EMING
EMANCIPATION AND ILLUSION

MARIE FLEMING

EMANCIPATIO AND ILLUSIO

Rationality and Gender in Habermas's Theory of Modernity

PHILOSOPHY / POLITICAL SCIENCE / WOMEN'S STUDIES

In this comprehensive analysis of Jürgen Habermas's philosophy and social theory, Marie Fleming takes strong issue with Habermas over his understanding of rationality and the lifeworld, emancipation, history, and gender. Throughout the book she focuses attention on the various ways in which an idea of emancipation motivates and shapes his universalist theory and how it persists over several major changes in methodology. Her critique of Habermas begins from the view that universalism has to include a vision of gender equality, and she asks why Habermas, despite deeply held concerns about equality and inclusiveness, repeatedly and systematically relegates matters of gender to secondary status in his social and moral theory. She extends her critique to a range of issues in his theory of rationality and examines what she views as his very problematical claims about truthfulness, art, and bourgeois intimacy.

The point of Fleming's critique of Habermas is not to dispute universalism, but to build on the key universalist principles of inclusiveness and equality. She is not persuaded by the view, shared by both sympathizers of Habermas and his postmodern critics, that to be for or against Habermas is to be for or against universalism. Her intention rather is to show that Habermas's theory of modernity is so structured that it cannot achieve its universalist aims. Contending that his theory is not universalist enough, she claims that universalism has to be reconceived as a radical, critical, and historical project.

MARIE FLEMING is Professor of Political Science at the University of Western Ontario. She is the author of *The Geography of Freedom: The Odyssey of Elisée Reclus.*

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
UNIVERSITY PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

ISBN 0-271-01655-8

EMANCIPATION AND ILLUSION

MARIE FLEMING

EMANCIPATION AND ILLUSION

RATIONALITY AND GENDER IN HABERMAS'S THEORY OF MODERNITY

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
UNIVERSITY PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fleming, Marie
Emancipation and illusion : rationality and gender in Habermas's theory of modernity / by Marie Fleming.

p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-271-01654-X (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN 0-271-01655-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Habermas, Jürgen—Views on modernity. 2. Reason. 3. Enlightenment. 4. Sex role. 5. Postmodernism. I. Title.
B3258.H324F585 1997
305.3'01—dc20 96-34937
CIP

Printed in the United States of America
Published by The Pennsylvania State University Press,
University Park, PA 16802-1003

It is the policy of The Pennsylvania State University Press to use acid-free paper for the first printing of all clothbound books. Publications on uncoated stock satisfy the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1992.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was written with the support of both the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I also wish to acknowledge my intellectual debt to Jürgen Habermas, with whom I worked as a Humboldt Fellow from January to June 1991 in Frankfurt. I hope that he will take my criticisms, as I intend them, as part of a continuing effort to reinterpret the "project of modernity."

In the book I have drawn on the work of many others. The writings of Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib, even where I disagreed, were important to my attempt to establish the questions that needed to be asked of critical theory. The two readers for Penn State Press, one of whom I later learned was Jane Braaten, gave helpful suggestions for improving the original manuscript. Finally, I express my gratitude to Robert Gellately, whose commitment to history and historical understanding helped determine the direction of my work.

Portions of Chapter 1 appeared in my article "Working in the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Habermas, Foucault, and Derrida," *Philosophy Today* 40 (Spring 1996). Some of the ideas in Chapter 9 were presented in my article "Women and the 'Public Use of Reason,' " *Social Theory and Practice* 19 (Spring 1993).

INTRODUCTION

Jürgen Habermas's philosophy and social theory draws a line between modernity and postmodernity. That line is reproduced, over and over, in Habermas's own writings, in those of his keenest supporters, and also in those of his more skeptical readers, and it is drawn at least equally clearly in the texts of his postmodern critics. Everyone, from Habermas himself, to his sympathizers, to the postmodernists, seems to agree on one thing, namely, that Habermas stands for the universalizing tendency of modernity, and that to be for or against Habermas is to be for or against universalism. In this book I refuse to draw a line between modernity and postmodernity, and my criticisms of Habermas are not arguments against universalism. On the contrary, from my feminist perspective, Habermas's theory is not universalist enough. I contend rather that universalism has to include a vision of gender equality, and what I seek to explain is how and why his theory of communicative action does not allow for the articulation of such a vision.[1] Why, for example, does he include feminism in the list of heterogeneous and "particularistic" social movements, environmental groups, antinuclear protests, tax revolts, and so on, that have sporadically made themselves felt in Western societies in the latter part of the twentieth century? How can he suggest that feminism belongs to the grand "universalistic" tradition of bourgeois-socialist liberation movements and still maintain that feminism is a "new" social movement reflecting late-twentieth-century particularistic

1. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 and 1987). Hereafter cited as *"TCA"* by volume and page.

aspirations?[2] Why does he continue to develop a moral theory that denies moral status to issues of gender, despite concerns raised by feminist theorists?[3] Why does he view his class-based model of the public sphere of modernity, which he worked out over three decades ago, as basically correct, despite the evidence for the differential basis of women's exclusion from the public sphere?[4]

Habermas's treatment of gender presents difficulties because he says little about gender and assumes, wrongly, that gender has nothing to do with the rationality problematic. It also presents difficulties because, despite his androcentrism, in some important respects his views are not incompatible with feminist insights. For example, he still stands by his early view that there is a constitutive connection between knowledge and human interests and that a reflexive understanding of that connection requires a fundamental change of perspective in theory of knowledge. That view was developed in the 1960s, when he rejected the Cartesian model of the disembodied subject and envisioned a community of knowers whose physical survival, relations with one another, and "human" development depended on their ability to gain different types of knowledge: the theoretical knowledge needed for efficient intervention into the natural world, the moral-practical knowledge needed to establish relations between persons, and the "emancipatory" knowledge needed to overcome social and psychological structures of power and repression. Habermas's work on knowledge and human interests was also an argument against a positivistic conception of knowledge. He maintained that analytic philosophy of science had reduced to a sort of half-knowledge the historical-hermeneutic disciplines and the "emancipatory" knowledge produced through Marxian social theory and Freudian psychoanalysis. He expressed these criticisms of the dominant tradi-

2. Ibid., 2:393–94.

3. See esp. Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 306 ff., and "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory," *Praxis International* 5 (January 1986): 402–24. Cf. Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," in Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds., *Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 31–56.

4. See, for example, Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Mary P. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 259–88; and Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

tion within and against the tradition's assumptions, and his initial strategy was to expand the theory of knowledge to preclude the privileging of science. While he did not dispute science's claim to produce valid knowledge, he argued that science, and philosophy of science, had taken scientific norms as the basis not for one type of knowledge, but knowledge itself.[5]

The epistemological approach Habermas took to the question of knowledge and human interests was useful in constructing a powerful (internal) critique of philosophy of science, but for reasons I discuss in Chapter 2, he became convinced that epistemology could not take us very far beyond critique. He decided that solutions to the dilemmas he described could only be found through a radical reconceptualization of epistemological issues, and he was particularly attentive to the need to rethink the model of subjectivity at the core of epistemology. In his theory of communicative action he offers a model of intersubjectivity as a way of generating understanding about how we acquire knowledge of all kinds—knowledge of the natural world, but also of each other and of the self. This reconceptualization of his work on knowledge and human interests has been so radical that Habermas's later theory is generally understood as having left his earlier work in epistemology behind altogether. This is an exaggeration, as I shall show, but the point I want to make here is that he continues to be motivated, in his later as in his earlier work, by strong resistance to the Eurocentric privileging of scientific rationality in whatever terms that privilege is expressed—whether the terms are social-economic, political, cultural, or philosophical. His resistance to a dominant scientific rationality is conspicuously present in his attempt, in the theory of communicative action, to expand the concept of rationality to include relations between persons and relations with oneself.

This way of painting Habermas makes his relationship to modernity more complex and certainly puts into question postmodern criticisms that he is an unrepentant rationalist. However, it also makes the questions I raise about gender more difficult to answer because, if my picture is at all descriptively accurate, it should, at least initially, win Habermas much sympathy from feminists, especially feminist philosophers of science who have been arguing for some time for an abandonment of the

5. See esp. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests,* trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (London: Heinemann, 1972).

epistemological ideal of disembodied subjectivity. Feminist philosophers have scrupulously documented the negative images of women in philosophical texts and in many disciplines in the natural and social sciences, and they have been generally persuaded that gender biases, gender-based metaphors, even instances of explicit gender hostility, are fundamentally connected with the ideal of disembodied subjectivity that has structured philosophical and scientific texts. This ideal has been described in various ways, but it almost always involves a core self that is disconnected from human interests and relationships and has nothing to fall back on except the contents of its own consciousness. The ideal has also been interpreted as representing a deep aspiration to escape the dependencies of the world and personal relationships, to become impossibly transparent to oneself, to the point of denying one's own body and emotions. According to feminists, this repudiation of the body leads to various textual manifestations of the fear of contamination from whatever stands in the way of reaching the (impossible) ideal, and it extends to the repudiation of women, who have been culturally and historically linked with the body and the emotions.[6]

Feminists have demanded new understandings of knowledge and knowledge production. Many have sought to expand epistemology into areas of investigation formerly understood as sociology of knowledge and social psychology. In general, the idea is to include in (an expanded) epistemology not only an explication of the (male) self that has dominated epistemology but also social-theoretical and social-psychological explanations of that self. In psychoanalytical terms, the disembodiedness of the (male) self is sometimes explained as traceable to the male child's difficulty in separating from the mother, a difficulty that results in a persistent crisis of identity and a strong tendency to see any

6. See, for example, Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Naomi Scheman, *Engenderings: Construction of Knowledge, Authority, and Privilege* (New York: Routledge, 1993). See Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell, and Nancy Fraser, *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995), for a discussion of epistemological issues and social and political theory. See also Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992). For an attempt to refashion a theory of justice from feminist and postmodern perspectives on epistemology, see Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). Cf. Young, "Recent Theories of Justice," *Social Theory and Practice* 18:1 (1992): 63–79.

kind of dependency as threatening.[7] Other discussions have focused on Western parenting practices that establish the basis for the gender division of society by giving differential treatment to girls and boys.[8] These psychoanalytic theories are frequently supplemented by social-theoretical perspectives. For example, many feminists contend that the masculinist experiences associated with the content and practice of science and epistemology are the experiences not of all males but of a relatively small number of privileged (middle-class) males whose social-economic, political, and cultural dominance is well documented.[9] In addition, there have been initiatives for rethinking how knowledge is produced, notably through greater emphasis on dialogue, interaction, and community. The aim is to redefine knowledge, so that the knowledge we have of each other is not reduceable to the knowledge we have of the physical world and so that even the knowledge we have of the physical world can be understood as social activity.[10]

Habermas's theory of communicative action represents a good test case for feminist philosophy and social theory. If gender biases and stereotypes are rooted in masculinist experiences, and if those experiences are expressed paradigmatically, as feminists contend, in the ideal of dis-

7. For psychohistorical challenges to the ideal of disembodiedness, see, for example, Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11 (Spring 1986): 439–56; Jane Flax, "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Epistemology and Metaphysics," in Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983), 245–81; and Naomi Scheman, "Othello's Doubt/Desdemona's Death: The Engendering of Scepticism," in her *Engenderings*, 57–74.

8. This view has been heavily influenced by Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), and Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).

9. Social-theoretical insights have led to proposals for theories based in a feminist "standpoint theory." An important proponent of standpoint theory is Sandra Harding. See her *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). See also her "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: 'What is Strong Objectivity?' " in Alcoff and Potter, *Feminist Epistemologies*, 49–82, as well as the critical perspective of standpoint theory presented by Bat-Ami Bar On, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," also in Alcoff and Potter, 83–100.

10. See Code, *What Can She Know?*; Helen E. Longino, *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Lynn Hankinson Nelson, *Who Knows: From Quine to a Feminist Empiricism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). There are important connections between feminism and postmodernism; see Susan J. Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

[redacted]jectivity, one would expect him to be just the theorist [redacted] not have reproduced the gender prejudices of modernity. [redacted] does not deny that knowers have social and cultural identities, and he explicitly argues that knowledge is communally produced. For decades, he has maintained that knowledge cannot be identified with science and that science is not the only conceivable form of knowledge. Moreover, given recent trends in feminist theory, the dialogic and intersubjective model that he develops would appear to be especially relevant. And yet many feminists remain unenthusiastic. For example, Jane Braaten regards his concept of a "communication community" as too limiting to be of much value for feminist theory.[11] According to Nancy Fraser, his deficiencies on gender issues are so deeply embedded in his theory that the theory has to be viewed as androcentric in its very conception.[12] At the very least, as Seyla Benhabib and several others suggest, his theory requires substantial changes if it is to be able to reflect the aims and expectations of contemporary women.[13]

One might wonder whether feminists have got it right: whether the androcentric elements of philosophy of science can be traced to the model of disembodied subjectivity, and if so, whether feminists have correctly identified the basic features of that model, whether the ideal of disembodied subjectivity can be so easily abandoned, and what would be involved in such an abandonment. I do not ask these questions in this book, though much of my discussion touches on them and on related issues of subjectivity. In this book, I ask why Habermas's theory of communicative action reproduces the androcentrism associated with the

11. Jane Braaten, "From Communicative Rationality to Communicative Thinking: A Basis for Feminist Theory and Practice," in Johanna Meehan, ed., *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 139–61. Cf. Simone Chambers, "Feminist Discourse/Practical Discourse," also in Meehan, 163–79.

12. See Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" Cf. Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory" in Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique,* 57–76.

13. Benhabib, "Concrete Other," is right to see that Habermas's theory needs serious revision if it is to reflect contemporary concerns about gender issues; however, I am critical of her position, as I explain in my article "The Gender of Critical Theory," *Cultural Critique* 13 (Fall 1989): 119–41. See Kai Nielsen, "The Generalized Other and the Concrete Other: A Response of Marie Fleming," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* XVII: 2 (April 1990), 163–71, who defends Benhabib's position. Cf. also my article "Women's Place in Communicative Reason," in Elizabeth D. Harvey and Kathleen Okruhlik, eds., *Women and Reason* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 245–62. For recent feminist assessments of Habermas, see the essays in Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas.*

philosophy of subjectivity, notwithstanding the fact that he has supposedly left that philosophy behind. The question is fair, because, despite any differences he might have with feminist interpretations of philosophy and science, Habermas would not disagree with the feminist contention that the Cartesian subject of knowledge is male, as well as bourgeois. I situate my discussion, then, in the insight, fundamental both to the tradition of critical theory, in which Habermas works, and to contemporary feminism, that all knowledge is produced by embodied and interested human beings, in relationship with each other and in history.

Habermas's treatment of gender cannot be attributed to oversight, nor can it be reduced to male bias. I do not doubt that he wants to include women in his universalist utopia. But if he does not subscribe to the ideal of disembodied subjectivity, how, then, are we to explain why his theory does not give evidence of his personal and political commitment to gender equity? And how can we account for the latent traditionalism on gender issues that, I argue, runs through all his major writings? Contrary to what Habermas might think, there is a connection between gender and rationality in his theory that he does not acknowledge, and it is a connection that he cannot acknowledge without abandoning important parts of his theory.

I understand my argument as a radical form of internal critique. I examine Habermas's aims, but also the assumptions that are built into his theory, including those that may be unintended and unwanted. In the relevant places I also draw attention to the rhetorical features of his argumentation, to peripheral or occasional remarks, and so on, that point to difficulties not easily resolvable within the assumptions of his theory, but still apparently related to the theory's central concerns. In that way I hope to draw out the significance of apparently marginal references or obscure texts. But while I employ a number of different strategies, my intention is to develop an analysis that also includes Habermas's own formulations of the questions at issue. He might wish to contest my interpretation, but he would surely recognize himself in my discussion of key areas of his theory, especially the problem of understanding meaning, his lifeworld analysis, and his account of the validity-basis of speech. In those and other instances, I show why the arguments he offers cannot support the conclusions he draws. My internal critique is radical because it is situated at the limit of Habermas's theory and strives to show what that theory prohibits and why.

My argument is divided into three parts. In Part 1 of this book I main-

tain that to understand why the universality question takes the form it does in Habermas's theory, we have to see that it is connected to his attempt to "disallow" the question of historicity. By historicity I refer to the historical situatedness of all thinking and acting and to the problem of making provision, in theory, for a full and open discussion of that situatedness. It does not mean, as Habermas might contend, taking a radically historicist approach whereby human life and meanings are reduced to their historical context, but it does challenge the emphasis of his theory and, by extension, suggests that we need to ask new questions of modernity.

In Chapter 1, I discuss how Habermas positions himself, constructively, in relation to the older generation of critical theorists, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, and defensively, in relation to postmodernists Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. As I show, his response to Horkheimer and Adorno's "dialectic of enlightenment" is meant to redirect critical theory into a more positive assessment of modernity's potential. But he then takes that response as the basis of his reply to the genealogical and deconstructionist strategies of postmodernism. I maintain that whatever the merits of Habermas's argument in the context of critical theory, it does not work well against Foucault and Derrida. However, my main concern is to ask what we can learn about Habermas's theory from his failure to confront important issues about history, context, and meaning. In Chapter 2, I trace the inspiration for his theory of communicative action to his idea of an "emancipatory interest" of knowledge, developed as part of his thesis on knowledge-constitutive interests. The emancipatory interest has not been abandoned in Habermas's later work, as is sometimes thought, and it continues to structure his theory in complex and significant ways. The core problem of his theory of communicative action becomes: how can the decentering of worldviews and the rationalization of the lifeworld that are associated with modernity be "necessary conditions" for an emancipated living conceived independent of modernity? This problem, as I show in Chapter 3, is related to the issue of the objectivity of knowledge and, for Habermas, to the requirement to justify the claim to universality of the rationality expressed in the modern understanding of the world. Here I include a discussion of Habermas's subsequent treatment of the universality question in his discourse ethics and refer to Seyla Benhabib's feminist rethinking of Habermas's universalism.

In Part 2 of this book I address the particularity of gender and show

how Habermas articulates that particularity in his social and moral theory. My aim here is not simply to establish what his views are but to try to understand why his theory does not offer a vision of gender equality and why it even seems to promote a view of gender relations that is totally at odds with the key universalist principles of equality and inclusiveness. I introduce the gender problematic in Chapter 4, where I discuss Habermas's thesis of internal colonization, the view that the excessive juridification of the lifeworld in contemporary democracies leads to an erosion of the lifeworld's constitutive communicative practices. I indicate how the problem of gender is implicated in Habermas's distinction between system and lifeworld, and to specify the problem, I draw on Nancy Fraser's feminist critique of Habermas,[14] as well as the more favorable assessment of his work by Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato.[15] The problem of gender, as I argue, is related to Habermas's relegation of the question of basic rights for women and children to a secondary status in his argument for the restitution of the communicative practices of the lifeworld. Somehow an appeal to freedom from the state bureaucracy does not necessarily include a consideration of how we might address the unfreedom of a gender-structured lifeworld.

In Chapter 5, I continue to investigate the gender aspects of Habermas's theory by discussing his reference to the traditional Hindu practice of *sati* as belonging to a way of life that was "self-maintaining." I refer to his theory of meaning and then to his discourse ethics, to argue that Habermas's example of a "self-maintaining" way of life, while compatible with the historicist and contextual elements of his social and moral theory, also puts a strain on vital assumptions. I examine the difficulty by discussing the anthropological features of his proposal for reconstructing historical materialism. In that proposal he traces the "human" form of reproducing life to the institutionalization of the "father" role and argues that Marx's concept of social labor has to be "supplemented" with the familial principle of organization. I conclude that the problem of gender in Habermas's theory is connected to his attribution of a special value to the "female" labor of socialization and to his conceptualization of that labor as outside "social" labor. In Chapter 6, I support that analysis by providing a detailed examination of Habermas's

14. See Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?"

15. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

lifeworld concept. I argue that his lifeworld/system schema is a more complex version of his reinterpretation of the Marxian concept of social labor and that his theory of communicative action reproduces the Marxian exclusion of "female" labor from social labor. In Habermas that exclusion is accompanied by an aestheticization of the internal relations of the family that render those relations virtually immune to critique.

In Part 3, I turn critical attention to Habermas's concept of communicative action, especially to his claim that the lifeworld is constituted by three structural components (culture, society, and personality) corresponding to the three cultural value spheres of science, morality, and art. I maintain that he cannot sustain his argument that the differentiation of the lifeworld into three structural components is also a "rationalization of the lifeworld," and in each of the three chapters of Part 3 I focus on the very problematical third cultural value sphere of art that Habermas has tried to explicate in terms of truthfulness.

In Chapter 7, I demonstrate Habermas's considerable ambiguity on truthfulness. In his early (1973) work truthfulness is a nondiscursively redeemable claim, but later (from 1976 on) truthfulness is presented as a discursively redeemable claim on the model of truth and (procedural) rightness, that is, as a "criticizable" claim. Moreover, while he holds that truthfulness does not refer to an "inner life," there are numerous passages in his theory that suggest the opposite. In the end, I argue, he does not establish a formal-pragmatic basis for truthfulness and so cannot establish that the modern type of lifeworld represents an "increase in rationality." He also admits into his theory basic features of a model of intentionality he hoped to avoid. Related difficulties can be shown for Habermas's views on art, which are sketchy and unsatisfactory, but nonetheless an important component of his theory, as I show in Chapter 8. In that chapter I examine his critique of aesthetic modernism and critically assess his argument that his theory is an alternative to postmodernism. With reference to work by Albrecht Wellmer, I also reconstruct Habermas's concept of aesthetic-practical rationality, the idea that aesthetic experiences have practical effects and are a vital component of reaching understandings about ourselves and the world around us. That idea cannot, however, explain what Habermas must mean by the "inner logic" of art. I thus piece together his (and Wellmer's) views to argue that despite his (and Wellmer's) attempt to reinterpret Adorno's "truth" of art in terms of a linguistically conceived intersubjectivity, aesthetic-practical rationality presupposes a sphere of experience that is neither

intersubjective nor discursive, but rather the home of an unbounded subjectivity.

The analyses I provide on truthfulness and art suggest that notwithstanding Habermas's attempt to present the lifeworld as communicatively structured, his theory comes closer than he thinks to a subject-centered and aesthetically based ideal of reason. In Chapter 9, I continue this discussion by examining his early work on the public sphere, including his model of the public sphere's internal dynamic, which he still defends as basically correct. In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* written in the tradition of ideology critique, Habermas's treatment of gender follows the pattern of his later work based on rational reconstruction, but the more historical and sociological argument of the early work makes it possible to investigate his views on gender a little more closely. As I discuss it, his understanding of the "public use of reason" is tied to an explicit reference to the intimate sphere of the bourgeois conjugal family. Bourgeois intimacy is the "literal" home of a specific subjectivity, the place where a feeling of "human closeness" gives rise to the very "experience" of humanity that then gets embodied in the bourgeois concept of humanity. I ask what it means for Habermas's understanding of the public sphere that he refers to the "illusion of freedom" in bourgeois intimacy to explain the structure of reconciliation in bourgeois ideology but does not also address the gender inequality that is sustained by that illusion.

PART ONE

RATIONALITY

ONE

CRITIQUE OF REASON

Habermas's idea of a "radical critique of reason" is a specific response to the pessimistic appraisal of enlightenment thinking offered by Horkheimer and Adorno, his predecessors in the Frankfurt school of critical theory. He uses that idea to refute their well-known and much discussed thesis of the "dialectic of enlightenment,"[1] which challenges cherished liberal and Marxian assumptions about progress and the enlightenment and which links the virtually unstoppable advance of instrumental rationality in capitalist societies to progressive deterioration of human freedom. Habermas contends that this disturbing thesis, developed by Horkheimer and Adorno in the dark period following the disclosure of Nazi atrocities, becomes less convincing as an indicator of future possibilities for emancipation once we see that they base their predictions on an overly restrictive understanding of reason and cannot get beyond the paradoxes and theoretical dead-ends of self-referential critique. According to Habermas, we have to understand the enlightenment and its rationality in more complex terms and we cannot give up on the "project of modernity,"[2] however critical we might be about the direction that project has taken under the social-economic and cultural conditions of late

1. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972).

2. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 3–15; also published as "Modernity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 3–14. The essay is based on a talk given by Habermas in 1980 to mark his acceptance of the Theodor W. Adorno prize from the city of Frankfurt.

capitalism.[3] Habermas also understands the position he works out in the context of earlier critical theory to have more extensive application, and he has increasingly relied on that position to assess more recent theories, especially those of "postmodernists" such as Foucault and Derrida.[4] In every case, he argues that a "radical critique of reason" leaves no room for a positive conception of the enlightenment and that the paradoxes produced by self-referential critique can be avoided if we develop a concept of communicative reason that emphasizes intersubjectivity and dialogue.

The question I raise in this chapter is whether Habermas's critique of earlier critical theory lends itself as readily as he thinks to postmodernism. It strikes me as possibly problematic that an idea formulated to explicate and contest Horkheimer and Adorno's pessimistic appraisal of modernity's potential has become the basis of a global critique of the views of contemporary postmodern theorists, some of whom are deeply divided over the interpretation of modernity and many of whom do not see themselves as pessimistic. One might well agree that self-referential critique leads to paradoxes and theoretical dead-ends, that it is a style of argumentation generated out of the enlightenment tradition, but still resist Habermas's negative views on self-referential critique. At least one can imagine postmodernists taking the position that paradoxes are not necessarily something to be avoided at all costs, that they might well in-

3. See esp. Habermas, *TCA.* Richard J. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 207, suggests that Habermas's theory is part of a life-long attempt to "rethink" and "rewrite" Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* Cf. *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992) and *Philosophical Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), both edited by Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer.

4. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures,* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987). For discussion of the relationship between critical theory and various forms of postmodernism, see Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1987); Mark Poster, *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Thomas McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); Bernstein, *New Constellation;* Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994); Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory,* trans. Kenneth Baynes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); and Stephen K. White, *Political Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

dicate the limitations of theory, and, moreover, that we need to bear those limitations in mind rather than assume in advance that we should try to erase them. One might further hold that paradoxes are conceivably the result of diverse and not easily assimilable viewpoints, even that paradoxes should be treated as possibly positive signs of a struggle within theory against its more totalizing tendencies. The possibility that paradoxes can be productive, and not simply limitations on theory, has to be taken into account in any assessment of Habermas's idea of the radical critique of reason.

I contend here that even if Habermas's views on self-referential critique have a certain plausibility in the context of Horkheimer and Adorno's "dialectic of enlightenment," when applied more generally, to Foucault and Derrida, for example, they are heavily circumscribed by what gets left out, especially the question of the historical situatedness of all thinking and acting. Before advancing that argument, I want to discuss in more detail what Habermas means by the problem of a radical critique of reason and how his understanding of that problem is related to his assessment of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment.*

Habermas situates the problem of a radical critique of reason within the internal development of the enlightenment tradition and Marxian ideology critique.[5] According to this account, the enlightenment sets itself against "magical" thinking and presupposes an ability to separate categories of validity like true and false from empirical concepts like exchange, causality, and so on. It thus makes possible a distinction between nature and culture and involves a "decentering of worldview" in which nature becomes desocialized and the human world denaturalized. The "fusion" between nature and culture dissolves, and from now on, one can distinguish between the physical world, the social world, and the individual's inner world of subjective experiences. This differentiation of the three "worlds" is also accompanied by a more global understanding of the enlightenment. Conceived as a whole, the enlightenment is driven by the claim that it has been "cleansed of all cosmological, theological, and cultic dross," and because this claim involves an appeal to validity as such,

5. See Jürgen Habermas, "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno," in his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 106–30. Cf. earlier version "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment,*" *New German Critique* 26 (Spring/Summer 1982): 13–30.

it becomes possible to suspect that any theory presenting itself as (empirically or normatively) valid might still be motivated by illegitimate interests and power claims. This type of suspicion, essential for critique and unique to modernity, allows for the development of a Marxian ideology critique that "*disputes* the *truth* of a suspicious theory by *exposing its untruthfulness*." There comes a point, however, when ideology critique itself becomes suspect of promoting bourgeois interests. Whereas early Marxists could appeal to the "truth" embodied in bourgeois ideals, Horkheimer and Adorno can no longer assume that bourgeois ideals are anything more than one further expression of an instrumental and disempowering reason. In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* they proclaim that progressive control over the physical world brings increasing domination of the individual psyche.[6]

Habermas argues that Horkheimer and Adorno's thesis of the "dialectic of enlightenment" becomes less compelling once we understand that it is entangled in the paradoxes of a radical critique of reason. If, as they say, everything is open to suspicion—bourgeois ideals, as well as the ideology critique that must lay claim to the truth-potential of those ideals—there is no way of establishing normative points of reference. But Horkheimer and Adorno do presuppose normative reference points. At least, in Habermas's view, they cannot describe the dialectic of enlightenment without making use of the critical capacity that according to them, has been lost in the unbounded spread of instrumental reason. The problem posed by their work might be understood as follows: If we have lost all capacity for critical reasoning, how is it then that we can even raise the question of such a loss? To raise the question, to enter into an open-ended discussion, is to announce, in a performative sense, the existence of a reason that cannot be reduced to the instrumental or understood solely in terms of power claims. According to this view, which is at the core of Habermas's critique of his predecessors, anyone who argues against reason is necessarily caught up in a performative contradiction: she uses reason to assert that reason does not exist. Adorno, Habermas writes, not only acknowledged his performative contradiction, but, inspired by Nietzsche, even fostered it, and his *Negative Dialectics* "reads like a continuing explanation of why we have to circle about within this *performative contradiction* and indeed even remain there; of why only the insistent, relentless unfolding of this paradox opens up the prospect

6. Habermas, "Horkheimer and Adorno," 114–19.

of that magically invoked 'mindfulness of nature in the subject in whose fulfillment the unacknowledged truth of all culture lies hidden' " (119–20).

Horkheimer and Adorno's relation to enlightenment thinking is deliberately paradoxical, but they still keep open the promise of reconciliation by looking to the sphere of autonomous art. The question Habermas raises is why they abandoned theory at such a critical juncture, and he traces the difficulty to what he sees as a limitation in their concept of reason. He maintains that Horkheimer and Adorno were operating with a concept of instrumental reason, which properly defines subject/object relations with their basis in propositional truth but is too restrictive to be applied to other types of relations. According to Habermas, we need a concept of communicative reason, which focuses attention on intersubjective relations and rightness claims. He maintains that his predecessors in critical theory did not have such a concept of communicative reason and that, for that reason, they tended to reduce intersubjective relations, which involve practical-ethical commitments, to subject/object relations, which involve instrumental (power-oriented) relations. If we follow Habermas, we have to conclude that Horkheimer and Adorno did not have the conceptual tools to avoid the paradoxes of self-referential critique.

Habermas is suggesting that Horkheimer and Adorno were mistaken to transfer modernity's redemptive potentials to the sphere of autonomous art. If, in his view, they had had something like a concept of communicative reason, they would have seen that reconciliation, though not necessarily unconnected to the sphere of art, is situated at the level of intersubjectivity and rational argumentation. This relocation of reconciliation would, of course, require a departure from the more utopian elements of Adorno's aestheticism, but for Habermas, the concept of a communicative reason can once again put critical theory on the path of a more positive assessment of modernity's critical resources. He is also convinced that this result is not in conflict with the aims Horkheimer and Adorno set for theory, and he maintains that their paradoxical practice of determinate negation logically required resistance to the complete fusion of validity and power. He is now prepared to defy the basis of their judgment that there is "no way out": "Anyone who abides in a paradox on the very spot once occupied by philosophy with its ultimate groundings . . . can only hold that place if one makes it at least minimally plausible that there is *no way out.* Even the retreat from an aporetic situ-

ation has to be barred, for otherwise there is a way—the way back." The "way back" leads to an achievement of modernity that first makes critique, and theory, possible: "The categorial distinction between power claims and truth claims is the ground upon which *any* theoretical approach has to be enacted" (127–28). What alarms Habermas is the fact that Horkheimer and Adorno "commence their critique of enlightenment at such a *depth* that the project of enlightenment itself is endangered" (114).

Habermas secures Horkheimer and Adorno's connection to the enlightenment tradition by maintaining that however despairing their outlook and however inadequate their conception of rationality, they never fully relinquished their hope for reconciliation. Nonetheless, he believes that their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* foreshadowed concerns and mistakes that were eventually to lead postmodernists like Foucault and Derrida to abandon all traces of enlightenment thinking. He maintains that all these theorists, despite their divergent viewpoints, get caught in the paradoxes of self-referential critique and that such difficulties can be avoided through a concept of communicative reason. Understanding postmodernist challenges as essentially variants of the difficulties he identifies with Horkheimer and Adorno, he claims that they too involve performative contradiction.[7]

In what follows I argue that Habermas's attempt to apply the idea of radical critique of reason to Foucault and Derrida meets at best with mixed results. If the charge of performative contradiction is too limiting to be effective against genealogy and deconstruction, we need to indicate why it is not effective and what is at issue for contemporary critical theory.

Habermas's critique of Foucault does not preclude considerable agreement with the powerful descriptions of modernity made possible by the genealogical method. He and Foucault agree that the threshold of modernity can be placed at the end of the eighteenth century. They also agree on two outstanding characteristics of modernity: the increasing dissatisfaction with the philosophy of the subject that inaugurates mod-

7. See Martin Jay, "The Debate over Performative Contradiction: Habermas versus the Poststructuralists," in Honneth et al., *Philosophical Inverventions*, 275–76. Jay is inclined to think that the idea of a performative contradiction inevitably puts Habermas's philosophical opponents on the defensive, but suggests that the idea is of limited use for understanding "social contradictions."

ern philosophical discourse and the prominence in modern discourse and practice of a regulatory (instrumental) reason.[8] Habermas also seems to be saying that genealogy can produce reliable results within a (limited) field of inquiry. Foucault, he notes, sees the historical subjugation of madness as marking a confluence between two sorts of processes: the "more conspicuous operations," in which refractory speakers are barred from discourse and disagreeable themes suppressed, and the "altogether inconspicuous operation" of determining the valid and invalid statements within discourses. From a Foucaultian perspective, the better argument only appears to establish itself nonviolently because the archaeologist digs through the "buried foundations of meaning" and patiently excavates the infrastructures that "first establish what is going to be considered true and false *inside* any discourse." This method, as Habermas concedes, allows us to ascertain the limits of any given discourse: to the extent that certain kinds of elements are unconsciously excluded as heterogeneous, the rules constitutive of discourse are also exclusionary mechanisms.[9]

The problem with Foucault's analysis, according to Habermas, is not that it is wrong, but rather that it is inherently limited, because "one can only inquire about the function of the will that attains expression in [discourses]."[10] Foucault's archaeologist must remain an outsider who "brackets" the self-understanding of discourse participants: as an outsider, she must leave to one side the fact that discourse participants view themselves as "subjects who relate to objects in general in accord with universal criteria of validity."[11] Habermas's argument is that Foucault's archaeology—which is the other side of his genealogy and an attempt to overcome hermeneutics—is necessarily unable to deal with the self-understanding of participants in discourse.

But this argument, in itself, is still not enough to address what Habermas sees as the radical critique of reason that seems to operate as an intrinsic force in genealogy, and even independently of Foucault's intentions. As is generally acknowledged, Foucault's researches extend

8. Habermas develops his views on Foucault in "The Critique of Reason as an Unmasking of the Human Sciences: Michel Foucault" and "Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again," in his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 238–93. Cf. Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 103–8.

9. Habermas, "Critique of Reason," 247–48.

10. Ibid., 248.

11. Ibid., 252.

beyond his narrowly descriptive claims about historical confinement, clinics, madness, prisons, and so on, and raise (at least implicitly) more general claims about the (supposedly inherently) regulatory nature of Western reason. In Habermas's view, genealogy presents us with a problem similar to the one he determines for earlier critical theory: the problem of the making use of a critical capacity that is supposed to have been lost in the unbounded spread of instrumental reason. Whereas some writers have taken on the more methodological task of trying to figure out how genealogies produce their radical effects,[12] Habermas argues that Foucault's critique of reason is based on a performative contradiction that allows a space for the reason (and the subjectivity) he means to exclude: because genealogy proceeds "eruditely" and "positivistically,"[13] it implicitly acknowledges (at least performatively) the rules of a discourse in which claims to truth structurally require redemption. Moreover, Habermas remarks, Foucault thinks of himself as a "happy positivist,"[14] and while he is no ordinary positivist, the fact remains that he uses the tools of science to criticize science. Whatever value genealogy might have, the fact that it also operates as a critique of reason brings with it the inevitable "aporias of this self-referential undertaking."[15]

This argument is similar in structure to the one Habermas uses in his critique of Horkheimer and Adorno. In that case, he maintains that Horkheimer and Adorno could not escape the demands of a communicative rationality, even though they were powerless to find a way out of what appeared to be a theoretical dead-end and were compelled to circle about in the practices of an ad hoc determinate negation. In the case of genealogy, he explains that Foucault's contradiction does not remain at the level of his "postmodern rhetoric"[16] but reaches into his concept of power. He shows in some detail how Foucault thinks of "power" simultaneously as something historical and as something transcendental; it is the object of historical-empirical research, even as it points to intelligible structures beyond specific historical events. "Power" is thus raised

12. Cf. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

13. Habermas, "Critique of Reason," 257.

14. Habermas, "Some Questions," 276. The German edition uses the term "glücklicher Positivist," which has been translated into English as "fortunate positivist." I prefer "happy positivist."

15. Habermas, "Critique of Reason," 247.

16. Habermas, "Some Questions," 282.

to a "basic transcendental-historicist concept of historiography as critique of reason," and we are left with the "paradoxical consequences of a fundamental concept contaminated by contrary meanings."[17]

Given the parameters of Habermas's discussion, it is hard to see how Foucault can escape the charge of performative contradiction. He could explain it away by claiming that genealogies, which have enacted a dispersal of subjectivity, do not leave room for a subject that could take responsibility for the contradiction.[18] However, a case can be made that the dispersed subject is a version of the unified subject classically identified with instrumental reason and modern subjectivity. More important, the charge of performative contradiction, though linked in Habermas's analysis with the idea of Foucault's unsuccessful attempt to evade modern subjectivity, is directly tied to the communicative structures of rational argumentation: the speaking subject cannot simply be identified with the model of the unified/dispersed subject. This situation may raise further questions, as Martin Jay suggests, about the location of the "responsible speaker,"[19] but it does not get Foucault out of the difficulty.

Habermas's discussion of Foucault is impressive and confident, and his criticism, though sympathetically expressed, is unsparing. He further argues that the idea of "subjugated knowledges"[20] cannot serve as a foundation for genealogy and that the validity claims of Foucault's own discourse are "nothing else than the effects of power they unleash." While he sees genealogical historiography as a possibly useful "tactic and a tool for waging a battle against a normatively unassailable formation of power," he insists, referring to an argument made by Nancy Fraser, that some kind of normative notions are necessary if Foucault is, in Fraser's words, to "begin to tell us what is wrong with the modern power/knowledge regime and why we ought to oppose it."[21] He also believes that although Foucault sees the dilemma, he is strongly influenced by Nietzsche's example to hold on to his "embattled perspectivism." For

17. Habermas, "Critique of Reason," 254–57.

18. Cf. Jay, "Performative Contradiction," 267–68.

19. Ibid., 275–76.

20. Habermas points to Foucault's own linking of genealogical research activity with the claims of "local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge." See Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 83.

21. Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," *Praxis International* 1 (1981): 283.

Foucault, as for Nietzsche, historical consciousness becomes an "objectivistic illusion" that serves as a mask for basically irrational impulses and passions.[22]

Perhaps Foucault is confused, as Charles Taylor thinks.[23] Or maybe he has not found the right vocabulary, as Richard Rorty might say. But Foucault's stubborn refusal to name a "right side"[24] is also a defiant gesture that recalls Horkheimer and Adorno's attitude to the paradoxes of self-referential critique. Yet Habermas's attempt to deal with Foucault's defiance is only partially successful because it also indicates the limitations of his own theory.

Habermas has argued that Foucault's genealogies, which demonstrate the coercive features of historical discourses, cannot deal with the more positive aspects of power as reflected in the self-understanding of discourse participants. Because the theory of communicative action attempts to reconstruct such self-understanding, genealogies can be viewed as complementing, even affirming, that theory. Nonetheless, this Habermasian strategy for dealing with genealogy is not without problems. As discussed above, the archaeologist works by "bracketing" the self-understanding of participants. But the reverse also appears to be true because it is possible to reconstruct the internal perspective of participants in communicative action only if we bracket the understanding of a possible archaeologist, which leaves Habermas open to the same charge—in reverse—that he levels at Foucault, that is, that the theory of communicative action is only partial in that it cannot inquire about the function of the will that gains expression in discourses. Since no one is likely to argue that there is no will in discourse, we should be able to investigate which will it is that gets expressed. However, such knowledge is not possible from the perspective of discourse participants, who "always *have to suppose* that only the unforced force of the better argument comes into play under the unavoidable communication presuppo-

22. Habermas, "Some Questions," 278–84.

23. See Taylor's remarks in *New Left Review* 170 (July/August 1988): 114–16. Cf. his "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in *Political Theory* 12 (May 1984): 152–83.

24. Habermas, "Some Questions," 282, finds this situation exasperating. For a defense of Foucault against Habermas, see Joseph Margolis, "Redeeming Foucault," in John Caputo and Mark Yount, eds., *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 41–59; Caputo, "On Not Knowing Who We Are: Madness, Hermeneutics, and the Night of Truth in Foucault," in the same volume, 233–62, argues that Foucault has to be seen as practicing a "radical" hermeneutics.

sitions of argumentative discourse."[25] Habermas's theory begins from that perspective, so it must, as a matter of methodology, exclude from its object domain the type of data that goes into genealogical researches and which aims at an exposition of the will that gets expressed through various types of exclusionary mechanisms, prohibitions on what can be said and how, rules about who has the right to speak, class and race specifications, gender specifications, and so on.

The obvious Habermasian response to concerns about what is left out in his theory of communicative action is that genealogy is more appropriate for gaining knowledge of the discursively constructed will. This response is bound to fail because, even for Habermas, the matter cannot be reduced to alternative approaches and methodologies: a theory of communicative action that deals with the self-understanding of discourse participants or genealogical researches that focus on substantive issues of culture and power. As discussed above, for Habermas, the precise difficulty of genealogy is that it seems to be more than it can be—a radical critique of reason, whereas, from the perspective of his theory of communicative action, genealogy can only be the exposition and criticism of various forms of cultural expressions of rationality. The theory of communicative action, it has to be said, puts us in an impossible situation: it says both that we should look to genealogy for what it leaves out and that genealogy is inherently paradoxical. This impasse is not simply a matter of the equally "partial" perspectives employed by Habermas and Foucault. Rather Habermas's theory and Foucault's genealogy are "coupled" in such a way that the one kind of analysis serves to exclude the objects of the other: genealogy cannot get at the internal perspective of discourse participants, the theory of communicative action cannot identify the will that gets expressed in discourse.

Faced with this situation, one might try to reflect on one's starting point—the internal perspective of participants in discourse—and put the assumptions related to that starting point under critical scrutiny. Or one might, as Habermas does, make that starting point relatively immune to criticism and instead try to figure out what kind of justification would be needed to support it. An indication of the kind of justification Habermas tries to provide is contained in his claim that Foucault failed to see that he was dealing with a "specific will to knowledge and to truth that is constitutive for the modern form of knowledge in general and for

25. Habermas, "Horkheimer and Adorno," 130.

the human sciences in particular" and was thus led to believe that "*all* discourses (by no means only the modern ones) can be shown to have the character of hidden power and derive from practices of power." He agrees that the human sciences can be "unconsciously instrumentalized" for the "self-destructive dynamic of the self-positing subject," but suggests that a "way out" can be found through the "reflective" sciences and philosophy, which unlike the human sciences, are in a position to take account of the "structurally generated will to self-knowledge and self-reification" and thus able "to free themselves from the power that drives them."[26] I shall not address here the question whether the "reflective" sciences and philosophy can provide a basis for a discourse that is able to free itself (in principle) from power. Instead I want to remark that whereas Foucault cannot show that "*all* discourses . . . derive from practices of power," Habermas has put himself in a position whereby he must show that at least one discourse is not so derived, which reinforces my point that the theory of communicative action is intertextually linked with genealogy. Habermas can show that as discourse participants we must suppose that at least one discourse is not derived from power, but this supposition, even if it is as unavoidable as he says it is, will always allow for the Foucaultian suspicion that all discourses are in fact derived from power.

While Foucault is identified with Nietzsche, Habermas sees Derrida as the "disciple" of Martin Heidegger.[27] In the first of two essays dealing with deconstruction, Habermas argues that Derrida too fails to find a way out of the philosophy of the subject because he substitutes an *Urschrift* for transcendental subjectivity.

26. Habermas, "Critique of Reason," 265.

27. Habermas became troubled upon his discovery in the early 1950s that Heidegger had sanctioned the publication of writings from the 1930s with the offending references to National Socialism intact. He drew the conclusion that Heidegger's philosophy could too readily accommodate the politics of National Socialism, and he located that accommodation in Heidegger's devaluing of rational argumentation. He pursued these themes in the early 1950s and again in the 1980s. See Jürgen Habermas, "Im Lichte Heideggers," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* 12 July 1952; "Mit Heidegger gegen Heidegger denken. Zur veröffentlichung von Vorlesungen aus dem Jahr 1935," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* 25 July 1953. Cf. his "Die große Wirkung. Eine chronistische Anmerkung zu Martin Heideggers 70. Geburtstag," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* 26 September 1959. Cf. also his "Heidegger-Werk und Weltanschauung," his foreword to Victor Farías, *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1989); "Work and Weltanschauung: The Heidegger Controversy from a German Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter 1989): 431–56; and "The Undermining of Western Rationalism through the Critique of Metaphysics: Martin Heidegger," in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 131–60.

> Derrida achieves an inversion of Husserlian foundationalism inasmuch as the originative transcendental power of creative subjectivity passes over into the anonymous, history-making productivity of writing. . . . Derrida by no means breaks with the foundationalist tenacity of the philosophy of the subject; he only makes what it had regarded as fundamental dependent on the still profounder—though now vacillating or oscillating—basis of an originative power set temporally aflow. Unabashedly, and in the style of *Ursprungsphilosophie,* Derrida falls back on this *Urschrift,* which leaves its traces anonymously, without any subject.[28]

This description is overdetermined by Habermas's worry about the problem of a radical critique of reason and does not do justice to the point of Derrida's reading of Husserl, namely, that iterability is presupposed in all intentional acts. However, the claim that Derrida too is trapped in modern subjectivity does not settle the matter for Habermas, who needs a stronger argument against deconstruction than he does against genealogy because he is convinced that as Heidegger's "disciple," Derrida, unlike Foucault, has devalued argumentation. Habermas, as is well known, sees an important connection between Heidegger's philosophy and his National Socialist sentiments, and he is particularly alarmed that Heidegger uses the idea of ontological difference to posit the existence of a "cognitive competence *beyond* self-reflection, beyond discursive thought."[29] Derrida, too, he argues, "degrades politics and contemporary history to the status of the ontic and the foreground, so as to romp all the more freely, and with a greater wealth of associations, in the sphere of the ontological and the archewriting."[30]

Habermas sees right away, however, that unlike Heidegger, Derrida does not give a special status to *Andenken,* and in a second essay he attempts to bring out the basis of Derrida's alleged devaluation of the norms of argumentation.[31] Here he does not address Derrida's writings, but rather the views of Derrida's "disciples," and his reconstruction of "Derrida's" argument is heavily dependent on a description of the prac-

28. Jürgen Habermas, "Beyond a Temporalized Philosophy of Origins: Jacques Derrida's Critique of Phonocentrism," in his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 178–79.

29. Habermas, "Undermining of Western Rationalism," 136.

30. Habermas, "Beyond a Temporalized Philosophy of Origins," 181.

31. Jürgen Habermas, "Excursus on Leveling the Genre Distinction Between Philosophy and Literature," in his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 185–210.

tice of deconstruction in a text authored by someone else.[32] He attempts to defend this procedure by saying that Derrida "does not belong to those philosophers who like to argue."[33] The most generous conclusion I can reach is that Habermas's prejudgment of Derrida as a disciple of Heidegger led him to view Derrida's admittedly unorthodox style as an attempt to avoid argumentation. In any event, he claims to have found the basis for what he sees as Derrida's position in deconstruction's supposed reversal of the primacy of logic over rhetoric.[34] His concern is that such a reversal, if sustained, would allow all texts to be examined primarily, if not solely, on the basis of the effects they achieve through their rhetorical elements. That would deny philosophy (and science) the problem-solving function that it claims to perform through rational argumentation. It would also allow Derrida, like Heidegger, but in a different way, to avoid the charge of performative contradiction. As Habermas puts it, "There can only be talk about 'contradiction' in the light of consistency requirements, which lose their authority or are at least subordinated to other demands—of an aesthetic nature, for example—if logic loses its conventional primacy over rhetoric." In an attempt to strengthen his case, Habermas asserts that Derrida "does not proceed analytically, in the sense of identifying hidden presuppositions or implications," but by a "critique of style."[35] Similarly, he attributes to Derrida the "purposely paradoxical statement that any interpretation is inevitably a false interpretation, and any understanding a misunderstanding."[36]

These charges provoked an angry reply from Derrida, who rejected outright the idea that his deconstruction could be reduced to a "critique of style" or the "primacy of rhetoric":[37] "Deconstruction, as I [Derrida] have practiced it, has always been foreign to rhetoricism . . . deconstruction, that at least to which I refer, ***begins*** by deconstructing logocentrism, and hence also that which rhetoricism might owe to it. Also for the same reason I never assimilated philosophy, science, theory, criti-

32. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstuction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), is the text in question.

33. Habermas, "Excursus," 193.

34. In Habermas's defense, Culler's book does seem to make this claim. Even an incensed Derrida admits that Jonathan Culler is "occasionally obliged to rigidify my arguments out of pedagogical considerations." See Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc,* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 157 n. 9.

35. Habermas, "Excursus," 188–89.

36. Ibid., 198.

37. Derrida, *Limited Inc,* 156–58 n. 9.

cism, law, morality, etc. to literary fictions."[38] Derrida also denied thinking or ever saying that "any interpretation is inevitably a false interpretation, and any understanding a misunderstanding," and he insisted that he was "one of those who love 'arguing.' "[39]

Habermas's general strategy against postmodernism is to identify reversals, evidence of unwitting support for the philosophy of the subject and the possibility of performative contradictions. His examination of the writings of Derrida's "disciples" was supposed to get at the nature of the challenge that deconstruction poses for modernity and, more specifically, for the theory of communicative action. However, it is far from clear that Derrida abandons rational argumentation and that he does this on the basis of the primacy of rhetoric. Moreover, as practiced by Derrida, deconstruction's professed commitment to "the ethics of discussion . . . the rules of the academy, of the university, and of publication"[40] suggests that there are no practical implications for conventional modes of conducting research. Nor does Derrida seem to be participating in that "totalized critique" usually associated with Adorno. At least he denies the view—attributed to him by both sympathizers and critics—that he has ever " 'put such concepts as truth, reference, and the stability of interpretive contexts radically into question' if 'putting radically into question' means contesting that there *are* and that there *should be* truth, reference, and stable contexts of interpretation."[41] It is also open to question whether Derrida is in a performative contradiction even when he poses radical questions concerning the "possibility of these things [truth, etc.], of these values, of these norms, of this stability." This "truth" is not to be identified with a Heideggerian "truth-occurrence." On the contrary, "in pragmatically determined situations in which this 'truth' is set forth [the questioning of the possibility of truth, etc. and the discourse attuned to that questioning] must submit . . . to the norms of the context that requires one to prove, to demonstrate, to proceed correctly, to conform to the rules of language and to a great number of other social, ethical, political-institutional rules, etc."[42]

38. Ibid., 156 n. 9.

39. Ibid., 157 n. 9. Some commentators, notably Christopher Norris, have retracted their earlier statements that deconstruction privileges rhetoric or is in some sense subversive of argumentation. Cf. Norris's *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

40. Derrida, *Limited Inc,* 157 n. 9.

41. Derrida, "Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion," in *Limited Inc,* 150.

42. Ibid., 150–51.

If Derrida's attitude to argumentation were the problem, Habermas should have been reassured—at least he could have proceeded with the question of whether Derrida is in a performative contradiction. Yet the issue seems not yet to have been named. Nor is Derrida's response to Habermas very helpful because for the most part he simply denies the charges. The Habermas/Derrida exchange cannot be viewed as an unfortunate misunderstanding, however, and Habermas's uncharacteristic insensitivity to the ethics of discussion cannot be reduced to anxiety about a possible repetition of the Heidegger dilemma. Moreover, Habermas acknowledges the importance of the deconstructionist concern about difference,[43] so that, while strategies for dealing with difference are more developed in deconstruction, the attention to difference cannot in itself explain the difficulty he sees in deconstruction. To understand that difficulty, we have to address Derrida's claim that he is not, as Habermas would have it, proposing a "way out" of the philosophy of the subject, but rather facilitating, through his writings, a process of deconstruction or destabilization—still tied to rational argumentation —which, according to Derrida, is already in progress. So, the question is what is the nature of this deconstructionist claim and what implications does it have for the theory of communicative action?

As I see it, deconstruction distinguishes itself by the claim—which is criticizable and, therefore in the Habermasian sense, inside rational argumentation—that the nonidentical or *différance* or play is inevitably built into norms of intelligibility or rationality structures. Derrida not only makes this claim, but pursues its implications into the deepest recesses of philosophical thinking: "What has always interested me the most, what has always seemed to me the most rigorous . . . is . . . the strictest possible determination of the figures of play, of oscillation, of undecidability, which is to say, of the *différantial* conditions of determinable history, etc."[44] A possible response to this suggestion is that I am not giving sufficient attention to two different levels of analysis: norms of intelligibility and rationality structures. For example, one might conceive of norms of intelligibility as cultural/historical standards that are unstable by their nature, but maintain that rationality structures are formal and procedural and thus not subject to the same degree of

43. Habermas refers to Derrida's "subtle conception of difference." See his *Past as Future* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 119.

44. Derrida, "Afterword," 145.

variability. There is some point to this argument. Moreover, Derrida and deconstructionists generally have been concerned to demonstrate the variability of norms of intelligibility in the sense of cultural/historical standards and have not turned their attention to the more enduring aspects that Habermas has tried to identify in his examination of rationality structures. It is also true that, in deconstructionist circles, the formal/substantive distinction has tended to be dogmatically rejected, rather than subjected to the close examination that one might expect, given the claims of (Derridean) deconstructionist practice. While such considerations make the matter between Habermas and Derrida more complex, they do not alter what I take to be the basic deconstructionist challenge for the theory of communicative action. Even if we were to agree that rationality structures cannot be identified with culturally based norms of intelligibility, the claim that rationality structures are only relatively stable would still hold. This "relatively stable" cannot be theorized from within a theory that takes the (classically expressed) point of view of discourse participants in modernity: from that viewpoint rationality structures have to be theorized as stable, fixed—according to Habermas, "necessary" and "unavoidable."

The matter is in need of further consideration, however. If deconstruction does not abandon rational argumentation, there is still a possibility that Habermas might be able to show that Derrida, like Foucault, is in a performative contradiction. One might, for example, point to Derrida's statement that although deconstruction adheres to the conventions of theory, science, and philosophy, its attention to *différance* means that it is "no longer . . . only theoretical-scientific-philosophical."[45] Derrida's "no longer only" might indicate that deconstruction is, after all, a repudiation of theory, science, philosophy, and the rational argumentation that accompanies them—a kind of contemptuous following of the rules only to find ways to destabilize them. (There is evidence that some postmodernists take this view). If so, while Derrida might not exactly reject argumentative practices, he might still devalue them. This devaluation would appear to be in the name of a reason that cannot be reduced to the instrumental and that involves the affirmative, but undertheorized, aspects of deconstruction—otherness, diversity, differences. If these aspects are undertheorized, the question arises whether deconstruction repeats the failure of earlier critical theory to give expression to its ideal

45. Ibid.

of reason. One might also mention Derrida's many references to apparently necessary paradoxes and tensions and, even more explicitly, his attitude to performative contradiction—which seems to evoke the cheerful/defiant resignation reminiscent of Adorno or the "happy positivism" of Foucault.[46] Just as one might say, with Habermas, that Foucault makes implicit appeals to the truth of his genealogical researches, one might suggest that Derrida, in his references to otherness and diversity, makes assumptions about a reason for which he provides no theoretical clarity. One could then conclude that we need to give more detailed expression to the affirmative aspects of both genealogy and deconstruction.[47]

This interpretation, which situates Derrida in a Nietzschean rather than Heideggerian problematic, would make a Habermasian critique of Derrida more plausible. However, this more Nietzschean interpretation of Derrida would not allow for the type of resolution that Habermas develops in the context of critical theory. Derrida's "no longer only," it turns out, cannot be channeled into one of the two alternatives proposed by Habermas: either a concept of instrumental reason that applies to subject/object relations or an expanded concept of reason that requires a theorization of rationality structures as stable, necessary, and unavoidable. Deconstruction creates a difficulty because it involves the claim that rationality structures are inherently unstable, whereas the expanded concept of reason that Habermas offers in response to Horkheimer and Adorno and to Foucault is based on the view that the rationality structures he reconstructs are essentially stable components of a universal rationality embodied in the validity-basis of speech.

The question of the relative stability of rationality structures is "prohibited" by the theory of communication. That is, that question is already "settled" before the theory of communicative action even begins. As Habermas explains, his theory is based on two methodological abstractions: the development of cognitive structures is abstracted from the "historical dynamic of events," and the evolution of society is ab-

46. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 79–80. Cf. also his *Limited Inc.,* 157–58 n. 9, where he objects to Habermas's charge of performative contradiction.

47. Variants of this strategy can be found in Bernstein, *New Constellation,* and in McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions.* For a critique of Bernstein and McCarthy, see Marie Fleming, "Critical Theory Between Modernity and Postmodernity," *Philosophy Today* (forthcoming, 1997).

stracted from the "historical concretion of forms of life."[48] Habermas's claim that rationality structures are "necessary" and "unavoidable," despite their historical roots, has seemed exaggerated to some of his (sympathetic) readers who have suspected him of a naturalistic fallacy. However, the matter becomes more critical in the context of deconstruction because, from a deconstructionist perspective, the claim that rationality structures are necessary and unavoidable shuts down the discussion instead of opening it up. If rationality structures were unavoidable and necessary, in an absolute sense, we need do no more, and can do no more, than produce a description of them. But if there is an opening, however small, that opening should allow for discussion of the historicity of the "non-natural" power relations that continue, up to a point, to determine rationality practices. Not only is there the suspicion that Habermas is shutting down the discussion. He may also be incorporating into his theory of communicative action a self-understanding that (conceivably falsely) universalizes as the norm its own historically specific experiences. It is hard to see how the deconstructionist claim that rationality structures are only relatively stable can be handled from within a theory that takes the (classical) point of view of discourse participants in modernity: from that viewpoint rationality structures have to be theorized as stable, fixed—necessary and unavoidable.

The major themes of Habermas's philosophy and social theory have developed in conjunction with his participation in a series of significant intellectual exchanges carried out in a fairly public fashion and across several disciplines. He made important contributions to the "positivist dispute" begun by Adorno and Karl Popper; he energetically engaged Hans-Georg Gadamer on hermeneutics and Niklas Luhmann on systems theory; and more recently he has created much controversy among historians and others over issues related to the interpretation of the Holocaust and the public use of history.[49] Over the years, and in the context of these (political and intellectual) exchanges, Habermas has formulated new, and sometimes important, perspectives that he has incorporated into his theory in various ways, and many of his supporters believed that his "debate" with postmodernism would lead to similarly productive re-

48. Habermas, *TCA*, 2:383.

49. For a detailed account of Habermas's debates, see Robert C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

sults. However, his book on the philosophical discourse of modernity is a "combative work," as Peter Dews remarks, and in it Habermas "leaves the impression of having far less to learn from his opponents."[50] It is undeniably true that the combativeness of Habermas's book stems from what he views as a wholesale onslaught by postmodernists on the enlightenment tradition. However, this is only part of the story. In my view, what is at issue cannot be reduced to an argument about the status of the enlightenment or the critical resources of modernity. Habermas's combative approach to postmodernism also has to be taken as an indication of his overly defensive position on the starting point and content of his theory of communicative action.

In conclusion, Habermas's attempt to apply the idea of a radical critique of reason to "postmodernism" meets with limited success. He may be right to interpret Horkheimer and Adorno as saying that we cannot have normative reference points, and I do not deny that some postmodernists make this mistake as well. However, the mistake is not intrinsic to "postmodernism"—many of those identified as postmodern can, and frequently do, acknowledge the normativity of intersubjective relations. Moreover, the mistake Habermas attributes to Horkheimer and Adorno is even less likely to be made by many feminists, who are keenly aware of the need to develop critiques of established social and political conditions and generally sensitive to the debilitating consequences of some forms of postmodernism. If a "radical critique of reason" means denying the possibility of establishing normative reference points, then much feminism and (at least some forms of) postmodernism cannot be shown to be making such a critique.

Habermas does not view questions of history and culture as unimportant, but he conceives of them as "supplementary," something to be added on to a theory of communicative action and to be dealt with in a supplementary analysis. This solution does not end the difficulty, however, because the type of questions raised by the newer methodologies—genealogy, deconstruction, gender analysis—do not quite fit with the division he makes between matters of rationality and matters of culture and history. In the case of Foucault, genealogical questions do not confine themselves to culture and history, but spill over into a critique of reason. In the case of de-

50. Jürgen Habermas, *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Peter Dews (London: Verso, 1992), 3.

construction, the claim that rationality structures are only relatively stable cannot even be raised from within the theory of communicative action. I leave it to later chapters to address the challenges that feminism poses for Habermas. Here I say that feminists share in the feeling or intuition, expressed in much contemporary writing, that one is both inside and outside modern philosophical and theoretical discourse. This and similar intuitions indicate the presence of not easily assimilable viewpoints—on gender, for example, but they also give evidence that it is possible, sometimes necessary, to read without premises of stability. This point, I want to emphasize, does not require a strictly postmodern standpoint and can, in fact, be made from within critical theory. As Albrecht Wellmer writes, "The notion of communicative rationality is also meant to indicate a conception (and self-conception) of symbolic communication which does not allow for *any* validity claims to be exempt in principle from possible critical examination."[51]

Habermas's objective in his book *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* is to strengthen universalist claims by making them immune to genealogical and deconstructionist critiques. In my view, however, this strategy only leads to a weakening of universalism. I maintain that genealogy, deconstruction, and gender analysis pose questions of history and context that cannot be put to one side and that we should view paradoxes as possibly productive, the result perhaps of diverse and not easily assimilable viewpoints, even a hopeful sign of a less restrictive human community. I suggest that we regard universalism as a discursive space, unstable and necessarily open, in which genealogical and deconstructionist claims can be taken up and addressed and in which new understandings of a universalist consciousness can be developed. We need to take seriously the universalist values of equality and inclusiveness, and we need to seek to give expression inside universalist discourse to those interests not well represented in the classical interpretations of modernity. I critically examine Habermas's views on gender from that standpoint and suggest that his theory of communicative action is overdetermined by historically specific theoretical commitments. Paradoxically, a theory that sets out to rid itself of the content of historical traditions, in the end, is too deeply influenced by historical categories. I do not dispute universalism, rather I argue that Habermas's theory is not universalistic enough.

51. Albrecht Wellmer, "Reason, Utopia, and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," in Richard J. Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 53.

TWO

THE EMANCIPATORY INTEREST

Habermas places Horkheimer and Adorno in a skeptical strand of modernity stemming from Nietzsche and reaching forward into postmodernism. He sees them entangled in the paradoxes of a radical critique of reason and, generally, making the kind of mistakes that would eventually lead postmodernists to abandon modernity altogether. But he also tries to rescue the older generation of critical theorists from too complete an identification with postmodernism. He maintains that despite their affinity for Nietzsche's aesthetic theories, Horkheimer and Adorno did not follow Nietzsche all the way to a conflation of validity and power and that they continued to believe in modernity's redemptive potentials, even if they could only express that belief through performative contradiction. Here we see Habermas drawing the line between a modernity that stands for universalist values and a postmodernity that turns away from enlightenment thinking. Horkheimer and Adorno might come close to the line, but in the end, Habermas insists, they never cross it into postmodernity. Nonetheless, there is still a problem for critical theory, as envisioned by Habermas. He maintains that Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is inherently subversive of enlightenment thinking, so that while they might refuse to give up on the enlightenment, that refusal can only take the shape of an (ungrounded) belief in the aesthetic or expressive aspects of human existence. They cannot tell us why we should hold that belief. According to Habermas, an expanded concept of rationality can provide a reasoned basis for modernity, so that there is no longer any need to circle about, with Horkheimer and Adorno, in performative contradiction.

In this chapter I raise the question of the relation between Habermas's theory of communicative action and the emancipatory aspects of enlightenment thinking. In this regard Habermas's views can be quite perplexing. It is certainly worth noting that he seeks to secure Horkheimer and Adorno's connection to the enlightenment by referring to their continuing belief in the enlightenment's emancipatory impulse. And yet, if the interest in emancipation is what it is that remains valuable about modernity, it is strange that his theory of communicative action, which is supposed to provide a basis for modernity, says virtually nothing about emancipation. Moreover, Habermas's attention to the moral-practical sphere of rationality has given rise to concerns about whether he has given up on emancipation altogether, especially if he can say, as he does, that we may be able to achieve (a procedural type of) justice, but not necessarily happiness.[1] The stark contrast between Habermas's earlier explicit theorization of an emancipatory interest of knowledge and his all but complete silence on the topic in his theory of communicative action is so conspicuous that it calls for some explanation. One cannot simply assume that there is no relation at all between the earlier and later works, not the least because he still apparently holds to the basic outline of his earlier argument on the relation between knowledge and human interests.[2]

I want to reconstruct the rationality problematic of Habermas's theory of communicative action by establishing connections between his epistemologically based conception of knowledge-constitutive interests and his linguistic-pragmatic concept of communicative rationality. I make these connections by focusing on the problem of meaning in the social sciences, a problem that is central both to his earlier thesis on knowledge and human interests and to his understanding of rationality in his theory of communicative action. By examining how his earlier, and explicit, thematization of an emancipatory interest of knowledge arises out of his concern with the problem of meaning we can thus raise questions about whether and, if so, how the idea of emancipation makes itself felt in the theory of communicative action.

1. See Martin Jay, "Habermas and Modernism," in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity,* 125–39; also Joel Whitebrook, "Reason and Happiness: Some Psychoanalytic Themes in Critical Theory," in Bernstein, 140–60.

2. Jürgen Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," in *Autonomy and Solidarity,* 150.

Habermas's conception of knowledge-constitutive interests was formulated in the context of his participation in the "positivist dispute" of the 1960s. That dispute began in 1961 with methodological and philosophical disagreements between Adorno and Karl Popper and was continued from 1963 by Habermas and Hans Albert.[3] Virtually every aspect of the debate about "positivism," including the term itself, became subject to intense disagreement,[4] but Habermas's concerns became centrally focused on the problem of understanding meaning. He argued that analytic philosophy, which worked from the model of the natural sciences, could not grasp the unique features of the interpretive social sciences, which he saw as connected to the core area of the understanding of meaning. He explained that the data used by interpretive social scientists were symbolically prestructured and had to be distinguished from the type of data used by natural scientists, and he maintained that we had to think in terms of two distinct types of sciences, the empirical-analytic and the historical-hermeneutic. But while the question of the differences between the social and natural sciences turned on the use of hermeneutical methods, it did not stop there. The fact that interpretive social scientists had no choice but to employ such methods meant that philosophical reflection on social science practice had to include a consideration of the interpreter's "participation" in the creation of the objects of her research. The "data" only came into existence through the participation of the interpreter, who had to be able to "translate" into data the symbolically prestructured reality she confronted.[5] In the

3. See Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology,* trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Heinemann, 1976). Habermas published his views in two major books, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences,* trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988) and *Knowledge and Human Interests.* Habermas's inaugural address to the University of Frankfurt in 1965 is published as "Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective," in his *Knowledge and Human Interests,* 301–17.

4. The debate is also a continuation of Horkheimer's attempt to distinguish between "critical" and "traditional" theory. See esp. Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), 188–243.

5. See esp. Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences.* Cf. his articles "The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics" and "A Positivistically Bisected Rationalism," both collected in Adorno, *Positivist Dispute,* 131–62 and 198–225. See also Jürgen Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," in Josef Bleicher, ed., *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 181–211; and Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," also in Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics,* 128–40. Cf. Habermas's "Some

1960s Habermas dealt with the question of the interpreter's "translating" role by introducing the concept of knowledge-constitutive interests.

The idea of an emancipatory interest of knowledge was the most controversial feature of Habermas's concept of knowledge-constitutive interests. Initially, however, the concept concerned only the distinction between the empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic sciences. Having argued that in practice, the sciences divided into two types, he maintained that each was organized around a specific cognitive interest, a technical interest in the empirical-analytical sciences and a practical interest in the historical-hermeneutic ones. According to this view, empirical-analytic science involves the production of technically useful knowledge and can be traced to the necessity of the human species to secure its material conditions of life, whereas the historical-hermeneutic sciences are rooted in the universal need of humans to achieve a linguistically based preunderstanding (norms, values, and so on). In each case, Habermas understands the connection between knowledge and everyday life in terms of a feedback loop: causal explanations based on empirical-analytical knowledge can be translated into technically useful knowledge and narrative explanations based on hermeneutic knowledge can be translated into practical knowledge. In 1973 he wrote that the feedback loop could be explained by the fact that theoretical knowledge is "relatively embedded" in a universal context of prescientific interests.[6] He further suggested that the technical and practical cognitive interests could "neither be comprehended like empirical inclinations or attitudes nor be proposed or justified like variable values in relation to norms of action." They were rather "deep-seated anthropological interests" that we simply "encountered" when we attempted to clarify how the facts were "constituted."[7] He also said that these two interests were both

---

Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis," in his *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 1–40. Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 108 ff. and 124 ff., provides a discussion of the exchange between Habermas and Gadamer. For an account of the social sciences, which draws on Habermas among others, see James Bohman, *New Philosophy of Social Science: Problems of Indeterminacy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). Honneth, *Critique of Power*, 203–39, charts the process through which Habermas arrived at the arguments he presented at his 1965 inaugural address.

6. Jürgen Habermas, "A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3 (1973): 176.

7. Habermas, "Some Difficulties," 21.

grounded in "deeply rooted" and presumably "invariant" structures of action and experience.[8]

The idea of a practical interest rooted in language, as distinguished from a technical interest rooted in labor, was used by Habermas to support his argument that the understanding of meaning is a central feature of social science interpretive practice. In the context of the positivist dispute, his aim was to show the inherent limitations of a positivistically oriented philosophy of science that recognized science as the only legitimate form of knowledge rather than as one possible form of knowledge.[9] But he eventually went beyond this aim, as part of his attempt to clarify the status of a "critical" theory, to argue that we can also identify an emancipatory cognitive interest. To the extent that he connects this third interest to the idea of reflection, he can be seen as beginning to formulate the idea of an emancipatory cognitive interest in 1963, when he called for sustained reflection on the "knowledge-guiding [technical and practical] interests" that must be "brought under control and criticized or legitimated as objective interests derived from the total societal context."[10] In a passage from 1964 he remarks: "As a makeshift, we can conceive of criticism . . . as a process which, in a domination-free discussion, includes a progressive resolution of disagreement. Such a discussion is guided by the idea of a general and unconstrained consensus amongst those who participate in it."[11]

In his inaugural address to the University of Frankfurt (1965) Habermas connects the idea of self-reflection with the idea of an emancipatory cognitive interest. Whereas he had earlier begun from the facticity of two types of knowledge and introduced the idea of their respective cognitive interests as a way of distinguishing separate, though related, enterprises connected to social reproduction, his argumentation now seems to demand a different reconstruction: he begins with the idea of an emancipatory interest involving self-reflection, identifies its role in social reproduction, and finally, suggests the type of knowledge that could be said to embody it. As for the part played by self-reflection in the social

8. Habermas, "Postscript," 176.

9. Habermas, ibid., 158, sees his work as a "critique of scientism." "By scientism I mean a basic orientation prevailing in analytical philosophy . . . [which] says that a scientific philosophy, just like science itself, must proceed *intentione recta*, i.e. it must have its object before itself (and is not allowed to approach it reflexively)."

10. Habermas, "Analytical Theory," 162.

11. Habermas, "Positivistically Bisected Rationalism," 215.

reproduction process, in a somewhat surprising turn, he links the emancipatory interest to ego-development, understood as a process whereby the individual achieves a critical understanding of (previously) unconscious constraints and learns to integrate his own needs and the demands of society. In an attempt to integrate the emancipatory interest into the structure he had developed in his discussion of the technical and practical interests, he explains that the emancipatory interest is rooted in power, which like labor and language, is another form of social organization. As examples of the type of knowledge based on a process of self-reflection that "releases the subject from dependence on hypostatized powers"[12] he offers the social critiques of Karl Marx and the metapsychology of Sigmund Freud that incorporate "an interest which directs knowledge, an interest in emancipation going beyond the technical and practical interests of knowledge."[13]

Notwithstanding this coordination of the three cognitive interests, each tied to social reproduction and to a specific type of knowledge, Habermas's analysis is marked by an asymmetry. The technical and practical interests are "lower" interests,[14] so that the third interest is "higher." Moreover, the connection of the emancipatory interest to power sharply distinguishes it because, whereas the technical and practical interests direct attention to the successful application of knowledge at the level of the everyday, critical self-reflection resists the reality of an everyday marked by domination and aims at "unconstrained consensus."[15] The emancipatory interest, compared with the two "deep-seated anthropological" interests, is also historical in a way that is addressed only in passing. According to Habermas, the emancipatory interest "can only develop to the degree to which repressive force, in the form of the normative exercise of power, presents itself permanently in structures of distorted communication—that is, to the extent that domination is institutionalized."[16] In 1973 he explained that although the technical and

12. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests,* 308 ff.

13. Habermas, "Some Difficulties," 9. The notion of knowledge-constitutive interests allowed Habermas to interrogate a hegemonic philosophy of science that, he argued, privileged one human interest, the *technical* one. The argument was not a plea to install philosophical hermeneutics in the place occupied by philosophy of science, since the former could also be shown to be limited in its privileging of the *practical* interest. Either way, for Habermas, philosophy failed to embody the *emancipatory* interest, the one he believed was proper to it.

14. Ibid., 21.

15. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests,* 313–14.

16. Habermas, "Some Difficulties," 22.

practical interests in knowledge are grounded in "deeply rooted" structures of action and experience, the emancipatory interest in knowledge has a "derivative status." It "guarantees the connection between theoretical knowledge and an 'object domain' of practical life which comes into existence as a result of systematically distorted communication and thinly legitimated repression." He draws the conclusion that the "type of action and experience corresponding to this object domain is, therefore, also derivative." He suggests as well that self-reflection aims at the dissolution of the "pseudo-objectivity . . . rooted in unconscious motives or repressed interests."[17]

Richard Bernstein explains that Habermas views the emancipatory interest as "derivative" in that we "derive" it from reflection on the various disciplines and types of knowledge guided by the technical and practical interests. By reflecting on these sources of knowledge we come to an awareness that "they contain an internal demand for open, free, non-coercive communication." Bernstein concludes from this that the emancipatory interest is derived from "what is presupposed" by the technical and practical interests.[18] That is true only up to a point, however, because the derivativeness of the emancipatory interest also has to be understood in terms of its status as a historically specific claim. Even if, as Habermas suggested in 1971, all three interests are peculiarly both "transcendental" and "historical," the fact that the emancipatory interest is derivative, as well as distinctively modern, raises questions about how that third interest could apply to contexts outside modernity. The risk Habermas sees in such questioning is that it leads to historicism. Whatever else might have been at issue, at that time he warned that "historicism . . . would, at the very least, tie the emancipatory interest of knowledge to fortuitous historical constellations and would thus relativistically deprive self-reflection of the possibility of a justificatory basis for its claim to validity."[19] Those "fortuitous historical constellations" can be taken as referring to the emergence of the bourgeois state at the end of the eighteenth-century, to which Habermas devoted his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.*[20]

17. Habermas, "Postscript," 176.
18. Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity,* 10–11.
19. Habermas, "Some Difficulties," 14–15.
20. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

Habermas's decision to leave epistemology for rational reconstruction was influenced by the many criticisms of his conception of knowledge-constitutive interests, especially of his idea of the emancipatory interest.[21] Bernstein explains that Habermas himself came to realize that the conception of knowledge-constitutive interests was "seriously flawed." The "most glaring" flaw, according to Bernstein, is a "radical ambiguity" in the concepts of reflection and self-reflection. He writes that Habermas had fused two distinct conceptions: the self-reflection of reason upon its own conditions of employment and the emancipatory self-reflection that refers to a subject's attempt to release itself from hypostatized powers. According to Bernstein, the latter use of self-reflection is dependent on the first: emancipatory self-reflection presupposes a "rational reconstruction of the universal conditions for reason." As he further explains, Habermas became aware of the difficulty soon after he had completed *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) and tried to find a solution by distinguishing the practice of emancipatory critique from a rational reconstruction that assists the process of emancipatory critique by giving an account of the universal conditions for the employment of reason.[22] Bernstein's explanation of the split Habermas makes between rational reconstruction and critique can be supported by statements made by Habermas in 1971 and again in 1973.[23] However, more was at issue for Habermas in the move to rational reconstruction than the internal difficulties of the concept of self-reflection. In his book on the philosophical discourse of modernity he explicitly argues against the model of self-reflection and the figure of the "knowing subject," including the macro-subject of praxis philosophy. According to Habermas, the theory of communicative action provides a model of a linguistically generated intersubjectivity that can no longer be thought of in terms of self-reflection.[24]

21. See Karl-Otto Apel, "Wissenschaft als Emanzipation? Eine kritische Würdigung der Wissenschaftskonzeption der 'Kritischen Theorie,'" in Winfried Dallmayr, ed., *Materialien zu Habermas' "Erkenntnis und Interesse"* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 318–48, and Dietrich Böhler, "Zur Geltung des emanzipatorischen Interesses," also in Dallmayr, 349–68. Cf. Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), 53–125. See also Henning Ottmann, "Cognitive Interests and Self-Reflection," in John B. Thompson and David Held, eds., *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 79–97.

22. Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity,* 12–13.

23. See Habermas, "Some Difficulties," 22–24, and "Postscript," 182–85.

24. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* 300 ff.

Nonetheless, despite the difficulties of an epistemological approach, Habermas did not abandon the idea of an emancipatory interest of knowledge. In 1971, for example, as he was planning his new project of rational reconstruction, he was still referring to an interest "which directs knowledge, an interest in emancipation going beyond the technical and practical interests of knowledge." Moreover, he suggested that the foundation for a critical (emancipatory) sociology might be "smuggled in surreptitiously" when we "mingle" two senses of interest in enlightenment: on the one hand, "a relentless discursive validation of claims to validity" and, on the other hand, "practical change of established conditions."[25] He later explained that he moved "away from 'knowledge and human interests' to 'society and communicative rationality,' " but noted: "I still consider the outlines of the argument developed in [*Knowledge and Human Interests*] to be correct."[26]

The relation between Habermas's earlier and later views remain unclarified, and it is not surprising that his readers differ widely on just which aspects of his earlier work continue to be relevant for an understanding of his theory of communicative action. Stephen White, for example, describes in detail relations between Habermas's mature work and his earlier conceptions of the technical and practical interests, but does not discuss how, if at all, his later theory relates to (or breaks with) the idea of an emancipatory interest.[27] John B. Thompson believes that Habermas's later writings mark a "significant modification" of the view he defended in *Knowledge and Human Interests,*[28] whereas David Rasmussen sees Habermas's philosophy of language and reconstructive science as having a strong connection to the idea of emancipation.[29] Rasmussen confirms the view expressed some years ago by Thomas McCarthy that the "idea of a critical social theory incorporating an emancipatory interest takes us to the center of Habermas's thought."[30] According to Bernstein, "The insights contained in [Habermas's] original trichotomy of human interests are conceptually transformed in a new register within the context of his theory of communicative action." He

25. Habermas, "Some Difficulties," 9 and 15.

26. Habermas, "Philosophico-Political Profile," 150.

27. See Stephen K. White, *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

28. John B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 96–97.

29. David M. Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990).

30. McCarthy, *Critical Theory,* 76.

also suggests that although the later "instrumental action" is the link to the technical interest, "communicative action" ties together the practical and emancipatory interests.[31]

At the very least we have to go on the assumption that the idea of an emancipatory interest continues to play some part in the theory of communicative action. That is not to say that the idea, developed through epistemology, functions the same way in his later theory; there one would expect to find only traces of its "original" version. It is no coincidence, however, that traces of the emancipatory interest can be located in Habermas's 1981 discussion of the problem of meaning. That discussion is, in fact, a more detailed working out of the situation of the interpreter of meaning that he identified in the 1960s. As discussed earlier, it was precisely the situation of the interpreter of meaning that led him to develop the idea of an emancipatory interest in the first place.[32]

In the 1980s Habermas continued to argue, as he did in the 1960s, that the core area of social science practice is the understanding of meaning, and he expresses even more explicitly the view that the social sciences have a logic all their own. He appeals to Martin Heidegger's ontological characterization of understanding as a "basic feature of human existence" and to Hans-Georg Gadamer's view that reaching understanding is a "basic feature of historical life." He also quotes Anthony Giddens to the effect that 'Verstehen' must be seen "not as a special method of entry to the social world peculiar to the social sciences, but as the ontological

31. Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity,* 17. See Fred R. Dallmayr, *Polis and Praxis: Exercises in Contemporary Political Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 225 ff., who also sees important links between Habermas's earlier and later views, but emphasizes the conceptual difficulties especially in the later work. Cf. Dallmayr, "Habermas and Rationality," *Political Theory* 16 (November 1988): 553–79, and Bernstein, "Fred Dallmayr's Critique of Habermas," ibid., 580–93. Cf. Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 156–63, who comments on difficulties in Habermas's (early) typology of work and interaction. These difficulties, as LaCapra suggests, are related to an undertheorized emancipatory interest.

32. Habermas has been criticized for giving priority to the system perspective. See McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions,* 152 ff. Cf. Dieter Misgeld, "Critical Hermeneutics versus Neoparsonianism?" *New German Critique* 35 (1985): 55–82; Hans Joas, "The Unhappy Marriage of Hermeneutics and Functionalism," in Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, eds., *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's "The Theory of Communicative Action,"* trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 97–118; and Honneth, *Critique of Power,* 278 ff. That kind of criticism is not unfounded, but it does not confront the fact that despite his systems orientation, Habermas is preoccupied from beginning to the end with the lifeworld perspective of understanding meaning.

condition of human society as it is produced and reproduced by its members."[33] Now, as in the 1960s, he insists that the problem for the interpreter of meaning lies not only in *"theoretically describing"* data, but first of all in *"obtaining"* them, for the data to be gathered are "already symbolically structured and inaccessible to mere observation." While we have no choice but to accept symbolic expressions as the data on which the interpreter bases her observations—there is no other alternative, the important question is how these data are obtained and what it means for our understanding of social science interpretive practice that the data, symbolic expressions, are accessible only through the interpreter's participation in the object domain. Such participation has to be acknowledged because "meanings—whether embodied in actions, institutions, products of labour, words, networks of cooperation, or documents—can be made accessible only *from the inside.*" But if the interpreter becomes a participant, she must also enter into a very specific kind of relation with the subjects of her investigation. She must, according to Habermas, enter into a relation of intersubjectivity.[34]

Habermas understands the intersubjective relation between the interpreter and the persons whose expressions are being analyzed in terms of what it means in general to understand symbolic expressions. He explains that the term "rational" is normally used with reference to persons or actions, but that it actually refers to an (explicit or implicit) assessment concerning the extent to which good, that is, convincing, reasons can be provided to support an expression involving a belief or expectation. In the first instance, therefore, the rationality of an expression depends on its "criticizability." The process involves "that type of speech in which participants thematize contested validity claims [to truth, rightness, or truthfulness] and attempt to vindicate or criticize them through arguments." Habermas maintains that interpreters, far from being impartial observers, must follow these "everyday" procedures in the explication of symbolic expressions in the object domain. That is, the nature of the data necessarily leads the interpreter of meaning into a type of participation that requires the redemption of validity claims and the establishment of an intersubjective relation with those whose expressions are being explicated. The interpreter has to know

33. Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies* (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 151; Habermas, *TCA*, 1:107.

34. Habermas *TCA*, 1:107–12. Habermas agrees with Giddens that in the social sciences there is a "*double* hermeneutic"; Giddens, *New Rules*, 158.

the conditions under which the validity claims connected with the symbolic expression would be accepted as valid and those under which they would be challenged and rejected. He must enter into the language in the object domain, that is, ask people what they mean by their expressions, and so on (direct access), or imagine what responses might be given (indirect access). Whether people are engaged in actual discussion, or whether, as in historical and some cross-cultural research, investigators must rely on their imaginations, the access to data remains in principle the same. From a methodological perspective, it is also beside the point whether or not the people concerned have actual reasons: their actions will be intelligible (that is, make sense in the context of a rational interpretation of meaning) only if the interpreter reconstructs the situation in terms of (at least) possible reasons. "In order to understand an expression, the interpreter must *bring to mind the reasons* with which a speaker would if necessary and under suitable conditions defend its validity."[35]

Habermas admits that it is a "disquieting thesis" that communicative actions have to be interpreted "rationally," that is, through the process of taking part in the redemption of validity claims. We might like to think that communicative actions can be understood first in their actual course and then assessed against some theory. On the contrary, he argues, meaning is inaccessible from the objectivating status of observer, and for that reason the interpreter has to become a participant. The fact that such participation involves the redemption of validity claims also denies the possibility of a clear separation of questions of meaning and questions of validity "in such a way as to secure for the understanding of meaning a purely descriptive character."[36] Moreover, the interpreter is necessarily drawn into an evaluation of validity claims. This situation arises, according to Habermas, because the reasons that are offered, or could be offered, to the interpreter are of such a nature that they cannot be received without some sort of response, be it affirmation or negation or abstention. Thus the "*description* of reasons demands *eo ipso* an *evaluation,* even when the one providing the description feels that he is not at the moment in a position to judge their soundness." It is possible to understand reasons "only to the extent that one understands *why* they

35. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:9–15.

36. Ibid., 107–8. According to his *On the Logic of the Social Sciences,* 135, "Symbolic validity cannot be logically distinguished from the origin of meaning."

not sound, or why in a given case a decision as to whether reasons are good or bad is not (yet) possible."[37] An abstention, he explains elsewhere, "does not really signify a true declaration of neutrality, but only signals that we are putting off problems for the time being."[38] In fact, he writes, interpretation can take place "only under the presupposition that [the interpreter] judges the agreement and disagreement, the validity claims and potential reasons with which he is confronted, on a common basis *shared* in principle by him and those immediately involved."[39]

The discussion of the interpreter's participation not only puts into question "the usual type of objectivity of knowledge."[40] It also produces a critical point in the analysis because the practice of a social science requires that we be able to distinguish the interpretive achievements of the social scientist from those of the people investigated. It is the attempt to maintain that distinction, in the face of the resistance to it from within the logic of his analysis, that drives Habermas into what Kenneth Baynes has called "an exercise in intellectual gymnastics."[41] Baynes's remark is made within the context of a sympathetic treatment of Haber-

37. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:115–16.

38. Jürgen Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity,* 204.

39. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:116–17. In 1985 Thomas McCarthy described Habermas's argument as an attempt to establish that "meaning, intelligibility, and understanding are in the final analysis inseparable from validity, rationality, and assessment." He also tried to diminish the force of Habermas's argument. If it worked, he suggested, it demonstrated no more than the "unavoidability of something like what Weber called the *Wertbezogenheit,* the value-relatedness of our interpretations; it does not suffice to exclude the *Werturteilsfreiheit,* freedom from value *judgments,* that he combines with it." Contending that Habermas's conclusion was stronger than warranted, he insisted on the possibility of withholding judgment: "Interpreters raised in pluralistic cultures and schooled in cultural and historical differences are quite capable, it seems, of understanding symbolic expressions without taking a position on their validity." See Thomas McCarthy, "Reflections on Rationalization in *The Theory of Communicative Action,*" in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity,* 183–85. Cf. Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," 203–6. McCarthy's appeal to a Western self-understanding is hardly convincing; we are given no further reason to believe that symbolic expressions can be understood "without taking a position on their validity." Cf. McCarthy, "Scientific Rationality and the 'Strong Program' in the Sociology of Knowledge," in Ernan McMullin, ed., *Construction and Constraint: The Shaping of Scientific Rationality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 75–95, which tends to favor Habermas's view.

40. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:116.

41. Kenneth Baynes, "Rational Reconstruction and Social Criticism: Habermas's Model of Interpretive Social Science," *The Philosophical Forum* 21 (Fall-Winter 1989–90): 125. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:113–14.

mas's position, whose "intent," he feels, is "fairly clear." But this sort of "exercise" can also indicate a difficult problem.

In an effort to distinguish the two sorts of interpretive achievements, those of the analyst and those of the people in the object domain, Habermas argues that social science interpretation requires that the rationality problematic be present on two levels. To distinguish these levels, he needs to specify the interpreter's participation, and this he does by splitting the interpreter into speaker and actor. For the inhabitants of the "observed action system," he argues, speaking and acting are intrinsically related, but the interpreter enters the observed system only as a speaker, not as an actor. "In concentrating, as a speaker and hearer, exclusively on the process of reaching understanding, the social scientist takes part in the observed action system *subject to the withdrawal,* as it were, *of his qualities as an actor.*" According to this explanation, the people in the observed action system participate for purposes of understanding and action-coordination, while the interpreter participates with them only for "the sake of understanding"—he or she has no interest in "their" action-coordination per se. Habermas also suggests that interpreters are involved in a "virtual" participation through which they become "at least potential members" of the communicative context under investigation. This participation is "merely 'virtual' . . . because the interpreter, viewed in his capacity as an actor, pursues goals that are not related to the given context but to *another* system of action. To this extent, the social scientist does not pursue any aims *of his own* within the observed context." The interpreter then is involved in two action systems, and the "action system in which [he] moves *as an actor* lies on a different plane."[42]

Whereas Habermas once thought of the interpretation of meaning in terms of translation,[43] in 1981 he suggests that there is an internal connection between the process of understanding meaning and the social scientist's preunderstanding of rationality. He maintains that it is impossible for the interpreter to understand communicative actions unless she already knows what is involved in reaching understanding and assessing validity claims. This know-how is not acquired at the site of the inquiry, however, because the interpreter has it before he arrives; it is in-

42. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:114. In 1967 Habermas thought of "observers" as "reflective participants." See his *On the Logic of the Social Sciences,* 93.

43. "A translation must take place . . . in this translation [the analyst] relies on the pattern in which he was socialized." Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences,* 137.

learned by interpreters, as members of a social group in their own lifeworld, prior to taking up the task of understanding the expressions encountered in the object domain.[44] But this type of knowledge has to be distinguished from the interpreter's cultural/historical standards of rationality. Habermas maintains that even though the interpreter's preunderstanding of rationality belongs to the modern understanding of the world, it cannot be identified with the substantive (cultural/historical) rationality standards of modernity. At least that is the circumstance, according to Habermas, in which social science interpreters must assess the validity claims that they identify as having been raised (at least implicitly) in the observed system. They must use their preunderstanding of rationality to assess the validity claims with which they are confronted, and they must also try to put at a critical distance rationality standards that are culturally specific to their own society.

Much of Habermas's argumentation can be viewed as methodological. However, he does more than provide methodological arguments for understanding social scientific interpretive practice. He also suggests that interpreters, once "participating" in the observed action system, are obligated to "take seriously" the validity claims that are presumably raised there. On the one hand, the interpreter must assume, as a starting point for his interpretation, that there is an "immanent rationality" in speech that is "always implicitly shared." But Habermas also wants to say that the "immanent rationality" of speech is not merely a necessary presumption of social science interpretation but a reality that brings the interpreter and those whose expressions are being analyzed into a relation of intersubjectivity. That relation goes beyond the interpreter's understanding of the meaning of symbolic expressions. For example, Habermas insists that the interpreter should "take seriously the rationality claimed by the participants [in the object domain] for their utterances, and at the same time critically examine it." Far from being reluctant to judge, interpreters should, he thinks, feel positive about assuming such a role—make explicit "what the participants merely presuppose." Instead of placing oneself "*outside* the communication context under investigation[,] one deepens and radicalizes it in a way that is in principle open to *all* participants" (130). Similarly, he writes: "It is [the] potential for critique built into communicative action itself that the social scientist, by entering into the contexts of everyday action as a virtual participant, can

44. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:110, 125.

systematically exploit and bring into play outside these contexts and against their particularity" (121). On the other hand, he resists seeing the interpreter as taking the initiative, by viewing her actions as having "only the *auxiliary function* of assisting participation in the process of reaching understanding, which is the key to understanding the actions of *other* agents" (114).

Habermas's attempt to specify the interpretive achievements of the social scientist by splitting him into speaker and actor presents us with a new set of questions. There may well be some basis on which the interpreter may be said to be uninvolved in the action-coordination in the object domain, but the speaker role he necessarily assumes there is performative. Insofar as he "takes seriously" the validity claims that he ascertains in the object domain and insofar as he "deepens and radicalizes" the context, he is actively involved in what Habermas refers to as the rationalization of the lifeworld. That process is one in which the lifeworld is differentiated into the three structural components of culture, society, and personality and in which speakers begin to discriminate between three "worlds" (objective, social, subjective) and raise and redeem validity claims (truth, rightness, truthfulness). Such rationalization, in Habermas's view, refers to changes at the formal level of rationality and do not necessarily affect cultural/historical standards, though the decentering of worldviews associated with the rationalization of the lifeworld would likely lead to changes in cultural/historical standards as well, if existing power relations could no longer be so readily legitimated through the invocation of cultural tradition. Nor does he claim that a rationalized lifeworld is "better" in the sense of being more meaningful or providing more opportunities for happiness.[45] But we are still left with the question of how to account for the interpreter's action in the object domain. That action appears to be integrally related to her role as interpreter and to involve a transformative moment connected to the (conceivably, though not necessarily, unintentional) promotion, in the object domain, of a "rationalization" of the lifeworld.

The idea of the "immanent rationality" of speech, or some such idea, follows from the logic of Habermas's argumentation. Having established

45. Jürgen Habermas, "Remarks on the Discussion," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 7 (1990): 129, writes: "I have always emphasized that . . . 'rationalized' forms of life are by no means 'better' than others in the sense of a good life (or of an 'non-alienated' life in the clinical sense). Life worlds cannot be compared *in toto*, but in each case only on those dimensions where learning processes are possible."

that social science interpretive practice brings into existence a relation of intersubjectivity between the social scientist and those whose expressions provide the data for her analysis, he must be able to specify that relation and explain how it makes communication possible between the interpreter and people whose cultural experiences are possibly very different. He responds to this problem by claiming that the interpreter's "preunderstanding" of rationality—the knowledge of what it means to raise and redeem validity claims—is learned in a particular lifeworld, but is not identical with the cultural/historical standards of rationality that one might find in that lifeworld. He further claims that there is an implicit sharing in this "preunderstanding" by the people in the object domain, that there is an "immanent rationality" in all speech. The "immanent rationality" of all speech is thus modeled on the interpreter's "preunderstanding" of rationality, notwithstanding the fact that that preunderstanding is a historically specific phenomenon, in that it represents an understanding of the world that first comes into existence in modernity. But if the logic of one's argument requires the claim of an immanent rationality of all speech modeled on an understanding of the world that is specifically modern, should one not stop and ask whether there is anything about that argument and its starting point that we need to reconsider? Habermas does not ask such questions. He not only makes the claim that we have to assume that speech contains an immanent rationality, he also suggests that the path from communicative action to discourse is "always ingrained in the very structure of action oriented to reaching understanding."[46] Moreover, he means to say not simply that the path is there, but that it is a path that should be followed and, moreover, that interpreters should assist those who, for whatever reason, find themselves on that path.

Habermas admits that his description of the rationality of action oriented to reaching understanding relies on a "*preunderstanding* anchored in modern orientations."[47] But, as he observes, the type of action oriented to reaching understanding, despite its rational internal structure, is "by no means everywhere and always encountered as the normal case in everyday practice." He further writes: "In claiming universal validity—with, however, many qualifications—for *our* concept of rational-

46. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:130.

47. Ibid., 44. Cf. Habermas, "A Reply to My Critics," in Thompson and Held, *Critical Debates*, 277, where he writes, "We cannot simultaneously *assert* a proposition or *defend* a theory and nevertheless anticipate that its validity-claims will be refuted in the future."

ity, without thereby adhering to a completely untenable belief in progress, we are taking on a sizable burden of proof."[48] To the critic's objection that the rationalization of the lifeworld reflects Western experiences,[49] he responds that for the critic's objection to be valid, it would have to be shown that the rationalization of the lifeworld into the three structural components of culture, society, and personality is essentially Western. Habermas's argument for the universal validity of "our" concept of rationality depends on formal-pragmatic arguments that I critically examine in later chapters. Here one might reflect on the fact that even though Habermas does not shrink from the "sizable burden of proof" involved in claiming universal validity for the concept of rationality that comes into existence in modernity, he seems strangely untroubled by suggestions that his theory might contain Eurocentric prejudices. His lack of defensiveness on this question seems to indicate that he understands his theory as providing a certain set of assurances concerning its orientation to a non-Eurocentric, that is, truly universalist perspective. I would like to indicate the nature of these assurances by suggesting that the idea of the rationalization of the lifeworld, as developed in Habermas's theory of communicative action, is a "carrier" for the idea of the emancipatory interest of knowledge.

I raised the question of the relation between Habermas's concept of knowledge-constitutive interests and his theory of communicative action. I observed that although important aspects of the technical and practical interests have found their way into the later concepts of instrumental and communicative action, there is no obvious location for a similarly reconceptualized emancipatory interest. I agree with Bernstein that the emancipatory interest has not, however, been abandoned and that the concept of communicative action ties together the practical and emancipatory interests. But even if the emancipatory interest has been "conceptually transformed," as Bernstein states, and brought into the later theory, we still need to say how we can identify that interest in the

48. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:137–38.

49. Thomas McCarthy, for example, has expressed the concern that Habermas's schema of the three spheres of validity (truth, rightness, and truthfulness) might be Western and idiosyncratic rather than universal features of human interaction. His main worry is "to avoid conceptually screening out utopian—or for that matter, dystopian—possibilities of social development." McCarthy, "Reflections on Rationalization," 191. For Habermas, McCarthy's proposal is an unpromising "attempt to embed the perspective of reconciliation in a philosophy of history of nature." Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," 211.

later theory. Precisely how does the concept of communicative action tie the practical and emancipatory interests together?

We can think of the concept of communicative action as having two basic axes, one synchronic and the other diachronic. The synchronic axis refers to the "rational internal structure" of communicative action and involves the three world-relations and the three world-concepts, the three validity claims, and the idea of a rationally motivated agreement tied to intersubjective assessment of validity claims. The diachronic axis of the concept designates the decentering of worldviews, a process whereby formerly "fused" spheres of world-relations, world-concepts, and validity claims become differentiated. The emancipatory interest, or what remains of it, would have to be located along the diachronic axis, that is, in the idea of the differentiation of the lifeworld into three structural components and three rationality spheres. If, as Habermas claims, this process of differentiation represents "an increase in rationality,"[50] he would also see no difficulty in endorsing the intersubjective relation between the social science interpreter and those whose expressions are being interpreted, even when that relation of intersubjectivity (in principle) opens up the "path" from communicative action (where the validity claims are "fused") to discourse (which requires a high level of differentiation of the rationality spheres, each organized around a specific validity claim). The theory of communicative action does not set out to describe the substantive features of an emancipated society, and it can tolerate a plurality of forms of life, but it does proclaim that "the decentration of world understanding and the rationalization of the lifeworld are necessary conditions for an emancipated society."[51]

50. Habermas, *TCA*, 2:144–45.

51. Ibid., 1:74 suggests that the procedural concept of rationality can be used to develop a critique of Western societies with their "one-sided rationality limited to the cognitive-instrumental" if we can show that "the decentration of world understanding and the rationalization of the lifeworld are necessary conditions for an emancipated society."

THREE

OBJECTIVITY AND UNIVERSALITY

The Anglo-American rationality debates of the latter part of the twentieth century were precipitated by Peter Winch's challenge to standard ways of understanding "primitive" societies and refer to complex, sometimes highly contentious, discussions among philosophers and social scientists about worldviews, rationality, and objectivity.[1] Habermas views these debates as evolving out of questions asked by researchers in earlier periods, even as indicating a sort of enlightenment within the academy concerning research and responsibility. The early anthropologists, he explains, could still naively assess non-Western cultures in terms of standards of intelligibility and rationality learned in the West, but their self-assurance was disturbed when investigators began to ask about the "uniqueness or commensurability of civilizations and worldviews." The emergence of cultural anthropology, with its investigations of mythical traditions, rites, and magic, forced a "*radical* confrontation on the one fundamental question: whether and in what respect the standards of rationality by which the investigator was himself at least intuitively guided might claim universal validity."[2] As I show in this chapter, Habermas shifts the basic concern of the rationality debates by refusing to see the issues dividing Winch and the "rationalists" in terms of cultural/historical standards of rationality. He effects that shift by translating the issues

1. For a discussion of the rationality debates, see esp. Bryan R. Wilson, ed., *Rationality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970); Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, eds., *Rationality and Relativism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982); and Habermas, *TCA*, 1:1–141. *TCA* appeared in German in 1981, before the publication of the work edited by Hollis and Lukes.

2. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:53.

between hermeneuticists and rationalists into the question of the interpreter's "preunderstanding" of rationality. This translation is made possible by his distinction between cultural/historical rationality standards and the preunderstanding of rationality that the interpreter learns in the modern type of lifeworld. As discussed in Chapter 2, he maintains that this preunderstanding is a modern phenomenon, but is not identical with the cultural rationality standards of any historically specific modern lifeworld.

From Habermas's viewpoint, then, the real question driving the rationality debates is whether the interpreter's preunderstanding of rationality is adequate for understanding the experiences and actions of peoples of radically different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. That viewpoint guides his analysis of the Anglo-American rationality debates but gives rise to further questions about the objectivity of the knowledge produced in social science interpretive practice. His discussion of objectivity, while originating with methodological and social-theoretical concerns, ultimately leads to the political-ethical question of the "justified claim to universality" of the modern understanding of the world. The universality question is the dominant theme of Habermas's discourse ethics, and his treatment of it, which feminist thinkers have found problematic, has to be seen in the context of his theory of communicative action.

Habermas begins his discussion of the Anglo-American rationality debates from the presumption of the need for a context-independent standard,[3] and he organizes the various, and complex, strands of the debates into a series of six rounds of arguments for and against universalism. His immediate concern is to affirm the necessity of assessing worldviews in terms of their rationality, and he begins the series of six rounds of arguments by referring to Steven Lukes's discussion of the principle of charity, which, though situated at the "perimeter" of the discussion, has the potential of neutralizing the whole controversy. According to the charity principle, an interpreter who confronts beliefs that appear *prima facie* irrational has a choice of how to proceed: either adopt a critical attitude and then try to explain how such "irrational" beliefs came to be held or begin from the assumption that what appears irrational "may be interpreted as rational when fully understood in its context." This sug-

3. Ibid., 62.

gests for Lukes that the problem comes down to "whether or not there are alternative standards of rationality."[4] In response, Habermas concedes that a belief, in the form of an obscure expression, might resist interpretation, and for the moment we might try to explain it in sociological or psychological terms, but he maintains that these are temporary expedients and cannot replace the logic of interpretation. Lukes is mistaken, he contends, to pose the problem in terms of choices open to the anthropologist. "In a strictly methodological sense the alternative posited by Lukes does not exist" because symbolic expressions issue from speaking and acting subjects and must be interpreted by reference to the action orientations (and possible reasons) of that actor. Far from being a question of hermeneutic charity, it is a "methodological precept," according to Habermas, that the anthropologist "proceed from the presumptive rationality of the questionable expression in order, if necessary, to assure himself step by step of its irrationality." In his view, no amount of charitable interpretation can disguise the fact that a claim to universality of rationality standards makes itself felt in the logic of interpretation. Interpreters have to construct rational interpretations of meaning in which they have "to take a positive or negative position on criticizable validity claims."[5]

Having determined that Lukes is unable to find a way around the controversy, Habermas opens the second round of arguments by referring to E. E. Evans-Pritchard's account of the African tribe of the Azande, which became the focus of the controversy. He suggests that there are two types of interpretive strategy in Evans-Pritchard's account: one aims at understanding the Zande belief in witches in the context of their culture and the other at assessing worldviews for their rationality. Whereas the first type of strategy leads Evans-Pritchard to the conclusion that the mythical worldview of the Azande is internally consistent, the second suggests that the matter of witchcraft cannot be reduced to the substantive question of its meaning for the Azande. Going on the assumption that the others share with the interpreter "intuitively mastered principles of formal logic that hold for both sides in the same way," Evans-Pritchard drew the conclusion that the Zande worldview could not compare to a modern worldview in terms of its ability to assess the truth

4. Steven Lukes, "Some Problems about Rationality," in Wilson, *Rationality,* 194; Habermas, *TCA,* 1:54. Cf. Lukes's "Relativism in its Place," in Hollis and Lukes, *Rationality and Relativism,* 261–305.

5. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:53–55.

of propositions and the efficacy of interventions in the world.[6] Peter Winch objects to this judgment, because it relies on a conception of "reality" that has to be regarded as "intelligible and applicable *outside* the context of scientific reasoning itself" and which sets up the interpreter as ultimate arbiter on what is actually real independent of all language. According to Winch: "What is real and what is unreal shows itself *in* the sense that language has."[7]

In this second round of arguments Habermas identifies the two main perspectives presented in the rationality debates; however, he also indicates that Winch's contribution prejudiced the ensuing discussions by replacing the question of cognitive adequacy at the center of Evans-Pritchard's analysis with the substantive issue of witchcraft. Habermas's aim in the third round is to shift the discussion from the substantive question back to the question of cognitive adequacy. He begins with a backhanded compliment to Winch, as he remarks on the strength of the latter's claim that worldviews are like portraits and, like portraits, cannot be true or false. On this reading, speakers of one language should not arrogate to themselves the right to proclaim the "real" meaning of reality. But Habermas breaks with this imagery by arguing that unlike portraits, which are neither true nor false, worldviews "*make possible* utterances that admit of truth." He also maintains that worldviews have an "indirect" relation to truth and that it is this fact that Winch fails to take into account. Winch's claim, that what is true and false is determined within a language, thus allows for the inference that each claim to truth, in any language, necessarily involves a claim to what is universally true. Common to all languages, Habermas insists, is the "idea of truth," so that even if what is true for any given people is decided on the basis of cultural-historical criteria, the "idea" of truth is not understood in a "particularistic way." By linking up the idea of truth with the appeal to universality intrinsic to the validity claim of truth, he shifts the discussion away from the substantive issue of witchcraft and lays the basis for a formal analysis. "Whatever language system we choose, we always start intuitively from the presupposition that truth is a universal validity claim. If a statement is true, it merits universal assent, no matter in which language it is formulated."[8]

6. Ibid., 55–57.

7. Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society," in Wilson, *Rationality,* 81–82; Habermas, *TCA,* 1:57.

8. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:58.

A strong interpretation of Habermas's position, which seems to be required in this context, suggests that anyone who speaks invites cross-cultural (and transhistorical) evaluation "from the quasiaesthetic and truth-indifferent standpoints of coherence, depth, economy, completeness, and the like, but also from the standpoint of *cognitive adequacy.*" He concludes that the "adequacy of a linguistically articulated worldview is a function of the true statements that are possible in this language system." At the same time he concedes that language offers possibilities "for making sense of human life" and that it is wrong to assess worldviews solely in terms of their ability to allow for true statements and effective techniques. Worldviews are also cultural interpretive systems that "throw light on existential themes recurrent in every culture—birth and death, sickness and need, guilt, love, solidarity and loneliness," and as such are comparable "only in respect to their potency for conferring meaning." In contrast to Winch, however, he views all this as rather beside the point because, for him, the meaning-conferring properties of worldviews cannot be equated with their rationality. According to Habermas, "Winch sidesteps toward aspects of content, though the rationality of worldviews and forms of life would have to be found in their formal properties."[9] Habermas gets this result by distinguishing between the formal and substantive aspects of a worldview.

In the fourth round of arguments Habermas attempts to show that Winch "misses the problem at issue." He also departs from a strictly methodological discussion and directs attention to the rationality of the life practices that the anthropologist is supposed to be investigating. Cognitive adequacy, he maintains, applies to the "coherence and the truth of the statements possible in [worldviews] as well as the effectiveness of the plans of action dependent on them," but such cognitive adequacy "is *also* reflected in the practice of conducting life." The question becomes what to make of the fact that the Azande showed discomfort about inconsistencies only when pressed by the anthropologist. Whereas for Evans-Pritchard the Zande tolerance of inconsistencies at the level of everyday life is evidence of the inferiority of their worldview, Winch insists that the European, "obsessed with pressing Zande thought where it would not naturally go—to a contradiction"[10] is com-

9. Ibid., 58–59. Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia,* 241, remarks that "Habermas seems to have pulled the rug from under the feet of hermeneuticists like Winch."

10. Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society," 93; Habermas, *TCA* 1:60. Winch is responding to E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937).

mitting a category mistake. According to Winch, the Zande practice of witchcraft cannot be measured against science because the belief in witches in the culture of the Azande cannot be equated with the scientific attitude that the modern physicist brings to the study of natural processes.[11]

In the next round of arguments Habermas raises the question of how to understand Winch's charge of a category mistake. If it means that we should not attribute to everyone a characteristically European interest in resolving inconsistencies, it is still possible to suggest that the Zande lack of interest in resolving inconsistencies is evidence that their worldview "imposes less exacting standards of rationality and is in this sense less rational than the modern understanding of the world." He takes up Robin Horton's suggestion that we evaluate worldviews on the basis of the extent to which they allow for the development of processes of cognitive-instrumental learning. On this "closed versus open" schema, "the belief in witches exhibits a structure that binds the Zande consciousness more or less blindly to inherited interpretations and does not permit consciousness of the possibility of alternative interpretations to arise." The problem is that Horton's point of reference is still modern science and reflects Western experiences because it views the belief in the magico-mythical world of representation as incompatible with that reflective attitude necessary for the development of scientific theories. At this point Habermas suggests a way to avoid a possible renewal of the objection that the European is making a category mistake. Even on the assumption that "readiness to learn" and "openness to criticism" are not specific to Western societies, he writes, "it is at least *one-sided* to judge worldviews according to whether they inhibit or promote a scientific mentality." This remark takes the focus off a Western preoccupation with science and instrumental rationality. It is also integral to his proposal for an expanded concept of rationality.[12] This expansion concerns what Habermas refers to as the formal aspects of a worldview and is dependent on a prior distinction between a worldview's formal and substantive aspects.

11. Habermas, *TCA,* 1:59–61.

12. Ibid., 61–62. According to Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," in Wilson, *Rationality,* 153, "For the progressive acquisition of knowledge, man needs both the right kind of theories *and* the right attitude to them." Cf. Horton's "Tradition and Modernity Revisited," in Hollis and Lukes, *Rationality and Relativism,* 201–60.

Horton's schema is restrictive, in Habermas's view, because it applies the meaning of rationality only to cognitive-instrumental interaction with the external world, whereas rationality extends over three "worlds": the external world addressed by Horton, but also the social and subjective worlds. Here we see Habermas alluding to the dilemma he paints of a Western interpreter confronted with apparently irrational views. There, in the "mirror" of mythical thinking, the Westerner becomes aware that there is not just one world, the objective world that provides the subject matter of science, but social and subjective worlds as well.

> If mythical thought *does not yet permit* a categorial separation between cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and expressive relations to the world, if the expressions of the Azande are for us full of ambiguities, this is a sign that the "closedness" of their animistic worldview cannot be described solely in terms of attitudes toward the objective world; nor can the modern understanding of the world be described solely in terms of formal properties of the scientific mentality.[13]

Habermas acknowledges that his discussion, which draws on an expanded concept of rationality, has departed from Winch's argumentation, but maintains that it provides universalism with a "more subtle defense." In the sixth, and final, round he distinguishes the "justified claim to universality" of the rationality that gets expressed in the modern understanding of the world from the "unjustified" self-understanding of Western culture that tends to reduce rationality to the dimension of cognitive-instrumental interaction with the external world. He establishes agreement with rationalists, like Horton, that "scientific rationality belongs to a complex of cognitive-instrumental rationality that can certainly claim validity beyond the context of particular cultures," but at the same time maintains that this is only one test for the rationality of a worldview. We would also have to test a worldview for the moral-practical rationality that attaches to the social world and for the aesthetic-expressive dimensions of the subjective world. From this perspective, Horton's notion of rationality does not permit adequate theorizing of the complex issues involved in understanding radically different cultures;

13. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:63.

the phenomena that are addressed are too varied to be reduced to th dimension of a "sense for theoretical alternatives." This circumstance i true, Habermas believes, not only for Horton, but also for Winch and fo critics like Lukes and Alasdair MacIntyre. He insists, however, that de spite the preoccupation of rationalists with Western science, their ob servations "fit easily into the formal-pragmatic viewpoints" from which he himself proceeds when he refers to the closedness and openness of worldviews. "What seems to belong to the idiosyncratic traits of West ern culture is not a scientific rationality as such, but its hypostatization." While Winch's arguments are too weak to sustain the view that there is an incommensurable concept of rationality that is inherent in every form of life, they are sufficiently strong "to set off the justified claim to universality on behalf of the rationality that gained expression in the modern understanding of the world."[14]

According to Habermas, the rationality debates divert attention either to the culture of the anthropologist (by suggesting that witchcraft is an inferior form of science), or to the culture of the people investigated (by suggesting that witchcraft belongs to a different understanding of rationality). He resists the "standard" rationalist position, which turns out to be ethnocentric because it privileges cognitive-instrumental rationality, as well as the relativist position, which is too weak to sustain the view that rationality standards are incommensurable. While he advocates a universalist position, he claims that his concept of rationality differs in a significant way from the one at the center of the rationality debates and that for this reason he is not vulnerable, as are the rationalists in those debates, to relativist criticisms.[15] This, I believe, is true. The communicative model reworks the terms of the debates by broadening and deepening the concept of rationality. It broadens the concept of rationality by extending rationality over three spheres. An "uncritical" self-understanding of the modern world, Habermas maintains, associates rationality with the cognitive-instrumental relations that have become socially and culturally dominant and suppresses the moral-practical and expres-

14. Ibid., 63–66.

15. Thomas McCarthy has argued that if relativists are to prove that there is a plurality of standards of intelligibility, they need to be able to identify the existence of such standards independently of the question of their validity for us. See McCarthy, "Scientific Rationality," 75–95. McCarthy is primarily concerned with the position of Barry Barnes and David Bloor as stated in their "Relativism, Rationalism and the Sociology of Knowledge," in Hollis and Lukes, *Rationality and Relativism*, 21–47.

sive relations of the other two spheres. To the extent that two rationality spheres (moral-practical and aesthetic-practical) are repressed, the "uncritical" self-understanding of the modern world results in a "distorted understanding"[16] of rationality and an inadequate basis from which to theorize about the world. He is thus able to claim that "rationalists" such as Horton produced incomplete analyses: they were working with a restricted concept of rationality and focused too narrowly on the question of cognitive adequacy.

Habermas deepens the concept of rationality by dividing a worldview into its formal and substantive aspects. This aspect of his analysis is especially potent against "relativists" like Winch who, he believes, misidentified the nature of rationality altogether. According to Habermas, Winch diverted attention to the meaning-conferring content of worldviews and failed to see that a worldview's formal properties are the proper candidate for a rationality test. On this basis, Habermas rejects the presumed necessity of having to offer an opinion on the substantive question of whether witchcraft must in the end be subject to science: the local meaning that witchcraft is able to generate for members of a lifeworld cannot be translated into a rationality question. It is only insofar as witches raise claims to propositional truth that they (implicitly) accept the conditions attached to the redemption of validity claims. If, as Winch claims, all languages have their own sense of true and false, real and unreal, valid and invalid, and if, as Habermas maintains, those claims are essentially universalistic, such claims carry with them obligations that they be redeemed in a rational manner. It follows from this that, on the question of cognitive adequacy—which involves a validity claim to truth—the inhabitants of a radically different culture must be viewed, from a methodological perspective, as always already oriented to the redemption of truth claims.[17]

Habermas's division of a worldview into its formal and substantive properties also puts him in a position to suggest that despite apparently diametrically opposing views, the various participants in the rationality debates shared deeply held convictions. He maintains that Winch, Mac-

16. See Habermas, *TCA*, 1:66.

17. Since Winch's work first appeared, it has been generally assumed—against his insistence to the contrary—that his position entailed a relativist thesis. Habermas's analysis makes it understandable why Winch resists such labeling. Cf. discussion in Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 93 ff.

Winch, Lukes, and the other participants all relied on minimal notions of rationality derived from the law of noncontradiction. He claims, quoting Albrecht Wellmer, that the "substantive" standards of rationality that became central to the rationality debates are "parasitic" on this minimal standard and that the participants' restrictive concept of rationality explains why they could all agree on the apparently higher tolerance for contradiction exhibited by the Azande. He refers to Wellmer's view that the discursive, or procedural, conception of rationality, characteristic of the theory of communicative action, is a "formal standard of rationality" situated on a "meta-level" vis-à-vis all those "substantive standards of rationality,"[18] including a Western standard "distorted" in favor of cognitive-instrumental relations. This way of resolving the matter requires that we regard the formal properties of rational argumentation as not essentially related to the privileging of cognitive-instrumental relations and as not essentially Western.

Habermas needs something more, however, to convince us that there is some point in thinking that we are not simply deflecting all cultural experiences into the three formal world-concepts that he identifies as part of the modern understanding of the world. The claim to objectivity might well be a methodological prerequisite of social science interpretive practice; interpreters might well have to "participate" with the others in a redemption of validity claims; to the extent that interpreters do participate, we may have to deduce that they possibly facilitate a "rationalization" of the lifeworld in the object domain. As discussed in Chapter 2, such rationalization has to be viewed as the (not necessarily intentional) promotion in the object domain of the increasing differentiation between three "worlds," three validity claims, and so on. Habermas visualizes the process of differentiation as the following of a "path" that takes us from communicative action, in which the three validity claims are intertwined, to discourse, in which any one of the validity claims can be thematized. From a methodological perspective, we may have to suppose that this path is "always ingrained in the very structure of action oriented to reaching understanding."[19] Nonetheless, as also discussed in Chapter 2, Habermas is not simply talking about methodological prerequisites. The intersubjective relation that develops with the others in the

18. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:72–73, makes the argument by quoting from Albrecht Wellmer's unpublished paper "On Rationality." Cf. Wellmer, "Reason, Utopia, and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 52–57.

19. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:130.

context of interpretation brings the interpreter into a political-ethical relation with those whose expressions she analyzes, and it is that political-ethical relation which includes the possible promotion in the object domain of a rationalization of the lifeworld. It is thus here, in the realm of the political-ethical, that the question of the "justified claim to universality" of the modern understanding of the world presses itself on us.

Part of the difficulty in identifying the issues to be addressed is that Habermas does not satisfactorily separate out the methodological question of what the interpreter must suppose from the political-ethical question of taking up an intersubjective relation with the other. This aspect of his analysis is especially apparent in his attention to the differences between mythical and modern thought. Whereas he identifies the superiority of the Western worldview in its ability to grasp the "nonempirical validity" ascribed to symbolic expressions, he suggests that mythical thought does "not yet" have a separate concept for nonempirical validity but rather confounds validity with "empirical efficacy." Presumably, for the believer of myth, if something is efficacious, it is true or valid. She has "not yet" learned to establish propositional truth on the basis of the internal connections of the symbolic expressions; there is a "confusion" of what works with what is true. Habermas emphasizes that he is not merely referring to specific validity claims. He takes it as given that mythical thought does not—or does "not yet"—differentiate propositional truth, from normative rightness, from expressive sincerity (truthfulness). He also stresses that the general and diffuse notion of validity is "still not freed from empirical admixtures."[20] Though mythical thinking might be seen from the Western perspective, as an "antithesis to the modern understanding of the world,"[21] the "still not's" and the "not yet's" sprinkled throughout the analysis stand as witness to Habermas's conviction that, in terms of rationality structures, mythical thought is less developed than, but not essentially different from, modern.[22]

20. Ibid., 50–51.

21. Ibid., 44.

22. Martin Hollis and Robin Horton, aware of similar problems, have insisted that translation of alien beliefs and practices into terms intelligible to us cannot take place in the absence of a bridgehead understood as a core of shared beliefs and common patterns of inference. These assumptions are viewed as a priori presuppositions by Hollis, while for Horton they constitute an empirical hypothesis. See Martin Hollis, "The Social Destruction of Reality," in Hollis and Lukes, *Rationality and Relativism,* 67–86, and Robin Horton, "Tradition and Modernity Revisited," also in Hollis and Lukes, 210–60.

We might interpret such statements in a weak sense and view them as involving the claim that there is a developmental possibility in worldviews for a change from the mythical to the modern; however, Habermas is doing more than pointing to one of possibly several paths of development. His view that "the decentration of world understanding and the rationalization of the lifeworld are necessary conditions for an emancipated society"[23] is specifically linked to his thesis of the three rationality spheres, and it is hard to see how we could get a "justified claim to universality" for those three spheres, unless it could be shown that precisely those three spheres are immanent in speech and subject to a developmental logic. Here we see the significance of the diachronic dimension of his project of rational reconstruction, since his argument against Winch directs attention to the "theoretical task of discovering patterns of development of rationality structures."[24] That task does not deny that worldviews are "cultural interpretive systems . . . that reflect the background knowledge of social groups and guarantee an interconnection among the multiplicity of their action orientations,"[25] but it does require that worldviews be assessed over the whole range of formal-pragmatic basic concepts historically traceable to modernity.

Habermas readily admits the relation between his concept of communicative rationality and the understanding of the world that comes into existence in modernity. In fact, he openly declares that a worldview's formal properties are distinguished for the first time with the modern understanding of the world, and he virtually invites the suspicion that his concept of rationality, even though expanded, might be Eurocentric. It is also with some enthusiasm that he takes on the role of defender of modernity, and he fully and openly acknowledges that a defense of modernity's universalist values is an integral part of his theory. I contend that the obligation to defend the universal validity of his concept of communicative rationality is built into his theory of communicative action and that given the structure of his argument, he is not easily able to do otherwise. Having developed a concept of rationality that he views as traceable to the modern understanding of the world, and having identified the claim to universality as intrinsic to that understanding, his attention turns to what is involved in the claim to universality. The funda-

23. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:74.
24. Ibid., 135.
25. Ibid., 43.

mental problem for his theory becomes how to satisfy the claim to universality of the understanding of the world that comes into existence in modernity.

A collection of essays published by Habermas in 1983 gives evidence of his continuing preoccupation with the problem of objectivity and the need to satisfy the claim to universality. If it is true that the interpreter's data are obtained through a participation that involves him in an intersubjective relation with those whose expressions he is supposed to be explicating, we have to abandon conceptions of objectivity based on the notion of an impartial observer. But if some such idea is presupposed in social science interpretive practice, and if, as Habermas argues, the claim to objectivity is a methodological prerequisite of interpretation, it is doubtful that we can simply give up the idea of objectivity. Habermas's thinking is bold and creative in this regard, and he holds that the interpreter's "inevitable" involvement in the communicative processes under observation can actually provide for a new understanding of the objectivity of knowledge. He acknowledges that the interpreter's "participant role" threatens "the very context independence and value neutrality that seem necessary to the *objectivity* of theoretical knowledge"; however, he maintains that while the interpreter is denied the "privileged status" of third person, for that very reason she is placed in a position of "negotiated impartiality from within."[26]

According to Habermas, the "objectivity" issue cannot be resolved from the outside, but if it is to be resolved, a resolution must be found from within the context of the interpreter's participation. Here, as elsewhere, he maintains that interpreters must proceed on the assumption of an "immanent rationality" shared by them and the persons whose meanings are being explicated and that this assumption involves the expectation that competent speakers have (at least implicit) reasons to offer in defense of their utterances. Again, he argues that the interpreter will not even be able to understand reasons as reasons unless she is able to take a positive or negative position on them. But he also explicitly links the interpreter's evaluation of (actual or presumed) reasons to her usually implicit, but virtually inescapable appeal to "presumably universal standards of rationality." He is also determined not to allow his analy-

26. Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 28–29. (This book comprises his 1983 work, *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln*, and a later essay.)

sis of the interpreter's participation to be viewed as simply an account of the explanatory power of interpretation because, as he sees it, we still have to find a way to address the question of the rationality that is preunderstood in interpretive practice. Even if the appeal to universal standards of rationality is inescapable, he argues, "this by no means proves that those standards are truly rational."[27]

In the same (1983) volume of essays we also have Habermas's first important statement of his discourse ethics.[28] That work directs philosophical attention to the political-ethical question of universality, and one might be tempted to think that he has turned away from a sociologically based theory of communicative action, which gets stuck on the question of universality and looks to philosophical analysis to help find a way out of the universality problem. That view is flatly rejected by Habermas; he maintains that his discourse ethics "simply takes up again" problems that he had already discussed in his 1973 *Legitimation Crisis* and which had "remained in the background" in his theory of communicative action. He further claims that his program of research has "remained the *same* since about 1970, since the reflections on formal pragmatics and the discourse theory of truth first presented in the Christian Gauss lectures."[29] Even if one is skeptical—as one should be—about an author's perspective on his own work, that perspective should not be discounted, and in the present case Habermas's remarks are a useful reminder that his discourse ethics is profoundly dependent on his linguistic-pragmatic concept of communicative rationality.[30] While a full examination of the discourse ethics is beyond the scope of my analysis, I would like to examine the basic idea of that work and to discuss its relation to the theory of communicative action.[31] As I argue, Habermas's examination of

27. Ibid., 30–31.

28. See Habermas, *Moral Consciousness.* See also Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics,* trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), which contains later essays. Cf. Klaus Günther, *The Sense of Appropriateness: Application Discourses in Morality and Law,* trans. John Farrell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

29. Habermas, *Justification and Application,* 148–49.

30. Ibid., 148, maintains that his linguistic-pragmatic concept of communicative action was of "primary importance for the philosophical foundations" of the theory of communicative action.

31. For a recent account of Habermas's discourse ethics, see William Rehg, *Insight and Solidarity: A Study in the Discourse Ethics of Jürgen Habermas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994). Cf. Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment: An Inquiry into the Preconditions of Moral Performance* (Univer-

universality in the discourse ethics is a systematic investigation of the moral-practical rationality sphere, but it leaves intact the question, raised in the theory of communicative action, of how to satisfy the claim to universality that comes into existence in the modern understanding of the world.

In 1983 Habermas provided the following principle of discourse ethics: "(D) Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity *as participants in a practical discourse.*"[32] From the beginning, readers were somewhat uncertain how to interpret his aim of "recasting moral theory in the form of an analysis of moral argumentation,"[33] and in response to this and other difficulties arising out of a need for clarification, Habermas now (since 1992) understands the principle of discourse (D) as "the point of view from which norms of action can be *impartially justified.*"[34] Notwithstanding this change, his recent work reaffirms his earlier position that if we are to succeed in developing a moral theory, we need to be able to identify a "special" type of validity claim and we need to be able to identify that claim within the "horizon of the lifeworld."[35] Moreover, discourse ethics still "stands or falls," as he said in 1983, with two assumptions: (1) that "normative claims to validity have cognitive meaning and can be treated *like* claims to truth," and (2) that "the justification of norms and commands requires that a real discourse be carried out and thus cannot occur in a strictly monological form."[36]

Habermas introduces the principle of universalization (U) in reference to the first assumption of discourse ethics, that normative claims

---

sity Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). See also Alessandro Ferrara, "A Critique of Habermas' *Diskursethik*," *Telos* 64 (1985): 45–74; Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); and David M. Rasmussen, ed., *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).

32. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 66.

33. Ibid., 57. Some have suggested that his discourse ethics is more appropriately read as a theory of political legitimacy than as a theory of moral validity.

34. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy,* trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 108–9. According to Habermas, we need to distinguish moral validity from legal validity, in order to avoid the liberal tendency toward a legalism in which moral validity is subordinated to legal validity and democratic practice is reduced to the specification of decision-making procedures.

35. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 57–58.

36. Ibid., 68.

have a cognitive basis. (U) is formulated as follows: "*All* affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its *general* observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of *everyone's* interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation)." Drawing on claims he makes about rational argumentation in his formal pragmatics and theory of communicative action,[37] he suggests that we understand (U) as a "bridging principle" for practical discourses (dealing with rightness) and as analogous to the principle of induction for theoretical discourses (dealing with truth). According to Habermas, (U) would be the principle that makes agreement possible in practical discourses, just as the principle of induction makes agreement possible in theoretical discourses. As for his second assumption, regarding the requirement of "real discourses," we should not be side-tracked into thinking that Habermas's argument rests on a conviction about the social necessity of such discourses. He does say that no individual—moral theorist or anyone else—can provide norms with the necessary motivating power for coordinating action: "What is needed is a 'real' process of argumentation in which the individuals concerned cooperate" and through which they gain the knowledge "that they have collectively become convinced of something." However, this "becoming convinced of something" is cognitively based: in the absence of any authority outside the participants themselves, the validity of a proposed norm is inextricably tied to the uncoerced assent of all those possibly affected in a practical discourse, in which the cognitive basis of moral choices is ensured by the principle of universalization.[38]

Some readers of Habermas might want to put the emphasis on the second assumption of discourse ethics, the idea that "real discourses" are required for valid moral judgments. However, there is little doubt that Habermas himself understands the two assumptions of discourse ethics (the cognitive basis of moral choices and the requirement of "real discourses") as internally connected: the idea of "real discourses" includes the ability of individuals to make moral choices in a rational manner. This view puts the weight on the first assumption of discourse ethics, the

37. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 62 and 111 n. 33, refers to his theory of argumentation, as outlined in his "Wahrheitstheorien," in Helmut Fahrenbach, ed., *Wirklichkeit und Reflexion. Walter Schulz zum 60. Geburtstag* (Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1973), 211–65, and in his *TCA.*

38. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 62 ff.

idea that moral choices have a cognitive basis. It also helps explain the content of his moral theory.

Habermas's reasoning is as follows. If moral choices have a cognitive basis, and if (U) is the principle that makes agreement possible in discourses dealing with moral questions, the "fundamental question" of moral theory becomes: "How can we justify the principle of universalization itself, which alone enables us to reach agreement through argumentation on practical questions?" (44). To address this question he continues to draw on his theory of argumentation, but his immediate point of departure is a transcendental-pragmatic argument developed by Karl-Otto Apel, a key element of which is the idea of performative contradiction. In Chapter 1 I referred to Habermas's use of this strategy against postmodernist critics of reason. Here the idea of performative contradiction is employed somewhat differently. Apel's transcendental-pragmatic argument, as Habermas explains, is intended to reach even the ethical skeptic who consistently denies the possibility of grounding moral principles, but the basic aim is to establish a reference point for discourse ethics that is comparable in function to the "I think" of the philosophy of reflection. An important first step in the achievement of this reference point is to show that the skeptic makes assumptions that are inevitable in any argumentation, that these assumptions have an ethical basis, and that the skeptic is mistaken to believe that "metaethical treatment" of moral questions is a way of avoiding moral argumentation. For Habermas, as for Apel, "any subject capable of speech and action necessarily makes substantive normative presuppositions as soon as the subject engages in any discourse with the intention of critically examining a hypothetical claim to validity." In "argumentation as such," Habermas writes, Apel reaches a reference point that is as fundamental for discourse ethics as the "I think" or "consciousness as such" for the philosophy of reflection; the theorist of argumentation works from the self-referentiality of his arguments, just as the epistemologist works from the self-referentiality of her knowledge. However, achieving an awareness of one's arguments is viewed as a significant advance because it becomes possible to give up "futile attempts at a deductive grounding of 'ultimate' principles" and to turn to the "explication of 'unavoidable' (i.e., universal and necessary) presuppositions" (80 ff.).

From this transcendental-pragmatic point of departure, Habermas argues that (U) follows by "material implication" from two premises: (1)

that every person who enters a process of argumentation must make certain normative presuppositions (contained in the pragmatic rules of discourse), and (2) that "we understand what it means to discuss hypothetically whether norms of action ought to be adopted" (92, 97, also 86). The first premise involves the specification of normative presuppositions. Concerning the second premise, Habermas has been quite sketchy, but I take him to be referring to the intuition, which he associates with the modern understanding of the world, that it is possible to discuss norms of action impartially. The principle of universalization thus results from a combination of the two premises: the identification of the normative presuppositions of argument (first premise) provides a more detailed account of our (intuitive) knowledge of "what it means to discuss hypothetically whether norms of action ought to be adopted" (second premise). While I support Benhabib's argument that the rules of rational discourse involve substantial content, I draw different conclusions and reject her view that the second premise can be read as "simply equivalent to some version of U."[39] I differ also from William Rehg, who argues for a combination of the two premises, but sees the first as providing "the rules of rational discourse" and the second as providing "content."[40] My argument is that rules and content are contained in each premise. Before I examine Benhabib's arguments, I shall discuss in some detail Habermas's specification of the normative presuppositions of argument. The specification of these presuppositions is critical for his justification of (U), which he conceives as a rule of argumentation and as a core part of the logic of practical discourses.

Argumentation involves several sorts of rules, not all of which are normative, so that if Habermas is to be able to identify (U) as a rule of argumentation, he has to be able to say precisely which rules can be viewed as normative. Following suggestions by Robert Alexy, he refers to (1) logical and semantic rules, (2) procedural rules, and (3) the normative rules defining the process of argumentation. He suggests that logical and semantic rules have no ethical import and, for purposes of analysis, can be put to one side. Procedural rules include pragmatic presuppositions, such as the recognition of the accountability and truthfulness of all participants, as well as such requirements as providing a reason for disputing

39. Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*, 307.
40. Rehg, *Insight and Solidarity*, 58 ff.

a proposition or norm, and so on. Notwithstanding the ethical dimensions of some of these procedural rules, he maintains that the normative presuppositions of argument have to be situated at the level of process rules. He explains that argumentation, as a process of communication, aims at a "rationally motivated agreement" and is structurally committed to "improbable conditions." These aspects, which he earlier understood under the "ideal speech situation," are crucial for understanding the principle of universalization as an integral part of a mode of communication in which communicative actors must make certain normative commitments.[41]

The "ideal speech situation" is a complex formulation and has undergone a certain amount of transformation since Habermas introduced it in 1973. For example, at one time, he believed that a form of life could be envisioned from possibilities inherent in the ideal speech situation,[42] but has since declared: "No historical society coincides with the *form of life* that we anticipate in the *concept* of the ideal speech situation." He also disavows any attempt to impute to him the notion of a "rationalistic utopian society" and claims that he does not "regard the fully transparent society as an ideal, nor do I wish to suggest *any* other ideal." Nonetheless, he still insists that the "ideal speech situation has its place in the theory of truth"[43] and suggests, in retrospect, that the intention of his earlier analysis had been to reconstruct the "general symmetry conditions that every competent speaker who believes he is engaging in an argumentation must presuppose as adequately fulfilled."[44] The question becomes what precisely are the presuppositions that speakers must make about their obligations to each other when they participate in the mode of communication known as rational argumentation? To answer this question Habermas refers to the process rules listed by Alexy.

1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
2. (a) Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
   (b) Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.

41. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 86 ff.

42. Habermas, "Wahrheitstheorien," 259, writes about a "constitutive illusion that is at the same time the appearance of a form of life."

43. Habermas, "Reply to My Critics," 235.

44. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 88.

(c) Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.

3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in 1 and 2.[45]

Extrapolating from this list of normative rules attached to the process of argumentation, Habermas suggests that the first rule "defines the set of potential participants . . . [as including] all subjects without exception who have the capacity to take part in argumentation." This rule can be expressed as the right to universal access. The second rule "guarantees all participants equal opportunity to contribute to the argumentation and to put forth their own arguments." This rule can be expressed as the right to equal participation. The third "sets down conditions under which the rights to universal access and to equal participation can be enjoyed equally by all, that is, without the possibility of repression, be it ever so subtle or covert." According to Habermas, if it can be ascertained that participants in argumentation cannot avoid making these normative presuppositions, and if the principle of universalization (as he formulates it) adequately expresses what is involved in reaching agreements on hypothetical norms, then "everyone who seriously tries to *discursively* redeem normative claims to validity intuitively accepts procedural conditions that amount to implicitly acknowledging (U)." If so, he continues, the normative rules of discourse require that a valid agreement on a hypothetical norm cannot be reached by participants in a practical discourse unless (U) holds, that is, unless all those affected can reach an agreement after considering everyone's interest and after taking into account possible consequences and side effects that might follow for each individual as a result of the norm's general observance.[46]

But discourse ethics, as a reconstruction of the intuitions associated with the moral point of view cannot test the assumption, central to that point of view, as well as to discourse ethics, that "normative claims to validity have cognitive meaning and can be treated *like* claims to truth." Rather, discourse ethics proceeds as if that assumption could be warranted; it must, as it were, put that assumption on hold. According to Habermas, the transcendental-pragmatic argument supports the view that

45. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 89, is referring to Robert Alexy, "Eine Theorie des praktischen Diskurses," in W. Oelmüller, ed., *Normenbegründung, Normendurchsetzung* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1978).

46. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 89 ff.

the principle of universalization, as a rule of argumentation, is "implied" by the presuppositions of argumentation.[47] However, even assuming that the transcendental-pragmatic argument can accomplish this much, the argument remains incomplete, in that it must presuppose the validity of his formal-pragmatic theory of argumentation. If Habermas's case for discourse ethics is to be convincing, then he must be able to sustain the claims of his formal-pragmatic analysis of the validity-basis of speech, that is, he must say how the assumption of the cognitive basis of moral choices can be warranted. This question requires detailed examination, and I shall take it up in later chapters. Here I would like to refer to Benhabib's critique of Habermas's discourse ethics, which also focuses on the centrality of (U). Of relevance for my discussion here is her claim that we can reformulate discourse ethics in a way that permits us to dispense with (U) altogether.

Benhabib argues that Habermas's formal and procedural model of morality does not give sufficient attention to the cultural/historical context of the rules of argument. She explains, for example, that Habermas's rule of universal access "already presupposes a strong universalist-egalitarian commitment to consider as irrelevant from a moral standpoint all those natural and cultural characteristics among human groups which distinguish them from one another." She is not saying that this commitment is wrong—it is one she shares; rather, she is concerned that Habermas is generalizing to all times and places a way of living in the world that is historically and culturally specific to the tradition of modernity. She draws particular attention to the rule of universal access. Interpreting Habermas as saying that "*all* speakers of *any* natural language" are potential discourse participants, she maintains that this requirement only goes to show that "even the so-called 'universal' pragmatic presuppositions of human discourse have a cultural-historical content built into them."[48] In response to Benhabib, Rehg maintains that there is no need to identify "all competent speakers" with all natural language users and suggests that the universalization requirement be read weakly, so that the rule of universal access becomes a "formal one which leaves open which concrete persons, language groups, and cultures qualify as 'competent speakers.' "[49] Rehg's suggestion seems to me to be compatible

47. We do not have to accept Habermas's specific formulation of the principle of universalization, but we do have to accept some such formulation.

48. Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia,* 306.

49. Rehg, *Insight and Solidarity,* 63 ff.

with Habermas's intentions; however, it does not address the claim made by Benhabib that the rule of universal access, whether interpreted in her strong sense or, more weakly, as Rehg suggests, "reflects the commitments of a moral philosophy as practiced by individuals who are themselves members of a culture that cherishes universalism."[50] Her point is that we have to acknowledge that these premises are historically and culturally situated, and she claims that Habermas fails to do just that.

In Benhabib's view, Habermas's formal procedural model of morality is too preoccupied with consequences—with what is needed to guarantee consensus. Whereas his discourse principle (D) opens up the possibility of understanding moral reflection in processual terms, that is, as an "ongoing moral conversation," he focuses not on the process, but on the result, and he introduces (U) to try to pin down what would count as a valid consensus.[51] Once again in response to Benhabib, Rehg suggests that Habermas's specification of side effects and consequences is simply his way of taking seriously Hegel's critique of Kant that "norms always function in empirical contexts involving more than is explicitly defined by the norm's content."[52]

One can also argue that Habermas's concern with consequences and side effects arises out of his understanding of the structure of rightness claims. While he views the principle of universalization as a "bridging principle" for practical discourses (dealing with rightness) and as analogous to the principle of induction for theoretical discourses (dealing with truth), rightness claims have a different structure from that of truth claims. It is this difference in structure that makes the two principles analogous in function (rather than identical). Because rightness claims do not refer to facts, but to norms of social interaction, an agreement on norms, unlike an agreement on facts, carries with it, as an integral part of the agreement, consequences and side effects for all those possibly affected. Thus, an agreement on norms, to be considered valid, must include a consideration of possible consequences and side effects for each and every person who is, or might be, affected. But this response, like the one Rehg provides, falls short of meeting Benhabib's concerns. These are worth noting because, even though her criticism of Habermas

50. Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia,* 306.

51. Benhabib, "In the Shadow of Aristotle and Hegel," in *Situating the Self,* 37–38, and her *Critique, Norm, and Utopia,* 303–4.

52. Rehg, *Insight and Solidarity,* 61.

is misplaced, many of the questions she raises about the limitations of Habermas's moral theory still need to be addressed.

Benhabib's attempt to reconceptualize discourse ethics aims at establishing a process-oriented moral theory that can accommodate an enlarged definition of the moral domain. She is particularly concerned to avoid the sharp distinction that Habermas makes between moral questions and evaluative questions. To anticipate my discussion in a later chapter, he maintains that evaluative questions, such as gender and other "good life" issues, can claim a "social" validity, but are not "strictly" normative because they are intrinsically bound up with lifeworld identities and not necessarily relevant beyond the particular historical context in which they arise. He claims that it is only with regard to moral questions involving "justice" that individuals can be sufficiently disentangled from lifeworld identities to take on the hypothetical attitude necessary for making decisions that are (in principle) relevant beyond a particular historical/cultural context.[53] As Benhabib suggests, (U) sets up an unbridgeable gulf between moral questions and evaluative questions, justice and the good, and the moral domain is so defined that evaluative questions, including those related to gender, cannot be conceived as strictly moral.

If there are grounds for believing, as Benhabib and other feminists do, that this distinction between justice and the good life is unnecessarily restrictive, one conceivable response to the difficulty (of achieving moral status for gender and other "evaluative" questions) is to eliminate (U). At least that is the direction Benhabib takes. Arguing that (U) "adds little but consequentialist confusion" to (D),[54] she advances a "historically self-conscious universalism" and suggests a "weak justification program" consisting of a "family of arguments and considerations." The universalizability test is retained, however; Benhabib maintains that all we need for that test is (D) (under the 1983 formulation),[55] along with the "rules of argument governing discourses."[56]

53. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 107–9.

54. Benhabib, "In the Shadow of Aristotle and Hegel," 37.

55. Habermas's more recent formulation of (D) appeared in 1992, after Benhabib had developed her criticisms of his discourse ethics. If she retains the 1983 formulation, she must say why the demarcation problem between legal validity and moral validity does not arise, or does not arise for her, or if it does, how she deals with it.

56. Benhabib, "In the Shadow of Aristotle and Hegel," 29 ff. She explains that the principles of universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity are obtained through a Rawlsian process of "reflective equilibrium" that is, a process in which "one, as a philosopher,

To feminists and other theorists who find the division into justice and the good life too confining and who argue that justice has to be reconceptualized to include substantive questions,[57] Habermas responds that "justice is not a 'value' like health or wealth, but a validity claim like truth."[58] Given my discussion (in later chapters) of Habermas's treatment of gender, this response is far from adequate; however, I am not convinced that Benhabib's "historically self-conscious universalism" is the answer because, while her attention to process over result is not without attraction, in the end her proposal raises troubling questions. No longer seeking simply to reconstruct the logic of practical discourses, she does not stop at an explication of the process of moral deliberation, but shifts the emphasis of discourse ethics to the problem of what would be needed to sustain "those normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement *as a way of life* can flourish and continue."[59] Discourse ethics, so defined, must presuppose the value of this "way of life" and privilege a "secular, universalist, reflexive culture" that promotes discussion and debate about values, justice, and the good. Benhabib claims that this "comprehensive reflexivity" is a "singular cognitive virtue" of postconventional morality (based on principled and reasoned argumentation) and establishes the superiority of this type of morality over systems of conventional morality (based on the authority of cultural and religious beliefs). She explains that, in the "ongoing moral conversation," the conventional moralist, who is only able to offer reasons based on some set of beliefs, is at a de-

---

analyzes, refines and judges culturally defined moral intuitions in light of articulated philosophical principles." Cf. her "Liberal Dialogue versus a Critical Theory of Discursive Legitimation," in Nancy L. Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 149 ff. Elsewhere, in her "Concrete Other," 416, Benhabib offers a version of discourse ethics in which the object domain of moral theory is "so enlarged that not only rights but needs, not only justice but possible modes of the good life, are moved into an anticipatory-utopian perspective."

57. For one such attempt to rethink the meaning of justice, see esp. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* For recent feminist attempts to renegotiate the division between justice and the good life, see the following essays in Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas:* Seyla Benhabib, "The Debate over Women and Moral Theory Revisited," 181–203; Jodi Dean, "Discourse in Different Voices," 205–29; and Johanna Meehan, "Autonomy, Recognition, and Respect: Habermas, Benjamin, and Honneth," 231–46. Cf. Martin J. Matuštík, *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York: Guildford Press, 1993), who proposes to make discourse ethics more attentive to the particular and the concrete.

58. See Habermas, "Remarks on the Discussion," 129.

59. Benhabib, "In the Shadow of Aristotle and Hegel," 38.

cided disadvantage because the kinds of reasons she is able to offer "will not be sufficiently universalizable from the standpoint of all involved." The conventional moralist, faced with a situation that demands an ever-escalating amount of reflexivity, either has to "stop the conversation and . . . withdraw from the process . . . in order not to let their world-view crumble" or be willing to admit that her belief system is not the last word on the morality of a practice. In the latter case she is no longer a conventional moralist, rather she has joined a system of postconventional morality and can admit that there is a "step beyond conventional morality, maybe some common ideal of humanity, from which [her] moral precepts draw their binding force."[60]

If, as Benhabib says, conventional moralists must, at some point, withdraw from the conversation, and if those who continue are no longer what they were, the condition for inclusion into the ongoing moral conversation would have to be the transformation of the others into postconventional moralists. However, we would still have to be able to say how this transformation can be justified.

But aside from my concerns about Benhabib's proposal for a revised discourse ethics, I am also not convinced by her basic criticism of Habermas, namely, that he cannot get the "formal procedural" model he wants because (U) also contains substantial content derived from the pragmatic rules of discourse. She concludes from this that his formal proceduralism has to be rejected and that discourse ethics needs to be reformulated, in order to place more emphasis on process and to allow for the inclusion of substantive elements. While I agree with Benhabib that (U) contains considerable content, I do not accept her argument that (U) is either redundant, because it adds nothing to (D) that is not contained in the rules of argument, or inconsistent, because it admits content into a formal procedural model of morality. My response is that (U) is not redundant because (as already discussed) (U) expresses the connection between the normative presuppositions of argument and the intuitive knowledge of what it means to justify a norm of action. Without (U) we are left with a vaguely defined moral intuition on the one hand, and a set of formally pragmatically derived presuppositions of argument on the other: (U) allows us to join the two premises and to understand the latter as a specification of the former. Moreover, this read-

60. Ibid., 42–43. She sees no difficulty in saying that "communicative ethics 'trumps' other less reflexive 'moral points of view.' "

ing of (U), which understands the rules of argument as having content, does not require that we see (U) as inconsistent. Benhabib can only hold that (U) is inconsistent because she believes that (U) precludes the acknowledgment that the rules of rational discourse have content. I have argued that this is simply not the case.

It is true that Habermas is deeply committed to the universalistic and egalitarian ideals of modernity, but I do not see him as having smuggled such ideals into his theory or as being in any way unaware of the crucial role they play in his theory. On the contrary, his discourse ethics acknowledges that the moral point of view is traceable to modernity, and he sees it as the responsibility of the moral theorist not only to explicate the moral point of view but also to confront seriously the question of what kind of justification would be required to support that point of view. For example, he writes that we cannot rule out the possibility that the moral point of view might be no more than the "expression of the particular moral ideas of our Western culture." He also cautions that, given the anthropological data, there are "grounds for suspecting that the claims to universality raised by ethical cognitivists on behalf of the moral principle they happen to favor is based on an ethnocentric fallacy."[61]

The problem with the principle of universalization is neither simply its content (rights of universal access and equal participation), nor simply its formality (expressed in terms of its inability to deliver substantive principles), but rather its selectivity. How is it that some values, those related to "good life" issues, get classified as "particular values [that] are ultimately discarded as being not susceptible to consensus?"[62] This selectivity operates as an integral part of the procedure of practical discourse and the universalizability test, so that the principle of universalization inherently favors a certain kind of result. The difficulty does not result from a failure to acknowledge the content of discourse ethics and cannot be resolved by channeling more content into discourse ethics. Rather we need to look more closely at Habermas's justification for (U). That justification, as discussed above, is incomplete in that it must presuppose the validity of his formal-pragmatic theory of argumentation. I

61. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 78–79. He also writes: "I am not dramatizing the situation when I say that faced with the demand for a justification of the universal validity of the principle of universalization, cognitivists are in trouble."

62. Ibid., 103.

agree with Rehg that the "derivation of (U) . . . moves within the theory of argumentation and cannot do any better than assume such a commitment."[63] But Rehg is only putting off the question when he suggests that Habermas's claims about rationality, the lifeworld, and moral learning processes have to be grounded "outside" the theory of argumentation, in the theory of communicative action.

Habermas's discourse ethics redirects the universality question, but like the theory of communicative action, is dependent on his formal-pragmatic analysis of the validity-basis of speech. I critically examine that analysis in Part 3 of this book. In the meantime, in Part 2, I want to give detailed and explicit attention to the particularity of gender and to show how that particularity gets expressed in Habermas's theory.

63. Rehg, *Insight and Solidarity,* 67.

PART TWO

GENDER

FOUR

THE PROBLEM OF GENDER

Feminists have argued that the historical formation of the European state system was accompanied by images of nurturing mothers and male protectors, and that these images sustained a complex system of social roles and gender identities. They have also maintained that in one form or another and in complex ways, the gendered roles and identities of modernity continue to shape contemporary social and political practices. That is to say, gender-based assumptions, expectations, and social obligations still mediate the experiences of everyday life, whether at home, in public, or at place of work. Gendered roles and identities can seriously undermine attempts to achieve equality and can give rise to undesirable effects that are difficult to address through legal means. One might refer to spousal abuse and workplace discrimination, but also to the more generalized problem of social inequality, as evidenced by the asymmetrical representation of women and men in public office. The strong suspicion that the persistence of gendered roles and identities will continue to undermine attempts to achieve full equality for women suggests to feminists the urgent need to have the problem of gender put on the philosophical and theoretical agenda. If, as is hard to deny, gender identities structure public and private spheres, it is important to understand the nature of that structuring and to have it articulated as a question for social and political theory. Habermas does not address these issues, but his theory of communicative action[1] speaks to feminist concerns in at least one crucial respect: he suggests that there are complex institutional and

1. Habermas, *TCA*.

cultural linkages between public and private spheres that need to be investigated.[2]

While initially promising, Habermas's theory is bound to be disappointing to feminists.[3] The problem is more than his general lack of attention to matters of gender. More important, his system/lifeworld distinction, which suggests the complex interrelationship between public and private, also leads him to various views that appear to be fundamentally at odds with feminist attempts to reconceptualize modern social and political theory. In this chapter I discuss his thesis of the internal colonization of the lifeworld. That thesis, which is designed to show the debilitating effects of extensive juridification in welfare state democracies, can also be regarded as systematically undermining the feminist case for the use of legal-bureaucratic measures to achieve "basic rights" for women and children. Even if Habermas is right about the negative consequences of the juridification of the lifeworld, and even if feminists are sometimes mistaken in their enthusiasm for legal-bureaucratic remedies to effect social justice, the "basic rights" question still needs to be addressed, and the fact that Habermas leaves that question unaddressed has to be noted and considered. Why does a theory that aims at inclusiveness and equality not give immediate and urgent attention to the need to secure gender equality?

In the first part of this chapter I discuss Habermas's distinction between lifeworld and system and explain how that distinction is connected to his analysis of the democratic welfare state. I also argue that the question of gender, though treated by Habermas as a side issue, becomes—unexpectedly and inadvertently—a central concern of his analysis. Having determined why Habermas's colonization thesis presents us with a difficulty that is not easily resolved within his theory, I argue that the difficulty persists, despite the support he expresses for feminist projects in his recent book on law. In the final section of the chapter I draw on Nancy Fraser's feminist critique of Habermas and on a response to Fraser by Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato,[4] in order to identify three pos-

2. See, for example, Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique,* 5, who view Habermas's theory of modernity as one from which feminists "have much to learn in analyzing the institutional splits and dichotomies between the public and private spheres."

3. See Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" and Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory," in Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique,* 57–76. Benhabib, in "Concrete Other," is somewhat more optimistic.

4. Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society,* 532 ff.

sible types of gender-based challenges to his theory. While agreeing with much of what Fraser has to say, and despite my own criticisms of Habermas, I do not accept her interpretation of the system/lifeworld distinction as inherently androcentric and ideological, and I argue that we have to look more closely at his concept of the lifeworld.

Habermas's concept of the lifeworld is meant to focus attention on the communicative processes through which experiences are symbolically organized and exchanged. The defining characteristic of communicative actions is their mode of coordination: they are open-ended, informally organized, and oriented to mutual understanding. By contrast, his concept of system signifies the functional integration of actions (or action consequences) according to principles of regulation that are inaccessible to speaking and acting individuals. This type of integration is characteristic of the modern economy and state administrative system, which while ultimately tied to the normative consensus generated in the lifeworld, in their routine operation are "steered" by media that have been rendered ethically "neutral"—money in the case of the economy and (organizational) power in the case of the administrative system. According to Habermas, the economy and state administration are subsystems of purposive-rational activity whose internal regulation is basically resistant to communicative processes oriented to reaching understanding. Thus while economic and administrative actions always include assumptions about system goals—for example, productivity or the efficient implementation of (given) social programs—one has to step outside the subsystems of economy and state administration to challenge the goals themselves.

The distinction between lifeworld and system that Habermas develops can lead to an overly sharp differentiation between societal processes, and he has been criticized for falling into that trap himself.[5] But the aim of his dualistic theory is not to allow a dichotomous interpretation of social processes, but rather to identify and explain various kinds of societal exchanges. The focus on societal exchanges is evident in his 1973 work, *Legitimation Crisis*, where he examines the interchange between economy and state administration in both classical liberal and welfare state societies. In that work he takes account of the structural transformation of the state under conditions of advanced capitalism and

5. Cf. Honneth, *Critique of Power*.

draws attention to the state's new role in managing the economy. H basic thesis is that the new partnership of state and economy is acco panied by four different kinds of "crisis tendencies": economic crises, r tionality crises (a result of contradictory demands on the state), legi mation crises (a result of failure to meet social-cultural expectations and motivational crises (which indicate an erosion of the values neede to sustain the market-state enterprise).[6] While foreshadowing much o Habermas's later theory, his *Legitimation Crisis* is primarily concerne with the connection between two media-steered subsystems (the econ omy and the state administration). Later (1981), in his theory of com municative action he examines another kind of exchange, between sys tem and lifeworld.[7]

Habermas's 1981 discussion of the system/lifeworld exchanges poses the problem of the excessive juridification in democratic welfare states. To ascertain the nature of the problem, he reconstructs the history of the modern European state system in terms of four waves of juridification. According to Habermas, the first such wave occurred during the period of Absolutism and brought into existence the structures of the bourgeois state. This juridification wave is fundamental for modernity, in that it allows for the "uncoupling" of system and lifeworld, a process in which the economy and state assert their independence of the religious and cultural imperatives of the premodern social order and emerge as subsystems of purposive-rational activity. The second wave of juridification led to the constitutional state *(Rechtsstaat)* and creates a legal basis for "private individuals," citizens who are "given actionable civil rights against a sovereign." The third wave, associated with the democratic constitutional state *(demokratischer Rechtsstaat),* gave constitutional status to "the idea of freedom already incipient in the concept of law as developed in the natural law tradition." The most recent—and problematical—juridification wave was achieved through the workers' movement and provides for the structures of the democratic welfare state (*sozialer und demokratischer Rechtsstaat.*)[8]

The first three juridification waves provided Habermas with the basis for a developmental account of the modern lifeworld. The first wave laid

6. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975).

7. Habermas, *TCA,* 2:332 ff.

8. Ibid., 357 ff. Cf. Mathieu Deflem, ed., *Habermas, Modernity, and Law,* Special Issue of *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 20:4 (1994): 1 ff.

the foundation for a separate and distinctive lifeworld. The second advanced the independent status of the lifeworld because the life, liberty, and property of private persons, which are guaranteed by civil law, could no longer be viewed as simply arising out of economic (system) relations. Progress was similarly assured by the establishment of the democratic constitutional state in which there is a presumption that laws express a "general interest" and require the assent of all. At the core of this account of juridification is the idea that the lifeworld, once uncoupled, has its "own logic" embedded in open-ended and communicative processes and that historical progress involves the development of that logic, independent of the claims of the economic subsystem. With the development of the welfare state, however, such progress is put into question because there is now a recoupling of lifeworld and system. The welfare state, according to Habermas, cannot be viewed as simply a continuation of earlier forms of juridification that allowed for development of the lifeworld. Whereas he views earlier legal regulations as indisputable gains of the lifeworld, the democratic welfare state, which institutionalizes class conflict and relies on legal means to solve social problems, is marked by ambivalences and brings with it a distinct change in the form of juridification. The welfare state cannot lay claim to the "unambiguously freedom-guaranteeing character" of earlier developments because its policies are structured by the *"ambivalence of guaranteeing freedom and taking it away."*[9]

Habermas does not mean that earlier forms of juridification were not riddled with contradictions; a basic contradiction existed between the "socially emancipatory intent" of bourgeois civil law and the repressive effects of bourgeois law on those compelled to sell their labor power. Rather, the problem with the welfare state is that the negative effects of juridification do not appear as side effects, but issue *"from the form of juridification itself.* It is now the very means of guaranteeing freedom that endangers the freedom of the beneficiaries." The welfare state endangers freedom when it goes beyond containing class conflict and "spreads a net of client relationships over private spheres of life." With these client relationships, core areas of the lifeworld are bureaucratized and monetarized, and the lifeworld loses the considerable independence it gained at the time of the constitutionalization and democratization of the bourgeois state. The ability of the lifeworld to assert its

9. Habermas, *TCA,* 2:360–61.

"own" claims becomes severely restricted, as the state administration, in cooperation with the economy, attempts to respond to social problems associated with capitalist growth, not by allowing for open public discussion about social goals, but by "penetrating" more and more deeply into the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld. To the extent that a systems logic comes to replace a communicative logic, the lifeworld becomes "colonized."[10]

I do not contest Habermas's contention that the democratic welfare state is structured by ambivalences. I even allow that he is right to be concerned about the juridification of the lifeworld. What I want to show is the subtle but significant shift in his argument in which the question of gender becomes (inadvertently) a central part of his analysis. His intention is to address a legal-bureaucratic intervention into the lifeworld that is not necessarily gender-specific—anyone can be unemployed, sick, poor, or old. However, the examples he chooses, family and school, have an explicit gender component: the school extends the nurturing and learning functions of the family. This choice of examples is of more than passing interest because it disrupts his text and takes the analysis in a somewhat different direction than that indicated by his expressed aims. He does not merely refer (as his analysis leads one to expect) to the increasing reification and the creation of new dependencies connected with the implementation of socially necessary welfare policy, but also, and especially, to what he sees as the pathological effects of extending the process of juridification to core areas (family and school) of the lifeworld.

Habermas does not deny the democratic aims behind much juridification. In fact, he identifies the judicial enforcement of "basic rights" in family and school with the establishment of "basic legal principles: recognition of the child's fundamental rights against his parents, of the wife's against her husband, of the pupil's against the school, and of the parents', teachers', and pupils' against the public school administration." He also acknowledges that, in the case of the family, legal-bureaucratic intervention has resulted in the dismantlement of the "authoritarian position of the paterfamilias" and led to "more equal distribution of the competencies and entitlements" of family members. Similarly, the legal

10. Ibid., 361 ff. Cf. his "Remarks on the Discussion," 127, where he refers to his colonization thesis as a "sharpening" of Max Weber's "paradoxes of rationalization" as represented in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment.*

regulation of the "special power relation" between government and schools has opened up the school system to a measure of public accountability as regards the needs of children and the wishes of parents. Yet, for Habermas, these benefits in increasing democracy have come at a high cost because, on his view, family and school institutions are so organized that they cannot be subject to judicial control and legal-bureaucratic intervention without dysfunctional effects for these lifeworld institutions themselves and for society more generally.[11]

Habermas's argument against the extensive use of judicial means to deal with problems in family and school is based on two considerations: the special nature of the internal relations of family and school and the important role of family and school institutions in the maintenance of societal cohesion. He maintains that the internal relations of family and school are nonjuridical by their very nature and "must be able to function independent of legal regulation." Whereas "formally organized" areas of action (for example, the workplace) might benefit from regulation (of the conditions of work), family and school institutions are "communicatively structured" and are "functionally dependent on social integration through values, norms, and consensus formation." Only if the internal relations of family and school were already "constituted in legal form," he argues, could "the increasing density of legal norms . . . lead to a redistribution of money and power without altering the basis of social relations." Here he begins to consider the importance of family and school in the production of societal cohesion. According to Habermas, legal-bureaucratic intervention into family and school strikes at and erodes the communicative practices that develop through socialization in the family and teaching in the school. His view is that communicative practices are constitutive of the lifeworld and play a crucial role in maintaining and renewing the cultural, social, and individual competences necessary for the reproduction of the larger social system, so that any erosion of these practices can severely weaken the basis of societal cohesion and lead to dysfunctional effects, not only for the lifeworld areas of family and school, but for society more generally. Juridification should extend only to the "enforcement of principles of the rule of law . . . the legal institutionalization of the *external* constitution of . . . the family or the school."[12]

11. Habermas, *TCA*, 2:368–69.
12. Ibid., 369–73. In 1981, and in the context of the controversy over school policy in

I shall forgo the opportunity at this point to discuss what Habermas means by societal cohesion and socialization processes and the precise role of the family in the reproduction of the social system. That discussion requires more detailed examination of his theory and will be taken up in later chapters. Here I want to restrict myself to the more general features of his colonization thesis. Even if Habermas is right about the debilitating effects of extensive juridification in family and school, his thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld by a systems rationality contains no further advice on how to deal with the issue of basic rights for women and children that has been a primary motivation (among feminists and lawmakers generally) for extending the process of juridification to the family. Many of the lifeworld problems he mentions—those relating to "the core areas of family law (governing marriage, support, matrimonial property, divorce, parental care, guardianship)"[13]—are not really addressed by referring, as he does, to the complexities of life brought about through the advancement of the capitalist economy. Once we "add on" the gender question, it is hard to see how we could even begin to "decolonize" the lifeworld without sustained attention to the fact that the lifeworld core is gender-structured and legally secured.

Since 1981 Habermas has extended and modified his account of juridification. For example, he has reconsidered his distinction between "law as a medium" and "law as an institution." In 1981 he said that the former is functional and administrative in nature and does not require "substantive justification," whereas legal institutions are "embedded in a broader political, cultural, and social context; they stand in a continuum with moral norms."[14] To view law as a medium, on the model of the economy or the state administration, one would have to identify for law a constitutive principle that is analogous to money for the economy and power for the state administration. Habermas has since concluded that it is not possible to identify such a principle,[15] and he no longer maintains the distinction between law as a medium and law as an institution. In 1990 he acknowledges that, in principle, "every legal norm can also be problematized under moral viewpoints." Nonetheless, he still allows for

---

the Federal Republic of Germany, Habermas thought that there would be greater resistance to dejudicializing and debureaucratizing the public school system than the family.

13. Ibid., 368.

14. Ibid., 366–67.

15. Jürgen Habermas, "Law and Morality," *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 8 (1988): 255, makes this point with reference to Niklas Luhmann's systems view of law.

his colonization thesis, and he does this by drawing a distinction between primary and secondary legal norms. Primary norms relate to the identity of persons and are "relevant for the constitution of legal subjectivity," whereas secondary legal norms "merely delineate the range of options for already constituted legal subjects." In terms of Habermas's views on juridification, it is the secondary legal norms that are the cause of concern. He explains that secondary legal norms have negative effects "when they intrude not just institutionally but also normatively (in the sense of bureaucratization and monetarization) into realms of life which are structured communicatively, and thus relevant to the identity of persons."[16]

Habermas has refined his views on the law and legal institutions, but the basic features of his colonization thesis remain intact. That thesis shows a latent traditionalism on gender issues, even though he is personally committed to gender equality. Habermas's ambivalence on gender finds its way into remarks he makes on the feminist movement, both in his theory of communicative action and in his more recent book on law. These remarks confirm and deepen the problem of gender in his theory.

In his theory of communicative action Habermas suggests that the women's movement "stands in the tradition of bourgeois-socialist liberation movements" and is a "struggle against patriarchal oppression and for the redemption of a promise that has long been anchored in the acknowledged universalistic foundations of morality and law." He also suggests that "the emancipation of women means not only establishing formal equality and eliminating male privilege, but overturning concrete forms of life marked by male monopolies." Nonetheless, he refers to feminism as a new social movement and insists that "an element of particularism" connects feminism with contemporary concerns about nuclear power, the environment, tax issues, and so on.[17] Feminists are understandably inclined to react negatively to the idea that the struggle against male dominance can be lumped together with tax revolts. Fraser insists that the substantive content of feminism, understood in terms of new identities and social meanings, cannot be regarded as "particularistic lapses from universalism," as Habermas seems to think. The new identities and meanings will be different, she admits, but in no way will they be "par-

16. Habermas, "Remarks on the Discussion," 130. For analyses of Habermas's views on law, see the essays in Deflem, *Habermas, Modernity, and Law.*

17. Habermas, *TCA,* 2:393.

ticularistic in any pejorative sense."[18] Cohen and Arato similarly object to what they see as a pejorative tone in Habermas's use of "particularist" to refer to the women's movement. Like Fraser, they also think that women's inclusion in the spheres of work and politics involves a fundamental challenge to "the male standards behind the allegedly neutral structures of these domains."[19]

Habermas's references to feminism in his (1992) book on law,[20] are addressed to liberals. In the passage in question, he discusses the concerns expressed by liberals that feminist initiatives for public discussion of "private" matters inevitably lead to excessive demands for self-disclosure, demands that would deny legal protection to the private sphere and place the personal integrity of individuals potentially in danger. These liberal concerns have been presented in reaction to feminist proposals, by Benhabib and Fraser, for example, to introduce into the public sphere a range of matters pertaining to the family and intimate relations that liberal theory views as "private." While Habermas's discussion of liberal concerns about privacy places him on the side of feminist attempts to bring "private" matters into public discussion, what is at issue for him is the integrity of his discursive model of the public sphere on which feminists have drawn in their attempt to remodel the public sphere.

In Habermas's view, if we want to assess liberal claims about the potential in the discursive model of the public sphere for an unwarranted encroachment on privacy rights, we have to consider two separate issues: (1) the public discussion of ethically relevant questions of the good life, collective identity, and needs, and (2) possible legislative decisions involving legal-bureaucratic regulation of everyday life that might ensue from any such discussion. He argues that it is a mistake to see the public discussion of "private" matters as in itself an interference with privacy and individual rights. Public discussion—that is, discussion connected with the legislature or the general public—might well include aspects of existing "private and public powers and responsibilities" and even extend to the question of the boundaries of public and private. In a discursive model of the public sphere, such as the one he advocates, there can be no restriction on what can be placed on the public agenda.

18. Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" 54.
19. Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society,* 548–49.
20. Habermas, *Facts and Norms.*

However, he contends that this aspect of the model is not a problem at all and that liberals see it as a problem because of their tendency to conflate public discussion of "private" matters with an interference into privacy rights. He explains that only the regulation of a new criminal matter, concerning spousal abuse, for example, or the implementation of a legislative decision on a matter such as childcare facilities, would count as public intervention into "private" life. These actions would count as public intervention into "private" life because, in each case, there would have to be changes in existing practices and responsibilities.[21]

Habermas's view is supportive of feminist initiatives in the public sphere, in that it promotes unconstrained discussion of "private" matters; however, he has not abandoned his earlier perspective on juridification, and he is far from advocating regulation as a solution to problems in everyday life. He maintains that the most suitable arena for the "struggle over needs" is not parliament, but the "general public sphere," and he observes that a lengthy process is generally needed before matters such as the question of spousal abuse or the demands of working parents for state-sponsored childcare facilities are even recognized as political themes. He explains to his liberal critics that much work has to be done by (feminist) advocates of change before such matters get the attention of the general public; in particular, the needs of all those affected have to be articulated amid the controversies arising out of "competing interpretations of self and world" and various "visions of the good life." This "struggle for recognition" has to be settled at the level of the general public before the interests that are being contested are clarified and "taken up by the responsible political authorities, put on the parliamentary agenda, discussed, and if need be, worked into legislative proposals and binding decisions."[22]

The idea of a colonization of the lifeworld, as presented by Habermas in 1981, allowed for a limited number of options for dealing with problems associated with the increasing juridification of everyday life; the logical solution seemed to be a reversal of the process, or decolonization. Even if we interpret this solution to mean that, in practice, we might expect no more than a halt to the process or perhaps only assurances against excessive juridification (this seems to be Habermas's current view), the fact remains that the idea of decolonization also serves to

21. Ibid., 312–14.
22. Ibid., 314.

reduce the normative currency of a strategy of legal-bureaucratic intervention into family life for purposes of establishing basic rights for women and children. Habermas has not retreated from his colonization thesis, and while he now offers a more measured response than he did in 1981, nothing he said in 1992 indicated a fundamentally different view of the colonization problem. It is true that gender issues, along with the idea of public and private, are now more fluid; he suggests, for example, that the division of public and private powers and responsibilities depends on historical circumstances and socially determined perceptions. Nonetheless, issues arising out of gender differences are conceived as political struggles over how to divide up existing responsibilities and powers, not about those competences and responsibilities themselves, and also not about the possible implications of gender issues for a theory of rationality. Moreover, in the 1992 passage to which I have referred, Habermas's objective is to convince liberals that his discourse model of the public sphere can accommodate gender issues without disrupting social and political institutions based on the idea of public and private.

In another passage from his 1992 book on law, Habermas urges feminists not to give up on the system of rights, but to come forward in the public sphere to say which gender differences are relevant for "an equal opportunity to take advantage of individual liberties." Here Habermas shows much sympathy for the feminist concern not to allow gender-based differences to be viewed, as in the liberal model of rights, as deviations from a male standard. His solution is to secure the public autonomy of women, in order to ensure that, as "the affected parties" in any discussion of gender roles and responsibilities, women have effective opportunity to participate in public discourses and to clarify their concerns.[23] These remarks indicate Habermas's solidarity with feminist claims for inclusion and equal status, but they are too general to be of much help in addressing the complexity of gender. Moreover, securing the public autonomy of women will not substantially alter the logic of his colonization thesis: women can (albeit with difficulty) shift the boundary of public and private and win government support for legal-bureaucratic intervention into "private" matters, but such legal-bureaucratic intervention will inevitably tend to erode the communicative practices that are constitutive for the lifeworld itself.

23. Ibid., 424–26.

For the remainder of this chapter I discuss how we might understand the gender dimensions of Habermas's theory by drawing on Fraser's critique of Habermas, as well as on Cohen and Arato's response to Fraser. I formulate three possible theses. The first thesis is that a gender-sensitive reading of his theory might actually enhance its critical power. The second is that the system/lifeworld distinction on which the theory is based is intrinsically, and not incidentally, androcentric and ideological. The third is that the theory of communicative action allows us to conceive of gender as a steering medium on the level of money and power. I take it as given, and as congruent with the intentions of Cohen and Arato, as well as Fraser, that if a theory is to have nonideological application, it must be able to give expression to the wishes and struggles of contemporary women.[24]

Thesis 1. Habermas's theory of modernity is of interest for feminism because it theorizes the relations between public and private spheres of life. In his discussion of classical capitalist societies, for example, he can be taken as suggesting that the economy and bourgeois conjugal family are mediated by the social roles of worker and consumer. According to Fraser, his account could be significantly improved if gender were taken into consideration. The worker role is masculine "not just in the relatively superficial statistical sense" but rather in a "very deep sense in which masculine identity in these [classical capitalist] societies is bound up with the breadwinner role." The historical struggle for a "family wage" is placed in a new light, once we see that wages are paid, not to a "genderless individual for the use of labour power," but rather to an individual with economic responsibility for a wife and children. Fraser also argues that the important role of citizen—linked to speech in the public sphere and to action on the battlefield—is masculine, and she raises the question of the significance for Habermas's theory that no mention is made of the feminine childrearer role (41–45).

While Habermas's account of welfare state societies can be similarly supplemented by gender analysis, such a strategy leads to more complex results. Fraser is generally convinced that Habermas is on the right track when he explains that under conditions of advanced capitalism, there is a realignment of state and economy and that these become "more

24. Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" 31, reminds us that Marx defined critical theory as "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age."

deeply intertwined with one another." However, she argues that there are significant limitations. In particular, he misses the fact that the new client role is "paradigmatically feminine," and he fails to document the fact that the clients of the welfare state are overwhelmingly women: poor women, older women, single women with dependent children. Even so, she believes that Habermas's account can lead to insightful analyses. For example, his view that welfare measures have both positive and negative effects can be developed to illuminate the nature of the ambivalence with respect to women generally. As a rule, welfare measures are positive for women because they imply a reduction of economic dependence on individual male providers, but they are also negative because they replace dependency on an individual male with dependency on a "patriarchal and androcentric state bureaucracy." For Fraser, the role of client, "*qua* feminine role, perpetuates in a new, let us say 'modernized' and 'rationalized' form, women's subordination" (47–50).

Fraser suggests that gendering the social roles that Habermas identifies and/or presupposes can lead to a better understanding of the gendered division of social interaction, but that the results are less successful for welfare state societies than for liberal capitalist ones. The difficulty I see with this suggestion is that once we acknowledge that the new client role is "paradigmatically feminine," all clients, both females and males, become feminized and the gender division that is the subject of feminist concerns tends to recede. Fraser also sees the difficulty, and she attempts to address it by further splitting the "paradigmatically feminine" into masculine and feminine: she claims that many welfare systems are internally "dualized and gendered" in that they include "masculine" programs to help principal breadwinners temporarily out of paid employment and "feminine" programs that assist families without a male head. In that sense, the welfare state represents a "change in the character of male dominance, a shift, in Carol Brown's phrase, 'from private patriarchy to public patriarchy' " (49–50). The difficulty is not easily resolved, however: one can always respond that Habermas's failure to note the possibly gendered dimensions of welfare programs does not necessarily reflect a failure in his theory. Moreover, it is also likely that a plurality of patterns of gender participation could be charted for existing programs, if we were to take into account such additional factors as race, class, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, and age. In my view, the strategy of gendering the social roles identified or presupposed in Habermas's theory is fruitful, but limiting, for understanding both liberal and welfare

state societies. My suspicion is that his omission of the childrearer role in his account of liberal capitalist and welfare state societies cannot be repaired without a significant restructuring of his theory.

Thesis 2. A second thesis on gender in Habermas's theory is that his system/lifeworld distinction, which is basic to the theory, is intrinsically androcentric and ideological. Fraser develops this position in relation to his analysis of welfare state societies. As she reads Habermas, the welfare state brings about two types of dependencies. The one type is the result of the bureaucratization associated with the implementation of social policy, while a second type is created with the juridification of family. Fraser rejects the idea that the juridification of the family is any different or any less disabling than the juridification of other areas of life, and interpreting Habermas as dividing the activities of social institutions into two types of action contexts, those aiming at social integration and those aiming at system integration, she maintains that childrearing has to be classified as a socially integrated task. She then argues that childrearing is a "dual-aspect" activity because it is involved "equally" in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld and in the material reproduction of the economic system. She also finds the system/lifeworld distinction more generally inadequate and maintains that labor in the paid place of employment, no less than the unpaid labor of childrearing is a "dual-aspect" activity (33–34).

To summarize the problem: whereas the theory of communicative action holds out the prospect of showing how public and private spheres of life are intertwined, and while that theory can be used to chart such intertwining, Habermas's colonization thesis appears to be a retreat, even a promotion of what Fraser refers to as the "ideological" separation of public and private. She attempts to resist this retreat by refocusing attention on the intertwining of public and private; for example, she claims that the family, while involved in reproducing social identities, can be seen as an economic system and that it is also constituted by power relations. She believes that it is a "grave mistake" to restrict "power" to state-administrative contexts and suggests that we need to refine and differentiate the concept of power to include "domestic-patriarchal" and "bureaucratic-patriarchal" power, but also other kinds (38). Denying that there is any important distinction between the two types of work, Fraser holds that professional childcare facilities are no more pathological than other forms of paid work: "If it is 'pathological' that, in

the course of achieving a better balance of power in familial and personal life, women become clients of state bureaucracies, then it must be just as 'pathological' *in principle* that, in the course of achieving a similar end at paid work, paid workers, too, become clients" (51). She concludes that even though his theory can increase our understanding of some issues of concern to women, his blindspots on gender can be traced to his "categorial opposition between system and lifeworld institutions" (55).

Fraser's critique of Habermas's system/lifeworld distinction has been challenged by Cohen and Arato, who maintain that her example of childrearing involves the substantive elements of action and thus misses the "real thrust" of his distinction between system and lifeworld. Dualistic theory, they contend, is not directly concerned with the substantive elements of action, but rests on a more basic distinction between two different "modes of action coordination."[25] Modes of action coordination, according to this argument, have to be distinguished from historically specific social institutions, and if Habermas himself has not correctly applied the system/lifeworld distinction—that is, if he relies on the normative meaning of specific historical institutions, the problem has to be traced to his misuse of the distinction, not to the distinction itself.[26] However, this argument does not refute Fraser's position. The problem she identifies is not necessarily tied to the substantive elements of action, even though she refers to such substantive elements for purposes of analysis, so that her argument could be reformulated to center on the idea of two modes of action coordination rather than two types of social institutions. Habermas's theory could then be viewed as having identified the activity of childcare with one mode of action coordination rather than as "equally" involved in the second mode.

But Fraser's position becomes problematical as a critique of Habermas once we see that his dualistic theory allows us to see the family, like other social institutions, as a site of two social processes, involving two modes of action coordination. The theory does not deny, as she claims, that both modes of action coordination are present in family institutions (both modes are similarly present in the paid workplace), so that the idea of a dual-aspect activity is not necessarily a problem for his theory.

25. Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society,* 535. See also Cohen's "Critical Social Theory and Feminist Critiques: The Debate with Jürgen Habermas," in Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas,* 57–90.

26. Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society,* 534.

As for her claim that childcare facilities would be no more pathological than other forms of paid work, Jane Braaten suggests that we should put the emphasis on whether the communicative task (childrearing) that has been exchanged for money results in the "replacement" of consensus-based communication and in the primacy of system goals. In that regard, Habermas's internal colonization thesis suggests that under conditions of advanced capitalism and the need for system efficiency, lifeworld gains in setting social priorities will almost certainly be lost in the ever-increasing tendency toward system integration.[27] Nonetheless, Fraser's basic concern that the system/lifeworld distinction reinstates the public/private split still needs to be addressed, and it is to preclude any such reinstatement that she attempts to show that childcare is "equally" involved in symbolic and material reproduction. However we assess the situation, she rightly maintains that it is not enough simply to reconstruct the gender subtext of Habermas's theory, because the theory itself seems intrinsically resistant to a full and open discussion of gender issues.

Thesis 3. A third thesis that can be developed from within the assumptions of Habermas's theory is that gender is a steering medium on the order of money and power. That idea is raised as a possibility by Fraser in her suggestion that the links forged by worker and consumer roles in classical capitalism "are adumbrated as much in the medium of gender identity as in the medium of money." Similarly, she refers to gender identity as an "exchange medium" and suggests that the concepts of worker and consumer are "gender-economic," whereas the concept of citizen is "gender-political."[28] Cohen and Arato grant that this is a problem, but suggest that instead of seeing gender as a steering medium, we should think of gender as a "set of codes." Faced with the problem of how gender codes differ from power codes, they emphasize the "different structure" of gender codes and maintain that we have to distinguish "among different kinds of power or, rather, among various *codes* of power and modes of the *operation* of power." They also suggest that "*gender is a generalized form of communication* or, rather, the code of such communication." As the "set of codes in and through which power operates," gender can be a "secondary code of the power medium" in

27. Jane Braaten, *Habermas's Critical Theory of Society* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 92 ff.

28. Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" 42–46.

formal organizations and, in the informally organized spheres of the lifeworld, it can "displace ordinary language communication and facilitate the operation of power."[29] As interesting as Cohen and Arato's statements are, they are far from decisive in determining that gender is not a medium. At the very least it remains unclear how gender as a "set of codes" differs from the media of money and power; the latter are similarly identified by Cohen and Arato as codes that "relieve actors of the necessity of mutually agreeing on the definition of the situation involved."[30] In each case what seems to be involved is a codification that can (or possibly could) be reformulated in terms of a logic of action consequences detached from communicative processes.

To spell out what would be involved in thinking of gender as a medium, one might, for example, refer to a "gender system" that gets defined across the public/private divide. One could then work out the connections between the economy, the state administration, and the gender system and investigate the relations between these (three) subsystems and the lifeworld. It would also be necessary to identify a constitutive principle for the gender system, and here one might propose a principle of masculinity, understood as a hierarchical binary opposition of masculinity and femininity. Nonetheless, I have reservations about taking this route because if masculinity is a steering medium, like money and power, its normative context would have to be tied to a "basically" ungendered lifeworld (just as power and money are tied to the normative context of a "basically" power-free and money-free lifeworld). By now, in the wake of feminist critiques that indicate the strong tendency of philosophical discourse to effect a resolution of gender questions by reestablishing a supposedly neutral subject,[31] we have to be suspicious of proposals for degendering the lifeworld. Whereas there is good reason to work for a degendering of the worlds of money and power, it is not obvious that the degendering process can be extended in the same way to the core areas of the lifeworld. Even as we use legal institutions to secure substantive equality for women and children, we cannot afford to overlook the possibly negative consequences, for women and children,

29. Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society,* 540–42.

30. Ibid., 535.

31. See, especially the work of French feminists, for example, Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman,* trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), and Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman,* trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

as well as for men, of the extensive use of the state-administrative apparatus to achieve social goals. Habermas's theory seems to replicate the ideological separation of public and private, but we also have to be critical about the kind of intertwining of public and private we want to support.

None of the three possible theses I have discussed can deal adequately with the problem of a gender-structured lifeworld. Fraser's critique of Habermas points in the right direction but tends to underestimate the relevance of his colonization thesis as a critical account of important features of advanced capitalism. Rather than trace the problem of gender in his theory to the system/lifeworld distinction and argue that system perspectives are equally evident in familial lifeworld contexts, I want to ask why Habermas omits the childrearer or nurturer role from the list of social roles (employee, consumer, client, citizen) that he associates with the system/lifeworld interchange. There is little-doubt that the family is a core part of his understanding of the lifeworld. Moreover, the family plays an important role in sustaining and reproducing the lifeworld's communicative practices. And yet, for some reason, the system/lifeworld interchange does not refer to the role of nurturer and the work of socialization. Why is that role not theorized somewhere on the system/lifeworld interchange, especially when Habermas's colonization thesis picks out the juridification of family and school to demonstrate the harmful effects of excessive legal-bureaucratic intervention into socially integrated lifeworld contexts?

By retreating from a critical examination of the relation between the nurturer role and the system/lifeworld interchange, Habermas shuts down the discussion, even in the face of the considerable pressure from within the logic of his theory to say something about the basic rights of women and children that are supposedly falsely addressed through excessive juridification of family and school. We need to know why socialization is so important for his theory that it can even override the question of basic rights.

FIVE

GENDER AND COMMUNICATION

In 1984 Habermas gave an interview to Peter Dews and Perry Anderson. In that interview he described his ethical position as cognitivist-universalist and was willing to subscribe to the "outrageously strong claim . . . that there is a universal core of moral intuition in all times and in all societies." He said that while moral intuitions were not "spelt out" in the same way in every case, they shared a common origin in "the conditions of symmetry and reciprocal recognition which are unavoidable presuppositions of communicative action." This claim led one of the interviewers to ask how we might reconcile the idea of a universal core of moral intuitions with the notion of a *Lebensform* or "form of life." By definition, a form of life has a cultural integrity that must be respected. However, if forms of life also share in moral intuitions that are universal, we have to allow for the possibility that the inhabitants of a particular form of life might, with good reason, speak out against the cultural practices of another one, even take action to stop such practices. To help sort out the issues, the interviewer raises the following question: how might we justify saying that a form of life belonging to the past was entitled to interfere with the cultural integrity of another one whose historically documented practices would, if they took place in today's world, be generally regarded as illegitimate. The specific question put to Habermas was how he would arbitrate the conflict over slavery waged between North and South in the United States of the 1850s.[1]

1. Jürgen Habermas, "Life-forms, Morality and the Task of the Philosopher," in his *Autonomy and Solidarity*, 201–5.

Habermas decides to defer judgment on the slavery issue until he can address "another textbook example of these dilemmas," the traditional Hindu practice of *sati,* the burning of women upon the deaths of their husbands, legally prohibited in Bengal in 1829 by the British governor. The question Habermas poses is whether the English, on first entering India, had been entitled to put a stop to the "ritual of burning widows." The Hindus, he says, would have argued that "this institution—a burial rite—belonged to their whole form of life." This explanation strikes him as having some claim to truth, and he takes the position that the English should have abstained from intervention "on the one condition that this life-form was really self-maintaining, that is, not yet in inevitable dissolution and assimilation to a different way of life." The Hindu practice is discussed only briefly and in order to clarify issues in a question about antebellum slavery. However, as a textbook example, and the basis on which one might draw conclusions about relations between forms of life, it is essential to the point Habermas wants to make. The example is also "textbook" because it represents a lost world: "There could be no analogy to this example today, because there are no such traditional cultures left after three hundred years of capitalism."[2]

Two features of the Hindu reference stand out. First, within the framework of Habermas's theory, it represents a premodern practice in which there is "not yet" the hypothetical attitude that he says is necessary to support the "moral point of view." Why, one might ask, does a theory of modernity refer to a premodern form of life to explain ethical relations in modernity? Second, *sati* exemplifies a particularly extreme form of gender inequality in which women are ritually burned upon the deaths of their husbands. Why, one might ask, does a theorist who is as professedly egalitarian as Habermas offer an example of extremely asymmetrical gender relations to explain what he means by a form of life that ought to be left intact? While he offers the Hindu example in passing and without much reflection, we still need to know whether his failure to address the gender aspects of his example is a mere slip or whether we should regard it as evidence of a deeper problem in his theory.

Habermas's reference to the Hindu practice of *sati* has to be viewed, initially, in the context in which it arose. As indicated above, he had just characterized his cognitive-universalist ethical position as an "outrage-

2. Ibid., 204.

ously strong claim." An interviewer then asked how this universalist position might be reconciled with the idea of a form of life: "clinical intuitions" about the value of a given form of life seem to render problematic any claim to universality. He asked Habermas to comment on the American slavery because it reflected the dilemma of a universalism that runs up against the particular. Whereas the North had appealed to universalist premises to support its argument for the abolition of slavery, the South had drawn on the idea of a form of life in its insistence that slavery belonged to the Southern way of life. Habermas begins his response by addressing "the political and implicitly moral question whether the institution of slavery could be justified within the framework of a set of specific constitutional laws." He finds it "not difficult" to judge the North to have been in the right because the "Northern position . . . that slavery could and should be changed in accordance with the constitution . . . [was] also in accordance with moral intuitions, which were fortunately not just expressed in books, but were codified—as principles—in law."[3]

This judgment is not at all straightforward. It deserves mention that, for Southern advocates, the validity of the North's reading of the Constitution was precisely what was at issue, especially in the period of escalating conflict from the latter part of the 1840s. It became a vital constitutional point whether Congress had the power to abolish slavery in the territories, and any effort to that effect was interpreted by the slaveholding states as an attack on their institutions. Moreover, the constitutional disagreement was settled through ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1866, after the North had won the Civil War, and stands as historical support for the Southern view that slavery existed until it was expressly abolished. This concurrence on the abolition of slavery was also an enshrinement of the Northern position in the U.S. Constitution, and it is of some importance for the valid consensus that Habermas needs to identify that the amendment was enacted in the absence of self-chosen representatives of the Southern viewpoint.[4]

3. Ibid., 203–4.

4. In the 1850s, Southern constitutional theory held firmly to the view that in the absence of locally enacted laws against it, slave "property" was legal and that slavery, unless abolished, exited everywhere. The South and its defenders also managed to have their views implicitly or explicitly recognized in law. For example, the Compromise of 1850 left it an open question whether the extension of the U.S. Constitution to the territories ipso facto established slavery there. The Southern understanding of the U.S. Constitution gained further ground in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which gave official statutory

Whether it is true, as Habermas would have it, that "few of the Southerners ever said that they would fight to the death on the ground of legal amendments, as such,"[5] the evidence suggests that the battle took place on the legal-constitutional plane as well. I introduce these issues to suggest that Habermas's argument can be challenged on factual grounds. At the same time I want to emphasize that such a challenge would not disrupt the logic of his position that, ideally, moral intuitions are codified as principles in law and that constitutional laws provide the criteria for evaluating the actions of a particular form of life. If we allow for that starting point, we can also begin to push it back. The fact that constitutional laws are, ideally, the codification of moral intuitions indicates that the legal-political question with which Habermas begins is already supplemented by a moral one based on the idea of a form of life.

Habermas moves to that moral level by addressing whether the South was a healthy form of life under threat of disintegration from an encroaching abolitionist North. The Southerners might claim, for example, that their form of life had its own historical value and suggest that the slaves in the South were no worse off than the proletariat in the North. (This sort of response was, in fact, a recurring theme in defenses offered by the South.) It is with the aim of assessing the South's claim to represent a distinctive form of life that Habermas takes up the other "textbook example of these dilemmas" and a form of life entitled to have been left intact. The question that the interviewer puts to Habermas is thus turned around: to say when we might intervene in a form of life, we

---

recognition to the "principle of nonintervention by Congress with slavery in the States and Territories." Furthermore, in the 1857 *Dred Scott* case the U.S. Supreme Court proclaimed (through Chief Justice Taney, whose opinion was recorded as the official decision) that Congress had no power to outlaw slavery and that the institution was theoretically legal in the U.S. territories (where no law had been enacted against it). At this time the Court also proclaimed that the U.S. Constitution did not protect free blacks. As for the Thirteenth Amendment, some abolitionists thought that it simply reiterated the proper reading of the Constitution, whereas others believed that it was necessary to outlaw an institution protected so long by the Constitution. It also needs to be mentioned that the states constituting the Southern Confederacy had declared their secession from the Union, but the assent of slave-holding states required for constitutional amendments was orchestrated through reconstituted state legislatures "packed" with friendly Republicans. My understanding of the constitutional events connected with the American Civil War comes principally from Harold M. Hyman and William M. Wiecek, *Equal Justice under Law: Constitutional Development, 1835–1875* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982). See esp. 132 ff. See also Harold M. Hyman, *A More Perfect Union: The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on the Constitution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

5. Habermas, "Life-forms," 204.

first have to say when we should not. In his view, the British should not have intervened in the Hindu "burial rite" on the one condition that the Hindu form of life was "really self-maintaining . . . not yet in inevitable dissolution and assimilation to a different way of life." Having offered a case against which the claims of the American South can be assessed, he concludes that unlike the situation in India, "Southern society never represented a form of life which was freely chosen." The South was "not a self-reproducing indigenous form of life, but an artificially produced one—an agrarian zone within a capitalist system of which the plantation South and the industrial North were equally part." The North and South together constituted a "common system" whose maintenance required that the legal order be less implemented in the South than in the North. Therefore, despite the "clinical intuitions" of the South that it was an historical form of life under threat of extinction, "from a normative point of view there were no real grounds for maintaining the Southern form of life."[6]

According to Habermas, the South's claim to be free of an interventionist North was dependent on whether it constituted a self-maintaining form of life that, counterfactually, could be said to have been "freely chosen." The term "freely chosen" is employed as a "naive-philosophical, normative redescription of *naturwüchsig.*" "No unforced consensus could—counter-factually—have ever sustained [the South]."[7] The argument is made in reference to the textbook case of *sati,* so that the Hindu arrangements are viewed by Habermas as "freely chosen" or *naturwüchsig,* that is, based on a moment of "unforced consensus." One might attempt to disallow the *sati* example by arguing that with the arrival of the British, traditional Hindu society was already on the way to assimilation. However, the definition Habermas gives of "self-maintaining" does not require total lack of contact with the "outside": a "self-maintaining" form of life is one that is "not yet in inevitable dissolution and assimilation to a different way of life." But, in any event, he can argue that even if Hindu culture was on the way to assimilation once the British arrived, the idea of imminent assimilation presupposes the moment of unassimilation needed for his analysis. Despite contemporary concerns about excessive decontextualization, I see no persuasive grounds on which to disallow such thought experiments. In this instance Habermas's decon-

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

textualization provides an opportunity to examine one of his few references to gender.

Habermas does not view *sati* as a matter of individual decision, and we would miss the point of his remarks if we were to interpret them as posing the question of *sati* in terms of intentionality, voluntary decision, suicide, and so on.[8] To determine what he means by "freely chosen" as it applies to *sati*, I turn to his theory of meaning and to his discourse ethics.

Habermas's theory of communicative action begins from the view that meaning is generated by discourse participants through relations of intersubjectivity and through a process in which culture and rationality are intertwined. However, whereas genealogical and deconstructionist analyses address this intertwining, Habermas's theory takes as its object the communicatively structured lifeworld through which a supposedly immanent rationality is expressed. According to Habermas, the communicative structure of the lifeworld is constituted by human competences and can be reconstructed independently of the culturally and historically specific understandings on which discourse participants must also draw. Given its base in rational reconstruction, the theory of communicative action thus acknowledges but does not and cannot address historical, cultural understandings. Those understandings, as the "content" of rationally motivated agreements, have to be examined through empirical-analytical theory. As I discuss in Chapter 6, Habermas has held steadfastly to the view, against much objection, but also not entirely without justification, that human competences are a fundamentally different kind of object for reconstructive theory than historical and cultural understandings are for empirical-analytical theory. The basic difference, he argues, is what we can conclude from a failure of the data to confirm the theory. In the event of data that contradict an empirical-analytical theory, we have the option of saying that whatever we set out to investigate—a certain attitude or belief, for example—does not exist; by contrast, the objects of reconstructive theory, human competences, are

8. For a discussion of *sati*, female subjectivity and modes of representing *sati*, see Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture, and Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15–63. See also Lata Mani, "Production of an Official Discourse on *Sati* in Early Nineteenth Century Bengal," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26 April 1986, "Review of Women Studies," 32–40, and her "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on SATI in Colonial India," *Cultural Critique* 7 (Fall 1987): 119–56. Cf. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow-Sacrifice," *Wedge* 7/8 (Winter/Spring 1985): 120–30.

given, so that in the event of data that contradict the theory, only the theory can be falsified, not the object itself. We cannot say that we do not have a capacity for reasoning, only that a particular account of our reasoning capacity is inadequate.[9]

Once Habermas isolates rationality from the social, cultural practices in which it is expressed, he cannot also include, as an integral part of his rationality problematic, an account of the historical, cultural understandings on which discourse participants draw to produce rationally motivated agreements. One would have to take up empirical-analytical theory to gain access to the historical understandings of a given lifeworld, to identify the participants' values and lifeworld circumstances, and to assess whether their actions are compatible with their values and assumptions. In that case, the "freely chosen" of the *sati* example would refer to the lifeworld perspective of the discourse participants who inhabited the Hindu way of life. While it is impossible, as Habermas suggests, for "us" to observe a practice such as *sati* without judging it as something that "we" would condemn, in that very judgment we acknowledge cultural differences: the meaning that the practice has for "us" is not the meaning that it has for participants of the Hindu culture. Habermas seems to be saying that the case of *sati* is the ultimate test for anyone who takes history and context seriously: however disturbing "we" find the cultural practices of another form of life, we ought not to judge those practices by our own cultural standards.

From genealogical and deconstructionist perspectives, the exclusion of culture and history from an understanding of rationality, as I argued in Chapter 1, gives cause for concern. But Habermas can also be viewed as attempting to construct a theory that, while focusing on rationality, gives due consideration to historicist concerns about the importance of differing value systems and cultural traditions for determining what constitutes a rationally motivated agreement in any given context. If we accept the split he makes between culture and rationality—and bracket the question of whether he can successfully meet genealogical and deconstructionist challenges, the fact that he does not direct attention to the cultural level cannot in itself be a matter for finding fault with Habermas—no one person can do everything. Nor does the lack of attention

9. See Jürgen Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 15ff. Cf. his "Discourse Ethics, Law and *Sittlichkeit*," in *Autonomy and Solidarity*, 258–59.

he gives to cultural matters necessarily mean that he thinks these unimportant. He can even declare that for discourse participants, culture can be the crucial factor in generating specific acts of meaning. His universalist theory, which seems so comprehensive, might actually be viewed as a relatively modest proposal to examine certain questions that still seem susceptible to philosophical analysis in an era of profound resistance to all forms of foundationalism.[10] Similarly, although Habermas's theory of rationality gives little attention to gender, he does not deny that gender is potentially crucial for cultural determinations of meaning. But even if we accept the rationality/culture distinction, can we say that he is right to assign gender to the cultural level? Before commenting on that question, I want to discuss his discourse ethics, which makes a parallel distinction between morality and ethical life.

Habermas's discourse ethics is an attempt to reconstruct and explain intuitions associated with the "moral point of view," especially the idea that it is possible to justify normative choices in a rational manner. As discussed in an earlier chapter, he redefines the moral principle in terms of the principle of universalization (U), which he identifies as a rule of argumentation and as a core part of the logic of practical discourse. (U) states that a norm is considered valid if all those affected, in considering everyone's interest, can agree to the consequences and side effects for each individual that are anticipated to result from the norm's general observance. If normative choices have a rational basis, as he claims, there has to be some way of distinguishing moral understandings from other sorts of understandings that, on Habermas's definition, do not fit into the category of the "strictly normative." That is, he needs some way of referring to understandings that are traceable to feelings or to values that, against a given background consensus, are reason enough in themselves for taking action. These understandings deal with ethical relations, but are justified by the participants of a form of life in terms of values and feelings, not reason as such. To solve the problem of how to acknowledge the legitimacy of these feeling- and value-based understandings, while still defending the view that strictly normative understandings have a rational basis, Habermas distinguishes between two spheres, morality and ethical life, and between two types of questions, moral and

10. On what is left over for philosophy, see Jürgen Habermas, "Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter," in Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, eds., *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 296–315.

evaluative. Moral questions comprise "norms and values that can be subjected to the demands of strict moral justification"; they can "in principle be decided rationally, i.e., in terms of *justice* or the generalizability of interests." Evaluative questions, which include those related to gender, refer to the "particular value orientations integrated to form individual and collective modes of life"; these are not strictly normative because they are "accessible to rational discussion only *within* the unproblematic horizon of a concrete historical form of life."[11]

Even feminists sympathetic to Habermas's proposal for a discourse ethics find it difficult to support his distinction between morality and ethical life. As discussed in Chapter 3, Benhabib argues that the morality/ethical life distinction is untenable because it restricts the sphere of morality to a narrow field of questions and seems to deny in advance the moral status of many feminist claims. What also strikes me as significant is the fact that while gender is rarely discussed in Habermas's theory, it is introduced at crucial points in the analysis. In his "textbook" example of a self-maintaining form of life he offers the example of *sati,* and as discussed in Chapter 4, he demonstrates the debilitating effects of excessive juridification on the lifeworld with reference to family and school. In each case Habermas picks a gender-structured example, even though, ostensibly, broader issues are in question, and in each case the example he gives involves relations of power and, specifically, male domination. Moreover, in both discussions—the one about juridification and the other about a self-maintaining form of life—gender is foregrounded to show an important point, only to recede into the background, as the more general (and supposedly ungendered) features of Habermas's theory reassert themselves—in the one case the lifeworld/system distinction and in the other the culture/morality distinction. This indicates to me that while Habermas assigns gender to culture, there is something about that assignment that does not quite fit. I suggest that on the face of it, gender might just as easily be assigned to the rationality level. At least Habermas's decision to view gender as a cultural matter, to be addressed by the participants themselves, does not obviously follow from his analysis of meaning and interpretation in the social sciences. As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, for Habermas there is no form of life that is not at least

11. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness,* 108. Cf. discussion in Habermas, "Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 92:3 (1995): 109–31.

implicitly oriented to validity claims, so that within his theory it becomes possible to assess lifeworlds to the extent that they provide for effective intervention into the physical world (cognitive-instrumental rationality) and to the extent that they foster principled relations between communicative actors (communicative rationality). So why does *sati* not count as a matter to be assessed in terms of moral-practical rationality?

Habermas presents us with a dilemma in his relegation of *sati* to the cultural level because gender relations are relations between persons and involve a moral-practical rationality that, within his theory, is shared (at least implicitly) by all forms of life. If gender involves moral intuitions and not simply "clinical" intuitions about the value of a form of life, the theorist would not be required to forgo judgment on the Hindu practice, at least as it relates to just relations between persons. But, more important, in the circumstances, and as discussed in Chapter 2, the theorist would be obligated (in principle) to take seriously the claim to rightness of those relations that is (implicitly) raised by practitioners of the Hindu way of life. Understanding *sati* from the point of view of cultural meaning, we might say that the meaning the practice has for "them" is not the one it has for "us." However, understanding *sati* from the point of view of moral-practical rationality is to say that insofar as the practice raises universal claims to the moral rightness of the relations between persons, it falls short. That is the point of Habermas's argument against Winch, in which he argues that the meaning-conferring aspects of the activities of witches have to be separated from the claim to truth that is implicitly raised by their attempted intervention into the world. Similarly, the meaning-conferring aspects of the practice of *sati* would have to be separated from the implicitly raised claim to rightness of the relations between persons that is secured by the practice. According to Habermas's two-track model of society, *sati* might be a cultural matter to be decided by the participants themselves, but it might also be a rationality matter involving just relations between persons, on which "we" can pass judgment on the basis of a universal core of moral intuitions that "we" and "they" share. In later chapters I attempt to show why his two-track model does not hold up under critical examination, but here the question is why, given the assumptions of that model, Habermas relegates gender to the cultural level of society, whereby the theorist has no choice but to acknowledge the (social) validity of actions taken in the context of values he does not share, rather than also to the rational-

ity level, whereby the theorist can engage (imaginatively) with the participants of the Hindu culture in the context of an understanding of rationality that "they" implicitly share with "us."

So far I have been interpreting the *sati* example within the context of Habermas's distinction between morality and ethical life. I have suggested that he classifies *sati* as belonging to cultural or evaluative matters, which do not lend themselves to being "rationally" decided, even though he might just as easily, and perhaps with more justification, have viewed *sati* as a rationality matter. However, the gender dimensions of the example are not exhausted by my argument that Habermas could have interpreted the *sati* case as a rationality matter. Why is it that the example he gives of a "self-maintaining" form of life happens to be gender-structured, and why does he give this particular example?

At the beginning of this chapter I noted that Habermas refers to a premodern form of life to explain ethical relations in modernity. The value of the *sati* example and why it represents a textbook case of a "self-maintaining" form of life seems to lie precisely in the view that, in the Hindu way of life, there is "not yet" a division into morality and ethical life. That division takes place in modernity and with the "uncoupling" of lifeworld and system, but such uncoupling is conceived against a background of a premodernity in which lifeworld and system are "not yet" uncoupled, not yet marked by conflict, not yet capable of self-determination, and not yet in history. As the textbook case of a self-maintaining form of life, the Hindu "burial rite" represents the site where there is no separation between ethical life and morality, and where the universal core of moral intuitions does not conflict with the way these intuitions are "spelt out." To get this result, however, one must conceive of the Hindu way of life as free of fundamental conflict, privileged in its innocence, and somehow otherworldly. I counter that Habermas's uncritical use of the image of a self-maintaining way of life admits into his theory gendered assumptions that subvert his theory's basically egalitarian aims.

The image of a cultural totality that is self-maintaining—unspoiled—has to be regarded as a structural part of Habermas's argument. He shares this romanticism with Marx and Rousseau, but it is a romanticism that is inclusive of a gender-based fiction—the union of the sexes. The fiction belongs to modernity and invokes the idea of a "natural" complementarity. In all its various manifestations, the myth of sexual union begins from the idea of a heterosexual couple, whose members are incom-

plete as individuals, but together constitute a whole being. The "couple" is physically and emotionally bonded through contrasting sexual functions, but also contrasting mental and intellectual faculties, moral predispositions, and so on. Rousseau wrote: "The social relationship of the sexes is an admirable thing. This partnership produces a moral person of which the woman is the eye and the man is the arm, but they have such a dependence on one another that the woman learns from the man what must be seen and the man learns from the woman what must be done."[12] That image has served to hide from women, as well as from men, the structural inequality of the relations between the sexes, and it is more than a little troubling that it has found its way into Habermas's "ideal-typical" form of life, especially at a time of increasing concern among women and men about the gender myths of modernity. The problem of the *sati* example is not dissimilar to the difficulty in Habermas's colonization thesis. Despite the different contexts, he looks to the normative appeal of a situation deeply implicated in gender inequality, even though he professes a commitment to the basic equality of the sexes.

By subscribing to the idea of a self-maintaining form of life, Habermas inadvertently admits the modernist myth of sexual union into his text. But once admitted, that myth determines his analysis in ways he did not intend. For example, it is not simply coincidental that the social-sexual relations of the family, rather than work or language, is the dominant feature in his textbook example of an intact form of life, as one can determine by working out the logic of the example. The English, as representatives of modernity, confronting the premodern world of India, would have required some distinguishing mark of the "humanness" of the Hindus. That mark would have had to be at the level of culture or "clinical intuitions" because the English could not have intuitively confronted the Hindus as sharing in the "universal core of moral intuition in all times and in all societies," unless they also somehow participated in the "clinical intuitions" that they confronted. For the English, the "humanness" of the Hindus was to be found in family relations and, notwithstanding their deep concern about the Hindu "burial rite," what was "human" about the family institution was the social-sexual relationship it represented. The "burial rite" is so obviously concerned with gender relations that this conclusion is hard to avoid. But to understand how

12. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 377.

the social-sexual relation functions in Habermas's theory, we have to look at his theory's anthropological features. To examine those features, we can examine an article (published in 1976) in which Habermas outlines his proposal for reconstructing historical materialism.[13]

In his article on historical materialism, which I want to discuss at some length, Habermas critically examines the Marxian concept of social labor and contends that to understand the human form of reproducing life, we have to supplement the concept of social labor with the familial principle of organization, understood as the institutionalization of the "father role." I discuss why he takes this position and what function he gives the family in his reconstruction of historical materialism.

Habermas begins his discussion of the concept of social labor by referring to the famous passage of the *German Ideology* in which Marx and Engels maintain that "man . . . begins to distinguish himself from the animal the moment he begins to *produce* his means of subsistence, a step required by his physical organization. By producing food, man indirectly produces his material life itself." By social labor Marx and Engels mean not only labor processes but also cooperation between individuals and groups, and Habermas suggests that we can understand the concept of social labor in terms of two types of rules, those which apply to instrumental and strategic action and those which apply to communicative action. He explains that instrumental action refers to "goal-directed" processes for transforming physical material into products of labor and that strategic action involves cooperative strategies for collectively coordinating individual effort within the labor process. However, he sees communicative action as another type of cooperation and identifies it with rules for distributing the products of labor. For the distribution of labor products, what is crucial is the "systematic connection of reciprocal expectations or interests." According to Habermas, the distribution proc-

13. Jürgen Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 130–77. (The article was originally published in 1976.) See discussion in Tom Rockmore, *Habermas on Historical Materialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), and Rick Roderick, *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986). Cf. Marie Fleming, "Technology and the Problem of Democratic Control: The Contribution of Jürgen Habermas," in Richard B. Day, Ronald Beiner, and Joseph Masciulli, eds., *Democratic Theory and Technological Society* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1988), 90–109; also Fleming, "Habermas, Marx, and the Question of Ethics," in Axel Honneth and Albrecht Wellmer, eds., *Die Frankfurter Schule und die Folgen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 139–50.

ess "requires rules of interaction that can be set intersubjectively at the level of linguistic understanding, detached from the individual case, and made permanent as recognized norms or *rules of communicative action*."[14]

As Habermas points out, the Marxian concept of social labor is critical of the fundamental assumptions of the philosophy of the subject. It is "directed equally against theoretical and practical idealism, which assert the primacy of the spirit over nature and that of the idea over the interest," and "declares war on the methodological individualism of the bourgeois social sciences and on the practical individualism of English and French moral philosophy." However, apart from the Marxian tendency to turn idealism on its head—which is all to the good, as far as Habermas is concerned—the concept of social labor involves the claim that it is by socially organized labor that human and animal life can be distinguished. To test that claim, according to Habermas, we need to specify the "human mode of life" more precisely, and he refers to the "new knowledge" gained by anthropologists about "the long (more than four million years) phase . . . of hominization" in which primates developed into humans (133).

Habermas initially phrases the question of how to distinguish human and animal life in terms of three types of evolutionary processes. In the primate stage there is an "exclusively natural" evolution (the species are still evolving), whereas the hominid stage is characterized by a "mixed" type of evolution involving natural selection, in which the most important variable is brain development, but also the "active, adaptive accomplishments of hunting bands of hominids." Similarly, whereas hominid life is characterized by a "mixed organic-cultural" type of evolution, with the appearance of "homo sapiens" there comes into existence an "exclusively social" evolution. "No new species arose. Instead, the exogamy that was the basis for the societization of homo sapiens resulted in a broad, intraspecific dispersion and mixture of the genetic inheritance" (133–34). The application of an evolutionary model to changes of a sociocultural nature has been disputed on empirical and conceptual grounds, in the anthropological literature, and more generally in the social sciences and the humanities. As I discuss below, the question of how to justify thinking in terms of a model of social evolution and what we might possibly mean by sociocultural progress are central concerns of

14. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," 131–32.

Habermas's theory. But here I want to examine his attempt to test the Marxian claim that the concept of social labor distinguishes human from animal life.

If social labor (as specified by Habermas) refers to the specifically human form of reproducing life, we should not be able to find within hominization any evidence of the rules of instrumental and strategic action, nor of the rules of communicative action. But once we examine hominization, according to Habermas, we find that those rules apply to hominid as well as to human life. Adult male hominids "(a) made use of weapons and tools (technology), (b) cooperated through a division of labor (cooperative organization), and (c) distributed the prey within the collective (rules of distribution)." Hominid society, he concludes, fulfilled conditions for an "economic form of reproducing life," because hominids produced the means of production, and because hominid labor, as well as the distribution of the products of that labor, was socially organized. In contrast to primate societies, "the strategic forms of cooperation and the rules of distribution were new," and these innovations were "directly connected with the establishment of the *first mode of production,* the cooperative hunt" (134–35). But if the concept of social labor cannot help us understand the difference between human and animal life, the question is how, then, the human form of reproducing life can be distinguished. Before taking up Habermas's response to that question, I want to remark on his discussion of social labor in hominid society.

Habermas argues that hominid society fulfilled the conditions for an economic reproduction of life and that the cooperative hunt has to be viewed as the first mode of production. This argument refers to the economic activities of the adult male hominids and requires a prior exclusion, from the concept of social labor, of the economic activities of adult females (and children). He reports that the "division of labor in the hominid groups presumably led to a development of two subsystems." The "adult males [came] together in egalitarian hunting bands and occupied, on the whole, a dominant position," whereas the "females . . . gathered fruit and lived together with their young, for whom they cared" (ibid.). At some point in the organic-cultural evolution of hominid society male and female labor had not yet been differentiated, but Habermas's text contains no mention of events that might have led to such differentiation, nor does it explain why females did not (or could not) participate in the cooperative hunt that supposedly constituted the first mode of

production. Given the strict definition Habermas has of natural evolution—related to brain development, for example—he apparently views the development of the male and female subsystems as sociocultural progress of some sort. However, from a feminist perspective, it is far from clear what is so socioculturally progressive about the development of two subsystems in which social labor and egalitarianism are identified with the subsystem from which females are excluded. Presumably, fruit-gathering does not meet the Marxian definition of social labor—for example, hominid fruit-gatherers did not have to produce the means of production. But putting to one side the definition of social labor, it is difficult to see why fruit-gathering became a specifically female activity. To continue the speculation introduced by Habermas, fruit-gathering and childcare are not likely to have animated the imaginations of all female hominids.

The sexual division of labor gets only descriptive meaning in Habermas's analysis. One might argue that insofar as it applies to a hominid society still caught up in natural evolution, the sexual division of labor cannot be a critical concept because critical (normative) theorizing is applicable only to human society. This might partially have exonerated Habermas, were it not for the fact that the sexual division of labor is also a feature of his analysis of "human" society. Having argued that the Marxian concept of social labor applies to both hominid and human society because each has an economic form of reproducing life, Habermas maintains that the human reproduction of life has to be distinguished from the hominid one by the institutionalization of the "father role" in a family system. "We can speak of the reproduction of *human* life, with homo sapiens, only when the economy of the hunt is supplemented by a familial [male-headed] social structure." He explains that with the "familialization of the male," a kinship system based on exogamy was introduced, and "the male society of the hunting band became independent of the plant-gathering females and the young, both of whom remained behind during hunting expeditions" (135–36).

Habermas admits that we can only speculate about the complex and lengthy changes—over several million years—that eventually led to the development of the (patriarchal) family system. However, he suggests that some time following the differentiation of male and female subsystems, hominid society evolved to the point where it presumably experienced a "new need for integration, namely, the need for a controlled exchange between the two subsystems" (135). What exactly is the nature

of this new need and why is it fulfilled by the institutionalization of the father role? Given the differentiation of the two subsystems, and leaving aside the question of why they have to be construed as male and female, there is a rather obvious need for coordination of the economic activities associated with hunting in the one subsystem and plant-gathering in the other. But, in strictly economic terms, coordination could have taken place in any number of ways. There is no reason why a "father role" had to be introduced. Something else is at issue, and from Habermas's text it is apparent that while the family system did allow for the coordination of "male hunting" and "female gathering," he views that role as having no more than secondary importance for a theory of social evolution.

The new need for integration is met through a coordination of the activities of both subsystems, but the need itself arises in the mode of production of the cooperative hunt. It is Habermas's view that the gradually developing egalitarianism within the cooperative hunt became incompatible with the one-dimensional rank order of the primates, in which "every individual could occupy one and only one—that is, in all functional domains the same—status" and retain it by virtue of his capacity to threaten. In response to system difficulties in the hunting band, and in a process lasting millions of years, the animal status system was supposedly replaced by a system of social roles that was more suited to the emerging egalitarian relations within the cooperative hunt. A social role system is better suited to egalitarian relations because it is "based on the intersubjective recognition of normed expectations of behavior" and involves a "*moralization of motives for action* . . . Alter can count on ego fulfilling his (alter's) expectations because ego is counting on alter fulfilling his (ego's) expectations." To participate in a social role system requires interactive competence: individuals must be able to "exchange the perspective of the participant for that of the observer" and learn how "to adopt, in regard to themselves and others, the perspective of an observer, from which they view the system of their expectations and actions from the outside, as it were." They must also expand their "*temporal horizon* . . . beyond the immediately actual consequences of action . . . [so that] spatially, temporally, and materially differentiated expectations of behavior . . . [can] be linked with one another in a single social role." Social roles also have to be connected with "mechanisms of sanction . . . to control the action motives of participants" (135–37).

Hominization never succeeded in developing such a social role sys-

tem, though, in Habermas's view, it was evolving in that direction. He believes that even the hominid "*language* of gestures and . . . system of *signal calls*" was a development toward the validity-basis of speech that was so important for the eventual establishment of the social role system. For example, he suggests that "cooperative big-game hunting requires reaching understanding about experiences," and for that reason we have to assume a protolanguage that "at least paved the way for the systematic connection of cognitive accomplishments, affective expressions, and interpersonal relations that was so important for hominization" (134).

The establishment of a system of social roles that was the eventual response to the new need for integration in the male subsystem of the hunting band required not only a reorganization of relations within the hunting band but also a fundamental reorganization of sexual relations. Given Habermas's view that the familial principle of organization marks the difference between human and hominid life, his reasoning can be reconstructed as follows. As male and female subsystems were becoming differentiated in hominid society, a basis was being laid for the (eventual) institutionalization of the father role that would complete the changes needed to fulfill the new need for integration, a need that was of such evolutionary importance that, once fulfilled, it meant the end of hominization and the beginning of "human" society. However, while subsystem differentiation is a structural requirement, the institutionalization of the father role could not take place in the context of the status-dependent sexual relations that hominids shared with the primates.

> Among chimpanzees and baboons this status system controlled the rather aggressive relations between adult males, sexual relations between male and female, and social relations between the old and the young. A familylike relationship existed only between the mother and her young, and between siblings. Incest between mothers and growing sons was not permitted; there was no corresponding incest barrier between fathers and daughters, because the father role did not exist. Even hominid societies converted to the basis of social labor did not yet know a family structure. (135)

Habermas explains that the primate/hominid pattern of status-dependent sexual relations was becoming even more obsolete, "the more the

status order of the primates was further undermined by forces pushing in the direction of egalitarian relations within the hunting band" (135).

In the circumstances of the two subsystems and in the context of evolutionary pressures, the new need for integration was fulfilled with the transformation of the primate/hominid pattern of status-dependent sexual relations to a "family system based on marriage and regulated descent." "Only a family system based on marriage and regulated descent permitted the adult male member to link—via the father role—a status in the male system of the hunting band with a status in the female and child system." The family system made it possible for the same individual to unify "various status positions": an individual could, for example, be a member of the cooperative hunt and a father. It also became possible for different individuals to have access to the same status: all members of the cooperative hunt could be fathers. Only then, according to Habermas, was it possible to have a "socially regulated exchange between functionally specified subsystems," the one subsystem for social labor and the other for "nurture of the young" (135–36).

So far, I have indicated the structural changes leading to the institutionalization of the father role. There is still the question of why the adult male needs controlled access to the female and child system and why one subsystem has to be reserved for the "nurture of the young." The young would, of course, have been cared for in hominid society; their physical and emotional needs would have been filled in the female and child relation. What Habermas has in mind cannot be simply physical and emotional care of the young. Rather, the nurture of the young is directly linked to the new need for integration that arises in the male subsystem. The social role system that eventually comes to integrate social labor in a human society is linguistically and culturally organized, requires highly competent individuals, and is crucially dependent on the transmission of competences from one generation to the next; an animal status system, by contrast, is directly related to personality and to the power to threaten of the individual occupying any given status. From an evolutionary point of view, the males in the hunting band, on the threshold of becoming "human," would have had to gain controlled access to the female and child system, in order to secure, through the socialization of the young, the linguistic and cultural bases of their social role system and the individual competences needed for the integration of social labor. Habermas is unequivocal that the "familial social structure" is fundamental to the integration and functioning of male and female subsys-

tems. He also claims that compared to production and social labor, socialization and childcare are "equally" important for the reproduction of a human species dependent for its integration on the interactive competences of a social role system (138).

The family system ensures the emergence and survival of a "human" society, but even more important to Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism is the argument that with the transition to a social role system and the establishment of the familial principle of organization, the structures of social labor enter into a new, that is "human," stage of development. For Habermas, this new stage of development is apparently the key to understanding social evolution and historical progress. I began my discussion of his reconstruction of historical materialism by indicating that his overall aim is to provide a basis for continuing to think in terms of social evolution. I now want to show why his supplementation of the concept of social labor with the familial principle of organization is essential to that aim.

As formulated by Habermas, the basic thesis of historical materialism is that each new mode of production allows for the growth of the technically useful knowledge needed for the development of the productive forces and provides a basis for a new form of social integration. The question he raises is why any society takes an "evolutionary step," and he argues that it is not enough to point to social movements, historical conflicts, and the political struggles of oppressed groups. We need to direct our attention to "how we are to understand that social struggles under certain conditions lead to a new level of social development." He suggests that it is possible to give an answer to that question if we assume that learning takes place not only in the area of technically useful knowledge needed for production but also in the area of the interactive competences needed for social integration and learned through socialization processes connected with the family. He maintains that there are two types of learning, cognitive-technical and moral-practical, that each have "their own logic," and that each can be reconstructed as a series of stages (147–48). To support his view of developmental stages of moral-practical knowledge, he refers to the Piagetian research tradition of cognitive-moral psychology. At a *preconventional stage* "only the consequences of action are evaluated in cases of conflict"; at a *conventional stage* "conformity with a certain social role or with an existing system of norms is the standard"; and at a *postconventional stage* systems of norms "require justification from universalistic points of view" (156).

Cognitive-moral psychology has been heavily criticized on empirical and conceptual grounds. Serious concerns have been raised as well about the possibly ethnocentric and androcentric prejudices built into the very idea of stages of learning in which groups and cultures are inevitably figured as higher or lower on some (perhaps arbitrary) scale of cognitive and moral competences. The debate around these issues is complex and emotional, and Habermas has been criticized on several fronts. A general concern, even for his sympathetic readers, is that in an attempt to develop a theory that is universalist, Habermas might be privileging Western values. Moreover, feminists, like Benhabib, who are impressed by Carol Gilligan's critique of Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development, suspect that Habermas's reliance on Kohlberg is evidence that his moral theory is too closely connected to an androcentric tradition.[15] I take these concerns seriously, but I am also struck by the fact that the debate has been carried out in a way that does not really address Habermas's point. His argument is that research projects like those of Piaget and Kohlberg indicate possible ways to give concrete expression to the idea that there is a "cumulative learning process" in moral-practical insight, however we might define moral-practical insight.[16] I do not want to excuse Habermas for drawing uncritically on developmental psychology, but I would argue that even though his attitude to specific research projects in developmental psychology is uncritical to a fault,[17] he is not so much wedded to those projects themselves, as he is to the idea that it must be possible to pursue some such project of reconstruction as long as we believe in some sort of historical progress. That is, if we continue, in one way or another, to hold on to the idea of social evolution, which is closely related to claims about historical progress, we also have to say what this might mean.

The problem in trying to say what we might mean by historical progress is that any theory of development will contain normative implications. As Habermas explains, every such theory presupposes that social evolution can be measured and that social evolution is good. And in every case we run up against difficulties: any attempt to measure social

15. See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). Cf. Benhabib, "Debate," 181 ff.

16. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," 163.

17. See, for example, Habermas's response to criticisms of his use of developmental models in his "Reply to My Critics," 258 ff. Cf. his discussion of the debates connected to Kohlberg's model in his *Moral Consciousness*, 171 ff.

evolution is highly problematic, and the assertion that social evolution is good contains a naturalistic fallacy. His strategy is to try to avoid these difficulties by establishing historical materialism on the "normative foundation of linguistic communication, upon which, as theoreticians, we must always (already) rely." According to Habermas, validity claims are "bound up with the cognitive potential of the human species," so that a theory of social evolution that understands historical progress as the "expansion of the potential of reasoned action" cannot, and does not have to, defend its normative implications. I leave it to later chapters to discuss the specifics of his proposal for basing the theory of communicative action on the validity-basis of speech, but already there is reason to be concerned about his androcentric vision of human emancipation. He concludes his (1976) article by reiterating the view that historical materialism involves the recognition that there is "progress in objectivating knowledge and in moral-practical insight."[18] But the entire argument of that article is constructed to show that the learning processes connected with moral-practical consciousness and social integration only become possible with the "transition to the sociocultural form of life, that is, with the introduction of the [male-headed] family structure."[19]

Habermas's discussion of hominization, which forms the empirical basis for his reconstructed historical materialism, has to be assessed in the context of the considerable scrutiny the anthropological literature has received in the period since the publication of his (1976) article. In particular, Donna Haraway, in her book, *Primate Visions,* has argued that post–World War II physical anthropology was obsessed with the idea of "universal man" and that this idea became an organizing principle for the examination of fossils and races, all of which were expected to be able to exhibit traces of a master plan through which "universal man" establishes himself. Haraway shows that from about 1950 there was an "international and nearly simultaneous interest in the synthetic theory of evolution" and that influential anthropologists like Sherwood Washburn became convinced that hunting is the driving force behind the evolution of "man." The interest in "universal man" was rooted in humanist values, and she suggests that Washburn was motivated by the question: "What evolutionary account of a human way of life could ground the

18. Habermas, "Historical Materialism," 176–77.
19. Ibid., 165.

particular post-war constructions of universal human nature that seemed essential both to hope for survival and to anti-racism?" As Haraway suggests, this enthusiasm for a scientific humanism among physical anthropologists was tempered by the skepticism of social anthropologists, who from the beginning expressed concern about neo-evolutionary strategies for constructing the "human way of life" and especially the tendency to conflate the "family of man" and the "human family." As well, there emerged competing theories in physical anthropology that placed woman-the-gatherer at the origin of species-making change. She maintains that from the late 1970s—and from the vantage point of postcolonialism, multiculturalism, and feminism, "The fatal move in Washburn's approach was precisely the requirement to produce universal man, i.e., a finally authorizing and totalizing account of human unity." That requirement was fatal because it "submerged the marked category of gender and relegated cultural difference to the thin layer of the last few thousand years." Haraway suggests that behind Washburn's universalism lay a confluence of scientific humanism with United Nations humanism and United States hegemony in the post–World War II period.[20]

It can safely be said that Habermas was (and still is) positively influenced by the United Nations humanism that developed following the Second World War. As is well known, he too looked to universalism in response to Nazi atrocities. In 1961 he recalled that at the end of the war he looked upon the "collectively realized inhumanity" with different, younger eyes. For him the clear message was that we could never again tolerate "the slightest hint of distinguishing Jews from non-Jews, Jewish from non-Jewish, even nominally."[21] Habermas has been (and still is) supportive of important features of the cultural traditions of the United States, though he certainly differentiates what he views as the more progressive features of American culture from its hegemonic tendencies. He refers favorably, for example, to U.S. understandings of citizenship, and he draws on those understandings to develop the view of a "constitutional patriotism," what he regards as a postnational patriotism based on a readiness to identify with democratic principles instead of a narrowly

20. Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 206 ff.

21. Jürgen Habermas, "The German Idealism of the Jewish Philosophers (1961)," in his *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 41. Cf. his statement in a recent (1990) interview in *Past as Future*, 119–20.

defined national consciousness.[22] Habermas's anti-Nazi and anti-racist sentiments would also have inclined him to look favorably upon the anthropological theories of "universal man" that developed in the post–World War II period. Nonetheless, while Haraway's argument is an indictment of Western humanism and suggests why we should be wary of universalizing tendencies, it cannot repudiate universalism as such, and so it is not in and of itself a reason to reject Habermas's universalism. Her account is also unspecific about the relation between the "family of man" and the "human family" generally assumed by physical anthropologists. It is precisely that relation that we need to understand if we are to say what is wrong with Habermas's view of universalism.

Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism can also be criticized from a somewhat different angle, in that he can be seen as passing on—in scientific terms—another version of the patriarchal story of origins that can be found in earlier writers.[23] Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau have each, in different ways, written about a supposed transition from a "state of nature" to the world of the social contract, and insofar as Habermas's account of "human" origins fits into that tradition, it can be examined from the perspective of Carole Pateman, who argues that the social contract has historically and logically presupposed a sexual contract that secures men's sex-right, or political right to women's bodies.[24] However, it would be a mistake to follow Pateman too closely in interpreting Habermas because he does not understand patriarchal conjugal right as the essence of human society. It is true that there is an important political dimension between the sexes that he does not theorize, and he has undoubtedly integrated patriarchal norms into his theory, as for example in his comment that the relation between mother and child in hominid society is only "familylike." However, the family structure in his theory is not reduceable to a fraternal pact for orderly access to female bodies for the purposes of sexual intercourse. If that were the case,

22. See Jürgen Habermas, *Die nachholende Revolution* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990), 149 ff.

23. Several feminists have remarked on the creation myths in influential writers in modernity. Cf. Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Pateman, *Sexual Contract*; Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974). Creation myths include "state of nature" stories, but also Freud's tale of the brothers' pact after the original parricide and Lévi-Strauss's reference to the "exchange of women" as the original currency.

24. Pateman, *Sexual Contract*.

it might still be possible to remove the offending presuppositions from the theory. The difficulty of Habermas's theory goes much deeper. For Habermas, a "human" society requires a father-centered family structure, and that structure is fundamentally tied into his reconstruction of historical materialism.

The concept of social labor, as employed by Marx and Engels, is critical as well as descriptive. It shows the limitations of classical economic categories for understanding economic processes and develops new economic categories based on the idea of labor power, surplus value, and so on. These new categories, developed from the perspective of (objectively conceived) working-class interests, allow for the inclusion of the working class in theories of the economy. Moreover, the Marxian analysis of capitalism ensures that the working class, notwithstanding its oppression, enjoys a privileged relation to the means of production, a relation that is to be the basis for human emancipation as such. To begin from the sexual division of labor, as Habermas does, and to reconstruct historical materialism in inclusionary terms, one must show why and how female labor has to be included in social labor and explain what it is about women's oppression that putting an end to it facilitates human liberation. Furthermore, a reconstruction of historical materialism that begins from the sexual division of labor would not simply apply Marxian categories developed from the perspective of the working class, but would involve a fundamental reconceptualization of social labor, in order to secure the inclusion of female labor.

It apparently never occurred to Marx and Engels to include female labor in social labor,[25] despite Engel's concern about the "world historical defeat of the female sex" that led him to investigate the origins of the family.[26] Engels's account of the family has been criticized on numerous grounds—among other things, he obscures the problem he seeks to understand by giving primacy to class and by linking the idea of women's oppression too closely to the development of private property.[27] How-

25. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Feminist Readings: McCullers, Drabble, Habermas," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 35 (Fall/Winter 1979–80): 30, argues that Habermas has got Marx wrong. In my view, Habermas is working out the logic of the Marxian concept of social labor and, unintentionally, revealing its androcentric core.

26. Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), 87.

27. Cf. discussion in Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), 63 ff.; Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in Lydia Sargent, ed.,

ever, whatever the limitations of his argument, it established the problem of women's oppression as an important concern of historical materialism. With Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism, and despite the fact that he begins from the sexual division of labor, the sexual division of labor disappears even as a problem to be addressed. Not only does he not develop a theory of women's oppression; he traces "human" society to the subordination of women in a father-centered family structure and offers a theory of human evolution that does not even raise the question of how women are to be liberated from such subordination.

Habermas does not (and cannot) include "female" labor in the concept of social labor because he formulates social labor in a way that explicitly excludes the type of labor involved in socialization. Engels might have been puzzled by the difficulty of accounting for women's oppression under capitalism, but he (and Marx) had no special category of "female" labor, so that under their view of the abolition of capitalism, the division of labor between the sexes would also come to an end and women would be released from their double oppression as workers and as women. By contrast, the solution to the sexual division of labor defies Habermas's reconstructed historical materialism because that division cannot be overcome, even in principle. In Habermas's theory female work, with its special value, cannot be eliminated and conceivably cannot be reduced, and if it is not done by females, then it has to be done by males. But that work can never be included in the concept of social labor.

This discussion helps explain Habermas's apparent reluctance to follow through on the assumptions of his moral-practical rationality and to have the gender relations of *sati* assessed in terms of just relations between persons. Why, I asked, does he classify *sati* as belonging to cultural or evaluative matters that do not lend themselves to being "rationally" decided, even though he might just as well, and perhaps with more justification, given the assumptions of his moral theory, have viewed *sati* as a rationality matter? The answer is that his universalism is based on a concept of social labor (involving technically useful knowledge and moral-practical insight) that does not apply to the "female"

Women and Revolution (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 1–41; and Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 13 ff.

labor of socialization. He cannot both include "female" labor in a concept of social labor and still claim that "female" labor is a necessary "supplement" to social labor. And if he were to give up the idea that "female" labor is "supplementary" to social labor, he would have to rethink the meaning of sociocultural evolution and historical progress.

SIX

THE LIFEWORLD CONCEPT

Habermas argued in the 1970s that to understand why a society takes an evolutionary step to a new mode of production, we have to see that there are two types of learning processes. The one type is related to the growth of technically useful knowledge needed for production and the other to the development of interactive competences and moral-practical insight needed for new forms of social integration. In this reconceptualization of historical materialism Habermas continues to give primacy to the economy: a new mode of production is still rooted in the state of development of the productive forces. However, he maintains that moving to a new mode of production is crucially dependent on the acquisition of interactive competences necessary for integrating the new relations of production. He gives this view a more precise definition in 1981 when he states that societal development is "steered" by forces arising out of the material reproduction of the lifeworld, but draws upon "structural *possibilities* and is subject to structural *limitations* that, with the rationalization of the lifeworld, undergo systematic change in dependence upon corresponding learning processes."[1] The aim of the theory of communicative action is to contribute to a reconceived historical materialism by clarifying what is involved in the "rationalization of the lifeworld," that is, by elaborating the view that historical progress has to be understood in terms of the "expansion of the potential of reasoned action."[2]

1. Habermas, *TCA*, 2:148.
2. Jürgen Habermas, "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," in his *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 177.

Given Habermas's conviction that the cognitive and moral competences required for historical progress are socially and linguistically organized and deposited in the validity-basis of speech, it is no coincidence that in the period in which he was arguing for a reconstruction of historical materialism, he was also turning his attention to the idea of species competences and formal-pragmatic analysis. Inspired by Noam Chomsky's work in reconstructive linguistics,[3] he argued (in 1976) that we could understand the ability of interacting individuals to exchange roles and generate interpretations as a basic communicative competence, in much the same manner that Chomsky had understood a speaker's ability to produce meaningful expressions as evidence of a basic linguistic competence. And just as Chomsky had sought to disclose the intuitive knowledge of rules that constituted a speaker's linguistic competence, so Habermas proposed reconstructing the intuitive knowledge that interacting individuals demonstrated, not simply in the production of grammatically well-formed sentences, but also in their ability to use these sentences in successful speech acts. The view that communicative competence has "just as universal a core" as linguistic competence[4] also led Habermas to reinterpret his concept of communicative action. Whereas he once used that concept, in the tradition of Marxian ideology critique, to refer to substantively interpreted contexts and in connection with an appeal to reason implicit in the bourgeois ideal of reciprocity,[5] since the 1970s communicative action has come to signify a type of action in which actors orient themselves to three formal world-concepts (objective, social, and subjective) and three validity claims (truth, rightness, and truthfulness).

Habermas also links his proposal for reconstructing historical materialism to his long-standing concern about the problem of meaning in social scientific inquiry, especially as related to the interpreter's "preunderstanding" of rationality and the claim to universality. As we have seen, his discussion of the social scientist's participant role in creating

3. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965).

4. Jürgen Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 1–68. (The essay was published in German in 1976.) Habermas began by referring to the program as "universal pragmatics," but shifted to "formal pragmatics" to emphasize the theory's formal and procedural features.

5. Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" in his *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 91–102. (The essay was published in German in 1968.)

the meanings that are supposed to be under investigation gives rise to complex issues, ranging from how to understand the practice of social science interpretation, to the question of the objectivity of knowledge, to what we are to make of the possible rationalization of worldviews in the object domain that conceivably results from the interpreter's involvement there. Habermas's response is that we have to assume that there is an immanent rationality in speech, that we have to try to explicate and justify that assumption, and that we have to reinterpret, but not abandon, the idea of the objectivity of knowledge. If, as he reasons, all lifeworlds are connected through a universal infrastructure constituted by a core of unavoidable presuppositions of communication, the interpreter is conceivably tapping into a potential for communicative rationality in the object domain and does not have to be viewed as imposing on (actual or potential) discourse participants an understanding of rationality that they did not already (at least implicitly) share. While he rejects the idea of an impartial arbiter as the ideal of objectivity, he believes that we can work for a new understanding of objectivity by thinking in terms of a "negotiated impartiality" from within the communicative process.

The idea of a communicatively structured lifeworld is central, then, both to Habermas's understanding of the problem of meaning and to his reconstruction of historical materialism. However, that idea would remain overly hypothetical without some means of identifying the lifeworld's basic communicative features. For example, in order to say how the idea of a communicatively structured lifeworld provides for an understanding of the learning involved in moral-practical insight, Habermas needs to explain how the communicative structures of the lifeworld are reproduced and what such reproduction means for a view of historical progress understood in terms of the "expansion of the potential of reasoned action." His lifeworld concept thus needs to indicate both the "rational internal structure" of the lifeworld and the mode of reproduction of that structure.

Habermas develops his concept of the lifeworld on the basis of the intuitive knowledge of competent speakers of modern societies, and his argument proceeds through a synthesis of a number of diverse and complex traditions of scholarly thinking. While his initial claim is that his lifeworld concept reflects the understanding of the world that comes into existence in modernity, his aim is to show why that concept has universal validity.

Habermas introduces the idea of the lifeworld as the "correlate of processes of reaching understanding." Communicative action always takes place in the "horizon of a lifeworld," which is "formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic background convictions." The three formal world-concepts (objective, social, and subjective) of communicative action and the corresponding validity claims (truth, rightness, and truthfulness) "provide the formal scaffolding with which those acting communicatively order problematic contexts of situations . . . in their lifeworld, which is presupposed as unproblematic."[6] In a more detailed formulation,[7] he once again thinks of the three formal world-concepts, along with the criticizable validity claims, as forming the "frame or categorial scaffolding that serves to order problematic situations . . . in a lifeworld that is already substantively interpreted." The formal world-concepts make it possible for communicative actors to "qualify the possible referents of their speech acts so that they can relate to something objective, normative, or subjective." The lifeworld, by contrast, forms the ever-present "background" of communicative action; it is a "reservoir of taken-for-granteds, of unshaken convictions" that communicative actors draw on in their efforts to reach understanding. Though always "moving *within* the horizon of their lifeworld," participants in communicative action cannot refer to "something in the lifeworld" as they might to something (facts, norms, experiences) in the objective, social, and subjective worlds. Rather, the lifeworld is the "transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social, or subjective) and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements" (124–26).

For the "experiencing subject," Habermas explains, the lifeworld is given as "unquestionable." Nor is the lifeworld accessible at all except segmentally. It is "only in the light of an actual situation that the relevant segment of the lifeworld acquires the status of a contingent reality that could also be interpreted in another way." It "forms the indirect context of what is said, discussed, addressed in a situation . . . [it] is the intuitively present, in this sense familiar and transparent, and at the same time vast and incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful, that is, valid *or* invalid." Not only

6. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:70.
7. Ibid., 2:113 ff.

do we have to understand the unproblematic character of the lifeworld in a radical sense: "Qua lifeworld . . . it can at most fall apart." But a similar view has to be taken of the "commonality" of the lifeworld: "It is prior to any possible disagreement and cannot become controversial in the way that intersubjectively shared knowledge can; at most it can fall apart." The lifeworld is also "immunized" against "total revision." It "forms the setting in which situational horizons shift, expand, or contract. It forms a context that, itself boundless, draws boundaries." It "circumscribes action situations in the manner of a preunderstood context that, however, is not addressed . . . [and] remains indeterminate." "For members, the lifeworld is a context that cannot be gotten behind and cannot in principle be exhausted" (130–33).

Habermas establishes a relation between the lifeworld understood as "background" convictions and the three formal world-concepts of communicative action by suggesting that we think of the lifeworld as "represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns." This is possible, he claims, if we assume that there is an "internal connection between structures of lifeworlds and structures of linguistic worldviews." The justification for this is that language and culture, like the lifeworld, have a "certain transcendental status"; they cannot be identified with one of the formal world-concepts, nor can they be regarded as something in the objective, social, or subjective worlds. "Communicative actors can no more take up an extramundane position in relation to their lifeworld than they can in relation to language as the medium for the processes of reaching understanding through which their lifeworld maintains itself. In drawing upon a cultural tradition, they also continue it" (124–25).

Thinking about the lifeworld as constituted by interpretive patterns organized in language and handed down in cultural traditions gets us away from philosophy of consciousness; it discourages the view that understanding involves drawing out—making conscious—what was once implicit. However, it does not explain why problematic contexts in a linguistically and culturally based lifeworld have to be settled with reference to three "worlds" (objective, social, and subjective). To answer that question, we need to show a connection between the three "worlds" opened up with reference to the three formal world-concepts and the lifeworld itself. Habermas now proposes to show just that, as he expands the resources of the lifeworld to include not only language and culture but also group norms and values (the content of the social

world), as well as individual competences (the content of the subjective world). Identifying the object of phenomenological analysis with what Emile Durkheim called a "collective consciousness," he draws on Durkheim's observations about the "structural transformation of collective consciousness" to argue that as communicative actors take increasing responsibility for their own interpretive accomplishments, the lifeworld is differentiated into culture, society, and personality. The point is to view culture, society, and personality as structural components of the lifeworld rather than to see them, with Durkheim, as dimensions of a collective consciousness; the resources of the lifeworld can then be seen as including not only language and culture but society and personality as well. The unquestionable character that the lifeworld has for communicative actors, Habermas remarks, stems not only from the taken-for-granteds found in culture and language, but also from the "security the actor owes to well-established solidarities and proven competences." If the "solidarities of groups integrated via norms and values and the competences of socialized individuals flow into communicative action *a tergo*, in the way that cultural traditions do," it would make no sense, he thinks, to leave them out of account in any assessment of the resources upon which actors draw in their efforts to reach understanding (133–35).

The expansion of the resources of the lifeworld to include culture, society, and personality is an important step in Habermas's argument. However, while the lifeworld concept has been expanded and put on a materialist basis, it is still of limited use for social theory because it "still lies on the same analytical level as the transcendental lifeworld concept of phenomenology." As a concept developed from the participants' perspective, it is "not directly serviceable for theoretical purposes; it is not suited for demarcating an object domain of social science, that is, the region within the objective world formed by the totality of hermeneutically accessible, in the broadest sense historical or sociocultural facts." In a rather abrupt shift in perspective, he argues that "the *everyday concept of the lifeworld* is better suited" to serve as a "jumping-off point" for social theory.

> It is by this means [that is, the everyday concept of the lifeworld] that communicative actors locate and date their utterances in social spaces and historical times. In the communicative practice of

> everyday life, persons do not only encounter one another in the attitude of participants; they also give narrative presentations of events that take place in the context of their lifeworld. *Narration* is a specialized form of constative speech that serves to describe sociocultural events and objects. Actors base their narrative presentations on a lay concept of the "world," in the sense of the everyday world or lifeworld, which defines the totality of states of affairs that can be reported in true stories.

Habermas maintains that the "sense of the everyday world" or the "lay concept of the lifeworld" has advantages as a starting point for social theory because it refers to "the totality of sociocultural facts." Whereas the communication-theoretic concept is given from the perspective of participants, the everyday concept of the lifeworld presupposes "the *perspective of narrators* [and] is already being used for cognitive purposes" (135–37).

Nonetheless, the "intuitively accessible" concept of the sociocultural lifeworld contained in the perspective of narrators has its own limitations. According to Habermas, the major difficulty with the everyday concept of the lifeworld is that it cannot provide a "reference system for descriptions and explanations relevant to the lifeworld as a whole." He explains that while narratives indicate the "higher-level reproduction processes" manifested in the maintenance imperatives of lifeworlds, they refer to what happens in a lifeworld rather than to the structures of the lifeworld. He needs to be able to refer to those structures themselves, as well as to the processes in which they are reproduced, if he is to provide an account of the reproduction of the lifeworld. He suggests that the everyday concept of the lifeworld can be "worked up" for these purposes, if we start from those "basic functions" that are fulfilled by language: mutual understanding, coordinating action, and socialization. If the fulfillment of these functions provides the lifeworld with the "continuation of valid knowledge, stabilization of group solidarity, and socialization of responsible actors," the reproduction of the lifeworld can be said to involve three processes: cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization. Habermas argues that lifeworld reproduction cannot be reduced to social integration (as Durkheim thought) nor to socialization (as suggested by Mead) and that we have to understand all three re-

production processes (cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization) as interconnected (136–38).[8]

To complete the picture, Habermas matches up the three processes for the reproduction of the lifeworld with the three structural components of the lifeworld: culture, society, and personality. He clarifies these structural components as follows:

> I use the term *culture* for the stock of knowledge from which participants in communication supply themselves with interpretations as they come to an understanding about something in the world. I use the term *society* for the legitimate orders through which participants regulate their memberships in social groups and thereby secure solidarity. By *personality* I understand the competences that make a subject capable of speaking and acting, that put him in a position to take part in processes of reaching understanding and thereby to assert his own identity.

According to Habermas, the reproduction of the lifeworld can be understood as involving the "testing" of each of its three structural components within the medium of communicative action. While cultural knowledge is "tested against the world" by means of criticizable validity claims, or "standards of rationality," the lifeworld is also "tested," in processes of social integration and socialization, against culturally based standards for social solidarity and individual identity.[9] He also speculates that the three reproduction processes are not likely to be of equal importance for a given lifeworld and suggests three possible variations.

In one type of lifeworld reproduction, culture provides sufficient "valid knowledge" for reaching understanding, so that cultural reproduction contributes to the maintenance of society by providing "legitimations for existing institutions" and "socialization patterns for the acquisition of generalized competences for action." In a second case, where society is sufficiently integrated for reaching understanding, the process of social integration can secure "legitimately regulated social

8. "Social integration," which has been used by Habermas in a general way to distinguish "lifeworld" from "system," refers here to only one of the three processes through which the lifeworld is reproduced.

9. Habermas, *TCA*, 2:138–39. Communicative action is a medium not only for reproducing cultural knowledge, but also for reproducing social memberships and personal identities, and disturbances in these reproduction processes can lead to loss of meaning, anomie, and psychopathologies. See *TCA*, 2:142.

memberships" and "moral duties" or "obligations." In a third possible case, which refers to his ideal-typical modern lifeworld, "personality systems have developed such strong identities that they can deal on a realistic basis with the situations that come up in their lifeworld." In that event, socialization processes, which provide for "interpretive accomplishments" and "motivations for actions that conform to norms," become the dominant reproduction process for the modern type of lifeworld. Nor is Habermas's emphasis on socialization and personality surprising. While he argues for the "complex interconnection" of three processes and criticizes Mead for reducing the reproduction of the lifeworld to the socialization of individuals, his own account explicitly draws on Mead's concept of symbolic interaction and works it out, with the help of phenomenological analysis, as a "concept of linguistically mediated, normatively guided interaction." In the end, Habermas provides a more detailed and complex account of lifeworld reproduction, but still gives priority to the socialization of individuals (140–41).

Habermas makes no claim, initially, that a lifeworld concept constructed from the intuitive knowledge of competent speakers of modern societies can be anything but a reflection of the modern understanding of the world. However, notwithstanding this point of departure, the aim of the exercise is to develop a lifeworld concept that is universally valid, that is, a concept that is suitable for understanding the communicative structures of lifeworlds in all cultures and epochs. He does not deny the considerable burden of proof that falls on anyone trying to develop a universally valid lifeworld concept on the basis of the intuitive knowledge of competent speakers in modern societies. He writes: "Once we introduce the concept of the lifeworld in communication-theoretical terms, the idea of approaching any society whatsoever by means of it is not at all trivial." In his view, however, the question of the universal validity of his lifeworld concept is a separate matter from its construction, and he contends that the "burden of truth for the universal validity of the lifeworld concept . . . shifts then to the complementary concept of communicative action" (143–44).

If the "burden of truth" for the universal validity of the lifeworld concept shifts to the concept of communicative action, we will have to be able to say why the concept of communicative action, with its three formal world-concepts and its three validity claims, is relevant for all cultures and epochs of human existence. Habermas's response is that if

communicative action (conceived as constituted by three validity claims) is the medium in which the symbolic structures of the lifeworld are reproduced, the structural constraints of communicative action will have systematic effects for reproduction processes or indicate a "developmental logic." We will have to back up our claims by showing evidence for such a logic, for example, by seeing whether "the structures of historical lifeworlds vary within the scope defined by the structural constraints of communicative action not accidentally but directionally, that is, in dependence on learning processes." He claims that a directional development can be established, if, for example, evolutionary changes can be described as resulting in a structural differentiation of culture, society, and personality and if that differentiation indicated "an increase in rationality" (144–45).

This "increase in rationality" is, for Habermas, a "rationalization of the lifeworld" and can be understood as the "linguistification of the sacred." Referring to Mead and Durkheim, he offers the following sketch of the linguistification of the sacred: "The further the structural components of the lifeworld and the processes that contribute to maintaining them get differentiated, the more interaction contexts come under conditions of rationally motivated mutual understanding, that is, of consensus formation that rests *in the end* on the authority of the better argument." On this basis, the reproduction of the lifeworld is "no longer merely routed *through* the medium of communicative action, but is saddled *upon* the interpretive accomplishments of the actors themselves." "Universal discourse points to an idealized lifeworld" reproduced in communicative processes that have been "largely detached from normative contexts and transferred over to rationally motivated yes/no positions." He views the process as a "sort of growing autonomy" that is achieved as the "constraints of material reproduction no longer hide behind the mask of a rationally impenetrable, basic, normative consensus, that is to say, behind the authority of the sacred." Though not free of conflict, a rationalized lifeworld achieves a "singular transparence" in that adult actors are able to distinguish between actions that are success-oriented and those that are understanding-oriented, no less than between "empirically motivated attitudes" and "rationally motivated yes/no positions." For each of the three structural components of the lifeworld, Habermas explains, there are "evolutionary trends": cultural traditions become reflective and subject to incessant testing, social institutions become legitimated through formal procedures, and "a highly abstract ego-identity is contin-

uously stabilized through self-steering." The "release of the rationality potential inherent in communicative action" is also connected to a differentiation of form and content and to the abandonment of mythical worldviews and "concrete thinking" (145–46).

Habermas's appeal to a developmental logic and the suggestions he makes for historical research in support of such a logic, as well as his sketch of what a rationalized lifeworld would look like are all intended as ways of helping to establish the universal validity of a lifeworld concept constructed from the intuitive knowledge of competent speakers of modern societies. Moreover, all these suggestions are based on the presupposition that it is possible to separate the construction of such a lifeworld concept from the question of its universal validity. The problem is not so much that Habermas begins from a historically specific understanding of the world—there is no other way to begin—but that he endorses, without critical examination, the idea of developmental logic that is an implicit feature of that historical understanding. The three patterns of interconnection he gives for the reproduction of the lifeworld are not simply variations, but presuppose normative reference points and directional development: from a type of lifeworld in which cultural values are sufficient "to cover the given need for mutual understanding," to a second type in which cultural values are "incorporated into a normative reality that is, if not criticism-proof, at least resistant to criticism," to a third type in which cultural values are subject to "continuous testing by action oriented to reaching understanding." In this third type of lifeworld reproduction, which Habermas associates with modern societies, personality systems have to be sufficiently strong to allow individuals to take responsibility for the interpretations that flow into cultural values and ensure social cohesion (141). Not only does he integrate into his lifeworld concept a structural differentiation that he associates with modernity, but he regards that differentiation as a developmental norm: "The state of development of a symbolically structured lifeworld is indicated by the separation of culture, society, and personality" (152).

The price to be paid for taking Habermas's route of rational reconstruction and developmental logic is a reduction in critical capacity. Even if we allow that it is possible to identify communicative structures for modernity, these structures have to be removed from the historical context in which they appear. But then the normative content of the structures themselves cannot be made subject to criticism, at least not

from within the theory of communicative action. As Habermas explains, his theory requires two types of methodological abstractions: he abstracts the development of cognitive structures from the "historical dynamic of events," and he abstracts the evolution of society from the "historical concretion of forms of life" (383). He compares formal-pragmatic analysis to Edmund Husserl's phenomenological lifeworld analysis or Ludwig Wittgenstein's analysis of forms of life in that it aims at "structures that, in contrast to the historical shapes of particular life-worlds and life-forms, are put forward as invariant" (119).

At every stage of his argument for a lifeworld concept, Habermas draws on his concept of communicative action. Because he conceives communicative action as constituted by universal validity claims, the claim to universality has to be viewed as part of the lifeworld concept he develops. But the question of the universal validity of his lifeworld concept cannot be decided by appealing to his concept of communicative action if that concept first makes possible his lifeworld concept. I do not dispute Habermas's idea of the importance of the universality claim for modernity, and I also agree that we have to take that claim seriously. However, from where I stand—a feminist who is trying to find out why women's claims to full equality and participation in "humanity" are not reflected in Habermas's theory, taking the claim seriously also means allowing for a discussion of the historicity of that claim. My intention is not to try to dissolve the normative force of the claim to universality, but on the contrary, to enhance it. Instead of looking for ways to remove the universality claim from history, which is essentially the method of rational reconstruction, I hold that we have to put to one side the question that has preoccupied Habermas—the question of how to justify the claim itself—accept that our histories, for better or worse, are inextricably mixed up with that claim, and try, by way of a critical understanding of how the universality claim has been interpreted, to make the claim more relevant to a politics based on equality and inclusiveness.

It is not hard to agree with Habermas that the claim to universality is a basic feature of the understanding of the world that comes into existence in modernity. However, within the context of preoccupations that have their origins in historical and theoretical debates of the third quarter of the twentieth century, he has turned his attention to the problem of how to justify the claim itself and has not given attention to the particularistic meanings that have been associated with that claim. Rather than critically examine the normative reference points of culture, society,

and personality that he builds into his theory, he seeks to show that the differentiation of the lifeworld into structures associated with precisely those three reference points represents a rationalization of the lifeworld not only for modernity, but also for humankind. Habermas does not approach this view lightly, as I suggested above, but he has had a tendency to minimize the difficulties of reconstructive methods. For example, in the 1970s, when he was elaborating the problematic of his theory of communicative action, he commented that Adorno "distrusted the concept of a developmental logic because he held the openness and the initiative power of the historical process (of the species as well as of the individual) to be incompatible with the closed nature of an evolutionary pattern." Habermas admitted that Adorno's reasons for distrusting the developmental model could "serve as a warning," but he maintained that they could "grant no dispensation from the duty of justifying concepts used with a critical intent."[10] Given the statements he makes about historical research, I take it that he thought the risk of closure could be avoided through indirect confirmation of the developmental logic implicit in his concept of communicative action. However, no amount of historical research can decide the matter of the idea of a developmental logic if that idea is an integral part of the intuitions that are being reconstructed. While empirical-analytical research can indirectly confirm the intuitions that are reconstructed, it cannot contest those intuitions themselves.

Habermas has been criticized for the special status he gives to the reconstructive sciences, but his position on the methodological issue of the differences between empirical-analytic and reconstructive science has not really been refuted. Take, for example, Fred Alford's charge that Habermas adopts a non-realist position on the empirical-analytic sciences, but proceeds on realist premises for the reconstructive sciences. According to Alford, he has two mutually exclusive views of science because in the one case the data are theory dependent, whereas in the other there is a necessary correspondence between theory and its object.[11] But this argument does not really address Habermas's point that

10. Jürgen Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity," in his *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 72.

11. See C. Fred Alford, *Science and the Revenge of Nature: Marcuse and Habermas* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1985), and his "Jürgen Habermas and the Dialectic of Enlightenment: What Is Theoretically Fruitful Knowledge?" *Social Research* 52 (Spring 1985): 119–49. Simone Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and the Politics of Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 109–22, denies

the differences between the two types of sciences are specifically related to what, in each case, we can conclude from a failure of the data to confirm the theory. Whereas in the empirical-analytic sciences the failure of the data to confirm a theory might lead to the conclusion that the state-of-affairs we were trying to understand does not exist, in the reconstructive sciences we can only conclude that our theories are not adequate to the capacities that we set out to investigate—we cannot say, for example, that capacities for reasoning do not exist, but only that our understanding of those capacities is false or at least inadequate. For Habermas, this situation leaves us with no choice but to develop an essentialist understanding of the relation between reconstructive theory and the "know-how" it takes as its object. He has thus stated:

> The reconstruction which I have proposed of our intuitive understanding of truth, with the help of a theory of discourse, may prove to be false, or at least insufficient. But the everyday or scientific practice which depends on the correct use of this intuitive knowledge remains unaffected by these attempts at reconstruction and their revision. It is not practical knowledge itself which can be refuted, but only the false description of it.[12]

Habermas seems right to suggest that practical knowledge exists independent of any description of it and that the most we can do is to refute false descriptions of practical knowledge, not the knowledge itself. While the methodological difficulties attached to the reconstructive method are not an argument for not taking up reconstruction at all, they do indicate that caution should accompany appeals to reconstructive arguments. If reconstruction is based on historically specific intuitions that cannot be independently tested, that is, if all we can get is indirect confirmation of the intuitions that are reconstructed, any universalist theory that establishes itself on the basis of those intuitions runs an especially great risk of particularism. In my view, Habermas conflates two questions: the relevance and importance of the claim to universality and

---

the stronger claims Habermas makes for reconstructive science, but contends that his reconstructive understanding of communicative rationality can be defended on the basis of its "plausibility and adequacy."

12. See Jürgen Habermas, "Discourse Ethics, Law and *Sittlichkeit*," in *Autonomy and Solidarity*, 258–59.

the historically specific normative reference points to which he links that claim.

Habermas's colonization thesis, as discussed in Chapter 4, is based on the view that the increase in system complexity in democratic welfare states leads to excessive judicialization of the lifeworld, as ever more areas of life become subject to economic and state administrative imperatives. I have argued that his colonization thesis presents a difficulty for feminism because he argues for a de-judicialization of the family and puts to one side the question of "basic rights" for women and children that much legal-bureaucratic intervention into family matters is meant to address. If, as Habermas suggests, the judicialization of the family should be kept to a minimum, what perspective should we develop, then, on the "basic rights" question? Can he say anything about that question beyond reiterating his commitment to equality for all citizens and beyond calling for the public autonomy of women? If not, why not? In returning to the colonization thesis, I also want to take into consideration the importance of Habermas's lifeworld concept for his proposal to reconstruct historical materialism. That proposal, as I argued in Chapter 5, is a matter of concern because it refers to a "female" labor of socialization that is excluded from the concept of social labor, notwithstanding the fact that Habermas understands social labor as the site of egalitarian relations and historical progress. Given that his discussion of historical materialism prepares the ground for his theory of communicative action, the question is whether his exclusion of "female" labor from the concept of social labor is connected to his treatment of gender in his theory of communicative action, and if so, how we are to understand that connection.

An important aim of Habermas's discussion of historical materialism is to account for the cooperative elements of communicative action that Marx and Engels assumed, but did not theorize. As I have explained, he identifies those cooperative elements with the interactive competences of adult humans and insists that such competences are learned in a distinctive process associated with moral-practical insight. His argument is that sociocultural evolution is directly dependent on two types of learning processes, one type involving the technically useful knowledge needed for production, as Marx and Engels maintained, and another type involving the moral-practical insight needed for social integration. In the theory of communicative action, technically useful knowledge is linked

to system processes and moral-practical insight to lifeworld processes, so that Habermas's system/lifeworld distinction, which drives his colonization thesis, can be viewed as making possible a more complex interpretation of what Marx and Engels understood as the basic components of social labor. This view is confirmed in Habermas's remark that system and lifeworld appear in Marx as "realm of necessity" and "realm of freedom."[13]

Habermas's aim in further dividing system and lifeworld, the one into economy and state administration and the other into private and public spheres, is to provide for an understanding of advanced capitalism that takes into account the increasing complexities of welfare state democracies. Specifically, he wants to allow for examination of the crucial interchange between lifeworld (public and private) and system (economy and state administration). According to Habermas, the system/lifeworld interchange takes place in the media of money and power and is institutionalized in the social roles of employee, consumer, client of state bureaucracies, and citizen of the state. In reference to the consumer role, he describes private households as having been "converted over" to mass consumption, "redefined" as system environments, and made subject to the economic and administrative imperatives of the "monetary-bureaucratic complex."[14] The consumer role bears further examination, but the initial question is what to make of the absence of the nurturer role from the configuration of the four social roles (employee, consumer, client, citizen). Habermas acknowledges the universalistic aspirations of the women's movement, and he refers to feminism as a struggle against male domination and the "one-sidedly rationalized everyday practice" of the "male world." However, for reasons to be discussed, he is solidly committed to the four social roles of employee, consumer, client, and citizen, and he does not see that taking feminism seriously would involve not only addressing the status of the nurturer role, but opening up discussion of the gendered pattern of all social roles.[15]

Habermas's androcentrism does not mean that he puts little value on "women's work." In his reconstruction of historical materialism, for example, he argues that compared with the production and social labor of men, the activities of nurturing and socialization performed by women

13. Habermas, *TCA*, 2:340.
14. Ibid., 351.
15. Ibid., 393–95.

are "equally important" for the reproduction of the human species. In fact, he considers the nurturer/socialization role so important for a theory of sociocultural evolution and historical progress that his reconstruction of historical materialism requires the "supplementation" of the Marxian concept of social labor by the familial principle of organization. While Habermas is less explicit in his theory of communicative action about the gendered identities and obligations attached to socialization processes, he continues to understand social evolution in terms of learning processes connected to interactive competences and moral-practical insight, and he still holds that socialization processes are centered in family institutions. In some respects, he views the nurturer/socialization role as even more important for modernity than it was for the earliest "human" societies.

As mentioned earlier, Habermas maintains that the lifeworld is reproduced through the interconnected processes of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization and that because any one process can be dominant for a given lifeworld, we can envision different types of lifeworld reproduction. He gives three possible variations. Two of these indicate a "premodern" mode of lifeworld reproduction: the dominant process in the one case is cultural reproduction, in the other, social integration, but in each case personality systems are underdeveloped and socialization is relatively unimportant. By contrast, in the third variation, identified with modern lifeworlds, strong personality systems are the key to the successful reproduction of the lifeworld and the dominant reproduction process is socialization. In view of Habermas's understanding of socialization processes as crucial for sustaining and renewing the individual competences associated with strong personality systems, the "female" work of socialization not only does not lose its importance in modernity but comes to dominate the overall process of reproducing the lifeworld.

The importance Habermas gives to socialization processes for reproducing the modern type of lifeworld makes all the more conspicuous the absence of the nurturer role from the social roles institutionalized in the system/lifeworld interchange. However, there is a pattern here. Just as the familial principle of organization had to be added on to the concept of social labor to make comprehensible the "human" mode of reproducing life, so the nurturer role has to be added on to the system/lifeworld distinction to make comprehensible the reproduction of the modern type of lifeworld. That is to say, despite its importance for the

reproduction of the modern lifeworld, the nurturer role is not viewed by Habermas as "social," and it is for that reason that it is not listed with the social roles (employee, consumer, client, citizen) institutionalized in the system/lifeworld interchange. From the point of view of the aspirations for gender equality expressed by women and men in the late twentieth century, Habermas's understanding of the nurturer role goes beyond androcentric sentiments to a basic conceptual inadequacy. His lifeworld/system distinction, like his reinterpretation of the concept of social labor to which it is related, is insufficiently critical of its Marxian sources; it too reproduces the Marxian exclusion of "female" work from social labor.

Let us turn to the connection Habermas makes between the social role of consumer and the private household. In identifying that role, he draws on, but also reinterprets the views of earlier Frankfurt school theorists.

In the 1930s Max Horkheimer and his colleagues directed extensive research on the changing structures of the family, first in Europe and later also in the United States. This research, analyzed from a Marxian perspective and informed by a Freudian theory of instincts, was initially undertaken in the hope of understanding the relationship between the decline of paternal authority in the bourgeois family and what Horkheimer and others believed to be a serious crisis in the authoritarian structure of society as a whole. Their optimism about an imminent overthrow of the capitalist system did not endure for long, and the question then became how to explain why the structural transformation of the bourgeois family did not, in fact, lead to revolutionary social change. In the end Horkheimer presents the decline of paternal authority not as a development in the direction of progressive social change but in more negative terms, as a sign of the debilitating effects of mass consumption on the bourgeois family, and on society as a whole. According to the general argument, under conditions of monopoly capitalism the ruling class becomes smaller, and middle-class families, no less than the working-class families to which they become assimilated, grow powerless, as system needs insinuate themselves into the family's innermost sphere and as the family's psychic structures are harnessed for system purposes. In the final analysis, the bourgeois family is idealized by Horkheimer as the last bastion of an instinctual humanity, and its decline is not cause for rejoicing, but an indication of the spread of monopoly capitalism.[16]

16. See Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political*

In the tradition of the Frankfurt school Habermas links the private household to the consumer role, but he maintains that it is possible to provide another interpretation of the bourgeois family's transformation. Instead of a Freudian theory of instincts, he advocates a theory of socialization that can connect Freud with Mead, put more weight on structures of intersubjectivity, and replace "hypotheses about instinctual vicissitudes with assumptions about identity formation." He argues that the transformation of the bourgeois family should not be understood simply in functionalist terms, that is, as serving the interests of capital; it can also be understood in structural terms, that is, as providing for the development of egalitarian relations within the family, individuation in discursive practices, and liberalized childrearing.[17] These developments do not, however, translate into questions of gender equality, as one might have thought. Rather the point of Habermas's discussion is to determine what the transformation of the bourgeois family means for understanding the new conditions of socialization.

Habermas argues that there is a "growing autonomy" of the nuclear family because it is now cut off from the figure of the father that once represented societal repression and so brought system imperatives into the family context. He also regards the structural changes in the bourgeois family as representing the "inherent rationalization of the lifeworld" because, in the transformation from a family unit based on paternal authority to one providing for egalitarian relations, "some of the potential for rationality ingrained in communicative action is *also* released." It is apparently because the communicative infrastructure of familial lifeworlds gains a new independence that familial lifeworlds are able to understand economic and administrative imperatives as "coming at them from outside." In Habermas's view, this development means that socialization processes now take place in a "largely deinstitutionalized communicative action," that is, in communication structures "that have freed themselves from latent entanglements in systemic dependencies." He suggests that the increasing polarization between a communicatively structured lifeworld and the formally organized contexts of the system brings with it a "different type of danger" for socialization because, while the Oedipal problematic is no longer so significant, the adolescent's adjustment to adult social roles now becomes more complex and

Significance, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 137 ff., 149 ff. Cf. Jessica Benjamin, "The End of Internalization: Adorno's Social Psychology," *Telos* 32 (Summer 1977): 42–64. Cf. also Whitebrook, "Reason and Happiness," 140–60.

17. Habermas, *TCA*, 2:386 ff.

risky. The reason for this, he explains, is that the competences, motives, and attitudes learned in the socialization processes of the familial lifeworld, that is, in a relatively independent communication infrastructure, are to some extent incompatible with the functional requirements of adult social roles (located in the system/lifeworld interchange). As a result, adolescent crises grow in significance.[18]

Habermas's discussion of family life is focused on understanding the new conditions for socialization provided by the structural transformation of the bourgeois family. He understands those conditions not simply in terms of historical events, but as the product of an unfolding of an inner logic inherent in the family's internal structures of communication. The family is presented as self-contained, having its own integrity, growing in autonomy, predisposed to seeing itself as separate from the basically alien economic and administrative imperatives that come at it from the "outside." This aestheticization of the family's internal relations also makes it immune to criticism and indicates that despite his reinterpretation of the Frankfurt school's understanding of the family, and notwithstanding the considerably reduced importance he gives to a Freudian instinct theory, he continues, like Horkheimer and Adorno, and like Marx before them, to naturalize family relations. But Habermas places a more explicit weight on the family as a site of freedom. Socialization processes are tied up with claims not only about the family's internal structures of communication, but also about what those structures represent in and of themselves.

In his discussion of the rationalization of the familial lifeworld, Habermas uses terms identical to those he uses in his more general characterization of the rationalization of the lifeworld. In each case, there is "growing autonomy" from the processes of material reproduction and a release of the "potential for communicative rationality ingrained in communicative action." The rationalization of the lifeworld appears to involve not just one, but rather two parallel processes, the one in the familial lifeworld sphere and the other in the lifeworld's public sphere. He remarks, for example, that "the inner logic of communicative action 'becomes practically true' in the deinstitutionalized forms of intercourse of the familial private sphere as well as in a public sphere stamped by the mass media."[19] There seems to be no retreat from the immediacy he as-

18. Ibid., 387–88.
19. Ibid., 403.

signs to family relations. Thus, even though he aims at a theory based on equality, and even though he admits that power and money still pervade the relations of the private household,[20] his theory does not, and apparently cannot, provide for criticism of the power and economic relations of a gender-structured lifeworld.

Habermas's theory proceeds from what he takes to be the intuitive knowledge of competent speakers of modern societies. But he actually relies on a "well-developed" tradition of social theory. He tells us that he intends to take up "conceptual strategies, assumptions, and lines of argument from Weber to Parsons . . . great social theorists like Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Mead . . . Freud and Piaget." Such an undertaking, as he admits, involves a risk of particularism: "In [social-scientific paradigms] is reflected the world- and self-understanding of various collectives; mediately they serve the interpretation of social-interest situations, horizons of aspiration and expectation." Habermas suggests that for any social theory tied to the history of theory, there is the "danger that particular interests are being brought to bear unnoticed in its own theoretical perspective." He also thinks that the danger can be minimized: "Linking up with the history of theory is also a kind of test; the more freely [a theory] can take up, explain, criticize, and carry on the intentions of earlier theory traditions, the more impervious it is to the danger." But the danger is especially great for Habermas because his lifeworld concept is developed in communication-theoretic terms and in a performative attitude to the great names of modernity—Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Mead. From the perspective I have been arguing, his theory is too close a reflection of the world and self-understanding of those theorists on whom he draws. If I am right, the historically specific intuitions from which he starts are not universalizable, as he thinks, but represent intuitions that, for social-economic, political, and legal reasons, have been culturally dominant in modernity.[21] For all Habermas's concerns about universalism, his theory turns out to be not universalist enough.

20. At least this is how I am interpreting his references to the historical legacy of the "patriarchal oppression" of women and to the "sexual division of labor" in the bourgeois household. See Habermas, *TCA*, 2:393.

21. Ibid., 1:139–40.

PART THREE

COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

SEVEN

TRUTHFULNESS

Habermas draws on Max Weber's theory of culture to argue that the three cultural value spheres of science and technology, law and morality, and art are institutionally differentiated and enduring features of modernity.[1] As a redescription and specification of the three value spheres, his theory of communicative action can be summarized as follows. The modern differentiation of the lifeworld into three structural components (culture, society, and personality) is the opening up to experience of three "worlds" (objective, social, and subjective), along with the basic attitudes that can be adopted to those worlds (objectivating, norm-conformative, and expressive), their corresponding rationalities (cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-practical), and the three validity claims (truth, rightness, and truthfulness) thematized respectively in three uses of language (constative, interactive, and expressive). In this description, each of the three structural components of the lifeworld is assigned its own validity claim, and each is conceived of as having a unique "inner logic" that expresses itself in a specific type of rationalization. According to this model of three autonomous spheres, the validity claim of truth is lodged in the cultural space of science and institutionalized in the "scientific enterprise," whereas the rightness validity claim is attached to postconventional law and morality and the institutions of the liberal-democratic state. As for the cultural and institu-

1. See esp. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:157 ff., and his "Questions and Counterquestions," in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 206–11.

tional space of the truthfulness validity claim, Habermas refers to an "artistic enterprise."[2]

In the next chapter I shall explain why Habermas no longer holds the view that truthfulness can be identified with the sphere of art. Here, I leave that matter to one side as I examine his formal-pragmatic account of truthfulness in the context of his attempt to show that the modern type of lifeworld represents an "increase in rationality." In Habermas's view, if we can establish a cognitive basis for three distinct areas of validity (truth, rightness, and truthfulness), the differentiation of the lifeworld into culture, society, and personality will mean that there is criticizability over three "worlds." The differentiation of the lifeworld that takes place in modernity will then be understood, not simply as an idiosyncratic feature of modernity, but as expanding the potential for "reasoned action" and, therefore, as a "rationalization of the lifeworld." According to Habermas, communicative competence has "just as universal a core" as Chomsky claimed for linguistic competence, and a "general theory of speech actions would thus describe exactly that fundamental system of rules" necessarily employed by adult speakers in successful speech acts, "no matter to which particular language the sentences may belong and in which accidental contexts the utterances may be embedded."[3]

I have already argued that Habermas's lifeworld concept is flawed because it does not provide a vision of gender equality. As I now want to show, even apart from the gender issue, he is not able to support his formal-pragmatic account of the lifeworld. His argument for the rational basis of rightness meets with only qualified success, but his argument for the rationality of the truthfulness claim cannot succeed, even on its own terms.

The most comprehensive account of Habermas's formal pragmatics remains his 1976 essay "What Is Universal Pragmatics?"[4] In that essay he

2. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:240 ff., refers to the cultural and institutional spaces of the three validity claims.

3. Jürgen Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 26.

4. Ibid. The article first appeared as "Was heißt Universalpragmatik?" in Karl-Otto Apel, ed., *Sprachpragmatik und Philosophie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976). For a discussion of Habermas's theory of communicative action that emphasizes his formal pragmatics, see Maeve Cooke, *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics* (Cam-

draws on John Austin's speech act theory[5] to explain how "interpersonal relations" are produced in speech acts and to demonstrate the rational basis of those relations. This argument is meant to establish a foundation for expanding the concept of rationality beyond propositional truth and can be divided into two parts: first, a defense of the assertion that "interpersonal relations" are in fact produced through speech actions, and second, the demonstration that those relations have a rational basis. The first part of the argument deals with the issue of whether propositions have performative force, that is, whether they have a function in establishing relations between persons, and similarly, whether the performative use of language in which relations between persons are established can claim propositional truth. Habermas argues that while some utterances emphasize truth and others establish or affirm intersubjective relations, every utterance necessarily performs both functions, that is, every speech act contains a locutionary component (in the form of a sentence containing a proposition about something in the world) and an illocutionary component (in the form of a performative sentence that establishes an intersubjective relation). This argument suggests that in any speech situation, individuals must enter into powerful relationships: they must confront the external world in their claims to propositional truth, and they must establish intersubjective relations on the basis of their implicit (or explicit) claims to normative rightness. Habermas explains that the truth claim is conspicuous in the cognitive use of language—reports, explications, narrations, and so on, that emphasize the content of the utterance as a statement or proposition; here one refers only indirectly to the validity of the intersubjective relation in the context of which the proposition is made. Rightness claims are conspicuous in the interactive use of language—for example, warnings, commands,

---

bridge: MIT Press, 1994). Cf. John B. Thompson, "Universal Pragmatics," in Thompson and Held, *Critical Debates*, 116–33, and Steven Lukes, "Of Gods and Demons: Habermas and Practical Reason," in Thompson and Held, 134–48. See also Jonathan Culler, "Communicative Competence and Normative Force," *New German Critique* 35 (Spring/Summer 1985): 133–44, and Allen W. Wood, "Habermas' Defense of Rationalism," ibid., 145–64; Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas*, gives a skeptical reading of the claims Habermas makes for the primacy of communicative discourse.

5. Cf. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); "Performative-Constative," in C. E. Caton, ed., *Philosophy and Ordinary Language* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 22–54; and "Performative Utterances" in his *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 233–52.

promises, requests, and refusals, where the truth of the propositional content is implied, but not emphasized.[6]

The second part of Habermas's argument requires that he be able to show that the normatively based relation between speaker and hearer also has a basis in rationality. Austin reserves the concept of "meaning" for the sense and reference of the locutionary component of the utterance and uses "force" to refer to the illocutionary act: he thereby relegates the intersubjective relations established or affirmed through speech to the realm of the irrational. Resisting Austin's privileging of propositional truth, Habermas seeks to show the inherent rationality of the performative by arguing that a speech situation brings participants simultaneously into two communicative levels: the level of intersubjectivity, in which speaker and hearer communicate with each other, and the level of experiences and observables in which they reach an understanding about something in the world. While granting that speaker and hearer establish normatively based relations through the illocutionary act, he argues that the illocutionary force of the speech act does not derive simply from the binding force of recognized norms, because an assumption about rightness can itself be the object of discourse. According to Habermas, the acceptability of the speech act depends upon "a reciprocal recognition of validity claims" that "have a cognitive character and can be checked." With the performance of an illocutionary act, the speaker enters into a specific kind of "interpersonal bond"—a "guarantee that, in consequence of his utterance, he will fulfill certain conditions—for example, regard a question as settled when a satisfactory answer is given; drop an assertion when it proves to be false; follow his own advice when he finds himself in the same situation as the hearer; stress a request when it is not complied with; act in accordance with an intention disclosed by avowal, and so on."[7]

6. Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" 61–65.

7. Ibid., 62–63. Cf. his "Reply to My Critics" and his *Moral Consciousness*, 19–20. In his "Vorbereitende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie der kommunikativen Kompetenz," in Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), 104–6, Habermas describes the speech act as consisting in a "dominating" performative sentence and a "dependent" propositional sentence. The former determines the "mode of communication" and in this way lays the basis for how the latter is to be interpreted. Put another way, communication about objects can only take place under the condition of what Habermas then thought of as "simultaneous metacommunication"—an understanding at the level of intersubjectivity that establishes the pragmatic conditions for communication as such.

To summarize Habermas's position, the production of intersubjective relations is not irrational, because these relations are always established in the context of a "normative background" that can be rendered problematic and made subject to rational argumentation. According to this view, if the validity of the norm governing the relation between persons participating in a speech situation comes into question, the claim to rightness of the relation, like a truth claim about something in the objective world, can stand only on condition that adequate grounds or reasons are offered in its defense. At the level of communicative practices of everyday life, "facts" or "norms" have a taken-for-granted quality. Once these everyday assumptions are challenged, however, social actors can try to resolve their differences by moving to the level of discourses. They can enter a "theoretical discourse" to come to an agreement about a disputed fact, and they can begin a "practical discourse" to resolve the issue of a problematic norm. Habermas suggests that the facts or norms that are brought into play in theoretical and practical discourses are already and similarly in operation in the lifeworld. That is, he treats norms like we have tended to treat "facts." Both are "cognitively testable" within the context of "reciprocal bonds [that] have a rational basis."[8]

Habermas's objective is to achieve a cognitive basis for rightness claims that will allow us to understand the moral-practical sphere as involving a rationalization analogous to the rationalization of the cognitive-instrumental sphere. His claim, as I discussed in Chapter 3, is that the principle of universalization performs the same function for practical discourses that the principle of induction performs for theoretical discourses. He argues for the universalization principle on the view that questions of (procedural) justice permit a hypothetical attitude and the generalizability of interests, and as such are distinct from questions of the good life that are too bound up with lifeworld identities to be viewed as "strictly" moral.[9] From a feminist perspective, this translation of rightness claims into questions of a procedural justice amounts to a defense of a fairly traditional type of moral theory. But it has to be said that so long as the justice/good life split is put to one side, Habermas makes a plausible case that rightness claims of a procedural sort are redeemed through structures of argumentation in much the same manner as truth claims. Later I argue that he cannot successfully defend his for-

8. Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" 63.
9. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 104 ff.

mal-pragmatic argument for the primacy of "justice" questions, and in anticipation of that argument and where clarity is an issue, I refer to a (procedural) rightness claim. In the meantime, I want to show that in contrast to his understanding of rightness claims, which meets with at least qualified success, his argument for the rationality of the truthfulness claim fails on virtually every count.

Habermas's argument to expand the concept of rationality to the moral-practical and aesthetic-practical spheres is structurally committed to giving equal weight to the three types of validity. This equal weight can be read, for example, in his statement that a successful utterance "must count as true for the participants insofar as it represents something in the world; it must count as truthful insofar as it expresses something intended by the speaker; and it must count as right insofar as it conforms to socially recognized expectations."[10] Similarly, while truth and rightness claims are notable in the cognitive and interactive uses of language, the claim to truthfulness is emphasized in the expressive use of language, especially first-person statements that serve to disclose a speaker's intentions, wishes, feelings, and so on and which allow speakers to represent themselves publicly to each other. But while the truthfulness claim is a "universal implication of speech" and a "necessary condition" for all speech acts, the expressive use of language, in which the claim to truthfulness is emphasized, "can, in a way, dispense with illocutionary acts." Moreover, while participants express their intentions and feelings, they are not at liberty to thematize the "interpersonal relation" into which they are brought through the act of "public self-representation."[11] It is apparently not possible to correlate expressive speech acts with the expressive use of language in the same way that one can correlate regulative speech acts with the interactive and constative speech acts with the cognitive uses of language.

Habermas leaves unexplained why the analysis yields this result. One problem is how the truthfulness claim, if challenged, could be redeemed. If it is a "criticizable" validity claim on the order of truth and rightness, precisely how is its criticizability to be understood? One possibility is that the truthfulness claim could be redeemed under one of the other two validity claims. Habermas seems to be recommending this strategy in 1981 when he refers to the possibility of checking the consis-

10. Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" 28.
11. Ibid., 57–58.

tency of the person's expression with his or her previous behavior or the ensuing action: "That a speaker means what he says can be made credible only in the consistency of what he does and not through providing grounds.... [T]hose obligations to prove trustworthy [Bewährungsverpflichtungen] that the speaker takes on . . . contain an offer to the hearer to check against the consistency of the speaker's past or future sequence of actions whether he means what he says."[12] That would mean that claims to truthfulness would have to be tested through the redemption of the truth claims that are contained in propositions about the person's consistency. While Habermas encourages such tests of consistency, these tests involve a shift from truthfulness to truth. Because he does not theorize that shift, the problem of the status of the truthfulness claim is unresolved. These difficulties arise when truthfulness is viewed as a "criticizable" validity claim. Difficulties of this nature did not arise in an essay Habermas published in 1973 where truthfulness is a nondiscursively redeemable claim, categorially distinct from the discursively redeemable claims of truth and (procedural) rightness.[13]

In that essay Habermas explains that truth and (procedural) rightness claims have a mediated relation to experiences: the grounds or reasons that lead to agreements on facts and norms demand a suspension, at the level of redemption, of those experiences that were the basis for entering into the respective theoretical and practical discourses. By contrast, the trust that one has in a speaker's truthfulness is grounded, not in argumentation, but in conviction (Glaubensgewißheit) and is dependent on "communicative experiences." "The experience of certainty, which accompanies such confidence in a person, results from interactions in which I have experienced that person's truthfulness." This conviction is not sensual, because unlike sensual certainties, like seeing, hearing, smelling, and so on, it is accompanied by a validity claim (of truthfulness) (224–25). Challenges to a speaker's truthfulness arise out of suspicions of being deceived or led astray by his or her expressions of intent. They involve such questions as "Is he deceiving me?" "Is he deceiving himself?" Habermas explains that these questions are not addressed, as are questions in theoretical and practical discourses, to the individual concerned, but to a third party, on the model of a hearing in a court of law. In 1973 he also thought that the person suspected of deceiving him-

12. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:303.
13. Habermas, "Wahrheitstheorien."

self could be "brought to his senses" through psychoanalysis. The problem is that neither a hearing nor a psychoanalytic conversation can be viewed, like a discourse, as a "cooperative search for truth" (221). Whereas in 1973, the nondiscursivity of the truthfulness claim is an acknowledgment of its special relation to experiences, in 1976 Habermas argues that truthfulness is a discursively redeemable claim and an equal partner in the "cooperative search for truth." But the difficulty of how the truthfulness claim can be discursively redeemed persists, as can be seen in his 1981 suggestion that a decision on truthfulness has to be based on the consistency of the person's expression with his behavior. Here, he resorts, as he did in 1973, to a third-party model to explain the redemption of the truthfulness claim, but without the acknowledgment he gave in 1973 that this sort of redemption belongs to a nondiscursive claim.

One might object that surely the person accused of untruthfulness could provide evidence to back up her claim to truthfulness, or that evidence can be presented on her behalf. However, concerning the redemption of the truthfulness claim, the decision still has to be understood on the model of a trial, as Habermas suggests in 1973. There is also a difficulty with the kind of evidence that might be brought to bear in such a case. If the trust in a speaker's word is experientially based, the "facts" relevant to the case would amount to references to concrete and particular experiences. However, these experiences do not constitute grounds or reasons accompanied by claims to universality typical of theoretical and practical discourses, where claims to truth and (procedural) rightness "transcend"—by way of induction and universalization—the historical moment in which they are uttered. Most important, it seems to be a condition of entering into a "cooperative search for truth" that challenges to truthfulness not even arise. Put another way, challenges to truthfulness only seem to arise in cases of disturbed communication; in successful communication the claim ideally never arises. The truthfulness claim, I suggest, is in principle implicit—it ideally never arises—in contrast to truth and rightness claims, which are in principle explicit, and in which there is a premium on reasoned judgments as opposed to normatively secured agreements. The question is how to understand nondiscursive redemption, and to what extent this nondiscursivity challenges the idea of truthfulness as a validity claim that is intersubjective and criticizable.

Habermas suggests in 1973 that there are several sorts of certainties.

As I noted, he makes a distinction between sensual certainties, like hearing and seeing, and the nonsensual certainties of trusting someone and understanding an expression. There is yet another kind of nonsensual certainty, and that is the certainty that one has when one knows something or is convinced by a norm. Whereas the nonsensual certainty of trusting someone or understanding an expression derives from experience, the certainty of knowing or being convinced, while mediated by experience, derives "immediately" from the successful deployment of grounds or reasons to defend the facts or norms at issue, and only indirectly from experience. Knowing and being convinced are accompanied by a type of "experience [Erlebnis] of certainty . . . that alone results from the experience [Erfahrung] of the peculiarly unforced force of the better argument" (226). This suggests that the truthfulness validity claim, which is nondiscursive, based in experience—whose force is not derived from reasons—is denied the type of certainty that accompanies the "unforced force of the better argument." This result is not in conflict with Habermas's statement: "That a speaker means what he says can be made credible only in the consistency of what he does and not through providing grounds." But it does challenge his view (from 1976 on) that truthfulness is a validity claim that is "criticizable." Such criticizability is also placed in question by the existence of specialized discourses for truth and rightness, theoretical and practical discourses respectively, but no specialized discourse for truthfulness. As compared to truth and (procedural) rightness, truthfulness seems to be linked to the lifeworld in a way that resists reasoned judgment.

This result undermines Habermas's argument for the rationalization of the lifeworld which is based on the possibility of establishing criticizable validity and the possibility for "reasoned action" over three "worlds." The elaborate structure of the theory of communicative action also comes into question because the truthfulness sphere, whose rationality is in doubt, corresponds to one of the three formal world-concepts, one of the three structural components of the lifeworld, one of the three processes for reproducing the lifeworld, and so on. It can also be correlated with the strong personality systems that Habermas takes as paradigmatic for the modern type of lifeworld, in which communicative actors take responsibility for their own interpretive accomplishments. In view of the importance of strong personalities for his lifeworld concept, his account of the validity sphere of truthfulness needs to be at least as clear as the other two spheres. And yet, the opposite is the case.

I have been arguing that the three validity spheres split into categories of criticizability and uncriticizability, with truth and (procedural) rightness on the one side and truthfulness on the other. I now want to focus on another type of asymmetry, one that brings truthfulness into a special relation to truth.

An important question related to the redemption of the truthfulness claim involves the problem of what the claim actually refers to. From the beginning Habermas has maintained that the claim to truthfulness is connected to the person's expression of intent and that the yes/no stand is taken on the adequacy of the expression, not on the correspondence of the expression to the person's "inner life." While it is true that some of his comments suggest the exact opposite, in the more important places—and where he is making an explicit effort to make himself understood—his responses only make sense if we understand him as saying that the yes/no stand on truthfulness is taken on the expression itself. This position, as he is prepared to acknowledge, goes against the commonsense idea that there is a correspondence between an expression of intent and actual intent. According to the commonsense idea, truthfulness points to a supposed correspondence between a person's expression of intent and an intention that is "inside," just as truth refers to a supposed correspondence between a person's expression about something in the world and a reality that is "outside." The idea of a correspondence of the contents of one's consciousness and an expression is also reflected in the philosophy of the subject, in which the sovereign individual takes decisions in isolation from other human beings and in abstraction from the world. Thus Habermas's wish to refer to truthfulness in a way that does not reintroduce the idea of an inner life is also part of his attempt to steer clear of the philosophy of the subject. I argue that his attempt to disconnect truthfulness from an inner life is not consistent.

In 1973 Habermas argues that the tradition of empiricism, in its privileging of propositional truth, falsely concluded that truthfulness could be reduced to truth relations. It is a mistake, he maintains, to hold that whereas truth, mediated by discourse, suggests a world external to the speaker, truthfulness, mediated by discourse, similarly brings into view an inner world to which the speaker has privileged access. Rather, truthfulness has to be conceived in terms of a validity claim, tied to representative speech acts, that signifies the meaning of what is said. Whereas

"truth" refers to the meaning of a proposition that asserts a correspondence with the external world, "truthfulness" refers not to the inner world of the speaker, but rather to the "sense in which I give expression to an intention." He explicitly states that truthfulness is not a relation between an expressed intentional sentence and the person's "inner" experience: "As soon as we conceive of truthfulness as a relation between an expressed intentional sentence and an inner experience or condition, we have already conceived according to the model of truth relations and failed. In acts of self-description I maintain nothing about inner episodes; I make no statements at all; rather I give expression to intentions." The possibility of untruthfulness refers to whether the person's expression, not the person, deludes or leads astray, and the possibility of delusion and self-delusion has "nothing" to do with untruth (Unwahrheit) (236–37).

In 1973 when Habermas still viewed truthfulness as a nondiscursively redeemable claim, he looked to the model of psychoanalysis. Within that model, conditions for the discursive redemption of truth and rightness validity claims are satisfied because of the self-reflection produced in psychoanalytic conversation. However, it is precisely because psychoanalytic conversation is *not* "relieved of action" and "free of experience" that it is also able to provide for the "discursive" redemption of the normally nondiscursive claim to truthfulness. "The true interpretation makes possible, simultaneously, the truthfulness of the subject in utterances, with which until then he had deceived (possibly others, but at least) himself." This reconciliation of truth and truthfulness remains obscure, but suggests the force of their interconnection. As a rule, truthfulness validity claims can be tested only in "relationships of action." The best communication is the one "in which, along with a truth claim, a truthfulness claim can be 'discursively' tested (and found to be unjustified)" (259–60).[14] However, while the psychoanalytic model is suggestive, it does not really challenge the commonsense view that truthfulness refers to a relation between an expressed intentional sentence and inner experience, nor does it adequately explain why it is the person's expression, not the person, that deludes or leads astray.

Habermas gives insufficient attention to the question of why an inner

14. Cf. similar remarks in Habermas's "Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis," in his *Theory and Practice*, 23–24. ("Some Difficulties" first appeared in 1971.)

life seems to be attached to the truthfulness claim. But the point I want to make here is that, in 1973, he was unequivocal in his view that truthfulness should not be identified with an inner life. As unconvincing as his argument might be at this stage, it is hard to make it compatible with the theory of communicative action (1981), in which he openly and repeatedly thematizes a subjective world. Nonetheless, not even his later, and repeated, references to a subjective world are evidence that Habermas has changed his mind about the mistake of identifying the truthfulness claim with an inner life. In 1983, for example, he was still arguing against the idea of an inner life, as can be seen from his discussion of Ernst Tugendhat's attempt to explain practical discourses on the model of first-person intentional sentences. I want to examine Habermas's response to Tugendhat because it confirms my argument that from the beginning to the end, he has not wanted to identify truthfulness with an inner life and understands such an identification as a failure to secure oneself from the consciousness tradition of the philosophy of the subject.

As reconstructed by Habermas, Tugendhat's argument for establishing practical discourses on the model of first-person intentional sentences has to be viewed, initially, in the context of his denial that an intersubjective relation is necessary for resolving disputes related to propositional and intentional sentences. The individual might enter an intersubjective relation to settle matters of truth and truthfulness, but according to Tugendhat, there is no structural requirement for such a relationship. But if, as he maintains, an intersubjective relation is unnecessary for decisions on truth and truthfulness, he needs to explain why he thinks that such a relation is required for issues related to normative rightness. Why is it that it is only when a decision is reached through argument that we consider a norm to have been justified? Tugendhat's response is that the process of justifying norms can be understood on the model of the justification connected to first-person intentional sentences. In intentional sentences the individual concerned becomes the ultimate authority on decisions regarding what is in her best interest and what action she ought to undertake. If we extend the intentional model to the deliberations of a group, he argues, the participation of all concerned can be viewed as necessary to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to have her reasons included in the common decision and not, as Habermas would have it, to secure a cognitive basis for justifying norms.[15]

15. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 68–72.

Habermas notes that Tugendhat's argument is steeped in semanticist presuppositions; these he finds problematical in their own right. However, given his aim to elaborate a cognitivist ethical theory, he is understandably concerned about Tugendhat's central contention that practical discourses have a volitional, rather than cognitive, basis. He argues that even apart from Tugendhat's suspect semanticist approach, the case for viewing the justification of norms on the model of first-person intentional sentences is flawed, notably because the idea of impartiality is a fundamental intuition that cannot be reduced to the idea of a "balance of power" among discourse participants. He points out that even Tugendhat's predicate "equally good for everyone" already assumes the necessity of an impartial judgment about everyone's interests and that this requirement cannot be understood in terms of an equal opportunity to press for one's own interests. The difficulty, according to Habermas, results from a conflation of validity claims and power claims, but can be traced to the starting point of Tugendhat's model—a semantic explication of the predicate "equally good for everyone." He maintains that instead of beginning from semanticist presuppositions, we have to see that "equally good for everyone" expresses a rule of argumentation of practical discourses. From that perspective, the idea of impartiality, which is at the basis of the moral "ought," is "rooted *in* the structures of argumentation *themselves* and does not need to be *brought in* from the outside as a supplementary normative content."[16]

In 1991 Habermas similarly challenges what he sees as Tugendhat's attempt to trace the moral "ought" to the "inner sanctum" and suggests that "central feelings of shame and guilt" are "secondary phenomena to the extent that they are *reactions* to the violation of legitimate expectations grounded ultimately in the reciprocity of the structures of recognition underlying communities in general." According to Habermas, we are socialized to suppose that there is such an "inner sanctum," but behind the moral "ought" what we actually find is "the unforced force of the good reasons in terms of which moral insights impress themselves on consciousness as convictions."[17]

Habermas's debate with Tugendhat is not simply an argument for understanding practical discourses as cognitive rather than volitional, but

16. Ibid., 72–76.

17. Jürgen Habermas, "Remarks on Discourse Ethics," in *Justification and Application*, 44 ff. (This essay was first published in German in 1991.) Cf. also Habermas's comments on Tugendhat in his *TCA*, 1:313–14.

also an attempt to discredit the idea of an "inner sanctum." Nonetheless, despite his rejection of the "inner sanctum" in relation to practical discourses, he risks reintroducing the problem in connection with what he calls the "subjective" world. The question I want to address here is whether Habermas successfully avoids the notion of an "inner sanctum." Without holding him responsible for the difficulties of his interpreters, it is fair to say that he has provided some basis for the views of (sympathetic) readers who have interpreted his truthfulness validity claim as referring to some claim to correspondence of expressed intent and actual intent. If the claim represents sincerity or "lack of deception" on the part of the speaker, if a speech act requires that a speaker express his or her "inner life" in the shape of an explication of his or her intentions, wishes, feelings, and so on, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that assumptions are being made about an authentic self that inhabits the subjective world and to which the speaker has privileged access. The mysteriousness of this "inner life" seems implicit in Habermas's statement that "nothing can be learned in an objectivating attitude about inner nature qua subjectivity."[18] In response to a question from Thomas McCarthy about how this statement might be interpreted, he suggests that it should be understood "only in the sense of a rejection of *purely* objectivistic approaches to psychology."[19] But Habermas does not deal with the implied premise of McCarthy's question that there is in fact an inner life, that the expressed intent of the speaker should more or less correspond to the person's actual intent, and that the truthfulness claim is meant to test that correspondence.

Many of Habermas's formulations are sufficiently ambiguous to allow for the inference that the expressed intent has something to do with an inner life. One might refer, for example, to his statement that a successful utterance "must count as truthful insofar as it expresses something intended by the speaker" or to his claim that a speaker's "communicative competence" includes an ability to "express his intentions in such a way that the linguistic expression represents what is intended."[20] As well, he refers to the "expressive attitude" as one in which "a subject presenting himself reveals to a public something within him to which he

18. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:237. See Cooke, *Language and Reason*, 72 ff., who also raises questions about expressive speech acts.

19. Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," 205. Cf. McCarthy, "Reflections on Rationalization," 180.

20. Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" 28–29.

has privileged access,"[21] and he emphasizes that one of the functions of speech acts is to "serve the process of self-representation—in which case the speaker makes reference to something in the *subjective world* to which he has privileged access."[22] (There are numerous examples that might be given.) Additional questions arise in Habermas's suggestion that there is an intuitive link between truthfulness and truth.[23] In sum, while he does not want to identify truthfulness with an inner life, he does not seem to be able to avoid the assumptions of a model of intentionality. In fact, he is so dependent on those assumptions that he uses them to explain his theory's most important distinction: between language oriented to reaching understanding and language oriented to consequences.

Habermas defends the view that language oriented to reaching understanding is the primary mode of language use and that language oriented to consequences, or the instrumental or strategic use of language, is "parasitic" on language oriented to reaching understanding. The question comes down to the self-sufficiency of the speech act. He maintains that the speech act is self-sufficient because the "communicative intent of the speaker and the illocutionary aim he is pursuing follow from the manifest meaning of what is said." However, because illocutionary acts are "embedded in contexts of interaction," there is always the possibility of side effects or perlocutions. Drawing on work by Austin, he argues that there are two kinds of side effects: those that the speaker does not foresee or does not intend are perlocutionary effects of a trivial kind, but perlocutions of a more serious order arise whenever a speaker, motivated by a wish to effect outcomes, uses speech for purposes that relate only contingently to the meaning of the utterance. Following Austin to the extradiscursive space of the speaker's intentions, he concludes that speech employed for instrumental or strategic purposes is not meaning-

21. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:309.

22. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 136.

23. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:444–45 n. 84, discusses the link between truthfulness and truth by referring to the following example. "If Peter truthfully confesses to loving Frances, we feel entitled to accept as true the assertion that Peter loves Frances. And if, conversely, the assertion that Peter loves Frances is true, we feel entitled to accept as truthful Peter's confession that he loves Frances." In terms of the rules of propositional logic this transition—which assimilates expressive and constative speech acts—cannot be justified. What needs to be explained, according to Habermas, is why this transition is intuitively allowable. By contrast, we resist the assimilation of constative (truth) and regulative (rightness) speech acts with the same propositional content: what is true is not necessarily just, and what is just is not necessarily true.

ful within the internal structure of the speech act, but derives its meaning or makes sense only with reference to the "context" or "external" considerations. According to Habermas, Austin shows that "illocutionary results stand in a *conventionally* regulated or *internal* connection with speech acts, whereas perlocutionary effects remain external to the meaning of what is said." Similarly, with reference to the work of P. F. Strawson, he makes the following claim: if strategic speech can succeed only if speakers do not make known their perlocutionary aims, then speech acts can be used for "nonillocutionary" aims only on the condition that they are structured to achieving illocutionary aims.[24]

Habermas has had to respond to various criticisms of his use of the terms "illocution" and "perlocution," and he has since provided some "terminological clarification." For example, he admits that he has tended to treat perlocutions as undifferentiated and that earlier (1981) he had not distinguished "latent-strategic" and "manifest" perlocutions. An example of the latter is the bank robber's demand "Hands Up!" which is marked by a deficit in illocutionary force and whose "acceptability" depends on the threat of sanctions. In the context of this clarification, Habermas's characterization of strategic speech is based on perlocutions that are "latent-strategic" and not "manifest." He maintains, however, that this revision does not affect his earlier view in any meaningful way, and he explains: "I term those effects strategically intended which come about only if they are not declared or if they are caused by deceptive speech acts that merely pretend to be valid."[25] This reiteration of the view expressed in the theory of communicative action only highlights the difficulty, however. In his debate with Tugendhat, he attempts to avoid the idea of an "inner sanctum" by looking to the structures of argumentation. But to defend the idea that language oriented to reaching understanding is the original mode of language use, he resorts to the very intentional model he has been trying to avoid.[26]

Analogous problems arise in the area of action, where Habermas at-

24. Ibid., 286–95.

25. Jürgen Habermas, "A Reply," in Honneth and Joas, *Communicative Action*, 239 ff. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), 71 ff.

26. Cf. Habermas, "Vorbereitende Bemerkungen," 131–32. In that essay, published at a time when he thought in terms of two areas of validity, facts and norms, Habermas argues that the acceptability of a speech act is not a function of the speaker's truthfulness.

tempts to distinguish communicative action from strategic action.[27] In that regard, he explains that the terms "communicative" and "strategic" are not simply analytical, but points of view under which concrete actions can be classified. He explains that he does not want "to use the terms 'strategic' and 'communicative' only to designate two analytic aspects under which the same action could be described . . . as a reciprocal influencing of one another by opponents acting in a purposive-rational manner and . . . as a process of reaching understanding among members of a lifeworld." However, the only way to identify concrete actions as falling into the one type or the other is to ascertain the actor's intentions. Habermas writes that concrete actions have to be distinguished according to "whether the participants adopt a success-oriented attitude or one oriented to reaching understanding," also that "under suitable conditions, these attitudes should be identifiable on the basis of the intuitive knowledge of the participants themselves."[28] This position, too, remains unaffected by his revised view of perlocutions. He explains that he understands communicative action as the type of action in which illocutionary aims must be pursued "without reservation," and he continues to insist that his distinction between communicative and strategic action is "not *only* analytical."[29]

Habermas's use of a model of intentionality goes against his expressed aims and further undermines his attempt to identify the rational internal structure of the lifeworld. According to his argument for a communicatively structured lifeworld, the truthfulness claim has to be rooted in the structures of argument. It cannot also refer to the extralinguistic space of an inner life secure from the intersubjective and public process associated with the redemption of validity claims. If Habermas both rejects the idea of an inner life and brings it back into his analysis at crucial points, truthfulness may be the most basic of the three validity spheres that he identifies, notwithstanding his inability to show its criticizability.

The fact that Habermas has not been able to show that truthfulness is discursively redeemable on the order of truth and (procedural) right-

27. Habermas, "Reply to My Critics," 263–69, attempts to clarify his concepts of action. See also his "Reply," in Honneth and Joas, *Communicative Action*, 242–43, where he denies all suggestions that he has in any way identified the "practice of speech with that of social action."

28. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:286.

29. Habermas, "Reply," in Honneth and Joas, 240–42.

ness claims carries implications for his expanded concept of rationality and for his interpretation of the lifeworld. Whereas his aim is to show that the differentiation into culture, society, and personality represents a rationalization of the lifeworld, that differentiation can be taken as establishing provision for reasoned action only on a limited range of matters in the modern type of lifeworld—matters related to propositional truth and procedural rightness. Moreover, the differentiation of the lifeworld, as Habermas describes it, does not indicate a rationalization of the lifeworld as such, not even for modernity. Even apart from the question of the large area of "good life" questions that must be factored out of moral theory in order to allow him to establish the rational basis of rightness claims, his formal-pragmatic argument cannot determine criticizability for truthfulness, so that truthfulness claims retain an uncertain status. Caught between form and content, they help structure the speech situation, but unlike truth and (procedural) rightness claims, they have nothing comparable to the principles of induction and universalization that allow for a temporary suspension from the world of experiences.

My analysis also raises questions about what attitude feminists should take to Habermas's moral theory. Up to this point I have maintained that his moral theory cannot address important areas of feminist concern, but I have not said that he is not justified in giving primacy to justice questions of a procedural sort. I propose to conclude the chapter by saying why that primacy cannot be justified.

Throughout his theory of communicative action and related writings, Habermas emphasizes the importance of understanding the rationalization of the lifeworld in terms of the "abstraction of *universal* lifeworld structures from the particular configurations of totalities of forms of life" at the levels of culture, society, and personality. For culture this means "the constant revision of traditions . . . that have become reflective," for society, "formal and ultimately discursive procedures for establishing and grounding norms," and for personality, "a highly abstract ego-identity."[30] Given this emphasis on abstraction and formal analysis, there is an understandable tendency for feminists to suspect that Habermas's exclusion of gender-related issues from his definition of the moral domain is attributable to a division of form and content and to conclude that his theory simply continues the prejudice, intrinsic to the philosophy of the

30. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 344–45.

subject, of identifying women with the bodily and emotional aspects of life that cannot be submitted to "rational" decisions. Habermas's theory continues to give expression to that prejudice. Moreover, from a feminist perspective, his decision to view gender-related issues as not "strictly normative" might just as well indicate a problem with his definition of the moral realm as an insufficient level of normativity of the phenomena concerned. Nonetheless, the matter of Habermas's treatment of gender cannot be reduced to the form/content division. As I argued in an earlier chapter, Benhabib is mistaken to claim that he does not acknowledge the content of the formally derived rules of argumentation that he builds into his discourse ethics. Here I want to reiterate that his procedural model of morality is not free of content and it does not make any such claim. The problem is rather the type of content that gets included in Habermas's model, as well as the precise role that content plays in his moral theory.

I suggest that we understand Habermas's discourse ethics as making reference to three types of content: (1) the content of the formally pragmatically derived rules of argumentation, (2) the content associated with substantive moral principles, and (3) a vaguely defined "contingent content" that he situates "outside" practical discourse. The first refers to the basic rights of universal access and equal participation that Habermas locates in the process rules of argument; with his characterization of that type of content I am substantially in agreement. The second comprises basic norms for regulating action, substantive guidelines, substantive principles, and the like, that, according to Habermas, are the subject matter of moral argumentation. Here, too, I find little with which to disagree. My concern is with the third type of content, the "contingent content" that is supplied by the lifeworld and that seems to be the ground of practical discourse. "Contingent content" is implied in Habermas's statement that practical discourses are "always related to the concrete point of departure of a disturbed normative agreement." Similarly, he refers to "antecedent disruptions [that] determine the topics that are up for discussion" and claims that practical discourse is "dependent upon contingent content being fed into it from outside." The idea of contingent content is also a critical point in the analysis because all such content is subject to a process, practical discourse, in which particular values, such as those related to gender and other good-life issues, are "ultimately discarded as being not susceptible to consensus." The principle of universalization, as the core part of the logic of practical dis-

course, "acts like a knife that makes razor-sharp cuts between evaluative statements and strictly normative ones, between the good and the just." Habermas admits that the principle of universalization is "selective": it precludes moral deliberation on certain kinds of questions.[31]

The key element in the selection of which questions are to be viewed as strictly moral is whether they allow for a hypothetical attitude. We can understand Habermas as raising contextualist concerns when he argues that socialized individuals cannot take a hypothetical attitude toward the "form of life and the personal life history that have shaped their own identity." However, unlike contextualists, he does not draw the conclusion that it is not possible to take a hypothetical attitude at all, or that a claim to impartiality involves an illusion that must be abandoned. In his view, if the claim to impartiality can only give rise to an "illusion," that "illusion" is still a "reality" in that it has structuring significance for relations between communicative actors. He thus maintains that in addition to questions of lifeworld identity, there are questions in reference to which individuals acquire the ability to step back from their lifeworld, so that, momentarily at least, the "fusion of validity and social acceptance" that characterizes the lifeworld dissolves.[32]

The aim of discourse ethics is not to say in advance which questions permit a hypothetical attitude and can be viewed as moral. Rather, discourse ethics names "only a procedure: practical discourse." As a procedure for testing the normative validity of proposed norms of action, practical discourse ties the validity of a hypothetical norm to the assent of all those affected, as long as that assent includes a consideration of everyone's interest and takes into account the consequences and side effects for each individual that might be expected from a general observance of the norm. It is within this process that "particular values are ultimately discarded as being not susceptible to consensus," and among the particular values discarded are issues of the good life, including those related to gender, "which invariably deal with the totality of a particular form of life or the totality of an individual life history."[33] Practical

31. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 103–4.

32. Ibid., 104, 108.

33. Ibid., 103–4. See also 85–86, where he denies that an analysis of the presuppositions of moral argumentation can be used to derive norms that have normative force outside the context of argumentation. In response to worries that the level of abstraction required by his procedural model of morality indicates an ethnocentric point of departure, Habermas argues, in his "Remarks on the Discussion," 129, that proceduralism is "the very thing that protects us from a Eurocentric self-exaggeration."

discourse, structured by the principle of universalization, thus identifies which questions are moral and which are evaluative, which are to be interpreted in terms of justice, conceived in terms of the generalizability of interests, and which are to be interpreted as issues of the good life, to be left to the participants themselves and decided against the background assumptions of a historical lifeworld.

The universalization principle is not neutral, and Habermas does not deny this. He has also said that the philosopher has to "explain the moral point of view, and—as far as possible—justify the claim to universality of this explanation, showing why it does not merely reflect the moral intuitions of the average, male, middle-class member of a modern Western society."[34] So the question is how the selectivity of the principle of universalization can be justified. Even if one agrees that the distinction between moral and evaluative questions can be explained in terms of whether they provide for a hypothetical attitude, this explanation is not a justification for why we should accept the distinction itself. As I view the matter, Habermas would likely respond to charges of possible androcentrism just as he responds to charges of possible Eurocentrism, that is, he would suggest that the selectivity of his universalization principle is based on his transcendental-pragmatic argument. As I indicated in Chapter 3, however, the transcendental-pragmatic argument can be clarified within the discourse ethics, but it cannot be defended there. That is why Habermas's moral theory is ultimately dependent on his formal-pragmatic theory of argumentation and why he refers to that theory at important points in his discourse ethics.

If I am right about Habermas's inability to sustain his formal-pragmatic analysis, he also cannot defend the selectivity of his universalizability principle. That selectivity, having once again come into question, raises anew the distinction he makes between justice and the good life. Above, I suggested that even if we accept the split between justice and the good life, criticizable validity can only be shown for truth and (procedural) rightness. However, if the selectivity of Habermas's universalizability principle comes into question, the privileging of justice questions in moral theory is no longer assured. The exclusion of gender-related issues under the title of good-life questions now takes on more critical dimensions. Just as Habermas's understanding of the concept of social

34. Jürgen Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," interview in his *Autonomy and Solidarity*, 158.

labor does not include the "female" labor of socialization, and just as his system/lifeworld distinction reproduces that difficulty, his linguistic-pragmatic concept of communicative rationality excludes gender-related issues from the definition of the moral domain. He views these issues as not "strictly normative," just as he views "female" labor as not strictly "social" labor. In neither case can his argument be defended rationally.

EIGHT

ART

In Habermas's theory of communicative action, art, science, and morality are three autonomous spheres of value culturally and institutionally differentiated in modernity, each under its own universal validity claim. According to Habermas, the validity claim for the sphere of art is "authenticity or beauty," and the internal development of art in conjunction with this validity claim gives rise to "objective advances, improvements, enhancements" specific to art. He also refers to an "artistic enterprise," that is, to a "cultural system of action" that extends to the production, distribution, and reception of art and to the mediation of cultural understanding provided by art criticism. While Habermas was later to withdraw the claim that beauty can be identified with truthfulness, he still retains the view that the "value-enhancing" rationalization of art includes "aesthetic-expressive knowledge by individuals of their own subjectivity or inner nature." This type of knowledge is gained through therapeutic dialogue, as well as through explication of the values underlying "need interpretations, the interpretations of desires and emotional attitudes." He suggests that value standards are "reflected in an exemplary manner" in works of art, including literature, music, and the fine arts, and he identifies aesthetic-practical knowledge as a type of knowledge connected to the sphere of art. He concludes that for aesthetic-practical knowledge, the relevant form of argumentation is therapeutic and aesthetic critique and the model of transmitted knowledge is the work of art. Thus, he maintains, art can be understood, like science and morality, as an autonomous value sphere with a distinctive form of argumentation and a distinctive production of knowledge.[1]

1. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:165–77, 334.

Despite this programmatic gesture, Habermas's views on art are sketchy and difficult to reconstruct, let alone assess. We need a fuller description of aesthetic-practical knowledge and its rationality and some explanation of how the three rationalities (aesthetic-practical, cognitive-instrumental, and moral-practical) are mediated in everyday communicative practice. A very problematical aspect of the proposal is his claim that the "inner logic" of art involves a process of rationalization, or a cumulative type of learning.[2] Even sympathetic readers remain largely skeptical,[3] and one might be tempted to say that Habermas's position on art is ill-considered, underdeveloped, neglected in part because of his deeper interest in moral-practical rationality. But the fact remains that he regards art as one of three autonomous spheres of value culturally and institutionally differentiated out in modernity and he understands the internal development of each sphere as an integral part of the rationalization of the lifeworld. He also offers his model of autonomous spheres as an argument against aesthetic modernism and in support of his "project of modernity." We would be mistaken to think that Habermas's references to art, however fragmentary and unsatisfactory, are an unimportant part of his theory.

In a 1980 talk, which Habermas gave upon receiving the Adorno prize from the city of Frankfurt, he explains that the cultural and institutional development of autonomous art was made possible, in the period of the Renaissance, when the category of beauty and the idea of beautiful objects were first constituted. Literature, music, and the fine arts had formerly been tied to church and court, but in the Renaissance they began to assert their independence, a process that culminated in the middle of the nineteenth century with the rise of a consciousness of "art for art's sake." At the same time modern art, with its claim to know the "whole" of life, also became a "critical mirror" through which to view the social world and, from the beginning, held out the promise of a deliverance from a world divided against itself. This utopia of reconciliation, intrinsic to art, is basically at odds with art's claim to autonomous development, and as artists became preoccupied with aesthetic objects, the promised utopia became ever more elusive. Radical attempts to force a

2. This claim is required by the model of autonomous spheres. See Habermas, *TCA*, 1:239.

3. See the essays in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, esp. Martin Jay, "Habermas and Modernism," 125–39.

reconciliation between art and life—notably, the surrealist revolts—had exaggerated expectations. According to Habermas, they took art at its word and mistakenly assumed that art did in fact have the special knowledge it claimed to have. He also thinks that while aesthetic modernism has begun to lose its luster, we are still captivated by the nineteenth-century "cult of the new": the "distinguishing mark" of the modern is the "new," and whatever is new will be "overcome and made obsolete through the novelty of the next style."[4]

Habermas regards as "nonsense experiments" all those avant-gardist attempts "to level art and life, fiction and praxis, appearance and reality to one plane . . . to declare everything to be art and everyone to be an artist, to retract all criteria and to equate aesthetic judgment with the expression of subjective experiences." More tragic, however, is the fact that the "cult of the new" amounts to an "exaltation of the present." The changed consciousness of time, expressed through the metaphors of vanguard and avant-garde, reflects "the experience of mobility in society, of acceleration in history, of discontinuity in everyday life," but the "new value placed on the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral, the very celebration of dynamism, discloses a longing for an undefiled, immaculate and stable present." Even worse, this longing for a stable present feeds into the prejudices of neoconservatives like Daniel Bell, who view demands for self-realization and authentic self-experience as products of an "adversary culture" and call for a revival of religious faith to provide individuals with the stable identities needed for successful integration into society and work.[5]

Habermas's concerns about neoconservativism seem even more relevant today, as everywhere in the West economic problems are being addressed through a withdrawal from social programs and a return to traditional values. I also grant that aestheticism drives much postmodernism. But Habermas goes too far (in 1980) when he calls Foucault and Derrida "young conservatives." More remains to be said about contemporary theory and practice, especially about the boundary Habermas

4. Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," 3–15.

5. Ibid., 4 ff. Cf. Habermas, "Neoconservative Culture Criticism in the United States and West Germany: An Intellectual Movement in Two Political Cultures," in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 78–94. Cf. also Peter Bürger, "The Significance of the Avant-Garde for Contemporary Aesthetics: A Reply to Jürgen Habermas," *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981): 19–22. For a discussion of the aesthetic dimensions of feminism and critical theory, see Michelle Renaud, "Critical Theory, Utopia, and Feminism" (Ph.D. diss., Carleton University, Ottawa, 1995).

wants to draw between the postmodernism of a Foucault or a Derrida and his own vision of the "project of modernity" that gives up the "usual concentration upon art."[6]

As I discussed in an earlier chapter, Habermas views the postmodern questioning of rationality as ineffective, as always on the verge of being overwhelmed by instrumental reason, and tending to fall back into aestheticism. In his book on the philosophical discourse of modernity,[7] in which this oppositional stance is particularly conspicuous, he argues that Foucault and Derrida, like Horkheimer and Adorno, mean to be critics of subject-centered reason when they take up Nietzschean-type analyses, but that having taken on the limitations of Nietzsche's aestheticism, they can only sway helplessly back and forth between the transcendental and the empirical and do not see that the "way out" actually lies in an identification and clarification of the normative and intersubjective elements of their own critical practice. Habermas makes this argument over and over against these and other theorists, and he claims that to escape the pitfalls of the philosophy of the subject, we need a "*different* paradigm"—the paradigm of mutual understanding (310). I have already shown that his critical assessment of Foucault and Derrida has limited success and in the end points to shortcomings in his own theory. Let me now turn to the other part of his argument, namely, that his concept of communicative reason is an alternative to the aesthetically based and subject-centered reason typical of postmodernism.

Habermas claims that his theory's starting point is different from that of postmodern analyses influenced by Nietzsche and that this starting point allows for different conclusions. He maintains that Nietzschean-type analyses begin from the "embodied, speaking and acting subject," show that this subject is "not master in its own house," and conclude that the "subject positing itself in knowledge is in fact dependent upon something prior, anonymous, and transsubjective—be it the dispensation of Being, the accident of structure-formation, or the generative power of some discourse formation." Once the logos of an "omnipotent subject" is shown to be a "misadventure" and the "defenses of subject-centered reason are razed," there is the hope that the logos will some-

6. Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," 8 ff. Cf. Nancy Fraser, "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?" in her *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 35–54.

7. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.*

how or other collapse. He describes his own theory as a "different, less dramatic, but step-by-step testable critique of the Western emphasis on logos." Instead of starting from the "embodied, speaking, and acting subject," the theory of communicative action begins from an "attack on the abstractions surrounding logos itself, as free of language, as universalist, and as disembodied." If we take this approach, he maintains, we can see that Western logocentrism is a "systematic *foreshortening* and *distortion* of a potential always already operative in the communicative practice of everyday life." This potential has been only "selectively exploited" because Western self-understanding, reinforced by the philosophy of the subject, views human beings as "distinguished in their relationship to the world by their monopoly on encountering entities, knowing and dealing with objects, making true statements, and implementing plans." In his view, this self-understanding has to change if we are to understand the potential for reason in the communicative practices of everyday life, and it can change once we see that it is not the "use of propositions per se" but the "*communicative use* of propositionally differentiated language" that characterizes a sociocultural form of life and makes it possible to sustain the necessarily social reproduction of life of the human species (310–12).

Habermas's argument that communicative reason is an alternative to subject-centered reason is based on a strategy of expansion. His basic claim is that Western self-understanding confines reason ontologically, epistemologically, and linguistically "to only one of its dimensions," whereas his formal-pragmatic analysis is an argument for a three-dimensional view of the world. He argues, in the mode of his theory of communicative action, that there is an internal connection between meaning and validity not only for truth but also for rightness and truthfulness, so that we can refer not just to a "world" of facts, but also to a "world" of norms and to a "world" of subjective experiences. He maintains that this recognition of three worlds follows from the identification of three areas of criticizable validity and that it allows us to expand the phenomenological concept of the lifeworld. It becomes possible to refer not only to the background knowledge needed for propositional contents (culture), but also to two additional types of background knowledge: the "tacitly presupposed solidarities on which illocutionary acts are based" (society) and the "background of the speaker's intentions" (personality). Whereas subject-centered reason looks to standards of truth and success governing the relation of the knowing subject to the external world of

objects, communicative reason refers to all three components of speech acts (propositional, illocutionary, and intentional) and is based on the "capacity of responsible participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to intersubjective recognition" (311–14).

According to Habermas, his theory breaks with the philosophy of the subject because, if intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity has to occur over three worlds, validity can no longer be understood simply in relation to the objective world and there is no longer any need for the figure of the "knowing subject" that sees only a world of entities and is compulsively driven to turn everything around itself into objects. He also claims that this argument applies not only to the individual subject, as in classical liberalism, but also to the collective "self-referential subject-writ-large," as in praxis philosophy. Whereas Marx understood class struggle, revolution, and the release of the emancipatory potential built up in the forces of production as an "intrinsically rational process," communicative reason is no longer tied to a Marxian philosophy of history, but is "derived from the structures of linguistically generated intersubjectivity and concretized in terms of rationalization processes in the lifeworld." One might want to object that Habermas is providing something equivalent to the idea of an "intrinsically rational process" in his claim that the differentiation of the lifeworld into culture, society, and personality is also the release of a potential for rationality supposedly inherent in communicative action, but anticipating that objection, he argues that such a process cannot be understood as "self-reflection writ large" (347–48). While rational reconstruction provides for a "heightening consciousness" of the human situation, it does this through the attention it gives to "anonymous rule systems" and not, as in subject-centered reason, through self-reflection (300).

But does the attention Habermas gives to "anonymous rule systems" break with the philosophy of the subject? A major claim of his theory is that lifeworld reproduction cannot be reduced to either social integration or socialization, and that the two processes are connected with each other and with cultural reproduction. Habermas is talking about the simultaneous and interconnected social reproduction of groups and individuals in a communicatively structured lifeworld. However, this view is still based on the idea of groups and individuals and is not necessarily controversial from a Marxist perspective. It is at least conceivable that a communicative reinterpretation of the social reproduction of indi-

viduals and groups could be made compatible with praxis philosophy, in which the collectivity is a subject constituted by individuals. But here, in his discussion of the philosophical discourse of modernity, and in an attempt to distance himself from a subject-centered reason based on self-reflection, he claims that individuals and groups can be "members" of a lifeworld "only in a metaphorical sense" (343). I regard that statement, like Habermas's earlier claim that truthfulness has nothing to do with an inner life, as more of an unsuccessful attempt to avoid an undesirable outcome than a coherent explanation. My suspicion is heightened by his remark about the "terminological difficulty" of expanding the ontological concept of world to include three worlds (314). Contrary to what he says, the difficult is not simply terminological.

Habermas's strategy of expansion involves understanding the social and subjective worlds on the model of the objective world. He writes that truthfulness and normative rightness are "truth-analogous concepts" and that the "relations of the speech act to the speaker's intention and to the addressee can . . . be conceived in terms of the model of relations to the objective world."[8] Even as proposed, and especially given his (unsuccessful) attempt to avoid understanding truthfulness on the model of truth, this strategy for expanding the truth model suggests that communicative reason might be more closely tied than Habermas would want to the image of a "knowing and purposively acting subject." This view is confirmed in my examination (in Chapter 7) of his formal-pragmatic analysis. As I discussed, Habermas patterns the rightness claim on the claim to propositional truth, argues that there are equivalent processes of rationalization in the moral-practical and the cognitive-instrumental spheres, and claims that the principle of universalization in practical discourses is analogous to the principle of induction in theoretical ones. I have demonstrated that even if we accept the split he makes between justice and the good life in the moral-practical sphere, he can only establish two areas of criticizable validity—truth and (procedural) rightness. His inability to establish a third area of criticizability undermines his expansionist strategy because that strategy, as he understands it, requires discursiveness, intersubjective recognition, and criticizable validity over the three worlds.

8. Jürgen Habermas, "Toward a Critique of the Theory of Meaning," in his *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 75.

Habermas's formal-pragmatic argumentation is flawed, and strictly speaking, if I am right, this should be the end of the matter. But the matter is not settled because my analysis follows Habermas's formal-pragmatic argumentation and so does not address an understanding of reason that while basic to his theory, cannot be addressed in formal-pragmatic terms.

Habermas's "project of modernity" requires that we give up the "usual concentration upon art." His argument is that the radical modernist attempt to negate the abstraction of an autonomous art singled out just one cultural value sphere, whereas a "reified everyday praxis can be cured only by creating unconstrained interaction of the cognitive with the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive elements."[9] The idea of "unconstrained interaction" does not refer to the structural aspects of reason that are the object of Habermas's formal-pragmatic theory, but rather to an everyday communicative practice wherein all three rationality spheres are supposedly intertwined. If the attempt to level the abstraction related to autonomous art is misguided because it allows the abstractions of science and morality to stand, what would it mean to cure a "reified everyday praxis" by establishing "unconstrained interaction" of elements belonging to all three spheres? This idea of reason cannot be translated into formal-pragmatic terms; yet it is fundamental to Habermas's response to aesthetic modernism.

Nor is this reference to an everyday reason that we always already suppose an isolated incidence in Habermas's argumentative strategy. For example, in defending his theory of communicative action as an alternative to postmodernism, he writes about a "potential always already operative in the communicative practice of everyday life" and gives special emphasis to the "communicative use" of language. It is not difficult to see that more is at stake in his argument than an explication of linguistic structures. One can also point to formulations like "undamaged communication" and "communication free of domination" and to statements about an idea of reason that is embodied, if "only in a distorted manner," in communicative structures and the relationships they make possible. "Again and again," he maintains, "this claim [to reason] is silenced; and yet in fantasies and deeds it develops a stubbornly transcending power, because it is renewed with each act of unconstrained understanding,

9. Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," 11–12.

with each moment of living together in solidarity, of successful individuation, and of saving emancipation."[10]

Habermas presupposes an ideal of reason, but given the formal-pragmatic framework of his theory, the substance of the reason that he presupposes is not explicated, and in Habermas's view cannot be explicated. Nonetheless, he continues to insist that his theory is Marxian and even utopian. For example, he states that his concept of communicative reason "does contain a utopian perspective; in the structures of undamaged intersubjectivity can be found a necessary condition for individuals reaching an understanding among themselves without coercion, as well as for the identity of an individual coming to an understanding with himself or herself without force." This utopian perspective persists, despite the fact that his concept of communicative reason "comprises *only* formal determinations of the communicative infrastructure of *possible* forms of life and life-histories."[11] In fact, according to Habermas: "The utopian perspective of reconciliation and freedom is ingrained in the conditions for the communicative sociation of individuals; it is built into the linguistic mechanism of the reproduction of the species."[12] This ideal of reason has to be viewed as aesthetically based rather than rationally derived, and Habermas himself points to this connection between art and reason when he writes: "Modern art harbors a utopia that becomes a reality to the degree that the mimetic powers sublimated in the work of art find resonance in the mimetic relations of a balanced and undistorted intersubjectivity of everyday life."[13]

To those readers who would like a more explicitly utopian theory, Ha-

10. Habermas, "Reply to My Critics," 221–28.

11. Ibid., 227–28. He is responding to Agnes Heller, "Habermas and Marxism," in Thompson and Held, *Critical Debates*, 21 ff. Cf. Nancy Love, "What's Left of Marx?" in Stephen K. White, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46–66.

12. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:398.

13. Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 202. For a discussion of aesthetic judgment and community, see David Ingram, *Reason, History, and Politics: The Communitarian Grounds of Legitimation in the Modern Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 279 ff. See also Ingram, *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), esp. 180 ff., where he argues for a concept of aesthetic rationality as a way of dealing with the disjunction between theory and practice. Cf. Peter J. McCormick, *Modernity, Aesthetics, and the Bounds of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 307–19, who correctly observes that Habermas does not give sufficient attention to how we are to understand the relation between rational action and "reconciliation."

bermas replies that his theory embodies an ideal of reason that cannot be explicated. The fact that his answer discourages further questioning is itself a problem to be investigated. What is it about Habermas's understanding of reason that it does not or cannot give an account of itself? Why should we be satisfied with an assurance that his theory of the structural aspects of reason secures a reason that we would all want to defend? In the remainder of this chapter I shall try to shed light on what Habermas does presuppose by examining his claim that his concept of communicative reason moves beyond Horkheimer and Adorno by laying open the "rational core" of the mimetic capacity expressed in art. Here I also draw on Wellmer's attempt to make Adorno's understanding of the truth of art compatible with the theory of communicative action.

Habermas argues that the gloomy predictions of Horkheimer and Adorno's "dialectic of enlightenment" are the result of their unnecessary acceptance of paradox and performative contradiction. But he also claims that despite their negative assessment of enlightenment thinking, Horkheimer and Adorno suggest the idea of "a universal reconciliation, an emancipation of man through the resurrection of nature." They have no explication of this truth but as a "placeholder for this primordial reason," they name "a capacity, *mimesis*, about which they can speak only as they would about a piece of uncomprehended nature." Habermas explains that mimesis, or imitation, indicates a "relation between persons in which the one accommodates to the other, identifies with the other, empathizes with the other," and that it alludes to a "relation in which the surrender of the one to the example of the other does not mean a loss of self but a gain and an enrichment." In Horkheimer and Adorno, the mimetic capacity stands for what has been destroyed through the spread of instrumental reason, but it is also the means whereby an "instrumentalized nature makes it speechless accusation." Habermas maintains that Horkheimer and Adorno cannot explain this capacity, not because it is inexplicable, but because of the limitations of their philosophical framework. They understand reason as always instrumental and must therefore understand the communicative and interactive elements of mimesis as impulse, "the sheer opposite of reason." In the end Adorno surrenders "all cognitive competence to art in which the mimetic capacity gains objective shape."[14]

14. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:382–90. For Habermas's comments on Walter Benjamin's mi-

The sphere of art is itself not free of the "dialectic of enlightenment," however, and Wellmer shows that an antinomic structure penetrates even into Adorno's "non-violent" aesthetic synthesis. He demonstrates that for Adorno, the truth of art is connected to its ability to show reality "*as* unreconciled, antagonistic, divided against itself," but it can only do this "in the light of reconciliation, i.e. by the non-violent aesthetic synthesis of disparate elements which produces the semblance of reconciliation." In Adorno's view, this antinomic structure, while dominant in modern art, is impossible to escape because it belongs to the historical division of image and sign, intuition and concept, and ultimately leads to the disintegration of aesthetic meaning. In this context, art's survival and authenticity come to depend on its ability to articulate the "negation of synthesis" as aesthetic meaning, so that aesthetic synthesis is achieved "in the very process of negating it." Implicated in both the production and negation of aesthetic meaning, art must balance "between affirmative semblance and an anti-art that is bereft of semblance." There is no concept to refer to the "success" of the balancing act, which strictly speaking, is not possible, and art's "aesthetic success, which is to say its truth and authenticity, is inseparable from a remnant of aesthetic semblance, and thus of untruth."[15] Wellmer sees a relief from this dialectic in Habermas's model of communicative action, where the utopian perspective indicated by Adorno's concept of a "non-violent" aesthetic synthesis "migrates . . . into the realm of discursive reason itself." Here, in Habermas's theory, the "utopian projection [of an unimpaired intersubjectivity] is not the Other of discursive reason, but the idea which discursive reason has of itself."[16]

The question is how to make Adorno's idea of aesthetic synthesis compatible with the concept of communicative reason. According to Habermas, Horkheimer and Adorno's ideas of reconciliation and freedom can be "deciphered as codes for a form of intersubjectivity, however utopian it may be, that makes possible a mutual and constraint-free understanding among individuals in their dealings with one another, as

---

metic theory of language, see his 1972 essay, "Walter Benjamin: Consciousness-Raising or Rescuing Critique," in his *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, 146–50.

15. Albrecht Wellmer, "Truth, Semblance, Reconciliation: Adorno's Aesthetic Redemption of Modernity," in *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism*, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 8–11. (The essay appeared in German in 1983.)

16. Ibid., 14.

well as the identity of individuals who come to a compulsion-free understanding with themselves—sociation without repression." Once the codes are deciphered, certain phenomena become available for investigation, specifically phenomena related to "the intersubjectivity of possible understanding and agreement—at both the interpersonal and intrapsychic levels." Habermas supports this view by suggesting that a "cognitive function" for mimesis was not totally absent in Adorno's attempts "to show what the work of art owes to the power of mimesis to unlock, to open up," and he maintains that his formal-pragmatic theory lays open the "rational core of mimetic achievements" through a linguistic-pragmatic concept of communicative reason.[17] But it is far from obvious how Habermas's formal-pragmatic concept of communicative reason can give expression to the "rational core" of mimesis and so bring what is valuable about the aestheticist idea of reconciliation into his theory. He would have to clarify how his theory relates to the utopian aspects of art, as well as provide an explication of how Adorno's aesthetic theory can be read from his formal-pragmatic perspective. In this regard we are fortunate to have Wellmer's analysis of Adorno's concept of the truth of art.

Wellmer suggests that it is possible to make Adorno's idea of aesthetic synthesis compatible with a formal-pragmatic perspective only if we acknowledge art's function in "non-aesthetic" forms of communication, that is, its role in effecting "real" changes in the way we understand ourselves and the world. If it is true that the work of art is not simply an aesthetic object but also in some measure relates to a "real" possibility of reconciliation, the work of art is not the "illusory presence of a condition that does not yet exist," as Adorno thought, but rather the "provocative latency" of a process in which aesthetic experience is connected with communicative action. He shows how this connection is possible by distinguishing among three aspects of "everyday" truth: the "apophantic," the "endeetic" (truthfulness), and the moral and practical. He then claims that aesthetic rightness or validity (*Stimmigkeit*), while "touching on" all three aspects, cannot be identified with everyday truth, or with any one of its aspects, but has to be understood as a "phenomenon of interference" between the three aspects. He also suggests that Adorno can be interpreted as recognizing such "moments of interference" in connections between the mimetic-expressive and rational

17. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:390–92.

elements in a work of art, as well as in the relations among truth, semblance, and reconciliation. This argument, according to Wellmer, separates two dimensions of the truth of art that Adorno had fused, namely, the "truth content" of a work of art and the function of art in giving structure to our understanding of ourselves and the world, its ability to "open up the experience of reality, and correct and expand it."[18]

This redescription of Adorno's aesthetic theory supports Habermas's idea of aesthetic-practical rationality. Whereas Adorno "substantialized" the relation between reconciliation and the art work and saw that relation as a "central moment of the truth *content* of art," Wellmer's reformulation of the concept of the truth of art aims at a retrieval of a "truth *about* art, and not the truth content of any individual work of art." Wellmer explains that from a formal-pragmatic perspective, the truth of art is not truth "in the literal sense" but rather a "*potential* for truth." Works of art are "*bearers* of truth potential" in that they produce effects that have a potential for disclosing the truth, and we can thus refer to a "truth-*claim* which corresponds to the truth-*potential* of works of art, and which is inseparable from an *aesthetic* validity-claim" (23–26).

Wellmer also draws on the experiential basis of aesthetic discourses to support Habermas's critique of aesthetic modernism. That experiential basis becomes prominent in cases where an aesthetic object becomes a matter for dispute: participants can support their claims about beauty by referring to the "truth" of their experiences. (This relation between experience and validity in aesthetic discourses distinguishes them from theoretical and moral-practical discourses, in which validity is established on the basis of the force of the better argument.) According to Wellmer, we have to conclude that aesthetic experiences are treated "within the three dimensions of truth, truthfulness, and moral and practical rightness *simultaneously*." If this is the case, both the "truth-*potential*" and the "truth-*claim*" of art are tied to the "complex relationship of interdependency between the various dimensions of truth in the living experience of individuals, or in the formation and transformation of attitudes, modes of perception, and interpretations." He claims that this "practical character" of aesthetic cognition brings the "receiving, communicating and acting subjects . . . into the relationship between art, reality and utopia" and shows that art is not cut off from life, as is supposed in aesthetic modernism (23, 27 ff.).

18. Wellmer, "Truth, Semblance, Reconciliation," 21–23.

Wellmer's reformulation of Adorno's aesthetics brings complexity but also clarity to the idea of aesthetic-practical rationality. However, while he is sympathetic to Habermas's aims for redirecting critical theory into linguistic analysis and intersubjective understanding, he poses new difficulties for Habermas when he defines the formal-pragmatic "truth" of art as aesthetic rightness or validity. These difficulties return us to the question of the rationality of art that I raised at the beginning of this chapter.

Habermas's theory of communicative action matches up the sphere of autonomous art with the truthfulness validity claim, whereas Wellmer maintains that translating Adorno's concept of the truth of art into formal-pragmatic terms means that we have to understand aesthetic rightness as a validity claim distinctive to the sphere of art. Wellmer suggests that the tendency (in Habermas and others) to understand aesthetic validity on the model of truthfulness results from a too literal reading of the terms generally used to explain aesthetic experiences. Terms such as "saying" and "expressing" are dominant in modern art, but the artist "does not (literally) *say* something; and the authenticity of a construct is therefore not decided by the question whether the artist was being truthful." Wellmer believes that the opposite is the case: "The truthfulness of the artist, in so far as we can speak of it at all, is *shown* by the authenticity of the construct." If we are to understand aesthetic rightness against a formal-pragmatic concept of everyday truth, then neither truth (as in Adorno) nor truthfulness (as in Habermas) can be used "in a *non-metaphorical* sense" to refer to art. According to Wellmer, there is a "*metaphorical* interweaving of truth and truthfulness—and even of normative correctness—in the work of art," and this interweaving can be explained only by the fact that "the work of art, as a symbolical construct that carries an *aesthetic* validity-claim, is at the same time the object of an *aesthetic experience* that refers back to our ordinary experience in which the three dimensions of truth are interwoven in a *non-metaphorical* sense." He admits that it is difficult to explain how the work of art "refers back to our ordinary experience." But he insists that there is "something about art which leads us to view works of art themselves—or at least many of them—as vehicles of truth-*claims*; and these claims to *truth* that are made by works of art are connected with their *aesthetic* claim to validity" (24, 27–28).

Habermas's linking of truthfulness and art is not incompatible with his

view (discussed in Chapter 7) that truthfulness should not be seen as relating to an inner life, but rather to the person's expression. But his strong tendency to have recourse to a model of intentionality closes off this option, and he fully accepts Wellmer's conclusions. He now maintains that aesthetic validity cannot be identified with "just one" of the three validity claims, neither with truthfulness, as in his theory of communicative action, nor with truth, as Adorno thought, nor with normative rightness. He also agrees that truth, truthfulness, and rightness, which are differentiated in communicative action, can be attributed only "metaphorically" to works of art.[19] Before addressing this use of "metaphorical," I want to raise a more general question. If the "truth potential" of aesthetic validity cannot be identified with "just one" of the three validity claims, and if it is "interwoven" with all three claims, how does aesthetic validity fit into the overall structure of the theory of communicative action?

Since accepting Wellmer's account of aesthetic validity, Habermas has tended to "add on" aesthetic validity to the three validity claims he identified for communicative action. For example, in his book on the philosophical discourse of modernity he treats aesthetic validity (here translated as aesthetic harmony) as a fourth validity claim. "Communicative reason finds its criteria in the argumentative procedures for directly or indirectly redeeming claims to propositional truth, normative rightness, subjective truthfulness, and aesthetic harmony."[20] But aesthetic validity gets no systematic analysis, and Habermas continues to present his concept of communicative reason on the basis of the three-sphere structure of his earlier work and to refer to that structure in his argument against postmodernism. But the idea of aesthetic validity has implications for his theory, as indicated in another publication where he contrasts the "constitutive linguistic" function of world disclosure represented by the claim to aesthetic validity with the three "inner-worldly linguistic" functions (presenting facts, creating intersubjective relations, and expressing subjective experiences) represented by claims to propositional truth, normative rightness, and subjective truthfulness. Here we have a rather striking contrast between two types of linguistic functions; the

19. Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," 203. Cf. his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 418 n.18, where he writes that Wellmer has convinced him that "the harmony of a work of art—aesthetic truth, as it is called—can by no means be reduced, without further ado, to authenticity or sincerity."

20. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 314.

one type is connected to language as such and the other to the three linguistic "worlds" of communicative action. Habermas also gives a clear indication that the justification of validity claims attached to value standards does not have the rational basis he has tried to establish for the justification of validity claims connected to facts, norms, and subjective experiences. He writes that in aesthetic evaluations the validity of the work itself can be a reason for "assuming world-shaping [*weltbildend*] modes of perception," so that value standards can be justified "only indirectly, namely by means of authentically world-disclosing productions."[21]

James Bohman has responded with concern to Habermas's introduction of what he takes to be a "distinctively Heideggerian" world-disclosive function for language. He maintains that Habermas is "wrong to correct his previous intuition" about the "poetic function" of language in empirical contexts and suggests that an acknowledgment of world disclosure as a linguistic function gives too much to postmodern theories of language overwhelmingly focused on the idea of a "preinterpreted" world and artistic innovation. According to Bohman, we should reconceptualize disclosure as relevance and replace the figure of the artist with that of the radical social critic. I have argued, in response to Bohman, that disclosure is too complex to be written off as relevance,[22] but I do think that Habermas cannot admit into his theory of communicative action a disclosive function for language without also giving thought to what this means for the claims he makes in the theory. However, whereas Bohman wants to say that Habermas was right the first time around, when he did not attribute real disclosive power to the poetic aspects of language, I think we have to ask what it is about Habermas's theory that he can now suggest world disclosure as a "constitutive-linguistic" function. How can we make sense of this announcement? And does it really indicate a departure in his thinking? Let me turn to the idea of autonomous art, which is an enduring feature of Habermas's theory and somewhat of a subtext in Wellmer's analysis of Adorno.

21. Habermas, "Reply," in Honneth and Joas, *Communicative Action*, 227.

22. James Bohman, "World Disclosure and Radical Criticism," *Thesis Eleven* 37 (1994): 82–97. This essay is based on his paper, "Truth, Criticism and Disclosure," presented at the 1992 American Philosophical Association Meeting, in Louisville, Kentucky. My response to Bohman, "Truth, Disclosure and Relevance," was also presented at the 1992 APA Meeting. Cf. Bohman, "Formal Pragmatics and Social Criticism: The Philosophy of Language and the Critique of Ideology in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 12:3 (1986): 331–53.

Wellmer's analysis supports the idea of autonomous art, as can be seen in his challenge to Peter Bürger. He states that Bürger's demand that the institution of art be transformed to allow everyone the freedom to develop their "productive potential" gives too much to the "aesthetics of production," and he argues, against Bürger (and others), that transforming the institution of art cannot mean abolishing the "culture of experts" and the idea of the "great" art work. On the contrary, a "democratic opening-up of society" would need great art: "Without the paradigmatic production of 'great' art, in which the imagination, the accumulated knowledge and the skill of obsessively specialized artists is objectivized, a democratically generalized aesthetic production would presumably decline into an amateur arts- and craftism."[23] Moreover, Wellmer's reformulation of Adorno's aesthetics, which separates the substantial from the functional aspects of art, actually allows the truth content of art to retain the special appeal it had for Adorno. We might not understand how works of art can be "vehicles of truth-*claims*," but there is "something about" many works of art that make them so, and the truth claim of art, while connected to the claim to aesthetic rightness or validity, is attached to the "works of art themselves." Consequently, Wellmer maintains that the cognition achieved through art "cannot be expressed in words," neither by the participants themselves, nor by philosophy, which despite what Adorno hoped, is not in a position to tell us "what the 'semblance' of beauty is really about." In fact, aesthetically achieved cognition must remain outside conceptual knowledge, and we can do no better than talk about that cognition. According to Wellmer, aesthetic cognition is more like a "capability rather than abstract knowledge, something more like an *ability* to speak, to judge, to feel or perceive than the result of cognitive effort."[24] This naturalization of aesthetic cognition moves it out of the realm of linguistic intersubjectivity, precisely where Habermas's formal pragmatics was supposed to take it. We can therefore confront Wellmer with Habermas's complaint against Horkheimer and Adorno, that they saw the mimetic capacity as a "piece of uncomprehended nature," as an "impulse."

The difficulty is prefigured in Wellmer's claim that truth, rightness, and truthfulness can be used to refer to art only in a "metaphorical sense" and that we should think in terms of a "metaphorical interweav-

23. Wellmer, "Truth, Semblance, Reconciliation," 30–31.
24. Ibid., 22.

ing" of all three validity claims in art works. This use of "metaphorical" is not an explanation of works of art or of the aesthetic experiences that are supposedly transmitted through them. In fact, to say that truth, rightness, and truthfulness can be used only metaphorically to refer to art works confirms the self-proclaimed autonomy of modern art and preserves the status of art as a sphere of pure experience, uncontaminated by the world, and having its own special knowledge. Because Habermas accepts Wellmer's suggestion about a "metaphorical interweaving" of truth, truthfulness, and rightness in works of art, we can expect to find in his theory a similar pattern: an espousal of an aesthetic-practical rationality that presupposes the "truth" of art.

Habermas argues in his theory of communicative action that the three autonomous spheres of modernity must each be able to claim a cumulative process of learning. He maintains that the continuity of the knowledge specific to each sphere "can be guaranteed only by learning processes becoming reflective—that is, being coupled in feedback relations with specialized and institutionalized forms of argumentation." In each case we have to be able to identify the existence of "plausible relations to a typical form of argumentation specialized in accord with a universal validity claim."[25] He takes it to be uncontroversial that science involves a directional learning connected to the principle of induction and reflected in the epistemic contents of theoretical knowledge. More problematical, but still sustainable, in his view, is the claim that the sphere of morality is marked by a cumulative learning connected to the principle of universalization and reflected in the epistemic contents of moral-practical knowledge. On this model, there should also be a pattern of rationalization specific to art. Referring to dramaturgical actions, which "embody a knowledge of the agent's own subjectivity," as a type of rational action specific to art, Habermas maintains that this type of action gives rise to aesthetic-practical knowledge, that the form of argumentation is therapeutic and aesthetic critique, and that works of art, including literature, music, and the fine arts, stand as the model of transmitted knowledge.[26]

We are used to saying that we learn from art. For example, we might report that a literary work has changed our understandings of the world, redirected our lives, made us aware of certain issues, and so on. How-

25. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:238–39.
26. Ibid., 334.

ever, it is hard to see how aesthetic-practical knowledge can be cumulative and directional in a way that would guarantee the continuity of the knowledge in the sphere of art. But if this view is implied by the overall logic of Habermas's argument and by his specific references to art, his theory also suggests another interpretation of the "value enhancement" specific to art. In his discussion of Weber, Habermas explains: " 'Advances' in the domain of autonomous art move in the direction of an increasingly radical and pure—that is, purified of theoretical and moral admixtures—working out of basic aesthetic experiences."[27] This statement indicates that the idea of a cumulative learning in art does not refer to aesthetic-practical rationality, but rather to an "aesthetic-expressive rationality" that is connected to the "inner logic" of art and independent of the practical aspects of aesthetic cognition.[28] This cumulative learning cannot be linked up with intersubjectivity either. According to Habermas, "expressively determined forms of interaction" such as countercultural groups are not capable of giving rise to "structures that are rationalizable in and of themselves, but are parasitic in that they remain dependent on innovations in the other spheres of value."[29]

While the idea of aesthetic-expressive rationality, as opposed to an aesthetic-practical rationality, is only suggested in the theory of communicative action, Habermas has since declared that we are looking in the wrong place if we think that learning in the sphere of art can be tracked through discourses about art, that is, in aesthetic-practical knowledge. He claims that "it is the works of art themselves, and not the discourses about them, that are the locus of directed and cumulative transformations." For art, "what accumulates are not epistemic contents, but rather the effects of the inner logical differentiation of a special sort of experience: precisely those aesthetic experiences of which only a decentered, unbound subjectivity is capable." In modernity, there is an "ever more radical uncoupling of this potential for experience, the purification of the aesthetic from admixtures of the cognitive, the useful, and the moral." This decentering of subjectivity indicates an "increased sensitivity to what remains unassimilated" in our linguistically saturated interpretations of everyday life, with its pragmatic, epistemic and moral de-

27. Ibid., 177–78.

28. Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," 9, uses the term "aesthetic-expressive rationality." In his *TCA*, 1:238 ff., he refers to "aesthetic-practical rationality." See also *TCA*, 2:326, where he refers to the "aesthetic-expressive [complex] of knowledge."

29. Habermas, *TCA*, 1:238–39.

mands. The release from everyday interpretive challenges "effects an openness to the expurgated elements of the unconscious, the fantastic, and the mad, the material and the bodily—thus to everything in our speechless contact with reality which is so fleeting, so contingent, so immediate, so individualized, simultaneously so far and so near that it escapes our normal categorical grasp." The artist, in his reflective use of aesthetic materials and technique, "opens up a space for experiment and play," art becomes a "laboratory," and the art critic emerges as an "expert." While reluctant to refer to aesthetic "progress," Habermas insists that there is learning "in the sense of a concentrically expanding, advancing exploration of a realm of possibilities structurally opened up with the autonomization of art."[30]

Habermas offers an idea of aesthetic-practical rationality, conceived in terms of intersubjective understanding and linguistic analysis, that opens up discussion on the practical aspects of aesthetic cognition. He also presents an idea of aesthetic-expressive rationality, conceived in connection with an unbounded subjectivity relentlessly engaged in the purification of aesthetic experiences from "admixtures" of the cognitive, useful, and moral and fundamentally opposed to the interpretive demands of intersubjective understanding. In this way he reproduces in his theory the two contradictory strands of modernist thinking on art, the belief that art must have a practical effect on the organization of everyday life and the conviction that art is not tied to practice, not intersubjective, not discursive. In characterizing the expressive sphere of art as a nondiscursive space, as one of three spheres of innovation, and as subject-centered, Habermas brings into his theory an aesthetically inspired ideal of reason that is far removed from intersubjective understanding and linguistic analysis. The conclusion he draws from Wellmer's account of aesthetic validity, that art has a "constitutive-linguistic" or world-disclosive function, gives a different emphasis to his theory, but it is not exactly a departure from the theory because it builds on one of two opposing tendencies within it.

30. Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," 200–201.

NINE

INTIMACY

The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Habermas's 1962 book on the historical origins and subsequent evolution of bourgeois institutions,[1] is written in the tradition of Marxian ideology critique. In that book he acknowledges that the "category" of bourgeois public sphere is "typical of an epoch" and cannot be abstracted from the "unique developmental history" of late-eighteenth-century Europe.[2] He insists, however, that the category is more than bourgeois and that it is able to survive the structural transformation and disintegration of classical bourgeois institutions. Habermas's aim, in *Structural Transformation*, was to inquire whether the idea of a public worked out in the historical context of late-eighteenth-century Europe can provide the basis

1. Habermas's *Structural Transformation* first appeared at *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Darmstadt: Luchterland Verlag, 1962); it was republished with a new foreword by Suhrkamp Verlag in 1990. For critical commentaries following the publication of the English edition, see Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cf. discussion in Marie Fleming, "Women and the 'Public Use of Reason,'" *Social Theory and Practice* 19 (Spring 1993): 27–50. Habermas's concept of the public sphere has inspired several major studies. See, for example, Kenneth Baynes, *The Normative Grounds of Social Criticism: Kant, Rawls, and Habermas* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); and Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*.

2. Habermas, preface to *Structural Transformation*, xvii. He also maintains that the category of the bourgeois public sphere cannot be "transferred, idealtypically generalized, to any number of historical situations that represent formally similar constellations."

for a normative standard against which subsequent historical public spheres might be assessed.[3] As we know, Habermas now maintains that ideology critique cannot disengage its theoretical categories from their determination in bourgeois culture and thus cannot secure an independent basis for critical theory. Nonetheless, Habermas has not abandoned the motivations of his early project, despite his methodological turn to rational reconstruction, and in his theory of communicative action he attempts to reconceive historical progress and social evolution in terms of the development of cognitive structures. As he said in 1990, he would now present a more nuanced picture, but the theory that he has been elaborating since the 1960s has changed "less in its fundamentals than in its degree of complexity."[4]

In this chapter I want to discuss the gender aspects of Habermas's account of the public sphere of modernity. If, as he says, the fundamentals of his theory have remained in place for some three decades, and if it turns out that his treatment of gender in his early work on the public sphere follows the pattern I established for his later theory, there is further evidence in support of my argument that the problem of gender in Habermas's theory is related to his theory's fundamentals.

Habermas's account of the public sphere, as might be expected, makes use of the discourse of public and private, but he also singles out for special reference the intimate sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family. As I show in this chapter, he refers to the bourgeois intimate sphere to account for the cultural and psychological bases of the bourgeois concept of humanity, to explain the institutional and normative force of the new public sphere, and to demonstrate the public sphere's potential for self-transformation, that is, its ability to transcend the narrow class interests of the bourgeois. Habermas achieves this understanding on the basis of an uncritical reading of bourgeois intimacy: he explains the truth of bourgeois ideology, its promise of reconciliation, by referring to the "illusion of freedom" in the bourgeois family, but he does not problematize the gender inequality that is sustained by that illusion. Even once his an-

3. This motivation is noted by commentators. Cf., for example, Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 292, and Calhoun's "Introduction," 2. See also Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "The Public Sphere: Models and Boundaries," in Calhoun, 99–108.

4. Jürgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 422. "Further Reflections" is a translation of Habermas's 1990 foreword to *Strukturwandel*. Cf. Holub, *Critic in the Public Sphere*, who shows that the idea of a public sphere has had important practical implications for Habermas.

drocentrism is acknowledged, it is not clear how exclusions based on gender can be addressed, as Habermas now suggests, in his class-based model of the public sphere's internal dynamic.

Habermas begins his book on the public sphere with a detailed investigation of the historical and legal uses of the terms "public" and "private," which are, as he notes, of Greek origin. He remarks that the Hellenic public sphere has had a "peculiarly normative power" since the time of the Renaissance, but that it also held an appeal for earlier social formations. Through the tradition of Roman law, the categories of public (*publicus*) and private (*privatus*) and the notion of the public sphere (*res publica*) were passed down and applied even in the Middle Ages, when "an opposition between the public and private spheres on the ancient (or the modern) model did not exist" and even when manorial authority supported "no status that in terms of private law defined in some fashion the capacity in which private people could step forward into a public sphere." In contrast to the classical understanding of the public as the realm of what citizens had in common, for the feudal regime it was the particular in the form of privileges and immunities that was at the "core . . . of the realm that was 'public.' " Nonetheless, there were signs in the High Middle Ages of that "publicness" which was eventually to be resituated within a new kind of "publicity." Attributes of lordship, for example, the ducal seal, were "public," and the English monarch was said to have "publicness." Habermas characterizes this "*publicness (or publicity) of representation*" as a "status attribute." He further maintains that while the manorial lord's status was in itself neither "public" nor "private," it was represented "publicly." Under pressure of political and economic modernization, the feudal "carriers of the representative publicness"—nobles, prince, and church—split into public and private elements, and the way was cleared for the development of a "modern" sphere of public (state-related) authority embodied in a permanent administration and standing army. As "public" came to designate the state that had developed into an entity identifiable over against the ruler's person, "private" came to refer to what lay outside the sphere of the state apparatus.[5]

The opening pages of Habermas's book also draw attention to the parallels between Hellenic and bourgeois public spheres. Both make provi-

5. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 4–12.

sion for a "public of private people," and in each case the public sphere is institutionally both separate from and tied to a private one. In this context he draws on Hannah Arendt's idea of the "rise of the 'social' "[6] to show that whereas the Greek public sphere was committed to "the properly political tasks of a citizenry acting in common (i.e., administration of law . . . and military survival)," its modern counterpart shifts to the "more properly civic tasks of a society engaged in critical public debate (i.e., the protection of a commercial economy)."[7] In contrast, therefore, to the Hellenic model, whose reproductive activities are of private interest, hidden in the *oikos*, and not a matter for public discussion, the establishment of capitalism institutes a "*private sphere of society that has become publicly relevant*" (19). Habermas departs from Arendt's concerns in his search for what it was that made bourgeois publicity a unique historical experience; otherwise, the type of publicity that emerges with bourgeois hegemony might have to be viewed as an intrinsic part of the development of capitalism. For Habermas, something more than capitalist relations had to be involved in the "rise of the 'social,' " and this "more" he finds in the bourgeois "public use of reason," which allows a conceptual cut between the bourgeois public sphere and all preceding institutional arrangements, including those of the Greek world. However, to identify the factor that makes this conceptual cut possible, he departs from the discourse of public and private that opens his book. He now makes reference to a third sphere, the intimate sphere of the bourgeois family and maintains that it is at the "core" of the private (55).

The relation between reason and intimacy, though of originary significance for the new public sphere, is relatively underthematized in *Structural Transformation*, and in order to make it more visible, I offer a reading that gives attention to the fact that his analysis is structured by an uninvestigated tension between overlapping diachronic and synchronic accounts.

According to Habermas's diachronic account, the "public use of reason" is historically rooted in the art of rational-critical public debate that bourgeois intellectuals learned from their encounters with courtly-noble society. Having gained increasing independence from the court,

6. Ibid., 19; a reference to Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

7. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 52.

some members of the nobility became a cultural-political force in the "town" where they played an important role in the promotion of institutions devoted to reading and discussion, the coffee houses, salons, and *Tischgesellschaften*. Habermas observes the multiplicity of styles and publics and debates that separated the salons, *Tischgesellschaften*, and coffee houses. In the salons, for example, women were key participants, whereas the coffee houses denied them access. Again, the salons were noteworthy for the social mix of nobility, *grande bourgeoisie* of finance, and intellectuals who came together on an "equal footing"; the coffee houses, on the other hand, embraced large segments of the middle classes, including craftsmen and shopkeepers. On matters of economics and politics, the coffee houses did not shy away from heated debate, whereas practical political discussion in the salons tended to be "inconsequential"; he is inclined to think that the mixed gender of the salon participants was a factor in the level of seriousness of the discussion. The *Tischgesellschaften*, which were fewer and less imposing than their English and French counterparts, were colored by a "strong preponderance of middle-class academics" (29 ff.).

Despite these differences, Habermas argues that the salons, coffee houses, and *Tischgesellschaften* mark a break with older communicative practices because of the institutional criteria that they shared. For example, the social intercourse of the participants embodied not so much a presupposition of equal status as a total disregard of status. "*Les hommes*, private gentlemen, or *die Privatleute* made up the public not just in the sense that power and prestige of public office were held in suspense; economic dependencies also in principle had no influence." The important point, he contends, is not whether the idea of the public was actually realized in the salons and their counterparts, but that it became "institutionalized and thereby stated as an objective claim." Another feature of the new discursive activity is the problematization of areas of life formerly not subject to question. At a time when the rational orientation involved in capitalism demanded ever greater information, it was only a matter of time before interpretation in philosophy, literature, and art would escape the monopoly held by church and court. "To the degree . . . to which philosophical and literary works and works of art in general were produced for the market and distributed through it, these culture products became similar to that type of information: as commodities they became in principle generally accessible." However exclusive the actual public, it was always embedded in "a more inclusive public of all

private people, persons who—insofar as they were propertied and educated—as readers, listeners, and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion." Inclusiveness was also promoted by the emergence of a concert-going public that developed when admission on the basis of payment turned musical performances into commodities. Music, like literature and philosophy, thus assumed the form of cultural products freed of ties to a purpose set by court or church. The history of the theater is somewhat more complex, but here too, Habermas maintains, a "public in the strict sense of the word" could come into existence only when the theater declined as an expression of courtly publicity (36–40).

Habermas views the culture of the "town" and the salons as a "bridge" between the collapsing courtly form of publicity and the new publicity connected with the emerging bourgeois public sphere. The commodification of culture, already a factor in the literary institutions of the urban nobility, was, it might be said, intensified by bourgeois intellectuals, who learned the art of rational-critical public debate in their adventures in the "towns." This fact creates difficulties for Habermas's "bridging" thesis, however, because he needs to explain the specificity of bourgeois publicity. That specificity has to be identified, if he is to defend the claim that bourgeois publicity was more than the rational-critical public debate that was essentially and internally related to the development of capitalism. That is to say, Habermas needs to free bourgeois publicity from its identification with capitalism if he is to find in it the basis for a critical standard to assess subsequent historical public spheres. It is at this point that he introduces what appears to be a counterthesis, the view that the literary institutions of the bourgeois owed their existence to a decisive break with those of the urban nobility. This unexpected turn in the argument redirects the analysis and introduces a genealogical perspective in which structure is privileged over history. The emphasis is now on rupture rather than continuity and on the arbitrariness of historical forces rather than evolution.

What distinguishes Habermas's synchronic account is the location of institutional changes at the level of the bourgeois household as the principal factor in the development of a bourgeois public sphere. In his words, "The rational-critical public debate of private persons with one another flowed from the wellspring of a specific subjectivity . . . [that] had its home, literally, in the sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family." According to this account, a specifically bourgeois public sphere was

made possible by the deep structural change that occurred at the level of gender relations. That change was taking place as the bourgeois were making social and economic advances and as they were learning the art of rational-critical public debate. As the institutional face of gender relations, the patriarchal conjugal family became the dominant family type within the bourgeois strata and eventually the social norm as it displaced the open "houses" typical of aristocratic life and replaced the "playful intimacy" of the aristocracy with a newly found "permanent intimacy." The change in family life was reflected in architecture. In the once dominant extended family, the parlor had had a "public" character; there, the "lady of the house," in the company of its "master," had performed the representative functions in the presence of servants and neighbors. This "public" chamber disappeared from the home of the bourgeois family, or rather it was replaced by two complementary chambers. One was the living room designed to be used "privately" by the spouses and smaller children. The second was the salon, the "public" sphere where "family heads and their wives were sociable." This salon, as Habermas writes, was connected only by name to that institution of conviviality and rational-critical public debate of aristocratic society (43–46).

The bourgeois "public use of reason" cannot be explained without reference to the patriarchal conjugal family, which Habermas grasps theoretically by the idea of a third sphere. He now distinguishes between the *public* (in its literary and political forms), the *private* (economic), and the *intimate* (conjugal family). To sum up this part of his argument, while the bourgeois learned the art of rational-critical public debate from the urban nobility, the public sphere that they created, in literary works, but also in philosophy and law, became the expression of a sphere of subjectivity that was specifically bourgeois. To miss that point—as one might be inclined, given that Habermas himself privileges the diachronic aspects of his analysis—is to fail to see that the bourgeois "public use of reason" was not, in essence, a continuation of the salon-based rational-critical public debate.[8] Rather, bourgeois subjectivity was structurally tied to a concept of "humanity" that originated as a feeling

8. The diachronic dimensions of Habermas's analysis sometimes emerge even more strongly in commentaries on his book than in the book itself. Cf. Thomas McCarthy's remarks in his introduction to Habermas's *Structural Transformation* and Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures." At other times the structural argument is summarized without critical comment. Cf. Calhoun, "Introduction."

of "human closeness" in the innermost sphere of the conjugal family. That "closeness" was related to the "permanent intimacy" characteristic of the new type of family life (in contrast to the "playful" intimacy of the urban nobility).

The experience of the intimate sphere, according to Habermas, gave rise to a consciousness of a common "humanity," and to explain how this happened, he recounts the flood of letter exchanges and diaries of the eighteenth century that Foucault would later situate in the tradition of a "confessional mode."[9] Habermas places these "confessing" activities in a different (and more positive) light with the suggestion that they were intrinsically "audience-oriented" and "experiments with the subjectivity discovered in the close relationships of the conjugal family." Taken together, these Habermasian and Foucaultian insights increase our understanding of a complex historical process. However, the significance of Habermas's point that there is a transfer of experience from the intimate to the public spheres gets lost as he now effaces the intersection of intimate and public. On the surface, the experiences of the former simply spilled over into the latter, as author and reader engaged in "intimate mutual relationships" and "talked heart to heart" about what was "human." He relates that the bourgeois reading public sought insight about itself in the moral weeklies and Richardson's *Pamela*, as it would later on in the domestic drama and the psychological novel.[10] Foucault was similarly struck by the confusion of identity experienced by privatized individuals set adrift from the cohesiveness of tradition. The bourgeois could not, like the aristocrats they were displacing, simply refer to their superior "blood": according to Foucault, they constructed a body for themselves by looking "inward." As Habermas reports, the reading public grew as public libraries were founded, book clubs and reading circles were established, and weekly and monthly journals increased their sales. A liberal *political* public developed out of the liberal *literary* public as the state-governed apparatus succumbed to the pressure of the newly confident bourgeois to debate publicly the general rules governing commodity exchange and social labor.[11]

9. Cf. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

10. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 48–51.

11. Habermas's aim is to show the logical priority of the literary public over the political one. At the level of practice, the situation was more complex. For a discussion of Habermas's reception in the field of history, see Anthony J. La Vopa, "Conceiving a Public:

The separating out of the public into its literary and political components allows for a significant departure from the unified and enclosed public sphere model of the Hellenic world. This separation is also essential to Habermas's idea of the public as a "critical" sphere wherein public (state-related) authority is required to legitimate itself before "public opinion" and in the name of a common "humanity." It seems relatively certain that the bourgeois came to see themselves as authentically human and that they regarded the beliefs they developed about themselves in the "psychological emancipation that corresponded to the political-economic one" as applying in principle to a common humanity. In a trivial sense, they could not help but profess that the "voluntariness, community of love, and cultivation" that they believed they had discovered in a process of self-clarification inhered in humankind as such.[12] But Habermas is not simply referring to beliefs about a humanity that might be found to be false. Whatever the historical circumstances in which it emerged, the bourgeois experience of humanity was an event of world-historical importance because it made possible a concept of humanity that was not derivative (based on higher law) and that was in principle inclusive. Thus, even though historically restricted, through property (and implicitly education) qualifications, the public of the constitutional state had a "strict" view of the public sphere: "In its deliberations it anticipated in principle that all human beings belong to it."[13] Whereas the publicity of representation typical of the court had been located in the person of the sovereign, the site of the new publicity was the "people." Early bourgeois writers soon identified the new publicity with openness and the "rule of law," the very opposite of the secrecy and arbitrariness typical of courtly practices.[14]

In earlier chapters I remarked that Habermas introduced gender at various points in his theory, that the gender aspects of his discussion are undertheorized, that as a rule his references to gender are in support of some presumably larger point, and that once the point is established, gender is put to one side. This pattern can be found in his study of the public sphere. He understands the public world by referring to a familial sphere whose feeling of "human closeness" is the basis for a concept of

Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe," *The Journal of Modern History* 64 (March 1992): 79–116.

12. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 46–47.
13. Ibid., 85.
14. Ibid., 89 ff.

a common humanity. Moreover, the idea of bourgeois intimacy, while crucial to his attempt to extract the emancipatory potential of the new public sphere, does not get sustained attention, and the discussion moves on to supposedly larger themes.

Habermas's study is tightly focused around the problem of locating the source of the principle of inclusiveness, the public sphere's crucial justificatory claim, and once he locates that source in bourgeois intimacy, the question posed by his book seems to have found an answer. The principle of inclusiveness is the assurance he needs that bourgeois publicity cannot be reduced to the property-based institutions with which it is initially related.[15] While his attention is drawn elsewhere, and while he refers only in passing to bourgeois gender relations, his analysis of the public sphere continues to be explicated with reference to gender. For example, the idea of bourgeois intimacy enables him to indicate how the bourgeois "public of private persons" distinguished itself from the Greek one. In the Hellenic model, public life, or the sphere of the *polis*, represented what was common to Greek citizens (adult free males). It was constituted in discussion and associated with the activities of the market place, but extended to responsibilities in courts of law and to the common action of athletic games and war. As Habermas points out, movable wealth and economic power could not substitute for "being the master of a household and of a family," nor, conversely, could someone be excluded from the *polis* merely because he was too poor or had no slaves. While the patrimonial slave economy gave citizens freedom from productive labor, their status as citizens was strictly tied to their "private autonomy as masters of households."[16] The private status of the Greek master of the *oikos*, "upon which depended his political status as citizen, rested on domination without any illusion of freedom evoked by human intimacy," whereas the bourgeois "public of private persons" owed its existence to "the background experience of a private sphere that had become interiorized human closeness." Insofar as there was no "human closeness" in the Greek world, there was also no intimate sphere.[17] In Habermas's analysis, the Hellenic dyad of public

15. Ibid., 45–46. He writes that while the "line between private and public sphere extended right through the home," the privatized individuals who "stepped out of the intimacy of their living rooms into the public sphere of the *salon* . . . were not reducible to 'society.' "

16. Ibid., 3.

17. Ibid., 52. As much as we might be inclined to read back an idea of "human closeness" into the world of the ancients, there is good reason to believe that we are falsely

and private yields to the modern triad of public, private (economic), and intimate.

Habermas does not deny that bourgeois intimacy, which has no parallel in the Greek model, is a camouflage for male domination. However, he maintains that the "human closeness" of the new family type is more than a feeling that inspires bourgeois ideology. For the bourgeois, he claims, "humanity's genuine site" is the intimate sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family and not the public sphere itself, as one might be led to believe from a comparison of the Greek model. The "experience of 'humanity' originated [in modernity] . . . in the humanity of the intimate relationships between human beings who, under the aegis of the [patriarchal conjugal] family, were nothing more than human" (48–52). The view that the intimate sphere is "humanity's genuine site" has significant implications for Habermas's understanding of the public sphere. As mentioned above, he makes reference to the intimate sphere to specify a disjunction within the public sphere between its literary and political dimensions; that disjunction allows for a critical public space and makes it possible to generate new meanings of what constitutes "humanity." He also refers to the intimate sphere to explain the internal dynamic of the public sphere.

According to Habermas, there was a profound "ambivalence" between *bourgeois* and *homme* in the intimate sphere that was transferred to the public one. Within the conjugal family, the bourgeois was "two things in one: owner of goods and persons and one human being among others, i.e., *bourgeois* and *homme*." Similarly, the privatized individual was represented as *homme* in the literary public sphere and *bourgeois* in the political one.

> As soon as privatized individuals in their capacity as human beings ceased to communicate merely about their subjectivity but rather in their capacity as property-owners desired to influence public power in their common interest, the humanity of the literary public sphere served to increase the effectiveness of the public sphere in the political realm. ***The fully developed bourgeois public sphere was based on the fictitious identity of the two roles assumed by the privatized individuals who came together***

projecting onto Greek life an experience that was foreign to it. It was not as difficult, as one might think, for Plato to imagine the abolition of the Greek family.

> *to form a public: the role of property owners and the role of human beings pure and simple.*

As an ideology, the concept of a common humanity served to conceal the particular interests of property owners and manifested the "socially necessary consciousness in its essential falsity." However, the concept of humanity was "more than" ideology and "more than" illusion because it contained an aspect that could "lay a claim to truth inasmuch as it transcend[ed] the status quo in utopian fashion, even if only for purposes of justification." The "unmasking" depended, historically and logically, on exploding the "fiction of the *one* public" and exposing the "false" identification of the (political) public of "property owners" and the (literary) public of "common human beings" that had enabled class interest to assume the "appearance of the general interest" (55–56, 88).

Habermas attempts to reproduce this dynamic in his model of the contradictory institutionalization of the public sphere. Here I would like to summarize the basic features of this model, which as I discuss below, Habermas continues to defend against feminist challenges.

At the heart of Habermas's model of the public sphere is an ambivalence in the concept of law. As "an expression of will," the concept of law "included as an element the claim . . . to the exercise of domination," but as an "expression of reason" it retained "other, older elements of its origin in public opinion" and in fact aimed at the dissolution of domination. Cross-cutting this ambivalence between force and freedom is another one between a particular and a general interest, as reflected in the equation of bourgeois and homme—property owner and "human being." These ambivalences, which structure the model, also destabilize it, and this destabilization is sufficient to actualize its built-in mechanism for self-transformation—there are potentially ever new definitions of "human beings" and "universal interest." Therefore, while the historical transformation of the public sphere is initiated by the socialist rejection of the liberal equation of property owners and human beings and by the Marxist identification of new relationships of power between the class of property owners and the class of wage-earners, the rejection of a particular (bourgeois) claim to represent a general interest does not dislocate the internal dynamic of a public sphere committed to the idea of a general interest and to the noncoercive use of reason. The countermodel does, however, reverse the classical liberal distinction between public and private. Whereas the liberal model requires that private people

come together as a public to secure their private sphere legally and politically, the "universal concern" of the mass of non-owners who gain access to the public sphere (through electoral reforms) is no longer the reproduction of social life under the conditions of private appropriation, but rather the reproduction of social life as such. The liberal "public of private persons" is thereby transformed into a "public of citizens," and criticism and control by this new public extend to the formerly privately controlled area of socially necessary labor. The principle of inclusiveness, which initially operates to justify exclusions on the basis of property ownership, eventually provides theoretical support for the inclusion of previously excluded groups of men (79 ff.).

These actual and potential inclusions are the expressions of a "public use of reason" that Habermas's model is designed to reflect. It is crucial that he theorize the possibility of permanent disruption by means of a separation within the public sphere of the two wings of the literary and the political, with the former, as he calls it, a "training ground" for the latter. What is less clear is what the relation is between the "public use of reason," whose origins are in the gender relations of the patriarchal conjugal family, and the public sphere's gender-based exclusion. Habermas refers briefly to the historical exclusion of women, notably in relation to the liberal "public of private persons" and in a passage dealing with private autonomy. There he writes that "the [liberal] individual's status as a free human being [was] grounded in the intimate sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family" and legally guaranteed through such "basic rights" as "personal freedom" and "inviolability of the home." The legal securing of the "inviolability" of the home is a violent act perpetrated on those "human beings" legally confined to it, but this apparent "irrationality" goes beyond the obvious circumstance that the individual was a male head of the household or that the patriarchal conjugal family was already presupposed in the category of humanity because, as Habermas relates, "family and property" were the "foundation of private autonomy" (83). If, as he also says, the intimate sphere (patriarchal conjugal family) is at the core of the private (property) (55), then the bourgeois family is at the "core," not only of property, but of private autonomy itself.

Habermas's expressed view is that private autonomy had originally derived from one's status as a private (economic) person and by virtue of one's control over the means of production, but that within a public of citizens where one's public status is not formally tied to property, it

had to be grounded in the public sphere. "Private persons came to be the private persons of a public rather than a public of private persons." He views this development as a reversal. But the guarantee of the exercise of private autonomy, in the liberal model no less than in the socialist countermodel, is secured by one's participation in a public sphere. This suggests that the private (economic) is already within the logic of the public. Moreover, either private autonomy means something very different in the countermodel, where it cannot refer to private control over the means of production, or its connection to the private (economic) in the liberal model does not exhaust its meaning. That private autonomy cannot be reduced to the economic is suggested by the presence, in the countermodel, of what Habermas calls a "derivative" private autonomy. As the range of potentially public matters increases, a sphere of "informal and personal interaction of human beings . . . [is] emancipated . . . from the constraints of social labor (ever a 'realm of necessity') and become[s] really 'private.' " This "really 'private' " is the intimate sphere, which was obviously intended to survive the socialization of the means of production (128–29). In Engels's words, "The relations between the sexes [would become] a purely private affair, which concerns only the two persons involved."[18] If the removal of the intimate sphere from legal regulations of every kind is the *ne plus ultra* of this "derivative" private autonomy, the "original" private autonomy was only contingently related to one's status in the private (economic) sphere. The "illusion of freedom" in the intimate sphere would have been constitutive of the bourgeois concept of humanity.

Habermas's intention was to develop a model of the public sphere that could account for the normative content of the universalizing tendency of modernity, and once he had traced that content to the "illusion of freedom" in the bourgeois family, he developed a model that could refer—descriptively and normatively—to a public sphere, now conceived as independent of the intimate sphere. In the tradition of ideology critique, he "finds" the "standards" of reason "already given" in "bourgeois ideals" and takes them "at their word."[19] If the "origin" of ideology is, as he claims, in the "identification of 'property owner' with 'human being as such' in the role accruing to private people as members

18. Friedrich Engels, "Principles of Communism," quoted in Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 129.

19. Habermas, "Horkheimer and Adorno," in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 116.

of the public in the political public sphere of the bourgeois constitutional state,"[20] ideology critique also finds its "origin" in the identification of "property owner" with "human being as such," notwithstanding the fact that it contests this identification as a false one.[21] He reports that the concept of humanity originated with a feeling of "human closeness" in the bourgeois intimate sphere, but he does not consider that the concept of humanity, which was immediately public (audience-oriented), only concerned the public one. The intimate sphere, despite its importance for his explanation of the "public use of reason," falls away as he takes up anew the discourse of public and private. Habermas's model is so faithful a reconstruction of the public sphere's internal dynamic that it reproduces the pattern of gender relations at the center of that dynamic. While the intimate sphere yields the "truth" for the public one, gender relations become invisible in his model, just as they did in the bourgeois public. The extraction of "truth" then becomes a publicly resolvable question, spatially removed from the sphere of intimacy that, in the meantime, has been legally secured. To talk about exclusion, for Habermas, no less than for his predecessors in the nineteenth century, now means to expose the "false" identification of the (political) public of "property owners" and the (literary) public of "common human beings."

"Public reason" presupposes a type of logic that Habermas would later demonstrate for the value sphere of autonomous art. Bourgeois intimacy has all the markers of art's "inner logic": a space in which the "illusion of freedom" yields a promise of reconciliation, the site of the "experience" of humanity, a realm of subjectivity decentered and unbounded, a laboratory in which a free subjectivity can experiment and play and hit upon what is "really" human, a sphere of truly innovative human activity. Habermas explicitly connects intimacy and art: the experience of the intimate sphere, in conjunction with art, notably literary works, gives rise to the consciousness of a common humanity that becomes the basis for the bourgeois concept of humanity. He maintains that this concept of humanity, with its principle of inclusiveness, gets written into the culture (literary public sphere) and institutional struc-

20. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 88.

21. Nor can the problem be resolved by moving to the second-order reflectiveness of Adorno's performative contradiction wherein one is unhappily resigned to the thought that power lurks in the very reason through which truth is produced. Cf. Habermas, "Horkheimer and Adorno," 116 ff.

ture (political public sphere) of modernity and that it now becomes possible to have a rational organization of society. But how rational can this organization be if it is grounded in a gender-structured bourgeois intimacy and its "illusion of freedom"? At a minimum, Habermas would have to show how the principle of inclusiveness that structures the "public use of reason" can address exclusions based on gender.

Habermas's study of the public sphere was written in 1962, and on its appearance in English translation it has attracted much interest from Anglo-American readers. Some of these newer readers have charged that his book "idealizes" the bourgeois public sphere by overvaluing its principle of inclusiveness and by paying insufficient attention to its exclusionary mechanisms.[22] One type of exclusion is related to the "plebeian" public that functioned for a time during the French Revolution and persisted in some form in the Chartist and anarchist movements of the nineteenth century. In 1962 Habermas had thought of the plebeian public as "merely a variant" of the bourgeois one.[23] His attention was drawn to the powerful dynamic of a literate public, and he gave little or no thought to the historical repression of the illiterate (uneducated) publics that also claimed to represent the "people." The second type of exclusion is the historical and legal exclusion of women of all classes from the public sphere established by the bourgeois. Habermas's 1962 analysis simply takes note of the fact that women were legally barred from participation, and it has been left to feminists to raise concerns about the historical confinement of women to the domestic space of the private sphere.[24] Joan Landes argues that the institutionalization of bourgeois norms at the time of the French Revolution cut off the possibility of establishing a more gender-balanced public.[25] Carole Pateman points to

22. Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures," 289 ff., esp. 306. Cf. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 109–42.

23. Habermas, "Further Reflections," 425. See also Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, preface to the 1962 edition, xviii.

24. Some of this research has been explicitly related to Habermas's idea of public and private spheres. See, for example, Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, esp. Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" 21 ff.; Landes, "Public and the Private Sphere," 91 ff.; and Fleming, "Women and the 'Public Use of Reason,'" 117 ff. See also Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*.

25. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*. Cf. Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31:1 (1992): 1–20, who criticizes Landes's use of the terms "public" and "private" in the context of the Old Regime.

the androcentric nature of modernity in her argument that the coexistence of public equality and private inequality is not a contradiction of the modern "fraternal" patriarchy, but part of a "coherent social structure."[26]

Habermas responds to these criticisms in the foreword to the 1990 edition of his book. He admits that in 1962 he had underestimated the significance of the plebeian public, and he concedes that "the exclusion of women from . . . [the bourgeois public sphere] dominated by men now looks different than it appeared to me [in 1962]." He agrees that the model he developed in the 1960s to explain the internal dynamic of the public sphere cannot be simply extended to meet newer feminist critiques: "If one seriously tries to make room for the feminist dynamic of the excluded other . . . the model is conceived too rigidly." However, he stands by his basic thesis of the built-in self-transformation of the public sphere and maintains that gender exclusion, along with plebeian exclusion are "aspects . . . whose significance [he had] underestimated" in 1962. He also insists that "a mistake in the assessment of the significance of certain aspects does not falsify the larger outline of the process of transformation."[27]

The plebeian public disappeared from history, and its historical significance is a matter for debate, but feminism is a political struggle that originates with the institutionalization of bourgeois norms at the time of the French Revolution and continues to this day. As defender of the "project of modernity," Habermas is understandably concerned about the considerable skepticism many feminists bring to any assessment of modernity's potential. In an attempt to counter such skepticism and in specific reference to Pateman's work,[28] he writes that the question raised by feminists is "whether women were excluded from the bourgeois public sphere *in the same fashion* as workers, peasants, and the 'people,' i.e., men lacking 'independence.' " He understands the problem as follows. If we proceed from recent changes in the relationship between the sexes, we can see that these changes have had an impact on

26. Pateman, *Sexual Contract*, 219 ff.

27. Habermas, "Further Reflections," 427–30. Cf. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access," 259–88; Seyla Benhabib, "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas," in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 73–98; and Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures," 307 ff.

28. Habermas refers to Carole Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract," in John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988), 101–27. Cf. Pateman, *Sexual Contract*.

both the economic system and the "private core area of the conjugal family." In contrast, the nineteenth-century demands of underprivileged men involved changes to the economic system, but could be met without disturbing the bourgeois pattern of family relations that, with the growth of capitalism, had become dominant for the working class as well. From this observation it would appear that the exclusion of women from the new public sphere of modernity was determined in a "gender-specific" way, that is, women's exclusion had "structuring significance" for the public sphere and for the relation between public and intimate spheres.[29]

Habermas argues that notwithstanding these facts, the exclusion of women cannot be regarded as constitutive of the public sphere. In the first place, feminist critiques of modernity still appeal to "rights to unrestricted inclusion and equality, which are an integral part of the liberal public sphere's self-interpretation." According to that argument, by (implicitly or explicitly) making such appeals feminists situate themselves within the discourse of modernity and find themselves in performative contradiction if they deny the legitimacy of the discourse they have made their own. But Habermas also maintains that the possibility, even the necessity, of basing critique on claims to inclusion and equality is indicative of the public sphere's built-in potential for self-transformation. He argues that, with the establishment of the public sphere, no exclusion can be regarded as constitutive in the "Foucaultian" sense. He explains that Foucault understands constitutive exclusion as the absence of a "common language" between the participants of the hegemonic discourse and the "protesting others": "the formative rules of a hegemonic discourse . . . [are] mechanisms of exclusion constituting their respective 'other.' " According to Habermas, the idea of constitutive exclusion is useful for understanding the collapse of traditional societies: in the bourgeois revolutions, the "people," having been constituted as the "other" of aristocratic society, had no choice but to "move and express themselves in a universe that was different and *other*." However, he denies the relevance of the idea of constitutive exclusion for analyses of modernity and argues that the liberal public sphere had a built-in potential for self-transformation that made Foucaultian-type discourses structurally impossible.[30]

29. Habermas, "Further Reflections," 427–28.
30. Ibid., 429.

In his recent work on law (1992) Habermas continues to hold that "rights to unrestricted inclusion and equality built into liberal public spheres prevent exclusion mechanisms of the Foucauldian type and ground a *potential for self-transformation*."[31] From the perspective I have taken in this book, I agree that, on the most general level, feminists do claim rights to unrestricted inclusion and equality. But it is one thing to say, with Habermas, that these claims are a structural component of the discourse of modernity and quite another to suggest that they point to a real potential for self-transformation. What would this mean in the context of feminist critiques of modernity? If we start from the fact that changes in the relationship between the sexes have an impact not only on the economic system, but on the internal relations of the family, and if we can deduce that the exclusion of women from the public sphere of modernity had structuring significance for the bourgeois public and intimate spheres, as well as for the relation between them, we need to understand the nature of the restructuring that would be required to meet women's claims to full participant status. It is not enough to say that rights to inclusion and equality "ground a potential for self-transformation." We also need a critical theory that can provide normative categories for assessing the gendered structures of actual public and intimate spheres, as well as their gender-specific relation. But nowhere does Habermas suggest that gender should become a central concern of contemporary critical theory. To the contrary, in his recent reflections on his public sphere book and in his 1992 work on law, he does little more than call for the public autonomy of women. He simply encourages feminists, as the "affected parties," to make the division of roles and responsibilities between women and men a matter of public discussion and political contestation in the "general public sphere."[32]

The general public sphere, which is structurally analogous to what Habermas once called the literary public sphere, is constituted by a complex network of communications and informally organized public discourses that serve as grids or filters for channeling some matters raised in the general public sphere into the procedurally organized political system for possible legislative action and juridical treatment. The

31. Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 374.

32. Ibid., 312–14, 424–27. Cf. Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State," in Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 116–26.

filtering process is a crucial part of the relation between the two types of public spheres, and it is presumably here, in that filtering, that we should seek to understand what Habermas must mean by the public sphere's potential for self-transformation. However, the relation between the two types of public spheres is even more mysterious in his recent work than in his early account of the bourgeois public. In 1962 he presented a literary public sphere, more or less unified on the basis of bourgeois ideals, that served as a "training ground" for the political public sphere. In 1992, partly in response to critics' concerns that he had "idealized" the bourgeois public,[33] he conceives the general public sphere as "wild" in its very nature, "anarchic" in its structure, and "unconstrained" in its communication. It is no longer "one" public, but a complex network of multiple, overlapping, autonomous publics with communicative structures that emerge "more or less spontaneously."[34] To demonstrate the "substantive differentiation" of public spheres, Habermas gives the following examples: "popular science and literary publics, religious and artistic publics, feminist and 'alternative' publics, publics concerned with health-care issues, social welfare, or environmental policy."[35]

Habermas might well support women in making good their rights to unrestricted inclusion and equality, but when he encourages feminists to contest unwanted gender identities and gender relations in the general public sphere, he consigns the matter of the exercise of basic rights to the particularistic content of a "feminist public" that, in his discursive theory of law and democracy, operates as one of a plurality of competing and overlapping publics in an anarchically structured network of communication processes. In his theory of law and democracy, no less than in his theory of communicative action, Habermas develops theoretical categories that serve to detach feminism from its historical relation to the grand tradition of bourgeois universalism.

33. See Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures." Habermas develops his more recent views by drawing partly on Fraser's distinction between "weak" and "strong" publics that she presented in her critique of his early work on the public sphere. See her "Rethinking the Public Sphere."

34. Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, esp. 307 ff. For further discussion of the relation between the general public sphere and the political system, see Kenneth Baynes, "Democracy and the *Rechtsstaat*: Habermas's *Faktizität und Geltung*," in White, *Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, 216–18. James Bohman, "Complexity, Pluralism, and the Constitutional State: On Habermas's *Faktizität und Geltung*," *Law & Society Review* 28:4 (1994), 917–26, finds Habermas's two-track model of the public sphere in tension with the goals of radical democracy and suggests solutions to the difficulties.

35. Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 373–74.

Conclusion

Few supporters of Habermas would deny that his theory of communicative action, when examined from a feminist perspective, poses difficulties. However, proponents of the theory have been inclined to view his lack of attention to gender as due to a typically Habermasian preoccupation with procedural matters that, in themselves, do not involve gender prejudices. According to the usual scenario, Habermas's neglect of gender is to be regretted and perhaps he could do better, but that neglect is related to the level of abstraction of his theory and is a price that has to be paid for a truly universalist theory. Universalism, it is said, has to be sufficiently abstract to allow for a plurality of ways of being in the world, differing value-systems, and cultural diversity. Moreover, so the story goes, feminist criticisms of modernity involve the concrete and political aspects of everyday lifeworlds and do not necessarily imply any serious challenge for Habermas's rationality framework. Thus, those theorists who are interested in questions of rationality can follow Habermas in working out the rationality problematic, while feminists and others can attend to immediate and concrete needs in analyses more appropriate for discussion of cultural and political matters. This position is endorsed by Habermas, as can be seen from his discussion of genealogy. He does not deny the importance of questions about the exclusionary mechanisms that structure discourses, prohibitions on what can be said and how it can be said, rules about who has the right to speak, class and race specifications, gender, and so on, but he suggests, paradoxically, as I have shown, that such questions are not the proper concern of a theory

of rationality. In his recent comments on feminism he expresses similar sentiments.

It is too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Habermas's rationality problematic is pitched at too abstract a level to attend to feminist concerns about inclusion and equality. All this does is to affirm Habermas's own understanding of the distinction he draws between matters of rationality and matters of culture. It is not that feminists should not be giving attention to cultural matters—we need all the discussion we can get, from all sides of the issue and from all political and theoretical perspectives. We have learned a great deal from feminist debates about liberalism and Marxism, modernism and postmodernism, humanism and gynocentrism. I support all these efforts. But feminists in general have been much too reluctant to tackle questions of rationality, and we have been too readily persuaded that a concern with reason is itself somehow implicated in male values and perspectives. This attitude, which is discouragingly pervasive in the feminist literature, lets androcentrism off too lightly. Why should we give up on reason just because the ideals of reason have been formulated in the male image? The feminist suspicion against reason, and not just against male-dominated interpretations of reason, has been so strong that feminists who take a serious interest in Habermas are, as Johanna Meehan says, more or less "rowing against the feminist mainstream."[1] But feminist critical theorists also have to take care not to concede too much to Habermas. That is, we should not stay put in the realm of culture and we should extend our critiques to core features of his theory of rationality. It is important, of course, to illuminate, and fix, problems in Habermas by supplementing his theory with the work of Jessica Benjamin, Carol Gilligan, and Julia Kristeva and to test the adequacy of his theory against feminist practice and ideals of solidarity.[2] In many cases, however, even where the intent is critical, as in Jane Braaten's proposal for a feminist "communicative thinking," Habermas's rationality framework remains intact. Despite her valuable criticisms of Habermas, Braaten does not see the "content" of his theory as

1. Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 1.

2. Feminist critical theorists, like feminists generally, have been impressed by the work of Carol Gilligan. See esp. Benhabib, "Concrete Other"; see also Benhabib, "Debate." For reference to the work of Jessica Benjamin, see Meehan, "Autonomy, Recognition, and Respect." Dean, "Discourse in Different Voices," draws on Gilligan and Benjamin. For work dealing with the theories of Julia Kristeva, see Allison Weir, "Toward a Model of Self-Identity: Habermas and Kristeva," in Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 263–82.

an issue for feminism and admits that her argument "does not repudiate Habermas's theory of communicative rationality." She also suggests that a feminist communicative thinking might be "encompassed within Habermas's 'aesthetic-cultural' domain of discourse."[3] My aim in this book has been to take feminist issues directly to Habermas's theory of rationality, to challenge his theory's content, and to say why his understanding of universality precludes a vision of gender equality.

Over the years, Habermas has articulated the problem of universality in various ways. In *Structural Transformation* he worked with the bourgeois concept of humanity, but, in the end, he could not produce a critical standard for assessing subsequent historical public spheres because the tradition of Marxian ideology critique, in which his book was written, turned out to be too dependent on bourgeois ideals. He then turned to a study of the relation between knowledge and human interests and attempted to articulate an emancipatory interest of knowledge. Again he saw methodological limitations, and he concluded that his thesis of knowledge-constitutive interests was too constrained by epistemology and the model of self-reflection associated with the consciousness tradition of the philosophy of the subject. Against this background, in his theory of communicative action, he seeks to secure the independence of the normative foundations of critical theory by directing attention to the communicative structures of the lifeworld. He argues that we have to expand the concept of rationality by showing that intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity occurs over three "worlds" and that validity can no longer be understood simply in relation to the objective world and the "knowing subject." His theory of communicative action is remarkable in its breadth, persuasive on many issues, and frequently compelling, but this attempt to break with the philosophy of the subject does not succeed. He was already on the wrong track when he adopted an expansionist strategy, that is, when he proposed that truthfulness and rightness be understood as "truth-analogous concepts" and that the social and subjective "worlds" be viewed on the model of the objective "world." That strategy is suspect because it is too closely tied to the model of truth, and in any event it breaks down for internal reasons.

While Habermas's formal-pragmatic analysis is weakened by his inability to sustain basic distinctions, the difficulty I have traced to the gender dimensions of his theory is not simply a question of the internal integrity

3. Braaten, "From Communicative Rationality to Communicative Thinking."

of his lifeworld concept. If that were the case, he (or others) could conceivably start all over again, as he did after he became dissatisfied with ideology critique, and later when he turned away from epistemology. Nor is the problem of gender in Habermas's theory reduceable to his methodological starting point: that is, to the fact that he abstracts cognitive structures from the flow of historical events and the evolution of society from historical forms of life. That view, too, would suggest that we need a new methodology, one that gives priority to the particular and the concrete rather than to the universal and the general. Would that the matter could be so easily resolved, but it cannot. Even within the assumptions of Habermas's theory, gender relations do not have to be viewed as reduceable to lifeworld identities, and they can, in fact, be understood as involving relations between persons and a moral-practical rationality that, according to Habermas, is shared (at least implicitly) by all forms of life. If, as I have argued, gender involves moral intuitions, and not simply "clinical" intuitions about the value of a form of life, the theorist will not be required, as Habermas suggests, to forgo judgment on gender-based practices, at least not insofar as they relate to just relations between persons. Habermas's arguments for the primacy of rationality over culture (in philosophy and social theory) and for the primacy of morality over ethical life (in moral theory) do not hold up, but the question is why, even within the assumptions of his model, he inevitably assigns gender to the level of culture and ethical life. In his discussion of the Hindu practice of *sati*, for example, he understands gender as a cultural matter, in which the theorist has no choice but to acknowledge the (social) validity of actions taken in the context of values he does not share, rather than also to the rationality level in which the theorist can engage (imaginatively) with the participants of the Hindu culture in the context of an understanding of rationality that "they" implicitly share with "us."

More is at stake than finding the right methodology, and the failure of Habermas's formal-pragmatic analysis only highlights the problem of how to interpret his idea of intersubjectivity. He has tried to convey an understanding of intersubjectivity by way of ideology critique, through his thesis of knowledge-constitutive interests, and through formal-pragmatic analysis. Because the idea of intersubjectivity is not entirely dependent on his formal-pragmatic argument, it survives the failure of that argument, and we can turn to his early work to try to make sense of aspects of the idea that Habermas might have missed. To judge from his

work on the public sphere, it would appear that his understanding of intersubjectivity is patterned too closely on the bourgeois concept of humanity as a realm of genderless beings. In the tradition of historical materialism, Marx broke the identification of bourgeois and "human being," but to go beyond Marx, Habermas would have had to break the identification of male and human being. Not only does he not do this—a rather large "oversight" for someone who has universalist aims, but his theory actually promotes the identification of male and human being in its retention of a gender-structured family. What is disconcerting for a politics of gender equality, and what is difficult to deal with theoretically, is the way the normativity of the bourgeois type of family gets written into Habermas's theory. His interpretation of the modern understanding of the world is deeply problematic, not because universalism is itself a problem—if by that we mean that we should give up universalism—but because the categories of his theory are too committed to a particularist understanding of gender.

Habermas views issues of gender as cultural and historical and as not properly belonging to the rationality problematic, but references to gender appear in his text intermittently and infrequently, at crucial points in the argument, generally unexpectedly, and leave important questions unanswered. What I refer to as the problem of gender emerges most conspicuously in his thesis of the internal colonization of the lifeworld. That thesis also establishes the basic distinctions of his theory of rationality: lifeworld and system, communicative and instrumental rationalities. The point of the colonization thesis is to show that a systems rationality associated with legal-bureaucratic intervention into the lifeworld leads to an erosion of the lifeworld's constitutive communicative practices, but what Habermas understands by this erosion can be explained only with reference to the social reproduction of the cognitive skills necessary to participate in the open-ended communication processes of modernity. Lifeworld reproduction is the core concern of his colonization thesis, and because he understands lifeworld reproduction (descriptively and normatively) as the function of family and school institutions, the only examples he could have chosen to demonstrate his thesis of the progressive deterioration of the lifeworld's constitutive communicative practices under conditions of advanced capitalism were the ones he gave: family and school. But if there are no other possible examples, we have to conclude that family and school are not really examples at all and that the colonization thesis is not about the general problem of juri-

dification in contemporary democracies, but rather about the profoundly negative effects of juridification on the core lifeworld areas of family and school. The problem of gender in Habermas's theory concerns the anxious attention he gives to lifeworld reproduction and his corresponding relegation of the question of basic rights for women and children to secondary importance. To assess the seriousness of this problem for his theory, we have to examine his attitude to the nurturer role: he both understands the nurturing/socialization of the young as crucially important for sustaining and reproducing the lifeworld's communicative practices and yet does not include the nurturer role among the social roles in the system/lifeworld interchange.

The gender-based difficulties of Habermas's theory are traceable to his theory's origins as a proposal for reconstructing historical materialism. In that proposal he argues that we cannot understand the specifically "human" mode of reproducing life, unless we "supplement" the Marxian concept of social labor with the familial principle of organization, understood as the institutionalization of the "father" role. In Habermas's reconstructed historical materialism, socialization becomes critical for species development because humans, unlike the primates and hominids, can no longer rely on natural selection and must evolve on an "exclusively social" basis. In a "human" society, social labor, which he identifies with a male subsystem, is integrated through a social role system that is linguistically and culturally organized, requires highly competent individuals, and is crucially dependent on the transmission of competences from one generation to the next. However, the reproduction of the competences needed to participate in the (male) social role system is provided through the work of nurturing and socialization that takes place outside "social" labor, in a female subsystem. Habermas argues that supplementing the concept of social labor with the familial (male-headed) principle of organization allows us to demarcate human and animal life, but the whole point of such demarcation is to establish that sociocultural evolution and historical progress can be conceived in terms of interactive competences and the expansion of possibilities for "reasoned action." In this way, he hopes to provide for a theory of historical progress that restricts itself to a theory of cognitive development and rationality structures, one that is not tied to the ideals of a particular historical period. Unfortunately, his theory of historical progress is built on a gendered foundation that is very much tied to the ideals of a particular period in history.

Habermas does not (and cannot) include the "female" labor of socialization in the concept of social labor because, in his attempt to account for sociocultural evolution and historical progress in terms of expanding possibilities for reasoned action, he formulates the concept of social labor in such a way that it explicitly excludes the type of labor involved in socialization. He cannot both include "female" labor in a concept of social labor and still claim that "female" labor is a necessary "supplement" to social labor. And if he were to give up the idea that "female" labor is "supplementary" to social labor, he would have to rethink the meaning of sociocultural evolution and historical progress. Habermas's assessment of the role of "female" labor for sociocultural evolution is a kind of milestone in his thinking, and it gets structured into the basic categories of his theory of communicative action. He maintains that socialization processes are crucial for sustaining and renewing the individual competences associated with strong personality systems and the modern type of lifeworld, so that the "female" work of socialization not only does not lose its importance in modernity, but comes to dominate the overall process of reproducing the lifeworld.

Habermas's system/lifeworld schema is a more complex version of his understanding of the concept of social labor. Just as the "female" labor of socialization is excluded from social labor, so the nurturer role is absent from the social roles (employee, consumer, client, citizen) of the system/lifeworld interchange. This absence is not a simple oversight, and it also does not indicate that Habermas thinks the nurturer role unimportant. On the contrary, socialization is so important for his theory that it takes precedence even over the question of basic rights. The nurturer role is excluded because Habermas does not view it as a strictly "social" role. In his theory of communicative action, as in his discussion of historical materialism, he reproduces the Marxian exclusion of "female" work from social labor. Whereas the familial principle of organization had to be "added on" to the concept of social labor to understand the "human" mode of reproducing life, so the nurturer role has to be "added on" to the social roles of the system/lifeworld interchange for understanding the reproduction of the modern type of lifeworld. Moreover, whereas his reconstructed historical materialism envisions male and female subsystems as connected by a "socially regulated exchange," his theory of communicative action understands the two communicative spheres of the lifeworld (familial and public) as functionally connected through processes of socialization. There is also an important dif-

ference. In each case, the internal relations of "private" and "public" lifeworld spheres are relatively autonomous, but in the theory of communicative action, and with reference to the modern type of lifeworld, the family becomes a site of emancipation in its own right. The modern family is presented as self-contained, having its own integrity, actually growing in autonomy, and predisposed to seeing itself as separate from the basically alien economic and administrative imperatives that strike at it from the "outside."

This aestheticization of the internal relations of the modern family is prefigured in Habermas's account of the bourgeois pubic sphere. The model he develops in that account refers—descriptively and normatively—to a public sphere, but the public sphere's concept of humanity draws its inspiration from the "illusion of freedom" in the bourgeois family. Habermas's mistake occurs early on in his argument, just after he traces the bourgeois concept of humanity to a feeling of "human closeness" in the intimate sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family. He is now confronted with two "realities"—the fundamental inequality of the internal relations of the bourgeois family and the illusion harbored by the family that family members were all free and equal "human beings." But he is drawn to the normative power of the family's "illusion of freedom," and he puts the "reality" of gender inequality to one side. It apparently does not occur to him to carry forward into his analysis of the public sphere a critique of the gender relations for which the "illusion of freedom" was constitutive. Habermas is still very much influenced by his early discovery that, for modernity, humanity's "genuine site" is the intimate sphere of the bourgeois family, and he continues to incorporate into his theory an idealization of family life that makes criticism of a gender-structured family all but impossible.

The problem of gender also applies to Habermas's discourse ethics. Whereas in his theory of communicative action the nurturer role is not strictly social, his discourse ethics holds that gender and other "good life" questions are not "strictly normative." The justice/good life split has received much critical attention, but the difficulty is not simply a matter of excessive attention to form at the expense of content. Habermas's discourse ethics, though a formal theory, has an investment in a certain type of content, and he attempts to justify that investment through his principle of universalization. That principle, as the core part of the logic of practical discourses, separates statements that are evaluative from those that are "strictly" normative, the "good" from the "just."

Within this process, one type of content—justice understood as the generalizability of interests—gets "selected" as the content of moral theory, while whatever is left over becomes categorized as not strictly normative, to be left to the participants themselves, and to be decided in the context of lifeworld identities and cultural values. The selectivity of Habermas's principle of universalization is, however, dependent on his formal-pragmatic analysis of the validity-basis of speech, and his inability to sustain that analysis means that he can no longer provide a basis for the privileging of justice questions in his discourse ethics. My argument is not meant to reject procedural questions as an important concern of moral theory, but to say that there is no justification for viewing these questions as the exclusive, or even primary, content of moral theory. That means that we need to rethink the concept of justice, from within discourse ethics, but also moral theory more generally.

Habermas's theory is not universalistic enough because the basic categories of the theory are gender-coded. As matters currently stand, his understanding of social labor and socialization processes, on which his concept of communicative rationality sits, is a gendered, and flawed, understanding. But it does not follow that we must, or even can, give up on reason, nor should we turn away from universalism.

As I have indicated at several points in this book, I agree with Habermas that feminist critiques of modernity presuppose "rights to unrestricted inclusion and equality." That situates me, and in my view feminists generally, very much within the philosophical discourse of modernity. Feminism also continues the "project of modernity," though that project cannot unfold the way Habermas has envisioned. The task ahead is to work for a radical democracy that can better live up to the promise of inclusion and equality. No theory that has been inspired by that promise can be left out of account, and especially not Habermas's. But if his theory is to contribute to a new universalism, it cannot be accepted in its present form and will have to be reconstructed. According to Habermas, reconstruction "signifies taking a theory apart and putting it together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself."[4] Habermas reconstructs historical materialism by supplementing the concept of social labor with a gendered familial structure, and any reconstruction of Habermas's universalism will have to address his deci-

4. Jürgen Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 95.

sion to place the "female" labor of socialization outside social labor. In the reconstructed universalism I have in mind, we will have to think about how gender issues can be explicitly theorized not as "add-ons" to Habermas's lifeworld analysis, but as an integral part of our interpretation of the lifeworld and its communicative structures.

Universalism, reconceptualized to give explicit attention to issues of gender, has to become a critical and historical project. The concern shifts away from trying to justify the (gendered) understanding of modernity to the question of how to clarify, and to correct for, the gendered and Western intuitions that have been taken by Habermas (and others) to be representative of rationality and of modernity. We can also revive the "practical intent" of critical theory, its Marxian inspiration, that has been all but lost in Habermas.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, Theodor W., et al. *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology.* Trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby. London: Heinemann, 1976. First published in German in 1969.

Alcoff, Linda, and Elizabeth Potter, eds. *Feminist Epistemologies.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Alford, C. Fred. "Jürgen Habermas and the Dialectic of Enlightenment: What Is Theoretically Fruitful Knowledge?" *Social Research* 52 (Spring 1985): 119–49.

———. *Science and the Revenge of Nature: Marcuse and Habermas.* Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1985.

Apel, Karl-Otto. "Wissenschaft als Emanzipation? Eine kritische Würdigung der Wissenschaftskonzeption der 'Kritischen Theorie.' " In W. Dallmayr, *Materialien,* 318–48.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Austin, John L. *How to Do Things with Words.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

———. "Performative-Constative." In *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*, ed. C. E. Caton, 22–54. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963.

———. *Philosophical Papers.* Ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

Baynes, Kenneth. *The Normative Grounds of Social Criticism: Kant, Rawls, and Habermas.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

———. "Rational Reconstruction and Social Criticism: Habermas's Model of Interpretive Social Science." *The Philosophical Forum* 21 (Fall-Winter 1989–90): 122–45.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

———. "The Debate over Women and Moral Theory Revisited." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 181–203.

———. "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory." *Praxis International* 5 (January 1986): 402–24.

———. "Liberal Dialogue versus a Critical Theory of Discursive Legitimation." In *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum, 143–56. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

———. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics.* New York: Routledge, 1992.

Benhabib, Seyla, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell, and Nancy Fraser. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Benhabib, Seyla, and Drucilla Cornell, eds. *Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Benhabib, Seyla, and Fred Dallmayr, eds. *The Communicative Ethics Controversy.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

Benjamin, Jessica. "The End of Internalization: Adorno's Social Psychology." *Telos* 32 (Summer 1977): 42–64.

Bernstein, Richard J. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

———. "Fred Dallmayr's Critique of Habermas." *Political Theory* 16 (November 1988): 580–93.

———. *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Post-modernity.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

———, ed. *Habermas and Modernity.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.

Böhler, Dietrich. "Zur Geltung des emanzipatorischen Interesses." In W. Dallmayr, *Materialien*, 349–68.

Bohman, James. "Formal Pragmatics and Social Criticism: The Philosophy of Language and the Critique of Ideology in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 12:3 (1986): 331–53.

———. *New Philosophy of Social Science: Problems of Indeterminacy.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

———. "World Disclosure and Radical Criticism." *Thesis Eleven* 37 (1994): 82–97.

Bordo, Susan. "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11 (Spring 1986): 439–56.

Braaten, Jane. "From Communicative Rationality to Communicative Thinking: A Basis for Feminist Theory and Practice." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 139–61.

———. *Habermas's Critical Theory of Society.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

———. "The Succession of Theories and the Recession of Practice." *Social Theory and Practice* 18:1 (1992): 81–111.

Bürger, Peter. "The Significance of the Avant-Garde for Contemporary Aesthetics: A Reply to Jürgen Habermas." *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981): 19–22.

Calhoun, Craig, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

Caputo, John, and Mark Yount, eds. *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

Chambers, Simone. "Feminist Discourse/Practice Discourse." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 163–79.

———. *Reasonable Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and the Politics of Discourse.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.

Cixous, Hélène, and Catherine Clément. *The Newly Born Woman.* Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Code, Lorraine. *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Cohen, Jean L., and Andrew Arato. *Civil Society and Political Theory.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

Cooke, Maeve. *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.

Culler, Jonathan. "Communicative Competence and Normative Force." *New German Critique* 35 (Spring/Summer 1985): 133–44.

Cuzzo, Maria Wyant. "Habermas' Communicative Action Theory and the Adversarial Assumption of the Civil Litigation System: A New Perspective for Empowering Dispute Resolution." Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1995.

Dallmayr, Fred R. "Habermas and Rationality." *Political Theory* 16 (November 1988): 553–79.

———. *Polis and Praxis: Exercises in Contemporary Political Theory.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984.

Dallmayr, Winfried, ed. *Materialien zu Habermas' "Erkenntnis und Interesse."* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974.

Dean, Jodi. "Discourse in Different Voices." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 205–29.

Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc.* Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988.

Deflem, Mathieu, ed. *Habermas, Modernity, and Law.* Special Issue of *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 20:4 (1994).

Dews, Peter. *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory.* London: Verso, 1987.

Dinnerstein, Dorothy. *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise.* New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Dreyfus, Hubert L., and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Eley, Geoff. "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century." In Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 289–339.

Ferrara, Alessandro. "A Critique of Habermas' *Diskursethik*." *Telos* 64 (1985): 45–74.

Flax, Jane. "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Epistemology and Metaphysics." In *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, 245–81. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983.

Fleming, Marie. "Critical Theory between Modernity and Postmodernity." *Philosophy Today* (forthcoming, 1997).

———. "The Gender of Critical Theory." *Cultural Critique* 13 (Fall 1989): 119–41.

———. "Habermas, Marx, and the Question of Ethics." In *Die Frankfurter Schule und die Folgen*, ed. Axel Honneth and Albrecht Wellmer, 139–50. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986.

———. "Technology and the Problem of Democratic Control: The Contribution of Jürgen Habermas." In *Democratic Theory and Technological Society*, ed. Richard B. Day, Ronald Beiner, and Joseph Masciulli, 90–109. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1988.

———. "Women and the 'Public Use of Reason.'" *Social Theory and Practice* 19 (Spring 1993): 27–50.

———. "Women's Place in Communicative Reason." In *Women and Reason*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Kathleen Okruhlik, 245–62. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

———. "Working in the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Habermas, Foucault, and Derrida," *Philosophy Today* 40 (Spring 1996): 169–78.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* Vol. 1. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1980.

———. *Power/Knowledge.* Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

Fraser, Nancy. "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions." *Praxis International* 1 (1981): 272–87.

———. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." In Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 109–42.

———. "Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity." *Praxis International* 5:4 (1986): 425–29.

———. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

———. "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender." In Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique*, 31–56.

Giddens, Anthony. *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies.* London: Hutchinson, 1976.

———. "Reason without Revolution? Habermas's *Theorie des kommunikativen Handels.*" In Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity, 95–121.*

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Goodman, Dena. "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime." *History and Theory* 31:1 (1992): 1–20.

Günther, Klaus. *The Sense of Appropriateness: Application Discourses in Morality and Law.* Trans. John Farrell. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Habermas, Jürgen. "The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics." Adorno et al., *Positivist Dispute,* 131–62.

———. *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas.* Ed. Peter Dews. London: Verso, 1992.

———. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy.* Trans. William Rehg. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996. First published in German in 1992.

———. *Communication and the Evolution of Society.* Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979.

———. "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment.*" *New German Critique* 26 (Spring/Summer 1982): 13–30.

———. "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere." In Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* 421–61.

———. "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality." In *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique*, ed. Josef Bleicher, 181–211. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

———. *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics.* Trans. Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

———. *Knowledge and Human Interests.* Trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro. London: Heinemann, 1972. First published in German in 1968.

———. "Law and Morality." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 8 (1988): 219–79.
———. *Legitimation Crisis.* Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975. First published in German in 1973.
———. "Modernity—An Incomplete Project." In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, 3–15. Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983.
———. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action.* Trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.
———. *Die nachholende Revolution.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990.
———. "Neoconservative Culture Criticism in the United States and West Germany: An Intellectual Movement in Two Political Cultures." In Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 78–94.
———. *On the Logic of the Social Sciences.* Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988. First published in German in 1967.
———. *The Past as Future.* Trans. Max Pensky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.
———. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures.* Trans. Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987. First published in German in 1985.
———. *Philosophical-Political Profiles.* Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983.
———. "Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter." In *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* ed. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, 296–315. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987.
———. "A Positivistically Bisected Rationalism." In Adorno et al., *Positivist Dispute*, 198–225.
———. *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays.* Trans. William Mark Hohengarten. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.
———. "Postscript to *Faktizität und Geltung.*" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 20:4 (1994): 135–50.
———. "A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests.*" *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3 (1973): 157–89.
———. "Questions and Counterquestions." In Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 192–216.
———. "Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism." *The Journal of Philosophy* 92:3 (1995): 109–31.
———. "Remarks on the Discussion." *Theory, Culture, and Society* 7 (November 1990): 127–32.
———. "A Reply." In Honneth and Joas, *Communicative Action*, 214–64.
———. "A Reply to My Critics." In Thompson and Held, *Critical Debates*, 219–83.
———. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Trans. Thomas Burger. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989. First published in German in 1962.
———. "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State." In

Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann, 107–48. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

———. "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present." In Hoy, *Foucault*, 103–8.

———. *Theory and Practice.* Trans. John Viertel. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

———. *The Theory of Communicative Action.* 2 vols. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 and 1987. First published in German in 1981.

———. *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics.* Trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.

———. "Vorbereitende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie der kommunikativen Kompetenz." In Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie*, 101–41. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971.

———. "Wahrheitstheorien." In *Wirklichkeit und Reflexion. Walter Schulz zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Fahrenbach, 211–65. Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1973.

———. "Work and Weltanschauung: The Heidegger Controversy from a German Perspective." *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter 1989): 431–56.

Hansen, Miriam. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Haraway, Donna. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science.* New York: Routledge, 1989.

Harding, Sandra. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Hartmann, Heidi. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." In *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sargent, 1–41. Boston: South End Press, 1981.

Hekman, Susan J. *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

Heller, Agnes. "Habermas and Marxism." In Thompson and Held, *Critical Debates*, 21–41.

Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. "The Public Sphere: Models and Boundaries." In Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 99–108.

Hollis, Martin, and Steven Lukes. *Rationality and Relativism.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.

Holub, Robert C. *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Honneth, Axel. *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory.* Trans. Kenneth Baynes. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

Honneth, Axel, and Hans Joas, eds. *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's "The Theory of Communicative Action."* Trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

Honneth, Axel, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer, eds. *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

Honneth, Axel, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer, eds. *Philosophical Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

Horkheimer, Max. *Critical Theory: Selected Essays.* Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell. New York: Seabury Press, 1972.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* Trans. John Cumming. New York: Continuum, 1972. First published in German in 1944.

Hoy, David Couzens, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Hyman, Harold M., and William M. Wiecek. *Equal Justice under Law: Constitutional Development, 1835–1875.* New York: Harper & Row, 1982.

Ingram, David. *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

———. *Reason, History, and Politics: The Communitarian Grounds of Legitimation in the Modern Age.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman.* Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Jaggar, Alison M. *Feminist Politics and Human Nature.* Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983.

Jay, Martin. "The Debate over Performative Contradiction: Habermas versus the Poststructuralists." In Honneth et al., *Philosophical Interventions*, 261–79.

———. "Habermas and Modernism." In Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 125–39.

———. *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

Joas, Hans. "The Unhappy Marriage of Hermeneutics and Functionalism." In Honneth and Joas, *Communicative Action*, 97–118.

Kellner, Douglas. *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.

Kelly, Michael, ed. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.

LaCapra, Dominick. *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Landes, Joan B. "The Public and the Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 91–116.

———. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Longino, Helen E. *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Love, Nancy. "What's Left of Marx?" In White, *Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, 46–66.

MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Mani, Lata. "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on SATI in Colonial India." *Cultural Critique* 7 (Fall 1987): 119–56.

———. "Production of an Official Discourse on *Sati* in Early Nineteenth Century Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26 April 1986, "Review of Women Studies," 32–40.

Marshall, Barbara L. "Feminist Theory and Critical Theory." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 25:2 (1988): 208–30.

Matuštík, Martin J. *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel.* New York: Guildford Press, 1993.

McCarthy, Thomas. *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978.

———. *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

———. "Reflections on Rationalization in *The Theory of Communicative Action.*" In Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 176–91.

———. "Scientific Rationality and the 'Strong Program' in the Sociology of Knowledge." In *Construction and Constraint: The Shaping of Scientific Rationality*, ed. Ernan McMullin, 75–95. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988.

McCormick, Peter J. *Modernity, Aesthetics, and the Bounds of Art.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Meehan, Johanna. "Autonomy, Recognition, and Respect: Habermas, Benjamin, and Honneth." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 231–46.

———, ed. *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Misgeld, Dieter. "Critical Hermeneutics versus Neoparsonianism?" *New German Critique* 35 (1985): 55–82.

Mitchell, Juliet. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

Negt, Oskar, and Alexander Kluge. *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere.* Trans. Peter Labanyi et al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Nelson, Lynn Hankinson. *Who Knows: From Quine to a Feminist Empiricism.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

Nicholson, Linda J., ed. *Feminism/Postmodernism.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Okin, Susan Moller. *Women in Western Political Thought.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Pateman, Carole. "The Fraternal Social Contract." In *Civil Society and the State*, ed. John Keane, 101–27. London: Verso, 1988.

———. *The Sexual Contract.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Poster, Mark. *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder. *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture, and Postcolonialism.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Rasmussen, David M. *Reading Habermas.* Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990.

———, ed. *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

Rehg, William. *Insight and Solidarity: A Study in the Discourse Ethics of Jürgen Habermas.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

Renaud, Michelle. "Critical Theory, Utopia, and Feminism." Ph.D. diss., Carleton University, Ottawa, 1995.

Rockmore, Tom. *Habermas on Historical Materialism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Roderick, Rick. *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

Rooney, Phyllis. "Recent Work in Feminist Discussions of Reason." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 31:1 (1994): 1–21.

Ryan, Mary P. "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America." In Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 259–88.

Scheman, Naomi. *Engenderings: Constructions of Knowledge, Authority, and Privilege.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow-Sacrifice." *Wedge* 7/8 (Winter/Spring 1985): 120–30.

———. "Three Feminist Readings: McCullers, Drabble, Habermas." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 35 (Fall/Winter 1979–80): 15–34.

Taylor, Charles. "Foucault on Freedom and Truth." *Political Theory* 12 (May 1984): 152–83.

Thompson, John B. *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Thompson, John B., and David Held, eds. *Habermas: Critical Debates.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982.

Vetlesen, Arne Johan. *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment: An Inquiry into the Preconditions of Moral Performance.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

Villa, Dana R. "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere." In *American Political Science Review* 86 (September 1992): 712–21.

Warnke, Georgia. "Discourse Ethics and Feminist Dilemmas of Difference." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 247–61.

———. *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.

Weir, Allison. "Toward a Model of Self-Identity: Habermas and Kristeva." In Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas*, 263–82.

Wellmer, Albrecht. *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

White, Stephen K. *Political Theory and Postmodernism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

———. *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice, and Modernity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

———, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Whitebrook, Joel. "Reason and Happiness: Some Psychoanalytic Themes in Critical Theory." In Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, 140–60.

Wiggershaus, Rolf. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance.* Trans. Michael Robertson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.

Wilson, Bryan R., ed. *Rationality.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970.

Winch, Peter. *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958.

Wood, Allen W. "Habermas' Defense of Rationalism." *New German Critique* 35 (Spring/Summer 1985): 145–64.

Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

———. "Recent Theories of Justice." *Social Theory and Practice* 18:1 (1992): 63–79.

INDEX