Saving Reason:

Jürgen Habermas's Synthesis of Western Philosophy

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Jeffrey L. Tate

Student ID: 27000969

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UNIVERSITY OF WALES
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Abstract

This dissertation argues that Jürgen Habermas's *philosophy of communicative reason* successfully defends the Enlightenment notion of Reason as the vehicle of truth and progress, while integrating Postmodern insights into the illusory nature of metaphysical foundations. Habermas discards the Enlightenment *philosophy of the subject* with its subjective reasoning, to create his *paradigm of mutual understanding* using intersubjective reasoning. In so doing, Habermas integrates philosophical hermeneutics and the Linguistic Turn, while using Pragmatism to avoid the Postmodern danger of relativism.

The Enlightenment philosophy of the subject as developed from Descartes through Hegel entails aporias of subjectivism. The hermeneutic turn in philosophy reduced subjectivism by de-reifying the division of the objective and subjective worlds, and by including interpersonal learning within its paradigm. The Linguistic Turn in philosophy highlighted the linguistic nature of all knowledge and truth, threatening to relativize both, with their validity limited to a particular language and culture. The legacy of Nietzsche transmitted through Foucault highlights the irrational motivations behind all reasoning, which is reduced to being the tool of selfish power. Gadamer adds his voice both to the linguistification of knowledge and to the aesthetization of rational judgment. Peirce, however, while accepting the linguistification of truth, emphasizes the practical evidence of truth statements as a criterion of their validity.

Into this philosophical mixture, Habermas, integrates speech-act theory and theories of cognitive-moral development to create his *theory of communicative reason*, which grounds the validity of statements on illocutionary speech, but retains non-linguistic experience as a foundation for truth. While giving a nod to non-rational influences on reasoning, Habermas give little attention to this in his philosophy, and I outline the elements of psychoanalytic theory that should be integrated into his philosophy to make it less rationalistic.

Introduction

In this dissertation I will defend the thesis that, with his theory of *communicative reason*, Jürgen Habermas integrates the insights of the Enlightenment, Pragmatism, Philosophical Hermeneutics, and the Linguistic Turn to create a comprehensive philosophy that is both modern and yet postmetaphysical, rescuing both reason and progress from the Postmodern charges of foundational relativism and irrationality; yet, I will demonstrate, Habermas's theory can be improved by integrating psychoanalytic insights into his theory of communicative reason.[1]

At least since Nietzsche, the Enlightenment valuation of Reason as the tool for discovering Truth has been openly attacked. Reason has been accused of being the handmaiden of selfish power-interests, of being nothing more than language-on-stilts, of being a thin veneer over the irrational motivations that drive action. As a result, reasoning came to be seen as ethnocentric, if not egocentric. Moral relativism seemed to be the only logical conclusion. Nietzsche, Freud, Gadamer, Foucault, Rorty and others made the case convicting Reason of self-misrepresentation. Adorno and other critical theorists showed how Reason led not to more humanity, but to an inhumane systemization of life, not to utopia but to dystopia. Perhaps, then, after all humanity's hopes, the ideals of the Enlightenment were no more grounded than the mythology that it claimed to supersede.

In the midst of such philosophical pessimism, if not nihilism, a seemingly quixotic figure has emerged: Jürgen Habermas, who sees the ideals of the Enlightenment as still valid. No, he does not deny the insights of Reason's critics:

[1] This dissertation has benefited from my discussions with Gary Davis, who administers the online Habermas discussion forum at http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/habermas

He accepts the idea that a foundational metaphysics is no longer possible. He accepts the idea that the "natural rights of Man" is not a tenable basis for morality. He accepts the idea that Truth is language. He accepts the idea that unreason drives reasoning. He accepts the idea that excessive "rationalization" of the lifeworld has caused inhumane consequences. *However*, Habermas also finds a new foundation for reasoning: dialogue itself. The unavoidable and universal framework of convincing discussion—the very framework that Reason's critics use themselves—is for Habermas the reliable basis for Truth.

In this dissertation I will show how Habermas salvages the valuable kernel of the Enlightenment and integrates it with the insights of post-Enlightenment philosophy to create a new foundation for truth and progress. First I describe Habermas's foundational "theory of communicative action," for this is the basis of his entire philosophy: the inherent rationality of convincing discourse. Then I discuss Habermas's concepts of cognitive and moral development, which he borrows from Piaget and Kohlberg. The universality of this development is key to Habermas's claim that empirical and moral truth are universal. Then I shift to describing the main problem with Enlightenment philosophy, as Habermas understands it: the "philosophy of the subject." It is this paradigm, Habermas claims, that has caused the aporias philosophy faces in Modernity.

I then discuss post-Enlightenment developments in philosophy that provide concepts that Habermas uses to create his new foundation for reasoning. Dilthey and Heidegger provide the concepts of hermeneutic epistemology and hermeneutic ontology that Habermas finds valid and useful in his own theory. Peirce's philosophy of pragmatism provides Habermas the critical insight that language alone is insufficient to ground truth, *practical* effect is also required.

Next I discuss the overt challenges to the Enlightenment notion of reason as presented by Gadamer, Foucault, and Rorty. Gadamer brings two charges against Reason: that it is guided primarily by un-thematized "prejudices," and that "taste," not logic, is the basis for assessments of validity. Foucault brings Nietzsche's notions of the will to power into his analysis of the guiding role of "dominant power structures" in creating truth and even the criteria for truth. Rorty completely linguistifies truth, making it relative to one's language and culture.

Then I discuss Habermas's postmetaphysical metaphysics of the "paradigm of mutual understanding," with which he leaves behind the philosophy of the subject and its aporias for an intersubjective paradigm, while retaining the notion of individual agency. His intersubjective philosophy incorporates epistemological and ontological hermeneutics. Against Idealism, he retains a "soft naturalism" while rejecting "metaphysical Realism." He rescues the concepts of free action and free will from scientistic reductionism by distinguishing "causes" from "reasons." Habermas integrates Pragmatism and the Linguistic Turn by accepting the linguistification of the validity of *statements*, but he insisting on retaining the Pragmatic concept of checking *truth* against empirical phenomena.

I discuss how Habermas's theory of communicative action is the basis for his theory of communicative reason, his answer to postmodern critics. The foundation for communicative reason is a small set of "idealizing performative presuppositions" that Habermas believes are inherent in communication. Crucially, in describing communicative reason, Habermas uses Weber's classification of knowledge into three spheres, and I discuss each of these spheres of communicative reason. Habermas shows that empirical statements of truth, and moral statements of rightness, have universal validity.

In the next section of the dissertation I show how Habermas has selectively integrated into his theory of communicative reason the key philosophical insights of his intellectual predecessors. He is more in agreement than in disagreement with most of them.

Finally, I discuss criticisms of Habermas's theory, particularly the criticism that his theory is too rationalistic, minimizing the influence of the "Other of reason" in thinking. In the main, I agree with this criticism, and I outline the key psychoanalytic insights about "the Other of reason" that need to be integrated into Habermas's theory of communicative reason in order to partially address this issue.

Two Pillars of Habermas's Theory

Habermas builds his new contribution to philosophy on the twin pillars of speech-act theory and developmental psychology. From speech-act theory he uses the concept of illocutionary statements to build his concept of "communicative action." From developmental psychology he uses Piaget's model of cognitive development and Kohlberg's model of moral development. These concepts from speech-act theory and from developmental psychology give Habermas the basis of his claims to the universal validity of reasoning.

Communicative Action

Habermas uses the unavoidable rationality of linguistic communication as his new standard for Reason. According to Habermas, the use of propositional language is the defining characteristic of being human, of being a person; and the purpose of using language is to reach interpersonal understanding about something. (Habermas 1984, 287) Habermas says that we achieve understanding of a statement "when we know what makes it acceptable"; which means that "we can take a yes or no position on its claim." (Habermas 1984, 297-98) To understand a statement, the listener, the interpreter, must use "standards of rationality" that he must presuppose are "binding on all parties." (Habermas 1990, 31) These standards for the rationality of communication via language have no ultimate standard or basis other than that they are unavoidable for *intelligible* linguistic communication; they inhere in language itself. (Habermas 1990, 81)

Since interpersonal understanding is key for his theory of communicative reason, Habermas is primarily interested in the illocutionary, rather than the

perlocutionary, use of language, so he divides language use into two broad categories: communicative action and strategic action. Strategic action uses perlocutionary language in an attempt to *compel* the actions of another person: "Run!" "Get in line!" "Buy now!" and so forth, usually in more subtle forms. Communicative action, in contrast, uses illocutionary language in an attempt to generate mutual agreement via mutual learning from one another. With communicative action participants are primarily interested in finding or creating the *mutually* agreed-upon statements regarding the topic at-hand; that is, to be mutually persuaded by the "unforced force of the better argument" alone. (Habermas 1984, 79) In order for participants in communicative action to feel confident that the most valid statement possible has been discovered and in order to be convinced by that best argument, certain conditions of the discourse *must* be fulfilled. The four major conditions required to be fulfilled are:

- Publicity and inclusiveness: every relevant person must be included in the discussion
- Exclusion of hierarchy: everyone must have an equal right to speak and to participate
- Exclusion of deception: participants must mean what they say
- Exclusion of coercion: there must be no restriction on the arguments presented and equally considered (Habermas 2008, 50)

So that they can be most easily persuaded by the best argument, ideally, participants in communicative action adopt a "hypothetical attitude" toward all the arguments, all the "validity claims," offered by the participants in discourse—including the validity claims that they, themselves, (at least initially) believe and offer for discussion. (Habermas 1990, 125) Also ideally, each participant should

attempt to adopt the perspective of the other person who presents a competing validity claim, so to better understand the context of that person's claim. (Habermas 1992, 138) So, each participant in communicative action holds her beliefs "lightly" and is willing to critique and to change her beliefs in the process of the discourse. Ideally, communicative action produces an agreement among participants about the best argument, the best validity statement, regarding the topic at-hand. When communicative action does not lead to consensus, then the discussion is postponed to "an indefinite future" when further experiences may allow a consensus to emerge. (Habermas 1995, 94) This leads, potentially, to an "infinite conversation" punctuated by interruptions due to "the need to act in the lifeworld." (Habermas 2003, 253)

Habermas understands that these criteria of truly communicative action are idealizations, never completely achieved. However, he believes that these idealizations actually do motivate participants' behavior to attempt to *approximate* these criteria when the goal is to find the most convincing validity statement about a topic. (Habermas 2008, 27, 51) *Actual* discourse situations can be considered to adequately approximate the ideals of communicative action when efforts have been made to be as inclusive and open as possible within the resources available, with acknowledgment that the discourse may be continued within a larger spatiotemporal-informational frame in the future if conditions both allow and warrant expanded discussion. (Habermas 1995, 53) Habermas understands, too, that the vast bulk of actual communication does not even approximate this ideal discourse situation; rather, most use of language is "a diffuse, fragile, continuously revised and only momentarily successful communication." (Habermas 1984, 101)

Nevertheless, Habermas's idea of communicative reason is based on the ideal discourse situation for truly communicative action.

For Habermas, the ability and willingness to self-critique every validity claim is the hallmark of Modernity, which rejects the authority of all unquestionable dogma. (Habermas 1995, 95; Habermas 2001, 133) When dogma and tradition are devalued as authorities for beliefs, then, Habermas believes, the principles of communicative action "impose themselves on us as conditions for recognizing validity at the post-conventional level of cognitive development," (Habermas 1995, 27) because without dogma only mutually convincing reasons are left as the legitimate source of authority. (Habermas 1995, 31)

Cognitive-Moral Development

Closely connected to Habermas's model of communicative action are his ideas about cognitive and moral development, because to participate well in communicative action participants must have achieved an *abstract* ego identity and *post-traditional* morality. Habermas uses the developmental models of both Piaget and Kohlberg to form his own model of cognitive-moral development and its role in communicative reason. Habermas cites Piaget's notion of "reflective abstraction" as the process of cognitive development in which the individual progressively recognizes the principles guiding her thinking, and can subsequently perform logical operations on those very principles, such as categorizing the principles, resolving conflicts among the principles, creating new overarching principles, and so forth. (Habermas 2003, 244) This developmental process of reflective abstraction starts during early adolescence and continues thereafter, with no upper limit to the potential for continuing to more and more abstract ideas.

Ideally, this development results in abstract reasoning in regard to the objective world, the interpersonal world, and the subjective world. From Kohlberg, Habermas borrows the notions of conventional vs. postconventional morality. At the postconventional level of moral development, one's beliefs about what is the morally right thing to do are based on universal principles, not ego-centric or ethno-centric considerations. (Levine, Kohlberg, & Hewer 1985) Habermas states that cognitive development up to abstract levels is required for, and facilitates, moral development to the postconventional level.

Toward the advanced end of cognitive-moral development are found (1) the capability for counterintuitive understanding of the objective world (such as relativity theory and quantum theory), (2) a morality based on universal abstract principles rather than the parochial teachings of one's own culture, (3) a self-identity based on general ego capabilities rather than on traditional societal roles, and (4) one is also better able to imagine perspectives other than one's own, a "de-centration" of one's point of view. (Habermas 1979, 85-86, 106; Habermas 1984, 69) When one has achieved such an abstract manner of thinking, then one is less identified with, less attached to, particular, concrete validity claims. One is then able to critique validity claims, even those held by oneself, without feeling personally threatened. One can then participate in an open-minded, fluid fashion in communicative action, and be convinced by the "unforced force of the better argument." (Habermas 1995, 131) When communicative action is freely acting in all spheres, *everything* about a person, a culture, a society is continuously up for critique and revision based on the unforced force of the better argument. (Habermas 1987, 146)

Habermas (who has a Ph.D. in Sociology, as well as a Ph.D. in Philosophy) believes that the main stages of cognitive and moral development are universal among all peoples. Habermas believes that the key features of the objective world are the same for everyone, so Piaget's model of cognitive development applies to all normal individuals; and Habermas believes that the key features of the interpersonal world, in regards to what helps or hurts individuals, are the same for everyone, so Kohlberg's findings about moral development also apply to all normal individuals. This means, for Habermas, that there is a universality of "mature forms of cognition" and of "mature forms of moral insight." (Habermas 2003, 244)

Habermas believes that capitalism has fostered the development of an abstract identity of ego functions by removing the individual from traditional roles and by rewarding more general organizational capabilities. (Habermas 1987, 114, 291) Global communication has also fostered the development of post-traditional ego identities via "intercultural contacts and multiethnic connections" that foster "cosmopolitan identities." (Habermas 2001, 75, 76) Such de-centration of one's perspective also fosters a less egocentric and ethnocentric morality as well, in order to avoid the pain of cognitive dissonance from holding mutually contradictory beliefs; that is, to avoid holding empirical beliefs about the universal characteristics of psychology and sociology that would be in disharmony with one's ethnocentric moral beliefs, one will change one's moral beliefs toward universality as well. (Habermas 2003, 59; Habermas 1998, 99)

Understanding Habermas's ideas about communicative action and about cognitive development to abstract levels, one is then in a position to understand his ideas about *communicative reason*, which Habermas offers as an answer to the

aporias of Enlightenment reason, and as an answer to the charge of reason's irrationality made by postmodernism. But first, one must understand the philosophical problems bequeathed to Habermas, which his philosophy attempts to overcome; and one needs to understand the conceptual tools handed down to Habermas that he uses to construct his own philosophy.

Enlightenment Aporias: The "Philosophy of the Subject"

The major problem left by Enlightenment philosophy, according to Habermas, is the paradigm of the philosophy of the subject, as constructed initially by René Descartes. Using his method of radical doubt, Descartes conceives of a dualism between mind and world, between subject and object, between the indubitable "I" and the questionable "it." The mind is inside and the world is outside; the mind perceives only a representation of the outside world, and so can have no certain knowledge of the world. (Descartes 1984, 57) Descartes turns to God for reassurance that our representations are not merely sophisticated illusions; but later when God was dethroned by the Enlightenment as a source of certainty, modern European philosophy was left with the *problem of representation*: How do we know that our representations of the world are accurate, or even that they correlate with anything? Still today, within the philosophy of the subject, this representation problem has no generally accepted solution, even by avowed Realists. (Khlentzos 2004, 5)

Kant increased the sophistication of the philosophy of the subject by describing in detail how the subject constructs and comprehends its representations of the world: The subject creates its world in the subject's own image. The perceptual manifold exist in space and time because that is the nature of the *subject*. Phenomena are the subject's own constructions, only theoretically prompted by noumena. The subject's judgment and reasoning organize perceptions into patterns and discover the principles of patterning, including cause-and-effect. (Kant 1929, 116) Here, then, we have the nature of reason in the philosophy of the subject: we reason about ourselves, about our phenomena and their patterns of occurrence

within the manifold of perception. Indeed, if we forget that phenomena are our own constructions, or if we forget that reasoning is about *appearances* only, then we make mistakes: amphibolies and antinomies of reason. (Kant 1929, 282, 328)

Fichte takes the philosophy of the subject a step further by removing the need for phenomena to correspond to noumena; rather, an otherwise undefined "check" on the activity of the primordial self causes the differentiation of the primordial self into self and object. (Fichte 1970, 62) Hegel then finds in his Idealism the same solution to the problem of representation as does Fichte: appearances have no noumenal correspondent, so there is nothing to represent. (Hegel 1969, 36) However, like Kant, both Fichte and Hegel are obliged to include a not-me *something* in their paradigm, either X or Nature, to explain the differences between empirical regularity and daydream spontaneity within the manifold of perceptions. But for Hegel, too, reasoning is a matter of the isolated subject's generating its own ever-more inclusive and abstract *notions* to organize its experience. Kant leaves truth as one's solo reasoning about one's solo phenomena, and he leaves morality as one's solo reasoning about the universal applicability of one's own maxims. Fichte and Hegel do nothing to change those definitions, and actually intensify their solo character. (Habermas 1990, 40)

We have seen that with Descartes, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, was created the philosophy of the relatively isolated perceiving and reasoning subject. This philosophy is open to the representation problem and to the charge of solipsism. Following these philosophers, new conceptual developments began to offer fresh ideas that lead to a way out of this cul-de-sac of subjectivity; conceptual tools that Habermas will use.

Post-Enlightenment Concepts and Challenges

Post-Enlightenment philosophy explored the indeterminateness of meaning, the role of the irrational in guiding thought, and the limitations that one's language and culture place on one's understanding. These conceptual developments threaten to demote Reason to a mere tool of power and evolutionary survival. Habermas, however, uses these very concepts to answer the threat that they pose.

The Hermeneutic Turn

Wilhelm Dilthey modifies the philosophy of the subject to reduce the subject's isolation, but, like Nietzsche, he also highlights the irrational influences on reason, opening a door for postmodernism. Like Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, Dilthey understands all appearances as being limited to one's own consciousness. (Dilthey 1976, 261) Like Fichte and Hegel, he sees no use for Kant's concept of noumena; phenomenal reality is not representing any other reality. There is only one reality, only one world: that of conscious experience. Like Habermas, Dilthey is a *soft* realist in the sense that he believes that consciousness *depends* on material processes, although, again like Habermas, he does not believe that consciousness can be *reduced* to material processes. (Dilthey 1976, 165)

Dilthey accepts Kant's ideas of categories that organize our experiences, in particular temporality which Dilthey believes is the basic category in life (Dilthey 1976, 209); however, Dilthey adds more types of categories to Kant's logical categories of understanding. Kant's categories are useful for analyzing our perception of the objective world, but are less helpful for understanding interpersonal and subjective experiences, which include values and purposes.

(Dilthey 1976, 196-97) So, for Dilthey, not only reason organizes our experiences of the world, feeling and willing do, too. Every object and person in one's experience is laden with one's feelings about it, and one's intention toward it—even if only by one's feeling-perception of its unimportance; and thus feeling and willing, not just Kant's logical categories, control what one perceives and how one perceives it. (Dilthey 1976, 178, 241) Dilthey's categories of value, purpose, significance, and meaning arise from the addition of feeling and willing to reasoning as categories of understanding. This addition of feeling as an organizing category of experience is important to Habermas's ideas about morality, and as I discuss later is an entrée for adding psychoanalytic insights to Habermas's theory.

Dilthey, anticipating Habermas, changes the solitary observing-understanding subject, into an interpersonal subject. For Dilthey the categories, our organizing conceptual frameworks of experience (de Mul 2004, 153), are largely *learned* from one's culture; this creates one's "acquired mental structure." (Dilthey 1976, 244) This learning process is lifelong, and so one's organizing concepts inevitably change throughout one's life. Persons born into different cultures will have at least slightly different categories of experience because of their differences in milieu. And a civilization will evolve different organizing concepts across its historical eras as new ideas are generated. (Dilthey 1976, 162, 242-43) Dilthey's concept about this development of categories anticipates Habermas's ideas about the ability of cultures to learn, and to improve, over time; that paradigms do not just change, they progress.

Dilthey believes that one's individual knowledge is corrected and refined via interaction with the knowledge embedded in one's culture. (Dilthey 1976, 179, 190) Reciprocally, culture is influenced by, and at times corrected by, interaction

with an individual's unique knowledge. Anticipating Pragmatism, Dilthey says that knowledge and entire worldviews are kept, refined, or discarded based on their utility in furthering the interests of persons and cultures. Therefore, the history of a culture is developmental: each stage builds on the achievements of its predecessor stage, keeping what is useful and adding to it. (Dilthey 1976, 139) So again like Habermas, Dilthey believes that true cultural progress is possible and has in fact been occurring. Progress can be gauged by an increasing esteem for the individual and by more universal and inclusive understanding. (Dilthey 1976, 135)

Anticipating Heidegger, and offering an idea that Habermas incorporates, Dilthey emphasizes that experienced reality is, pre-conceptually, a unified whole in which the organism pre-linguistically comprehends, and feels, and wills, and acts with no doubts about the reality of any of it; including the reality of the resistance to action that defines objective phenomena. The concepts of inner vs. outer, subject vs. object, physical vs. mental, realism vs. idealism, self vs. not-self are artificial (though sometimes useful) abstractions that—incompletely—refer to various aspects of our *one* whole indivisible experience. (Dilthey 1976, 170-71) Here we see Dilthey's ontological hermeneutics: what is self and other is subject to interpretation, and may change over time. (de Mul 2004, 263) This notion of the developmental change of what is considered to be one's *self* anticipates Piaget and Kohlberg, and is a key concept in Habermas's ideas about progress in cognition and morality.

Like Habermas, Dilthey states that communication among persons arises by the need to understand one another, to know what the other person thinks, feels, and intends to do. (Dilthey 1976, 220) Although Dilthey incorporates Schleiermacher's hermeneutic model of meaning—the meaning of any statement or event is

determined by its place within the whole of statements and events of which it is a part, and meaning is endlessly tentative and subject to revision—and although the categories of understanding are not fixed, Dilthey nevertheless believes that mutual understanding among persons is possible because "the same functions and elements are present in all individuals," although the "degree and strength" of these functions and elements varies among persons. (Dilthey 1976, 236, 262) These key common human functions and elements that ground interpersonal understanding include: (1) the "identity of reason": that is, statements should not contradict one another; (2) "sympathy on the emotional plane"; and (3) "mutual commitments of right and duty accompanied by consciousness of obligation": that is, a basic sense of "reciprocity" of duties to one another. (Dilthey 1976, 186) Dilthey's ideas of these commonalities of human nature are incorporated almost whole-cloth by Habermas in his theory of communicative action and are key for his rebuttal of the relativism of postmodernism.

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Habermas considers himself to be a philosophical Pragmatist, and Charles Sanders Peirce introduces a key epistemological idea that is important for Habermas's refutation of relativism and for his concept of communicative action: truth is discovered via consensus achieved during discourse among knowledgeable persons. Peirce, a practicing scientist all his life, believed that scientific investigation (and he included philosophy as a form of scientific investigation) would progress toward a single, unified understanding. No one person could know the truth, but knowledgeable individuals, in discussion and with empirical testing, could correct one another's ideas and, over a long period of time, approximate a final truth in an asymptotic manner. (Peirce 1996, 152, 155) This idea of the

progress of knowledge via discourse is key to Habermas's theory of communicative action, although Habermas does not include the notion of progress to a single truth; for, like Dilthey, Habermas includes the evolutionary idea of endless change without an ultimate convergence.

«««««»»»»»

Habermas finds much of Heidegger's philosophy useful; they disagree mainly on the notion of *truth* and on the notion of *authenticity.* Like Kant, the German Idealists, and Dilthey, Heidegger believes that we only have access to the contents of consciousness. (Heidegger 1992, 30) Dasein, human consciousness, the "clearing" of "disclosedness" of phenomena (Heidegger 2010, 129) has several characteristics, which Heidegger terms *existentials*. Briefly, the primordial existentials of Dasein include (1) the conscious manifold of phenomena; (2) embodiment in an environing spatial world; (3) concerned being-with Others; (4) awareness of its past, present, and future; (5) caring about satisfaction of its desires; (6) a pre-thematic project of satisfying those desires; (7) a mood related to the satisfaction or frustration of desires; and (8) a pre-thematic understanding of self and world resulting from the significance and resistance of innerworldly things in relation to one's project. "Always already" Dasein is "thrown" into this ongoing existential process. (Heidegger 2010, 131) About all this, Habermas has no disagreement with Heidegger, and in fact finds Heidegger's description of the prethematic unity of experience useful. Habermas also has no disagreement with Heidegger's description of how language reveals the self-world to Dasein, that language thematizes existence; however, Habermas does not believe that this linguistic revealing should itself be termed *truth*.

Besides adding phenomenological detail to Dilthey's model of ontological hermeneutics, Heidegger's major new addition to philosophy is his notion of the *development* of Dasein from a lower to a higher state of self-awareness. Like Habermas, Heidegger believes that Dasein starts from a stage of conventional self-understanding and has a chance to progress from that. "Initially and for the most part," (Heidegger 2010, 137) Dasein's understanding of self-world is acquired from its culture, its Others, not from direct self-analysis of its existential condition. This *inauthentic* understanding of oneself is in terms of the standard roles and goals within one's particular culture: child, adult, parent, successful worker, loyal patriot, and so forth. Heidegger's term for the culture's superficial self-understanding and expectations is the *They*. (Heidegger 2010, 123ff) One's conformity to the conventional self-understanding transmitted by one's culture Heidegger terms the they-self, (Heidegger 2010, 125) and this corresponds closely to Habermas concept of the *conventional* stage of ethical-moral identity.

Dasein has the potential, however, of developing authentic self-understanding. (Heidegger 2010, 42) As an authentic self, Dasein becomes aware of the conventional, script-like nature of inauthentic understanding, in a manner similar to Piaget's notion of reflective abstraction. With the culture's scripted role devalued by Dasein as its basis of meaning, Dasein can find its authentic project based on its ownmost concerns, not limited to those priorities inculcated by its culture. With authentic self-understanding, one critically and selectively appropriates elements from one's culture rather than accepting the scripted version of self-understanding offered in Idle Talk by the They. The authentic self corresponds to Habermas's idea of *postconventional* and abstract ego development.

Habermas and Heidegger differ, however, in their ideas about *how* Dasein develops an authentic self-understanding out of its initial position of inauthentic self-understanding. Heidegger says that Dasein must first have an experience of existential *aloneness*, of standing back from its immersion in the They; Dasein must feel a sense of estrangement from the comfortable answers and the tranquilizing distractions found in Idle Talk: Dasein must feel an uncanniness, a not-at-home-ness in its ontic situation. (Heidegger 2010, 181-82) Heidegger believes that this awareness of existential separation from the They is often brought about by full awareness of one's mortality, because death is the ultimate separation from the They, and the anticipation of it, the anxious "dread" of it, can—but does not always—make us aware of existential separateness from the conventional roles assigned to us. (Heidegger 2010, 241ff) We will see that for Habermas, in contrast, post-conventional self-development is achieved, not by heightened separateness from one's fellows, but by an expanded discourse within a broadened community.

The Emphasis on the Irrational

As I will discuss, Habermas is perhaps most vulnerable to the charge that his theory of communicative reason ignores the power of the irrational forces influencing thought. Because of this, I present the challenges brought against Habermas by Gadamer and Foucault. Toward the end of the paper I will make suggestions for how Habermas can better integrate the irrational into his theory of reason.

Gadamer challenges Habermas's assertion that communicative action (which deals with *thematized* fore-understandings) can indeed result in a rational outcome.

Gadamer adopts the Dilthey-Heidegger model of ontological hermeneutics, including fore-understandings that are revised based on feedback from experience and from discourse. (Gadamer 2004, 550-51) For Gadamer, however, *un*-thematized fore-understandings remain dominant. As Gadamer understands it, each person exists as a hermeneutic interpretive program preloaded by his culture with an immense number of fore-understandings. These “prejudices” exist mostly out of awareness and as the unquestioned lifeworld that each person shares with Others in his culture. (Gadamer 2004, 273) It is impossible to bring each and every fore-understanding, or even most fore-understandings, into conscious scrutiny for its validity—even via communicative action—so one can never escape the prethematic prejudices of one's tradition. (Gadamer 2004, 269) For this reason, Gadamer points out, one's concepts reflect one's *pre*thematic lifeworld more than they do one's well-critiqued interpretations. (Gadamer 2004, 278)

In another challenge to Habermas, Gadamer emphasizes the *aesthetic* foundation of understanding and judgment. He believes that virtually all judgments are made on the basis of “taste” rather than a weighing of pro and con *reasons*. (Gadamer 2004, 77) That is, all judgments are more like preferring chocolate ice cream over vanilla ice cream, than they are like a mathematical equation; so judgment is a matter of aesthetics rather than calculation. Our response of taste preference is "the essence of all experience." (Gadamer 2004, 60) Even scientific reasoning involves an element of taste preference rather than conceptual reasoning (Gadamer 2004, xxiii), a point that Thomas Kuhn also made about scientific theory preferences in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (1996) Our taste for an experience is involuntary and is self-evident, like judging ice cream. (Gadamer 2004, xvii, translators preface by Weinsheimer & Marshall) In fact, Gadamer

points out, there are no universal conceptual criteria for aesthetic judgments, and it would be inappropriate to create them. (Gadamer 2004, 32) Aesthetic judgment, taste, then is primarily a sensual-emotional response, not primarily a cognitive one. And yet, says Gadamer, taste "implies a mode of knowing." (Gadamer 2004, 32) We *know* that a flavor of ice cream taste good or bad.

Gadamer is convinced, contra Habermas, that conceptual reasoning has only weak power of persuasion in human judgment, compared to the power of taste. A person's taste is more likely to control his actions than is his conceptual understanding of what he should do. (Gadamer 2004, 35) As Gadamer says, "human passions cannot be governed by the universal prescriptions of reason." (Gadamer 2004, 21) In particular, says Gadamer, morality is more a matter of taste than it is of conceptual reasoning. (Gadamer 2004, 34) So morality develops from individual experiences of aesthetic response, not from learning of concepts about what is morally right and wrong. (Gadamer 2004, 318) Like all taste, our moral sense originally develops from the tradition within which we are born and raised, and remains always primarily influenced by that origin. (Gadamer 2004, 282)

In the appendix, supplements, and afterward included in *Truth and Method*, (2004) Gadamer specifically responds to Habermas. Gadamer agrees with Habermas that "critical rationality" can result in "reflexive enlightenment" of fore-understanding. But he believes that this enlightenment is always quite limited, and that fore-understandings remain mainly governed by tradition and taste.(Gadamer 2004, 559) Gadamer says that Habermas has a "fantastic overestimation of reason by comparison to the affections that motivate the human mind." (Gadamer 2004, 570) So even after explicitly considering Habermas’s argument, Gadamer still is

convinced that one's being convinced by an argument has more to do with one's aesthetic response than it does one's reasoning. (Gadamer 2004, 571)

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Foucault serves as another important foil for Habermas because Foucault also challenges the very notion of the rationality of reason. For Foucault, reason is primarily the tool of self-interest and domination; not an Enlightenment tool of liberation. Foucault rejects the easy and almost obvious assumption of social progress in the West over the past 600 years. (Foucault 1977, 148)

What Foucault finds everywhere he conducts his archeology and genealogy is the influence of the power of greedy self-interest: The development of Western society over the past 500 years (at least) has been driven by power struggles among the factions who benefit to varying degrees from its social arrangements. This "capillary power" is inculcated into a culture's morality (Foucault 1980, 41), and it shapes each person's desires. (Foucault 1980, 59) This power shapes intellectual discourse and what are considered valid forms of argument and valid forms of evidence. In this manner, the dominant power in a culture generates the type of truth that helps that dominant power's beneficiaries the most. (Foucault 1980, 77, 92-93, 197) So, then, the truth produced by power determines what is accepted as morally right, personally ethical, and objectively true.

And so, Foucault draws a seemingly inescapable circle of "power-knowledge" that keeps minds and bodies chained to the dominant "power apparatus." Knowledge always supports some power structure, and knowledge is always generated by the power structure. All knowledge furthers the power of the knower and the power apparatus that supports him: all knowledge is "fundamentally selfish knowledge." (Foucault 1977, 203)

The Relativism of Language

While Gadamer challenges Habermas with the power of taste to affect judgment, and Foucault challenges Habermas with the inescapable "capillary" manifestations of the power-knowledge apparatus, Richard Rorty challenges Habermas on linguistic grounds.

For Rorty, sensations and language are tools for coping with living existence, for Darwinian survival; coping, not accurate representation of anything, is their mechanism of evolutionary selection. (Rorty 1991, 119) In fact, "success," both short-term instrumental success and long-term evolutionary success, is the only criterion for the "accuracy" of the connection between mental phenomena and our unworlded environment. (Rorty 1991, 13)

In disagreement with Habermas, all truth is purely linguistic, says Rorty; and since language is just an evolutionary tool for communication among persons, then *truth* is just those statements that are well-accepted among those persons who fully comprehend them. (Rorty 1991, 24, 26) Statements are *believed* when their meaning can be *coherently* woven into our preexisting web of beliefs. In this re-weaving process, some of our preexisting web of beliefs may need to be adjusted a little or a lot in order to improve the coherence of that region of our total web of beliefs. Most of the time, new beliefs are woven into our preexisting web of beliefs with minimal modification required of that preexisting web of belief; occasionally, major modification of our preexisting beliefs is required. (Rorty 1991, 94)

Per Rorty, pragmatism has no theory of truth other than *coherence* within the total web of beliefs. (Rorty 1991, 133) There is no correspondence between truth and anything nonlinguistic, for example. (Rorty 1991, 24, 154) The search for universal truth is best described as the desire to maximize intersubjective

coherence among experts; a laudable and necessary quest without possibility of a final realization. (Rorty 1991, 22) Again, however, Rorty reminds us that the success of both the individual and of the human species indicates that our total web of beliefs is efficacious in relation to the causal links between our mind-world and our unworlded natural environment. (Rorty 1991, 159)

Rorty points out that this *coherence model of truth*, based on the harmoniously interconnected web-like hermeneutic structure of our beliefs, entails six conclusions, some of which are in harmony with Habermas's theory of communicative reason and some of which are not: First, contra Peirce, the model excludes any convergence of beliefs over time toward the one best explanatory belief about anything. (Rorty 1991, 27, 131) As Rorty points out, Thomas Kuhn (1996) has shown us that even in physics scientific revolutions can happen at any time, derailing the convergence of *normal* science and fanning-out new beliefs among experts into a diverging array before eventually settling into a new, again temporary, coherent period of a restructured normal science. Second, similarly to Gadamer's notions of taste, there is no "universal transcultural rationality." (Rorty 1991, 26) That is, there are no universal rules for how agreement about beliefs is to be gained. The reweaving of webs of belief to incorporate new statements follows no fixed logic; coherence is gained through creativity, often with the help of new metaphors that just *feel* apt. (Rorty 1991, 124) Reasoning well, then, amounts to being *open* to reweaving one's web of beliefs as needed for the harmonious inclusion of new statements as warranted by experience. (Rorty 1991, 62) Coherence and the success of one's beliefs are the best measure of rationality; in fact "success" and "failure" are better terms than "rational" and "irrational." (Rorty 1991, 66) Third, no field of knowledge is more in touch with "reality" than is any

other field of knowledge that holds itself open to reweaving of its beliefs and is without unquestionable dogma. (Rorty 1991, 119) Fields of study simply vary in the range and intensity of agreement about their respective beliefs among their respective experts. (Rorty 1991, 53, 162) Rorty suggests that the term "unforced agreement" among experts is a better term than "objectivity." (Rorty 1991, 38) Fourth, different fields of expertise may study, each from its own perspective, the same phenomena. Then each field's theoretical models may well be equally valid even though they are incommensurable between the fields. (Rorty 1991, 60) Fifth, as Rorty explicitly states, "Foucault was right": since reason does not have inviolate rules, and since the reweaving of beliefs is borderless, including the entire network of beliefs, then knowledge is never immune from the influence of selfish interest or other emotional factors. (Rorty 1991, 26) Sixth, knowledge is always ethnocentric: a vast web of well-accepted beliefs instilled into each person from infancy forward; and that web of beliefs can never be completely unwoven and removed or replaced. The very language that we use to think, to construct beliefs, is laden with implicit beliefs. Literally, each person—his essence as person—is that web of language-beliefs.

For Rorty, everyone is limited to viewing and comprehending experiences from the perspective of his culture's language-beliefs. (Rorty 1991, 30) The best that anyone can do to escape his parochialism is to acquire an attitude of inquisitive openness to novel and foreign beliefs: a willingness to incorporate initially strange beliefs coherently within oneself by adjusting one's web of beliefs as needed for that coherence. (Rorty 1991, 14) For Rorty, the "advanced," broadminded individual is one who is familiar with a very wide range of the world's beliefs and who fluidly internalizes those beliefs, as warranted by the overall coherence of his

total web of beliefs, via processes similar to Piaget's concepts of assimilation and accommodation. (Rorty 1991, 110) As with truth, there are no fixed criteria for determining which societies are better or worse; the best we can do in this regard is the judgment of broadminded persons who have wide experience of various societies. (Rorty 1991, 29, 42) Rorty denies that ethnocentrism entails relativism because such assimilation and accommodation of beliefs are guided by both success and coherence. (Rorty 1991, 67)

Habermas's Philosophical Theory

As we have just seen, Habermas enters into philosophical discourse at a time when philosophy seems to have quicksand for its foundation: The paradigm of the philosophy of the subject is trapped by its inherent dualities; the subject is reduced to its language; knowledge and truth are reduced to coherence and practicality; reason is reduced to instrumental calculations at the service of power struggles or taste preferences. The Enlightenment hope that philosophy will unshackle humanity and illuminate the way out of the shadow-cave of unreason is at a low point. Habermas's intention is to use the very insights of the critique of Enlightenment philosophy to lift philosophy out of this hopelessness, to give Reason a new firm foundation.

Habermas's Postmetaphysical Metaphysics

Habermas's metaphysics is based on ontological and epistemological hermeneutics. He combines these to form his *paradigm of mutual understanding*. Then, with the addition of his theory of communicative action and his synthesis of Piaget's theory and Kohlberg's theory, Habermas creates his *theory of communicative reason*, with which he answers the challenges of postmodernism.

Ontology

Habermas's ontology is based on that of Heidegger, and therefore is a version of ontological hermeneutics in the lineage of Dilthey. Habermas explicitly accepts Heidegger's insight that both the World and the Self arise simultaneously from an undifferentiated unity, which is later thematized linguistically. (Habermas 1990,

147) But prior to linguistic thematization, we have a prethematic, "practical and nonpropositional know-how." (Habermas 2003, 133) This prethematic understanding is key for Habermas's refutation of skepticism.

Habermas believes that the undifferentiated prethematic unity of experience differentiates into the objective world and the subjective world pragmatically, based on the experience of coping. The *objective* world contains those experiences that we cannot willfully control and that seem to be the "same for everyone." (Habermas 2003, 254) In contrast, the *subjective* world differentiates "negatively" as all those experiences that are neither objective nor intersubjective. (Habermas 2003, 104) For Habermas, our objective world does not *represent* an unworlded noumenal reality. Rather we take note of unworlded reality "performatively—as the totality of resistances that are processed and are to be anticipated." (Habermas 2003, 26-27) Habermas discounts "metaphysical realism" that "chases a fictitious view from nowhere" in the quest to comprehend an unworlded reality that appearances only represent. (Habermas 2003, 216) Likewise, for Habermas, the distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself is meaningless. (Habermas 2003, 190) Habermas concedes that unworlded reality "as it is in itself partially eludes the horizon of 'our' possible experience." (Habermas 2003, 20) Other types of conscious creatures may well experience a different objective world. (Habermas 2003, 19) However, Habermas believes that the common human "epistemological anthropology may determine the same mode of experience for all subjects capable of speech and action." (Habermas 2003, 20)

Although experience pragmatically differentiates into objective and subjective, Habermas cautions that these must be understood as concepts, and must not be reified into ontological entities, such as "mind" and "nature." (Habermas 2008,

161-62; Habermas 2003, 77) Habermas agrees with Wittgenstein that there is no entity behind the personal pronoun "I." (Habermas 2008, 179) Although the personal pronoun "I" does not refer to an entity, Habermas has no doubt as to the "prelinguistic origins of a sense of self-agency." (Habermas 1992, 27, note 18) This pre-linguistic self-agency becomes *individuality* when one becomes "capable of speech and action, one who in the face of other dialogue participants presents and, if necessary, justifies himself as an irreplaceable and distinctive person." (Habermas 1992, 168) So, for Habermas one who is in the sensorimotor, prelinguistic stage of development, is a human agent, but is not yet an individual.

Although he speaks against reifying the division of objective and subjective worlds, Habermas claims that he is not an Idealist, and that he advocates "a non-scientistic or soft naturalism." (Habermas 2008, 153) This soft naturalism includes, for Habermas, a two-way interaction between mind and nature: the "neural realization of thoughts" and the "programming of the brain by thought." (Habermas 2008, 173) Habermas has no doubt that consciousness depends on the material-organic substrate of the brain. He has no doubt that the underpinnings of thought comply with the physical laws of nature. But he does not believe that the nature of thought can be reduced to the nature of physics. Physics involves *causes*, while thought involves *reasons*. (Habermas 2008, 157) The power of reasons is based on their meanings, "not in accordance with laws of nature but in accordance with grammatical rules" (Habermas 2008, 191) Conscious actions are determined by both physical causes and linguistic reasons. Subjective introspection of thought can reveal the reasons, but not the causes; objective observation of the brain can reveal the causes, but not the reasons. (Habermas 2008, 185, 194)

For Habermas, “freedom of action” means acting according to reasons. (Habermas 2008, 155) Free action is still constrained by the laws of physics that describe the material substrate of thought. But this substrate has as little constraint on thought as does the substrate of my computer that I’m using constrain the ideas that I put into words here. However, there are constraints on freedom beyond the laws of physics: an individual’s freedom of action exists within a “field of possibilities that is limited by her capabilities, character, and circumstances. . . . In this sense, she is not *unconditionally* free to act one way or another.” (Habermas 2008, 157) We are limited to acting on the basis of the reasons that are within our repertoire. And certainly our reasons are influenced by our organismic needs originating in nature which are “sublimated through rational reflection” into preferences for action and into concepts. (Habermas 2008, 195) Indeed, prelinguistic needs, emotional and biological, are “the background of a partiality that determines our subjective attitudes in relation to the world.” (Habermas 2008, 188) In contradistinction to freedom of thought and action which mean freedom to think and to act according to reasons rather than being constrained by causes, “free will” for Habermas has the same meaning as it does for Kant: the ability to choose to act according to one’s moral insights. (Habermas 2003, 95)

Epistemology

Habermas’s epistemology is hermeneutic and pragmatic. Habermas fully subscribes to the linguistic turn: language structures phenomenal appearances with complex and layered meanings that in part determine how they appear to us. (Habermas 2001, 191) It is impossible to view the world free of its structure of meanings embedded in one’s language. (Habermas 2008, 43) Everything one

encounters is given an “a priori meaning” within the linguistic ontology of one’s lifeworld. (Habermas 2001, 144) So “language and reality interpenetrate in a manner that for us is indissoluble.” (Habermas 2001, 357) The “lifeworld” of (mostly prethematic) shared meanings shapes the “context of dialogue” of all participants. (Habermas 2003, 177) Habermas notes that only *objects* are given as appearances in the phenomenal manifold. *Ideas* about those objects and their interrelations are given only in propositional thinking. (Habermas 1998, 11) So our notion of the World as the totality of objects and their interrelations is a linguistic construct. (Habermas 2003, 216)

Pragmatically key for Habermas is his “non-epistemic concept of truth”: the truth of an assertoric statement refers, ultimately, to *objects* within empirical experience. (Habermas 1992, 49) It is the statement’s agreement with the relevant empirical experience that makes the statement true. (Habermas 2003, 39) So *truth* is ascertained *performatively* by action in the objective world, in contradistinction to *rational acceptability*, which is ascertained via discourse. (Habermas 2008, 34) So while truth statements must be *justified* in discourse by being rationally acceptable, their truth must ultimately be ascertained with empirical observation. Habermas emphasizes this non-epistemic conception of truth to refute Rorty’s notion that truth is merely linguistic and can be justified with coherent agreement alone. (Habermas 2003, 38) Habermas emphasizes that "objects” and “states of affairs” among objects are *not* “decided by local [linguistic] habits, but by the world presupposed to be objective in itself.” (Habermas 2003, 63) Objects in the world are “the same for everyone,” so they serve as the constant reference for changing assertoric statements about them. (Habermas 2003, 63) Habermas recognizes that his model leaves a “gap” between performative truth and

propositional justification; that is, between action and language. For Habermas there is always a difference between rational statements and practical truth in actions. (Habermas 2003, 92, Habermas 2008, 34)

For Habermas knowledge is pragmatic-hermeneutic: coping in life with the objective and intersubjective worlds leads to justified interpretations—conceptual systems—naming and explaining the objects and relationships in those worlds. (Habermas 2003, 27) Always-changing experience leads to altered interpretations; language systems are in constant feedback with action. (Habermas 2003, 217) This linguistically articulated "lifeworld" of "background" understanding "forms the background for everyday communication." (Habermas 2003, 60)

Paradigm of Mutual Understanding

Together, Habermas's ontology and epistemology form his alternative to the philosophy of the subject: his "paradigm of mutual understanding." (Habermas 1990, 296) The key elements of this paradigm are:

1. The subjective perspective is no longer "privileged"; rather, interpersonal communication that "coordinates plans for action" is privileged. (Habermas 1990, 296)
2. The self is not an object; rather it "forms itself through participation in linguistic interaction." (Habermas 1992, 25) Individuals are not Absolute I, or transcendental consciousness; they are "*products* of the traditions within which they stand . . . and of the socialization processes within which they grow up." (Habermas 1990, 299)
3. The prelinguistic origin of a sense of self-agency is still recognized. (Habermas 1992, 27, note 18)

4. Self-observation is not conceptually more privileged than is interpersonal communication; self-observation is largely just a "recapitulating reconstruction" of knowledge gained interpersonally via language. (Habermas 1990, 297)
5. Both thinking and sensory perception have their "roots" in biological depth "where, for the time being, they slip from the sight of the step-by-step process of abstracting from what is above." [i.e. from what is self-observable] (Habermas 1992, 99) So the "initial phases of our pre-predicative experiences elude conscious control or explicitly discursive processes." (Habermas 1992, 100)
6. We refer every perception to "the concept of reality." (Habermas 1992, 103)
7. "The burden of proof falls upon argumentation." (Habermas 1992, 101) But a required element in the proof of assertoric statements is agreement with objective experience. (Habermas 2003, 254)
8. There is no transcendental philosophy; just examination of "actually exercised rule-knowledge that is deposited in correctly generated utterances." (Habermas 1990, 297-98)
9. In "everyday communicative practice" statements must "prove their worth" in successful dealings with the world. (Habermas 1990, 199)
10. Our prethematic understanding of the objective and interpersonal worlds based on coping “makes nonsense of total doubt as to the accessibility of the world,” and refutes skepticism. (Habermas 2001, 358)

Habermas believes that his post-metaphysical paradigm of mutual understanding refutes the relativism of Gadamer, Foucault, and Rorty because *language* must serve effective *action* in the world, and the objective world is the *same* for everyone. (Habermas 1990, 206) So language is shaped to fit empirical experience. Language serves and is shaped by action. (Habermas 1990, 154; Habermas 2001 353-54) Therefore, competing concepts can be ranked as more true and less true based on how well they fit empirical experience.

Habermas's Communicative Reason

With this understanding of Habermas's post-metaphysics we are now in a position to discuss his ideas about *communicative reason*—his answer to the critiques of Enlightenment reason. With the demise of the philosophy of the solitary observing-understanding subject, for Habermas the sole criteria for the validity of statements is "agreement reached by argumentation." (Habermas 1990, 14) The individual who is trying to figure things out by himself, as Descartes attempted, is hopelessly solipsistic. Only interpersonal agreement, obtained via communicative action, provides validity—via the unforced force of the better argument. (Habermas 1990, 14) The wider the forum of communicative action—"before an ever more competent and larger audience, against ever new objections" (Habermas 2003, 109)—the more universal becomes the validity of the consensus. (Habermas 2008, 43) Habermas notes, reminiscent of Dilthey, that communicative reason entails "idealizing performative presuppositions" that are necessarily held by the participants. (Habermas 2003, 86) These include:

- A world of independently existing objects to which all participants refer

- That participants are rational and are accountable to one another to explain their reasoning
- That the validity of a statement is maintained in contexts beyond any one particular discussion
- That participants will attempt to take the perspective of the other person's argument in order to weigh it fairly (Habermas 2003, 86-87; Habermas 1990, 322)

Of course, for Habermas, all understanding is hermeneutic. All understanding is an amalgam of prethematic action-based knowledge, thematic fore-conceptions, linguistic validity statements, the familiar horizon disturbed by new experiences, new discourse with unfamiliar horizons—all resulting in interpretations that are never final. (Habermas 2003, 60; Habermas 1987, 125) Actual discourse is never "pure" and free of unacknowledged "motives and compulsions." (Habermas 1990, 323) Communicative action does not remove these "motives and compulsions," but via the critiques of interlocutors it thematizes them as much as is needed and as is possible. Once thematized, unacknowledged fore-understandings then lose their "pre-interpretive power." (Habermas 1987, 133)

Habermas endorses Max Weber's paradigm of the differentiation of knowledge in Modernity into three spheres, each with its own criteria for validity. (Habermas 1990, 112) These three validity spheres correspond to three types of experience: objective, subjective, and intersubjective. First, discourse about objective experience produces *truth*: validity statements about objects and their relationships. This type of discourse has as its epitome, science. In this sphere, truth is an amalgam of (1) objective experience in the world and (2) agreement among experts: both looking and discussing, one might say. (Habermas 1987, 72;

Habermas 2003, 8) This type of discourse produces *objective* knowledge. This truth is *presumed* to be universally valid because innerworldly objects are presumed to be the same for everyone. Habermas notes that scientific discourse is just as dependent on interpretation as is any other type of discourse. (Habermas 1984, 109) Second, discourse about subjective experience yields *truthfulness*: an authentic awareness of, and expression of, who one is: beliefs, hopes, fears, ambitions, values, and so forth. This type of discourse—which Habermas says may be conducted just within oneself—produces *ethical* knowledge, using the word ethical to mean one's personal life ideals. This knowledge is not presumed to be universally valid, but is valid for one's own life or one's community of like-minded fellows. (Habermas 1990, 108) Third, discourse about intersubjective experience yields *rightness*: validity statements of how persons should interact with one another. This is the sphere of *morality* for Habermas. (Habermas 1984, 307) This moral knowledge by his definition is universal, applying to all persons. Habermas notes that in all three spheres of knowledge validity claims will contain *some* reference to the objective world, so will imply *some* claim to objective truth in addition to any ethical or moral claim being made. (Habermas 1992, 96)

Moral discourse shares with scientific discourse the presupposition of the universality of its agreed-upon validity statements. For scientific discourse the source of this universality is the common *objective* world, which Habermas believes is the "same for everyone." (Habermas 2003, 89) For moral discourse the source of universality is the common *social* world, which includes everyone. (Habermas 2003, 43) Just as objective truth is presumed to apply to the objective world, independently of any one person's perspective, so moral norms are presumed to apply to all intersubjective relationships independently of any one

person's perspective. (Habermas 1998, 108) These presumptions are inherent in the ideal discourse situation of communicative action in which no one person's perspective is privileged, and the consensus is to be derived from the unforced force of the better argument as seen from *everyone's* perspective. (Habermas 2003, 266; Habermas 1995, 50) This insight is contained in Habermas's Principle of Universalization, the criterion of all valid *moral* norms:

> **(U)**: All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects the norm's 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). (Habermas 1990, 65)

Like all communicative action, moral discourse has no basis other than the unforced force of the better argument, and so has no pre-specified outcome. (Habermas 1990, 122) Literally *any* moral norm will be valid if it is the outcome of communicative action and if it adheres to principle U. (Habermas 1990, 163)

Just as scientific discourse must supplement discussion with observation of the objective world, so moral discourse must supplement discussion with guidance by *moral feelings*. (Habermas 1990, 50-51) Moral feelings serve the same role in moral discourse as do sensory perceptions in scientific discourse. Like sensory perceptions, moral feelings impose themselves on us rather than being willed by us, and are shared by all normally developed persons. (Habermas 1990, 47) Habermas labels positive moral feelings *admiration* and negative moral feelings *resentment* regarding behavior applied to another individual. (Habermas 1990, 45, 47) The combination of moral feelings and communicative action leads to "moral learning processes as an intelligent expansion and reciprocal interpenetration of the social world." (Habermas 2008, 48) With moral learning, individuals come to include reciprocal moral perspectives within a larger and larger community of humanity, and moral norms become more and more validly universal. The ideal

limit is complete inclusiveness—which is the same ideal as for objective truth. Habermas believes that communicative action about moral norms is possible universally, among all peoples, because of the commonality of moral feelings and because within all languages and worldviews "concepts such as truth, rationality, and justification play the same role . . . . And this fact is sufficient to anchor the same universalistic concepts of morality and justice in different, even competing, forms of life." (Habermas 1995, 105)

Habermas believes that the source of the binding force of moral norms is the same as the source of the binding force of the sacred: the general interest of the community. (Habermas 1987, 77ff) This connection with the general interest of one's community gives moral norms their "ought" quality (Habermas 1987, 93) and their deontological nature (Habermas 1995, 29) Moral validity *means* that "everyone is obligated to help bring about such an inclusive realm of legitimately regulated inter-personal relations." (Habermas 2003, 231)

Of course Habermas recognizes that not everyone has the *will* to behave according to moral norms. Moral will comes not from reasoning, according to Habermas, but from one's childhood psychological development and socialization. (Habermas 1990, 183) And adherence to moral norms can be reasonably expected only if one's society is not dramatically out of harmony with those norms, so that following moral norms does not violate one's own interests. (Habermas 1995, 34) Nevertheless, moral norms maintain their validity even if no one has the will to follow them. (Habermas 1995, 14)

Moral discourses produce many different moral norms. Just which moral norm takes priority in any particular situation may require a "discourse of application." (Habermas 1990, 181) So, for example, in a particular situation the moral norm to

save an innocent life may take priority over the moral norm to tell the truth. Nevertheless, this would not invalidate the moral norm to tell the truth. (Habermas 1995, 64)

The specifics of *ethically* valid—in contrast to morally valid—consensus may differ greatly among individuals and among ethical communities. (Habermas 1995, 127) Habermas points out that modern philosophy has no metaphysical certainty about the best kind of life to lead. No one has "privileged access" to ethical "epistemic authority." (Habermas 2002, 70) Rather, like all validity statements, ethical insights are obtained via communicative action to discuss what is best for *me*, or for those in my group to discuss what is best for *us*. (Habermas 2003, 268) The loss of traditional ethical authority—including premodern philosophy—means that "ethical-existential questions—what is best for me overall? who am I and who do I want to be?"—must be answered by the individual herself. (Habermas 2001, 236) The best advice that philosophy can give in these matters, Habermas says, is that one should live one's life "consciously." (Habermas 2003, 289) By this he means reflectively with deliberation of one's ethical-existential questions.

At the level of an ethical *community*, Habermas points out that the group's ethical standards will derive from its vision of its "utopia," its ideal form of life. (Habermas 1998, 98) Its standards will reflect what its members take to be the common good of their community. (Habermas 2003, 233) In fact, persons who accept the same norms of ethical validity are in the same "social world." (Habermas 1990, 141) Agreement among persons about ethical and moral norms "emotionally binds" them to one another and to behavior consistent with those norms, (Habermas 1990, 324) and creates "obligations relevant to further interaction." (Habermas 1998, 18) As with moral norms, this binding quality of

ethical norms is due to their connections with the common good of the group. Successful communicative action among the members of an ethical community will *change* their self-understanding and their "resolve." (Habermas 1998, 163) Irresolvable conflicts among ethical norms are handled by "compromise" rather than by achieving consensus. (Habermas 1995, 60)

We are now in a position to clarify the key elements of Habermas's notion of communicative reason.

- Linguistic reason is what defines humans as persons.
- Validity statements concerning the spheres of objective and intersubjective experiences must be generated via communicative action. No one, by herself, can be certain that what, in isolation, she believes is true, is in fact true of the *common* objective world and of the *common* intersubjective world. Rather, she must obtain certainty via communicative action comparing perspectives among her interlocutors, and via the unforced force of the better reasons generated by this comparison.
- Communicative action both can provide additional perspectives on the issue at-hand and also can thematize one's fore-understandings, or prejudices, so that they do not automatically steer one's thinking.
- Validity statements about objective *truth* and about moral *rightness* entail observation of nonlinguistic experience: observing objects, in the case of truth; observing moral feelings in the case of rightness. Neither truth nor rightness are purely "epistemic"; they both include more than agreement among discussants about rational assertability: these validity

statements must also fit with perceptions of objects and of moral feelings.

- Validity statements about one's own best life or that of one's community of fellows are valid only for those involved. Modern philosophy can have no ethical recommendations other than self-reflection on one's values and goals, and the use of communicative action with one's fellows and one's therapist.

And yet, regarding that last point, really, Habermas's philosophy *does* give us an ethic, both for individuals and for communities. Habermas's ethic begins with his definition of person: a person is a human being who uses language to come to an understanding with other persons; a human who can use language for communicative action, not just for strategic action. (Habermas 2002, 82) We can then follow this notion's ethical implications: The capacity for participation in communicative action requires that one is able to take seriously the perspective of others, and that one can participate in critique of one's own beliefs by holding one's beliefs "lightly." This ability requires an ego-identity that is abstract—not tied to a particular concrete role or a parochial worldview—and requires that one has achieved a progressive de-centering of one's perspective cognitively and morally. That is, one must have attained post-traditional moral intuitions and abstract cognitive abilities. (Habermas 1995, 47, 94) Such de-centering of one's perspective—or we might say, the achievement of a world-centric perspective, rather than an ego-centric or ethno-centric perspective—will enlarge one's moral circle. Habermas says that a self-conscious life will entail "authentic self-realization" and "autonomy." (Habermas 1992, 146) Autonomy, for Habermas as for Kant, means a will guided by one's moral insight. (Habermas 1995, 10) So

clearly Habermas believes that his philosophy can prescribe that everyone should have psychological development adequate to the creation of a strong moral will. So although Habermas's philosophy will not dictate the desired outcome of ethical discourses, it does dictate the desired outcome of *being able to fully participate in communicative action*: that is, the development of an abstract ego identity with post-conventional moral principles, with an openness to new ideas and to foreign perspectives, and with a willingness to have every question answered by the unforced force of the better argument found via communicative action. One must have non-dogmatic beliefs and the reflexive capacity for learning. (Habermas 1992 324-25) Habermas's other criterion for ethical belief is that one's ethics must not conflict with one's moral insights; moral insights take priority over ethical insights. (Habermas 2008, 161) This, of course, is entailed in Habermas's definition of autonomy, and, again, requires development of a strong moral will.

In fact, Habermas gives us an explicit description of this ethical ideal—although he does not name it that way—when he describes the future potential of the modern trend of the progressive rationalization of all aspects of life:

> "The vanishing point of these [modern, rationalizing] evolutionary trends are: for culture, a state in which traditions that have become reflective and then set aflow undergo continuous revision; for a society, a state in which legitimate orders are dependent upon formal procedures for positing and justifying norms; and for personality, a state in which a highly abstract ego-identity is continuously stabilized through self-steering. . . . they signal a release of the rationality potential inherent in communicative action." (Habermas 1987, 146)

Clearly, for Habermas, this full release of the "rationality potential inherent in communicative action" is an ethical ideal, both for individuals and for communities.

Habermas's Integration of His Philosophical Predecessors

Let us now look at how Habermas is in conversation with philosophers since Descartes, both appropriating their key ideas and answering the questions that they left us. Although Habermas discards the philosophy of the subject, he retains key the insights of the Enlightenment. He incorporates hermeneutic philosophy, and uses Pragmatism to avoid relativism. He accepts the linguistification of truth statements, but again uses Pragmatism to avoid relativism. He accepts the role of non-rational psychological factors influencing judgment, but he insists that reasoning has the upper hand.

Descartes, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel

From the philosophy of the subject, Habermas retains the idea that each conscious creature generates its unique phenomenal experience. Also, for Habermas, as for Descartes, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, there is an unworlded reality that is forever inaccessible to us. Habermas departs from the philosophy of the subject, however, by giving primacy ontologically, not to the subject who creates his world, but, like Dilthey and Heidegger, to undifferentiated non-dual experience that divides pragmatically into self and world. Habermas discards the problem of representation because there is nothing "outside" for the subject to represent "inside": it's all just one conscious experience, and the division into outside of and inside of the subject is conceptual, not ontological. This sidesteps the aporias of the philosophy of the subject, the unbridgeable dichotomies that revolve around the issue of whether the outside or the inside has primacy: whether language structures the subject or the subject structures language; whether culture—intersubjective

experience—forms the subject or the subject forms culture. All of these dualisms are, for Habermas, conceptual, not ontological. Ontologically, they are all facets of one non-dual conscious experience.

Within the Enlightenment philosophy of the subject, reasoning is a mostly private matter: the subject identifies the patterns in her phenomenal experience, then the subject identifies patterns in those patterns, and then identifies patterns in those second-order patterns, and so forth toward more and more inclusive and abstract ideas. So, the subject is left to her own ratiocination to develop an understanding of her experiences. This leaves the philosophy of the subject wide-open to the problems of solipsism.

Habermas rejects this paradigm of isolated reasoning: he states that all reasoning is via language, and language is an *inter*subjective phenomena; reasoning occurs within a *network* of individuals. Reasons are by their very nature explanations, and explanation is communication, and communication is intersubjective. Even conversations with myself, in my own head, are a play-acting of conversing with someone else—*imaginary* intersubjectivity. So, reasoning is never solipsistic, it always includes perspectives other than one's own.

And yet, Habermas does use the idea of *individual* cognitive development, primarily using the models of Piaget and Kohlberg. Within these models, the person can only reason up to the level of abstract thinking that he has attained, and the person can only understand others' perspectives to the degree that he has achieved ego decentering. Someone of quite limited cognitive development will be unable fully to use her intersubjective network to expand her understanding of her experiences. She will, in fact, be limited by the nature of her own subjectivity. Of course, what is true of the person with quite limited cognitive ability is true of

everyone: we can reason up to the level of cognitive development that we have attained, and we can take the perspective of others up to the degree of ego decentering we have developed. Communicative action then, depends on both intersubjective and intrapsychic factors. Habermas has described in detail the intersubjective process of communicative action; he has not described in detail how intrapsychic factors—present in every participant—play a role in communicative action. Habermas does however provide us with his "performative"—intrapsychic—ethical ideals that are required to become a person who can participate competently in communicative action and who can behave with free will morally.

Habermas escapes the aporias of freedom of action found within the philosophy of the subject by defining free action as the ability to act according to reasons—not as the ability to act independently of, or contrary to, cause-and-effect. The fact that reasons depend on a material substrate that behaves according to causal laws is just as irrelevant as is whether ideas are expressed on paper rather than on a computer screen. The fact that reasons will be affected by subconscious factors—physiological and emotional needs, for example—is also irrelevant to freedom of action. The source of the thought is not of concern regarding free action; being able to act according to reasons is, for Habermas, the only issue concerning free action.

Dilthey and Peirce

Habermas takes several elements of his philosophy from the hermeneutic model first developed by Dilthey from Schleiermacher's ideas about textual interpretation. Habermas largely accepts Dilthey's model of the "acquired mental

structure" in which intersubjective learning is responsible for one's categories of experience, with a reciprocal learning between the person and her culture based on the practical outcomes of applying those categories. For Habermas, as well as for Dilthey, this ongoing feedback between ideas and their effectiveness leads to developmental progress both for the individual and for a culture, as the best ideas are kept and are further improved. (Habermas 1984, 182) Habermas accepts Dilthey's ontological hermeneutic of a unified whole of experience that becomes differentiated conceptually into objective and subjective experiences. Habermas also uses Dilthey's ideas about communication as understanding based on reasons and mutual respect. Finally, Habermas uses Dilthey's notion of emotions as one of the categories of experience in his own idea of moral emotions as the perceptions grounding moral intuitions about rightness.

Habermas takes from Peirce the idea of truth as the product of an ideal discourse situation. However, Habermas rejects Peirce's idea of eventual convergence toward the one final truth. For Habermas, the universal validities of (empirical) truth and of moral rightness are *idealizations* required by the definitions of truth and rightness; but truth and rightness never actually achieve universality and are never asymptotically convergent or final.

Heidegger

Habermas largely accepts Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics and Heidegger's phenomenological description of Dasein, and particularly the notion of fore-understandings that are in a reciprocal relationship with experience. Habermas's major difference with Heidegger is about the nature of development from an inauthentic they-self upward and into an authentic self. For Heidegger this

development occurs via an epiphany about one's existential aloneness; a type of inward *re*-centering of one's ego perspective. For Habermas, the development of one's most authentic self, the post-conventional self, occurs via a *de*-centering of one's ego perspective that is catalyzed by discourse with others' perspectives. (Habermas 2003, 59) However, for both Heidegger and Habermas, upward personal development entails progressive freedom from the conventional stage of ego identity in which one is identified with a pre-scripted, standard cultural role.

Gadamer

Habermas's major disagreement with Gadamer is the latter's emphasis on "taste" determining reasoning. Habermas believes that the feedback of *practical* effects into reasoning prevent reasoning's being so "aesthetically"—rather than instrumentally—driven. So where Gadamer accuses Habermas of over-emphasizing the power of reason to guide persons' thought and action, Habermas rebuts that it is not just reasoning, but is both reasoning in feedback with practical effects that guide thought and action. But Habermas's theory does not adequately develop the role of aesthetics in reasoning about empirical matters, a role that, as Kuhn has shown in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, cannot be ignored even in the development of theories in physics.

Foucault

Habermas has no fundamental conflict with Foucault's notion of capillary power-knowledge: indeed, Habermas would say, knowledge, reasoning, is influenced by many factors, various competing power interests among them. But Habermas feels that Foucault is reductionistic to imply that knowledge *mainly*

serves power interests. (Habermas 1994, 91) Habermas complains that Foucault gives no guidance to distinguish more valid from less valid power-knowledge claims. (Habermas 1994, 94) He complains that Foucault ignores the ability of communicative action to bring power interests to light and so to lead to reasoning that takes into consideration all participants' power interests equally, (Habermas 1984, 119-20) Habermas states that Foucault ignores the fact that reasoning must prove itself with practical effectiveness in the world, which limits the control that power interests can have in shaping truth. Finally, Habermas complains that Foucault ignores the obvious progress in human flourishing in "the bourgeoisie constitutional state," (Habermas 1994, 101-02) and "the unmistakable gains in liberality and legal security, and the expansion of civil rights" in modern societies. (Habermas 1990, 290) For Habermas, history has not been merely a series of equally oppressive power/knowledge regimes. That is, history has *not* been just one form of subjugation after another; rather, there has been *progress* in reducing subjugation, and an increase in the ability of individuals to choose their life paths outside of the dominant power structure. (For detailed documentation of such progress in the Western world, see Pinker 2011.)

Still, Habermas grants that Foucault's "unmasking" of capillary power is valuable. (Habermas 1994, 102) And Habermas sounds his own alarms about the effect of power on the lifeworld. For Habermas, the lifeworld is the background of human relationships more or less consciously guided by commonsense norms of truth, rightness, and truthfulness; that is, the lifeworld is guided by more or less faithful approximations to communicative reason. Habermas names two societal forces that distort action in the lifeworld away from guidance by communicative reason: the "systems" of money and of administrative power. (Habermas 1981,

115) These systems are guided by their own *impersonal* logic: profit on the one hand, and action within a formal administrative role on the other hand;s rather than being guided by the norms of illocutionary communication; *systems* are guided by strategic, not by communicative, action. According to Habermas, money and administrative power have as their *proper* function to *serve* the lifeworld, not to dictate to it: to make exchange relationships more efficient, and to smooth organizational actions. In modern capitalist societies, however, both systems overstep their proper roles and begin to *serve their own ends*: *maximization of profit*, and *maximization of administrative power*. As this happens, lifeworld decisions cease to be made on the basis of communicative reason and begin to be made on the basis of profit and power, a process that Habermas terms *colonization of the lifeworld* by the systems of power and money. (Habermas 1984, 227) Especially decisions that should be made primarily on the basis of *rightness* are then made, rather, on the basis of profit and bureaucratic power. (Habermas 1984, 363)

Rorty

Habermas agrees with Rorty, and with the Linguistic Turn more generally, that language does structure thought and perceptions: for example, at this moment I perceive a *computer* laying on a *desk* within a *room*, rather than just a pattern of light and dark rectangles. Rorty and Habermas also agree that *unforced agreement* among knowledgeable discussants is the best guide to valid statements. They agree, too, that there is no convergence among valid statements toward a final agreement. Both agree that irrational forces affect reasoning, often in hidden ways.

Both agree that the instrumental success of action guided by reasons is a necessary guarantor to the validity of those reasons.

Habermas's differences with Rorty, and with the Linguistic Turn more generally, concern truth's degree of freedom from linguistic determination. For Habermas, truth includes not just agreement among knowledgeable discussants, it also includes—separately—agreement with perceptions: perceptions of innerworldly objects in the case of empirical *truth*, and perceptions of moral emotions in the case of interpersonal *rightness*. For Habermas, both types of perceptions are independent enough of one's language to make them independent checks on validity. This relative language-independence of perceptions means that Habermas and Rorty disagree on the universality of valid statements as well. For Rorty, all knowledge is ethnocentric, confined within the borders of a language and a culture. Competing validity statements are incommensurable across language-cultures. For Habermas, perceptions are "the same" among the normally developed members of the human species. (Ingram 2010, 102) These "same" perceptions serve as cross-cultural measures of validity statements. Also, for Habermas, illocutionary speech is the same for all normally developed members of the human species: the same set of idealizing presuppositions are required in order to be convinced by reasons. The cross-language, cross-cultural commonality of perceptions and of illocutionary speech mean, for Habermas, that valid assertoric truth statements and valid moral rightness statements have universal validity.

Criticisms of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Reason

There is criticism that Habermas reifies Weber's three spheres of reasoning, that Habermas reifies the concepts of strategic action vs. communicative action, and that he reifies the concepts of system and lifeworld—that actual experience is always an undifferentiated mixture of them all; that these are analytic, not empirical, divisions. (Joas 1991, 98; Kruger 1992, 149; McCarthy 1991, 130)) I think that Habermas understands that the entities he names—lifeworld, system, strategic action and communicative action, the three spheres of knowledge, and so forth—are terms for conceptual, not empirical, categories. These are concepts *abstracted* from experience, similarly to the concepts *ego*, *id*, and *superego*: these are not empirical *things*, they are conceptual tools for *organizing* our understanding of psychic experience. Habermas has clearly stated that all notions of the organization of experience are linguistic constructions.

Rorty's criticism is that Habermas tries in vain to retain a solid foundation for (communicative) reason, when, as I have discussed, in Rorty's opinion there is no foundation to reason, other than the degree of conceptual coherence. Yet, Rorty is a pragmatist and he does include *practical* success as one measure of validity. This seems necessarily to entail non-linguistic criteria: Does the bridge *actually* collapse or not as I walk across it? So Rorty's model of truth does not seem to be as totally linguisitified as he claims. If this is the case, then Rorty's philosophy is compatible with Habermas's theory of communicative reason.

But most criticisms of Habermas's theory concern his relative neglect of the irrational, emotional, aesthetic, unconscious, un-thematized aspects of the mind and their effects on reasoning. (Gadamer 2004; Warren 1995, 181, 193; Ingram

2010 30; Alexander 1991, 72; Dux 1991, 95; Berger 1991, 172; Dallmayr 1997, 90; Coole 1997, 224ff) It is this type of criticism that I want to discuss further.

Regarding this criticism that Habermas neglects—although he does not deny—the role of the non-rational in the process of reasoning, I have to concur. Habermas gives a nod to the notion that—*of course*—non-rational aspects of the mind do exist and do influence everything the mind does to a greater or lesser extent. But after giving that ritual nod, Habermas does little to incorporate non-rational factors into his theory of communicative reason. Yes, Habermas does say that we must observe moral *feelings* as a basis for moral reasoning, and he does say that *aesthetic* preferences are a valid basis for ethical reasoning that applies only to myself or to my community of like-minded fellows; but that is about as far as Habermas explains the role of non-reason in reasoning. In his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas's deals with psychoanalysis in his very brief excursus on the writings of the psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis. Here Habermas does not deny the existence of "the imaginary dimension, the image-creating fantasy steered by drives . . . as the world-constituting medium of the imaginary dimension of society. . . . this prelinguistic fantasy-production on the part of inner nature," as Habermas paraphrases Castoriadis. (Habermas 1990, 333) But other than criticizing Castoriadis for staying within the philosophy of the subject—that is, not sufficiently linking private fantasy with intersubjectivity—Habermas has little to say about the influence of "the imaginary dimension."

Integrating Psychodynamics into Habermas's Theory

So what *should* be integrated into Habermas's theory to make it more balanced and complete, less rationalistic? Certainly, as Whitebook (1997,185) has hinted with his statement that Habermas does not adequately incorporate the unconscious into the theory of communicative reason, at least psychoanalytic psychodynamic theory should be incorporated into Habermas's model.

From psychoanalytic drive theory, we know that every instinctual urge will be manifested in either overt or disguised fashion. Some instinctual urges can be gratified in undisguised form, such as eating the biggest piece of birthday cake. Some urges must be sublimated into less gross, more acceptable (to oneself and to others) forms, such as becoming a gynecologist rather than a criminal voyeur. Some instinctual urges will be gratified by exposing their overt expression by others, as with pornography police. And there are many more *defense mechanisms* with which to gratify instinctual urges without guilt or punishment. (See for example A. Freud 1966) The point is that the gratification of instinctual drives will be *rationalized* within one's conceptual scheme of the world. Of course, this includes one's narcissistic desire to be a "good person," according to one's superego prohibitions and one's ego-ideal aspirations. So certainly in this bottom-up sense Nietzsche and Foucault are correct: the exercise of one's *power* to gratify (usually in sublimated fashion) one's instinctual urges is expressed in all one's actions, including one's reasoning.

From psychoanalytic dream theory, we know that *primary process* thinking—most commonly and clearly exemplified in dreams—is imagistic and not in conformity to the rules of logic. Within primary process thinking time and

causality can run backward, or be scrambled completely; A can be both B and not-B at the same time. Primary process thought is driven by primitive, fundamental fantasies, desires, and fears. The language of primary process thought is metaphorical, composed of double entendres. We know that primary process thinking influences rational, *secondary process* thinking. Slips of the tongue, jokes, creative writing, profanity, reflective thinking, and free-associations demonstrate this influence daily. (See for example S. Freud 1960) Primary process thought is the wild, untamed, unpredictable source of new combinations of ideas for secondary process, rational thought—as is occasionally vividly demonstrated when a scientist's dream is translated into a new theory, as happened with Kekule's new theory of the multivalent-carbon structure of the benzene ring. (Benfey 1958)

We know from psychoanalytic object relations theory that every significant entity in one's experience is affectively charged based on infantile dichotomies: the gratifying vs. frustrating dichotomy being the most basic. This basic positive-negative dichotomy develops into good vs. bad, loved vs. hated, desired vs. repelled, idealized vs. devalued, and so on. We also know that the infantile division of self and not-self begins with the gratifying "good" being taken as self and the frustrating "bad" being rejected as not-self (that is, the process of primitive splitting and projection). (See for example Greenberg and Mitchell 1983) We see normal, playful adult manifestations of this psychodynamic in the idealizing of one's home-team and the demonizing of the competing team (although this is sometimes taken to non-playful extremes). We also see manifestations of this psychodynamic of projection in politics, in war, and in situations where there is a lack of information about another person and so too much is "left to our imaginations," that is, to our projections.

So drive theory, dream theory, and object-relations theory show us that language—at least secondary-process, rationally intelligible language—does *not* construct our world, at least not its foundation: pre-linguistic sensorimotor relations, primary process thinking, and instinctually based projections construct the foundation of our experienced world. Initially, our preoperational and concrete-operational language *expresses* this sensorimotor-instinctual construction of experience.

With the development of more abstract cognition, we can reflect on this sensorimotor-instinctual construction of thought, and begin to "think about the way we think." With this developmental process, our view of self and others becomes less split into good vs. bad as we become aware—in at least a commonsense manner—of the differences between "immature" thinking and "mature" thinking. But this abstract, reflective thinking is itself performed using metaphorical language based on sensorimotor-instinctual thought, as described by the linguists Lakoff and Johnson in *Philosophy in the Flesh*. (1999) And this insightful reflection on the "immature" elements in our thinking is *resisted* when such insight would threaten frustration of drives, or would threaten contamination of "good" objects (including the self) with overwhelming reincorporated negativity, or would destroy one's current paradigm of self and others without offering an acceptable replacement and so would leave one feeling disorganized. Psychodynamic processes cannot be halted. We never stop gratifying instinctual drives, we never stop using primary process thinking, we never stop splitting and projecting into good and bad others and self. (Flax 2000, 54; Benjamin 2000, 87; Mitchell 2000, 181) So, we always have instinctually loaded gratifications, we have feelings-perceptions of projected idealization or devaluation, and we have primary process

double entendres toward every *concept* that could affect us in any way—all influencing judgments of whether a statement is valid or invalid. This "irrational" cauldron is easily demonstrated during family political and religious discussions, and during "talking heads" political-discussion television programs. Kuhn's (1996, 53ff) description of Joseph Priestley's inability to let go of his concept of phlogiston even to the end of his life undoubtedly gives us an illustration of a scientist's psychodynamics interfering with what should have been an irresistibly rational paradigm shift.

Psychoanalysis, then, shows that no reasoning will be free of pre-rational influences, even in the (approximately) *ideal discourse situation* described by Habermas. Instinctual drives, primary process thought, and projective object relations will always influence what seems reasonable. Not only is there no God's-eye omni-perspectival view, there is no omni-rational view, either.

None of this takes away from the importance of secondary process, logical thought; the type of thought that Habermas emphasizes in his theory of communicative reason. As we see in psychosis, primary process thinking is not very effective at coping with empirical and interpersonal reality: I cannot *actually* kill my father, and then later have him to enjoy. I cannot *actually* walk around exhibitionistically nude in my town, and then later enjoy the social esteem that I want. We rely on secondary process thought *to cope* most effectively with empirical and interpersonal experience. We also rely on secondary process thought to identify and to describe unconscious psychodynamics. Psychoanalysts use secondary process thinking and language in their interpretations to the analysand. And yet, the analyst's secondary process interpretation is guided by *his own* psychodynamics reacting to the analysand's free associations, body language, and

so forth; creating the awareness of the analyst's *countertransference* is part of the reason for the analyst's own training analysis. So, in *any* relationship, there is a hermeneutic circle of transference-countertransference psychodynamics that can never be escaped, although it can be (partially) thematized.

Furthermore, research on psychotherapy outcomes has shown that intellectual insight alone into one's psychodynamics has only weak power to change one's behavior and everyday worldview. Rather, the repeated *experience* of non-judgmental, interested engagement by the psychotherapist is required to reduce the persuasive power of one's projections (fore-understandings). The particular interpretative model used by the psychotherapist is of less importance—that is to say, the mutually agreed upon *truth* (the interpretation) is of less importance (though it is not unimportant) than is the benign experience of the dialogue itself. (Luborsky, Crits-Christoph, Mintz, & Auerbach 1988, 272) *Relationship*, as powerfully as reason, allows us to view others as less devalued and dangerous (as a demon), or as less idealized and benevolent (as a savior). Likewise, the *relationship* of illocutionary communication, of communication that attempts to understand one another rather than to control one another, communication that values the other's viewpoint rather than combating it, may be more transformative of future interpersonal and intrapsychic experience than is the propositional claim to *truth* or *rightness* that is the *rational* validity statement generated by communicative reason.

None of this nullifies Habermas's notion of communicative action—discourse in which the performers agree to make their thematized fore-conceptions less tightly held and more open to critique, allowing for new truth, new interpretations of experience. We know that within psychoanalysis interpretations do help both the

analysand and analyst to *see* the psychodynamic pattern as a thematized entity that can be more easily recognized and more *consciously handled* in future situations. The fact that transference-countertransference psychodynamics are never-ending within the psychoanalytic relationship, and the fact that most of the time most of these remain in the background and go uninterpreted, does not nullify the knowledge gains achieved by analyst and analysand—knowledge that proves itself in the more free, fluid, and creative extra-analytic life of the analysand. Likewise, the very process of communicative action within an approximately ideal discourse situation can thematize psychodynamics operating within the group of participants, allowing primary process thought, projections, and instincts to be used as a source of insight and creativity rather than as subconscious ground-faults interrupting the circuit of discourse. Already there is an extensive literature in the theory and technique of thematizing and analyzing these unconscious processes within groups. (see for example Locke 1961; Foulkes 1990)

How would integration of psychodynamics modify Habermas's theory of communicative action? It would add another element to his model of the intersubjective and subjective spheres of experience. In addition to analyzing the *rightness* of intersubjective norms, discourse participants would need to analyze their intersubjective projections and introjections, just as in object-relations psychoanalysis. Discourse participants would also need to analyze the libidinal, aggressive, and narcissistic feelings and fantasies attached to their own conceptual "contributions" to the discourse. Perhaps this is best put under Habermas's heading of subjective *authenticity*: knowing and expressing the truth about oneself.

Does this ask too much of communicative action, to include the psychodynamics of the participants as the focus of analysis and critique, along with

the analysis of truth, truthfulness, and rightness? Well, it would certainly raise the bar, but Habermas already has the bar set very high. As he acknowledges, the ideal discourse situation is truly an *ideal*; never found in actuality—and yet is powerful as the ultimate standard for illocutionary communication, a standard by which we can judge the *relative* adequacy of actual discourses. Adding awareness of the participants' psychodynamics to Habermas's model of communicative action improves the measure of actual discourses, and is a reasonable and necessary step toward improving the validity of the consensus achieved by the unforced force of the better argument.

Habermas, I think, would disagree with none of the foregoing. He acknowledges irrational influences in communicative action—although he leaves this part of his theory rather undeveloped—and he relies on mutual critique of ideas to thematize irrational fore-understandings so that they have less subconsciously guiding power. He knows that very little discourse approximates the ideal discourse situation; perlocutionary agendas get in the way. And yet, Habermas has seen the concrete progress in the human condition in the West over the past 300 years as discourse has been more and more freed from official, strategic constraints. Habermas would say, with Freud, that relative to the irrational, "The voice of reason is soft, but very persistent." (Quoted on the Freud memorial in Vienna.) Adding analysis of psychodynamics to communicative action, will only strengthen the voice of reason, and hasten the ongoing progress of humanity.

Conclusion

Habermas's theory of communicative reason retains key insights of philosophy since Descartes: the manifold of appearances, the *progress* of reason, ontological hermeneutics, epistemological hermeneutics, pragmatic insistence on reference to non-linguistic phenomena, and language as the vehicle of truth. Habermas's theory of communicative reason also gives Reason a firm foundation: illocutionary communication; that is, communicative action. The performative structure (idealized) of communicative action is universal across cultures and languages, and so the parameters for rational conviction are also universal. The innerworldly objects of perception are the same for all normally developed adults, so truth statements have universal validity. Moral feelings of admiration and resentment are the same for all normally developed adults who reach the world-centric level of postconventional moral development, so mature rightness statements have universal validity. Finally, as Pinker (2011), for example, has shown, *progress* actually can be measured as reduction of suffering, increase of health, and greater degree of effective agency in choosing one's life path. Yes, Habermas successfully defeats the postmodern assertions of the relativism and irrationality of reasoning.

And yet, Nietzsche and the Postmodernists are onto something valid, too: a current of unreason runs through all reasoning. Instinctual urges, primary-process thought, and projections of good and bad influence all our perceptions and judgments; all rationalized for acceptability to self and to others. But, as in group psychoanalysis, communicative action can be used to bring to light the psychodynamics at play in discourse. Our very unreason can become the subject of

reasoning—not for the Other of reason to be squelched, but for it to be more consciously integrated; the better to playfully enrich our life's flourishing.

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