracketing out of practice in this way cannot be achieved automatically for the institutional framework of society still remains distinct from the subsystems of purposive-rational action themselves. If the latter come to dominate a particular social configuration they leave unfulfilled a vital need for legitimation. The question is: how will the necessary depoliticization of the masses be made plausible to them? The technocratic solution implied by the concept of negative utopia answers that technology and science themselves take on the role of an legitimating ideology.<sup>2</sup>

Although the danger of the realization of a negative utopia is real, this does not mean that critical theory sees this as a necessary fate to which we will inevitably succumb. Because of the very fact that the system of interaction is distinct from the system of work, another kind of rationalization is also conceivable.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.56

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.104



this would be the broader mode of the rationalization of social norms and it would serve to increase the participation and individuation of all persons affected by social decisions.<sup>1</sup> A critical theory of society depends, therefore, upon the interest in the progressive emancipation of mankind from the hypostatized powers of nature and society. Critical theory aims at increasing the possibilities for the realization of 'the good life' - the moment of positive utopia.

We are now in a position to offer a three-fold classification of the three different knowledge-constitutive interests which are fundamental to the three different kinds of science. Using Schroyer's model,<sup>2</sup> we can add the corresponding systems of social action to to our classification in the following manner :

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<sup>1</sup>The attached diagram taken from Habermas (Technology and Science as 'Ideology') ought to make the distinction between the meaning of rationalization at the level of the subsystems and at the level of social norms clear. c.f.p.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: "Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society", pp.214-215

Systems of Purposive-  
Rational (Instrumental  
and Strategic) Action

Institutional Framework:  
Symbolic Interaction

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Action-orienting rules	Technical rules	Social norms
Level of definition	Context-free language	Intersubjectively shared ordinary language
Type of definition	Conditional predictions Conditional imperatives	Reciprocal expectations about behaviour
Mechanism of acquisition	Learning of skills and qualifications	Role internalization
Function of action type	Problem-solving (goal attainment defined in means-ends relations)	Maintenance of institutions (conformity to norms on the basis of reciprocal enforcement)
Sanctions against violation of rules	Inefficacy: failure in reality	Punishment on the basis of conventional sanctions: failure against authority
<u>RATIONALIZATION</u>	Growth of productive forces; extension of power of technical control	Emancipation, individuation; extension of communication free of domination

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Interest of the respective sciences

- A. The technical interest:  
We conceive of the strict sciences as that mode of analysis that yields information that presupposes the interest of certainty and technical control.
- B. The practical interest:<sup>1</sup>  
We conceive of the hermeneutic sciences (or the historical-interpretative sciences) as that mode of interpretation that yields an understanding of the social cultural life world and that presupposes the interest of extending intersubjective understanding.
- C. The emancipatory interest:  
We conceive of a critical science as that kind of inquiry that is capable of analyzing the supposed and actual 'necessity' of historical modes of authority and that presupposes the interest of the emancipation of men from law-like patterns of 'nature' and history.

The corresponding systems of action:

- A. Instead of talking about the substructure, we refer to the systems of purposive rational action.
- B. Instead of talking about the superstructure, we refer to the systems of symbolic interaction.
- C. Instead of talking about the forms of social consciousness we can speak about the reflexive recognition of legitimate authority which is internal to the system of self-reflection.

What distinguishes critical theory from empirical-analytical science and from historical-hermeneutic science is the synthesizing

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<sup>1</sup>Because of the fact that an objectivistic image of science has become so widespread, it is necessary to issue a warning: the practical interest is not to be understood in an empirical sense. It performs instead a constitutive-transcendental function. As Habermas explains:

"When these communication flows -- i.e. those which make possible intersubjective understanding -- break off and the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding is either rigidified or falls apart, a condition of survival is disturbed, one that is as elementary as the complementary condition of the success of instrumental action: namely the possibility of unconstrained agreement and non-violent recognition. Because this is the presupposition of practice, we call the knowledge-constitutive interest of the cultural sciences 'practical'. It is distinguished from the technical cognitive interest in that it aims not at the comprehension of an objectified reality but at the maintenance of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding, within whose horizon reality can first appear as something." Knowledge and Human Interests, p.176

function performed by the emancipatory interest in reason. The technical and practical interests attain their full validity only in the context of the emancipatory interest. In history man is engaged in a struggle which operates on two levels. On the first level, man is engaged in a constant struggle to overcome scarcity, and this is the level at which the interest of the 'strict' sciences in certainty and technical control becomes important. On the second level, man is engaged in a struggle to overcome the institutional restraints which make mutual recognition on an equal basis impossible. The interest of the historical-hermeneutic sciences in the reconstruction of reality by means of an analysis of the meaning of 'understanding' (Verstehen) under different historical conditions, is the interest which becomes operative at this level. In terms of the emancipatory interest, only those institutional and organizational patterns of social behaviour which permit of unhindered and free discussion of our needs and wants are to be accepted. It is only within the framework of a critical science, therefore, that inquiry into the historically unnecessary constraints of power and ideology which block further emancipation can be undertaken in a meaningful manner.<sup>1</sup>

The advantage to be gained from such a critical science is that it makes possible the critique of both capitalist and communist society in so far as both systems display a tendency to emphasize technological imperatives at the expense of an extension

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, pp.283,309. Laing and Cooper (Reason and Violence, Tavistock, London, 1971) also make this point but give a less explicit account of the interests governing the different kinds of scientific procedure: "Scarcity is the basis of the possibility of our history, not its concrete reality...History is born from an abrupt disequilibrium which fissures society at all levels. History is not necessary or essential. The legendary history of some tribes is the negation of history, and we still see the reintroduction of the timeless archetype at sacred moments of repetition. But if history exists, it is necessarily dialectical, and requires dialectical examination." p.113 Dialectical and critical science in this sense mean the same thing c.f. David Cooper. Two types of rationality. NLR 29, Feb. 1965. pp.196-197

of politically informed and enlightened will. According to Habermas, the real problem with which we are objectively confronted in both West and East is this: Namely, 'how we can actually bring under control the pre-existing, unplanned relations of technical progress and social life-world.'<sup>1</sup> The potential tension which Marx saw as developing between the forces and relations of production has not lessened, and neither have any existing forms of socialist organization succeeded in preventing its emergence. This is because the direction of social development is still left to be decided by the technical interest which resides in the necessities for the reproduction of natural life. Such interests represent a danger because they exercise control over social development,

"...Without being reflected upon and confronted with the declared political self-understanding of social groups. In consequence, new technical capacities erupt without preparation into existing forms of life-activity and conduct."<sup>2</sup>

The social cohesion of advanced industrial society - whether it be capitalist or communist makes little difference in this sense<sup>3</sup> - is continually threatened by the very formalism of such a society. Rationalization is carried out only at the subsystemic level of society and does not affect the 'greater irrationality of the whole.'

"The very formalism of rationalized subsystems destroys any objective image of the whole and promotes instead an internal incapacity to grasp it...During periods of crisis the unrecognized human needs of society reassert themselves as the most decisive issues. The ideological pretense of 'natural laws' of objective development are, at these times, exposed."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.60

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.60

<sup>3</sup>I do not mean to imply the validity of the convergence thesis of the growing similarity between communist and capitalist society. I am recording one particular similarity in this case.

<sup>4</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.203. (Schroyer uses this example only with reference to the analysis of capitalist society.)

The only rational kind of solution to such a crisis situation would be one in which the mediation between technical progress and the structure of the social life-world were made the result of conscious reflection. Until the two processes can be mediated in this manner, history will remain a continuation of natural history. Even if the technocrat's dream of a self-stabilizing social system (i.e. the negative utopia of 1984) could be achieved, such an outcome would still be equivalent to no more than the realization of 'the biological base value of survival at any cost': in the case of the cybernetic dream, that of ultrastability.

The danger to our civilization today is that the dialectic of potential and will - i.e. the relationship between our technical capacities and our practical needs and wants - continues to take place in an unreflected manner 'in accordance with interests for which public justification is neither demanded nor permitted.'<sup>1</sup> The all-embracing rationalization of society only becomes thinkable upon the basis of a critical science informed by the emancipatory interest in reason. As Habermas has repeatedly pointed out: The redeeming power of reflection cannot be supplanted by the extension of technically exploitable knowledge.

Since Habermas develops his notion of a critical theory primarily in terms of a confrontation with the 'scientistic' image of science, we shall seek to clarify the meaning of his version of critical theory in these terms.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.61

Schroyer uses the term 'scientism' to refer to the contemporary self-image of science, i.e. to what people generally understand science to be.<sup>1</sup> According to this understanding, legitimate knowledge is only possible in the system of the empirical sciences. In other words, scientism replaces epistemology with methodology.

"Positivism marks the end of the theory of knowledge. In its place emerges the philosophy of science...Hence transcendental inquiry into the conditions of possible knowledge can be meaningfully pursued only in the form of methodological inquiry into the rules for the construction and corroboration of scientific theories."<sup>2</sup>

We have already pointed out that science and technology constitute the basis of the 'knowledge industry' which has become the leading force of production in advanced industrial society. In so far as it is science and technology which ensure continued economic growth, they also take on an important legitimating function.

"It is our thesis that the scientific image of science is the fundamental false consciousness of our epoch. If the technocratic ideology is to lose its hold on our consciousness a critical theory of science must lay bare the theoretical reifications of this scientific image of science."<sup>3</sup>

The term reification comes originally from Marxist theory where it is used to describe the process in which what are in reality relations between men and historical forces come to be seen as relations between things. For example, the law of exchange value involves more than the 'objective' and quantitative relation between commodities. Embodied in any commodity is a specific, historically conditioned relation between producers. Thought which banishes the moment of mediation implied in the latter statement is in danger of turning into stubborn banality. Reified thought fails to grasp its object adequately and contents itself with the mere ordering, registration and classification of

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: 'Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society', p.210

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.67

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: Ibid, p.213

whatever it is which presents itself as a fact:

"In other words, reification can be described as an extreme step in the process of objectivation whereby the objectivated world loses its comprehensibility as a human enterprise and becomes fixated as a non-human, non-humanizable, inert facticity...Through reification the world of institutions appears to merge with the world of nature. It becomes necessity and fate, and is lived through as such, happily or unhappily as the case may be."<sup>1</sup>

Because of this process, the location of authority in society remains hidden, and a non-critical, non-dialectical mode of thought is no longer able to grasp adequately the meaning of social progress in the direction of greater emancipation.

This critique has important consequences: those who accept the model of piecemeal social analysis may do so more for reasons of convenience than because of a genuine commitment to come to terms with the real nature of historical change. The possibility of knowledge is always premised upon the capacity of the knower to transcend the given. If this capacity is ignored or denied, the society in its existing form is absolutized. The exclusive focus on the particular, torn out of its general context of meaning, results finally in a sociology which no longer seeks to understand but only to domesticate and conform.

The notion that essence and appearance do not coincide in a reified social order underlies the claim of critical theory that sociology cannot possess the same degree of homogeneity as the natural sciences. Sociological laws do not refer to a conceptual whole into which the individual pieces fit neatly and without difficulty. Not only do being and appearances fall apart, but the

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<sup>1</sup>P. Berger and T. Luckmann: The Social Construction of Reality, Allen Lane, London, 1969, pp.106-108.



individuals who comprise the society cannot be reduced to the concept of 'social atoms.'<sup>1</sup> This does not mean, however, that the concept of social totality must be cast off, for without this concept, social science could do no more than simply attach itself to the naked phenomenon. Once this happens, the important historical contexts which shape all social processes are lost sight of. For example, the law of exchange, which equates history with fate, is a law which cannot be grasped in its immediacy but which can only be understood conceptually. Capital, as Marx pointed out, is not merely the sum of material products. It is just as much the sum of exchange values which in turn are the expression of social magnitudes. Thus the law of exchange is not only the conceptual product of critical science, but is also the law by means of which human needs come to be shaped and economic and social development given their direction.<sup>2</sup>

In classical economic theory, the introduction of labour-saving technological devices into the productive process was left to chance invention and haphazard discovery. It was Marx, however, who showed that the introduction of such devices was necessary for the perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production. What Marx's analysis means ultimately is that highly sophisticated

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<sup>1</sup>As Adorno has pointed out, the concept of the 'social atom' (although enjoying widespread use) can only have a metaphorical meaning in comparison with the concept of the atom used in natural science. "The equality of the smallest social units, of individuals, cannot be posited with the same degree of seriousness - not even when placed before the television screen - as it can with reference to physical-chemical material. Empirical social research proceeds, nevertheless, as though it takes the idea of a social atom literally. That it succeeds to some extent with this idea, says something critical about the society." T.W. Adorno: 'Soziologie und Empirische Forschung' in Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie, herausgegeben von Heinz Maus und F. Fuerstenberg, Luchterhand, Neuwied, 1972, p.92.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx: Capital, op.cit. The Marx-Engels Reader, p.230

machines and cybernetically arranged systems (i.e. instrumentalities of formal rationality) become the precondition for the survival of an expanding system of production which itself serves no higher end than to begin anew, at each point, and at a more intensified level, the process of capital accumulation.

Interestingly enough, the spread and consolidation of this system of production coincided with the general pronouncement of the death of God in Western society. These two developments coincided to constitute what Michael Harrington has called the 'tragic sociology' of Max Weber. The sociology was forced to take on tragic undertones because the belief that man could order his own world through technology and science and hence dispense with the need for God was defeated. As our previous analysis has shown,<sup>1</sup> the supremacy accorded to the system of formal rationality by the emerging industrial order resulted in consequences which, for Weber, were not happy ones:

"In government, in industry, in every aspect of life, scientific principles of organization were becoming more and more dominant. But, at the same time, 'substantive rationality', life as a meaningful experience for individual human beings, as an explicable totality, was on the decline. Technology would progressively bureaucratize and bureaucratize, and in this context it made little difference whether a socialist order would succeed capitalism. The future, under any guise, would be<sup>2</sup> more oppressive and hostile to freedom than the past."

The irony of this is that it was Weber, the rationalist, who was first led to announce that, in the modern goal-directed world, reason was becoming increasingly irrational.

When dealing with Habermas's analysis of the meaning of rationality and the relationship between ideology and reality, we should not overlook the important fact that for Habermas ideology

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<sup>1</sup>c.f. p.44.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Harrington, p.130

does not consist of pure illusion and deception, but that it also embraces a moment of relative truth.<sup>1</sup> This point is of crucial importance for an understanding of the account given by critical theory of the meaning of values as moments of social theory. The concepts value and 'value free' are not absolutely distinct from one another and neither are they in irreconcilable opposition. The real danger lies in the tendency to objectivate the whole problem of values, i.e. to regard values as being things which have a special ontological status all of their own. Values cannot and should not be eliminated from social inquiry, but they also should not be used as an excuse to pronounce unwarranted assumptions. Values are always mediated and for critical reason they therefore, serve the purpose of the confrontation between what a society pretends to be and what it really is.

The moment of truth in a value must always be examined in its relationship to a particular historical situation. The value that all people should have a motor car would be false and abstractly utopian if applied to a society based upon a subsistence economy. The challenge made by critical theory, however, viz. that all people should enjoy a moderately comfortable standard of living as well as a life free from fear and delusion, is a true and realizable value when placed in the context of the given level of development of the productive forces of advanced industrial society.

This analysis can be narrowed in application and applied to the problem of reification in the capitalist economy in the following way. Although capitalist commodity production hides the true nature of the social relations which it embodies, it creates at the

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas argues, for example, that the bourgeois identification of 'homme' and 'citoyen' must at the time, have coincided with the general interest to a significant extent, or else it would not have become a constitutive part of public consciousness and capitalist ideology: Habermas: Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, op.cit. pp.109-110.

same time the kind of economic rationality and calculability without which the continual expansion of the forces of production would not be possible. The peculiar paradox of the rationality of capitalist society is, therefore, that while capitalist commodity production makes emancipation potentially possible, it blinds man's ability to see this fact, thereby diverting his energies into destructive and wasteful channels.

It was this very process that Marx saw so clearly, and it was this insight which was to inform his programme for a social science conducted in the form of a critique of political economy. In terms of his critique Marx was able to show that social relations become reified because of the hidden structures of domination concealed in the commodity form. It is precisely this function which all critical science must fulfill, i.e. it must restore to man the missing parts of the history of his self-formation. In the process of the critical recovery of the suppressed moments of his history, man will become aware of the distinction between historically necessary patterns of domination and historically unjustified forms of authority which are connected to distorted systems of communication.

We have already described reification as the process whereby the human world merges with the natural world in the consciousness of the human subject. In Habermas' thought an analysis which exposes the process of reification does not merely provide the basis for a critique of the dominant forms of self-understanding of the late capitalist life-world; but also has an important metatheoretical significance. This significance lies in the fact that all knowledge for Habermas is 'interest-based'. In other

words, there are interests which guide all scientific inquiry and which do not only determine the selection of problems but which also exercise a decisive influence upon the selection of the fundamental categories of the system. In contrast to scientism, Habermas offers a programme for social theory in which the interests which direct knowledge are brought under rational control because they are acknowledged and legitimized as objective interests.

The interest which governs the empirical-analytic sciences is the interest in acquiring control over real processes of nature and society. This interest is therefore fundamental to all historical endeavour. In history this interest is confirmed in the following two ways: firstly, to the extent to which it actually leads to domination and control, and, secondly, to the extent to which it is confirmed in retrospect by its success (i.e. it is reinforced through positive feedback). In terms of this process this interest becomes so self-evident that it eventually 'disappears' as an interest governing empirical-analytical scientific procedure.<sup>1</sup>

In so far as the interest in the extension of control and domination is applied to the natural world, this produces no problems of a practical kind, for as Habermas argues, 'we are not practically interested in the fate of nature as such'. This is because we have no experience of what happens within nature itself as it is brought under the analytic and technical control of physics and technology. This does not apply, however, at the social level: the fate of society is something in which we are 'practically' interested. The danger is not that we openly acknowledge this as an ontological fact given in the structure of social life, but that we pretend that sociological endeavour can be abstracted from its context in the wider realm of society itself. In the social and historical

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.210

world, subject and object can only be strictly separated at the price of arbitrarily breaking off the process of rationalization. The wearisome insistence that 'everything is what it is and not another thing' has a paralyzing effect on social thought, for even when the individual sets himself up as the opponent of the forces and pressures of socialization it should not be forgotten that he, the individual, remains the most special product and result of the inevitable process of socialization.<sup>1</sup>

According to the principles of an analytic philosophy of science, all practical questions which cannot be posed and solved in the form of technical tasks must be eliminated. These questions are then convicted of dogmatism and the result is that:

"Every 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 - thus the persuasiveness which a value claims with respect to action - simply cannot be rationally justified. Thus on this level the critique of ideology involuntarily furnishes the proof that progress of a rationalization limited in terms of empirical science to technical control is paid for with the corresponding growth of a mass of irrationality in the domain of praxis itself."<sup>2</sup> (My emphasis).

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<sup>1</sup>Because they overlook this fact, Adorno calls 'individualists' like Huxley and Jaspers reactionary. The historical period in which the individual begins to disappear, is also a period of the most unrestrained emphasis on 'individuality' at the artistic and philosophical level. Modern rock and pop music is perhaps the most striking example of this. The music which accompanies the apparent burst of individual protest and revolutionary energy is in reality played by the very long fingers of social manipulation. In the context of the repressive society, the emancipation of the individual subject is not of benefit to him, but only does him further damage in the absence of any mediating mechanisms which might protect him from the larger and oppressive totality. In a 'bad' or unfree social totality, the forces of socialization introduce a process of individuation only in order to break the isolated individual more perfectly. "Freedom from society robs the individual of the power to freedom" (T.W. Adorno: Minima Moralia, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, a.M., 1973 Nr.97)

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.265.

The significance of the quotation which stands at the head of this chapter should now be more apparent. As liberal capitalism developed into late capitalist society, reason came increasingly to be identified with technology (i.e. with the systematic application of a science concealing a hidden interest), whilst the social sciences (which attempted to make their interest-based nature explicit and hence capable of rationalization) came to be degraded in the official ideology to the realm of arbitrary values and dogmatism. By articulating a concept of substantive rationality, Max Weber, as we have argued, attempted to rescue social science from this ideological inversion. But practical questions could not ultimately be decided upon the basis of intuitive knowledge of the existence of a realm of values which give meaning in history to what we do and make with our scientifically controlled knowledge. Knowledge concerning the realm of values would first have to be made the object of the critical self-reflection of the social sciences if they were not to close off to themselves the possibility of justifying their own endeavours theoretically. The concept of an encompassing rationality which Habermas strives to articulate depends upon recognizing the rational justification for the convergence of reason and commitment. An emancipatory critical science of society does not reject the relative truth of analytical science. It incorporates this moment of truth as a necessary presupposition for the emancipation of society:

"On the one hand, it is only possible to see through the dogmatism of a congealed society to the degree to which knowledge has committed itself to being guided by the anticipation of an emancipated society and actualized adult autonomy for all human beings; at the same time, on the other hand, this interest demands that insight into the processes of social development be already attained, because only in these processes can such insight be constituted as objective."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.262

The model, however, within which objective, analytic insights into the processes of social development are brought is derived from Freud's metapsychological reflection about the way in which norms, which constitute the institutional framework of society, decide which needs are to be satisfied and which are to be suppressed. It should be noted at this point that, if the purpose of suppression is to convert libidinal energy into work because of a scarcity of goods, then the extent to which such needs are repressed is a variable factor which changes in dependence upon the given stage of the development of the forces of production. From this Habermas concludes that man's basic problem is "... not the organization of labour but the evolution of institutions that permanently solve the conflict between surplus impulses and the constraints of reality."<sup>1</sup> In these terms, cultural tradition can be understood as a form of collective unconscious in which:

"...motives that have been split off from communication are driven incessantly about and are directed by the excluded symbols into channels of substitute gratification. These motives, rather than external danger and immediate sanction, are now the forces that hold sway over consciousness by legitimating power. These are the same forces from which ideologically imprisoned consciousness can free itself through self-reflection when a new potential for the mastery of nature makes old legitimations lack credibility."<sup>2</sup>

For Habermas the most important conclusion to be drawn from an understanding of cultural tradition in this way is that it shows that the interest of the self-preservation of the species cannot be defined independently of the cultural conditions represented by work, language and power. The interest of the human species in self-preservation should not be reduced automatically and without further thought to the material reproduction of the species, because it is under the conditions of the existence of culture that the human species must first interpret what it counts as life.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.283

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. P.282

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. P.288



In other words, if the evolution of the institutional framework is held to be a dependent variable in the process of technical progress, then the only evaluative criterion which we may justifiably apply to the analysis of social development is that of the preservation of a self-steering system. This would mean that the philosophical status of the human subject is usurped by the concern (understood in terms of the structure of purposive-rational action) with the complex nature of the external world.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, if the evolution of the institutional framework is understood in terms of the system of cultural tradition which articulates our needs, then we have to posit progress in the technical sub-systems as the dependent variable in a process of progressive emancipation. It is this latter situation which Habermas has in mind when he talks about a concept of encompassing (allumfassende) rationality.

The realization of an encompassingly rational society depends upon the practical action of a self-reflective subject. The irrationality of all forms of historically unnecessary domination is to be done away with through a process of political education based on an open and general discussion, purged of all elements of domination. The critical discussion of practical questions within an open dialogue serves the very important function of rationalizing attitudes by means of the justification of standards.<sup>2</sup> As Habermas goes on to point out, the relation between attitudes and statements cannot be reduced to one of implication, but the approval of a procedure as well as the acceptance of a norm can be supported or weakened by argumentation and can, therefore, be rationally assessed. Although there is a difference between the

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<sup>1</sup>This is the main thrust of Habermas' criticism against the 'functional-structural' theory of Luhmann. c.f. Habermas/Luhmann: Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1974, p.327

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.7

standards which are rules governing communicative action and the standards which in science determine the methodological procedures by means of which descriptive statements having validity are made, both kinds of standards can, nevertheless, be made into objects of the rationalization of a choice in the medium of unconstrained discussion. The political form of such unconstrained discussion, is of course, the democratic form.

"This principle, that - expressed in the Kantian manner - only reason should have force, links the democratic form of political decision-making with the type of discussion to which the sciences owe their progress."<sup>1</sup>

We still have to investigate the kinds of conditions under which unconstrained discussion can still be held to be a valid possibility. At this point we can point, however, to the fact that Habermas's concept of encompassing rationality is too insubstantial. In an historical situation of extensive and persuasive cultural manipulation, the human life of dialogue has to rescue and practically realize reason and truth. It is difficult to see how the individual subject, who is himself the object and target of the affirmative and manipulative elements of the socialization process, is to preserve a sufficient degree of autonomy to enable him to still reflect rationally and critically about his society.<sup>2</sup> This point becomes particularly telling when we bear in mind the fact that the amount of indirect control of human behaviour through externally implanted stimuli, especially those of the psycho-technical, bio-technical and geneticalo-technical kinds,<sup>3</sup> is on the increase. The danger which is inherent in this situation is that there might be nothing left about which to reflect if the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.7.

<sup>2</sup>This theme will be dealt with more fully in the chapter on 'Technological Rationality'.

<sup>3</sup>c.f. Habermas: Theorie und Praxis, Op.cit. p.356

autonomy of the individual psyche is hollowed out and the motivation for all behaviour is induced from outside the individual. The question as to whether or not manipulation in this sense is total, has not been settled by any manner or means.<sup>1</sup> But this should not prevent us from pointing to the fact that the realization of the concept of encompassing rationality depends upon the success of a form of dialogue which is rooted in social conditions but which has to perform, nevertheless, an emancipatory function outside of them. In the chapter on Praxis we shall also be confronted with a similar problem: Habermas' theory preserves its connections with praxis and yet strives, at the same time, to maintain a distance from it.

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<sup>1</sup>At times the representatives of critical theory argue that manipulation is total - (c.f. Habermas: Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, p.19. Horkheimer and Adorno: The Dialectic of Enlightenment, and Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man) - while at other times the implication is clear that, although the chances are slight, the possibility for radical and enlightened political action still exists - (c.f. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus and Adorno: 'Spaetkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft').

CHAPTER THREETECHNOLOGICAL RATIONALITY

The problems posed by the emergence of the technocratic society<sup>1</sup> act as a connecting link between the concept of the rational society and the concept of praxis.

The transformation, as we have seen, of liberal capitalist society into the technocratic form assumed by late capitalism has had the effect of making society appear Janus-faced.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, technological innovations have revolutionized the forces of production, thus offering the promise of greater freedom. On the other hand, the very possibility of human freedom seems to be threatened by an ever-expanding system of production which appears to be governed by no other imperatives than those of technology itself. The result of this is, as Habermas argued in one of his earliest publications<sup>3</sup>, that we register each new technical

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<sup>1</sup>Because the concept of the 'technocratic' society is highly contentious, I wish to clarify the sense in which I am using the concept here. I am not advancing a technocratic theory of society in the sense in which Jacques Ellul and Helmut Schelsky do, for the good reason that the assumption that technology and its imperatives define the society as a whole, closes off the analysis of the questions of who wields power, how, and for what ends. I am, therefore, using the concept of the technocratic society in a rather loose sense in order to keep the answers to such questions open. By technocratic society I mean a society in which science and technology play a leading role in production. In such a society historical development is determined rather more by means of 'scientifically rationalized control over objectified processes' (Habermas) than by the democratic means of answering the practical question of how men can and want to live in view of the ever-expanding power of technical control. The advantage of using the concept in this way is that we can then avoid passing a priori judgement as to whether or not late capitalist society is still a class society in the sense in which Marx used the term (i.e. a society in which class divisions represent the fundamental cleavages in the social fabric). Rather than beginning with the idea of the causal supremacy of either technocracy or class, we begin the analysis by pointing to the existence of a tension between human/group/class interests and technological imperatives.

<sup>2</sup>Chapter One, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Juergen Habermas: 'Die Dialektik der Rationalisierung: Vom Pauperismus in Produktion und Konsum' (1954) in Juergen Habermas: Arbeit Freizeit Konsum: Fruehe Aufsaeetze, van Eversdijk, Holland, 1973.

achievement with a peculiar kind of 'Hassliebe' (love-hate). It is this love-hate which makes up that bad conscience of ours which lies somewhere between our fascination for flashing neon lights and our desire for simple and honest living, and which forbids us to enjoy a clear-cut relationship to technological progress. These remarks of Habermas's bring to mind one of the most startling facts concerning the technocratic society, namely, that although there seems to be no doubt about the fact that the future society is to be a technocratic society, the consequences of the emergence of this kind of society has led to a prevailing sense of unease: the technocratic society, it seems, has come about as the result of some kind of accidental revolution rather than as the product of politically enlightened will. Because we are no longer sure whether it is man or the machine who rules, the relationship between theory and practice has become enormously complicated. The problem of the realization of freedom casts light upon the particular epistemological problem with which we are grappling here: namely, has the sheer quantity of technology which now exists obliterated from consciousness not only the desire for change but also the knowledge of the possibility for change? And if not, from who or from where, i.e. from what area of life or experience, may we expect to draw rational explanation of ourselves and the history which we are daily in the process of making? These are the most important questions with which we shall be concerned in this chapter.

Because the technical transformation of the societies of Western Europe and the USA has been performed in an accidental manner - i.e. the change did not take place according to an overall social plan - this does not mean that the process of transformation cannot be explained. Harrington is, therefore, correct in asserting that it is possible and necessary to place responsibility for this 'accidental revolution'. Harrington makes the mistake, however, of confining

his analysis to the dynamics of capitalist development. In his view, to place responsibility means to talk about capitalism and "To talk of capitalism as an economic system is to take the first step away from fatalism."<sup>1</sup> It is true that capitalism first instituted a mode of production based upon the continual expansion of labour saving technical devices, but it is not true to state simply that the dynamics of the origins of the technocratic society are the same as the dynamics under which the fully institutionalized system now operates. For an analysis of the latter, it becomes necessary to return to Habermas's reformulation of Marx's dialectic of the relations and forces of production. Habermas's argument is that the two moments of the dialectic should be expressed in the more general categories of the institutional framework of society and the subsystems of technical, formal rationality. In the technocratic society, the latter come to predominate over the former, thus offering man greater material freedom but denying him the possibility of subjective freedom. According to the dialectical concept of freedom which was developed in Chapter One, freedom in both directions can only result from the rational translation of technical knowledge into the subject matter of practical discourse. However, the question still remains: can the institutionalization of such a form of discourse still be regarded as viable after we have crossed the threshold to the technocratic society in which the subsystems of the society perform the primary role in historical development?

In order to answer this question, we need to discuss, firstly, the meaning of technique, and secondly, the results of its application in the economic, political and cultural spheres. According to Ellul, the technocratic society has not come about simply because man has become enslaved to the machine.<sup>2</sup> To conceive of the techno-

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Harrington, p.21

<sup>2</sup>Jacques Ellul: The Technocratic Society, (tranl. John Wilkinson) Vintage Books, New York, 1954

cratic society only as problem of machines is to disguise the real meaning of technocracy, for it is technique which integrates the machine into society. What then is a technique? R.K. Merton describes a technique as being "...any complex of standardized means for attaining a pre-determined result."<sup>1</sup> The emphasis here is away from spontaneous behaviour and onto behaviour that is rationalized and deliberate. If technique, as a means, can be said to be the 'one best way' of achieving a particular result, its triumph over other ways of thinking and acting will necessarily involve the inversion of the traditional understanding of the means-end relationship. We shall return to this point later.

In J.K. Galbraith's view, a technique involves the systematic application of scientific or other organized knowledge for a practical task. Systematic application depends upon dividing and subdividing the task into its component parts. "Thus, and only thus, can organized knowledge be brought to bear on performance."<sup>2</sup> Mumford's definition of 'technics' is very similar to Galbraith's:

"Technics is a translation into appropriate, practical forms of therapeutic truths, implicit or formulated, anticipated or discovered, of science."<sup>3</sup>

What all these definitions have in common is that they embody only what Habermas has defined as instrumental knowledge. In pre-technocratic society the employment of means (instrumental knowledge) was always undertaken within and confined by a larger social realm of interests and values.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages, for example, extra-technical considerations operated in all areas of life, thus posing great obstacles to technical progress and causing 'history to coincide with theology'. (Ellul). However, the long period

<sup>1</sup>R.K. Merton, introduction to *Ibid.* p.vi.

<sup>2</sup>J.K. Galbraith: The New Industrial State, second addition, Penguin, 1972, p.31.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis Mumford: Technics and Civilization, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1934, p.85

<sup>4</sup>Perry Anderson: Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, New Left Books, London, 1975

of secularization which began with the Renaissance culminated, via the early mixing of the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, finally in an advanced industrial society based upon the logic of a continually expanding system of technological production.

In the latter kind of system, the economy no longer operates according to the principles of the market but becomes instead a sphere of extensive manipulation. The more productive relations become tied to technical exigencies, the more the economic process as a whole loses in elasticity. Galbraith provides a very neat illustration of this point. If road-building is undertaken in a milieu of generally low technical development; the men who use the picks and shovels can be called out on the same day that the decision is taken to build the road. Similarly, the picks and the shovels can be bought on the same day too. However,

"When specifications are raised to modern superhighway standards and heavy machinery is introduced, the market no longer works as well. Engineers, draftsmen, drainage experts and those who arrange the elimination of trees, grass, parkland and streams and other enviromental amenities may not be readily available even in response to substantial advance in pay...Market behaviour must be modified by some form of planning."<sup>1</sup>

In the economic sphere we can, therefore, distinguish between the following two types of long-term planning. On the one hand, a producing unit can take over its source of supply through a process of vertical integration. Because of its dependence upon steel, a firm which manufactures motor-cars will tend to buy out those firms which produce steel. On the other hand, the enormous investment of time and capital necessary to a technological mode of production means that the firm cannot afford to remain dependent upon the uncertain level of demand determined by the market. For this reason a long-term strategy to promote and ensure demand has to be found

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Galbraith, p.42



and implemented by means of the advertising media. In terms of our concern about the way in which historical development is determined, the significant feature of this development is that those firms which manipulate the buying behaviour of the public in this way are private firms. They are therefore able to exercise control over the formation of public opinion, without themselves being subject to control by public opinion.

"Because of the rapid innovations in consumer goods, the market output includes not only use values but also the motives for possessing them and their obsolescence; the very concept of 'supply' takes on ideological import. Choice becomes merely the consumer's reaction to a<sup>1</sup> pre-established supply that brooks little resistance."<sup>1</sup>

The economy of a technocratic society, as we have seen, depends upon intensive planning at all levels. The corollary of this is that economic planning requires political coercion. Ellul contends that this is the key to understanding the political dimension of technocratic society. Moreover, it seems doubtful that planning can be made subject to control by local decentralized authorities. The success of such local plans often depends upon the extent to which they can be guaranteed by the centralized state authority. According to Ellul the meaning of the often quoted success of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the U.S.A. has been seriously misunderstood:

"...the source of this enterprise was the Roosevelt government, which performed operations of expropriation, made means available and assured sanctions."<sup>2</sup>

Basic to Ellul's thesis is the idea that political freedom is on the decrease in all highly industrialized societies.

The bourgeois idea of publicity (*Offentlichkeit*) promised freedom in the market and the dissolution of all forms of domination in the political sphere. This promise, however, rested upon certain

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<sup>1</sup>Claus Offe: 'Political Authority and Class Structures - An Analysis of Late Capitalist Societies' (transl. Michael Vale) in 'The International Journal of Sociology', Sprints, 1972, p.95

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Ellul, p.182

social and economic conditions and it is these which have altered so fundamentally. The function performed by the mass media is not only confined to procuring demand for the right products at the right times. Its function extends to the propagation of a legitimizing ideology for the system as a whole, as well as to its psychological function of offering comfort and support in the face of stress and tension. Marcuse was quick to point out that the result of this process was not adjustment but mimesis - the immediate identification of the individual with the society.<sup>1</sup>

Man must not be allowed to succumb to the strain created by his new mode of life. To this end the techniques of mass manipulation must be fully utilized in order to prop the individual up psychologically and to invest him with powers of resistance which he does not innately possess. Thus propaganda and advertising rely more and more upon obsessional techniques. Their power and influence to mould the inner life of the individual must be exerted unceasingly as the aim is always to produce conditioned reflex action. The effect of this, in Ellul's words, is to create 'a long range vacuity' in the individual and to suppress altogether the moral dimension.

"Through propaganda, we can train a man not to kill or not to drink alcohol; or we can train him to kill or to smoke opium. The objective result is different in either case. Sociologically, there is admittedly a world of difference between dictatorship and democracy. But in both the moral problem is suppressed; the individual is simply an animal broken in to obey certain conditional reflexes ...on the moral plane there is a fundamental identity when democracy achieves its ends through propaganda. The human effects of technique are independent of the ideological end to which they are applied."<sup>2</sup>

The liberal model of advanced industrial society pre-supposed that a 'literary public' (literarische Öffentlichkeit)<sup>3</sup> which exercised important political influence, would grow out of the

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.25

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Ellul, p.375

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit.

intimate sphere of the private family. In late capitalist society, however, the family has ceased to mediate in a meaningful manner between its individual members and the social totality. As a unit it has been phased out of the sphere of social labour. As each member now becomes responsible for earning his own wage at a workplace outside of the family, a more direct relationship is established between himself and the state. It is the state which guarantees social security and protection from risks such as unemployment, illness, care for the aged and accident insurance. To use the language of psycho-analysis, the child now learns the reality principle through the forces which run through the family from the outside. What this means is that the process of socialization as previously understood has altered: the relationship between the individual and the external social reality is no longer mediated in an important way by family relationships or by peer groups.<sup>1</sup>

The gradual hollowing out of the intimate sphere of the family has been accompanied and complemented by important changes in house design and city planning. For example, just as doors disappear within the house itself, so do the fences between neighbours and so does the space between the houses themselves.

The sum total of these developments points to the fact that the private sphere no longer enjoys sufficient protection. The disappearance of the 'free space' so necessary to the moral and intellectual development of the individual belongs to the general decay of cultural life.<sup>2</sup> No longer are the masses to be raised to a higher cultural level, instead culture is to be brought down to the level of the masses. The possibilities for technical reproduction have not only facilitated economic access to cultural goods, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson and Prewitt: Political Socialization, Little Brown, Brown, 1968, c.f. the chapter entitled 'Agents'.

<sup>2</sup>Hannah Arendt: Between Past and Future, Faber and Faber, London, 1961, p.14

technical forms of reproduction and marketing have adapted these goods themselves so as to facilitate psychological access to them as well.<sup>1</sup>

"Kant's formalism still expected a contribution from the individual, who was thought to relate the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts; but industry robs the individual of his function. Its prime service to the customer is to do his schematizing for him...Not only are hit songs, stars and soap operas cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types, but the specific content of the entertainment itself is derived from them and only appears to change. The details are interchangeable."<sup>2</sup>

The above discussion bears witness to an often remarkable coincidence between the criticisms of technocratic society raised by conservative theorists such as Ellul and the criticisms made by more critical thinkers such as Adorno and Habermas. What distinguishes these two schools of thought from one another, is that critical theory does not share the extreme note of pessimism which characterizes so many of the conservative critiques. Ellul, for example, ends his work on a note of pessimism that can only be called total. He argues that there can be no more use in posing questions either as to the motives or as to the reasons behind historical development. "Technique exists because it is technique. The golden age will be because it will be. Any other answer is superfluous." There remains only resignation and capitulation.

In view of some of the themes enunciated in Habermas's work, e.g. the argument that critical theory does not share the mood of total pessimism, may at first seem a little surprising. In the essay

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<sup>1</sup>I am aware of the danger involved in sketching out some of the important ideas worked out by critical theory in this brief manner. It is, in particular, exceedingly difficult to do justice to Adorno's work in this way. The densely complex nature of this thought does not tolerate the reduction to such programmatic outlines. To be fair to Adorno, it seems, involves either quoting him at impermissible length or remaining silent. This difficulty may account in large part for the regrettable neglect from which his work has suffered.

<sup>2</sup>T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer: Dialectic of Enlightenment (transl. John Cumming) Hender & Hender, New York, 1972, pp.124-125.

'Praktische Folgen des wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritts' he states that the freedom of the subject and the idea of autonomous goal-setting (Zwecksetzung) have been reduced to meaninglessness because of the growing interdependence of science, technique, industry, military and administration; and in Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit he argues that public opinion can no longer play the emancipatory political role it once did, for the good reason that the public itself has been split irreconcilably into two parts: into a minority of specialists whose thinking and reflecting is done in private, i.e. in situations from which the general public is excluded, and into a majority of passive recipients who do their consuming in public. Not the least of the tasks with which we are confronted in this chapter is to explain, in spite of the themes referred to above, how and why Habermas does not fall victim to this mood of resignation and despair.

We have already noted that Habermas's 'Fragestellung' is underpinned by a significant kind of pessimism for a Marxist thinker.<sup>1</sup> However, his Fragestellung leads ultimately to an entirely new dimension being added to the debate concerning the meaning of technocratic society and a reminder as to the reasons for this is clearly not out of place. Habermas draws a distinction between two different types of action, i.e. between goal-directed action (which is based upon instrumental knowledge as well as the rational choice of strategies for the application of such knowledge) and communicative action (which is based upon the structures of symbolically mediated interaction). Because there are different kinds of rational action, based upon different kinds of knowledge-constitutive interest, Habermas is able to make a very important distinction at the level of social development between further emancipation and increased repression. The distinction between emancipation and repression

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<sup>1</sup>Chapter Two, p. 45

depends upon the recognition that there are various possible modes of interaction between the subsystems of instrumental-technical action and the larger framework of communicative interaction. A preponderance of instrumental action over communicative action results in further emancipation at the subsystemic and greater repressions at the level of the systemic framework, but because the two kinds of action are kept analytically separate, Habermas does not exclude the possibility that the two spheres can be brought into rational relationship with one another.

Unless this distinction is made, social theory will relapse into simplifying reductionism. Depending upon the initial frame of reference, social theory will divide into either an unjustifiably optimistic kind of determinist Marxism or into an unduly pessimistic and conservative view which equates totalitarian and technocratic society. The weakness of Ellul's analysis for example, lay in the fact that it did not articulate the nature of the dialectic of interaction between these two levels with sufficient clarity and Habermas argues that we find in Marcuse a more sophisticated attempt to explain the nature of this kind of interaction.

"Both tendencies (the increase in state intervention and transformation of science and technology into the leading forces of production) have destroyed the particular constellation of institutional framework and subsystems of purposive-rational action which characterized liberal capitalism, thereby eliminating the conditions relevant for the application of political economy in the version correctly formulated by Marx for liberal capitalism. I believe that Marcuse's basic thesis, according to which technology and science today also take on the function of legitimating political power<sup>1</sup> is the key to analyzing the change constellation."<sup>1</sup> (My addition.)

It is therefore to an examination of Marcuse's thesis that we must next turn. Before doing so, it is necessary to issue the reminder that Marcuse's thesis offers only the key to the analysis of the problem of technological rationality and not the solution. We shall then go on to evaluate Habermas's attempt to formulate a solution.

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.100

## II

Before beginning the account of Marcuse's version of the nature of interaction between the technical subsystems and the institutional framework, a short reminder about the origins of this whole debate (i.e. the work of Marx himself) will not be out of place. It was Marx who first drew attention to the important distinction between the forces of production and the relations of production. Whereas the forces of production consist of tools, labour power and technical knowledge -- i.e. determine the limits within which nature can be objectified or controlled -- the relations of production determine the way in which labour power, tools and technical knowledge are applied to the processing of raw materials. Habermas points to the additionally important fact that control over the socially available labour power, as well as the ability to regulate access to the raw materials, determines the distribution of socially produced wealth. In other words, the relations of production give expression to the distribution of social power and therefore to the structure of interests which exist in a given society.<sup>1</sup> Marx saw the transition from capitalism to socialism as being brought about by political revolution. In this revolution the proletariat rises above society, destroys the old set of relations of production (the political apparatus of capitalism) in socializing them, while at the same time retaining intact the existing technological apparatus.

For Marcuse this situation no longer holds good. Because of the following two reasons the possibility of a revolution along the

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<sup>1</sup>Juergen Habermas: "Thesen zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus", Lecture delivered at the Hegel-Kongress held in the Stuttgarter Liederhalle, May, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx: Grundrisse (transl. Martin Nicolaus), Penguin, 1973, p.87 and Karl Marx: Das Kapital, Vol III, in the Marx-Engels Reader, op.cit. p.318

lines mentioned above no longer exists. Firstly, the working classes in the West have sold their revolutionary potential in exchange for the promise of a continually rising standard of living. Secondly, Marcuse believes that the ideological mystifications erected by the new technological universe prevent the formation of a politically informed class consciousness along the lines foreseen by Marx. The theme of One-Dimensional Man is that the technological universe and the political universe have merged into one single universe, i.e. "Technological rationality has become political rationality."<sup>1</sup>

Marcuse's development of this thesis however, is ambiguous. At times he seems to regard technique as the sole driving force in history. At other times he suggests that the forces of production can only expand within the limits laid down by the already existing institutionalized relations of production. Let us examine Marcuse's argument in greater detail, in order to see if we can discover the reasons why he presented it in such an ambiguous manner.

In the opening chapter of One-Dimensional Man he writes that; "The techniques of industrialization are political techniques; as such they prejudge the possibilities of Reason and Freedom."<sup>2</sup> Marcuse goes on explicitly to reject the view that technology can be used for whatever ends we wish to employ it.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, he sees the conception of the neutrality of technique as being contested

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.14

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.31

<sup>3</sup>In 'Philisophie und kritische Theorie' (1937)-reprinted in .cit Kultur und Gesellschaft, Band I - Marcuse uses a concept of reason (Vennunftbegriff) which is couched in a strongly ideqlist manner (p.107); At least one of the reasons why Marcuse talks at times about the supremacy of technique in this way could be that he has never fully overcome these ideqlist presuppositions. Instead of Absolute Mind or the Absolute Ego, technique now becomes the constituting subject which points the objective world for us.



by Marx himself.<sup>1</sup> This view is confirmed by Marcuse's criticisms of the Soviet Union. Here too he rejects the idea that nationalizing technical progress leads to liberation. The reasons for this is that the logic of technical progress is the logic of domination per se.

"However, when technics becomes the universal form of material production, it circumscribes an entire culture; <sup>2</sup>it projects a historical totality -- a 'world'".

But Marcuse does not always argue along these lines. In the opening chapter of One-Dimensional Man we also find statements such as the following : "The highest productivity of labour can be used for the perpetuation of labour, and the most efficient industrialization can serve the restriction and manipulation of needs "(Emphasis added).

In this quotation I have deliberately drawn attention to the way in which Marcuse's uses the passive voice. Does this not imply an awareness on Marcuse's part of the existence of a structure of interest which lie outside the domain of the imperatives of technology itself, and which can determine the uses to which technology is put?

There is a great deal of evidence to support the view that Marcuse does in fact often write with this very perspective in mind. As Habermas has pointed out, it becomes logically impossible to argue that technical rationality has become political rationality and, at

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<sup>1</sup>Marcuse's interpretation is significant in so far as the dialectic between forces and relations of production is also presented in an ambiguous manner by Marx (just, interestingly enough, as it is in nearly all attempts to give an account of the evolution of technocratic society. Mumford, for example, on pp.26 & 87 of Technics and Civilization attributes causal supremacy to the institutional framework of society. In direct contradiction of this position, on pp. 105 & 356 he attributes supremacy to the machine itself. And this same ambiguity is found again in Galbraith - The New Industrial State, p.17 as opposed to pp.111-113)

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.127

the same time, to urge the need (and assume the possibility) for revolution, unless one is prepared to accept the view that a qualitatively new and different kind of scientific rationality is possible. Marcuse, however, shies away from the implications of a 'new technique' and a 'new rationality', and even goes so far as to brandish the call for a 'qualitative physics' as an obscurantist mystification.<sup>1</sup>

In other works, too, Marcuse often argues along these lines. In Eros and Civilization he talks a great deal about the way in which technology is put to use.<sup>2</sup> In his introduction he argues that the capability of a society to do such horrifying things as to 'overkill' and 'overburn' is the "...by-product of the development of the productive forces within a system of exploitation and repression." (emphasis added). This line of reasoning continues throughout the book: the brute fact of scarcity is the consequence of a specific organization of society.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in the lecture on Max Weber, the latter is criticized for paying too little attention to this dialectic and analysing rationality in a reductive and technocratic manner.<sup>4</sup>

If at times Marcuse argues that the forces of production are the major historical force, and at other times, that the relations of production enjoy this status, then what are we to make of this confusing state of affairs? The key to finding an answer to this question lies in an analysis of the following ideas of Marcuse's:

"Thus the rational hierarchy emerges with the social one. If this is the case, then the change in the direction of progress, which might sever this link, would also affect the very structure of science - the scientific project."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.135

<sup>2</sup>Herbert Marcuse: Eros and Civilization, Sphere, London, 1970

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Chapter Two

<sup>4</sup>Marcuse: 'Industrialisierung und Kapitalismus im Werk Max Weber's' in Marcuse: Kultur und Gesellschaft, Bank II, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, a.M., 1965

<sup>5</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.135

However, the structure of science and the scientific project are not the same thing. It is, therefore, not a case of one 'old' kind of rationality and logic or one 'new' kind of rationality and logic, but a case of recognising that there have always been two different kinds of logic and rationality. Marcuse's failure to make this recognition is the fundamental weakness in the theory of one-dimensionality. The strength of Habermas's position, on the other hand, lies precisely in the fact that he does differentiate between the rationality of instrumental action and the mode of logic which governs communicative action at the intersubjective level, i.e. the level at which we determine the uses to which our objective knowledge, won from the structure of science, is to be put.

Once this is grasped the problem for a theory of social evolution then becomes that of how to explain the paradoxical fact that, while social systems alter their 'goal-values' (Sollwerte) in a state of dependence upon the forces of production, the changes which take place in these values themselves are limited by the logic of the development of 'world-views' (Weltbilder), a logic quite different from that upon which purposive-rational action is based.<sup>1</sup>

We are now in a position to suggest why Marcuse's work contains this ambiguity. The difficulty centers around the epistemological problem concerning the relationship between the idea of freedom and its practical realization.

If the system of one-dimensionality is water-tight, then critique can dispense with an explanation of what Claus Offe calls, its own 'Denkmoeglichkeit' (possibility of being thought).<sup>2</sup> Because of the following two elements in Marcuse's analysis, he avoids having to

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<sup>1</sup>c.f. op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus, p.18

<sup>2</sup>Claus Offe: "Technik und Eindimensionalität: Eine Version der Technokratiethese?" in Antworten auf Herbert Marcuse, herausgegeben von Juergen Habermas, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1969, p.87

offer an historical account of the possibility for revolution. On the one hand Marcuse believes that manipulation is universal. On the other hand, he believes that, because of the spectacular technological progress made in late capitalist society, the reality of pacified existence is so near at hand, that it will require only a sudden and collective realization of this fact to provoke the decision to overthrow the existing system. As Offe puts it; for Marcuse: "The reality of pacified existence is near and far at the same time".

In so far as Marcuse feels it at all necessary to talk about the location of potential revolutionary energy, he does so by situating it with those marginal groups who stand outside the productive process itself -- the racial minorities, the jobless, the lumpen proletariat and the students. If the possibility of pacified existence is both near and far, if the attempt is not made to mediate logically between the mode of rationality of universal domination and the mode of rationality of pacified existence, then the ability to make revolution does not presuppose a necessary understanding of historical process. Revolution comes instead as a flash of glowing need.

"It would be a decision which raised vital biological, erotic and aesthetic demands, and which realized them in one single action."<sup>1</sup>

It is in this way that Marcuse avoids having to answer the important question concerning the relationship of theory to practice in technocratic society, namely, 'Who educates the educators?'

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.84

## III

In this section we shall deal in greater detail with Habermas's criticisms of Marcuse. The intention here is to show, firstly, how Habermas returns to certain important themes in classical Marxism in order to criticise Marcuse, and then secondly, to show how Habermas undertakes certain important revisions in Marx's work in order to retain its theoretical relevancy for the changed historical situation of late capitalist society.

As we saw earlier on, the conservative critique of technocratic society ended on a note of extreme pessimism. What was found to be problematical with this critique was that it argued that the economy, polity and culture had been turned into circular systems of self-governing technical rationality, and that these closed systems, therefore, left no more room for the exercise of human choice and consequently no hope of emancipation.

In contrast to this viewpoint, the merit of Marcuse's theory is that he holds emancipation to be desirable, necessary and possible. Marcuse's theory, however, becomes problematical for us, as the analysis he presents rests upon certain unresolved ambiguities. These ambiguities stem from Marcuse's main thesis which argues that technical rationality and political domination have grown together in a fused, circular relationship.

In arguing against this position, Habermas reverts back to Marxism itself in order to recall the truth of one of its most important and systematically developed themes: that the emancipation of the human species presupposes the successful resurrection of nature.

"The innocence of technique, which we have to defend against its portentous detractors, lies simply therein, that the reproduction of the human species is bound

to the conditions of instrumental, wholly purposive-rational action -- and that, therefore, only the extent but not the structure of technical control can vary historically as long as this human species remains organically what it is."<sup>1</sup>

Habermas sees Marcuse as falling victim to the lure of a romantic philosophy, in the same way in which Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch did in their attempts to free the exchange between man and nature from all the repressive elements associated with the technical domination of nature. Instead of seeing nature as the object of possible technical control, Marcuse wishes to encounter her as an opposing partner in a possible interaction, i.e. he seeks to replace our present exploitative exchange with nature with a future 'fraternal' interchange with external nature.<sup>2</sup> This is Marcuse's reponse to the notion that the rationality of modern science is a deforming, corrupt and crippling rationality.

But as Claus Offe argues, it is not at all clear why we should suppose that the technical form of our knowledge of nature should also necessarily have to determine the methods and objects of our application of this knowledge.<sup>3</sup> It should not be forgotten that the establishment and maintenance of gardens, parks and protected areas (which Marcuse uses as examples of the pacified transformation of nature) depend upon exactly the same type of knowledge and control of nature as does the capacity to overburn and to overkill through the weaponry of modern warfare.

As the physical level, at least, the continued existence of the human species depends upon the logic of technological development as it is embodied in the structure of work. Habermas is therefore

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas: Theorie und Praxis, op.cit. pp.348-349

<sup>2</sup>Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, op.cit. p.88

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Offe: 'Technik und Eindimensionalitaet', p.96  
 (... "produktive and destruktive Verwendung unterscheiden sich nicht im gesellschaftlichen Sinn des Apriori der Vorausgehenden Erkenntnis.")

convinced that what Marcuse should mean when he talks about pacified existence is an alternative attitude to nature rather than the conception of a different kind of structure of work.

"The alternative to existing technology...refers to an alternative structure of action: to symbolic interaction in distinction to purposive-rational action. This means, however, that the two projects are projections of work and of language, i.e. projects of the human species as a whole, and not of an individual<sup>1</sup> epoch, a specific class, or a surpassable situation".

According to the distinction which Habermas makes between the subsystems and the institutional framework of society, we can now see that the aggregate of techniques and the systems of purposive-rational action do not develop in full autonomy and solely on the basis of their own imminent logic. They develop only within the context of institutionalized social worlds. The actual pattern which technical development assumes is prescribed by social institutions and structures of interest; not the least of which being those which determine the location of decision-making power over the form of future investment.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the costs of technical research (e.g. space research) have risen so enormously in the last few years, should make it obvious that the extent and direction of future progress in this field will be determined to a significant extent by the politicians who have to achieve some sort of balance between scarce financial resources and the demand for expansion made by preferred areas of research and development. In late capitalist society the nature of state investment plays a decisive role in determining the direction in which the society moves as a whole. Although we began this chapter by employing the concept of the technocratic society in a loosely defined manner, we can now justify the fact that it can be tied down to a more specific form -- late capitalist society. For its survival

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.88

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: Critique of Domination, Chapter 7.

the system depends upon continued capital investment, but at the same time such investment is subject to political control and interference on a massive scale, thus rendering the purely economic form of early capitalism redundant.

"The crucial problem is to provide those agencies possessed of the institutional competence to make decisions concerning the realization of capital with sufficiently strong incentives and opportunities for investment, and moreover, to give compensation for lack of opportunity to invest. In such problems - typical of those with which political administrative management centers are confronted - is manifested the continued basic capitalist structure of the economic system. Moreover - and this justified the qualification of late capitalist - there can be no question that the realization of private capital is politically mediated down to the last detail precisely because of its key position in maintaining the continued stability of the system as a whole."<sup>1</sup>

The mobilizing function which the state now performs is connected to its function and ability to redistribute national income. In West Germany, for example, the percentage of state appropriation and distribution of national income has risen from 15% to 44% in the last fifty years.<sup>2</sup> The effects of state activity on scientific and technical progress can be observed directly in the following two areas. Firstly, the state can stimulate demand through the creation of 'investment goods' (Investitionsgueter), e.g. by placing new orders with the armaments sector. Secondly, the state must guarantee the infra-structural requirements of the economy as a whole and this includes making heavy investments in the following areas: science, research, education, transport, communications, subsidies for the building industry and for agriculture, and city planning.

We can conclude from this that social development is not determined solely by technological imperatives. However, such a conclusion is not yet of great theoretical significance because of the fact that, although neither the imperatives

<sup>1</sup>Claus Offe: 'Political Authority and Class Structures' Op.cit. p.98.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Deppe: "'Alte' und 'neue' Arbeiterklasse" in Technologie und Kapital, op.cit. p.88



of technology nor the imperatives of social integration have causal supremacy in themselves, we still do not know very much about the way in which these two systems interact. We therefore have to ask ourselves, in terms of our definition of what a rational society might mean, what degree of rationality could be claimed for the kinds of investment decisions made in late capitalist society.

In order to answer this question, we must turn again to certain elements in Marx's work. Although Marx does not adequately explain the way in which the systems of technological production and social integration interact,<sup>1</sup> he nevertheless does tell us something very important about the way in which these systems interact in one specific historical period. Characteristic for capitalist development is the fact that the active adaptation of the technical subsystems to the external conditions of existence has been matched only by a corresponding passive adaptation on the part of the institutional framework to changes in the forces of production.

Habermas sees the importance of The Communist Manifesto as lying not only in Marx's praise for the way in which the bourgeoisie, in a rule of scarcely one hundred years, 'has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together': but also as lying in the fact that in it Marx grasped the way in which this constant revolutionizing of the forces of production acts back upon the relations of production.<sup>2</sup> In Marx's own words:

"All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas: 'Thesen zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus, op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>Habermas: Theorie und Praxis, op.cit. p.351

<sup>3</sup>The Marx-Engles Reader, op.cit. p.338

Marx argued that man, having become conscious of the real conditions of life, could institute a new kind of political order: one in which the enormous liberating potential of the forces of production could be used for the benefit of all men rather than in which surplus value would continue to be expropriated by the owners capital. The institutionalization of this kind of new political order would correspond to replacing the realm of necessity with the realm of freedom.

It was in this way that Marx left the promise of freedom to mankind. Man makes his own history, but until now has not done so consciously. This being the case, the historical task facing mankind centers around the reorganization of the relations of production. The realm of freedom is made possible by the development of the forces of production, but depends for its realization upon the re-organization of the relations of production. Habermas's starting point, as we saw, was the question of how technical knowledge can be translated in a rational manner into practical knowledge. We can now see that the intention behind the 'Fragestellung' is to redeem this lost promise of Marxism under changed historical conditions.

#### IV

The question of the redemption of the lost promise of Marxism can be reformulated as a question concerning the relation of technology and democracy. By technology Habermas understands the 'scientifically rationalized control of objectified processes.' By democracy, on the other hand, Habermas understands those 'institutionally secured forms of general and public communication that deal with the practical question of how men can and want to live.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.57

Because of the changed historical situation in which late capitalism finds itself, Habermas rejects the idea of radical revolutionary activity as it has been understood since the publication of The Communist Manifesto in February, 1848. In 1968 however, it is changing the general structure of education which seems to be more important for the organization of enlightenment than the training of cadres or the building of revolutionary (but impotent) parties.

Significantly, Habermas does not proceed from this point to argue that the challenge posed by technology can be overcome by technological means. The historical tasks, as Habermas sees them, are the following:

"The question is to set in motion a politically effective discussion, which will place our social potential of technical knowledge and power (Wissen und Koennen) in rational harmony with our practical knowledge and volition (Wissen und Wollen)."<sup>1</sup>

The key to Habermas's criticism of Marx is that Marx falsely reduces the self-generative act of the human species to labour: Marx believed that the reproduction of social life could be rationally planned (through the introduction of universal suffrage) as a process of producing use values. In this argument what Marx does, is to equate 'the practical insight of a political public with successful technical control'. Against this view, Habermas raises a plausible objection:

"Meanwhile we have learned that even a well-functioning planning bureaucracy with scientific control of the production of goods and services is not a sufficient condition for realizing the associated material and intellectual productive forces in the interest of the enjoyment and freedom of an emancipated society."<sup>2</sup>

When discussing the conservative thesis of technocratic society and Marcuse's thesis of the one-dimensionality of technocratic society, we drew attention to the fact that the source of our objections

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theorie und Praxis, p.357

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.58

to both theses lay in a failure to distinguish clearly between the mode of logic of instrumental action at the subsystem level and the mode of logic of communicative action at the higher level. Marx was very well aware of this distinction, but, in Habermas's view did not see with sufficient clarity the extent to which his analysis was based in actual fact upon just such a distinction.<sup>1</sup>

In both the 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' and the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Marx includes both an analysis of the forces of production (in which instrumental action prevails), as well as an analysis of the relations production from which Marx does not eliminate or reduce the role of the structure of symbolic interaction and cultural tradition. Although Marx understands the history of social development in terms of this dialectic, (i.e. in terms of material reproduction and of the critical abolition of ideologies) he interprets his method in a way which Habermas finds unacceptable, for his interpretation of his own method would have us believe that social development is always causally tied to changes in the structure of work alone. "Thus in Marx's works, a peculiar disproportion arises between the practice of inquiry and the limited philosophical self-understanding of inquiry."<sup>2</sup>

Against this more limited self-understanding of Marx's, Habermas contends that an advance in the level of social evolution can only be said to occur if the change is marked by a conscious supersession of constraint at both levels:

"Raising the productivity of technical exploitable knowledge, which in the sphere of socially necessary labour, leads to the complete substitution of machinery for men, has its counterpart here in the self-reflection of consciousness in its manifestations to the point where the self-consciousness of the species has attained the level of critique and freed itself from all ideological delusion.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, Chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. p.42

The two developments do not converge. Yet they are interdependent; Marx tried in vain to capture this in the dialectic of forces of production and relations of production. In vain -- for the meaning of this 'dialectic' must remain unclarified as long as the materialist concept of the synthesis of man and nature is restricted to the categorial framework of production."<sup>1</sup>

It is to Freud that Habermas turns in order to complement the limitations involved in Marx's reflection upon his own method, with a more valid model of the theoretical status of self-reflection in the cultural sciences. Both Freud and Marx regard society as being the element in which man lifts himself above the animal conditions of existence. What distinguished man from animal for Marx, was the fact that man is a tool-making and tool-wielding creature. Habermas argues that the concept of social labour which Marx develops on the basis of this distinction, reaches back too far into the evolutionary scale. Not man but the hominidens first distinguished themselves from anthropoid apes in making the reproduction of the species dependent upon social labour.<sup>2</sup> Arguing along the lines suggested by Freud, Habermas seeks to show that it is the institution of the family which distinguishes man from animal in the most fundamental sense. The family, with its differentiated roll and status-system, introduces a system of norms of action which presuppose language. It is these norms of action which comprise the institutional framework of society and decide upon which needs (the latter always being expressed in terms of language) are to be satisfied and which are to be suppressed.<sup>3</sup>

What is important about this line of argument is that, if the purpose of suppression is to convert libidinal energy into work

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.55

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Thesen zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus.

<sup>3</sup>Freud argued that the causes of neurosis at the individual level were the same as those which drove the society to establish institutions at the social level -- both involve the repression of instinctual energy in favour of the larger reality principle. (c.f. Civilization and its Discontents, transl. Joan Riviere, Hogarth Press, London, 1972)

because of a scarcity of goods, then the kinds of needs and the extent to which they are repressed is an historically variable factor. This underlies the argument that the basic problem confronting mankind in the attempt to realize freedom, is not the organization of labour, but the 'evolution of institutions that permanently solve the conflict between surplus impulses and the constraint of reality.'" But this conflict is not always resolved in a form which widens the realm of freedom. In the collective unconscious of the cultural tradition, motives, which have been split off from communication in a transparent form, are disguised in a distorted symbolic form and re-directed into channels of substitute gratification. This kind of ideologically imprisoned consciousness can only free itself through the emancipatory power of self-reflection once a new potential for the mastery of nature strips the old legitimations of their credibility.

The inclusion of these elements from Freud's idea of a metapsychology suited to the study of distorted communicative action, focuses attention more sharply upon the importance of power and ideology in social development. In attempting to outline a model of social evolution based upon this essential complementarity between Marx and Freud, Habermas intends to show that the interest in self-preservation cannot be defined independently of the cultural conditions of work, language and power together.

"The interest of self-preservation cannot aim at the reproduction of the life of the species automatically and without thought, because under the conditions of the existence of culture this species must first interpret what it counts as life."<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis added)

A social system interacts with its environment through production (appropriation of external nature) and socialization (appropriation of internal nature). Production depends upon the truth of empirical

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.288

statements (capable of verification) and socialization upon the status of norms (capable of justification). Progress in the system of production takes place within the limits of what have been called 'growth possibilities'.<sup>1</sup> These limits are set by the capacities of the biological and natural environments (i.e. not only by the supply of raw materials, but also by the capacity of these environments to maintain an ecological balance in the face of the effects of pollution and radio-active fall-out etc).

The growth possibilities which determine the development at the level of socialization are extremely difficult to define. We have already mentioned the fact that the socio-cultural environment fulfills two important functions. It consists, on the one hand, of an organization of suppressive forces which enforce the repression of the demand for instinctual gratification. On the other hand, the cultural system itself serves to articulate the mass of our needs and to anticipate demands for gratification. Some of these demands are re-interpreted into mythical, religious or utopian elements and in this way confer, as consolation, legitimating power on the prevailing structure of norms. It is, therefore, in this system that the structure of domination is determined. But this fact does not make it any easier to determine the ceilings to growth or to the limits to change in the direction of either increased emancipation or further repression. The reason for this difficulty, as Habermas has pointed out, is that we have never been able to discover any psychological 'constants' in human nature.<sup>2</sup>

However, the fact that no constants of this nature can be said to exist, does not mean that a social system could expand indefinitely in either direction. The limitations here are to be found in the way in which a social system produces motivations for action. We have

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<sup>1</sup> Denis Meadows: The Limits of Growth, Heinemann, London, 1972

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.63.

already pointed out that all social systems have to resolve in one form or another the conflict between surplus impulses and the constraint of reality. To the extent to which they succeed in doing this without producing "unequivocally identifiable suffering", they can be said to be seen to be legitimate and will, therefore, be able to generate the necessary level of motivation for the perpetuation of the system. If suffering becomes unequivocally identifiable, i.e. if a process of critical self-reflection lays bare the unnecessary ideological restraints, then a system crisis will be experienced in the form of a withdrawal of motivation.

But not only do we have to define the distinct growth possibilities in each of the two spheres of production and socialization; we also have to find a way of accounting for the manner in which they interact. This Habermas does through his theory of language. Language acts as a transformer between these dimensions because communication about the contents of propositional knowledge is only possible under conditions of simultaneous metacommunication about interpersonal relationships. The transcendental unity of language is seen by Habermas, as the ground of human intersubjectivity.<sup>1</sup>

Habermas's attempt to account for the nature of social evolution is constructed to show that social change does not follow only the logic of the extension of the forces of production, but also takes place "...in the boundaries of a logic of the life world, whose structures are determined by the intersubjectivity produced through language and which rest upon claims for validity (Geltungs-ansprueche) which can be held up to criticism."<sup>2</sup> For Habermas, a social formation centers around a fundamental 'organizing principle' which lays down the 'abstract space' within which possible changes in the social

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<sup>1</sup>This will be the main theme in Chapter Five.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.27



structure can occur. ("Organizing principles limit the capacity of a society to learn without losing its identity."<sup>1</sup>)

Such organizing principles consist of highly abstract rules and should never be identified with a particular mode of production. What every organizing principle does is to lay down a particular level of learning (Lernniveau). In his address to the Hegel Congress (1975) Habermas argued that, in explaining the change from one kind of social formation to another, we have to do two things: firstly, we have to take cognisance of the system-problems which overstrain the steering capacity of the particular social formation; secondly, we have to take cognisance of the evolutionary learning process which the new organizing principle calls into existence.

"A society can only learn (in an evolutionary sense) when the system problems, which the old system could not solve, are solved by the skimming off and institutional utilization of the surplus individual learning capacities. In this way the first step towards the establishment of a new form of social integration takes place: a form of integration which allows for an increase in the forces of production as well as an extension of system-complexity."<sup>2</sup>

We can, on this basis, determine the stage of development of a society in terms of the institutionally accepted learning capacity, i.e. in terms of whether or not provision is made for the differentiation of technical from practical questions. This is the reason why the problems posed by technology cannot be met by technology alone. The realm of freedom can only be realized in Habermas's view through the setting into motion of a politically effective discussion, whose specific task it is rationally to combine technical power with correctly understood and interpreted human and social needs. Discussion of this type performs two important practical functions. Firstly it would promote a process of enlightenment amongst those who act politically, thus enabling them more rationally to relate their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 18

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: 'Thesen zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus.'

tradition-bound self-understanding of their interests to the existing level of what is technically possible at any particular stage of the development of the forces of production. Secondly, in terms of such a discussion, man would also learn to judge to what extent, and in which direction, any further development of the technical subsystem of society is desirable in view of the needs which have been made the object of general articulation and new interpretation in the first stage of the discussion.

"In this situation questions of life conduct demand a rational discussion that is not focused exclusively either on technical means or on the application of traditional behavioural norms. The reflection that is required extends beyond the production of technical knowledge and the hermeneutical clarification of traditions to the employment of technical means in historical situations whose objective conditions (potentials, institutions, interests) have to be interpreted anew each time in the framework of a self-understanding determined by tradition."<sup>1</sup>

The inclusion of practical questions in this way as the legitimate subject of discourse would be coterminous with the attainment of a new learning level in a society. On this basis the reign of conscious human history could begin. This is the way in which Habermas seeks to redeem the lost promise of Marxism.

## V

Before concluding this chapter, I wish to place the foregoing exegesis in a more general perspective. I propose to do this by mentioning two criticisms<sup>2</sup> which can be justifiably levelled at the programme which Habermas develops in order to redeem the legitimacy

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.53

<sup>2</sup>These criticisms, as well as possible alternative solutions to the problems, will be taken up again in Chapter Six where they will be the subject of a more detailed discussion.

of Marxism for a critique of late capitalist society, as well as by pointing to the extremely valuable function which Habermas's writings have performed in an historical situation characterized in general by the extreme poverty of the attempts to interpret nature and society as a whole.

In one particular instance, it is not so easy to reconcile some of Habermas's conclusions with the substantive analysis he presents. There is, at the very least, a certain amount of ambiguity concerning the possibility of institutionalizing a 'politically effective dialogue' under the conditions of extensive cultural manipulation. The resultant effect of cultural manipulation is the depoliticization of the public realm. Individual life becomes progressively privatized and therefore ineffective from the point of view of influencing the 'public' institutions which manipulate individual behaviour. However, at the same time, this process results in the growing structuration of all private life through cultural manipulation, and, as Trent Schroyer puts it, the resultant paradox is that the individual is depoliticized and yet integrated into the social system with the consequences that 'classic public opinion is replaced by an atmosphere of acclamation.'<sup>1</sup>

The ambiguities which arise from this situation can be clearly seen in Habermas's essay entitled, "Praktische Folgen des wissenschaftlich - technischen Fortschritts".<sup>2</sup> This essay ends with what we have already characterized as a central 'Leitmotiv' of Habermas's thought: namely, that the redeeming power of reflection cannot be replaced with the extension of technically realizable knowledge, if the possibility of freedom in history is to be kept alive. However, if from this point we retrace the steps of Habermas's argument, we find in the third to last paragraph the following: "In the place

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: "Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society", p.230

<sup>2</sup>Printed in the German edition, op.cit. of Theory and Practice.

of norms...comes the external control through stimuli." The latter kinds of control are functional: there is nothing in them which one can see through (durchschauen). In the face of such opaque forms of control, reflection would be powerless. This latter situation is a result of the fact that the technical systems of society have 'absorbed' and thereby liquidated the historically important relationship between the domination of external nature and the realization of social freedom.

Habermas seeks to resolve the tension between these two positions -- between the desired state in which reflection retains its validity and the negative utopia of total social control -- by asserting that the task is and remains that of instituting an open and effective political discussion. This assertion does, however, leave open too many important questions of a sociological nature about the extent to which the conditions for the possibility of the institutionalization of the dialogic situation have themselves being called into question.

The Italian commentator, Gian Rusconi, for example, believes that the process of institutionalizing an ultra-democratic dialogue such as Habermas has in mind represents the weakest link in the conceptual chain. This is because Habermas assumes the operation of a therapeutic dynamic of a Freudian metapsychological kind which has the extremely difficult task of having to make concrete a social theory in the form of knowing self-reflection (erkennende Selbstreflexion).<sup>1</sup> The danger, as Rusconi sees it, is that the substance of genuine political action will be substituted for a kind of group therapy.

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<sup>1</sup>Gian Enrico Rusconi: "Erkenntnis und Interesse bei Habermas", (aus dem italienischen von Burkhardt Kroeber) abgedrueckt in Materialien zu Habermas 'Erkenntnis und Interesse', herausgegeben von Winifried Dallmayr, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, a.M., 1974, p.118.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that, no matter how serious the above objections, Habermas's theory is a response to that troublesome question which has been eating away at the roots of critical thought since its inceptions: namely, 'Who educates the educators?' Marx asserted that the oppressed must be free for their liberation before they can become free in fact. As we have seen from his condemnation of the 'ineffectual training of cadres' and the building of impotent parties, Habermas takes this notion of Marx's very seriously. His sensitivity to the contours of contemporary historical reality forces Habermas to come out squarely on the side of the weapons of critique rather than on the side of the critique of weapons, or even on the side of advocating the necessary conjunction of the two. But the weapons of critique presuppose valid knowledge, and this too is part of the dilemma that has been troubling critical thought since Hegel, viz. the problem of knowing before knowledge. Habermas's answer to this problem lies in his theory of dialogue and centres upon the fact that he grasps knowledge as something which 'becomes.' Instead of being tied to some external and static point, knowledge is only attained in the dialectical process of the formation of will (Willensbildungsprozess) in which technical potential can be related to practical needs and desire. Practical norms, according to Habermas, are capable of truth, and the only way in which the validity of such norms can be tested is through dialogue. The great achievement of Habermas's theory is to have developed a theoretically cogent programme for the re-introduction of practical questions as a legitimate subject of discourse in Western philosophy. Habermas breaks decisively with the prevalent scientistic consciousness in which religion and philosophy have been sublated in a highly ambivalent way due to the fact that in the ruling 'scientism', moral conceptions have been detached from the theoretical systems of interpretation.

"Today religion is no longer a private matter, but in the atheism of the masses the utopian contents of tradition are threatened with extinction. Philosophy has been stripped of its metaphysical claims, but in the dominant scientism, those constructions before which a wretched reality had to justify itself have disintegrated."<sup>1</sup>

Today it is through Habermas' critique of scientism and his attempt to develop a social theory with a practical intent that the possibility of objective freedom has been kept alive in Western thought.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.113

CHAPTER · FOURTHE THEORY OF PRACTICE

"Not whether the street fighter or urban guerrilla can win against the weapons and technology of the modern state, but rather precisely where the street is in the superstate, and indeed, whether the old-fashioned street as such still exists in the first place in that seamless web of marketing and automated production which makes up the new state: such are the theoretical problems of Marxism today, at least in what might be termed the over-developed countries."<sup>1</sup>

The changes brought about by the First World War had a far-reaching impact upon European Marxism. For the first time, a Marxist party had succeeded in capturing state power, but this had not happened in a highly industrialized European nation as Marx thought it first would. Instead the revolution had taken place in semi-barbaric, semi-asiatic Russia; causing Trotsky to remark rather ruefully that "History seems to be unwinding her skein from the other end." In this situation that very real brand of revolutionary optimism, such as Trotsky entertained, soon revealed its impotence: it became clear that in backward Russia spontaneous support for the right policies would not always be forthcoming. To overcome the deficiencies caused by a lack of social awareness, the conquests of the revolution would have to be consolidated by naked force imposed from above.<sup>2</sup> As early as the thirteenth congress of the Communist Party in May, 1924, Trotsky was called upon to admit that he had been wrong in criticizing the Politburo -- the first instance in the history of Bolshevism where a member of the party was charged with a 'crime of conscience'. What of the system of production and consumption which would enable man to return to himself from the forms of self-estrangement, and to grasp the world with his own powers, thus becoming one with it? What, finally, had become of the

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<sup>1</sup>F. Jameson: Marxism and Form, Princetown University Press, Princetown, 1974

<sup>2</sup>I. Deutscher: The Prophet Outcast, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, p.448

"resistance movement against the destruction of love in social reality", as Paul Tillich had described the communist movement.<sup>1</sup>

This radical disruption of basic Marxist assumptions led to a searching reappraisal of the foundation stones of Marxist theory. One of the most crucial questions which had to be re-examined was that concerning the relation of theory to practice. Practice, or praxis, has been used in the Marxist tradition to refer to self-conscious action as opposed to externally conditioned and purely reactive behaviour. In Marxism practice has always borne a dialectical relation to theory, thus making a strong contrast to the position outlined by Aristotle in his Metaphysics in which practice was held to be separated from and opposed to the purely contemplative realm of theoria. Martin Jay describes the Marxist usage of this term as follows :

"In fact, one of the earmarks of praxis as opposed to mere action was its being informed by theoretical considerations. The goal of revolutionary theory was understood as the unifying of theory and praxis, which would be in direct contrast to the situation prevailing under capitalism."<sup>2</sup>

Lenin, however, in this concluding speech to the 11th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, introduced a fateful revision into the original Marxist usage as outlined above. In this speech the two poles of the dialectic as seen by Lenin were not so much praxis on the one hand and theory as such on the other, but praxis and its relation to the problems of organization. In his extremely influential essay 'Towards a methodology of the problem of organization', written shortly after the First World War, Lukacs too echoed Lenin's theme: the problem of the organization of the Communist Party, Lukacs argued, should be re-instated as 'one of the most important intellectual questions of the revolution'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>c.f. Erich Fromm: Marx's Concept of Man, Ungar Paperbacks, 1961, p.59

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, p.4

<sup>3</sup>Georg Lukacs: History and Class Consciousness (transl. Rodney Livingstone), Merlin Press, London, 1971, pp.295-343



Beginning with their first publications in the earlier 1930's it is the Frankfurt School who again reject the reduction of theory to the problems of organization. Habermas stands clearly within this tradition. Critical theory has set itself the enormously difficult task of re-thinking the relation between theory and practice at a time when the possibilities for a revolutionary transformation of Western society appear as remote as ever. Nevertheless, the emancipation of society for Habermas depends upon the rational control of the forces of production by fully democratized relations of production, and in order to make good this claim, Habermas does not shrink from the responsibility of explaining how theory can inform liberating praxis.

But this does not mean that the question, 'What is to be done?' can be answered unequivocally:

"Only forced interpretations make the present situation seem so clear that answers simply take shape without difficulty. This is the advantage offered by actionism; it generates the illusion that the situation is so unambiguous that only tactical questions are left to be discussed. This re-emergence of the neglected 'organization problem', however, is not a real advance, but only a bluff."<sup>1</sup>

Habermas calls this kind of forced interpretation a bluff as it not only leaves unsolved all the prior theoretical problems but also because it does not even clearly state and analyse such problems. It is therefore of the first importance that we examine these problems in some detail.

Marx had argued that revolutions need a material basis. Theory and practice stand in a dialectical relationship with one another, but this should not be taken to mean that they are linked in an immediate way. Theory, according to Marx, can only be realized

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.46

insofar as it fulfills the needs of the people. ("It is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality must also strive towards thought."<sup>1</sup>) The two poles of dialectical praxis are therefore philosophy -- which finds its material weapons in the proletariat -- and the proletariat -- which finds its intellectual weapons in philosophy. In classical Marxism, the final emancipation of man is based upon the assumption that the working class is the sole catalyst of the new order:

"Philosophy is the head of this emancipation and the proletariat is its heart. Philosophy can only be realized by the abolition of the proletariat, and the proletariat can only be abolished by the realization of philosophy."<sup>2</sup>

The difficulty with which critical theory is confronted, is that it is no longer clear how theory can become a practical force when the only class that Marx saw as being capable of realizing political freedom has shown itself to be inadequate to the task of fulfilling its historical role. In 1933 Horkheimer had argued that material conditions in advanced industrial societies had altered to the extent that rather than postulating a connection between philosophy and working class consciousness, the function of a truly critical theory of society would be to encourage a tension between intellectuals and workers in order to combat the tendency of the modern working class to adopt an extremely conformist position.<sup>3</sup> When the possibilities for realizing freedom in this manner appear remote, there is always the danger that cynicism and resignation will become the dominant forms of consciousness. In order to keep alive the idea of freedom, however, critical theory replaces the emphasis upon the positive realization of freedom with an emphasis upon understanding

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx: Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, in op.cit. The Marx-Engels Reader, p.19

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.23

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Horkheimer: Traditionelle und Kritische Theorie

the disappearance of the 'negative' critical forces in the world. This is one of the reasons why the critique of political economy is accorded far less attention than the social and cultural superstructure of society - something which more traditional Marxists have always relegated to a secondary position. Martin Jay neatly describes the position in which critical theory found itself as follows:

"Disillusioned with the Soviet Union, no longer even marginally sanguine about the working classes of the West, appalled by the integrative power of mass culture, the Frankfurt School travelled the last leg of its long march away from orthodox Marxism."<sup>1</sup>

If a necessary part of dialectical thought is that it postulates its own sublation in history by means of the completed revolutionary transformation of capitalist society, then what is missing in the contemporary situation for such a unity of theory and practice is the subject of the revolution. This is why Habermas can characterize the present historical situation in terms very similar to those used by Horkheimer and Adorno in the 1930's and 1940's: "...the exclusion from control over the means of production is no longer bound up to such an extent with deprivation of social rewards (income, security, education, and so forth) that this objective situation would still in any way be experienced subjectively as proletarian. And any class consciousness especially a revolutionary class consciousness, is not to be found in the main strata of the working class today. Every revolutionary theory, under these circumstances, lacks those to whom it is addressed; therefore arguments can no longer be translated into slogans. Even if there still were the critical mind, its heart is lacking; and thus today Marx would have to abandon his hope that theory can become a material force, once it has taken hold of the masses."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, p.256

<sup>2</sup>op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.196

But does this mean that because of the absence of a material force which unites theory and practice, that the critical elements of Marx's analysis of alienation and the need for emancipation have been rendered irrelevant? Habermas answers this question decisively: the answer is 'No', and the reason for this, as Kurt Lenk has pointed out, is because the missing elements for the immediate practical transformation of capitalist society do not mean that capitalism has automatically been transformed into an egalitarian middle class society.<sup>1</sup>

Habermas's analysis of late capitalism points to the fact that class antagonisms have not been abolished, but that they have become latent.<sup>2</sup> State regulated capitalism can be seen as a reaction to the dangers inherent in a situation which produces open class antagonism. One of the primary ways of avoiding open conflict is through the depoliticized class relations of late capitalism: whilst regulating many of the most important infra-structural elements of the economy, the loyalty of the working masses can be provisionally secured through a system of guaranteed financial rewards such as legally stipulated minimum wages, accident and unemployment insurance etc.

Claus Offe has convincingly shown that these politically manipulable variables force us to develop a new approach for understanding the new forms of social inequality, forms which take on an increasingly disguised aspect. Offe's argument is that we must discover at the political level those mechanisms which are now responsible for generating a 'horizontal system of disparities between vital areas' in place of the old vertical system of more direct class inequality.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kurt Lenk: 'Dialektik bei Marx: Erinnerung an den Ursprung der kritischen Gesellschaftstheorie' in Kritik und Interpretation der Kritischen Theorie, Verlag Andreas Achenback, Giessen, 1975, p.2

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus pp.75-78

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Offe: 'Political Authority and Class Structures', p.95

A new type of politics comes to predominate in late capitalist society -- the politics of preventive crisis management. As the priorities for this type of politics are those of system maintenance, certain areas of society will receive no political attention, even when they are in a state of crisis because the consequences of such a crisis have no immediate importance for the stability of the system as a whole. As a consequence of this a new system of structurally determined privileges grows up around certain interest groups concerned with such problems as securing continual prospects for capital realization, maintaining the necessary level of effective demand, the preservation of foreign trading privileges and the prevention and suppression of domestic conflicts.

"An empirical characteristic of the disparity between vital areas is the various lags in development between the actually institutionalized level and the possible level of technical and social progress. The discrepancy between the most advanced production and military apparatus and the stagnating organization of transportation, health and education is likewise a notorious example of the contradiction between rational planning and regulation of fiscal and financial policy, and the anarchic, ungoverned development of cities and regions."<sup>1</sup>

Habermas fully endorses the argument that if such contradictions can no longer be reasonably called class antagonisms, they must be understood in a minimal sense nevertheless as the necessary results of an integral political system of control.<sup>2</sup> But what complicates the issue so much is the fact, as was pointed out earlier, that because of the peculiar nature of its loyalty-ensuring mechanisms, late capitalism engenders neither uncorrected nor immediate exploitation and oppression. Because mass loyalty is created by means of reward for privatized needs, the achievements (or failures) of the system become increasingly difficult to interpret in political terms. This is why Habermas argues that the new 'technocratic'

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.101

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, pp.107-113

ideology of late capitalist society is different from the older kind of capitalist ideology of equivalent exchange. The new criteria no longer serve to justify the organization of social life through the normative regulation of interaction, but are anchored instead to the functions of a system of purposive-rational action. The expansion of state intervention renders what was previously accepted as matter of fact in the cultural realm problematical, and the result is that:

"Meaning is a scarce resource and becomes ever scarcer. In the general public, therefore, expectations arise which are oriented to use-values, that is, expectations which depend upon successful control. The rising level of demand is proportional to the increasing need for legitimation. The scarce resource of 'meaning' is replaced by the fiscally siphoned off resource of value."<sup>1</sup>

The absence of a genuine mode of legitimation is overcome through the creation of financial rewards which conform to the system. As long as such rewards can be created in sufficient quantity, the potential crisis of legitimation remains latent. This is the key to understanding why Habermas argues that the ideological form of technocratic consciousness reflects not just the sundering of an ethical situation but reflects the repression of 'ethics' as such as a category of life. In this situation the frame of reference of interaction, the only frame of reference in which domination and ideology can be comprehended and overcome by means of the capacity to distinguish between regressive and progressive emancipation, is neutralized. Man objectifies himself in the world in terms of strategies of adaptive behaviour determined by the structures of purposive-rational action.

"The reified models of the sciences migrate into the socio-cultural life-world and gain objective power over the latter self-understanding. The ideological nucleus of this consciousness is the elimination of the distinction

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus  
p.104.

between practical and the technical. It reflects, but does not objectively account for, the new constellation of a disempowered institutional framework and systems of purposive-rational action that have taken on a life of their own."<sup>1</sup>

Within this structure of privilege and instrumental decision-making which characterizes late capitalism, the imperatives of efficient operation and self-perpetuation leads to a continual violation of the principle of unrestricted transmission of political motives. This is why, as Offe pointed out, a discrepancy continues to exist between the actually institutionalized level and the possible level of technical and social progress.<sup>2</sup> It is not only the needs of the underprivileged and marginal groups such as students, racial and ethnic minorities, the aged and the physically handicapped which lack any real chance of political articulation, but also the more general needs of the society, as a whole, for humane living conditions and clean air to breathe.

The instrumental concept of political organization for the purpose of suppressing the need for legitimacy makes no provision for the rational self-enlightenment of individual members in those questions which concern their own collective interests. In this situation the interest in one of the two fundamental conditions of our social and cultural existence is violated, viz. the interest which extends to the maintenance of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding and to the creation of communication free from domination. As we pointed out in Chapter One it is only in this latter dimension that the true emancipation of man becomes possible, for it is only here that he can attain freedom from both the external constraints of nature and from the constraints of the hypostatized powers of his own unconscious objectivation in alienated social forms.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.113

<sup>2</sup>c.f. Chapter Four, p. 109.

Praxis, for Habermas, therefore, means that the practical interest in communication without domination, which has disappeared behind the interest in the expansion of our power of technical control must be restored to its rightful place. The restoration of the practical interest would imply a level of reflection that would penetrate beyond the level of particular historical class interests and would disclose mankind's fundamental interest in emancipation as such. Reflection of this kind about suppressed needs would lead to their reformulation in practical norms which would give rise to new forms of social interaction and new forms for the satisfaction of needs -- in short, in terms of our argument in Chapter One, to historical progress.

The two factors which lead Habermas to undertake the revision of the conditions under which the promise of freedom outlined by Marx can be realized -- increasing state intervention and the emergence of science and technology as leading forces of production -- are also central to his concept of practice. In late capitalism science has acquired a political significance, and this has certain consequences for science itself: science can now analyze reflectively the social context in which it is embedded and which determines the utilization of scientifically produced information. Praxis is the practical utilization of knowledge which can be prepared scientifically both in terms of its translation into technologies and strategies on the one hand and into communicative praxis on the other hand.<sup>1</sup> This is why the concept of praxis in Habermas's thought places so large an emphasis upon education and an analysis of discursive learning processes.

"The restructuring of the system of higher education which is now under way can be understood as both a part of technological planning and at the same time a reaction against it, as an attempt to constitute the system of the sciences

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.6



as a political entity. An institution of higher learning which is enlightened with respect to the critique of science, and also politically capable of action, could constitute itself as an advocate to urge that among the alternatives of priority for scientific and technological progress, the decision is not made automatically according to the 'natural laws' imposed by the military-industrial viewpoint, but is decided, on the basis of a general discursive formation of will, only after weighing politically the practical consequences."<sup>1</sup>

In the remaining sections of this chapter we shall explore these perspectives in more detail.

## II

In order to clarify further Habermas's concept of praxis, we shall begin this section by explaining what praxis is not. By proceeding in this way, we can also avoid a common identification, based upon a misunderstanding, which equates the concept of praxis developed in critical theory with the slogans of the New Left. Habermas, as we shall see, has devoted some considerable attention to distancing himself from the latter programmes.<sup>2</sup>

In an extremely perceptive work in which he seeks to restore clarity and theoretical respectability to the general confusion surrounding the whole debate about the practical realization of theory, Bubner argues that a critical theory is in no way spared its philosophical tasks by means of a direct translation into praxis. ("One must bear in mind the trivial truth that the relation between theory and practice poses, in the first place, a theoretical problem.)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.6.

<sup>2</sup>c.f. the essays 'The University in a Democracy: Democratization of the University', 'Student Protest in the Federal Republic of Germany', and 'The Movement in Germany: A critical Analysis' in Toward a Rational Society; and 'Zum Begriff der politischen Beteiligung' in Habermas: Kultur und Kritik, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1974; as well as the introduction to Theory and Practice.

<sup>3</sup>Ruediger Bubner: Theorie und Praxis - eine nachhegelsche Abstraktion, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt, a.M., 1971, p.6.

Contrary to the widely held view that praxis mediated by theory is largely a matter of the correct determination to become actively involved, it is necessary to remember that the mediation of theory and practice makes demands in the first instance upon theory itself.

It is true that the conflict between competing theories must first be settled by theoretical means, i.e. by examining which theory has the best arguments on its side and which offers the most plausible explanation of the phenomenon under discussion. But, - and this is what Bubner is particularly concerned about - none of this has anything to do with practice in an immediate sense. The theoretical mediation of praxis necessitates an examination of the actual structure of praxis and presupposes an explanation of the peculiar nature of praxis.<sup>1</sup>

What is of particular significance for us at this point is that critical theory has rejected the call for immediate action ever since the early 1930's, but that in spite of Habermas's very penetrating and lengthy analysis of the three different interest-based structures of action (instrumental, practical and emancipatory) a satisfactory account of the structures peculiar to practice itself has still not been given. In this chapter we are essentially concerned with the reasons for the rejection of immediate political action in critical theory. In the very last chapter of this work, we shall again take up the difficult problem of the nature of practice itself.

Even in his more optimistic earlier writings, Horkheimer, while still arguing along classical Marxist lines and supporting the idea that Nazism could be stopped by the direct seizure of control by working classes, shows signs of recognizing that the real chances for such development are remote and that a more likely outcome than 'the beginning of history' would be a 'retreat into barbarism'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.35

<sup>2</sup>Horkheimer: 'Vernunft und Selbsterhaltung', quoted in Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, op.cit. p,158

The argument that freedom could no longer be attained through revolutionary praxis began to gain increasing currency within critical theory. But this did not mean that critical theory gave up the idea of freedom as the most desirable of all social goals: it meant only that in the dark times ahead the life of the independent, thinking mind was to be the last refuge of freedom. In this situation political action in itself brought certain dangers with it and only lonely and independent thought could guard against these:

"Those intellectuals who fully subordinate themselves to the psychological situation of the class which in itself appears to represent the force of transformation and change, are led to a professional optimism and to the euphoric sensation that they are tied to an immense power. When the latter suffers severe set-backs, many of these same intellectuals face the danger of falling into a pessimism and nihilism that would be as unfounded as their optimism was. They cannot bear the fact that in particular periods it happens that the representatives of the most avant-garde, and futuristic thought, thought which grasps the historical situation at its roots,<sup>1</sup> are necessarily isolated and forced to rely on themselves."

In the post World War II situation Habermas echoes these sentiments, but with a new emphasis: questions of political action become enmeshed in the contours of the new technocratic consciousness. As so-called objective technical exigencies are linked to the unbroken structures of inherited domination, a hatred of technocracy begins to manifest itself. Habermas argues that the mistrust of technocratic developments which justify norms of domination by means of recourse to such objective imperatives is quite justified.<sup>2</sup> The danger inherent in this situation, however, is that justified criticism of this situation easily turns into sentiment hostile to learning, science and technology as such. What begins as a rejection of achievement orientations and the requirements of competence often ends in an explicit hostility to theory. And the end effect is to advance the cause of repression rather than freedom.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Horkheimer: Traditionelle und Kritische Theorie, pp.43-44.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.33

"The left's misleading total perspective and the right's affirmation of the status quo without any perspective could mesh, bringing about through the method of self-fulfilling prophecy what has always been evoked: the application of naked repression."<sup>1</sup>

The warning is again the same. A movement whose aim is the total liberation of society must not allow itself to be drawn into actionistic blunders. Habermas argues that the overhasty subordination of theoretical work to the ad hoc requirements of practice and the devaluation of theory in general are connected to the slogan of the 'New Immediacy', i.e. the demand for immediate instinctual gratification. The New Left and hippie subcultures -- especially in the U.S.A., England and West Germany -- have sought to overcome the atomization of private living and learning through the experience of group solidarity. Although such experiments do create some measure of sensitivity to atrophied modes of experiencing interaction (for example, the valid critique of the bourgeois educational process, "which has directed the young to individuation by means of the solitary reading of the printed word") they also contain a negative side, viz. their actions do not affect the centres of political power but tend rather to serve the immediate instinctual gratification of their initiators through the simple release of aggression than the liberation of the society as a whole.

"Even during the Paris May revolt the resistance of the working class, which resulted from conventional failures of capitalist planning, was not really at one with the student uprising. The two sides obviously had different motivations...The rhetoric of revolution lends itself too easily to projections that prevent the real causes of the protest movement from being clarified."<sup>2</sup>

In this quotation Paul Breines is not only implicitly criticizing Marcuse. He goes even further and argues that the principle of action for action's sake does not even vaguely approach the standards set by Marcuse, who is after all the spiritual mentor

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.31

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. pp.37-38

of many of the contemporary left-wing movements in the industrialized world. Breines feels that the New Left critique of capitalism as a system run by a few rich men, who, with the help of the police and the army, suck the blood of the people is not so much inaccurate as utterly fragmentary.

"Worse it is a critique which does not contain within itself the germs and idea of a new society adequate to the present technological and social pre-conditions of liberation."<sup>1</sup>

At a time when the increasing and massive terror and systematic repression of the state demands clear and independent thought

"...the New Left is beginning to dabble in irresponsible mimicry of peasant guerillas, gun worship, and an elevation of street fighting from a necessary tactic in many situations to the level of a strategy and even a principle of the movement."<sup>2</sup>

We can conclude from this that praxis is not the simple decision or commitment to action. The criticisms made by both Horkheimer and Habermas of the general trend amongst contemporary left-wing movements have one important thing in common: none of these movements meet the legitimate expectation that the translation of theory into praxis be plausibly explained. Having erected abstract bonds with world-historical forces it is not surprising that factional lines should rigidify within the New Left. A 'line' or objective body of concepts external to the concrete existence of the movement comes in the end to displace independent, critical thought.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Breines: 'From Guru to Spectre: Marcuse and the Implosion of the Movement' in Critical Interruptions, (ed Paul Breines), Herder and Herder, New York, 1970, p.17

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p.17

<sup>3</sup>A good example of this kind of development is Sebastiano Timpanaro's book On Materialism, (transl. Lawrence Garner), New Left Books, 1975. ("By materialism we understand above all acknowledgement of the priority of nature over 'mind', or if you like, of the physical level over the biological level, and of the biological level over the socio-economic level.....etc. p.34.)

"Snatching up bits and pieces of rhetoric from ideological expressions of already surpassed stages of capitalist development and Left-wing movements, the New Left constructs a cocoon around its own life; it insulates itself from its own originality and desensitizes itself to the dynamic processes of social disintegration and reconstruction in motion around it."

If Habermas argues that praxis is not what it commonly is thought to be within the New Left tradition, then we must ask ourselves what praxis is. Once again we can adopt the useful approach of asking ourselves what question it is which Habermas is seeking to answer. The concept of praxis in Habermas's thought has to explain how the unity of a self-formative process in which the moments of language, labour and interaction are dialectically related is to be conceived.<sup>2</sup> Habermas approaches the problem through a dimension first opened up by Hegel. Hegel criticized both Kant and Fichte on the grounds that they both hold self-consciousness to be the result of a process of solitary reflection. Hegel, on the other hand, understands the formation of self-consciousness as a process arising out of the complementary relationship between individuals who know each other. Self-consciousness in other words can be formed only on the basis of mutual recognition, i.e. when it results from the experience of interaction, in which one individual subject learns to see and experience itself through the eyes of other subjects. ("Consciousness exists as the middle ground on which the subjects encounter each other, so that without encountering each other they cannot exist as subjects."<sup>3</sup>) The distinctive sense of an ego-identity based upon reciprocal recognition is the specific result of a struggle for recognition.<sup>4</sup> This is the reason why the dialectical formation of self-consciousness is at the same time a relation of logic and of the praxis of life.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Breines, p.20

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.158

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.145

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p.147

The unity of the self-formative process with which we are here concerned is determined by three different elements; each of which mediates subject and object in its own way. The three elements are language, tools and family and each of these respectively designates a particular kind of dialectical relation, viz. symbolic representation, the labour process and interaction based upon reciprocity. Since Hegel no one has succeeded in holding these three elements together in the kind of dialectical unity intended by Hegel.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see shortly, Habermas takes on this tremendously difficult task.

In his critique of the concluding chapter of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind<sup>2</sup>, Marx rediscovered the importance of the interconnection between labour and interaction in the dialectic of the forces and relations of production. In this work Marx argued that the greatness of Hegel's Phenomenology lay in the fact that in it Hegel grasped the self-generation of man as a process of externalization and sublation of this externalization. Marx makes the very interesting attempt to retain the full validity of the idealist subject-interest by placing it in the context of the material interest of the species in self-preservation. However, if this attempt is to succeed, a third moment of dialectical mediation is necessary. This third moment, the pragmatic interest in the institutionalization of communicative action, assumes only secondary importance in Marx's theory, as he sees it as being something which is historically defined and limited.<sup>3</sup> As long as there is a scarcity of goods, the function

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas argues that in the history of Hegelian interpretation, each of these elements taken on its own has been elevated to the chief interpretative principle of the whole. Thus Ernst Cassirer places primary emphasis upon representation which then becomes the foundation for a philosophy of symbolic forms. Lukacs interprets the unity of subject and object materialistically, as the product of labour, and Theodor Litt, this same unity as the step by step self-development of spirit. (c.f. Ibid. p.157)

<sup>2</sup>In op.cit. Fromm: Marx's Concept of Man.

<sup>3</sup>Dietrich Bohler: 'Ueber das Defizitan Dialektik bei Habermas und Marx in Materialien zu Erkenntnis und Interesse, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt. a.M., 1974, p.373.

of the political realm will be to exercise the power to discipline and limit demands for the gratification of needs, and this situation must of necessity result in the domination of one class over another.

The development of the forces of production brought about by the capitalist mode of production results, finally, in the end of scarcity. In this way the necessity for institutionalization is broken, and in the course of the proletarian revolution, political administration will be replaced with the administration of things only. An analysis of the opening sections of the German Ideology reveals that Marx does not maintain this third moment of dialectical mediation throughout his analysis but that, according to his concept of social praxis, he reduces the one element to the other, that is, communicative action to instrumental action.<sup>1</sup> As Boehler puts it, the polarity between emancipation and self-preservation ceases to be: the latter disappears teleologically into the former. Habermas accepts this point, but with a qualification in his actual account of social evolution, together with the forces of production in which the moments of domination and ideology congeal. It is only in his philosophical frame of reference, that is, in his interpretation of his method, that this latter side of the practical relationship falls by the wayside.<sup>2</sup> Marx interprets what he does in the more limited sense of the self-constitution of the species through work alone. This leaves his analysis open to the interpretation that the development of the forces of production leads eo ipso to the emancipation of a self-conscious species-subject.

"Liberation from hunger and misery does not necessarily converge with liberation from servitude and degradation, for there is no automatic developmental relation between labour and interaction. Still, there is a connection between the two dimensions. Neither the Jena Realphilosophie

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx: The German Ideology, in The Marx-Engels Reader, op.cit. c.f. pp.140-157

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, Chapter two



nor the German Ideology have clarified it adequately, but in any case they can persuade us of its relevance: the self-formative process of spirit as well as of our species essentially depends on that relation between labour and interaction."<sup>1</sup>

We have now arrived at the point at which we can place the meaning which praxis has in Habermas's thought as a whole in the context of the basic 'Fragestellung' to which we referred in the introduction. The meaning of praxis cannot be understood adequately unless it is related to the dimension of the institutionalization of power and ideology as first outlined by Freud and then placed in the context of the general interest of mankind in emancipation. The Fragestellung to which the whole of Chapter Twelve of Knowledge and Human Interests is a specific answer is this: How can we grasp the meaning of institutionalization in such a way that the emancipatory interest in the self-constitution and self-realization of the subject can at the same time be shown as a constitutive principle of society and history?

This is the reason why Habermas places so much emphasis upon Freud's argument that the configurations which drive the individual to neurosis at the individual level are the same as those which drive the society to establish institutions at the socio-cultural level. Because the basic conflict in history is defined by a shortage of goods, the renunciations imposed by society upon its members represent an historically variable factor. This does not mean however, as we have repeatedly pointed out, that there is a direct or automatic connection between emancipation and technical progress:

"Differing in this respect from the merely technical application of scientific results, the translation of theory into praxis confronts the task of becoming incorporated in the consciousness and the moral attitudes of citizens prepared to act."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.196

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p.124

Freud has a view of the institutional framework of society which differs in important respects from the view held by Marx. In order to understand Habermas's analysis of the way in which liberating praxis translates technical knowledge into practical forms for the satisfaction of needs, it is important to bear the above difference in mind. For Marx the institutional framework expresses interests which have their basis in the system of social labour. For Freud, on the other hand, the institutional framework is connected with the repression of instinctual impulses. As Habermas explains, what requires ordering according to Freud's definition of institutions, is not labour itself, but the compulsion of socially divided labour:

"...With the recognition that every civilization rests on a compulsion to work and a renunciation of instinct and therefore inevitably provokes opposition from those affected by these demands, it has become clear that civilization cannot consist principally or solely in wealth itself and the means of acquiring it and the arrangements for its distribution; for these things are threatened by the rebelliousness and destructive mania of the participants in civilization. Alongside of wealth we now come upon the means by which civilization can be defended - measures of coercion and other measures that are intended to reconcile men to it and to recompense them for their sacrifices. These latter may be described as the mental assets of civilization."<sup>1</sup>

As not all needs find gratification, the function of the institutional framework of society, which consists of compulsory norms, is to sanction selectively the satisfaction of impulses. As a corollary of this, it is also a function of the institutional framework to redirect, transform and suppress those impulses and needs which cannot find gratification. Such impulses and needs lead a split-off existence, they become, in short, illusions. Habermas is quick to prevent a misunderstanding: this analysis does not represent a relapse into abstract idealism along the lines that the institutional framework is a purely pathological phenomenon.

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<sup>1</sup>Freud: *The Future of an Illusion*, quoted in Habermas: *Knowledge and Human Interests*, op.cit. p.278

"For the individual, the institutional framework of the established society is an immovable reality. Wishes that are incompatible with this reality cannot be realized ... But for the species as a whole, the boundaries of reality are in fact movable."<sup>1</sup>

This is because the degree of repression which is socially necessary is not independent of the material substrata of society, i.e. of the power of technical control over natural processes. With the development of technology, the structures of the cultural norms can be loosened. What Freud called 'illusions' and Marx 'ideology' are not therefore merely forms of false-consciousness, for they also contain utopian elements. We will recall from Chapter One, that the basic task which confronts man in his quest for freedom is "...not the organization of labour but the evolution of institutions that permanently solve the conflict between surplus impulses and the constraint of reality."<sup>2</sup> The task which falls to praxis is, therefore, to convert the critique of power structures that have become historically obsolete into the practical realization of the utopian contents of human culture.

### III

Habermas's writing as a whole has particular practical intention. For this reason his programme for a critical science of society cannot end with the mere critique of modes of domination which characterize a particular social form, but has also to perform the function of anticipating modes of anticipation. In Habermas theory there is no place for the idea that the knowledge of domination can itself supply the means for liberation. In fact, he specifically seeks to avoid this charge. He consciously seeks to draw a line

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.280

<sup>2</sup>c.f. Chapter One, pp.33-34

between his position and the position adopted by the more deterministic interpreters of Marx who evolve a theory of the inevitability of revolution.

The emancipatory interest - the most important of all the knowledge-constitutive interests for Habermas - has the function of uniting a practically engaged critique of epistemology as such with a critical social science, including psycho-analysis, which renders a critique of ideology. It is also the interest which indicates the social and political direction in which the scientific mediation of theory and praxis leads.

Emancipation implies that self-conscious subjects transform themselves in such a way that the result of their activity will be the reconstitution of the institutional framework of society. (We shall see shortly how this movement at the social level is analogous to that of psycho-analysis at the individual level). Theory can assist in the reconstruction of the formative processes of the subject, but it cannot, of its own account, force liberation upon a society. Habermas, therefore, specifically rejects the socialist notion of class struggle in which the revolutionary vanguard acts in terms of imputed class consciousness -- that is, the kind of consciousness which the members of a class would have if they could be made aware of all the relations governing their objective situation. Not only does Habermas reject the notion of a class consciousness imposed from above, but he also argues that the possibilities for the formation of an understanding of self and society in class terms have disappeared. Both white-collar and blue-collar workers have ceased to conceive of themselves as members of a class, and, more serious still because of the spread of technocratic ideology, they accept the social system as a reified entity which is inherently self-directing. As Schroyer

comments:

"The creation of adequate conditions for emancipation are tied into a general enlightenment of the population to a much greater degree than radicals usually realize...In this context the development of a critical scientific community is essential."<sup>1</sup>

For Habermas, praxis involves demonstrating the affinity and inner relationship between the enterprises of knowledge on the university level and the democratic form of decision-making.<sup>2</sup> What Habermas is doing here is to attack the traditional understanding of scientific inquiry in Western universities. The argument for the fundamental separation of science from practice is derived from Hume's demonstration that normative statements cannot be derived from descriptive statements. Habermas does not suggest in any way that this argument of Hume's is false, but what he does suggest is that it does not necessarily imply the strategy of application for which it has customarily been used, viz. to argue that politics does not belong at a university except as the object of a science which in itself, because it has to do with the practical knowledge of the rules governing communicative action, cannot be grounded in a scientifically binding manner. At the centre of Habermas's argument is the conviction that "We do not need to judge scientific inquiry only under the logical conditions of the theories that it generates."<sup>3</sup> We can also judge scientific inquiry in terms of its movement - we do not need to examine it only in terms of the results of the process of inquiry. Scientific progress in this view takes place in the medium of metatheoretical discussions. Habermas understands a metatheoretical discussion to include the following: "... methodological discussions of the utility of an analytic framework, the expedience of research strategies, the fruitfulness of hypotheses, the choice of methods of investigation, the interpretation of the results of measurement."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.248

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.6

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.6

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p.6

Metatheoretical discussions of this kind follow the same kind of rules as the critical discussion of practical questions. They both seek to rationalize attitudes 'by means of the justification of a choice of standards.' As we pointed out in Chapter Two, the relation between attitudes and standards cannot be reduced to one of implication but this does not mean that our approval of a procedure cannot be supported or weakened by rational argument. Although both are instances of the rationalization of a choice in the medium of unconstrained discussion, there is still a difference between discussing scientific standards that establish the framework for descriptive statements and standards that are rules of communicative action.

However, there is one instance in which practical questions are decided in such a rational form -- the instance of democratic decision-making, i.e. a form of political decision-making according to which all decisions are to be made dependent on a consensus arrived at in discussion free from domination. In this instance the only force which prevails is the power of the better argument.

"This principle, that - expressed in the Kantian manner - only reason should have force, links the democratic form of decision-making with the type of discussion to which the sciences owe their progress. For we must not overlook the element of decision-making in scientific progress."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore it can be said that the practical achievement of emancipation depends upon the setting in motion of processes of communication about human requirements and, simultaneously, of the ways in which institutions can be changed in order to meet these requirements. Individual and social emancipation can only be actualized together. If this fact is not grasped, the illusion (e.g. prevalent in so-called hippy culture) that emancipation is possible

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.     and c.f. also Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Vol II.

independently of the system, gains ground. Instead of assisting in a process of potential liberation, this illusion leads rather to a process of co-optation.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand this argument better, it will prove very fruitful to ask ourselves what implicit question Habermas is seeking to answer. This implicit question, as Schroyer has convincingly argued, is the one which was left unanswered in both theory and practice by the socialist tradition, viz: "What are the processes that can create a social system in which individual and social development can be reconciled without generating a highly centralized and authoritarian system?"<sup>2</sup> The concept of practice in the writings of Habermas is loosened from its connections to the liberation of the proletariat and is broadened to include the full range of human

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<sup>1</sup>Because the historical situation is one in which the vital needs of mankind as a whole are repressed and not just the particular needs of one class, the process of individuation -- the realization of the whole, of the integrated man -- can be seen as praxis. However, individuation by itself is only one side of the dialectic. Unless the process of negation leads to a counter-process of re-integration or synthesis, it cannot lead to the liberation of mankind. This latter kind of determinate or mediated negation is different from what Hegel called abstract (or indeterminate) negation. In her critique of the New Left and hippy sub-culture in U.S.A., Shierry M. Weber argues that they practice only abstract negation, some of the characteristics of which are :

1. Abstract negation is external: to a gesture, an object, a style; it opposes a counter-gesture, -object, -style. But it does not negate the whole complex of forces which are concretized in the gesture, object or style.
2. That it is ambiguous. There are any number of different and not mutually exclusive intentions which a negative action may have.
3. As the system works through the perversion of intentions and is capable of re-arranging its elements at will, any negation can be given a perverted meaning. Thus abstraction is co-optable.
4. Although it aims at the system, abstract negation is not total... An aggregate of external negations does not achieve the total negation of the system.
5. Insofar as the negation is not itself part of a project of counter-integration, it simply aids the forces of disintegration, increasing passivity, and so on. Current anti-intellectualism is an example of this".

Shierry M. Weber: 'Individuation as Praxis' in Critical Interruptions, op.cit. pp.38-39.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.250

claims for liberation in a technological era.<sup>1</sup>

In analysing the means for the achievement of this end, it should, in the light of the foregoing analysis, no longer appear surprising that Habermas should pay a great deal of attention to the structure and place of education in society. The analysis of education opens the way to the dimension in which the sciences practice reflection. In this dimension, through reflection, one can bring to consciousness the relation of living generations to active cultural traditions, which, unless reflected on, operate dogmatically. Habermas issues a call to make both the attitudes of political consequence and the motives that form the university as a scientific institution and social organization subject to critical discussion.<sup>2</sup>

Critical self-reflection will prevent education from becoming a controlled and purely manipulative science. According to Karl-Otto Apel, education (Paedagogik) can be understood as a classical case of a science which is vitally concerned with the mediation of theory and practice.<sup>3</sup> However, if in terms of the positivist conception of science, education is regarded as some kind of psychology for the

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<sup>1</sup>By this I do not wish to imply that Marx argues only on behalf of the proletariat. Anybody basically familiar with his theory will know that he argued that the proletariat can only emancipate itself if it emancipates the whole of society at the same time. (The proletariat is a class which "... cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, which is, in short, a total loss of humanity and which can only redeem itself by a total redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the proletariat." -- Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, in The Marx-Engels Reader, op.cit. p.22). As we stated in the concluding section of Chapter Three, Habermas is seeking to redeem the promise of total liberation which Marx first outlined. What Habermas is distancing himself from here is not Marx's writing itself, but the way in which the Marxist tradition has neglected the analysis of the general need for emancipation in favour of an analysis for the seizure of power by the working classes. As Horowitz once argued, socialism first became politicized, and then communism became militarized. c.f. Horowitz: The Foundations of Political Sociology, op.cit. p. 187f.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.9

<sup>3</sup>K.O. Apel: 'Wissenschaft als Emanzipation', in Materialien zu Habermas' Erkenntnis und Interesse, p.330



purpose of conditioning (Konditionierungs psychologie), then it follows that the relationship which pedagogical science enjoys to praxis, will be understood in a purely technological sense. Educators themselves would no longer be actively engaged in a process of mutual understanding and communication concerning educational and cultural goals. The latter dimensions would, in fact, have to be eliminated as unscientific.

A critically guided and informed science of education, however, cannot simply wish away this moment of manipulation. But what a science of education guided by the interest in emancipation can do is to act as a liberating corrective to a process of behavioristic manipulation. The reason why the moment of manipulation has to be sublated in a higher synthesis is that pure hermeneutical understanding is not always possible -- not even when both sides intend it to be so. Apel believes that a certain degree of manipulation is unavoidable, particularly in the situation between teacher and pupil when the latter is very young as well as in the relationship between psycho-analyst and patient. The reason why such relationships can never be ones of intersubjective communication free of domination is that in the case of both child and patient, important motivations are not apparent to consciousness and therefore cannot be expressed linguistically. But the function of both analyst and educator is not simply to exploit this situation but to provoke a process of reflection in which hidden motives can ultimately be made transparent:

"The methodological starting point for the teacher as for the therapist lies precisely therein, that objectification and manipulation on the one hand, and provocative understanding on the other hand, be connected in such a way that, in the event of the procedure being successful, the first component of the relationship will be rendered superfluous because the object of the objectification will be removed."<sup>1</sup>

The behaviour of the child which had, at first, to be disciplined externally will result eventually in the autonomous behaviour of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 332.

the mature adult. The language of the neurotic which, at first, can only be explained in terms of the symbols employed rather than understood, is sublated finally in authentic intersubjective understanding. But, for Habermas, the process does not end there. The emancipation of the individual pupil or patient still has to be mediated in terms of the emancipation of the society as a whole. It is because of the necessity for this mediation that the analysis also has to take into account the role and importance of institutions as such, as well as the process of institutionalization.

Habermas argues that disrupting educational institutions such as universities is not a tactic that could be defended rationally on political grounds. Reforming universities is a realistic goal -- rendering teaching and learning processes dysfunctional is not. Universities should not therefore be used for 'pseudo-revolutionary' adventures, but should be reformed in order to create an institutional framework that "would make it possible to undo the interlocking of instruction and research with power and privilege inside and outside the university."<sup>1</sup> If this were to be achieved, all those connected with the advancement, transmission and reception of knowledge,

"...would reflect on the didactic and methodological presuppositions of instruction and research and demand that the social context of their utilization enter into the basis of their legitimation."<sup>2</sup>

The importance of such an achievement would be that universities could become places where alternative evaluations of scientific and technological development could be made on the basis of a consideration of their practical consequences instead of surrendering political decision-making to the criteria of the military-industrial complex. There can be no definite guarantee that a better society

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.46

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.47

will come about in this way, but the hope that it might is not entirely without foundation, for as Habermas writes:

"If this potential does not inhibit itself self-destructively and if we of the older generation do not react without comprehension, it may become the motive force of a long-term process of transformation that prevents foreseeable catastrophes on an international scale and makes possible a measure of emancipation domestically. This cannot be known, but we can encourage it with caution."<sup>1</sup>

The hope for the emancipation of society in Habermas's writings does not lie, therefore, in the radical overthrow of the existing institutions of society but rather in a process of conscious structural change, -- a process, that is, of radical reformism. Habermas argues moreover that this is quite in line with what Marx understood to be critical-revolutionary praxis. This is because the consequences of the reforms which Habermas proposes are incompatible with the mode of production of the established system. If technical progress and private welfare -- the necessary but not sufficient conditions for emancipation in the encompassing sense outlined in Chapter One -- are seen as the only valid criteria for comparing the level of freedom in one social system with another, then the call for the reform of the existing system seems to have dubious validity.

"However, if we do not deem insignificant the goals, forms, and contents of humane social and communal life, then the superiority of a mode of production can only be measured in industrial societies, with regard to the scope it opens up for democratization of decision-making processes in all sectors of society."<sup>2</sup>

This explains why an understanding of Habermas's concept of praxis remains incomplete without a grasp of his analysis of the conditions under which communication free from domination can occur. And for an understanding of these elements, we have to turn to an examination of his theory of communication.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 49.

## IV

Before proceeding to a detailed examination of the theory of communication which will be the subject of the following chapter, I wish to show, in order to avoid some serious misunderstandings later on, the important ways in which Habermas's concept of praxis corresponds to that outlined by Marx, and this in spite of the differences to which we have already pointed in section II and III of this chapter. According to Marx theory and practice would be united in worker's associations, thus overcoming the gap between being and consciousness and thus also presenting in microcosm a picture of a future society in which alienation would be abolished. Avineri comments on Marx's view of workers associations as follows:

"Here life activity and life aims are one...A new type of a human being who needs his fellow-men emerges; sociability becomes an end in itself. Seeing in communism both the form and the principle of human life enables Marx to postulate the closing of the gap between being and consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

When placed in this perspective, the seemingly important question about the inevitability of revolution which has dogged the Marxist tradition loses its meaning. The deterministic view considers only the objective side of historical development and not its subjective elements. Objectively, praxis has to do with the organization of that class which stands 'outside' of civil society. Subjectively, praxis refers to the process of self-change which the proletariat experiences by means of its self-discovery through organization. However, since Lukacs's penetrating analysis of the problems of reified consciousness which he first presented in History and Class Consciousness, it has been evident that the subjective and objective elements of the moment of praxis cannot be related the one to the other, no matter how dialectically, unless further mediations are introduced into the process. Lukacs argued that the subjective moment is constantly endangered because of the fact that

<sup>1</sup>Shlomo Avineri: The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, Cambridge University Press, London, 1970, p.142

the revolution has to be made with men 'who have been brought up and ruined by capitalist society."<sup>1</sup>

Habermas too is vitally concerned with the problem of the translation of theory into praxis, but his solution takes on a highly mediated form because he is aware of the problem referred to by Lukacs. Between the subjective and the objective moments of the concept of revolutionary praxis referred to by Avineri come all the lengthy and complicated epistemological problems concerning the constitution of the subject, the critical self-reflection of science as well as the constitution of an emancipated species-subject, what Marx referred to as the Gattungs-Wesen.

The fact that Habermas refuses to overlook all these complicated issues brings with it the danger that the reader may forget that there is nevertheless, a practical intention behind it all. In particular, those theorists who have set their hearts on the formula of historical materialism in the form in which it has been passed on within the more orthodox Marxist schools, find in Habermas nothing more than the very thing which constitutes his starting point and primary preoccupation, viz. the ideology of bourgeois society.<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter One we called Habermas's theory critical materialism. The justification for this description lies not only in the fact that Habermas's theory intends to alter simultaneously both the individual subject and the society, but also, as Dieter Henrich has reminded us, because as critique, Habermas's theory has preserved its connections with the original materialist critique.

"For Habermas's argument includes the thesis that the relations of production in all previous societies were

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Lukacs: History and Class Consciousness, p.335.

<sup>2</sup>For a good example of this kind of interpretation of Habermas, c.f. Erich Hahn: 'Die theoretischen Grundlagen der Soziologie von Juergen Habermas' in Materialien zu Habermas' Erkenntnis und Interesse, op.cit.

of such a kind that they did not allow for the establishment of the conditions for complete discourse. The process of rationalizing production had as its precondition, the restriction of discursive rationality."<sup>1</sup>

Man, who is a social creature and therefore is oriented towards linguistic and discursive communication, stands at the same time under the power of limitations to discourse which he does not perceive. What Habermas calls critical reflection refers to the struggle and effort which has to be made in order to render all the factors which place limitations upon discourse conscious so that they may be eliminated finally.

Emancipation involves two things: distancing (Distanzierung) and identification. In the first instance the subject must distance itself from that which is unreflected and opaque. But this process of self-reflective distancing does not in itself bring about the emancipation of the subject. Emancipation depends, in the second instance, upon active identification with an anticipated future condition. Historical self-reflection, for this reason, is concerned not so much with the production of knowledge which understands emancipation in a formal sense only but with the production of practical knowledge about emancipation which leads to action in a concrete life-situation. Just as transcendental reflection leads to the emancipation of the subject in that it brings to consciousness the way in which this subject can oppose itself to the world as a knowing subject, so historical self-reflection leads to the emancipation of an action subject (Handlungssubjekt) in that it brings to consciousness the way in which this subject can knowingly and actively mediate its world. The idea is that the subject constitutes itself as the creator of its destiny in the world. The idea of the emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interest of a critical theory of society is what links

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<sup>1</sup>Dieter Henrich: 'Kritik der Verstaendigungsverhaeltnisse' in Juergen Habermas/Dieter Henrich: Zwei Reden, op.cit. p.17

Habermas to the original concept of a critical theory in the form of a critique of ideology which was inaugurated by Marx.

The anticipated mode of emancipation in Habermas's writing is connected to the institutionalization of free communication in the ultra-democratic dialogue situation. In the following chapter we will be discussing Habermas's analysis of the importance and meaning of dialogue. But before concluding this chapter, we can level some initial criticisms at Habermas's position at the same time as pointing to the merits and strengths of his position in other respects.

As we mentioned above, historical self-reflection refers to a process in which action and language are connected not only to the category of the subject, but also to the category of the social system (institutions). The reconstitution of the epistemological problematic which Habermas undertakes, focuses attention upon the problem of science, in the dimension of which the notion of constitution as well as that of education are of central importance. It has been argued that Habermas's systematic attempt to find a corrective to the positivistic self-understanding of science which both philosophers and scientists share, has diverted his attention away from the manner in which science is actually carried out in a society.<sup>1</sup> Just as the subject 'falls apart' in the sphere of work, so in the sphere of science does the subject become 'pluralized to the point of antagonism'. The argument concludes that the separation of instrumental action from the practical sphere of communicative action leaves unanswered many important theoretical and sociological questions concerning the social organization of science, e.g. questions concerning the relationship of pure to applied research and science.

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<sup>1</sup>Rusconi: 'Erkenntnis und Interesse bei Habermas', op.cit. p.131.

Against such criticisms it must be pointed out that Habermas himself is aware of all these problems:

"But even if we disregard the limits established by the existing system and assume that a social basis could be found today for public discussion among a broad public, the provision of relevant scientific information would still not be simple."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the question of the public's ability to respond to the results of research, as Habermas points out, there is the additional difficulty of the fact that knowledge of the greatest practical consequence is the least accessible because of the regulations of military secrecy. On even the most basic level, too, the flow of communication is disturbed because of the bureaucratic 'encapsulation' of the modern research process.

"The concrete, objective interest of the scientist integrated into a large organization, aimed at the solution of narrowly circumscribed problems, no longer needs to be coupled from the beginning with a teacher's or publicist's concern with the transmission of knowledge to a public of auditors or readers. For the client at the gates of organized research, to whom scientific information is addressed, is now no longer (at least immediately) a public engaged in learning or discussion. It is instead a contracting agency interested in the outcome of the research process for the sake of its technical application. Formerly the task of literary presentation belonged to scientific reflection itself. In the system of large-scale research it is replaced by the memorandum formulated in relation to the contract and the research report aimed at technical recommendations."<sup>2</sup>

In the light of passages such as the above, it is difficult to sustain the contention that Habermas overlooked this dimension of the problem. In strong contrast to this view, I would claim instead that his strength lies precisely in the fact, that although he saw the enormity of the problems, he was still able to come up with an imaginative and challenging solution.

The meaning of what Marcuse called the closed system of one-dimensionality is difficult to grasp in a way which leads in the

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.76

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.76.



direction of genuine transcendence. Because this system is a closed and mystifying one, it is not all easy to perceive the contradictions and structures of domination, not to mention the difficulty in trying to make sense of them, to develop them and so to turn them in to constructive praxis. To understand this dialectic means to abandon the search for a fixed, definite locus of negativity 'outside' the system.

"Instead we must learn to understand it as a way of translating the universal semiotic of technological experience in a way that collects negativity from its dispersion throughout the system and uses it to restructure the system from within by<sup>1</sup> reversing the relations of already existing imperatives."

It is within this frame of reference that we should remind ourselves once again that true emancipation, according to Habermas's theory, depends upon our ability to rationally translate technical knowledge into practical knowledge and vice versa. The questions concerning the sociological constitution of the scientific community are, in any case, secondary to the more fundamental one concerning whether a productive body of knowledge is merely transmitted from scientists to technologists for the purposes of technical manipulation and control, or whether such knowledge can be simultaneously appropriated as the linguistic possession of communicating individuals.

"A scientized society could constitute itself as a rational one only to the extent that science and technology are mediated with the conduct of life through the minds of its citizens."<sup>2</sup>

To this more fundamental issue, Habermas has a possible solution. As we have shown in the chapter, there is a dimension in which the scientifically guided rationalization of political power is possible.

"Political rationalization occurs through the enlightenment of political will, correlated with instruction about its technical potential. This dimension is evaded when such enlightenment is considered either impossible because of

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremy Schapiro: 'One-Dimensionality: The Universal Semiotic of Technological Experience'. in Critical Interruptions, op.cit. p.175

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p.79

the need for authoratative decisions or superfluous because of technocracy. In both cases, the objective consequences would be the same: a premature halt to rationalization."<sup>1</sup>

No matter what we may finally make of the mechanics of the solution which Habermas proposes, we must bear in mind the merits of his achievement. Not only is this a solution which offers an alternative to the resignation and capitulation implied by the positivistic self-conception of science and its technocratic embodiment. It also guards against the danger of resignation which came from the opposite direction. The early critical theorists correctly earned our commendation for their decisive rejection of the determinist elements which had been growing in weight within the Marxist tradition. However, this latter situation was not without its dangers, for it did seem that critical theory might lose all relevancy as far as the problem of praxis was concerned. The fact that critical theory 'increasingly treated any attempt to realize philosophy as instrumentalization'<sup>2</sup>, has led to the charge that Adorno, in particular, rejected praxis altogether. In fairness to Adorno, Habermas was quick to point out that this was essentially a misunderstanding of Adorno's position.<sup>3</sup>

That Habermas should be misunderstood in this manner is far less likely. The relationship between theory and practice in his writing is far more clearly articulated and has become over time far more central than it was in the writings of either Horkheimer or Adorno. In fact, Habermas's theory of communication, which will be the subject of the next chapter, can be understood as a programme which outlines the conditions under which theory becomes a practical power for the liberation of mankind.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.80

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, p.226

<sup>3</sup>Juergen Habermas: Philosophische-politische Profile, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1973, p.197

THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATION

"It seems to me there is an area today where all philosophical investigations cut across one another - the area of language. Language is the common meeting ground of Wittgenstein's investigations, the English linguistic philosophy, the phenomenology that stems from Husserl, Heidegger's investigations, the works of the Bultmannian school and of the other schools of New Testament exegesis, the works of comparative history of religion and of anthropology concerning myth, ritual, and belief - and finally, psychoanalysis." (Paul Ricoeur: Freud and Philosophy)

Habermas, it is true, has set himself the extraordinarily difficult task of attempting to synthesize all of contemporary philosophy into one overarching theory of social evolution. His investigations into linguistics and his first outline for a theory of communicative competence are, of course, part of the greater synthesis. In this chapter, however, we shall be examining them in a more limited perspective. We are concerned with the problem of language and of communication in so far as they are conditions for the practical realization of theory. They are, in other words, important moments on the road to freedom.

Habermas reconstructs Marx's theory in order to clarify each of the two moments of material synthesis, viz. work and interaction. The evolution of human society is therefore not linear as there is no direct causal relationship between the mechanism of production, on the one hand, and the reflexive self-formation of the species-subject via class struggle on the other hand. As we saw in Chapter One, the development of the productive forces of society does not lead automatically to the emancipation of mankind because this development is not the same as the dialectical processes of class struggle in which the sedimented constraints of reified power relations have to be overcome.

In Knowledge and Human Interest the essence of Habermas's critique of Marx is that Marx did not adequately grasp the method-

ological significance of his material investigations. At the level of the latter investigations, Marx clearly saw, it is argued, that the processes of natural history are mediated by the productive activity of individuals and the organization of their interrelations. The significance of this for us is that an analysis of this latter dimension demands an account of the way in which the formation of power and domination can be understood, and hence overcome. As Habermas himself puts it:

"These relations are subject to norms that decide, with the force of institutions, how responsibilities and rewards obligations and charges to the social budget are distributed among members. The medium in which these relations of subjects and of groups are normatively regulated is cultural tradition. It forms the linguistic communication structure on the basis of which subjects interpret both nature and themselves in their environment."<sup>1</sup>

The dialectics of emancipation is a way of comprehending how these two moments -- the liberation from the material and ideological constraints to human development -- interrelate in history.

## I

It will help us to gain a clearer understanding of the role which the theory of communication plays in Habermas's thinking if we show right at the beginning what it is that Habermas is defining himself against.

The first danger which has to be avoided is that of the particular kind of reductionism which has emerged within the study of communication which has been developed within the phenomenological tradition, and in particular, in its more recent offshoot, ethnomethodology. Habermas warns that the apparent radicalism of the ethnomethod-

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.53

ological approach hides the reasons for its shortcomings.<sup>1</sup> The radicalism in ethnomethodology lay in its rejection of the emphasis which the symbolic interactionists placed upon the shared meanings and symbols which are generated in the course of our everyday activity. Garfinkel, for example, has argued against this that the social order as such, including all its symbols and meanings, has no existence at all other than the rather fragile one created through each member's accounting and describing practices, i.e. the procedures of what Garfinkel calls 'documentary interpretation'.<sup>2</sup> What Habermas objects to in this sort of approach is that it confines itself to the analysis of the way in which individual actors construct a 'reality' and thus largely ignores the problem presented by the existence of the already constructed social reality with all its norms and regulations. In this sense, ethnomethodology remains within the limits of the phenomenological analysis of consciousness.

The question is this: where do the basic rules of documentary interpretation come from, if not from 'communicative experiences which are prescientifically structured.'<sup>3</sup> This means in turn that the basic rules governing everyday life and interaction are not the invariant essences of a transcendental life-world, but are themselves subject to other social processes, i.e. patterns of communicative behaviour. Because the rules governing interaction may be more influenced by unreflected socialization processes, class structures and hidden power relations, than by the on-going interpretations of actors engaged in interaction, Habermas's theory of communicative competence places primary emphasis upon socio-linguistic studies.

The second danger which has to be avoided is that of neglecting

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<sup>1</sup>Juergen Habermas: Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1971, c.f. Section 6, 'Der phänomenologische Ansatz', pp.188-220.

<sup>2</sup>Harold Garfinkel: Studies in Ethnomethodology, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften, p.197

the importance of the patterns of communicative behaviour. In Chapter Three we defined a technocratic society as one in which the instrumental action systems push aside the communicative action systems in which intersubjective understanding takes place. The danger created by the emergence of the technocratic ideology is that we overlook the dialectic of interaction between these two systems because of the fact that the technical subsystems of social action which are fed by science and technology have taken on a legitimizing power of their own.

Trent Schroyer describes the 'critique of domination' in terms of the need for a reflective critique of socially unnecessary constraints of human freedom. By unifying knowledge and production, a new realm of freedom, hitherto inaccessible to man, could be historically attained. As Schroyer points out, apart from the continued reformulations of positivist philosophy, a major convergence in the philosophy of the twentieth century seems to have emerged around one particular point, viz. the criticism of the pseudo-unity of technocratic consciousness.

"Phenomenology (Husserl), existentialism (Heidegger), neo-Marxism (Habermas), and hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer), have all generated a critique of what we have called 'instrumental reason.' Each has based its reflective critique on an attempt to recover the ancient truth that thinking and action (praxis) are in some sense an intended unity; hence all are speculative reconstructions of the relationship of knowledge and life, thinking and action."<sup>1</sup>

Although the crisis is given different names -- objectivism (Husserl), technicity (Heidegger) and instrumental rationalization (Habermas) -- the shared point of criticism is the growing identification of reason with the so-called strict sciences. This is seen to represent a regression in which social values and norms are replaced by technical

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.28

rules which mystify the social world.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the danger against which Habermas has to guard comes not only from the direction of the objectivistic self-understanding of the empirical sciences, but comes also from within the Marxist tradition itself. Alienation can no longer be seen primarily in terms of the appropriation of surplus value but must be seen rather as a direct and repressive result of the instrumental rationalization of society. In other words, for the contemporary epoch we need a new critical totalization which goes beyond the critique of political economy in order to show that the further development of society on the basis of a prescriptive scientism results in the distortion and suppression of symbolic communication.

Towards this latter end we have Habermas's investigations into the field of linguistic analysis and the resultant outlines for a theory of communicative competence in terms of which it can be shown that the progressive rationalization of the self-regulating technical subsystems forces the society as a whole to relinquish its capacity for nonrepressive communication.

Habermas never argues against the validity of instrumental action as such (for upon its success depends our ability to exercise control over the coercive power of external nature), but the extremely important question which he is continually asking is whether these same rules of instrumental action should also be allowed to govern our social lives as well.<sup>2</sup> The lesson which is to be learned

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<sup>1</sup>A good example of this, is the distress which Adorno felt over the tendency to turn cultural phenomena into quantitative data as this seemed to him to be a prime example of the reification characteristic of mass culture. "When I was confronted with the demand to 'Measure culture'", Jay reports him as saying, "I reflected that culture might be precisely that condition that excludes a mentality capable of measuring it". c.f. The Dialectical Imagination, op.cit. p.222

<sup>2</sup>For an account of this basic Fragestellung of Habermas in more general perspectives for his theory as a whole, c.f. Chapter One, p.13.

from a critical theory of society is that of creating an awareness of the importance of symbolic interaction systems for the very good reason that, where purposeful rational action becomes the only legitimate form of behaviour, life as a whole is reduced to a meaningless form of 'robot' existence. In Chapter Three we showed how both Marx and Marcuse had laid themselves open to a kind of 'Technocratic' interpretation in which the language and communicative systems become linked directly to the technical processes of work. In attempting to clarify the nature of the dialectic between material and subjective freedom, Habermas shows that the two dimensions are related but that the dimension of symbolic communication cannot be logically reduced to that of purposive-rational action. Possibly the most unique feature which characterizes Habermas's version of a critical theory with a practical intent, which sublates Marx's original critique, is to be found here.

It is only through the reconstruction of the self-formation of developmental processes that objectivity can be obtained about the relation between these processes and the cultural understanding which we have of them. What Habermas argues is that if critical theory is ever to become a practical force for change, it can only do so through a transformation of the consciousness which we have of the processes of our own self-formation both as individuals and as a society. Habermas's version of critical theory, therefore, has little in common with the tradition of Moscow-oriented Marxism which holds the function of critical theory to reside in the recognition of the objective possibilities for the creation of 'socialism'. The idea of making a conscious choice between the socialist and capitalist modes of development, might once have been a revolutionary conception, but as far as the advanced industrial states of the 1970's are concerned, it no longer is so. Habermas seizes the challenge to re-think the meaning of emancipation in this context.



Schroyer has argued that Habermas fills in the 'missing link' in Marx's critical theory, thereby avoiding the emergence of mechanical models of liberation within contemporary social theory.

"Both the theory of the vanguard (Marx) and the 'revolt of the instincts' (Marcuse) are measures of the desperation of critical analysis which cannot conceptualize the internal tendencies in social-cultural processes that ensure recognition of domination. Given this systematic failure, Juergen Habermas's communication theory of society is theoretically progressive in its conception of the recognition of domination as an objective possibility of symbolic communication."<sup>1</sup>

(My additions)

The idea that an adequate theory of communicative competence must become a constitutive part of social analysis, involves the creation of a critical theory which reconstructs Marx and Hegel together. The idea that a critique of political economy (or of domination) is the equivalent of a political programme of action for the working classes leaves one very important question unanswered: How is consciousness of domination possible? I would argue that Habermas is only able to answer this question through a communication theory of society because it is derived ultimately from an important theme which he borrows from Hegel, viz. the 'causality of fate.' Through the extension of this theme, which Habermas, as we shall show shortly, believes is legitimated by contemporary developments in the field of linguistic philosophy, he is able to demonstrate that the institutionalization of power relations comes to acquire a momentum of its own, thereby blocking man's ability to self-reflectively grasp the meaning of his own process of self-formation.

What Hegel meant when he spoke of the causality of fate was the compulsion to overcome suffering which is inherent in any social situation in which the reciprocity of mutual recognition through symbolic communication is disrupted or broken off. Hegel is, therefore, attempting to give a systematic explanation of why it is that

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.33

man should experience a need to overcome domination. For example, the 'criminal' who destroys the moral totality, thereby annulling the complementarity of unconstrained communication in that he puts himself as an individual in the place of the reciprocal gratification of needs guaranteed by the totality, sets off a process of fate which ultimately turns against him. The criminal experiences guilt in that he is confronted with the negating power of his past life. Habermas sees the significance of Hegel's notion of the causality of fate in the following:

"The guilty one must suffer under the violence of the repressed and sundered life, which he has himself provoked, until he experiences in the repression of the other's life the deficiency of his own, and, in his turning away from the other subject, his alienation from himself. This causality of fate is ruled by the power of the suppressed life. The latter can only be reconciled if the experience of the negativity of the sundered life gives rise to yearning for what has been lost and compels the guilty one to identify with the existence of the other, against which he is struggling, as that which he is denying in his own."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the rupture of mutual recognition causes a dialectical reaction which is experienced as a form of pressure for emancipation from domination. Each of the parties involved recognizes that the rigidified positions of conflict and hostility which they have taken up result from the fact that they have become detached from their life-context. In experiencing this need for a resoration of mutual and open recognition<sup>2</sup>, the conflicting parties experience the common ground of their existence at the same time.

Applied to the broader social level, the conflicting parties can be seen as classes instead of individuals, and the principle form of conflict as stemming from the disproportionate allocation of socially produced goods. One of the primary functions of the institutional framework of society is to regulate the repression of needs and wishes through a system of constraints embodied in the structure of social

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.56

<sup>2</sup>c.f. Chapter One, pp.15-18.

norms. However, when applied at this level, the notion of the causality of fate leads to certain complications. This is because a new problem must be taken into account: the nature of ideology or suppressed communication. Even in a situation where there is a measure of objectively superfluous domination -- i.e. where the actual degree of institutionally forced repression exceeds the degree of repression that is necessary at the given level of the forces of production -- the division of society into classes does not necessarily call forth the reactions of suppressed life on the part of the underprivileged class, thus forcing the oppressors to experience their just fate in revolution.

The new form which arises in this situation does not, therefore, result from scarcity, but from a form of domination which hinders noncoercive communicative interaction. This form of domination is then perpetuated by the ruling classes for its own sake, it no longer has any rational justification in the power of the society to control nature. Habermas argues that this form of historically unnecessary domination can only be overcome by the movement of reflection. This explains why, as we pointed out in the previous chapter, emancipation for Habermas involves a relation of both logic and of the praxis of life simultaneously. It is in this sense that Habermas seeks to provide a normative justification for critical theory in terms of a theory of communicative competence.

"Here the suppression and renewal of the dialogue situation are reconstructed as a moral relation. The grammatical relations of communication, once distorted by force, exert force themselves."<sup>1</sup>

We will understand more clearly what this whole debate about the causality of fate means for a critical science, if we relate it directly to Habermas's theory of the knowledge-constitutive interests. The knowledge-constitutive interest which is peculiar to the cultural or hermeneutic sciences is the practical interest. It is called

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.58

practical, we will remember, because it refers to the conditions necessary to the survival of the human species, i.e. to the success of instrumental action as well as to the possibility of unconstrained agreement and non-violent recognition; both of which are the pre-conditions to practice. We will also recall that what distinguishes it further from the technical cognitive interest of the natural sciences is that it does not aim at the straight-forward comprehension of an objectified reality as such but 'at the maintenance of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding within whose horizon reality can first appear as something.' But a consideration of the technical and practical interests alone still does not tell us whether society is evolving in the direction of increased emancipation. These two interests taken on their own refer only to what Schroyer has described as "the logic of self-formative processes that are always linked to historical adaptive capacities and the cultural potential for self-positing comprehension."<sup>1</sup> Only when these two interests are seen as moments of the emancipatory struggle of the human species, for the attainment of ever higher forms of freedom, can they achieve full validity as constitutive parts of a critical theory. The emancipatory cognitive interest in terms of which the supposed and actual necessity of historical modes of authority can be analysed, is best illustrated by the connection which it presupposes -- together with psycho-analysis -- between language deformation and behavioural pathology.

In the sections which follow we shall analyse the connection between psycho-analysis and the a priori interest in emancipation which Habermas believes is contained for us within the structure of natural language. But before proceeding with this task, we shall raise a very important question, which as we shall finally see, has important consequences for the status of Habermas's theory as a critical

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.151

theory of society 'conceived with a practical intention.'

Habermas's attempt to re-think Hegel and Marx together in terms of one unified critical theory is very challenging, and is probably the most important emancipatory critique of late capitalist society which we have; but does this mean that his conception of the link between critique and emancipation is adequate?

This particular question becomes very important when viewed in the light of the very challenging criticisms which Michael Theunissen has made of critical theory.<sup>1</sup> Theunissen's basic thesis is that both Horkheimer and Habermas relapse into an ontology of nature and that the reason for this is that both of them begin with an 'overburdening of the subject' (Überstrapazierung des Subjekts). And this overburdening of the subject results from the fact that both Horkheimer and Habermas equate the transcendental subject with the species-subject. Both transfer the powers which Kant saw as being constitutive for consciousness as such to the anticipated unity of the human species. The danger which is inherent in this situation becomes evident when we consider the meaning of praxis in Habermas's theory in this light. As Theunissen points out, Habermas's original concept of praxis contains two moments: those of work and interaction. To these original two moments, Habermas later adds a third, viz. self-reflection. According to Theunissen's argument, Habermas does not succeed in clarifying the relationship between interaction and self-reflection. But why does he differentiate between them then? An answer to this question can be found in the 'interest in language'. Theunissen argues that this 'Interesse an Sprache' contains two different moments. It refers, firstly, to the maintenance of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding and secondly, it refers also to the establishment of a communication free of domination.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Theunissen: *Gesellschaft und Geschichte: Zur Kritik der Kritischen Theorie*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1969.

In terms of this conception, what Habermas calls interaction refers to the maintenance of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding, while self-reflection refers to the establishment of communication free from domination. The reason why Habermas has not been able to clarify the relation between self-reflection and interaction is because they pull apart as the former pursues a revolutionary interest and the latter a conservative interest.

("Selbstreflexion und Interaktion streben auseinander, weil die eine ein revolutionaeres, die andere ein konservatives Interesse verfolgt.")<sup>1</sup>

The conservative moment of interaction takes place according to obligatory, sanctioned norms. The type of action to which it gives rise is that of reform, i.e. together with the maintenance it also gives rise to the extension of the sphere of tradition within which we achieve an understanding with one another.

The logical conclusion to this is the restriction of the revolutionary interest to self-reflection. And from this Theunissen draws the following conclusion:

"In this way Habermas 'subjectivizes' - subjektiviert - the revolution itself. This subjectification - subjektivierung - overcomes the distance between the praxis of critical theory and the praxis which it has as its goal. What disappears therewith in the final instance, is the historical process."<sup>2</sup>

The importance of these issues lies in the fact that the self-understanding of critical theory itself is at stake, for what Habermas believes he is doing,<sup>3</sup> is to evolve a critical theory which avoids precisely the error of an ontology of nature to which Theunissen has drawn our attention.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.26

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p.26

<sup>3</sup>The most important passages which contain an expression of this intention of Habermas's are to be found in Knowledge and Human Interests on pages 176, 280 and especially 196: "The concept of 'interest' is not meant to imply a naturalistic reduction of transcendental-logical properties to empirical ones. Indeed, it is meant to prevent just such a reduction."

## II

We shall begin this section by establishing the importance of psycho-analysis for Habermas's theory of communication. From there we shall go on to discuss Habermas's claim that the ideal of emancipation is already contained for us in the structure of language.

Christopher Nichols has described the common goal of the psycho-analysis and the philologist as being that of understanding the intentional structure of expressions, which have lost their meaning or whose meaning was never understood by those who made the expressions.<sup>1</sup> Both disciplines, therefore, are concerned with the reconstruction of fragmented texts which no longer convey the intended meaning of the authors.

This point of view is supported by Paul Ricoeur who contends that the psycho-analyst is a leading participant in the general discussion about language. Ricoeur seeks to show that psycho-analysis should not be regarded only as a form of individual psychology. Psycho-analysis belongs to modern culture not simply because it revolutionized the practice of psychiatry, but also because it had as its broadest aim "a reinterpretation of all psychical productions pertaining to culture, from dreams, through art and morality, to religion."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the importance of psycho-analysis for the contemporary discussion about language arises internally from Freud's method itself. Freud believed that dreams provide a model for all forms of disguise and sublimated expressions of human desires. The instincts themselves remain inaccessible to consciousness. But what can be interpreted, however, is the text of the dream account

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Nichols: 'Wissenschaft oder Reflexion: Habermas ueber Freud' in Materialien zu Habermas' Erkenntnis und Interesse op.cit. p.404

<sup>2</sup>Paul Ricoeur: Freud and Philosophy, (transl. Denis Savage) Yale University Press, London, 1972. p.4.

and this provides the connection between analysis and language. Analysis has the task of substituting another more comprehensible text for the text of the dream account itself. In other words, analysis is concerned with the exploration of the various relations which exist between desire and language. Ricoeur believes that all of man's psychic productions belong to the area of meaning and can therefore be made the object of a single unifying question, viz: "How do desires achieve speech? How do desires make speech fail, and why do they themselves fail to speak?"<sup>1</sup>

Habermas too likens the defence mechanism of inhibition to a form of flight on the part of the ego. This explains why there is a resistance on the part of the patient to plausible interpretations made by the analyst. The mechanism of inhibition operates through language. If it did not, it would not be possible to overcome the patient's resistances hermeneutically, i.e. through a process of semantic analysis.

"Based on the analyst's experiences with neurotic patients we can, as has been shown, recognize the function of psychoanalysis as language analysis in as much as separated symbolic contents, which lead to a private narrowing of public communication, are reintegrated into common language usage. The performance of the analyst, which puts an end to the process of inhibition, serves the purpose of resymbolization; inhibition itself can therefore be understood as a process linked to desymbolization."<sup>2</sup>

The important aspects of this relationship for Habermas are the differences between systematically distorted communication at the private level and intersubjectively understood communication at the public level. The process of desymbolization is therefore connected to that of symptom formation. What the patient does is to exclude from public communication the experience of a conflict-filled object

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.

<sup>2</sup>Juergen Habermas: 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence', in Recent Sociology No.2. edited by Hans Peter Dreitzel, Macmillan, London, 1970, p.126.



relationship, and in this way, renders the object inaccessible to his own ego as well. For the suppressed object, the patient substitutes another symbol which strikes an outsider as being a symptom because it has gained private linguistic significance and can no longer be communicated according to the rules of public language. In order to overcome this situation, the analyst has to perform a 'scenic understanding' in which he establishes meaning equivalents for the three moments of symptom formation -- the everyday scene, the transference scene and the original scene. The function of scenic understanding is therefore to make resymbolization possible, i.e. the re-entrance of private symbolic meaning into public communication.

Habermas argues that psycho-analysis made an important theoretical advance over hermeneutic understanding. Dilthey had taken the model of biography - in much the same way as Freud took the model of the dream as his starting point - and Habermas argues that this limited Dilthey's hermeneutical method to the reconstruction of the structure of life history that can be remembered. Hermeneutics is not concerned with that which resists memory through opacity but only with the recollection of meaning; it supplements the ability of life-historical memory as it would function under normal conditions. In this way hermeneutics can perform an important function in that it serves to assist the faulty memory of mankind through the critical reconstruction of symbolic forms and texts in which meaning structures have been objectivated. But herein lies also the particular limitation of the hermenutic method: the meaning structures which it studies can be disrupted only under the impact of external conditions, such as faulty memory or limitations affecting the channels of transmission of cultural tradition.

The advancement which Freud made over this method was that the distorted symbolic structures which psycho-analysis seeks to comprehend

result from the impact of internal conditions as well. In Habermas's words, in psycho-analysis, 'The mutilations have meaning as such.'

"The technique of dream interpretation goes beyond the art of hermeneutics insofar as it must grasp not only the meaning of a possibly distorted text, but the meaning of the text distortion itself, that is the transformation of<sup>1</sup> a latent dream thought into the manifest dream."

However, Freud's theory encountered certain obstacles which could not be solved without an adequately developed theory of language. In attempting to formulate the theoretical propositions which would make communicative competence possible, Habermas seeks to assimilate recent developments in linguistic philosophy. Before we proceed to discuss Habermas's analysis of the structure of language, we must first see just why an inadequately developed theory of language imposed certain limitations upon Freud's theory.

In The Ego and The Id (1923) Freud argued for the necessity to distinguish between what are in fact two different kinds of unconscious. Freud therefore, called that which is latent, and only unconscious in the descriptive and not the dynamic sense, the pre-conscious.<sup>2</sup> The term unconscious he reserved, according to this differentiation, for that which is dynamically repressed. Using the three terms, conscious (cs), preconscious (Pcs) and unconscious (ucs), Freud attempted to answer the question as to how something may become conscious. In so doing, he explicitly stated that he was attempting to provide an answer which had a very much broader theoretical significance than the rather narrower question stemming from the interest in pathological research, viz. how does the repressed become conscious? Freud's answer to the more general question is

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.220

<sup>2</sup>Sigmund Freud: The Ego and The Id, in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, edited by John Rickman, Doubleday, New York, 1957, p.210

as follows:

"...the real difference between an Ucs and a Pcs idea (thought) consists in this: that the former is worked out upon some sort of material which remains unrecognized, whereas the latter (the Pcs) has in addition been brought into connection with verbal images. This is the first attempt to find a distinguishing mark for the two systems, the Pcs and the Ucs, other than their relation to consciousness. It would seem, then, that the question, 'How does a thing become conscious?' could be put more advantageously thus: 'How does a thing become preconscious?' And the answer would be; 'By coming into connection with the verbal images that correspond to it.'"<sup>1</sup>

Habermas argues that Freud's account is inadequate because it does not explain how those ideas which are severed from language are translated into verbal presentations. It is, in fact, not at all clear how such a process of translation could take place unless it did so according to grammatical rules, and this is where the need for an adequate theory of language makes itself felt. Lacking such a theory, Freud was led into the error of arguing that even when unconscious ideas are connected with verbal images, "their becoming conscious is not due to that circumstance, but they become so directly..."<sup>2</sup> As Habermas points out:

"Starting with the experiences of the physician's communication with his patient, Freud derived the concept of the unconscious from a specific form of disturbance of communication in ordinary language. For this he would really have needed a theory of language, which did not exist at the time and whose outlines are only just beginning to take form today."<sup>3</sup>

Freud's question could not be answered until a theory of language was developed which could account for the transcendental structures of grammatical rules. Habermas argues that it is in Wittgenstein's philosophy that we find the beginning of such a theory of language conceived in a transcendental manner: "Today the problem of language has taken the place of the traditional problematic of consciousness: the transcendental critique of language replaces that of consciousness."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.213

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.214

<sup>3</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.238

<sup>4</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften, p.220

Wittgenstein's 'life-forms', which correspond to Husserl's 'life-world', no longer follow the rules of synthesis of consciousness, but follow the rules of the grammar of 'language-games' instead. The analogy with the transcendental problematic outlined by Kant is clear: the logical form of language determines a priori the conditions under which possible statements about the world can be made.

As Habermas extends Wittgenstein's analysis of language games into a theory of universal pragmatics, it should not come as a surprise to us to find that Habermas's theory of communication results in a new way of relating subject and object. The problem towards which the relationship between subject and object points, is once again that of how to account for the processes of work and interaction that are constituted transindividually.<sup>1</sup> Intersubjectivity cannot be deduced from a generalized individual consciousness or through the phenomenological practice of the epoch. The problem with both Kant and Husserl is that they both restricted their accounts of the meaning of constitutive activity to self-referring and monologic framework. Habermas argues that a more adequate account of the constitution and interpretation of social reality can be found by means of an analysis of the universal pragmatics of ordinary language usage.

Habermas's account of the dialectical interrelation between instrumental action and symbolic interaction thus comes to depend heavily upon a theory of the self-reflexivity of language. The unique feature of language is that it is the only symbolic medium which functions at the same time as its own meta language.<sup>2</sup> The meaning and importance of this will become clearer once we have

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<sup>1</sup> c.f. Chapter One, pp.13,32 & 34. Chapter Two, pp.38,39,66 & 67 Chapter Four, pp.121 & 139.

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, pp.192,193

explained what use Habermas makes of Wittgenstein's concept of the 'language game'.

According to Wittgenstein's theory of the language game, it is not so much the words themselves which establish meaning, but the way in which words or sentences are actually used. ("Language and action interpret each other reciprocally; this is developed in Wittgenstein's concept of the language game."<sup>1</sup>) The 'grammar' of a language game therefore consists of a set of contextually specific generative rules which do not only govern and determine cognitive capacity, but which apply to all forms of communicative expression. Thus the dialectic of general and particular which is brought about through the intersubjectivity of talking and acting, also depends upon the use of spontaneous expressions of bodily movements and gestures and can, in fact, re-interpret and correct itself by such means. This then is one of the defining characteristics of ordinary or natural language (Umgangssprache). Ordinary language becomes complete only when enmeshed with interactions and corporeal forms of expression. It does not, therefore, obey the syntax of a pure language.<sup>2</sup>

"The specific character of ordinary language is this reflexivity. From the viewpoint of formal language we can also say that ordinary language is its own metalanguage. It acquires this unique function in virtue of its ability to incorporate into its own dimension even the non-verbal expressions through which it itself is interpreted."<sup>3</sup>

Language performs a transcendental function as it constitutes

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.168

<sup>2</sup>A pure or formal language can be defined solely in terms of symbolic means, i.e. through the metalinguistic rules of its constitution. 'Pure language' is as much the result of abstraction from the spontaneously evolved, pregiven material of ordinary language as objectified 'nature' from the spontaneously evolved, pregiven material of experience connected with ordinary language. Both restricted language and restricted experience are defined by being results of operations, whether with signs or moving bodies. Like instrumental action itself, the use of language integrated into it is monologic. It secures the cogent systematic interconnection of theoretical propositions by means of rules of inference". Knowledge and Human Interests, p.192

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.168

an intersubjective framework in which there is always a double level of communication. What Habermas means by communicative competence therefore refers to the capacity of the speaker to maintain communication at both levels, i.e. at the propositional level (information about objects) and at the intersubjective level (individuated expression which assists the hearer in understanding how the message is to be interpreted.) These two levels correspond to the difference between the cognitive and the interactive use of language. In the cognitive use of language attention is focused upon the content of the utterance as a proposition about objects or states of affairs in the world. In this type of language use, the type of interpersonal relationships involved is mentioned only incidentally. In the interactive use of language, on the other hand, we focus attention upon what Austin called the illocutionary force of the speech act, i.e. 'doing something when we say something'.<sup>1</sup> Here the communicative roles entered into by speaker and hearer, e.g. as resulting from warnings, promises or orders, are emphasised, while the propositional contents of the utterance are mentioned only in passing. Having differentiated between these two levels, we can not see more clearly why Habermas develops his theory of communicative competence in terms universal pragmatics.

Communicative competence extends not only to the mastery of an abstract system of linguistic rules, as Chomsky contended, but depends also upon the structure of intersubjectivity which in turn is linguistic. For this reason the general competence of the ideal speaker refers to the ability to produce a situation of potential ordinary communication.<sup>2</sup> Communicative competence thus means the mastery of an ideal speech situation.

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<sup>1</sup>Juergen Habermas: 'Some Distinctions in Universal Pragmatics', (transl. Pieter Pekelharing and Cornelius Disco) in Theory and Society, (3) 1976, p.156

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence', p. 138

"A speech act can only succeed if the participants fulfill the double structure of speech and carry on their communication on both levels at once: They have to unite the communication of a content with meta-communication about the role<sub>1</sub> in which the communicated content is to be taken."

These universal pragmatic features of language which enable us to generate the structure of potential speech, Habermas calls 'dialogue constitutive universals'. We can, therefore, define communicative competence in terms of the ideal speaker's mastery of these dialogue constitutive universals, and, significantly enough, we can also define it therefore, "irrespective of the actual restrictions under empirical conditions." <sup>2</sup>

From this we can conclude that the ideal speech situation is a unique utopian concept. It is utopian in the more obvious sense that it anticipates an 'ideal' situation. What is unique about it is that it can be employed in order to secure the validity of truth claims through rational discourse. It is in this that the significance of the theory of communicative competence for an emancipatory critique of society lies. We can distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate claims for the satisfaction of needs and desires only in a discourse that is free of systematic distortion. The structure of distorted communication is not ultimate; it can be explained through the logic of undistorted communication. We can conceive of the ideas of truth, freedom and justice to the extent that we master the means for the construction of an ideal speech situation.

Because language is that symbolic medium which functions at the same time as its own meta-language, Habermas can endorse Wittgenstein's remark that the concept of reaching an understanding lies in the concept of language. <sup>3</sup> Every understanding which is reached must be confirmed

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Some distinctions in Universal Pragmatics', p.157.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence', p.141

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.314 and Theory and Practice, pp.16-19.

in a reasonable consensus: if it is not, we cannot say that it represents a 'real' understanding.

"Reaching an understanding is a normative concept; everyone who speaks a natural language has intuitive knowledge of it and therefore is confident of being able, in principle, to distinguish a true consensus from a false one. In the educated language of philosophical culture, (Bildungssprache) we call this knowledge apriori or innate."<sup>1</sup>

As we have said, we can only anticipate this situation, we cannot simply produce it independently of the historically given empirical structures of the social system within which we operate. But if we are to succeed in the task of developing an emancipatory critique, then we must be able to show that the deformations of communicative competence which are induced by empirical social structures, result from asymmetries in the performance of dialogue roles. This is precisely the dimension which Habermas opens for us:

"The uneven distribution of dialogue constitutive universals in standard communication between individuals and social groups indicates the particular form and deformation of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding which is built into the social structure."<sup>2</sup>

In applying the model of intersubjectivity in this way, we assume that the actual motivations of the acting subject coincide with the linguistically comprehensible intentions of the speaking subject. As we saw in the discussion on the connection between psycho-analysis and systematically distorted communication, the latter situation is one in which social action and declared intentions do not only not coincide, but in which the motives which govern action are actually excluded from public communication and become fixed to the prelinguistically fixed symbolic organization of the unconscious.<sup>3</sup> The real point of Habermas's theory of communicative competence is to show how historically unjustified modes of emancipation may be understood. The greater the number of prelinguistically fixed motivations relative

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.17

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence', p.144.

<sup>3</sup>This Chapter, pp.152-157



to the number of publically declared and understood motivations, the greater is the deviance from the model of pure communicative action, and it is on this basis that Habermas can propose to make the empirical assumptions.

"...that these deviations increase correspondingly to the varying degrees of repression which characterize the institutional system within a given society; and that in turn, the degree of repression depends on the developmental stage of the productive forces and on the organization of authority, that is of the institutionalization of political and economic power."<sup>1</sup>

Just how successful this model can be as a form of critique has been amply demonstrated by Trent Schroyer's brilliant application of the theory of communicative competence in the field of ideology. Schroyer understands contemporary ideology to revolve around the compulsory suspension of doubt about claims to validity. ("Ideologies are those belief systems which can maintain their legitimacy despite the fact that they could not be validated if subjected to rational discourse.")<sup>2</sup>

In this way hidden power relations enter into the symbolic structures which govern everyday life. Schroyer argues that a suppressed dimension of Marx's work can be illuminated and extended along these lines. i.e. by viewing the fetishism of commodities as a deformation of symbolic communication. Those who restrict the freedom of others by appropriating the surplus value created by their labour, render this restriction 'just' by the ideological use of the language of exchange relations.

"However, despite the claims of just exchange, the actual meaning of human production becomes a repressed ideal which weighs like a fateful causality on the mind of the active man. Like the specter whose reappearance to Macbeth changes the meaning of kingship, the meaning of human activity is impossible to suppress. Man's ability to express reflexively the difference between being and pretense, essence and

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence', p. 146

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.163

and appearance, 'to be' and 'ought to be' contains a self-relexive potential for the statement of contradictions...In the unique causality of an open system of linguistic communication there is a potential reflection process<sup>1</sup> which can emancipate man from cultural reifications."

Language analysis has the duty of dissolving ideological syndromes and overcoming unconscious repressions. The transfer of pre-linguistic into linguistic motivations widens the scope for communicative action and is, therefore, a process of the creative extension of language.<sup>2</sup> The success of creative language use, is therefore also a moment of emancipation.

It is for this reason that we now turn to examine the particular form through which emancipation is to be realized -- the dialogue situation, or 'discourse'.

### III

The first thing which we should note about discourse is that in it experience and action (Erfahrung und Handlung) are suspended. In discourse validity claims can be rationally settled. Hence the fact that Habermas warns against comparing discourse to judicial procedure.<sup>3</sup> In the latter the concern is with establishing facts about a course of events and not with the validity of norms. A trial is not an example of discourse as it is a form of communicative action which depends upon the social roles and the interests of the disputing parties who are brought together in a context of interaction (Interaktionszusammenhang) in order to establish which interpretations are to be accepted for which sets of data. A discourse on the other

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.164

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence, p.127.

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas in Habermas/Luhmann: Theorie der Gesellschaft, p.200.

hand, is characterized by the co-operative search for truth.

"A discourse stands rather under the demand for the co-operative search for truth (Wahrheitssuche), i.e. principally unlimited and free communication, which serves the purpose of understanding alone; whereby understanding is a normative<sup>1</sup> concept which must be contrafactually determined."

In the previous section we described how fully developed speech acts consist of two basic elements -- a propositional content and a relational or intersubjective aspect. It is, of course, possible for the propositional content to be separated from the relational aspect. But when this happens it means that the validity claims which are raised in that particular speech act cannot be problematized as such and subjected to rational discussion -- they can only be naively accepted or rejected. Discourse, on the other hand, is that form of communication which allows for an exchange of arguments on hypothetical validity claims:

"It is only with the transition to 'discourse' that the validity claim of an assertion or the claim for the legitimacy of a command, viz. the underlying norm, can explicitly be questioned and topicalized in speech itself."<sup>2</sup>

Discourse, in other words, is a means for relating practical questions to truth and is at the same time, Habermas's means of showing that the dualism which Hume established between 'is' and 'ought', between facts and values, can be rationally overcome. (In analytic philosophy, the above dualism has resulted in the conviction that moral controversies cannot be resolved through reason as the value premisses from which we derive moral sentences are, in the final analysis, always irrational.)<sup>3</sup>

However, as Karl-Otto Apel has point out, the preconditions for reaching an understanding about goals and values are not nearly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.201

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: 'Some distinctions in Universal Pragmatics', p.164

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.140.

as hopelessly 'irrational', as is commonly assumed by the representatives of positivist philosophy.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, important to bear in mind that critical community of understanding (Verstaendigungsgemeinschaft), which even the representatives of 'value-free' science must form in order to corroborate and establish the validity of the statements which constitute the core of their science. Because of this intersubjective dimension of critical understanding, the acts of description and explanation demand that one respects the value standards of a minimal ethic (Minimalethik) which has its basis in the mutual respect of scientists for one another as autonomous subjects with the right to a free expression of their opinions.

Apel argues that it is largely because such a kind of minimal ethic is always presupposed, that Popper, (who argued in The Logic of Scientific Discovery that the concept of value-free science must not be transgressed), can nevertheless hold fast to the ideal of an open society in his social philosophy, in which he himself develops an engaged and partisan ideological critique (engagierte Ideologiekritik) of the 'enemies of the open society'. The fact that Popper takes the side of the proponents of the 'open society' does not mean that he has had to resort to an irrational, moral decision. His partisanship stems from a reflectively held confirmation and affirmation of the option for an entirely open community of critics possessing equal rights. And it is this option, which everyone who argues meaningfully, implicitly accepts and presupposes. Reason, as Fichte clearly explained, is simultaneously the will towards reason, and the will towards reason - in Popper's sense - is the will towards the realization of an open society.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. K.O. Apel: 'Wissenschaft als Emanzipation', p.338

The concept of a minimal ethic developed by Apel can help us to explain the particular meaning and achievement of norms, i.e. the ought of normative validity, which constitutes the validity claim of a norm at the same time as it gives it a binding character. If we accept the position advanced by Hume, however, then we are forced in the end to resort to a rehabilitation of the Hobbesian position in one form or another, i.e. to the idea that we are only bound to accept norms because of empirical motives such as fear of sanctions or personal inclination and interest. If there can be only empirical reasons for accepting norms, then one norm is really just as good as another and it is impossible to see why -- unless we are restrained by an external power -- we, as parties to a contract, should still feel obliged to abide by the norms laid down when once our original motives change or when the constellation of interests in general changes.

Discourse, as we said previously, is a means for accepting or rejecting the validity claims of norms with reasons. The appropriate model for discourse is, therefore, the communication community (Kommunikationsgemeinschaft).<sup>1</sup> In such a community substantial arguments - i.e. arguments which are pragmatic unities and in which not sentences but speech acts are connected - serve to redeem or criticize validity claims. Because such arguments serve to force the participants to provide rational grounds for the recognition of validity claims, only those norms which are 'right', i.e. which can be discursively redeemed, are accepted. Therefore, in discourse neither participants, themes nor contributions may be restricted and no force or power may prevail, except that of the better argument. This ensures that all of the following three moments will be contained in every norm that is accepted: rationality, universality and truth.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.144

"Because, in principal, all those affected by the practical deliberation have a chance to participate in it, the 'rationality' of the discursively formed will lies therein that the reciprocal behavioural expectations which are elevated to the status of a norm confer validity to a common interest, established without deception."<sup>1</sup>

The interest is universal because the constraint-free consensus (Zwangloser Konsensus) allows only that which all can want to be accepted. It makes a claim to truth, i.e. to be free of deception, because the interpretations of needs which become the subject of the discursive formation of will are also those interpretations of needs in which each individual must be able to recognize what he wants. The rationality of the discursively formed will is guaranteed by the deliberative situation of the formal properties of discourse which ensure that a consensus can only be attained through appropriately interpreted 'generalizable interests' (Verallgemeinerungsfähige Interesse), by which Habermas means needs that can be communicatively shared.<sup>2</sup>

If we bracket out for the time being the fact that Habermas's account of the model of discourse is somewhat obscure and is not without problems of its own -- and we shall take up these problems again in the following section of this chapter -- we should still nevertheless point out that its significance lies in the fact that it is a theory which shows how the concept of all-embracing rationality<sup>3</sup> finds practical expression. In this way Habermas seeks to show that the decisionistic treatment of practical questions which has dominated analytic philosophy since Hume can be overcome. The decisionistic treatment of practical questions can be shown to be unjustified, if we succeed in showing that there is a form of argumentation in which we can test the generalizability of interests instead of resigning ourselves to the impenetrable pluralism of seemingly ultimate value orientations (or belief-acts or attitudes).

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.148

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.149

<sup>3</sup>c.f. Chapter Two, pp.40,55,56 & 65-68.

## IV

We argued earlier on that the moment of extending creative language use was a moment of further emancipation. This is true, but it still does not answer the question of whether the link between the theory of communicative competence and the practical realization of freedom is adequate.

Habermas's analysis of communicative behaviour does help us to understand the patterns and structures of our everyday world and in so doing helps to increase our critical awareness of the distortions and repressions of everyday life. In this way we are still able to formulate a critique of the reified socialization processes which flow from the technological matrix of late capitalist society. The first pre-condition for successful practice - an understanding of the structures of unnecessary power and privilege - is thereby preserved and maintained in all of Habermas's writings.

Although, as we showed in the previous chapter, it is doubtful whether we can point to a 'class' in late capitalist society which occupies a pivotal and strategic position for the activation of change, there exists, nevertheless, a particular kind of social community which has as its *raison d'être* the discovery of truth. This community is the open scientific community which practices discourse. If these practising scientists could be made to realize that the concept of the neutrality of science is only a pseudo-neutrality, then it would be possible to forge entirely new kinds of connections between science and society. This would then constitute the second pre-condition for successful practice - a demonstration of the way in which technical knowledge and power can be related rationally to our practical needs and wants - as was outlined in Chapters One and Two.

In talking about the link between critique and emancipation we are therefore dealing with two moments: i.e. with the question of how consciousness of domination is possible and with the anticipation of a better society. As far as the first of these two moments is concerned there is little in Habermas that we can criticize. He goes further and deeper than any before him. His theory of emancipation results from a synthesis of enormous and breath-taking scale. As we mentioned in the introduction, the writings of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Peirce, Dilthey, Freud, Wittgenstein, Popper, Dewey, Mead, Parsons, Gadamer, Luhmann and Piaget all have a place in his system. And in undertaking this very large work of synthesis, Habermas began to fill in the missing link in Marxism: to spell out in detail the dialectic between the objective conditions for a classless society and the subjective conditions for self-emancipation.

What can be criticized, however, is that the anticipated ideal of a free and better society depends so much upon the analysis of the ideal speech situation. This, as Schroyer has pointed out, is a purely formalistic concept which contains no components that express historical relations.<sup>1</sup> Our analysis of the use which Habermas makes of Wittgenstein's 'language game' would certainly support this view. The analogy to Kant's problematic of transcendental constitution, to which we drew attention, is significant in this context. Seen from the perspective of linguistic analysis, the ideal speech situation and discourse both take on the dimensions of a transcendental language game divorced from the actual and contingent conditions of everyday life.

Theunissen's analysis of the unclarified relation between interaction and self-reflection in Habermas's writing, showed how the limit-

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, pp.166-168



ation of the interest in revolution to self-reflection resulted in the subjectification of the revolution and the consequent inability to retain a hold on the concrete historical process. The formalism of the kind of future society anticipated by Habermas is clearly expressed in his own account of the meaning of self-reflection:

"In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility."<sup>1</sup>

These criticisms are immanent in the sense that they seek to explain the inadequacy of Habermas's concept of praxis by measuring his theory with the standards and goals set and proclaimed by Habermas himself. However, criticism has also come from without. Instead of judging Habermas's version of critical theory according to its own demands, some commentators have questioned the very possibility of discourse as a possible means for the redemption of validity claims. Theodore Kiesel, for example, argues that there is a categorical framework to language in which we are and will remain trapped.<sup>2</sup> Ruediger Bubner argues that Habermas has borrowed his concept of discourse from the model of Socratic dialogue, but that the latter cannot simply be taken over in the form in which it is.<sup>3</sup> We should not forget that the individuals who are to participate in discourses have been, as members of a particular historical situation, socialized in a particular way. Bubner, therefore asks whether discourse can still succeed after centuries of continuous suppression of communication and ideological distortion.

In one sense, we can find support within critical theory itself for these latter criticisms. But in another sense, we can also find

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.197

<sup>2</sup>Theodore Kiesel: 'Habermas 'Reinigung von reiner Theorie: Kritische Theorie ohne Ontologie?' in Materialien zu Habermas' Erkenntnis und Interesse, op.cit. p.314

<sup>3</sup>Ruediger Bubner: Was ist kritische Theorie? in Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik, Theorie-Diskussion, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, a.M. 1973

in critical theory the means for transcending the criticisms.

In the first place ample evidence can be found within critical theory for the suppression of communication in a technological milieu. For example, Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the effect of mass communication has been to create a 'blindness and dumbness' on the part of the recipients and that these qualities then pass back into language itself:

"The blind and rapidly spreading repetition of words with special designations links advertising with the totalitarian watchword. The layer of experience which created the words for their speakers has been removed; in this swift appropriation language acquires the coldness which until now it had only on billboards and in advertisement columns of newspapers."<sup>1</sup>

In similar fashion Marcuse argues that because language, thought and imagination have not remained immune to the attack made on them by the machines and mechanised processes of the highly technologized structures of late capitalism, the idea that language, thought and imagination should be given free expression is a regressive one:

"The mutilated individuals would organize and destroy even more than they are now permitted to do...Rational is the imagination which can become the a priori of the reconstruction and re-direction of the productive apparatus toward a pacified existence, a life without fear. And this can never be the imagination of those<sup>2</sup> who are possessed by the images of domination and death."

Marcuse argues that empirically given consciousness is mutilated beyond the point at which it could still serve the process of liberation. Liberation, as he points out, depends upon 'rational imagination'. In Chapter Three we argued that the concept of praxis in critical theory became extremely problematical every since Horkheimer and Adorno first advanced the thesis of the 'total integration' and total assimilation of the subject in the reified systems

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Horkheimer and Adorno: The Dialectic of Enlightenment, p.165.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.194

of instrumental rationalization. Since then, the age-old question, 'Who educates the educators?', which had existed only as an undercurrent in the Marxist tradition, came to the fore.<sup>1</sup>

The problem which is implied in this question is the epistemological one of discovering, under conditions of widespread ideological distortion, from what area of life or experience we may obtain valid knowledge about ourselves and our society. Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse did have an answer to this question. Paradoxically, however, the form which this answer took did not have immediate or even apparent consequences for praxis. This was because it was only in the art work that the rational needs of mankind for a life of truth, beauty and freedom from toil could find expression, albeit in a sublimated form.

Marcuse argued that it is by virtue of the cognitive and transforming power of Reason that we can free ourselves from brutality, insufficiency and blindness. And in one-dimensional society, i.e. in a situation of nearly total cultural manipulation, the function of Reason converges with the function of Art:

"Like technology, art creates another universe of thought and practice against and within the existing one. But in contrast to the technical universe, the artistic universe is one of illusion, semblance, Schein. However, this semblance is resemblance to reality which exists as the threat and promise of the established one. In various forms of mask and silence, the artistic universe is organized by the images of life without fear...The more blatantly irrational the society becomes, the greater the rationality of the artistic universe."<sup>2</sup>

Here then is the second moment in critical theory; a moment which portrays a world with a staggering resistance to the pressures for mimetic conformity. The struggle in which serious art is engaged

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<sup>1</sup>Lukacs had, of course, thematized the problem many years before in History and Class Consciousness. This work, however, only began to find a readership after the 2nd World War.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man, p.187

in order to keep alive the possibilities of reason and freedom, accounts in part, for the esoteric denseness of the language now used in serious art: it strives to create a language appropriate to its own medium and which can therefore still act as the bearer of experience and meaning. Adorno and Horkheimer, for example, have argued that the work of art has a special status which enables it to do this: "...it posits its own, self-enclosed area, which is withdrawn from the context of profane existence, and in which special laws apply."<sup>1</sup>

The distinction between language as it is pre-formed for the masses by the culture industry and the special attempt made in the realm of serious art to prevent language from becoming a dead thing in our mouths, opens the way for us to a new line of argument. Habermas's intentions in analysing the ultra-democratic structures of discourse was quite correct: viz. to find a way to redeem the validity claims raised in the form of practical questions. However, if the individuals who are to enter into this discourse are the same individuals who speak a dead language, then the conditions for the possibility of objective knowledge which they are to establish, are threatened from the outset. The self-reflexivity of natural language is not in itself a sufficient guarantee for the elimination of the ideological delusions caused and perpetuated by historically unjustified relations of power and privilege. This would suggest that we should give serious consideration to the notion of a meta-aesthetics as a possible means of realizing Habermas's correct intentions in a more satisfactory form. The function of such a meta-aesthetics would be to explore the conditions for the possibility of objective knowledge through an analysis of the rules of interpretation applicable to the work of art.

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Adorno and Horkheimer: The Dialectic of Enlightenment, p.19

Habermas's concern with the search for meanings, with the possibility of non-repressive communication of values, is expressive of a fundamental crisis in our everyday life. In order to understand the full dimensions of this crisis, we must reconstruct the fate of the interpretative ability and creativity of those who live in late capitalist society. It is therefore a matter of importance that some of the reasons should be examined for the contention that the sublimations and esotericisms of the art work may reveal more about our interpretative abilities, than can be revealed through a communication theory based, in the first instance, upon the problem of language analysis.

In the twentieth century a revolution has taken place in art, which in speed and thoroughness exceeds all other known changes of the past:

"Wagner and even Richard Strauss felt indebted to Gluck as their spiritual ancestor, despite the vast difference between his music and theirs. But in the last fifty years there has been a break which has left no spiritual kinship between old and new music. Music now strives to cut itself off from its past, indeed from its most glorious past, from its Golden Age. This would be painful even if the results were more managable."<sup>1</sup>

A theory of meta-aesthetics is not a simple theory about art, but includes the study of the historical relations between subject and object as they are expressed in, and through, the art work. What is to be avoided at all costs is an evaluation of art as the mere expression of individual creativity, because the artistic subject is, in important respects, a social subject as well. This was why Adorno referred to the art work as a 'force-field' between subject and object, and is the reason why the revolution in modern art cannot be explained away as a result of individual caprice:

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Roth: The Business of Music: Reflections of a Music Publisher, Cassel, London, 1966, p.135

"If indeed totalitarian rule is not merely imposed on human beings from outside, but at the same time is prepared within them, then Stravinsky's music furnishes a cryptogram of the anthropological changes which have brought this about. At the same time we are confronted here by an objective process, that lies in the thing itself and is in reality social, rather than psychologically mediated; as a private person Stravinsky has stood fast against all totalitarian temptations, and left Europe when fascism began to gain the upper hand; in Russia he was proscribed. A responsible sociology of music seeks to define music as a field of societal forces, in terms of the tensions of those elements among which the particular character of the individual composer constitutes only one moment, and hardly the most important one."<sup>1</sup>

To see art as a force-field expressing historical relations between subject and object is the first prerequisite to grasping the significance of the revolution in art which occurred in the first decades of this century. Throughout this present work we have sought to show that critical theory is related to the history of human society by means of the capacity of man to be reflective about his own self-formative processes. We have also sought to show how the dialectic of self-reflection is forced to preserve truth in a negative form in order to resist succumbing to the emergent cultural alienations of late capitalist society. In these terms the struggle of modern art for autonomy signifies active resistance to the mechanical laws of the reified social world.

In art, the decisive break with the continuity of the past coincides with the outbreak of World War I. "Looking back at those pre-War days, which now seem so far away as the days of Charlemagne, I cannot help wondering how and why the arts alone were driven to warn the world of the impending catastrophe...Up to that fateful summer day in 1914 life was secure, to a degree that seems almost unbelievable to us: only the arts were nervous, upset, uncomfortable, as if they had the animal's instinctive awareness of an approaching storm...War broke out suddenly and, as it seemed, senselessly. Like

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<sup>1</sup>The Frankfurt School: 'The Sociology of Art and Music in Aspects of Sociology, Heinemann, London, p.112

all wars it did the arts no good. Gold went for steel and pens for rifles. It was like a change of scene on a darkened stage. When, five years later, the lights went up again nothing stood where it had been before. We came home from the war like Enoch Arden: the world had taken to new ideals. Music, in particular, broke out of its stable like a wild horse and became atonal. How all the good old rules went with the wind! Atonality was not just a new light. It was a bomb, threatening to blast the once luxurious palace of music to the ground."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the revolutionary break with the art of the past should not be seen as the result of decadence, willful perversity or the collapse of 'moral' values; it is, instead, the result of objective social tendencies and, in particular, of the invasion of the individual psyche by the dense structures of accumulated communicative techniques. In the age of advanced technology, the world might be drawing closer together, but does not do so in a way which helps the individual to greater autonomy and freedom. A dual process occurs: external events implode upon the individual consciousness in order, finally, to explode it from within. In Death in Venice, Thomas Mann describes how Gustav Aschnbach is broken hopelessly down by this very process: "That night he had a fearful dream - if dream be the right word for a mental and physical experience which did indeed befall him in deep sleep, a thing apart and real to his senses, yet without seeing himself as present in it. Rather its theatre seemed to be his own soul, and the events burst in from the outside, violently overcoming the proud resistance of his spirit; passed through him and left him, left the whole cultural structure of a life-time trampled on, ravaged and destroyed."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Roth, pp.144-145

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Mann: Tod in Venedig, Fischer, Frankfurt a.M., 1972

If we are to explain how and why modern art has struggled to preserve intact the dimension of integrated experience, we must first explain not only the way in which art is affected by social trends in general but also how art struggles with its traditional language and forms. As Habermas has commented:

"In the artistically beautiful, the bourgeoisie once could experience primarily its own ideals and the redemption, however fictive, of a promise of happiness that was merely suspended in everyday life. But in radicalized art, it soon had to recognize the negation rather than the complement of its social practice. In the aura of the bourgeois work of art - that is, in the cultist enjoyment of the already secularized, museum-ripe shrine - was mirrored a belief in the reality of the beautiful illusion. This belief crumbled along with the aura...Under the sign 'l'art pour l'art', the antagonism of art is carried to its extreme. The truth thereby comes to light that in bourgeois society art expresses not the promise but the irretrievable sacrifice of bourgeois rationalization, the plainly incompatible experiences and not the esoteric fulfillment of withheld, but merely deferred, gratifications."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, an interpretation of the art work, reveals the hollowness of the claim that social development in late capitalist society is harmonious and progressive. As we pointed out in Chapters Three and Four, the extent of the crisis of late capitalist society is often misperceived because this is a society which maintains and increases 'abundance' for its population. The danger remains, however, that man becomes increasingly unaware and uncritical of the forces which coerce and restrict him. Therefore it must be stressed again that the struggle does not take place in forms which are immediately recognizable. The idea that art reflects and depicts reality and in an unmediated form would be a form of ideology. If reality were directly represented in art, there would be no difference between art and empirical existence worth talking about. A critical aesthetics is therefore forbidden from proceeding as if art were nothing more than

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.119



the extension of society by other means.

Society enters into the work of art in a highly mediated way; often only in the extremely disguised and complicated constituents of form. Through these constituents reality is reflected once again, but it should not be forgotten that these constituents have their own dialectic and this prevents any simple equation with reality.

"Art cannot make concepts its 'theme'. The relationship of the work and the universal becomes the more profound the less the work copes explicitly with universalities, the more it becomes infatuated with its own detached world, its material, its problems, its consistency, its way of expression. Only by reaching the acme of genuine individualization, only obstinately following up the desiderata of its concretion does the work become truly the bearer of the universal."<sup>1</sup>

Because the relationship between art and society is so complex, it is not only successful art, but also the frustration and failure of genuine artistic talent that can prove, ultimately, to be a valuable source of illumination. A good example of this latter kind is Picasso. As John Berger has argued, Picasso enjoyed only two periods of activity -- from 1910 to 1914 and 1931 to 1942 -- during which he produced great and successful works. In the intervening and subsequent periods he produced nothing of comparable merit. This came about neither because Picasso lacked appreciation nor because he lacked creativity. What he did lack, however, were subjects. During his two successful periods, viz. Cubism and the period of Spanish fascism, Picasso was able to identify himself with the struggle of the left for a better society. After World War II was over, he failed to find those to whom he could belong and from whom he could draw inspiration. The Communists applauded Picasso for his political allegiance but displayed a frightening lack of understanding for his art. The restorative attempts within the post World War II capitalist

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<sup>1</sup>T.W. Adorno: 'Theses upon Art and Religion Today' (transl. W.P. Southard), Kenyon Review, VII,4, Autumn, 1945, p.681

order could hardly have excited an intense imagination such as Picasso's. He therefore no longer had anything to work on. He took up themes from other painters (Delacroix's 'Femmes d'Alger', Velasquez's 'Las Meninas', Manet's 'Dejeuner sur l'herbe') but his own original talent did not develop further. Towards the end of his life he wrote to a friend as follows : 'You live a poet's life and I a convict's'. Thus at the end of his life the most successful artist of the century confessed to despair. And the particular significance of this is that,

"The gifts of an imaginative artist are often the out-riders of the gifts of his period. Frequently the new abilities and attitudes become recognizable in art and are given a name before their existence in life has been appreciated...Art is the nearest to an oracle that our position as modern scientific men can allow us. What happens to an artists gifts may well reveal in a coded or cyphered way, what is happening to his contemporaries. The fate of Van Gogh was the partial fate of millions. Rembrandt's constant sense of isolation represented a new intimation of loneliness experienced, at least momentarily, by hundreds in seventeenth century Holland. And so it is with Picasso. The waste of his genius, or the frustration of his gifts, should be a fact of great significance for us. Our debt to him and his failures, if we understand them properly, should be enormous."<sup>1</sup>

We have now examined two of the ways in which society influences the art work and artistic creativity. Both of these, as we have seen, make important statements about the nature of reality and in some cases shed an entirely new light upon our understanding of our situation in modern history. But an adequate account of the art work must also take into consideration the kind of understanding which the work of art transmits because of the utopian impulse which is fundamental to it.

The explicit disavowal of the possibility of broad social acceptance, the esoteric denseness of the language, should not lead us to the mistaken belief that serious art no longer presents such

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<sup>1</sup>John Berger: Success and Failure of Picasso, Penguin, 1965  
p:202

a solution, but should remind us rather of the important truth that today, the hope for a better society is inextricably bound up with the preservation of enlightenment in a negative form. The concern with freedom during times as dark as these cannot immediately identify the practical levers for change or formulate the weights and pressures to be applied to these. The sad truth may be that the art work is the last preserve for the hope of a better world.

"It is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads."<sup>1</sup>

The place of aesthetics within the main corpus of critical theory will depend upon the extent to which critical theory addresses itself to the right questions, the most important of which would concern the relationship between art and society, while, at the same time, avoiding the danger of reducing the one to the other. Aesthetics should not exhaust itself in any pre-empting definition: Art has never been something separate from society. The increasing necessity for political intervention in society by the late capitalist state has made it less so.

"...people often accuse Marxists of welcoming the intrusion of politics into art. On the contrary, we protest against the intrusion. The intrusion is most marked in times of crisis and great suffering. But it is pointless to deny such times. They must be understood so that they can be ended: art and men will then be freer."<sup>2</sup>

In view of the fact that, as we have seen above, all representatives of critical theory have at one stage or another made critical theory a central concern (e.g. Adorno and Horkheimer), or have, at least,

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<sup>1</sup>T.W. Adorno: 'Commitment' (transl. Francis McDonagh) New Left Review, Sept/Dec. 1974, p.78

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Berger, pp.89-90

incorporated short aesthetic expositions in their work (e.g. Habermas and Marcuse) which testify to the importance of art as a potential source of illumination and information about identifiable levels of suffering and alienation, it is to be regretted that Habermas has not paid more attention to this field of study which has long been one of the central concerns of critical theory.

It may at first appear as if an approach such as that recommended here would mean taking yet another step back from the real problem of praxis, and it could then be said in Habermas's favour, that this, at least, he did not do. However, if our concern with the nature of enlightenment as a necessary pre-condition for successful praxis, is genuine, then we can argue that aesthetics represents the first and necessary step, and discourse the second.

Let us recall that we said previously that Habermas's concept of the ideal speech situation was a formalistic concept. Of this Habermas himself is clearly aware:

"However, only in an emancipated society, whose member's autonomy and responsibility had been realized, would communication have developed into the non-authoritarian and universally practiced dialogue from which both our model of reciprocally constituted ego identity and our idea of true consensus are always implicitly derived."<sup>1</sup>  
(my emphasis)

We will also recall that Habermas did not think of discourse solely as a situation of actually 'unconstrained subjectivity' but that, following the connection between psycho-analysis and linguistic analysis, he thought of it in a normative and therapeutic sense, i.e. in terms of the recovery of split-off symbols. This surely does not imply that 'socratic' dialogue is 'possible everywhere and at any time' (Bubner), but that the progress of mankind toward autonomy and responsibility is advanced "Only when philosophy dis-

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, p.314

covers in the dialectical course of history the traces of violence that deform repeated attempts at dialogue and recurrently close off the path to unconstrained communication."<sup>1</sup> The most important question then is this: 'In what form is philosophy able to retrace the deforming results of past violence?' And this question has important consequences for praxis. Central to the theory of the 'crisis of legitimation in late capitalism', is the following question: 'If the economic crisis in capitalism can be absorbed in the long run, which crisis tendencies manifest themselves in which form and in which social groups?'<sup>2</sup>

How are we to set about answering this question, if, as our evidence suggests, the steps of repressed dialogue cannot be retraced in and through dialogue itself? We could then argue that the truth of the possible statements which we could formulate in order to answer this question, would depend upon the realization that the work of art as such anticipates the 'good life' to an extent which language cannot. Not from retracing the course of the repression of communication by means of discourse itself will come truth, but from our success in interpreting and understanding the ability of modern art to record and protest the damage done to the ego in a society increasingly governed by the forces of instrumental rationalization.

The ability to read correctly the text of past suffering is extremely important for we must be clear about what the real threat to our civilization is. Is it only the population explosion, radioactive damage, destructive defence strategies, wasteful armament spending and pollution of the environment? Or are these the inevitable

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.315

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.59

results of another kind of crisis? Klaus Heinrich once argued that the degree and extent of self-destruction practised in our society ought to remind us of a fact which our positivistic epoch is only too eager to deny: namely, the fact that the reproduction of mankind can only be secured in the highly demanding form of historical survival which in turn presupposes that a sense of meaning in life and identity through culture are secured.<sup>1</sup>

For a critical science to make good its claim to be a guide for praxis, it must make plausible the case that the potential for crisis is contained within the social reality which it studies. At the socio-cultural level, the concept of crisis cannot be separated from the problem of identity. Societies, however, do not have a straight-forward identity which can be ascribed to them in the same trivial sense in which an object has an identity. In the latter case the same object can be identified as such by different observers. According to Habermas the identity of a society is not stable in this same sense: a society has the function of bringing forth (hervorbringen) its identity.

In a situation of crisis and conflict the identity of an individual or a society may be challenged to the extent that only two alternatives remain: collapse or the task of beginning a new life. In either case, a continuation along the old lines is impossible.<sup>2</sup> What we still have to do, therefore, is to discuss the meaning of 'critique' and the particular form which it should take in the contemporary context. In what sense is late capitalist society still a 'crisis society' and by what means are we to obtain objective knowledge about the meaning and dimensions of the crisis? These are some of the questions which we will seek to answer in the following chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>Klaus Heinrich: Über die Schwierigkeit nein zu sagen, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Erik Erikson: Young Man Luther, Faber & Faber, London, 1958, p.95

## CHAPTER SIX

THE MEANING OF CRITIQUE

"The traditional aim of socialist thought has been to become nothing less than the self-awareness of capitalist society. In a society profoundly ignorant of itself, it was the task of socialists to comprehend the principles on which the society worked. By discovering the real nature of capitalism, they were attempting to recapture an economic system that had escaped social control. Today this intellectual task remains as formidable as ever, because capitalist society is by the law of its own nature in a continual state of restless transformation. The true character of capitalism has to be rediscovered by each new generation."

Robin Blackburn: 'The New Capitalism'.

Critical theory as a more or less coherent body of thought began with the creation of the 'Institut fuer Sozialforschung' in Frankfurt in February, 1923. The creation of the Institut was really only the institutional and organizational expression of a movement of re-examination which had already begun within certain sections of the European Marxist tradition; a re-examination which had been initiated by Karl Korsch and Georg Lukacs, but which was ultimately to go much further than either Korsch or Lukacs in its rejection of the belief that the proletariat, because of its structurally determined position of oppression in the economic system, was the seed of the new society lying in the womb of the old.

The orthodoxies of the Second International began to be dismantled because of two historical events. The first of these was that the first successful seizure of power by the working-class had taken place in semi-feudal Russia and not in a highly industrialized nation as Marx had predicted. The second event of importance was that the idea of international class solidarity had been severely tarnished by the craven collaboration of the European working classes in their respective national war efforts.<sup>1</sup> These two factors, coupled with the increasing negation of the individual subject in the Soviet Union, led to a complete rejection within critical theory of the reliance upon the so-called scientific laws of historical development, which more orthodox Marxists claimed to have in their possession. These developments account, in part, for the rejection of the notion that the primary mode of critique should be that of political economy. Critical theory, therefore, evidenced an increasing concern with the problems of reification and commodity fetishism which Lukacs had done so much to revive.

<sup>1</sup>Martin Jay, 'The Frankfurt School's Critique of Marxist Humanism', Social Research, XXXIX, Summer, 1972, p285-287.

In the mid-1930's a third historical development began to make itself felt, and this development too, was to have a profound effect on the later form which critical theory was to assume. As the 1930's progressed, the legitimate fear arose that the realm of necessity would not be succeeded by the realm of freedom, but rather by a period of even greater barbarism. Alongside of socialism, fascism had emerged as a likely heir to the period of liberal and monopoly capitalism. The concern with these three historical developments constituted the bedrock upon which early critical theory developed.

These developments were, of course, also formative for Habermas's thought. But in his case -- he was only ten years old when the 2nd World War broke out, whereas Adorno was already thirty-six and Horkheimer forty-three -- two other factors which have to do with the restoration of the capitalist order in the post-World War II era, become more important. In order to understand the concept of freedom which emerges from Habermas's writings, it is necessary to see the decisive influence which the following two developments exercised on his thought: Firstly, the cumulative growth in state intervention (which is designed to secure the stability and growth of the economic system with a corresponding depoliticization of the public sphere), and, secondly, the growing interdependence of research, technology and government administration which have converted the sciences into a primary force of production.<sup>1</sup>

This explains why the task of an emancipatory critique as Habermas understands it, is connected not so much with an analysis whose object is the seizure of power by the working classes, but more with the problem of explaining how we can actually bring the pre-existing and unplanned relationship between technical progress and the social life-world under conscious control?<sup>2</sup> The problem with which we are objectively confronted in the 1970's is that the direction which technical progress takes is determined largely by unreflected social interests which arise autochthonously out of the compulsions of traditionally formed but hidden relations of power.

Technical progress has yet to be brought into alignment with the declared self-understanding of social groups. To the extent that we succeed in this task, we will succeed in increasing the realm of freedom. Habermas describes the basic orientation of his version of critical theory as follows:

"The investigations collected in this volume, in which the orientation has been predominantly historical, were to develop the idea of a theory of society conceived with a practical intention, and to delimit its status with respect to theories of different origins. Historical materialism aims at achieving an explanation of social evolution which is so comprehensive that it embraces the interrelationships of the theory's own origins

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<sup>1</sup> c.f. Chapter one, pp.22-25 Chapter three pp.72-80&91-93 Chapter five, p.143  
Chapter two, p.49 Chapter four pp.109-114

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p. 60



and application. The theory specifies the conditions under which reflection on the history of our species by members of this species themselves has become objectively possible; and at the same time it names those to whom this theory is addressed, who then with its aid can gain enlightenment about their emancipatory role in the process of history."<sup>1</sup>

This is where a critical science distinguishes itself from both the 'strict' sciences and the hermeneutic sciences, viz. in the consciousness of the processes of self-constitution and self-formation. There is an important difference between the strict and the hermeneutic sciences. The former deal with systems of instrumental action which alter the material base of society, while the latter can be seen as systems of communicative action which formulate the rules of interpretation that enable everyday actors to understand one another. Together these two dimensions constitute the process by means of which the human species develops in history. Where a critical science differs from the above two sciences is that it strives to be both explanatory and interpretative, while at the same time being guided by a different knowledge-constitutive interest from the natural and hermeneutic sciences. The interest which guides critical theory is therefore neither technical nor practical, but emancipatory.<sup>2</sup>

The laws which govern historical development are not invariant 'laws' of nature and history. Rather than stressing the element of 'external necessity', critical theory stresses that man is the active, albeit historically limited, subject in the constitution of the world. The emphasis is also upon the fact that man must become consciously aware of his role as the constituting subject in history if he is to become free, for only through a process of reflective criticism can legitimate and illegitimate authority be distinguished from each other.

"Thus the character of a critical science is unique insofar as it is concerned with the assessment of the socially unnecessary modes of authority, exploitation, alienation, repression."<sup>3</sup>

Critical theory, in other words, aims at the emancipation of man from the unnecessary constraints of the seemingly 'natural' forces of nature and history.

## I

In the following two sections we shall discuss some of the more important elements of critical theory in more detail, eg. its relationship to German

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed exposition of the three different modes of scientific enquiry, c.f. Chapter Two, pp. 49-52

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: 'Toward a Critical Theory for Advanced Industrial Society.', p.225

Idealism, its response to the increasing instrumental rationalization of society, the meaning of ideology, dialectics, self-reflection and interests. In his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant had attempted to give an account of the general epistemological principles which are theologically necessary pre-suppositions to our having knowledge about the world. In this view, subject and object could not be united. Immediate reality or nature could only be known as it is organized by the transcendental categories of synthetic apperception. What was revolutionary about Kant's concept of critique, however, was that the system of synthetic a priori judgements could be used to overcome the empiricism of a thinker such as Locke as well as the scepticism of Hume.

Hegel extended the scope of critique further by arguing that epistemology cannot be a first philosophy. In his view, Kant's analysis contained a 'bad infinity' which resulted from the fact that knowledge becomes trapped in a circular process if it advances the view that its criteria for objectively possible knowledge are themselves part of knowledge. For this reason, Hegel adds the element of self-reflection to critical philosophy. In this way consciousness would be forced to reflect back upon its own constitution, as well as the constitution of its objects. The triadic mode of synthesis in Hegel is a way of bringing the object within the sway of consciousness. With Hegel a new conception of philosophy is formed:

"He saw, as no philosopher since Aristotle had seen, the necessity for establishing his own philosophical position, not by the refutation of the philosophical theories of the past, but by incorporating them within his own system."

In Hegel's hands philosophy became not just one branch of specialized knowledge among others, but the ultimate form of knowledge itself. All accessible knowledge in science, history and everyday experience is connected together, interpreted, explained and sublated in a higher synthesis. The need for a philosophy of this kind was related to the need of the time in which Hegel lived and wrote, i.e., to act as a remedy for the general loss of freedom and unity in life. As a young man, Hegel had argued that the need for philosophy arises when the unifying power has disappeared from the life of man, i.e., when the contradictions no longer stand in a living and comprehensible relationship to one another but have become separated and assumed an independent form.

Once the harmony of life disappears, conflict pervades: consciousness is opposed to existence, nature is set against man, reality becomes estranged from the Idea. In his philosophy Hegel summarized all these oppositions as having the general form of a conflict between subject and object. The most important and unique achievement of his philosophy was that he was able to comprehend the coming

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c.f. translator's introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, op.cit., p.12

crisis of anomie or 'lack of inner-directedness' which was to accompany the spread of a market-dominated civil society and the dissolution of traditional bonds in Western Europe. This remarkable achievement should not blind us to the fact however, that Hegel was only able to do this because he carried out the necessary synthesis and re-unification only in the realm of thought:

"Man's knowledge and will had been pushed into a 'subjective' world, whose self-certainty and freedom confronted an objective world of uncertainty and physical necessity. The more Hegel saw that the contradictions were the universal form of reality, the more philosophical his discussion became -- only the most universal concepts could now grasp the contradictions, and only the ultimate principles of knowledge could yield the principles to resolve them."<sup>1</sup>

In the writings of Karl Marx yet another important dimension was added to the development of critical philosophy. In his Critique of Political Economy Marx believed he had shown how synthesis and re-unification could in fact be made real in the social and economic spheres. Marx rejected the Hegelian notion that nature is the external manifestation of mind. On the contrary, he argued, nature is the ground of mind. He did not mean this in a crudely materialist sense, however, because he saw clearly that nature can only become objective for us once it has been worked upon by the human subject:

"The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism - that of Feuerbach included - is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively."<sup>2</sup>

Prior to Marx, the active side of human practice had been emphasized by idealist idealism and not by materialism. Therefore, according to Marx, the active side had to be restored to materialism in order to overcome the abstractness of the idealist conception of practical constitution and human sensuous activity as such. For Marx it is the category of work or labour which brings about the synthesis of subjective and objective nature, the unity of which is imposed by the form giving character of human production.

This explains why the analysis of commodity exchange is central to Marx's philosophy. Marx sought to show that the value of a product is equivalent to the amount of human labour expended in its production. Having done that, he set out to show that the actual laws of capitalist development make this equal exchange impossible. Surplus value accrues to the owner of the means of production because he pays his workers less than the proportionate amount of value which they have produced through their labour. What the ideology of equivalent exchange does, therefore, is to both explain how the capitalist mode of production functions, as well as to reveal the truth which the ideology conceals. In early capitalism

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Marcuse: Reason and Revolution, p. 36

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx: 'First Thesis on Feuerbach' in The Marx-Engels Reader, op.cit. p.107

what was concealed was the immanent potential for overcoming alienation, an objective potential inherent in the socialization of the means of production. The function of 'critique' is therefore, to promote conscious emancipatory activity.

In Marx all the elements for a critical theory are present. But this does not mean that they have been 'weighted' correctly on his critical index, nor does it mean that the link between them has always been adequately thought out. Marx was a little too hasty in postulating a direct causal connection between revolutionary consciousness and critique. As we pointed out in chapters four and five, what Marx leaves unexplained is how consciousness of domination becomes or is possible.

When we say that all the elements for a critical theory are already present in Marx's work, we mean that he conceives of the process of social evolution in the dimensions of both work and interaction. On the one hand, the instrumental orientation to nature implies a logically invariant relationship, but on the other hand, the material basis of society is culturally mediated through the systems of communicative action. Both of these dimensions are essential for the emancipation of man but this means neither that these are parts of an identical process nor that they can be analysed in exactly the same way.<sup>1</sup> The dialectics of emancipation - the new dimension added by Habermas - is an attempt to explain the interrelation between these two dimensions.

Marx's principal error lay in the identification of the forces of production as the mechanism which puts an end to scarcity, and, at the same time, to ideological delusion as well: beyond a certain stage of development of the forces of production, Marx thought that irrational power constraints would be impossible to maintain. However, while the process of externalization is certainly dependent upon labour, the process of re-appropriation is not: the redemptive power of reflection, as Habermas has repeatedly pointed out, can never be replaced by work alone if society is to become freer.

Habermas's incorporation of psycho-analysis into critical theory is a response to his understanding of the fact that the institutionalization of power relations come to acquire a momentum of its own and that the obstacles to the rational development of society occur just as much in this dimension as in the area of economic crisis. While Marx was primarily concerned with the exploitative nature of the capitalist mode of production, Habermas has extended his version of critical theory in order to include all modes of unnecessary domination which result from systematically distorted communication.

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<sup>1</sup> c.f. Chapter One, pp.11-13  
Chapter Two, pp.44-49

In spite of these criticisms which we have made of Marx, we should not forget that critical theory has its basis in the works of Marx. The word 'critical' was consciously chosen in order to show the connection with Marx's critique of political economy. At the same time, however, the representatives of critical theory have continually emphasised that changing historical circumstances require and necessitate important revisions in the basic structure and approach of critical theory itself. They do this for the following reason:

"This theory implicitly reinforces the crucial point that dogmatism and uncreativity in the understanding of Marxism injures not the representatives of the established order, but rather the forces struggling for a better society."<sup>1</sup>

This is why there is something so tedious about the on-going debate as to whether critical theory is a 'Marxist' theory or whether it is a revisionist theory. Whatever one may think of the results, there is no doubt about the fact that Marx's writings have had an important practical effect on the history of the twentieth century. For this very reason, Marxism cannot hope to be able to stand outside the movement of history as closed body of immutable truth. As the fate of Marxism is interwoven in the most intricate manner with the fate of those forces engaged in the long and bitter struggle for a more rational and free form of human society, it seems to me that little can be gained from the attempt to either deny the importance of Marxism for critical theory or to 'rescue' Marxism from the alterations made by critical theory.

The need and relevancy for critical theory for the present task of combating the forces of increased repression, can perhaps best be understood if we bear in mind what has happened in the interim which separates Habermas from Marx. Up until the outbreak of the 2nd World War, the expectation that the proletariat would assume power in most of Western Europe was quite reasonable. Not only has that expectation since been disappointed, but the integration of the proletariat in bourgeois society means that it is no longer necessarily the crucial lever of social change. It is quite possible that this change may only be a temporary one, but the distinguishing feature of the contemporary period remains, nevertheless, that, for the time being at least, human behaviour will be manipulated and controlled rather than self-conscious and free.

The problem of alienation in late capitalist society is much more difficult to analyse than it was in liberal- and monopoly-capitalism. In the latter, exploitation and poverty took overt, perceptible forms. In late capitalist society the difficulty lies in the fact that the source and dynamic of alienation is not confronted directly. The depth of the crisis may not therefore be recognized as

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<sup>1</sup>William Leiss: 'The Critical Theory of Society: Present Situation and Future Tasks', in Critical Interruptions, op.cit., p.77

because the system appears to expand continually, thereby maintaining an abundance for its members. While claiming to be a highly rational form of society, there is in fact a growth of hidden mechanisms of coercion which result from unrecognized motives and compulsions. This is why there is something spurious about the claim that late capitalist society is a democratic society because it rests upon broad and fundamental consensus.

Consensus as such - even when there is the broadest possible participation in its formation - is no guarantee that the resulting policies, actions, or social structures will not be alienating, as this view does not take into account the extent to which differences in power result in inauthentic consensus. Amitai Etzioni has developed a useful distinction between alienation and inauthenticity. While the former refers to the unresponsiveness of the world to the actor who is subjected to forces which he neither comprehends nor guides, the latter refers to a relationship, institution, or society which only provides the appearance of responsiveness, while the underlying condition is alienating:

"Objectively, both alienating and inauthentic conditions are excluding, but inauthentic structures devote a higher ratio of their efforts than alienating ones to concealing their contour and to generating the appearance of responsiveness ... The alienated are imprisoned, the inauthentic work at Sisyphean labour."<sup>1</sup>

If it is at all possible to distinguish between pre-World War II critical theory and post-World War II critical theory, the distinction would have to be made along the lines of the general social change from a condition of alienation to one of inauthenticity. This is the reason why both Marcuse and Horkheimer argued that their earlier essays could not have the same significance in the contemporary context as they had at the time when they were written. Horkheimer wrote that at least as far as the problem of subjective consciousness was concerned, the proletariat had been integrated into society.<sup>2</sup> For Marcuse the change meant that theory could no longer hope to 'take hold of the masses.'<sup>3</sup> This did not mean, though, that what was once correct in the theory had now become false, but only that it had become a thing of the past. Until social conditions were drastically changed, critical theory would have to assume a more limited, negative role in society:

"Inasmuch as subject and object, word and thing, cannot be integrated under present conditions, we are driven by the principle of negation to attempt to salvage relative truths from the wreckage of false ultimates."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Amitai Etzioni: The Active Society, Free Press, New York, 1968, p.620

<sup>2</sup>Horkheimer: Vorwort zur Neupublikation von Traditionelle und kritische Theorie op.cit. p.8

<sup>3</sup>Marcuse: Negations op.cit., pp xi-xx

<sup>4</sup>Horkheimer: The Eclipse of Reason, quoted in Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, op.cit. p.263

This should not lead one to believe that critical theory has become unimportant for the future. It is precisely in order to preserve the achievements of the past, that critical theory must continually reinterpret them in the light of present possibilities. Categories such as freedom, happiness, reason, mind, morality and knowledge are not simply limited to the era of liberal capitalism, but are the on-going concerns of mankind.

This extremely important principle of critical theory -- ie. that the concepts which it employs are an integral part of the reality which they seek to grasp, and that, therefore, these concepts both help to change that reality and are themselves modified in the course of this change -- also brings with it a certain danger. The danger is that when social reality becomes inauthentic, critical theory relapses into a neo-idealist, pessimistic form of Kulturkritik. The particular merit of Habermas's version of critical theory is that it is not open to this kind of misunderstanding.

The negative formulations and pessimistic tones which pervade The Dialectic of Enlightenment and Negative Dialectic do not mean that Horkheimer and Adorno returned to a solely 'philosophical' form of critical theory. It should not be forgotten that these works played an important part in discrediting the somewhat naive belief, prevalent in historical materialism, that natural science was the only valid paradigm for a mode of thinking that would prove its truth in practice: in other words, that it was philosophy that had to be overcome. Horkheimer and Adorno succeeded in shaking this belief through their demonstration of the fact that the most important task confronting critical theory in the present era was the critique of instrumental rationality:

"The issue is not that of culture as a value, which is what the critics of civilization, Huxley, Jaspers, Ortega y Gasset and others had in mind. The point is rather that the Enlightenment must consider itself, if men are not to be wholly betrayed. The task to be accomplished is not the conservation of the past, but the redemption of the hopes of the past. Today, however, the past is preserved as the destruction of the past...That the hygienic shop-floor and everything that goes with it, the Volkswagen or the sportsdrome, leads to an insensitive liquidation of metaphysics, would be irrelevant; but that in the social whole they themselves become a metaphysics, an ideological curtain behind which the real evil is concentrated, is not irrelevant. This is the starting point of our analysis."

In other words, the reification of consciousness was the inevitable price which technical progress demanded. In exposing the real meaning of the Enlightenment by analysing its own immanent dialectic, Horkheimer and Adorno did succeed in restoring important socio-cultural dimensions to critical theory. The limitation which becomes evident in their work, however, is that they were not able to show how technical progress could be linked to an increase in the level of general emancipation at the same time. As we pointed out in Chapter One, it was only

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<sup>1</sup>Horkheimer and Adorno: The Dialectic of Enlightenment, op.cit., p. xv

with Habermas's formulation of the three different dialogics-in-action of the three different kinds of scientific activity that such a programme became possible.

Whether or not we may wish finally to replace the meta-linguistic analysis of discourse with some kind of meta-aesthetic is not as important in this context as the fact that Habermas's theory of communicative competence has restored the practical connection between 'critique' and the possibility for social change. As we shall show in the remaining sections of this chapter, he also succeeds on the basis of this theory in outlining how and at what point this seemingly monolithic system of cultural manipulation breaks down with the onset of "crisis". To make the charge of neo-idealism against Habermas, therefore, is not quite so easy. His theory of communicative competence is not an abstract philosophical substitute for historical materialism. It is rather that the success of the latter presupposes that of the former.

## II

In order to make good the above claims, we shall discuss those elements of critical theory which distinguish it in particular from what Horkheimer called 'traditional theory'. The elements which we shall discuss in this section are the analyses of ideology, dialectics, self-reflection and knowledge-constitutive interests in critical theory.

We shall do this in order to demonstrate the extent to which Habermas's writings offer a practical programme for the future emancipation of society. Traditional theory (or natural science) is distinguished above all by the fact that in it the social context in which the theory is applied, as well as the ends served by the progress of the theory itself, remain external to the structure and movement of the theory. It is on this basis that traditional theory claims to be 'value free'. But does this mean that a theory whose structure and function change through its involvement with the social reality is making an arbitrary choice when it commits itself to the attainment of more free kind of society? The answer, as the analysis of the above mentioned elements will show, is 'no'. As William Leiss has pointed out, social reality can be delineated schematically in such a way as to show that it is the non-involvement of theory in society which jeopardizes the possibility of freedom.<sup>1</sup>

According to Leiss, reality can be represented schematically as follows:

1). There is the precise way in which the established set of institutions functions, and these institutions embody two future possibilities.

<sup>1</sup>Leiss: 'The Critical Theory of Society', op.cit., p.79



2). The first of these possibilities refers to a possible transition to a more rational set of institutions (as Leiss points out, these would have the function of putting an end to war, injustice, poverty, and oppression).

3). The other possibility contained within the present refers to the possibility for increased barbarism, intensified oppression, and thermonuclear war.

The basic interest which all men share in common with one another is that represented under 2). The most important consequence which we should expect from an analysis of society is, therefore, clarification about the way in which to realize this common interest. But because society contains both the possibilities described under 2) and 3), the analysis of the way in which the established set of institutions functions cannot be adequate unless it also takes into account that which 'can' or 'ought' to be. Theory can only be divorced from society at its own peril:

"The actual incorporates the potential as part of its own structure. The prevailing reality always represents the realization of certain potentialities and the suppression of others, but the tension between the two sets is a permanent feature of the reality and is the driving force of historical change."<sup>1</sup>

When viewed schematically in this way, the issues seem to be relatively straightforward. What disrupts the unproblematic perception of the real problems, however, is ideology, for ideology is a veil which intervenes between the society and its perception of its own nature. Ideology is, therefore, not something which is false in itself, it becomes so only through its relationship to existing reality. For example, the ideals of the bourgeoisie -- freedom, humanity and justice -- are not false ideas: they become ideological when they are presented as though they were already realized.

As it is only in consciousness that something can be reflected in its 'otherness', the moment of subjectivity or reflection cannot be removed from the process of dialectical thought.<sup>2</sup> A theory of dialectical materialism, such as Marx developed, cannot succeed without the moment of reflection. The commodity form for Marx is an objective illusion because it conceals the institutionalized relations of production which went into its making. Through this process of abstraction it makes the elements of political domination and social force unrecognizable for workers and capitalists alike, thereby restricting the possibility for intersubjective understanding. It is only through reflection that this

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.80

<sup>2</sup> Adorno: Philosophische Terminologie II, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1974, p. 215. As Adorno points out in this passage, if we extract the moment of reflection from dialectics, then philosophy decays into a form of 'state religion' - a good example of which is Soviet Marxism. This sort of decay is contrary to the basic spirit of Marxism, as any unprejudiced reading of the texts will show.

process of abstraction can be overcome. To the extent that reflection succeeds in this task it will reveal the transformations of the institutional framework of society to be a movement of class antagonism, i.e., a dialectic of the consciousness of classes. This dialectic is in fact a process of reflection writ large:

"Unlike synthesis through social labour, the dialectic of class antagonism is a movement of reflection ... Thus it is not unconstrained intersubjectivity itself that we call dialectic, but the history of its repression and re-establishment."<sup>1</sup>

It is through the act of self-reflection that critical theory tries to grasp the self-formative process of an active subject, and in so doing shows that self-reflection is itself the interest in the comprehension and subsequent liberation of the subject from dogmatic dependence. In self-reflection false consciousness is overcome both analytically and practically:

"Self-reflection leads to insight due to the fact that what has previously been unconscious is made conscious in a manner rich in practical consequences: analytic insights intervene in life."<sup>2</sup>

In Habermas's writings, reflection does not refer only to the positing of the self (Fichte). If it did it would refer only to a return to the so-called evidence of immediate consciousness. In order to understand why reflection requires the work of deciphering (hermeneutics) and reconstitution (psycho-analysis), it is necessary to take into account a second element, viz. the fact the reflection is the effort to recapture the ego through its works or its acts.<sup>3</sup> This means that reflection has a practical and ethical, as well as a purely subjective side:

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<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, pp.58-59½

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.23

<sup>3</sup>Habermas has been criticized from various sides (Lobkowitz, Rohrmoser and Theunissen) for failing to distinguish adequately between self-reflection and rational reconstruction. Since the first publication of Knowledge and Human Interests, Habermas has clarified his position and partial acceptance of these criticisms, c.f. Postscript to Knowledge and Human Interests, p.182 and, for a more accessible account, c.f. Theory and Practice, p.22. (In the latter account, Habermas again makes clear just how important the moment of subjectivity is. Self-reflection brings those elements which ideologically determine a contemporary praxis of action and conception of the world to consciousness. Rational reconstructions, on the other hand, do not encompass subjectivity, they 'deal with anonymous rule systems, which any subjects whatsoever can comply with, insofar as they have acquired the corresponding competence with respect to these rules.')

"Whatever the secret of this 'diaspora', of this separation, it signifies that I do not at first possess what I am. The truth that Fichte called thetic judgement posits itself in a desert wherein I am absent to myself. That is why reflection is a task, an 'Aufgabe' - the task of making my concrete experience equal to the positing of 'I am'...we now say: the positing of the self is not given, it is a task, it is not 'gegeben', but 'aufgegeben!'"<sup>1</sup>

Because self-reflection can comprehend the source of error and dispersion, it is able to free consciousness from constraints. In performing the task of self-reflection, reason comprehends itself as interested. In self-reflection the interest of reason in emancipation makes itself apparent. It is in this way that we come upon the fundamental connection of knowledge and interest when we pursue methodology in the mode of the experience of reflection. If one is rationally to overcome the limitations of dogmatism, one first must have made the interest in reason one's own. As Habermas explains:

"The desire for emancipation and an original act of freedom are presupposed, in order that man may work his way up to the viewpoint of adult autonomy, from which viewpoint alone the critical insight into the hidden mechanism of the genesis of the world and of consciousness first becomes possible."<sup>2</sup>

Habermas is emphatic that the unity of reason and interest should not be misunderstood in a psychologistic sense, as must inevitably happen if his theory is approached from a positivist perspective, viz. if it is assumed from the beginning that interests are always foreign to pure theory, that they come to it from without, and serve only to obscure the objectivity of knowledge. For Habermas the knowledge-constitutive interests are neither natural nor transcendental determinants: they refer instead to the logic of the self-formative processes of human society.<sup>3</sup> For example, the technical knowledge-constitutive interest underlies the methodological procedures of the natural sciences and the practical knowledge-constitutive interest that of the hermeneutic sciences, but in such a way that they are not reflected upon and recognized as such. Each of the above two disciplines rests upon a priori assumptions which cannot be subjected to rational justification because they are not recognized as such. This, in a nutshell, is Habermas's criticism of the natural and hermeneutic sciences:

"Neither of them (Pierce and Dilthey) considered whether methodology as theory of knowledge reconstructs underlying experiences of the history of the species and thus leads to a new stage of self-reflection in the self-formative process of the species."<sup>4</sup> (my additions).

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Ricoeur: Freud and Philosophy, p. 45

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Theory and Practice, p.259

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Knowledge and Human Interests, pp.208-212.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.p.212

It is only through critical self-reflection, on the other hand, that knowledge can become aware of its own interests and recognize them as part of the objective context of its self-constitution. If reason contains an inherent interest in emancipation within its structure, we may well ask why this is not self-evident and why it requires such a lengthy and involved analysis in order to make it comprehensible? The answer to this question is that the dimension of power which has been operative throughout history has constrained the actualization of this cognitive interest. And this is the reason why Freud's theory plays such an important part - in Habermas's thought: he sees in psycho-analysis the first example of a science which reveals through reflection upon its own method that critical self-reflection upon pathological compulsion involves an interest in its abolition. The reconstruction of an individual life-history has a therapeutic effect because it restores to consciousness the individual's own processes of self-formation and this involves the recollection and conquest of those parts of the life history which have been closed off to conscious comprehension through the coercive power exercised by deformations of language and the causality of 'split-off' or suppressed symbols and repressed motives. Successful self-reflection overcomes the power of compulsively enacted causality.

Habermas generalized Freud's metapsychological scheme of interpretation in order to account for the origin and functions of power and ideology in social institutions. For example, all class societies have to find an answer to the problem of how to confer legitimacy upon a system in which wealth is distributed unequally. The institutional norms of the society therefore include such illusions as the ideology of the equivalence of exchange and these norms then perform the same function of coercion as suppressed symbols at the individual level. Critical reflection at the social level - the ideal form of which is discourse - is directed against power and ideology because it demands that the extent to which the norms of the society enforce a suppression of the interpretation and satisfaction of <sup>needs</sup> must be evaluated in the light of the capacity of the society to satisfy such needs according to the given level of the development of the forces of production. Critical reflection of this kind is the first and necessary step towards breaking the naive belief that greater technical progress always results in greater freedom.

Human history is an on-going process in which man struggles against the dimensions of power which result, on the one hand, from material scarcity, and, on the other hand, from unnecessary institutional and normative prohibition. In each case increasing freedom results from insight gained through the 'logics-in-action' of critical theory, viz. the interest in emancipation which inheres in reason.

In order for this latter kind of theory to have practical effect, it must be shown that the object of its analysis - in Habermas's case, late capitalist society - produces through the operation of its own internal laws of development a crisis which cannot be solved within the possibilities represented by its own structures as these are themselves subject to hidden dimensions of power.

In the following section we turn, therefore, to an analysis of the crisis of late capitalist society which will indicate the continuing need and relevancy for critical theory.

### III

The problem which we have to face when talking about a crisis in late capitalism is that of the apparent 'integration' of the proletariat. Does this mean, as the apologists of the existing order would have us believe, that late capitalist society is no longer a 'crisis society'? Critical theory answers this question in the negative but does so only with difficulty. This is because, as we saw in Chapter Three, the management and control of behaviour now made possible by highly sophisticated manipulative techniques, begs the question of how a critical understanding of this process can be acquired by those who are themselves the objects of the process of manipulation.

The value of any movement which is opposed to the existing structures of society, must, if it is to be at all convincing, confront the existing society along what William Leiss calls its 'leading edges', ie. the newest and most important features of the system's struggle for survival.<sup>1</sup> To what extent can a theory which bases itself on the writings of Marx perform this function? To what extent, in other words, is the object of our analysis still a 'capitalist' society?

In 1968 at the 16th Congress of German Sociologists, Adorno re-affirmed that in spite of the fact that no working-class revolution seemed imminent, this did not justify dropping the problem of capitalism from critical social analysis.<sup>2</sup> Although the theory of the increasing immiserization of the proletariat had not proved its validity in the literal sense, it had nevertheless done so in the no less alarming sense that unfreedom and dependence upon hypostasized social relations of concealed power and privilege had increased. As Adorno pointed out, if we view contemporary society from the perspective of the forces of production only then we do have some justification for talking in general about industrial or

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Leiss: 'The Critical Theory of Society', p.94

<sup>2</sup>Adorno: 'Spaetkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft' in Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften 8, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. , 1972.

technocratic society because the process of mechanical and technological production is the same where ever it is encountered. However, if we also take into account the relations of production, then we are justified in referring to the USA and the highly industrialized nations of Western Europe as still being capitalist. In none of these latter societies has the function of the productive apparatus been made subject to the control of politically informed and enlightened will.<sup>1</sup>

In making this distinction, Adorno was really only re-stating what Marx had already said, namely, that different social formations can be differentiated from one another in terms of the system of command over the means of production, i.e. in terms of the structure of interest and privilege sedimented in the relations of production. Habermas's analysis of the crisis of legitimation in late capitalism is based upon an acceptance and extension of this point to which Adorno had once again drawn attention.

As a means of explaining how the normative structures of society are linked with the material base, Habermas introduces the concept of 'organizational principles'. These principles determine the learning capacity of society and thereby relate its level of development to progress at the level of the forces of production as well as the relations of production. These principles accordingly define the area of 'abstract space' within which possible changes in the social structure can occur.<sup>2</sup> Because the nucleus of the social formation, in Habermas's conception, consists of an organizational principle, this means that the relations of production cannot be reduced to or equated with determinate forms of ownership of the means of production at any given time. In his address to the Hegel Congress (1975) Habermas argued that, in order to explain the change from one kind of social formation to another, we have to do two things. Firstly, we have to take into account which system-problems overstrain the steering capacity of the society; and secondly, we have to discover the nature of the potentially new learning-process which might result from crisis and breakdown in the old system. In Habermas's words: "A society can only learn (in an evolutionary sense) when the system problems, which the old system could not solve, are solved by skimming off and institutionally utilizing the surplus individual learning capacities. In this way the first step toward the establishment of a new form of social integration takes place: a form of integration which allows for an increase in the forces of production as well as an extension of system-complexity."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.361

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.18

<sup>3</sup> Juergen Habermas: 'Thesen zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus', Hegel Kongress, Stuttgart, May, 1975.

We can, on this basis, determine the evolutionary stage of the development of a society in terms of institutionally accepted learning capacities (eg. whether it makes provision for the separation of technical from practical questions and whether discursive learning processes can take place.) In Chapter Two we pointed out that positivism distinguishes between technical and practical questions at the logical level, but does so only in order to exclude the latter as the legitimate subject of discourse. The inclusion of such questions, on the other hand, would thus represent the attainment of a new learning level in the society.

Is there any evidence to suggest that the possibility for such a change in the structure of late capitalist society does exist? If so to what extent can a dialectical critique show how the potential crisis could result in self-reflective processes which would lead to further emancipation from unnecessary social constraint? What is it precisely which might cause individuals to see the existing system as 'illegitimate'? Could it be argued that late capitalism generates a crisis because of a structurally determined scarcity of a resource: in this particular case, not that of political power or economic profit, but the creation of motivation or meaning?

Social systems maintain themselves in an overly complex environment by making changes in two dimensions in response to the emergence of persistent problems. Social systems can effect such changes either by altering one or more of their material components, or by altering the goal-values (Sollwerte). However, if a situation arises in which a social system finds that it can only maintain itself by effecting changes at both levels, then the identity of the system as a whole becomes unclear. As far as social integration is concerned, the problem of identity becomes particularly acute as the younger generation is no longer able to recognize itself in a cultural tradition that was once binding and constitutive for the generation which preceded it. A crisis, in the sense in which Habermas develops the concept, therefore exists when the problems of social and system integration have to be solved at the same time.

One of the most interesting features of liberal capitalism had been its ability to depoliticize class relations through the institutions of the labour market, i.e. the exercise of class power disguised itself in the 'unpolitical' form of the exchange of wage labour for capital. However, late capitalist society is one in which there is an increasing amount of state intervention in the economy,<sup>1</sup> and this points to the significant fact that a repoliticization of the

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<sup>1</sup>c.f. Chapter Three, p.89.

relations of production begins to take place in late capitalism. However, this development does not lead Habermas to argue that the old political form of the class system will be re-established. The crisis in late capitalist society is of a different kind: "The political anomization of class power is rather surpassed by social anomization."<sup>1</sup> The pending crisis is no longer connected directly to the problem of the realization of surplus value. The focus is now upon the question of the rationality and legitimacy of administrative power.

The more the state has to intervene to correct dysfunctions in the economy, the more the following contradiction will become apparent: the contradiction between administratively socialized production and the continued private appropriation and utilization of the resultant surplus value. As this contradiction begins to become more apparent with every increase in state intervention, it can be neutralized through the offer of increasing amounts of financial compensation to those who are excluded from the direct appropriation of surplus value. The ability of the system to create and distribute such wealth then represents one of the outer limits which circumscribe the possible action of the system in its attempt to ward off the pending crisis. The other outer limit would be set by the ability of the system to procure as great a degree of autonomy for the administrative system as possible, thus making it independent of the need to legitimate itself in terms of the formation of public will. But this in turn would necessitate a fairly drastic change in the nature of the socialization process.

Habermas's analysis of late capitalism does not, therefore, exclude in any way the possibility that this system can contain the economic crisis (which Marx thought was inevitable) on a more or less permanent basis. However, it can only do so at a price, viz:

"...that the contradictory imperatives for steering, which arise from the necessary realization of capital, produce a string of other crisis tendencies. The continuing tendency towards the disruption of capitalist growth can be administratively processed and pushed step by step from the political into the socio-cultural system."<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the imperatives of continued economic expansion increase the level of social dislocation. The attempt to ameliorate these dislocations has contradictory consequences. The extension of bureaucratic social welfare organizations results in a more extensive integration of the individual into those areas of government administration concerned with unemployment, national health, education, occupational relocation etc. The end effect as Schroyer has called it,

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.56

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 60.



is 'dependent participation' and manipulated consumerism:

"These reformulations stress the sociocultural consequences of stimulated economic growth that make the work experience and everyday life less intelligible, transforms the human milieu into a technologically determined system, and systematically blocks symbolic communication by the superimposition of more and more technical rules and constraints deriving from rationalizing processes."<sup>1</sup>

State intervention results in the above tendencies, but these are increasingly in contradiction with one another. In order to demonstrate the precise way in which they interact, a four-fold classification of possible crisis tendencies is necessary. As Habermas explains:

"The fundamental contradiction in the capitalist system results in the fact that, ceteris paribus, either

- the economic system does not create the necessary amount of consumable value, or
- the administrative system does not create the necessary amount of rational decision-making, or
- the system of legitimation does not generate the necessary amount of general motivation, or
- the socio-cultural system does not generate the necessary amount of meaning which produces motivations for action."<sup>2</sup>

In the economic system, the inputs take the form of work and capital. The output is consumable value. Input crises have been rare in capitalism. Capitalist economic crisis has usually been an output crisis which has centered around the problem of how to distribute surplus value unequally without disrupting system integration. In the political system, inputs take the form of diffuse loyalty, the withdrawal of which results in a crisis of legitimation. The outputs of the political system consist of administrative decisions. Disorganization in the state apparatus will affect the quality of such decisions and the result will be a crisis of rationality.

The peculiar feature of the socio-cultural system, on the other hand, is that there can be no innate input crises at this level. The reason for this is quite obvious: the socio-cultural system does not organize its own inputs in a system immanent way, but derives them instead from the outputs of other systems. It derives its inputs from both the economic system (in the form of consumable goods) and the political system (in the form of administrative acts, social security and state subsidy). Output crises, therefore, in either of these two systems produce an input crisis for the socio-cultural system. Its ability to generate its own specific form of output -- motivation -- is thereby endangered. Insufficient levels of general motivation underpin the withdrawal of legitimation and falling levels of motivation disrupt the general level of

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Schroyer: The Critique of Domination, p.225

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p. 72

social integration. The effect of increasing state activity and intervention, therefore, renders problematical those elements of the cultural tradition which until this time had been assumed to be unproblematic. In a crisis of legitimation, it is meaning ('Sinn') that becomes an increasingly scarce resource. What had confounded Marcuse in his confrontation with the irrationality of the new technocratic order, was the fact that it was able to offer its members an increasingly high standard of living. A legitimation crisis, however, arises when expectations, which cannot be fulfilled, are systematically aroused. In this case the attempt can be made to defuse the situation through the offer of financial compensation. The extra-ordinary ability of technological production to do just this, led Marcuse to believe that the potential crisis was not structurally determined in that it no longer produced a strategically situated class in opposition to the established order. He therefore invested the hope for the rational transformation of society with marginal social groups.<sup>1</sup>

The position which Marcuse adopted seemed to represent an impasse for critical theory, which regarded itself as that branch of philosophy which refused to surrender in its search for the realization of the 'good life'. The particular value of Habermas's work lies in the fact that it shows the way out of the impasse into which Marcuse had been led. Because the reproduction of the human species takes place through the dual-medium of production and socialization, not only is Habermas able to show that material value is an inadequate form of compensation, but he is also able to show through his analysis of the meaning of socio-cultural crisis that late capitalist society must of necessity generate a crisis of this kind so long as its defining organizational principles remain what they are. The potential crisis, therefore, is structurally determined: a legitimation crisis can be seen from the fact that there is a discrepancy between the requested level of motivation on the part of the political and productive apparatus on the one side, and the supply of motivation from the socio-cultural system on the other.<sup>2</sup>

During the course of capitalist development, the political system is continually extended so as to shift its boundaries not only into the economic system, but into the socio-cultural system as well. Although it may at first seem paradoxical, it is this process of undermining a previously binding and legitimate cultural tradition which becomes the pivotal point for a new kind of crisis. Administrative manipulation is no substitute for meaning. The replacement of the latter by the former affects our ability to understand ourselves as well as the world in which we live.

<sup>1</sup>c.f. Chapter Three, pp.80-85.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.105

Manipulation acts on all aspects of our experience and at the same time prevents that experience from becoming a coherent totality. Both Adorno and Benjamin had drawn a distinction between *Erlebnisse*, which are atomistic sensations and experiences, and *Erfahrungen*, which imply an integrated type of experience which is mediated through cultural awareness and therefore includes a sense of the past and of the expectations of the future.<sup>1</sup> But what does the destruction of *Erfahrung* mean? One useful way in which to answer this question would be to see in the destruction of *Erfahrung*, the destruction of the ego as an autonomous, integrating, psychic mechanism that mediates between the individual unconscious and the reality principle. Manipulation, identification, mimesis, the destruction of experience, all result not in autonomy and freedom but in anxiety, meaninglessness, frustration, diffuse aggression and a feeling of impotence.

"It is not as though people are simply happy robots, secure and well-adjusted. Rather, as an essential part of the perversion, people experience their own disintegration - but in the form of increasing powerlessness (you can't fight city hall). Thus masochism has taken the place of neurosis, and cynicism and resignation are the contemporary forms of understanding. The fact that people have feelings of anxiety and awareness of meaninglessness rather than integrated and meaningful consciousness of what is wrong indicates how the system works against the life-forces."<sup>2</sup>

This does not necessarily mean that the situation cannot change, and the continued relevancy for critical theory consists in showing the potential for freedom which still exists within the realm of seeming necessity. This is why Habermas's work on legitimation problems is so important. It uncovers the dialectic of integration and manipulation thereby revealing which new contradictions arise as older ones are suppressed. And one of these is that, as the range of available commodities and the state run social services expands to immense proportions, the character of the expected satisfactions to be derived from the use of these products and services undergoes certain decisive changes. The man in the street might be led initially to believe that these commonplace products are capable of fulfilling his wildest and most extreme fantasies.<sup>3</sup> However, once the contradiction between the promised and actual degree of satisfaction makes itself felt, two possible reactions are possible. Overt cynicism towards these products and the system which produces them, is one of these. The other is that a fund of suppressed resentment and anger seems to be accumulating which can only find an outlet in what is still at the moment

<sup>1</sup> Op.cit. Jay: The Dialectical Imagination, p.104 & 208.

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit. Sherry M. Weber: "Individuation as Praxis", p.33

<sup>3</sup> Op.cit. William Leiss: "The Critical Theory of Society", p.97.

apolitical and diffuse aggressiveness, eg. wife-beating, child-murder, fast driving, excessive drinking and hatred of foreigners and non-conformists.

The growing element of dissatisfaction and aggression could, in conjunction with other factors, provide the basis for a transformation to a system of more genuine forms of gratification. Such gratification would come from the enjoyment of a reasonable quantity of material goods, determined on the basis of the minimum amount of labour required to produce them given the present stage of development of the forces of production. The dialectics of emancipation must lead, through the analysis of potential crisis, to a programme for the liberation of technology from its attachment to the structure of domination.

#### IV

If the disjunction between the normative inheritance of cultural tradition and the reality and demands of political & economic life widens beyond a certain point so that the maintenance of social integration is threatened, then, there are, as we saw, two possible directions which social evolution could take. Either the socio-cultural system could be uncoupled altogether from the system of material reproduction. In this case the nightmare of the negative utopia would be realized: the perfectly socialized individuals would be bound so tightly to the system through the extensive techniques of mass manipulation that they would 'freely' and 'willingly' sanction that very system, if for no other reason than that they could imagine no other possible one. Or the possibility for the extension of a new kind of socialization process would be realized. This latter possibility is connected to the realization of the ideal speech situation which is presupposed in the notion of communicative competence and has already made its appearance in certain areas of late capitalist society. This latter possibility arises because the administrative manipulation of the socio-cultural sphere has the unintended side effect of thematizing and bringing to consciousness those norms which were previously fixed by tradition, operated unconsciously and constituted a boundary condition for the political system as a whole. Normative structures previously accepted in an automatic way can now become the rational subject of discourse: "...administrative planning produces a universal pressure for justification (Rechtfertigungszwang) in a sphere that was once distinguished precisely through its power for self-legitimation."<sup>1</sup> Once the unquestioned character of norms has been destroyed, the only way in which validity claims can be stabilized is through justification in discourse.

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus, p.101.

The extension of a new kind of socialization process based upon the communicative ethic seems to be taking place on the part of the younger generation as well as in the area of serious art.

The position occupied by today's youth can be nicely illustrated through William James's work in which he examined the cognitive frameworks within which attitudes and beliefs develop. James drew a distinction between people who are 'once born' and those who are 'twice born':

"...The once born are those who unreflectively and 'innocently' accept the convictions of their childhoods; the twice born are those who may adhere to exactly the same convictions, but who do so after a protracted period of doubt, criticism and examination of these beliefs ...In other words, we need to examine not only the beliefs men hold, but the way they hold them. Politically and socially, it may be more important that members of a given sub-culture possess a relativistic view of truth than that they are conservatives or liberals."<sup>1</sup>

Habermas argues that the situation in which the younger generation finds itself today in late capitalist societies necessarily means that the rapidly increasing majority will be twice-born. The expansion of the educational system - an imperative for technological production - means an increase in the number of years during which the youth experience a 'psycho-social moratorium'. This moratorium now extends from early adolescence to, in extreme cases, the 30th year. Such lengthy periods of study bring with them intensified and protracted identity crises, crises during which the gap between the officially proclaimed 'interpretation' of life and the social reality itself is more likely to be clearly perceived. As we pointed out before, a crisis of this type can have one of two possible outcomes. If the result of an adolescent crisis which runs a non-conventional course is to increase the atomistic kind of understanding of self and society, then youth will increasingly join the ranks of the hippies, the Jesus-people, the drug sub-culture or other quasi-group formations of drop-outs. If the crisis, on the other hand, provokes the determination to struggle for change, then youth can be expected to arrange itself in student movements, high-school and university revolts, anti-imperialist campaigns, women's liberation etc.

This should not be misunderstood as an indication of the fact that Habermas ends up by adopting a position hardly different from that which Marcuse has taken up, ie. that the hope for a changed world lies with the marginal groups in technocratic societies. The discussions in the latter sections of Legitimationsprobleme im Spaetkapitalismus are not introduced as empirical examples of the revolutionary potential of youth. Habermas is discussing only what are

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Ibid. p. 126.

possible outcomes. It is also important to notice, therefore, that he also mentions the realm of serious art as an example of an area where what is seen to be a deforming and crippling reality is confronted with the alternative of a society based upon the satisfaction of needs which are interpreted and sanctioned according to the possibilities laid down by the structures of communicative competence. The argument is not to show that a situation of crisis will necessarily be used in order to secure a wider realm of freedom but only that there are areas of social interaction in which it can be theoretically demonstrated that individuals are driven into creating a new kind of learning process in order to survive the psychological stress created by the absence of legitimating cultural traditions.

The significance of serious art lies in the fact that, in direct contrast to popular art, it has struggled to become autonomous in the face of constant demands for employment extrinsic to art. Thus Habermas sees the unique function of art as lying therein, that it has taken up a position on behalf of the victims of bourgeois rationalization.<sup>1</sup> It has become the refuge, even if only virtual, of those needs which have been excluded from the material life-process of late capitalist society, in which previously dominant world-views, which offered interpretations of the world, nature and history as a whole, are replaced by ever-changing popular syntheses of isolated items of scientific information which testify to nothing more than the on-going instrumental rationalization of society. This process of instrumental rationalization conceals the practical questions of life and its expansion results in the repression of possibilities for communication about the contents of a projected image of the 'good life'.

It is therefore in the sphere of art that the residual needs of mankind -- eg. for a pacified relationship with nature, for the happiness of communicative experiences exempt from the imperatives of instrumental rationality, for the need to live together in wider forms of solidarity than those made possible by the narrow group egotism of the nuclear family, for the longing to give scope to imagination and spontaneity -- are gathered up. The modern trend has been to radicalize the autonomy of art vis-a-vis contexts of employment external to art in such a way as to produce for the time a counterculture arising from the center of bourgeois society but implacably hostile to the possessive individualism and achievement orientations characteristic of capitalist society.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.110

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.112

Throughout this work we have emphasized that a theory which seeks to become practical in the name of better society, has to validate itself in terms of a critique of the existing order as well in terms of an account of the structures of a more meaningful kind of socialization process. What is very important about Habermas's position is that he realizes that the constituents of a rational form of life cannot become the object of a rational formation of will which itself presupposes the existence of just those constituents.<sup>1</sup> This is another way of expressing the same dilemma which has been troubling critical thought ever since Hegel: namely, the problem of knowing before knowing before knowledge.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Habermas's answer to this problem lies in his theory of communicative competence. The only way in which the universal validity of norms can be tested is through dialogue. The difficulty is finding that area of life and experience which can both verify the damage done to the individual through the increasing instrumentalization of society as well as provide us with alternative kinds of norms which would increase the possibilities for communicative action. It is not that there is very much wrong with Habermas's theory of communicative competence as that it presupposes more extensive and deeper investigations in the field of aesthetics than he himself provides.

## V

We can, by way of conclusion, grasp the extent of Habermas's achievements if we view his theory as a whole in the light of the problem of freedom as it had come to be understood within the realm of Marxist orthodoxy as well as within the realm of positivist thought.

Let us begin with this latter issue. As we pointed out in Chapters One and Two, positivism operates with a concept of reason which severs the mediations between the human subject and the natural object. As reason, in this conception, belongs only to the subjective consciousness of the human subject, the way is opened to seeing in the realm of nature nothing more than a sphere which is to be controlled and dominated. (Man as the measure of all things meant the denigration of nature into an external other.)<sup>2</sup>

This kind of reason, which Martin Jay has so aptly called a 'kind of species imperialism', has ultimately worked to the disadvantage of man himself.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.194.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Jay: 'The Frankfurt School's Critique of Marxist Humanism', p.296

The denial of the historical constitution of the human world means that it was only a short and logical step to treat man too as an external object to be conquered and controlled by the development of the neutral techniques of science and technology. The growth of a technical civilization based upon the concept of 'subjective reason' has served not to increase the scope of man's freedom but to limit it. Attention was drawn to this development by Horkheimer and Adorno in The Dialectic of Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> Habermas has remained true to this tradition in that his work represents an on-going critique of positivism.

Ironically enough, the crisis of human existence to which the forces on the left were also contributing in no small measure was a direct consequence of the fact that a very similar kind of instrumentalist understanding of reason had grown up within the institutionalized Marxisms in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It was this development which caused Habermas to devote so much time to making distinctions between different kinds of revolutionary activity; to criticizing the bureaucratic rigidity of the socialist movement; to combating the objectivistic 'misunderstanding' of Marx's theory; and to developing a metatheoretical programme for the critical social sciences based upon the emancipatory interest which inheres in reason. Although Habermas has abandoned many of the central tenets of Marx's original work, he has rendered the Marxist tradition a great service in keeping alive its fundamentally libertarian impulse in an age in which the very idea of freedom has been brought into disrepute by the positivistic understanding practised by both the left and the right.

Few will be the critics who will not find fault with one or another aspect of Habermas's work. Those who are specialists in one or more of the many varied fields of scholarship which Habermas has synthesized, will no doubt have disagreements of various kinds with Habermas's particular interpretation of those authors whom they know more intimately. Such disagreement is altogether legitimate and is entirely necessary. However, in trying to measure Habermas's achievements, we should not forget, as Dieter Henrich has reminded us, that

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<sup>1</sup>"As soon as man discards this awareness that he himself is nature, all the aims for which he keeps himself alive -- social progress, the intensification of all his material and spiritual powers, even consciousness itself -- are nullified, and the enthronement of the means as an end, which under late capitalism is tantamount to open insanity, is already perceptible in the prehistory of subjectivity. Man's domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken; for the substance which is dominated, suppressed, and dissolved by virtue of self-preservation is none other than that very life as functions of which the achievements of self-preservation find their sole definition and determination: it is, in fact, what is to be preserved."



we stand only at the beginning of his theory: "Kein Abschluss ist also zu feiern." Habermas is still a relatively young man, he is only now reaching what would be the middle period of an average publishing life. If we follow Dieter Henrich in arguing that the real merit of any theoretical achievement consists, not only in its own accomplishment, but also in the response and effect which that theory finds and has on others, then there can be no doubt as to Habermas's success -- in Germany, at least, his effect upon the intellectual life of that country stands second only to one other thinker in this century, viz. Martin Heidegger.<sup>1</sup> And having said that, Henrich is quick out that to Habermas's it must be conceded that the effect of his theory has been far less ambiguous and far more fruitful than that of Heidegger's.

Habermas has kept himself immune from the temptations of orthodoxy. He has also seen and admitted that the exposure of the perverted rationality of society is not in itself an adequate conceptualization for critical theory, which must also be able to provide an adequate account of the actual mechanisms of social reproduction -- ie, the suppression and re-establishment of discourse, as well as the process of material reproduction through work -- in order that man may obtain a level of clarity about the socio-historical situation in which he finds himself that will have fruitful consequences for practice.

Neither Adorno and Horkheimer, nor Marcuse were able to develop adequate outlines for a practical programme of future action. In this sense critical theory itself was in a state of crisis. The brilliant and fascinating critiques of technical civilization did not illuminate the path to a better civilization. In contrast, Habermas's theory of the way in which validity claims concerning the relation of technical and practical knowledge can be redeemed in discourse offers new hope for the practical extension of freedom.

"Of course it makes a difference whether we are discussing standards that, as in science, establish the framework for descriptive statements or standards that are rules of communicative action. But both are cases of the rationalization of a choice in the medium of unconstrained discussion. In very rare cases practical questions are decided in this rational form. But there is one form of political decision-making according to which all decisions are supposed to be made equally dependent on a consensus arrived at in discussion free from domination - the democratic form. Here the principle of public discourse is supposed to eliminate all force other than that of the better argument, and majority decisions are held to be only a substitute for the uncompelled consensus that would result if discussion did not always have to be broken off owing to the need for a decision. This principle, that - expressed in the Kantian manner - only reason should have force, links the democratic forms of decision-making with the type of discussion

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Henrich: 'Kritik der Verstaendigungsverhaeltnisse' in Habermas/Henrich: Zwei Reden, p.22

to which the sciences owe their progress. For we must not overlook the element of decision-making in scientific progress. Here we see evidence of a subterranean unity of theoretical and practical reason."<sup>1</sup>

In a passage of unsurpassed lucidity, Wellmer once described Habermas's achievement in the following manner: "I believe that a new theoretical approach such as that of Habermas, in which the intention of criticizing science is joined with that of making criticism scientific, presupposes two things about this society: (1) that Marx's concept of class has largely lost its utility as an instrument of analysis; and (2) that science has not only become the decisive productive force, but that, together with educational institutions, it represents a decisive critical potential of highly industrialized societies, or can produce this critical potential in the form of scientifically qualified experts from the most varied social strata. If these assumptions are correct, then it is quite obvious that the differences in debate between 'critical' and 'traditional' science can no longer be interpreted in purely political terms as the expression of a class conflict, but that - precisely for that reason - they can and must be settled on the ground of science itself, because science itself has become the 'form of life' of industrial societies, and enlightenment is therefore possible only as an enlightenment of those directly or indirectly participating in science: as enlightenment about the irrationality of a praxis whose living element and principle of legitimation is scientific rationality, and as enlightenment about the repression of communication processes whose release alone will provide scientific-technical progress with a rational decision that can satisfy the needs of the individuals who make it."<sup>2</sup>

Habermas is not content, therefore, only to expose the hidden structures of domination. He subordinates his theory as a whole to the perennial task of mankind -- the struggle for emancipation. Adorno once said that no matter how opaque the spell of reification, it is only a spell ('So undurchdringlich der Bann, der ist nur Bann'<sup>3</sup>). Habermas has taken his teacher at his word. The real task of critical theory does not end with the sophisticated analysis of the structures of power and oppression, but only with the triumph of man over them.

THE END

<sup>1</sup>Op.cit. Habermas: Toward a Rational Society, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Op.cit. Wellmer: Critical Theory and Society, pp. 137-138.

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. Adorno: 'Spaetkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft', p.370

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